



StopWatch Theatre Company
presents

Arson About

by Mark Wheeler

Follow-Up Resource Pack

*Activities devised by Essex and Hampshire
Fire and Rescue Services*

PREVENTING

PROTECTING

RESPONDING

Introduction

Thank you for allowing StopWatch Theatre Company to visit your school to perform Mark Wheeller's arson prevention play "Arson About"

Every day, the Fire and Rescue Service is called to more deliberately started fires than accidental fires. Approximately 3000 people are injured and 100 die in deliberate fires every year in the UK. The cost to society has reached over £1.3 billion annually. Of the 814 arsonists found guilty at magistrates courts in 2004, 60% were under the age of eighteen and 32% under the age of fifteen.

Every week 20 UK schools suffer an arson attack – that is 1000 every year. Don't let it happen to your school! Raising awareness is the key to prevention, so be alert. The odd piece of burnt toilet paper found in a cloakroom often precedes a major fire in a school.

The five lesson plans contained in this pack are designed to be used in a PSHE, Citizenship or Tutor lesson. Feel free to adapt things to your own style of teaching, and do let us know how you get on – your feedback will help us improve this pack for the future. You can e-mail your comments to:

feedback@stopwatchtheatre.com

Contents

Page 3	<i>Big Decisions Lesson Plan</i>
Page 4	<i>Big Decisions Worksheet</i>
Page 5	<i>The Bigger Picture Lesson Plan</i>
Page 6	<i>The Bigger Picture Cue Cards 1/2</i>
Page 7	<i>The Bigger Picture Cue Cards 2/2</i>
Page 8	<i>Odd One Out Lesson Plan</i>
Page 9	<i>Odd One Out Worksheet</i>
Page 10	<i>Just for a Laugh Lesson Plan</i>
Page 11	<i>Just for a Laugh: Ryan's Story</i>
Page 12	<i>Tonight's Main Story Lesson Plan</i>
Page 13	<i>Drama Specialist Ideas for Further Work</i>
Page 14	<i>Useful Websites</i>

StopWatch Theatre Company wishes to thank the Fire and Rescue Services of Essex and Hampshire who have kindly agreed to share these activities with schools across the UK.



Big Decisions

What is it?

A discussion and writing activity where students consider the difficult choices made by the characters in the play.

What will the students learn?

That they have a choice when faced by difficult decisions and that each choice leads to a consequence.

What are the KS3 National Curriculum links?

- Citizenship - Developing skills of enquiry and communication. 2b, 2c
- Citizenship - Developing skills of participation and responsible action. 3a
- PSHE - Consider moral and social dilemmas. 4g

What do I do?

- Divide the students into small discussion groups.
- Give each student a copy of the Big Decisions worksheet.
- Ask the class to recount the consequences that followed on from each of the six decisions made in the play.
- Each group should choose 3 of the decisions, and for each one:
 1. suggest an alternative choice the character could have made
 2. explain why the various choices would have put the character in a dilemma
 3. predict how the outcome of the drama would have been different if the characters had taken the alternative choice.
- Go through the six decisions with the whole class again. Each group should report what they thought the choices and consequences were. Differing opinions can be explored.
- Summarise with key learning point that there are consequences in every decision we make, and we should always try to foresee these before making those big decisions.
- If there is time, groups could write a short story or draw a storyboard of the alternative consequences of making different choices.



Six Big Decisions made by the characters in Arson About

1. Ian decides to become Stueey's friend
2. Miss Butcher decides to suspend Stueey from school
3. Stueey decides to lie to Ian about the notes
4. Mollie decides to go into the school with Ian and Stueey
5. Ian decides to stay in the school with Stueey, and not leave with Molly
6. Ian decides not to 'squeal'

Choose 3 of these Big Decisions with your group and for each of them answer the questions in the boxes:

Decision Number:

What else could the character have done?

Why would that choice have been difficult for the character?

What would have happened differently in the play if they had made that choice?

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The Bigger Picture

What is it?

A TV Chat Show roleplay activity where the characters from the play face up to life without Molly.

'The risks of arson, including burns, smoke inhalation and death

- Acts of arson have far reaching consequences upon many different members of the community.
- The risks of arson, including burns, smoke inhalation and death.
- An awareness of the consequences of firesetting behaviour.

What are the KS3 National Curriculum links?

- Citizenship - 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a
- English - EN1
- PSHE – 2g, 3j, 3k, 4e
- Drama – EN1

What do I do?

- Copy and cut the cue cards.
- Divide the class into 8 groups, giving each one a cue card which identifies their character in the Chat Show.
- Allow each group time to answer the questions on the cue card and decide how their character was affected by Molly's death.
- Each group should elect a spokesperson, to represent the group's ideas by answering in role. Less confident groups can work as a team and share the role.
- Run a TV Chat Show roleplay with teacher-in-role as T.V. host. Ask the characters questions, starting with those on the cue cards, but building on their answers as they get into role. The discussion can also be thrown open to other audience members, and the characters can cross-question each other.
- At the end of the Chat Show, each group should be asked to script a Final Thought from the point of view of their character. This could include any regrets they might have, or any advice to the 'viewers' of things they should or should not do.



Molly's Dad

You had a choice to make. You wanted the promotion, a better job in the Fire Service, more money, so the family had to move. You had a good relationship with Molly until you argued on the fateful night. As a firefighter you have come across similar situations before but you never get "used to it" especially when the victim is a member of your own family.

How did you feel when you were told that your daughter died?

How do you feel about Ian?

What has been the effect on your work and family life?



Molly's Mum

You were happy at home. You had a nice job, lots of friends, Molly was happy, but your husband wasn't. There was a great new job for him, more money to bring home, but will that extra money bring extra happiness?

Who do you blame for your daughter's death?

How has the death of your daughter affected your life?

If you could give one piece of advice to our younger viewers watching today, what would it be?



Stueey

People thought you were hard, and cool. You only had to give some of them a look and they'd be scared of what you'd do next. That always made you feel good, gave you a buzz, you know. You could always get them to do all sorts of crazy stuff. If they were dopey enough to do it, it wasn't your fault. Ian was a good mate. OK you set fire to Shuttle's hide out, but he was a weirdo. You didn't mean for anyone to get hurt.

Why did you hate Butcher so much?

Have you ever written "hate mail" to anyone else?

What is your fascination with lighters?

Why did you set fire to Shuttle's hide out?



Ian

You're confused. You really fancy Molly, but Stueey is lost without you. You want to spend more time with Molly, but what about your best mate Stueey? If you're not there to keep an eye on him, he'll only get into trouble. So he collects lighters, lots of people collect things! You thought you were helping Stueey when you broke into the school. How wrong you were!

Why did you choose to stay in the school with Stueey rather than leave with Molly?

Did you know that Stueey liked setting fire to things?

How do you feel now that Molly is dead?



Shuttle

Why is it that whenever something bad happens you get the blame? Yeh, you used to get into trouble a lot, but you've changed now. You don't do that stuff anymore. You're fed up with people pointing their fingers at you whenever something goes wrong. You were getting petrol for your go-kart for goodness sake, and now everyone is treating you like public enemy number one.

What were you doing at the petrol station on the evening of the fire?

What did you think when you found out that the police had phoned home asking about you?

How did you feel when you realised that Molly had died in the school fire?



Dan (Shuttle's Brother)

Things were quite difficult looking after your younger brother Will. He always found it difficult to fit in, and you suspected he may be being bullied at school. No one called at the house for him. He spent most of his time on his own in his den, or building his go-kart.

Did Will (Shuttle) have any friends?

How do you think the petrol got on his trousers that night?

How did you feel when you had to talk to the police?

Do you think he lit the fire at the school?



Ian's Dad

Your son hasn't had it easy. His mum died when he was very young. You did your best to bring him up to be a good lad, but you couldn't choose his friends for him. His mate Stueey was in your opinion a "bit strange" and was always in trouble at school. Ian however only had a few detentions, not bad considering. Then there was Molly. Nice girl. Her father was a firefighter. She was going to be good for your son....calm him down a bit.

Do you blame yourself in any way for Ian's reckless behaviour?

How did you feel when Ian was arrested?

How has the part Ian played in the death of Molly affected your life?



Miss Butcher

You have been a respected teacher at the school for 10 years. In that time you have built up a reputation for being tough but fair. During your career you have handed out a number of detentions but never before have you received threatening letters. These you found very disturbing. You had your suspicions who the culprit may be, but no proof. The fire destroyed a third of the school. The whole school, especially Molly's tutor group were devastated to hear of her death.

Who did you think wrote the letters?

How do you feel knowing that the fire could have been set to get back at you?

How did the fire affect the staff and pupils at the school?



Odd One Out

What is it?

A word association and discussion activity. The words can all be associated with the consequences of an arson attack.

What will the students learn?

That acts of arson have far reaching consequences upon many different members of the community.

What are the KS3 National Curriculum Links?

- Citizenship - Developing skills of enquiry and communication. 2b, 2c
- English - Group discussion and interaction. EN1

What do I do?

- Copy the Odd One Out worksheet.
- Put the group in pairs, and hand out one worksheet to each pair.
- Ask the group to look at the six sets of words in the thought bubbles, and decide which one of each set is the odd one out, and then circle it.
- Give them a few minutes to complete, and then go through the sets of words asking for answers. There are, of course, no right or wrong answers, but discussion will be provoked on why different choices were made by different people.
- Ask the group to look at the other words around the edge of the sheet and choose one to go into each of the bubbles so that the odd one out remains the same, and the new word goes with the two that they think already go together.
- After completion, again discuss differing ideas with the groups.
- If there is time, the two empty bubbles can be used to make more groups of words with an odd one out, using any word that is on the sheet.



Church

Death
Fun
Friend
.....

Lighter

Scar
Shame
Burn
.....

Bins

Fire

Sadness

Shock
Paramedic
Hospital
.....

Smoke

Student
Teacher
Revenge
.....

Prison

School

Anger

Hoax Call

Arson
Court
Police
.....

Mourning
Firefighter
Parent
.....

Matches

Injury

Explosion

.....
.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

Classroom

Evacuation

Criminal Record



Just for a Laugh

What is it?

A roleplay or creative writing activity, developing the ideas from a short story.

What will the students learn?

To identify how peer pressure can influence actions and to provide strategies to cope with this behaviour.

What are the KS3 National Curriculum Links?

- PSHE – Recognising and resisting pressures and communicating confidently. 2g, 3j, 3k
- Citizenship – Justify opinions and expressing other’s opinions. 2b, 3a
- Drama – Use a variety of dramatic techniques to explore ideas, issues, texts and meanings. EN1

What do I do?

- Begin session by exploring what is meant by peer pressure and what part the group felt it played in the death of Molly.
- Explain that they are going to continue thinking about peer pressure by looking at another story with tragic consequences.
- Read “Ryan’s Story” to the class, stopping before the epilogue.
- Give pupils time to reflect on the story for a few moments in pairs, thinking particularly about peer pressure.
- Read the epilogue to pupils, emphasising the final question: “What can we do to prevent these terrible accidents?”
- Choose one or more of the activities below to focus the pupils thinking:

1. In small groups, act out the story to discover what happened before Steve died. Watch the different versions of events. Choose one group and rewind their roleplay to the critical moments and freeze the action. Ask the rest of the class what each of the characters is thinking. Re-run the role-play, but this time with a different ending in which everyone remains safe and sound.

2. Discuss who else was affected in the story. Select one of those characters and write a letter to an agony aunt along with the reply.

3. Re-write the story from another character’s perspective.



Ryan's Story

“We used to play dares all the time. On the way home we'd dare each other to jump across the railway tracks, jump off a bridge into the river below, make flamethrowers out of aerosols, play with matches, or run across a really busy road. We never really thought about the risks we were taking. It was just a good laugh.

I don't see any of them anymore. Once we left school we never kept in touch but I still see Steve's Mum around town. She's never forgiven us.

That night was horrible. It was as if everything was in slow motion. I will never forget that horrible noise as the car hit his body. It's hard to describe it, but it was like a hollow thud. He was dragged under the car and carried down the road until the car could stop fully.

When it happened we couldn't believe our eyes; Lee ran off somewhere while me and Pete went to check. When we looked at Steve we could barely recognise him. The car driver was in tears, screaming and shouting at us, the words making no sense, just rattling around in my head. I couldn't take my eyes off Steve. I knew he was dead because no one could look like that and still be alive. Pete was sick on the side of the road. I remember having to explain to the Police what we'd been doing. It sounded so stupid, but at the time we thought it was exciting.

It felt like it was hours before Steve's Mum came to the scene. She arrived in a car similar to the one that hit him. She kept on asking us what had happened but I couldn't speak to her. I knew that Steve hadn't even wanted to do it, but we pushed him into it. It's more fun if everyone does it, isn't it?”

Epilogue

This tragic story is unfortunately all too common. All too often the emergency services are called to an incident where some one has been killed or seriously injured as a result of peer pressure.

It's not a case of how Steve died but why he died. He could have died playing with the aerosol, jumping the railway tracks, or breaking his neck jumping into the river. Like Molly he was in the wrong place at the wrong time taking risks because of peer pressure.

What can we do to prevent these terrible accidents?



Tonight's Main Story

What is it?

A longer activity where students create media reports about an arson attack. With sufficient planning, PSHE, English, Drama, Art and IT departments can work together on various elements of the activity.

What will the students learn?

The way arson is reported has an impact on the way it is understood by the public.

What are the KS3 National Curriculum Links?

- English - To use a range of techniques to convey ideas, themes and characters. EN3
- Citizenship - Developing skills of enquiry and communication. 2b, 2c

What do I do?

- Put the class into small groups.
- Tell the class that they are journalists reporting on the fire in the school in Arson About.
- The class can research using newspapers and the internet how arson is reported.
- Give each group a brief, telling them:
 - i) what kind of news presentation they are to produce – newspaper article, radio or TV broadcast
 - ii) whether the students are to write a fair and balanced account or a biased account (blaming students, the school, the parents; or a sensationalised exaggerated account).

Each group's brief should be different, so that you can compare different media's handling of the same story.

- Each group will produce either an article for a national or local newspaper; a script for a 3 minute radio broadcast; or a storyboard for a 3 minute TV news item about the arson attack on the school.
- Timing is important. Pupils need to be given time deadlines for completing each part of the exercise. Time should be allowed at the end of the activity for students to present their work to the rest of the group and for groups to comment on and evaluate their own and other's work.

Presentation Options

The activity works well when the finished article is a written or drawn presentation, but when time and facilities allow, the following options all add impact.

- The TV broadcast can be filmed using hand held camcorders.
- The radio broadcast can be recorded.
- The newspaper article can be word processed, with drawings or found images added.



Role Play Ideas Using The Full Script

Arson About by Mark Wheeler is a published play, designed for Youth Theatre or Drama GCSE performance, as well as English Literature study. Copies can be purchased from Nelson Thornes, the publisher. The script also contains detailed follow-up activities written by Andy Kempe.

The version that StopWatch Theatre Company will be performing in your school has been adapted by Mark Wheeler for a professional cast of 4 actors. The comparison of this edited version with the published version could provide a rich stream of work for drama teachers to explore.

Although the professional performance will only be seen by Year 8s in your school, you could consider producing the play yourself to perform to other Year Groups to further the message.

The central triangle of relationships within the play has lots of room for exploration. Ian is the new kid in the school, desperately short of friends. Stueey is the first to offer his friendship to Ian. But he is always in trouble and has a worrying interest in lighters. Molly is a more assertive and 'together' person. When she and Ian start going out, she doesn't like him hanging around with Stueey any more. Ian doesn't know which way to turn, and his indecision causes grave consequences in the play. Roleplay ideas:

- *Imagine conversations between any two of the characters before the night of the fire. What would they say about the third one?*
- *Imagine previous occasions when there has been tension between the three characters together.*
- *Examine the moment when Molly asked Ian to leave Stueey in the school. How could she have been more successful? What could Ian have said to Stueey?*
- *Imagine the conversation that Ian and Stueey had when they found out Molly was dead.*

The script can be studied in the way that any other published play is used, have fun, and do let us know of any ideas that are really successful:

feedback@stopwatchtheatre.com



Useful Websites

StopWatch Theatre Company	www.stopwatchtheatre.com
Mark Wheeler	www.amdram.co.uk/wheellerplays
Nelson Thornes Publishers	www.nelsonthornes.com
Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service	www.hantsfire.gov.uk
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service	www.essex-fire.gov.uk
Fire Kills (ODPM)	www.firekills.gov.uk
StayWise Resources	www.staywise.co.uk
Firework Safety	www.fireworksafety.co.uk
RoSPA LASER Project	www.rospa.com
“Taking Chances: the lifestyles And leisure risks of young people” Child Accident Prevention Trust July 2002	www.capt.org.uk/pdfs/capt_risk_doc.pdf
Health & Safety Executive – Risk Education	www.hse.gov.uk/education/index.htm
“Learning to Listen: Action Plan for children and young people” Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. July 2003.	www.odpm.gov.uk
National Healthy Schools Standard – Partnerships Health Development Agency July 2000	www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk
“Respect and Responsibility – taking a stand against anti-social behaviour” Home Office. March 2003	www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/antisocial1.html
Safety Education Guidance for schools - DE&S	www.teachernet.gov.uk/pshe
National Curriculum Online	www.nc.uk.net
National Curriculum In Action	www.ncaction.org.uk
Schemes of Work	www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes
QCA	www.qca.org.uk

