Lyric

DRACULA

EDUCATION PACK

For Drama GCSE, A Level &
BTEC Performing Arts students

OVERVIEW & CONTENTS

These education resources have been created by the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. We are committed to deepening and nurturing young people's understanding of theatre and the arts. We aim to raise the cultural aspirations of young people and make theatre accessible to all. With this in mind, this education pack is designed for teachers and Drama students. This pack is written from a theatre maker's perspective and we hope it provides some interesting insights into how a production like *Dracula* is created and performed. Additionally, there are also resources and ideas of how you might further explore the themes and issues raised within this innovative and thought-provoking performance.

Content Warning
The play contains: themes of violence and specifically gender-based violence (including visual allusions to sexual assault); death (including of children); blood; abduction; depictions of grief and distress following trauma; the use of weapons; reference to hanging. This production is most suitable for ages 13+.

This pack is produced by the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre for education purposes only. It is not for commercial use.

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Phoebe Naughton and Macy Seelochan. Photo: Marc Brenner

THE ORIGINAL TEXT

Dracula, written by Bram Stoker and published in 1897, is one of the most famous and influential Gothic novels in English literature. It tells the chilling story of Count Dracula, a 'vampire' from Transylvania who travels to England to spread the curse of the undead. Told through a series of diary entries, letters, and newspaper clippings, the novel builds suspense and explores themes of fear, superstition, and the unknown. When Stoker wrote *Dracula*, the world was changing rapidly – Victorian Britain was at the height of its empire, but there were growing fears about decline, foreign invasion, and the loss of traditional values. Science and reason were beginning to challenge religious belief, and anxieties about sexuality, gender roles and disease were becoming more prominent in society. Dracula himself can be seen as a symbol of these fears – representing the threat of the outsider, the corruption of innocence, and the clash between old superstitions and modern progress. The novel not only helped to shape the vampire myth as we know it today – introducing ideas like blood-drinking, garlic, and immortality – but it also laid the foundations for the horror genre in literature and film. Its influence can still be seen in everything from early silent films like *Nosferatu* to modern works such as *Twilight*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and even *The Vampire Diaries*. *Dracula* remains a powerful reflection of the fears and uncertainties of its time, while continuing to inspire new generations of artists and writers.

DRACULA, ADAPTED BY MORGAN LLOYD MALCOLM

SYNOPSIS

SPOILER ALERT! If you are coming to see this production don't read this until you have experienced it as it will reveal some new twists, different from the original text.

This stage adaptation of *Dracula* begins with Mina Harker, a young Victorian woman, stepping forward to speak directly to the audience. She tells us that we are about to witness a re-enactment of terrifying events. She is the only survivor and has returned to tell the tale as a warning.

We meet Mina's fiancé, Jonathan Harker, a young solicitor who is travelling abroad for work. After he leaves, Mina's best friend Lucy enters. The two women discuss love, marriage, and a mysterious riddle: If you were lost in the woods and turned to see someone following you – would you rather it be a man or a wolf?

Meanwhile, Jonathan arrives in a distant country to meet a strange client, Count Dracula. Locals warn him not to go, but he travels by carriage to Dracula's remote castle. There, he meets the terrifying count and we witness as he experiences eerie and frightening events. He is held captive by his host but eventually escapes by jumping from a window.

Back in England, Lucy tells Mina she is being courted by three men. Dr Seward, who runs a local asylum, Quincey Morris, a wealthy American, and Lord Arthur Holmwood, whom she chooses to marry.

Mina warns the audience that ominous signs were ignored. One is seen through Dr Seward's disturbing patient Renfield, and the other is the arrival of a ghost ship in a storm, with its crew mysteriously dead or missing. The ship's captain speaks of a terrifying presence on board.

That night, Mina finds Lucy missing. She discovers her outside near a church, acting strangely, with puncture marks on her neck that Mina believes are the result of an accident caused by the pin of a broach on her shawl – but something much darker is at play.

Jonathan, now safe in Budapest, writes of his experiences at the castle. Mina joins him, and through his journals learns about Dracula. She contacts a friend of hers called Van Helsing, who comes to help Lucy, who is now gravely ill.

Lucy's three suitors all offer their blood to save her – but each night, a mysterious winged creature drains it away. Eventually, Lucy dies due to blood loss.

Mina, now back in London with Jonathan meets with Van Helsing where they reveal a shocking theory: Lucy has become creature, seen attacking children on the heath, known as the "Bloofer Lady", child speak for 'beautiful lady'. To prove it they visit the heath where she has been spotted and Mina sees her friend now transformed. They visit her grave and find it empty. Once Lucy has returned to her coffin to sleep before she is due to awoken again. Van Helsing and Arthur kill her with a wooden stake to stop her transformation.

Mina visits Renfield, who speaks of his "Master" and a desire for eternal love. Mina begins to experience nightmares and is eventually attacked by Dracula, forced to drink his blood – linking them psychically.

Mina, Jonathan, Van Helsing, Seward, Quincey, and Arthur travel back to Dracula's castle to stop him. After a fierce battle, it is Mina who kills Dracula by driving a stake through his heart.

Years later, Mina tells us she and Jonathan had a son – but both he and Jonathan are now dead. Then comes a chilling twist: the "Jonathan" on stage is not really Jonathan. He is a member of the audience from the previous night's show, chosen by Mina.

As he begs the audience to escape, Mina kills him on stage, revealing she is now a vampire. Her helpers – also vampires – were once victims like her, saved from abusive lives. She offers freedom to those in the audience who want it… but it becomes clear:

Vampires are among us – and they are ready to feed.

Things to look out for during the performance:

- Metadrama - in this case a 'play within a play structure' - Mina controls and comments on the action.
- How lighting, sound, and staging create suspense and horror.
- Characters who play multiple roles - notice how their performance style changes.
- The play's themes: power, control, freedom, and transformation.

Umi Myers.. Photo: Marc Brenner

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Morgan Lloyd Malcolm (Writer) and Emma Baggott (Director)
Find out about the inspiration behind this new adaptation of *Dracula* and the relationship between the writer and Director on this unique production.

LINK

Chi-San Howard (Movement Director) and Ana Diego Iversen (Assistant Movement Director)

Step into the world of a Movement Director and gain valuable insights about the importance of movement within this production.

LINK

Director – Emma Baggott. Photo: Marc Brenner

Writer – Morgan Lloyd Malcolm. Photo: Marc Brenner

INTERVIEW WITH ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GRÁINNE FLYNN

Can you explain what your role has been as Assistant Director on this production of *Dracula*?

As an Assistant Director on any production the key is to research, listen and support our director's vision in the rehearsal room. My first step was research to understand the history of *Dracula* and vampires. This would include reading books and articles, watching films and listening to podcasts. As an assistant director, researching is so useful to build up a bank of knowledge to understand your play; the cultural history around *Dracula* and to bring that knowledge into the rehearsal room.

As an Assistant director our role is really important to listen. If a question is asked by an actor in the rehearsal room, we go to find the answer. I'm always making notes on the actors and directors ideas on world of the play.

I'm always writing notes on blocking to remember the staging of the play which can be really useful in understanding each individual actor / character journey in the play.

Support is for all the team; it's about being responsive to what the room needs. For example, updated lines in the script if they have been changed by playwright or, helping actors with lines, helping with the next day rehearsal call.

Could you describe how your experience on this production has been different to others that you have worked on?

Emma Baggot, the Director of *Dracula*, is incredibly collaborative and empowers her team to make offers of ideas. Emma has brought an exciting team of creatives in the room. We have a Movement Director, Fight Director, Playwright, Composer, Stage Manager, Actors, Assistant Director and Director. Emma has a really clear and innovative vision for *Dracula* and has brought a team of artists that can see and build that vision to make it a real life production! Each creative has the space and time to build their vision with the actors. It is a real act of ensemble and collaboration.

Can you explain the relationship that you've had with the Director on this production? How have you collaborated?

Emma Baggot is like a mentor to me in this rehearsal process. Every day the rehearsal room is filled with so much joy and laughter from the whole company. Emma has taught me so much about the skill of being very detailed with your concept and vision for the play before entering the rehearsal room. Before entering the rehearsal room she's thought about an idea for every moment and then lets the actors play.

In the rehearsal room I really love watching her process, of how she connects with actors. Emma holds the rehearsal room with such sensitivity and care where every actor can bring their best work. Emma is always super open to my curious questions whilst acting as a mentor, guiding me to learn new skills. For example, logistical parts of directing, such as in our technical week (where we build the play in the theatre with all the lighting, sound, special effects) to work out how many pages we need to get through per hour to get to the end of the play. I love those part of the job especially, the ability to learn a new skill that is so useful for the future.

What has been one of the most interesting aspects for you working on this production of *Dracula*?

It has been incredible to watch Emma Baggot (Director) and Morgan Lloyd Malcom's (Playwright) vision become a production. Watching the actors delve into the world of *Dracula*; building a vampire acolyte troupe, learning and creating music, establishing the world of *Dracula* moving across space and time all through physical movement. It is a spectacle. From the first week of rehearsals, the company of actors and creatives became a strong ensemble building a shared vision.

I find it fascinating watching every creative expertise in building *Dracula*. For example, watching the illusion team think about how we can create challenging conceptual moments like 'someone floating' or, the fight director creating a battle with Dracula not physically being present in the play. The process has been cross-departmental where each team has observed and then, responded. For example, Adam Cork creating a composition responding to the movement sequence or, Joshie Harritette developing lighting design in the rehearsal room whilst watching the actors and director making the scene. There is a lot of responsive work from each team before we go into our tech week. That process feels incredibly my exciting because everyone has a share vision.

Jack Myers. Photo: Marc Brenner

What are you most excited about audiences seeing when they come to watch this production of *Dracula*?

Dracula has so many twists and turns. I think it will keep the audience questioning, that is what I love about great theatre! Morgan Lloyd Malcom has adapted *Dracula* to have a refreshing lense on the original story. The play has such heart and a real strong political message which asks questions to our audience to think and reflect on after they leave the theatre.

The play is magic with so many twists and turns. It is thrilling, full of energy and punch, whilst also, shocking and scary. Genuinely it is such an incredible piece of work which I'm certain audiences will be kept on the edge of their seats!

Have you ever worked on a piece of horror before and if so, how does this production of *Dracula* differ?

Yes! When I was younger, I was in the Young Company at The Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. My friends who I met from there created a theatre company called Switch_MCR.

We got the opportunity to create a show at a fringe theatre in Manchester. We wanted to be ambitious so decided to create our own DIY Horror Show called *The Other Side*. With a very small budget, building the set ourselves, making our own special effects and with our team of eleven friends made our show. We sold out for two weeks and won an Offie for our show. It was wildly fun and a proud moment for us all whilst, also develop our creative skills massively in deivising our own horror.

Is there anything you've learnt from this production that you'll be taking with you for future projects?

So much! The power of a collaborative theatre process; bringing together a great ensemble with an exciting concept and empowering your creative team to building a production. Dracula is like a composition of a music piece, each part of the story is scored so beautifully with the acting, directing, music, movement and set design, each part works together in great harmony. This process has taught me that each creative is equal important in building the world of the production.

Photo: Marc Brenner

DESIGN ELEMENTS

In conversation with...

Adam Cork – Composition and Sound Design

Sound is often such a vital element of horror, could you explain how you are using sound to create tension and suspense in this production?
All animals, including humans, are biologically hard-wired to react strongly to certain sounds, like the crying of a baby, or the aggressive growls of a predator. By using or imitating such sounds I can bypass rational thought, jump over the maturity of the adult and go straight to the child within, the primitive brain, engaging the purely reflexive instincts. In this way it's possible to put an audience on edge, in a state of heightened awareness of danger, making us more easily prone to shock, fear and revulsion. I'm also exploring the horror of ageing audio media, the layers of time which accumulate on recording techniques, much as they do on film techniques, making what was once the cutting edge seem horribly limited, horrifically claustrophobic. I'm fascinated by the phonograph, the first recording device, which dates almost precisely back to the time the original *Dracula* was written, as it was the beginning of the mechanical capture of sound, usually the human voice, in which process I find there is a notion of vampirism as there is with photography, the face, and in this case the voice, being separated, sucked out from the body of its owner in the service of sustaining an uncanny effigy of humanity. Musically I hope my score also has the effect of destabilising the mood of the audience by frustrating, confounding or denying expectations, much as the chief protagonists Mina and Jonathan are constantly thrown off-target by events.

How have you worked with other members of the creative team when creating the sound design?
I had two very fruitful meetings with Emma Baggott our Director, as well as some group meetings with the whole team, where we all threw ideas into the melting pot before rehearsals began. Then in the rehearsal room the actors brought all of their thoughts to the process as well. In terms of specific moments of collaboration, it was great to hear Grace Smart talking about her set and costume designs while showing us all the model box. Together with Emma's ideas about the world of the play, this vividly brought to my mind ideas about sound flavours and musical textures. Later in rehearsals it was great to see the end result of Chi-San Howard's movement sequences, as well as Bethan Clark's fight chorepgraphy. which helped me pin down the timescale and energy of certain musical paragraphs, and still later in the technical rehearsals, the beautiful lighting states designed by Joshie Harriette as well as Gareth Kaylan's ingenious illusions, and underpinned by the idea emanating from Morgan Lloyd Malcolm's play and Emma's take on it, that this version of *Dracula* is not only a window on the late Victorian world of the original novel, but also a reflection of today's world, our world.

Jack Myers. Photo: Marc Brenner

What are you most excited for audiences to experience during this production relating to sound and music?
I hope I succeed in helping to give audiences a visceral experience of the action of the play, as well as helping to evoke the original period of the novel, together with the world and period of Morgan's version. Emotionally too I hope the songs I've arranged and written help to deepen the audience's sense of the rich relationships between the characters. I aimed also to incorporate the classic horror and thriller film score influence which the script asks for alongside other musical styles and within a sound world such that there remains a textural unity across all these elements, which is a unique flavour of our show that the audience can simply take in as an accompaniment to the story, rather than be challenged by.

Have there been any challenges to overcome when considering the sound for this production?
The play is complex in terms of setting. We are in one space which is then used imaginatively to conjure many different locations, but this space itself is a theatre space within a church, which is then itself housed within the Lyric Hammersmith theatre auditorium, so the sense of place is fluid and unstable. There is also an evolving struggle for narrative control between the characters, and forces external to the story, but also sometimes external to the narrator, which destabilise our characters in different ways at different times. Finding different colours within the soundscore and music to support these layers of place and meaning has been an exhilarating challenge!

Photo: Marc Brenner

Set Design – Grace Smart

Grace Smart's set design for *Dracula* is cleverly created to work on multiple levels, helping the audience feel fully immersed in the story. The play uses the concept of a "play within a play", so the set is designed to look like a theatre or village hall. In the background, red walls and large, arched windows suggest a gothic-style church or old building, hinting that the performance might be taking place in a makeshift theatre space of the Victorian era. These design choices not only give the set a sense of history but also reflect the classic gothic horror style that audiences expect from a *Dracula* story.

A range of versatile set props are strategically placed on stage, including a metal bed frame, assorted stools and chairs, as well as wooden crates, boxes, and trunks. These items serve as multi-functional set pieces, allowing for fluid scene transitions and dynamic storytelling. The crates and trunks are particularly effective in their transformative use—reconfigured throughout the production to represent elements such as horse-drawn carriages, the hull of a ship, or raised platforms to create stage levels. This approach to minimalist, suggestive staging supports the fast-paced, imaginative style of the performance and allows the ensemble cast to create multiple locations without complex scene changes. This again fits the convention that this is re-telling of the story on a stage.

The lighting rig is deliberately visible, with hanging spotlights suspended from the ceiling, reinforcing the concept of a performance taking place within a temporary or makeshift theatre space. At the front of the stage, shell-shaped footlights – reminiscent of those used in Victorian music halls – are positioned to enhance the period feel and support the "play within a play" device.

These lighting elements not only serve a practical function, illuminating the actors and key moments of action, but also contribute to the metatheatrical style of the production. By keeping the technical equipment in full view, the design reminds the audience of the theatricality of the piece, blurring the lines between performance and reality. This open acknowledgment of theatrical convention is a nod to Brechtian techniques, encouraging the audience to remain aware that they are watching a performance, while still engaging with the story being told.

Costume Design – Grace Smart

The use of costume works in tandem with the set design to firmly locate the action within the Victorian time period – the historical setting of *Dracula*. Costume choices support both the narrative cand the stylistic intentions of the production.

The character of Mina is a central figure who remains in the same costume throughout the performance. Unlike the rest of the cast, the actor playing Mina does not multi-role, so there is no need for rapid costume changes or adaptable costume pieces. Her costume consists of a long blue skirt with a visible petticoat, a high-necked blouse with long sleeves, frilled cuffs, and a neck scarf – completed with period-appropriate black leather ankle boots and a blue waistcoat. This ensemble is symbolic rather than elaborate, grounding her character in the time period without drawing unnecessary attention or detracting from the fast-paced storytelling.

Umi Myers and Mei Mac.. Photo: Marc Brenner

Mina's costume acts as a visual anchor for the audience, maintaining consistency amidst the frequent character and scene changes performed by the rest of the ensemble. Her look is representative of a conventional Victorian woman, and the use of modest, historically accurate garments helps communicate her status, role, and emotional restraint, which aligns with both her character and the broader themes of the play.

Like Mina, the character of Jonathan remains in a consistent costume throughout the performance, reinforcing his fixed identity in contrast to the other actors who take on multiple roles. His costume consists of black trousers, a white shirt, and a Victorian-style waistcoat, all of which are typical of a 19th-century gentleman. A key detail is the red carnation placed in the buttonhole of his waistcoat–a small but deliberate choice that adds a symbolic flourish to his otherwise simple attire.

The remaining performers form an ensemble cast, with each actor multi-roling throughout the production to portray a wide range of characters from the Dracula narrative. This approach demands both physical versatility and creative costume design to clearly signal character changes to the audience without disrupting the flow of the performance.

For example, the actors playing Lucy's three suitors use identical base costumes, white short and black Victorian skirt, but distinguish each character by adding a top hat with a different coloured ribbon. This use of symbolic costume elements allows for quick and effective transformation between roles. It is a clear visual cue for the audience, helping them identify character changes through small, purposeful design details rather than full costume changes.

Similarly, the actor portraying Lucy adapts her role with minimal yet effective costume pieces. She may don a jacket when in public settings, or switch to a flowing white nightdress in scenes where her illness or supernatural influence is shown. These quick changes rely on costume layering and adaptability, a common technique in ensemble-led productions where speed and clarity are vital.

Lighting Design – Joshie Harriette

Joshie Harriette's lighting design plays a crucial role in establishing atmosphere and supporting the narrative of *Dracula*. Throughout the performance, lighting is used not only to indicate shifts in time and place, but also to remind the audience that what they are watching is a re-enactment of past events, told through the lens of Mina's memory. This idea is reflected in the mix of stylised and naturalistic lighting states, which work together to blur the lines between reality, memory, and theatrical storytelling.

A range of theatrical lighting techniques are employed. Bright spotlights and coloured washes are used in more heightened, performative moments, drawing attention to the artificiality of the 'play within a play'. In contrast, scenes set indoors or in more grounded moments use softer, more naturalistic lighting, creating a sense of r ealism and intimacy.

In keeping with the Gothic horror genre, red lighting features prominently across the production. Regular use of red casts an eerie glow over the stage, symbolising fear, blood, and death. These choices are both atmospheric and symbolic, enhancing tension while visually reinforcing the central themes of the story.

A particularly effective lighting sequence occurs during the scene set aboard a ship on a stormy night. Here, a combination of low-intensity blue lighting helps establish the nighttime setting, while flashing white strobe lights are used to represent lightning. This sudden, high-contrast effect, paired with the darkness and shadow, builds suspense as Dracula attacks the sailors. The use of silhouette and shadow adds to the sense of fear and the unknown, making the scene more dramatic and visually engaging.

There are moments when the lighting is integral for special effects used on stage including floating objects and people.

Harriette's lighting design not only enhances the mood and setting, but also aligns closely with the production's playful yet eerie tone, supporting both the comedic and horror elements of the performance.

Macy Seelochan. Photo: Marc Brenner

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Here are some ideas and resources to support you support your exploration of this production of *Dracula* and gothic texts more generally.

Provocations

Discuss the following questions with your pupils about this production of *Dracula*:

- *Dracula* is an iconic text, why would this production want to reimagine it through the eyes of the female characters Mina and Lucy?
- The character of Dracula is never physically seen in this production, what reason can you think of why the writer made this decision?
- Although *Dracula* is set in the past, what themes and issues explored in the production are relevant to a modern day audience?

Umi Myers. Photo: Marc Brenner

Mina's Monologue

Watch the film and have a go at writing a live theatre review style response to the following question:

- Describe how the performer Umi Myers, Playing the role of Mina, uses vocal and physical theatrical skills to portray a sense of tension.

TIP: remember to use precise details in your response to not only describe the skills used but to also evaluate the effect created.

To make your writing more sophisticated link vocal and physical skills together and describe how they support each other.

LINK

Here is the Monologue from the film clip:

Fear. An emotional response to feelings of threat. Fight or flight. It can be essential in the survival of our species. It is learnt as well as innate. It is the creeping dread as you strain to hear the sound that woke you at night. It is what tells you to stick to the light side of the street. It is what fuels your disgust and keeps you from tasting something unknown to you. It is what keeps you from stepping too far out of line. It is what keeps you in your place. What we are afraid of as individuals can become collective. And the stories we tell of the beasts that threaten us can make a person's anxiety become a people's fixation.

The stories we tell.

Listen carefully. Beware the teller as much as the tale. We are all afraid of such different things and tonight I cannot promise you will be safe.

But at least we aren't alone.

Some exam questions require you to describe how you would use vocal and physical theatrical skills to deliver a specific line or lines of dialogue. For Mina's Monologue below is an example response of how you might use precise details to describe and explain skills you could use to deliver the lines and the effect you would want to create. Having watched the video of the actor delivering these lines, consider different choices you would make.

TIP: The words in pink are example of precise details to describe the skills used and the green words are examples of explanations to justify decisions and explain the effect created for the audience.

To deliver this monologue effectively, I would use a range of vocal and physical skills to convey the sinister and unsettling nature of the text, gradually building tension and drawing the audience into the speaker's psychological and emotional world.

The opening word, "Fear.", is abrupt and isolated. I would deliver it with a short pause before and after, using a low, steady tone and slightly narrowing my eyes, allowing the word to land with weight. This would signal to the audience that fear is not only the theme but almost a character in itself. I would stand still, using stillness as a physical skill to create intensity and focus.

As I deliver the line "An emotional response to feelings of threat…"—I would shift into a more analytical tone, using clear articulation and a slower pace, almost like a lecture or documentary narrator. This would contrast with the more emotional parts that follow. My posture would be upright with my hands loosely clasped in front of me, suggesting control and rationality.

When delivering the line "It is the creeping dread…", I would start to lower my voice, almost whispering, and begin to use more expressive facial tension, such as tightening around the mouth and eyes. I'd tilt my head slightly and allow my body to lean just a little forward, giving the sense that I am drawing the audience into a more intimate and ominous space.

For the lines beginning "It is what tells you to stick to the light side of the street…", I would use repetition vocally to build a rhythmic pattern, slightly increasing the pace and volume with each line to show how fear escalates in the mind. Physically, I would allow my hands to become more active—gesturing subtly to the sides to represent the 'light' and 'dark' side, or lifting a finger on each new example to show the effect of fear.

As I say— "What we are afraid of as individuals can become collective…"—I would shift my gaze outward, looking more directly at the audience, using eye contact as a physical skill to implicate them in the fear being described. My tone here would become more serious, and I'd slow the pace slightly, allowing each idea to sink in. My stance would widen slightly, grounding me and showing the weight of the speaker's warning.

For the short line "The stories we tell.", I would pause heavily before and after, speaking each word slowly with emphasis. I would stand very still again here, using silence and stillness as key skills to create unease.

As I say "Listen carefully. Beware the teller as much as the tale.", I would lean slightly toward the audience, softening my voice to a warning tone, with raised eyebrows and a lowered chin to signal suspicion and threat.

The final lines— "tonight I cannot promise you will be safe. But at least we aren't alone."— would be delivered slowly, with a heavy emotional undercurrent. I would soften my vocal tone, introducing slight tremble or hesitation to suggest uncertainty. I would take a single small step toward the audience on "we aren't alone", suggesting a shared experience or a moment.

Throughout the piece, I would aim to use vocal contrast, especially between rational explanation and emotional warning, alongside controlled, minimal but expressive movement, to keep the audience on edge.

Set Design Concepts

For both GCSE and A-Level drama there is an expectation that you are able to write about your own concept for a set design. If you were going to create a design for this production of *Dracula*, what ideas would you incorporate? Think about the set design used in this production and how yours might be different. Consider different props, materials and use of the space that would also be effective at portraying the action and symbolism on stage.

Below is an example response for a GCSE / A level exam question asking the following: You are a set designer - discuss your ideas for a set design appropriate for this new adaptation of *Dracula*.

My set design would not be fully realistic – instead, it would be symbolic, using broken or unusual pieces of Victorian-style buildings to show both real places and what the characters are feeling inside. I want the audience to see how the women feel stuck, both physically and emotionally.

The stage would be split into three levels, each representing a different part of the female experience:

- ***Top level:*** *This would show the upper-class, proper world (like living rooms and parlours), where women are expected to behave and follow strict rules.*
- ***Middle level:*** *This would show everyday Victorian life, where the characters act normal but are hiding what they truly feel.*
- ***Bottom level:*** *(trapdoor / understage): This represents things that are hidden – fears, desires, sexuality, and Dracula's supernatural world.*

There would be spiral staircases connecting the levels to create a sense of tight spaces and show how hard it is to escape this world.

To reflect the Victorian time but also the darker, emotional side of the story, I would use:

- *Dark wood, heavy curtains, and soft gaslight-style lighting for a classic Victorian look.*
- *A colour scheme of grey, black, and purple to show sadness, control, and fear.*
- *Deep red would be used in important scenes (like when Lucy changes or Dracula appears), to show blood, danger, and passion.*

My set design would contain the following Set Pieces:

1. Four-poster bed (Stage Right)

- *Used when Lucy is sick or transforming.*
- *Shows female weakness and how their bodies are controlled.*
- *Curtains can move in the wind to show Dracula's unseen power or fear.*

2. Writing desk (Stage Left)

- *Used by Mina when she writes in her journal.*
- *Shows her intelligence and strength.*

3. Gothic doorway (Upstage Centre)

- *Leads to Dracula's castle or crypt.*
- *Stands for death, mystery, or change.*
- *Backlighting would create scary shadows to build tension.*

4. Curtains and hidden walls

- *Velvet curtains would hide parts of the set, showing how women's real feelings are kept secret.*
- *When something shocking happens, curtains could be ripped away to show stone walls or iron bars – symbols of being trapped.*

This design puts the focus on the female characters and how they are affected by the world around them. The gothic and non-realistic style helps show that Dracula isn't just a horror story – it's also about how women try to find freedom in a world that controls them. The set would help the audience see the contrast between how things look on the outside and what's really happening underneath.

Exam Mark Scheme Links:

- Interpretation and artistic intention: Clear concept rooted in female perspective.
- Understanding of the play and style: Maintains Victorian setting with symbolic / expressionist approach.
- Justification of design choices: Linked to character emotion, symbolism, and audience impact.
- Creative and practical understanding: Effective use of space, levels, materials, lighting, and transitions

B Terry. Photo: Marc Brenner

Physical Theatre Exploration

Here are some ideas about how you might use physical theatre to explore the gothic themes of creatures and Vampires inspired by the Dracula story.

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GOTHIC PHYSICAL THEATRE WORKSHOP: "CREATURES & VAMPIRES"

1. Creature Awakening (Solo & Ensemble Physicality)

Focus: Awakening the Gothic "other" – body control, tension, grotesque movement.

Instructions:

- One student is a vampire resisting the urge to feed.
- The others become moving "temptations" in slow motion (blood pulses, heartbeats, hands reaching).
- The vampire moves through, tempted but holding back – use tension and sharp retractions.

Progression:

- Introduce moments where the vampire gives in – use canon or ripple effects in group movement.
- Switch roles.

Gothic Themes: Hunger, temptation, morality vs. monstrosity.

2. The Vampire's Lair (Atmosphere & Levels)

Focus: Creating Gothic space through the body – architecture, tension, stillness.

Instructions:

- In small groups, create a living Gothic setting: a castle hall, crypt, or forest.
- Each student becomes part of the structure–pillars, chandeliers, arches, mist, bats.
- One "vampire" moves through the lair–physical response from the environment changes with their presence.

Progression:

- Add rhythmic breath, sound, or pulsing.
- Try in silence vs. with a soundscape.

Gothic Themes: Power, fear, suspense, isolation,

Umi Myers. Photo: Marc Brenner

3. Bloodlust (Impulse & Restraint)

Focus: Exploring temptation, inner conflict, and predator/prey relationships.

Instructions:

- One student is a vampire resisting the urge to feed.
- The others become moving "temptations" in slow motion (blood pulses, heartbeats, hands reaching).
- The vampire moves through, tempted but holding back – use tension and sharp retractions.

Progression:

- Introduce moments where the vampire gives in – use canon or ripple effects in group movement.
- Switch roles.

Gothic Themes: Hunger, temptation, morality vs. monstrosity.

4. Monster Duologues (Partner Physical Devising)

Focus: Physical storytelling between human and monster (e.g. Frankenstein & Creature).

Instructions:

- In pairs, one plays the creator/human, the other the creature/vampire.
- No words allowed – explore a one-minute scene of confrontation, abandonment, or recognition using only physical gestures, distance, and eye contact.

Progression:

- Layer with music or heartbeat sound.
- Build to a repeated gesture or shared movement pattern that reflects emotional shifts.

Gothic Themes: Creation and rejection, loneliness, fear of the "other."

Phoebe Naughton. Photo: Marc Brenner

5. Fog and Shadows (Ensemble Control & Gothic Setting)

Focus: Ensemble movement, atmosphere creation, and concealment / reveal.

Instructions:

- One student is the protagonist walking through a foggy moor, crypt, or ruined castle.
- The rest form a shifting fog—flowing slowly around them, freezing, hiding things, whispering.
- Introduce moments where fog turns into creatures or reveals glimpses of danger.

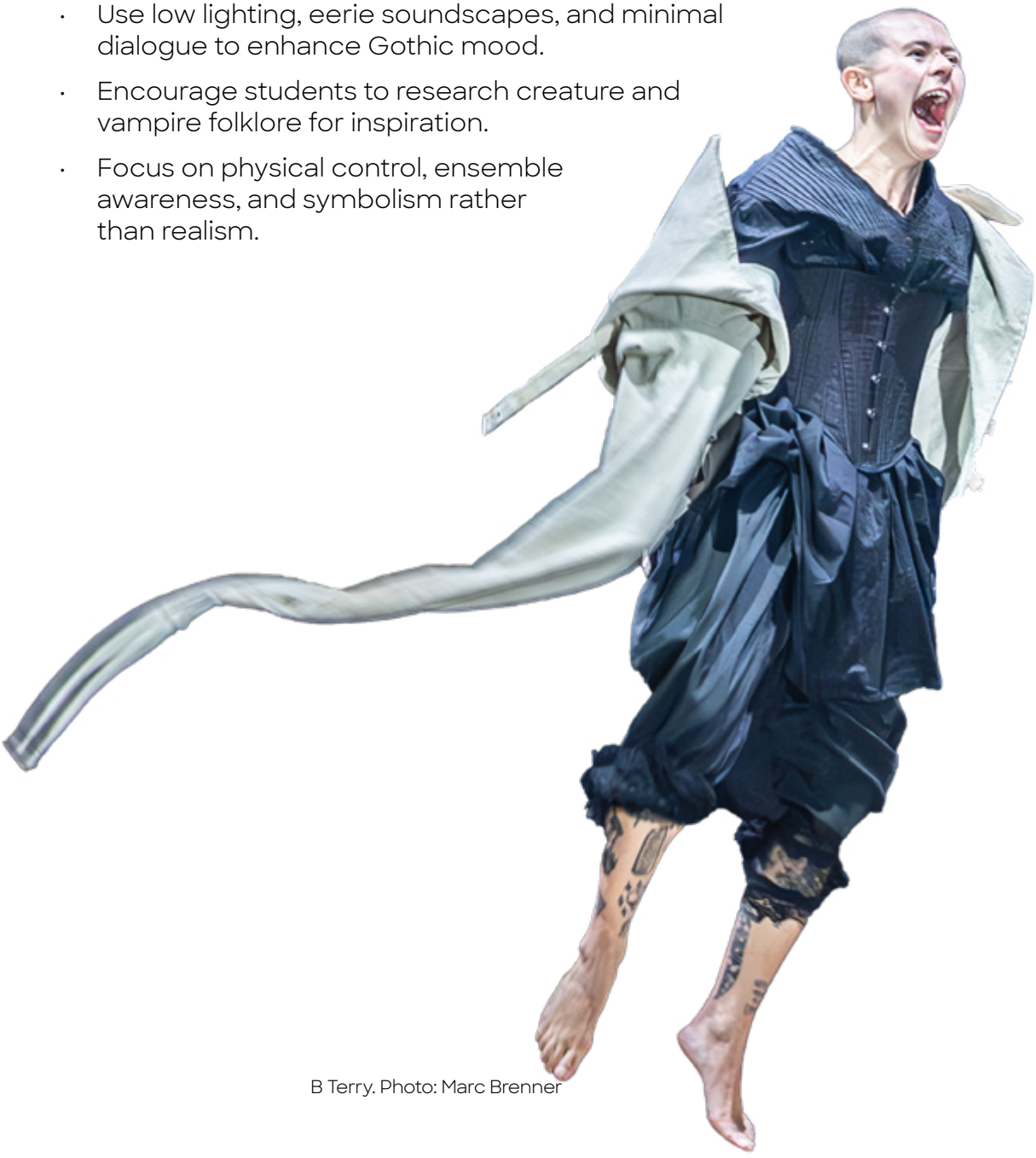
Progression:

- Use lighting (e.g., torchlight or spot focus) to emphasize concealment and shadow.
- Create a full group performance piece with this concept.

Gothic Themes: Isolation, the unknown, terror, illusion vs. reality.

Tips for Delivery:

- Use low lighting, eerie soundscapes, and minimal dialogue to enhance Gothic mood.
- Encourage students to research creature and vampire folklore for inspiration.
- Focus on physical control, ensemble awareness, and symbolism rather than realism.



B Terry. Photo: Marc Brenner

ACTIVITY ONE (15 MINS) – CREATURE AWAKENING

Focus: Controlled, slow movement; awakening the monstrous self

- Students lie on floor as dormant creatures
- "Awaken" body part by body part (elbow, knee, shoulder, etc.)
- Develop a creature-specific movement sequence (solo work)
- Explore group mirroring: pair or trio "creature duets"

Gothic Links: Monstrosity, transformation, unnatural movement

ACTIVITY TWO (15 MINS) – THE VAMPIRE'S LAIR (ENSEMBLE SETTING)

Focus: Using the body to create setting and mood

- Small groups create a living vampire lair (crypt, castle, cave)
- Use shape, breath, low levels, stillness
- One "vampire" enters – the lair physically reacts (shudders, recoils, leans in)

Extension: Add whispers or heartbeat rhythms

Gothic Links: Atmosphere, power, fear of the unknown

ACTIVITY THREE (15 MINS) – BLOODLUST: PREDATOR & PREY

Focus: Tension, impulse control, emotional restraint

- One vampire, surrounded by "temptations" (moving heartbeats, pulses, exposed necks)
- Vampire is drawn in but resists – play with tension and recoil
- Build to a physical outburst (sudden strike or collapse)

Gothic Links: Temptation, morality vs. monstrosity, desire

ACTIVITY FOUR (20 MINS) – MONSTER DUOLOGUES

Focus: Physical storytelling, relationship building

- In pairs: Creature and Creator / Vampire and Victim / Master and Servant
- Devise a short, non-verbal scene exploring:
  - Abandonment
  - Confrontation
  - Recognition
  - Use space, contact, gesture, and rhythm

Share a few duologues to class with peer feedback

Gothic Links: Isolation, broken relationships, empathy for monsters

PLENARY (10 MINS) – FOG AND SHADOWS ENSEMBLE PIECE

Focus: Ensemble movement, mood, slow tension

- One student walks through "fog" (the ensemble)
- Fog becomes whispering shadows, then part-creature
- Use repetition and canon to build suspense
- Freeze in final Gothic tableau

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Informal assessment through observation
- Peer feedback on movement, creativity, and control
- Optional: Students journal three Gothic physical ideas they explored

Extension / Homework

- Research a real or fictional Gothic creature or vampire legend
- Bring an image to inspire a physical theatre creature for next lesson

Traces of Medical Misogyny within Stoker's Dracula

Samantha Miles, PhD researcher in contemporary gothic playwriting.

The below article is a usful resource to learn more about the social and historical context of *Dracula*. It can also be used as stimulus for devising drama.

The late nineteenth-century saw the introduction of a new feminist ideal into Victorian society that championed independence among women, with many fearing this to be a radical threat to the male-dominated social order of the era. This movement, labelled the New Woman, is often considered to have been represented by Bram Stoker as a form of corruption in his 1897 novel *Dracula*, particularly through the demonisation of Lucy's sexually independent character. Whilst there are counterarguments to be made against this interpretation of Stoker's political opinions, such as his dimensional characterisation of the progressive Mina, there are certain elements of the novel that are difficult to separate from the patriarchal society from which it developed.

One of the key narrative threads of Stoker's novel is the medicalisation of vampirism, particularly evident in Chapter 13 when Professor Van Helsing declares to Dr Seward that he wants to "operate" on Lucy's body. In order to carry out the staking and beheading of Lucy's body in Chapter 16, Van Helsing brings with him a bag of tools similar to those that would have been used during medical procedures of the era by Stoker's own family. Three of Stoker's brothers were accomplished doctors, with the eldest being a particularly renowned physician who was known to have carried out numerous gynaecological operations. Whilst many of these operations were medically credible, a number of them were carried out unnecessarily in an attempt to cure women of 'hysteria'; a fictionalised

Mei Mac. Photo: Marc Brenner

illness constructed out of the patriarchal belief that women were emotionally weak and susceptible to mental breakdowns on account of their reproductive organs. Even after these particular gynaecological operations had been discredited within the medical field, Stoker's eldest brother continued to perform them and defended the supposed benefits of them. There is evidence within Stoker's own notes, taken during his writing of *Dracula*, that he consulted with his brother on the medical language and procedures carried out within the novel and, although there is no direct mention of these particular surgeries, Lucy's vampiric symptoms closely reflect those of a woman suffering from hysteria. Her proposed mutilation at the hands of Van Helsing, subsequently performed using tools resembling Victorian gynaecological instruments, is perhaps then reminiscent of Stoker's own brother performing a discredited operation in order to cure a woman of an imaginary illness. It's worth noting that hysteria was not removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders until the 1980's, and the medical misogyny that thrived during the Victorian era continues to affect our society today.

The history of medicine, like that of the vampire, is a rapidly evolving tale historically constructed by men, often at the expense of women and minority groups. However, recent years have seen women attempting to reclaim the story of the vampire as one of female agency and empowerment, regardless of the misogynistic themes that often accompany it.

Liz Lochhead's 1985 stage adaptation of *Dracula* portrays Mina and Lucy as instigators of the narrative, willingly choosing to invite the vampire's transformative bite into their lives. In 2023, Morna Pearson adapted the novel to bring an all-women and non-binary cast to the stage in *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning*, presenting the vampire as a tempting promise of patriarchal liberation. As our social and political landscapes change, contemporary audiences are receiving both Stoker's original novel and its subsequent adaptations in ways that develop beyond the ideologies of the Victorian era. This evolving dialogue between *Dracula* and its many audiences will continue to be immortalised through Morgan Lloyd Malcolm's newest interpretation of the vampire myth, handing control of the stage and the narrative over to Mina herself.

Umi Myers and Jack Myers. Photo: Marc Brenner

GCSE English Literature Set Texts that link to gothic / horror genre

As part of the English Literature GCSE there are some set texts that would be excellent to explore from a gothic horror perspective in drama – here are some from the different exam boards available:

AQA EXAM BOARD

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (optional)
Gothic / Horror Elements
Science vs. nature, isolation, monstrosity

Macbeth by William Shakespeare
Gothic / Horror Elements Supernatural (witches, ghosts), ambition, madness

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by R.L. Stevenson
Gothic / Horror Elements
Transformation, duality, repressed desires, foggy London

OCR EXAM BOARD

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (optional)
Gothic / Horror Elements Gothic monster, isolation, crime

Jekyll and Hyde by R.L. Stevenson (19th Century Prose)
Gothic / Horror Elements Duality, Victorian Gothic conventions

Macbeth by William Shakespeare
Gothic / Horror Elements Supernatural (witches, ghosts), ambition, madness

The Woman in Black by Susan Hill (Drama)
Gothic / Horror Elements Haunting, grief, ghostly revenge

EDEXCEL (PEARSON) EXAM BOARD

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (optional in Edexcel IGCSE)
Gothic / Horror Elements Gothic monster, isolation, crime

Jekyll and Hyde by R.L. Stevenson
Gothic / Horror Elements Identity, scientific horror, internal conflict

Macbeth by William Shakespeare
Gothic / Horror Elements Supernatural (witches, ghosts), ambition, madness

EDUQAS (WJEC) EXAM BOARD

Jekyll and Hyde by R.L. Stevenson
Gothic / Horror Elements Identity, scientific horror, internal conflict

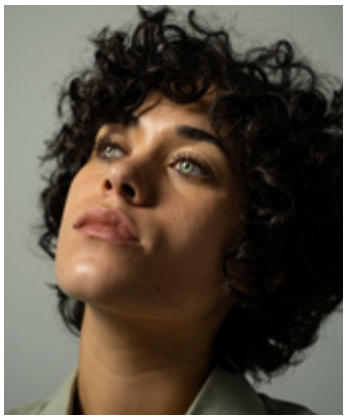
Macbeth by William Shakespeare
Gothic / Horror Elements Supernatural (witches, ghosts), ambition, madness

The Woman in Black by Susan Hill (Literature Component B)
Gothic / Horror Elements Haunting, grief, ghostly revenge

Cast

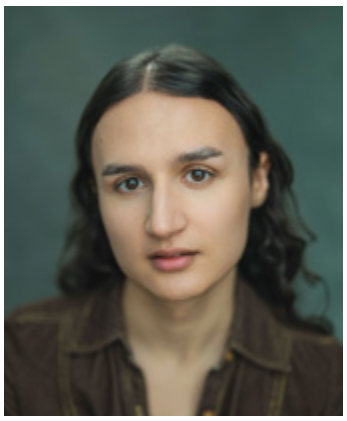
Lucy
Mei Mac (she / her)

Jonathan
Jack Myers (he / him)

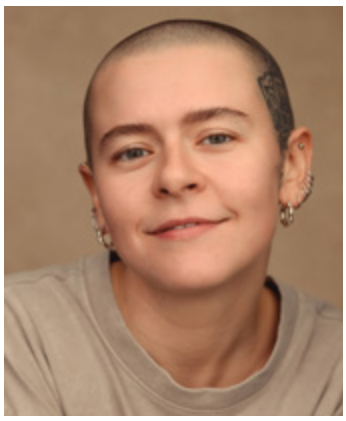


Mina
Umi Myers (she / her)

Van Helsing / Ensemble
Phoebe Naughton
(she / her)



Elsie / Ensemble
Macy Seelochan
(she / her)



Renfield / Ensemble
B Terry (they / them)

Creative Team

Written by
Morgan Lloyd Malcolm

Directed by
Emma Baggott

Set & Costume Design by
Grace Smart

Lighting Design by
Joshie Harriette

Sound Design & Composition by
Adam Cork

Movement Direction by
Chi-San Howard

Illusion Design by
John Bulleid & Gareth Kalyan

Fight & Intimacy Direction by
Bethan Clark

Voice Coaching by
Annemette Verspeak

Assistant Director
Gráinne Flynn

Assistant Movement Director
Ana Diego Iversen

Academic Consultant
Dr Sorcha Ní Fhlainn

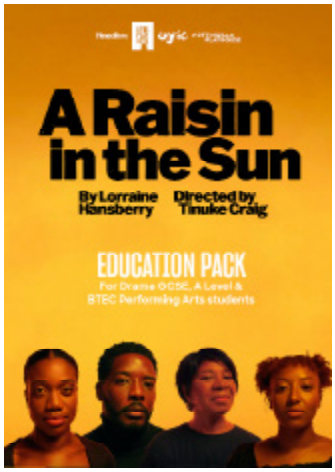
This education resource was produced by Natalie Jim, Education Producer, Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and designed by Hannah Yates.

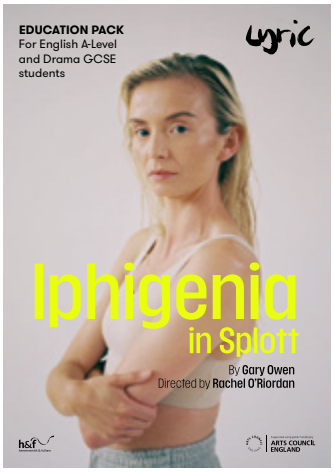
ABOUT THE LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre produces bold and relevant world-class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith, the theatre's home for more than 130 years. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Rachel O'Riordan and Executive Director Amy Belson, it is committed to being vital to, and representative of, the local community. A major force in London and UK theatre, the Lyric produces adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work that tells the stories that matter.

For more information on our education work and to download, other teaching resources please visit **lyric.co.uk/young-lyric/education**

Take a look at some of our previous Education Packs:





h&f hammersmith & fulham

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