

This lesson plan is the first in a series that makes up a unit on understanding and creating verbatim theatre. The unit will support you to introduce the concept of verbatim theatre, its origins, and how it links to your learners' devising knowledge. It will enable your learners to create and evaluate their own piece of verbatim theatre.

Lesson 1 will support you to introduce verbatim theatre both academically and through practical exploration. Your learners will define the concept by watching and reporting back on experts in the field. They will start observing and listening to others in order to replicate actions and speech. The optional timeline activity gives more depth to the history and evolution of verbatim theatre and looks further at the reasons people choose to work in this way.

### Curriculum for Excellence Links

Experiences and Outcomes	Benchmarks
I can create, develop and sustain a realistic or stylised character through the use of voice, movement and language. <b>EXA 3-12a</b>	Uses appropriate expression and movement to enhance characterisation, for example, facial expression, body language, eye contact, use of space, use of levels, gesture, posture.
In response to a variety of stimuli, I can use my understanding of characterisation to create characters using different approaches, making use of voice, movement and language. I can present my work to an audience. <b>EXA 4-13a</b>	Creates dramas for different purposes and audiences, experimenting with different genres, forms, structures and styles.
As I listen or watch, I can: identify and give an accurate account of the purpose and main concerns of the text, and can make inferences from key statements; identify and discuss similarities and differences between different types of text; use this information for different purposes. <b>LIT 3-04a</b>	Identifies and gives an accurate account of the purpose and main ideas of spoken texts, with appropriate justification.

LGBT Inclusive Education Learning Themes
Understanding the Equality Act (2010), UNCRC and Human Rights
Celebrating diversity and difference

Equality Act Characteristics Covered
Sexual Orientation

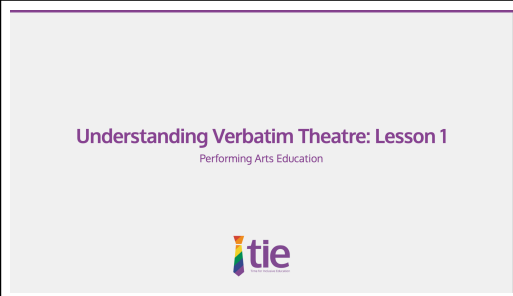



Learning Intentions
• I am learning about the concept of verbatim theatre.
• I am developing an understanding of how to accurately represent someone's actions and emotions.

Success Criteria
• I can define what is meant by verbatim theatre.
• I can give examples of elements that would be included in verbatim theatre productions.
• I can begin to understand the reasons directors choose to work with verbatim theatre.
• I can show people's actions and emotions through replication in a basic way.

## Resources accompanying this lesson

"Understanding Verbatim Theatre: Lesson 1" PowerPoint slides.

### Lesson Plan

Powerpoint Slide	Teaching Notes
<b>Pre-lesson homework</b>	Before starting this work, share with your class that you'll soon be teaching them about different ways that you can devise theatre. Set a homework task for your learners to come in with ideas of all the different ways they have already tried to create scenes and characters. This can be written up or recorded in any manner which suits your teaching and learning and they should be prepared to share this information with the rest of the class.
	Title page - introducing the topic.
<p><b>Learning Intentions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am learning about the concept of verbatim theatre.</li><li>• I am developing an understanding of how to accurately represent someone's actions and emotions.</li></ul> <p><b>Success Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can define what is meant by verbatim theatre.</li><li>• I can give examples of elements that would be included in verbatim theatre productions.</li><li>• I can state a reason directors choose to work with verbatim theatre.</li><li>• I can show people's actions and emotions through replication in a basic way.</li></ul> 	Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for Lesson 1.
<p><b>What is Verbatim Theatre?</b></p> <hr/> <p><small>In this section, we will explore the definition and origins of verbatim theatre.</small></p>	<p>Introduce Section 1:</p> <p>Ask for the ideas the learners have brought with them in the homework task and talk through all the ways you have created theatre with your learners in class, including scene work and characterisation.</p> <p>Introduce verbatim theatre as another way to create theatre and explain that you will be looking at the definition and the origins of this type of theatre, and starting to explore what that means practically for the director and the actor.</p>
<p><b>Verbatim Theatre: Definition</b></p> <hr/>  <p><small>"Verbatim theatre is a play constructed with words that were actually spoken by real people, rather than created via the imagination of a playwright or devised by theatre makers."</small></p> <p><small>Belfield, 2018</small></p> 	<p>Cover the definition in this slide with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style.</p> <p>Robin Belfield offers this simplistic definition for verbatim theatre in his book 'Telling the Truth: How to Make Verbatim Theatre'.</p> <p>You could use this quotation in several ways to engage your learners in discussions around his definition. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you think are the pros/cons of using real peoples' words?</li><li>• How would working in this way impact on playwrights?</li><li>• Do you think that this way of working involves less imagination?</li><li>• How do you think you gather the information needed to create a piece of verbatim theatre?</li></ul>

#### Verbatim Theatre: Definition

Verbatim theatre is a type of documentary theatre because it requires us to record and document people's words and actions accurately.

Verbatim theatre is intrinsically political as the topics explored usually concern injustices within society or aspects of life that the playwright believes require social comment.

Verbatim theatre helps us to understand the world around us, makes us question the events displayed to us, and challenges our thinking.



Cover the information in this slide with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style.

The three points displayed contain facts found in the literature surrounding verbatim theatre. They are included so the learners are introduced to these elements of the form: documentary, political/social commentary, and questioning/challenging thinking.

**Documentary:** You can assess your learners' prior knowledge of documentary drama and what it means to document words and actions. Pay particular attention to the word **accurately** here, as your learners need to be aware of ethics when creating verbatim work. Ethics are covered more fully in Lesson 3.

**Political/Social Commentary:** You could discuss what injustices they see around them in their lives. Lesson 2 looks at 'The Laramie Project' and the impact of homophobia on a community. You could discuss the use of language in schools to see if the learners have an understanding of the impact that prejudice-based language has on their school community. You could look at your school bullying policy to see what it says about prejudice-based language or you could refer to [respectme](#). Note the playwright is mentioned here. Earlier we asked a question about the impact of this work on playwrights - so this is a chance to discuss the role of the playwright in gathering and organising the material required for a successful verbatim play.

**Questioning/Challenging Thinking:** Ask your learners what they understand from this statement. This may give you an opportunity to find out what kind of learning has already made them question their thinking. You may also gather useful cross-curricular links and subjects that your learners may want to gather information from when creating their verbatim performance.



This is quite a challenging topic for the learners so you may find it useful to break up discussion work with practical tasks to ensure the learners are kept engaged and excited about the work.

The observation exercises below are examples, you can use any observation work you usually would. You can also move this slide to any point in the lesson where you would naturally include practical tasks.

### Observe the walk

This extension of the basic walk the grid exercise (walk in right angles at different speeds without bumping into anyone - this encourages collaboration, eye contact, and co-ordination) allows your learners to safely and confidently copy a person of their choice in the room without feeling embarrassed or isolated as they are all taking part in the activity at once. When they start their grid walk; they pick a classmate, observe their walk, body language, and gestures and imitate accurately. You can include speeds too so that the learners start to adapt to the changing motion of the person they are copying. This becomes fun when all learners have copied one another and everyone starts to look the same!

### Become your classmate

The learner works with a partner, who they sit next to. After a minute of observing how their partner is sitting and their body language, they try to become them. The partner should then try to move slowly. Using their peripheral vision, the observing partner should try to maintain accuracy in their portrayal of their classmate.

When the learners have practised this exercise, team them up with another pair so that they have observers who can tell them how accurate they were and what they need to work on to give an accurate representation of each other.

### Word for Word

Working in threes, this time learners are listening to the words, vocal patterns, and rhythms of their partners. One learner will begin to tell a story from their life - depending on the maturity of your class, this could be something trivial, it could be a story from yesterday or a class, or it could be something of importance. The other learners have to listen carefully not just to the story but to the way it is told: listening for changes in tone, pitch, and even hesitations. Once the story is told, the second learner's job is to retell it in exactly the same way. The third learner can write down notes on how they did and give feedback on their imitation.

When the learners get really good at this they can add in observations and imitations of body language as well.

On the next slide you'll see a video which features verbatim theatre practitioners explaining how they work. Watch the video and take notes.



Set the learners up for note taking in whichever manner suits your learning and teaching style.

They are going to watch a video which explains verbatim theatre practice.



This is a web video from the National Theatre Collection via YouTube, so will require internet to play. It is set to pre-load when your device is connected to the internet and will start with one click of a mouse or clicker.

Please note: subtitles can be activated on the YouTube video by selecting the 'Subtitles/closed captions' setting.



### Verbatim Theatre: Introduction Video

Discuss your notes. Is there anything from your discussions you would like to add to the word cloud below?

mixed-drama real-material evidence-based  
interviews natural-dialogue directors  
audio-delivery subject static interesting-ways  
event common  
dance portraying-people ethical-risk  
accurate court-trials messy playwrights  
being-human music  
exact-words quick-creation  
immediate anonymise political



Cover the information sharing and discussion in these slides with learners in whichever manner suits your teaching style. You are checking for understanding.

Here are some points from the video your learners may want to discuss. This list is not exhaustive.

Things we have learned about verbatim theatre:

- It is evidence based
- It includes interviews with people about an event or a subject
- It creates dialogue that is natural and messy
- There are different forms of verbatim: audio delivery, edited but exact words, mixed drama with verbatim words, etc
- It is immediate and quick to create as the material is real, right in front of you
- It engages the audience in social or political issues
- Verbatim plays about court trials are common
- Often plays are about what it is to be human; what is necessary suffering, what isn't
- People will talk to playwrights rather than journalists because playwrights can anonymise the characters

Things we need to be aware of when creating verbatim theatre:

- Be accurate with portraying people
- There are some ethical risks involved
- Can be static so directors need to bring it to life in interesting ways often through music and dance
- Far from simply staging the truth, it poses difficult questions about what truth really is and whether theatre can ever faithfully present reality

### Verbatim Theatre: Origins

Verbatim theatre has developed over almost 100 years. The timeline on the following slide introduces you to key practitioners.

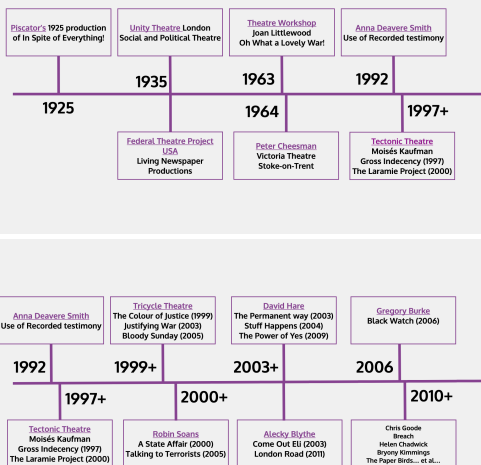




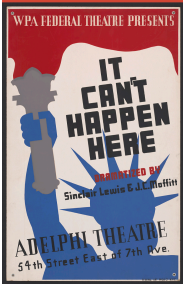
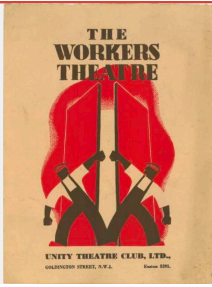
This is an optional timeline activity. It takes your learners through some of the history of verbatim theatre techniques.

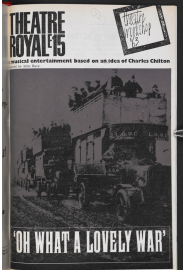

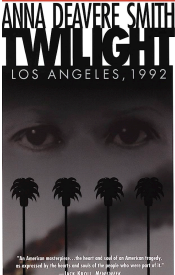
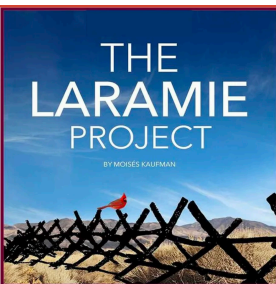
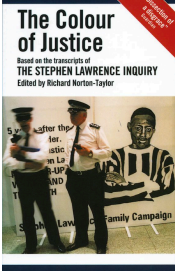
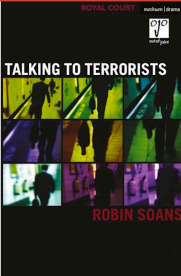
The productions/practitioners pop up one at a time with the click of a mouse or clicker.

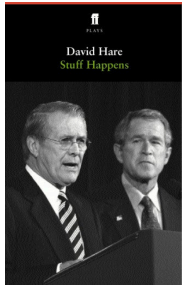
Every box has a link to a separate page that tells you more about the production/practitioner in case there are any of these you would like to cover in more detail with your learners. There are suggested links for you to refer to in the slides below for each production/practitioner. You may wish to check these in advance to enhance your understanding, although you may already be familiar with some of the productions and practitioners.

The timeline itself is enough to satisfy the criteria for Third/Fourth Level classes but if you are exploring verbatim theatre with an older age group you may want to look at several productions/practitioners or set a research homework activity about the history of verbatim theatre for learners to explore on their own. The timeline will give your learners an overview of the evolution of verbatim practice.



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<p><b>INFORMATION FOR PRODUCTION/ PRACTITIONER SLIDES</b></p>	<p>There are several excellent resources available to you when exploring verbatim theatre, and the productions and practitioners below. The following books and articles are useful for all below. Specific links are inserted opposite title slides.</p> <p>Books:</p> <p>Belfield, R. (2018). <a href="#">Telling the Truth: How to Make Verbatim Theatre</a>, Nick Hern.</p> <p>Hammond, W. &amp; Steward, D. (2012). <a href="#">Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre</a>, Bloomsbury.</p> <p>Articles:</p> <p>Love, C. (2018). <a href="#">A Concise Introduction to Verbatim Theatre</a>, Digital Theatre Plus.</p> <p>Paget, D. (1987). <a href="#">‘Verbatim Theatre’: Oral History and Documentary Techniques</a>, Cambridge University Press.</p>
<p><b>Timeline Activity: Further Information on Productions and Practitioners Slides</b></p>	
<p><b>Piscator</b></p> <p>Verbatim political documents News reports Direct quotations from public figures Multimedia The living newspaper</p>  <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">The Influence of Piscator</a></p> <p><a href="#">Piscator: Multimedia Pioneer</a></p>
 <p><b>Federal Theatre Project USA</b></p> <p>The living newspaper Documentary theatre Highly political Propaganda</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">The Federal Theatre Project Collection</a></p> <p><a href="#">The Show Must Go On! - Exhibition</a></p>
<p><b>Unity Theatre London</b></p> <p>Social and political theatre Dramatic realism used to educate Working class life represented Highly political The living newspaper</p>  <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">The Unity Theatre Trust</a></p> <p><a href="#">Working Class Movement Library</a></p>

 <p><b>Theatre Workshop - Oh What a Lovely War!</b></p> <p>Joan Littlewood</p> <p>Documentary theatre</p> <p>Collaborative, experimental, politically engaged</p> <p>AgitProp</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Introduction to Joan Littlewood's Theatre Practice</a></p> <p><a href="#">Film - A tribute to Joan Littlewood</a></p>
<p><b>Peter Cheeseman</b></p> <p>Recorded testimony</p> <p>Political campaigning on stage</p> <p>Staging the lives of local people</p> <p>Woven with songs</p> <p>Working class theatre</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Victoria Theatre Diamond Jubilee - Plays</a></p> <p><a href="#">Peter Cheeseman</a></p>
 <p><b>Anna Deavere Smith</b></p> <p>Recorded testimony</p> <p>Multiple viewpoints through one performer</p> <p>Recreated idiosyncratic speech patterns of interviewees</p> <p>Social commentary on racial tension and inequality</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Twilight Revival</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fires in the Mirror Part 1</a> (All 6 parts are available to watch)</p>
<p><b>Tectonic Theatre</b></p> <p>Moisés Kaufman</p> <p>Multiple interviewees compiled into multiple perspective artwork</p> <p>Landmark in verbatim form</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Tectonic Theatre Project</a></p> <p><a href="#">Moment Work</a></p>
 <p><b>Tricycle Theatre</b></p> <p>Nicolas Kent</p> <p>Tribunal plays</p> <p>Collaboration with journalist</p> <p>Highlighting high profile court cases and public enquiries</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p>	<p><a href="#">The Colour of Justice - Independent Review</a></p> <p><a href="#">Nicolas Kent</a></p>
<p><b>Robin Soans</b></p> <p>Uses verbatim interview material combined with fictionalised reconstructions</p> <p>Political subject matter</p> <p>Searching for a balanced view of a subject by counterpointing different experiences</p> <p><a href="#">Back</a></p> 	<p><a href="#">Talking to Terrorists Review</a></p> <p>Robin Soans is highlighted in <a href="#">Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre</a></p>



### David Hare

Uses verbatim interview material combined with fictionalised reconstructions

Political subject matter and metaphor

Investigating the way the state is run through theatre

Meticulous research

[Back](#)

[Mere Fact, Mere Fiction - Lecture](#)

[David Hare on Stuff Happens](#) - video

**Alecky Blythe**

Recorded delivery methodology

Reconstructed scenes using knowledge from interviews

Musical score composed from patterns and rhythms of speakers

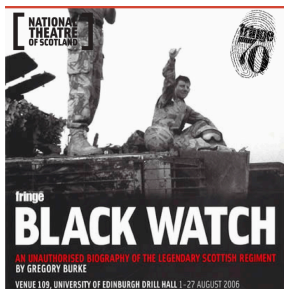
Highly political

[Back](#)



[Playwright Series- Alecky Blythe](#) - video

[Alecky Blythe talks to Simon Stephens](#)



### Gregory Burke

Interviews with former soldiers

Verbatim text

Traditional music

Physical Theatre

Political discourse and social commentary

[Back](#)

[Black Watch - A Cultural Landmark](#)