



## THEATRE STYLES

in BLOOD + CHOCOLATE

AN ADDITIONAL LEARNING RESOURCE

# Introduction

These resources are an additional supplement to the Education Resource Pack for Blood and Chocolate, which covers Historical and Social Context.

Here we will look at **theatre styles** with suggestions for further research and creative exploration.

**The Community play**

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photo: John Saunders

Click on the link below to access the main Education Resource Pack and its valuable content, which sets the historical and social context of Blood and Chocolate, with a wide range of classroom suggestions.

<http://www.pilot-theatre.com/?IDNO=1480>

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# The Community Play

The term community play was defined by Ann Jellicoe in 1978, when she set up a play in Lyme Regis, to be created with and about the local community, performed in promenade style, with the action happening in and among the audience.

In York, a tradition of community participation in theatre dates back to the original medieval mystery plays and has been revived in recent times with the waggon plays and on a larger scale, with the York Mystery Plays 2012, adapted by Mike Kenny and produced by York Theatre Royal, Riding Lights Theatre and York Museums Trust. Many of the community actors, choir, costume makers, photographers and others have returned, along with new faces and four professional actors,

## Local Histories

Public dancing, love and friendship, work and family were all powerful themes which emerged from the preliminary research for *Blood and Chocolate*. Mike Kenny, the writer, explored archives of letters, newspaper reports, photographs and accounts of working in York's chocolate industry during WW1.

The community cast of 200 mirror the community of the time; a community which lost thousands of young men to the battlefields of WW1.



Community actors in rehearsal

photo by Anne Crawford

*Explore and Create.....*

*What stories make up the history of your town, city, village or region?*

*How has your area been effected by historical events: the 1984 miner's strike; the women's suffrage movement; or even older histories such as the luddites or levellers or the English Civil War?*

*Visit the local history section of your library to find out more. Identify the personal stories against the backdrop of national or even international events.*

*Devise a piece of theatre which makes use of a large cast, working, marching, dancing, singing, mourning. What part of your local story brings people together?*

# The Community Play

## part two: Stimulus for a Story

Mike Kenny says: 'the starting point was the chocolate boxes given by the Sheriff and the Lord Mayor to the men at the front. This lead us to explore the radical history of chocolate and the Quaker families in York and we began to explore a relationship with a different York, behind the shopping streets. We wanted to make something for the people of York, about the people of York. This was an industrial city, before it was a tourist city, and a city where unusually, the bosses of one the biggest employers, the Quaker Rowntrees were ahead of their time in the way they respected their workers' rights, not because they were being forced to by legislation, but because they thought it was the right thing to do.'

The Rowntrees were Quakers, who have a testimony to Peace and pacifism. The involvement of factory workers in the war effort challenged them to find a way to hold on to their own personal beliefs, while respecting the choices of their employees and the effect of the war on the country as a whole.

Early in the research process, Mike walked along the Ouse river from the war memorial near York's Lendal Bridge, past another memorial to fallen railway workers and on until he reached Rowntree Park and the memorial to the factory workers who died (see pages 5 and 6.) The different styles of memorial provided a rich stimulus to the writing process.

*Explore and Create.....*

*Explore the images of the next few pages of War Memorials and discuss what message they tell of war.*

*Begin with a still image in your group of a memorial itself. Bring it to life slowly by voicing the thoughts of those represented by the memorial or of those visiting it.*

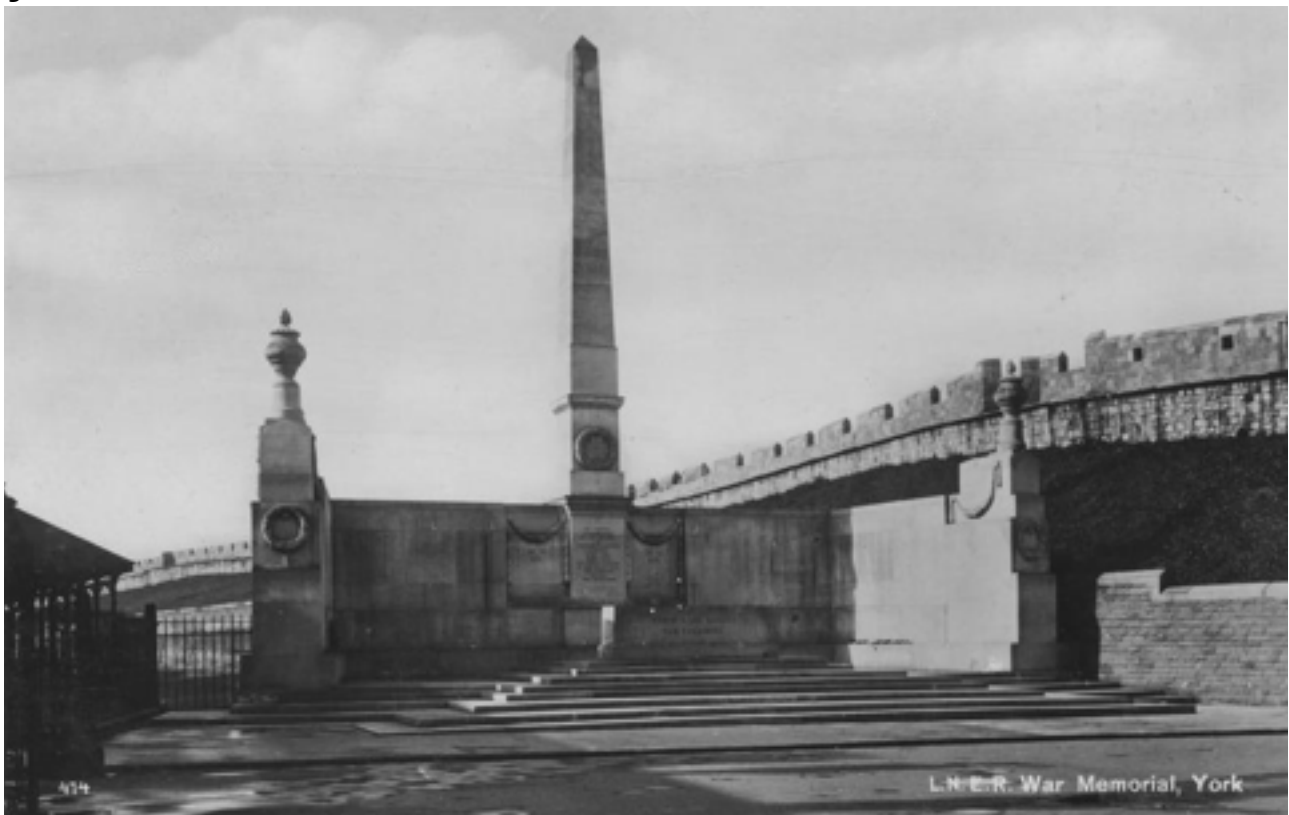
*Explore a war memorial in your area, look at the plaques inside churches. What was the effect of the First World War in your community?*

*If you know the names of those who died in the war, can you research what happened to those families? Do your parents or grandparents know what the impact was of the First World War on your family, wherever they were in the world?*

## NER Memorial York

2,236 employees of the North Eastern Railway were killed in the First World War including one director.

Fellow directors decided, in 1920, to allocate £20 000 for the erection of a memorial to the dead. The committee engaged Sir Edwin Lutyens to select a site and prepare a design. The way was cleared for work to start in 1923 and work was completed in June 1924. The memorial was unveiled by Field Marshall Lord Plumer and the Yorkshire Evening Press said the monument was one of imposing grandeur.



*(with thanks to Imagine York a project of York Libraries and Archives.)*

What did people feel about memorials after WW1?

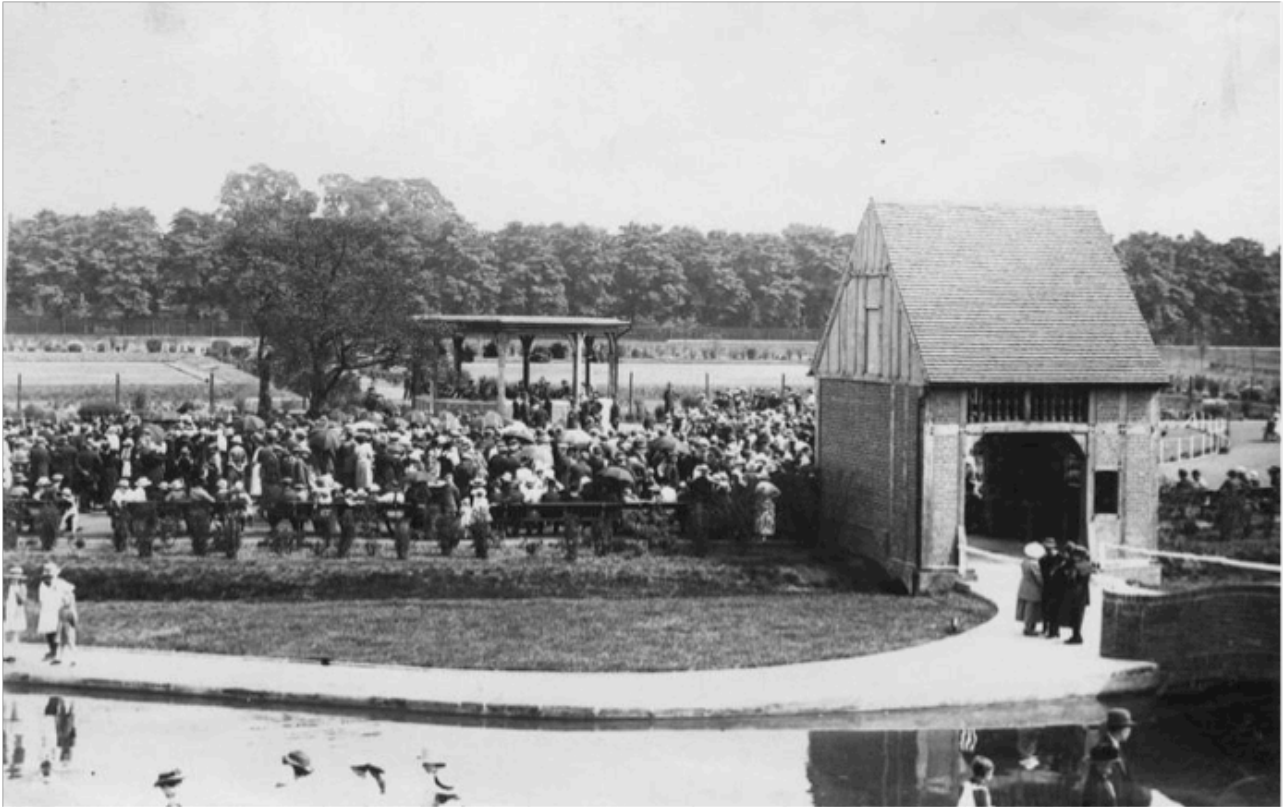
Could £20,000 have spent differently - for instance, to supported orphans and widows?

What do you think?



# The Memorial in Rowntree Park

The memorial, and the park itself, were dedicated to the memory of those lost in the war, particularly Rowntree's workers. It is in the shape of a dovecote, with the names of the fallen inscribed inside.



In July 1921, Joseph Rowntree handed over the deeds to the park to the Mayor and unveiled the memorial dovecote in front of a huge audience.

What does the dovecote symbolise?

If you live in or near York, pay a visit to Rowntree Park and stand inside The Dovecote. Notice the names inside. What does it feel like?



*photos by Helen Cadbury*



The Shot at Dawn memorial is at The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

<http://www.thenma.org.uk/>

## Shot At Dawn

This memorial commemorates those who were shot because they were accused of desertion. It is now recognised that many of these men were suffering from what we now know as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. On 7th November 2006, the British Government agreed to give a posthumous pardon to all of those executed for military offences in the First World War.



Some of these posts are for men of only 18 years old.

Some, like Private Asibiri Frafra, were from Commonwealth regiments, fighting on behalf of the British.

You can find out more about the Commonwealth contribution to the war effort here.

<http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/features/article/16/commonwealth-contribution>

## Unconventional Spaces and Audio Technologies

"Slung Low is a company that makes adventures for audiences outside of conventional theatre spaces, each with a powerful, moving story at its heart, shows that re-examine how audiences go and see a piece of theatre. Our ambition has always been to transport our audience to new places and to make them see familiar places from new perspectives."

At the beginning of the production process, Alan Lane, artistic director of Slung Low, brought everyone together to explain how it might work and demonstrate Slung Low's signature audio technology. We all put on headphones and he spoke into his tiny microphone; suddenly it was like he was speaking right next to me, not from the other end of the room.

"It felt like you put me in a film but I was the camera" – was the comment of an audience member at a previous Slung Low production.

Alan walked around York, scoping out places and spaces where a walking audience would be able to see the scenes unfold. It was important, he explained, to find height, so a large crowd could look up to windows or balconies. There would also be moments of actors and audience moving together, almost like a flash mob.

*Explore and Create.....*

*Research different ways headphones are being used in theatre, from site specific spectacles to audio walks.*

*Investigate the intimacy of audio by telling stories via headphones. Write a short story in the 1st person, which is addressed to the anonymous listener, like a letter, but written to be spoken aloud. (N.B. 2000 words is approximately fifteen minutes, the length of a BBC afternoon short story. You may prefer to go for half this length.) Record your stories, and add basic sound effects and music. (Free software such as Audacity is easy to use.)*

*Invite your audience to a 'performance' cafe, where they can listen individually to different stories on MP3 players at different tables. The tables may also contain artifacts or photos that support the story.*

*If you have the budget for wireless headphones and mics, plan a site-specific piece of work in your school or college: where will you place your audience?*

*You could also try an audio walk, recreating the voices of characters in your local community, based on the kind of research you might do for a community play (see page 3 and 4).*



# Verbatim and Documentary Theatre

The term Documentary Theatre usually refers to the use of printed sources, archives, letters, emails or court transcripts as part of the text of play. It may include interviews from real people. The objective is to tell a factual story based on real lives or events, often as a form of Political Theatre.

Verbatim refers specifically to the use of recorded speech in creating a script. There is an overlap in some plays, and the idea of verbatim theatre has developed over time. The first verbatim plays were both political and community-oriented and date back to the 1970s. The genre gained popularity in Britain from 2000 onwards, with plays ranging from Nicholas Kent's *Justifying War* at the Tricycle, (made up of the transcripts of the Hutton Inquiry following the death of Dr David Kelly and the build up to the Iraq War), to Alecky Blythe's *London Road*, exploring the effect on one street in Ipswich of finding their neighbour was the mass murderer Stephen Wright. *London Road* was remarkable in that the verbatim interviews were then set to music and sung, emphasising the extraordinary rhythms of natural speech.

Often the verbatim actors are also the interviewers. The extent to which they try to exactly represent their subjects may depend on the director and writer. In some cases the words are moved around or adapted and non-verbatim text may be inserted or the actors wear headphones and listen to the original speech, practicing it until they have it exactly right; the cadences and tone of the speaker are closely copied. Actors may also perform with the original voices in their earpieces, and speak what they hear.

During the making of *Blood and Chocolate* a team of researcher/writers from York University and Script Yorkshire worked with verbatim expert, Dr. Tom Cantrell and Pilot's Associate Director Katie Posner. Local people were interviewed about their memories working in York's chocolate industry. The final piece, *Clocking In*, was performed at York Cocoa House and included hot chocolate for the audience.



In rehearsals in York Cocoa House Paul Osborne, actor, (right) in conversation with Joe Dickinson, ex-Rowntree employee, collector and local historian. Paul is smelling chocolate that was originally sent out to Boer War.

*photo: John Saunders*

# Verbatim and Documentary Theatre

## Follow Up Activity

**Introductory Exercise:** Record three minutes of an interview with a family member about the place they live. Type up exactly what is said. In class, pair up and try to re-perform the dialogue exactly. This is called **verbatim theatre**. It creates a heightened reality when it is re-performed.

**Create a play:** focusing on ideas or stories from your community (see pages 3 and 4) are there other people you could interview to create your own verbatim play about an event in your area?

**IMPORTANT:** you must ask people's permission to record them and you must ask them to sign a release form, explaining exactly how their words are going to be used. Let your interviewees see the transcript (the typed up version) of your interviews, and make sure they are happy to be quoted. Invite the subjects of your interview to see your final piece.

Dr Tom Cantrell asks this question: "What role does the imagination play in the service of playing a real person whom the actor has met, and whose words become the text of the play?"

What do you think?

Can you put your own interpretation on the way you say the words, or should you say them in exactly the same tone?

Should you miss anything out?

## Further ideas...

When you've transcribed your recorded interviews, try removing the hesitations, the ums and ahs, in one version, and keeping them in another version. Perform the speech to the group with and without, which sounds better? Do the same with and without the interviewer's questions. Does the meaning change?

## Further Reading...

Acting in Documentary Theatre by Tom Cantrell, (Palgrave Macmillan 2013).

London Road by Alecky Blythe (Nick Hern Books, 2011).

The Permanent Way by David Hare (Faber and Faber, 2007).