

6. Planning work around 'The Angry Roads'

- 6a. Thinking about the site – CPD activity
- 6b. Observing young people's responses and creating 'thinking spaces' – CPD activity
- 6c. Considering the centre – *Planning for English and Drama*
- 6d. Silence, lies and having a voice. *Planning for PSHE, Citizenship, RE and beyond*
- ...
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6a. Thinking about the site – CPD activity

- Big Brum Secondary Teachers' Group

The following activity has been created with the Big Brum Secondary Teachers' Group, including PGCE students at Birmingham City University.¹

It has been designed to create 'thinking space' for you as teachers to engage with some of the core ideas at the centre of the play and programme ... and the challenges they pose for you as teachers.

It is our experience that taking even a little professional time out to think about the challenges posed by the Company and its work, makes a significant and qualitative difference to what can be achieved – including the outcomes for young people.

In particular, we have found that using the programme as *an opportunity to systematically observe young people's responses* makes a world of difference to what can happen afterwards. We develop this theme further in this section, along with the idea of creating 'thinking space.'

This initial activity makes use of the publicity image for 'The Angry Roads' as a starting point for professional reflection. It could be carried out during a staff, faculty, pastoral or departmental meeting of about 45 minutes, in advance of seeing the script, the play and the programme.

Using the publicity image, we looked at how we might use this to approach the text – even though we did not yet know it.

We worked in groups to think of ways of using the image with young people, in order to stimulate their imaginations.

Discussion point: *How can we use the image to stimulate young people's imaginations, in a way which does not close down possibilities, and/or prove too 'leading'?*

¹ With particular thanks to Chris Bolton, who hosted this session at Birmingham City University, along with members of the Company.

Here are a few of the ideas that we came up with. You could take the headings and come up with your own ideas. Alternatively, you could try some of them out with colleagues, or adapt them for pre-programme work with young people.

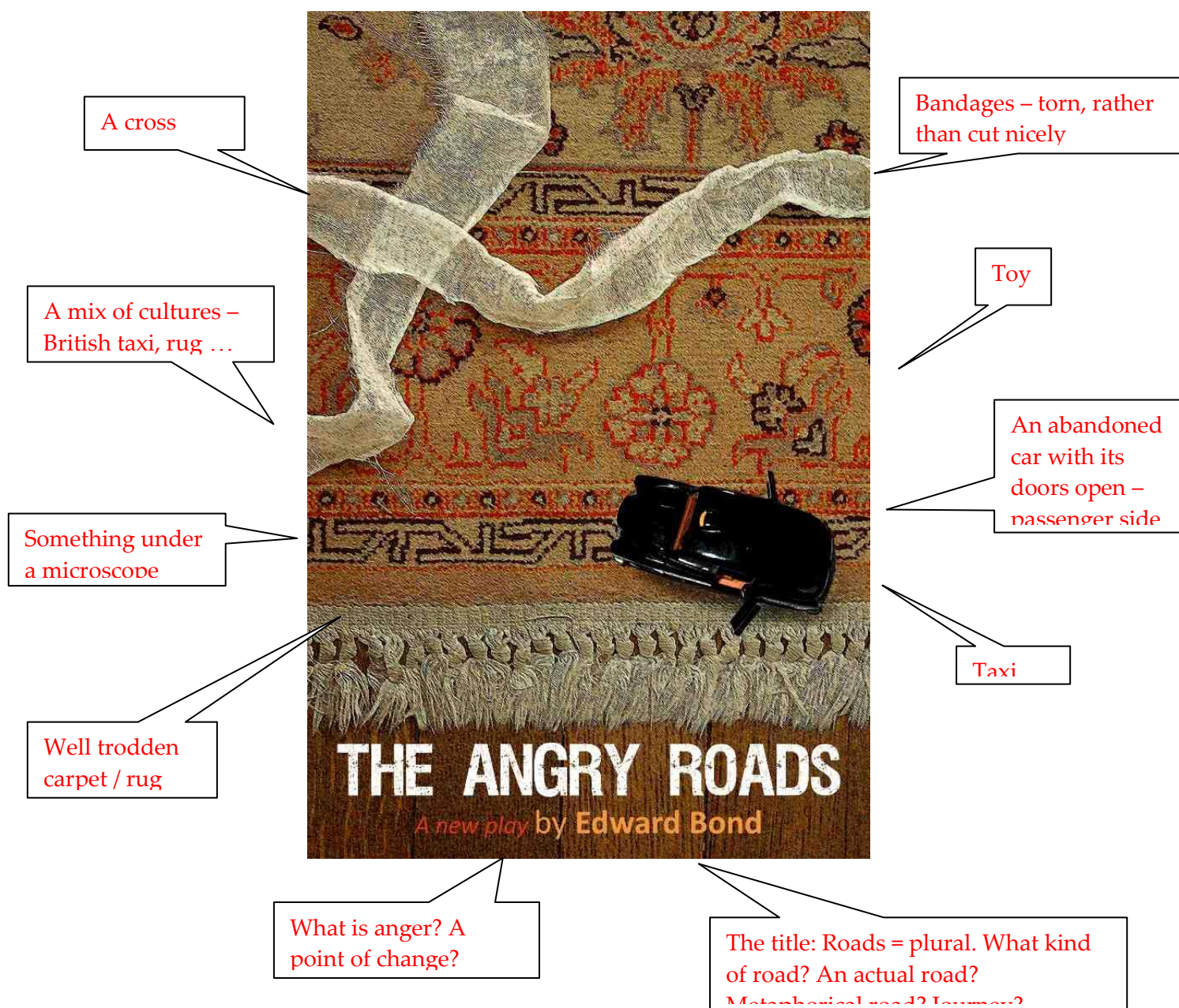
The title. Looking at the title of 'The Angry Roads,' what does this suggest? What kinds of roads might we be taking about? Why might they be 'angry'?

The objects/images. What do you see? What do you want to know? Can you re-create the image – using objects and/or your own selves? Working in three groups, with one physical object each (taxi, rug, bandage), think about how the objects got to be where they are? Think about the textures and colours. Why, for example, is the bandage/voile ripped? Create an improvisation based on your ideas. When you do this, concentrate on abstract movements, and try to keep dialogue to a minimum. How can the objects be manipulated, individually and with each other, to create different meanings? Who might own the object?

Hidden meanings. What's hidden or covered up by the bandages?

The site. What time period, culture or place do the images suggest? Why toys? Why is the image deserted? An empty room?

Extend the image beyond its frame – what is going on around it?



Example: Reactions and responses. What can we see?
Responses from the Big Brum Secondary Teachers' Group

The opening to the play. Exploratory CPD activity.

The activity needs a further 45 to 60 minutes in a space such as a school hall, gym or drama studio. It allows you to go into much greater depth in terms of thinking about drama, site and imagination.

We read through the text of the first couple of pages of 'The Angry Roads'. We took it up to the father's first rap on the table (page 4). The text at this stage includes a great deal of material giving descriptions of the set, as well as actions. There is very little dialogue.

In four groups, we used masking tape, sheets of paper and pens to build the site, creating images and descriptions of specifics as far as we could. A sample of these images can be found on the next page.

The groups built ...

1. The back wall (see Image 1 – the dragon door handle). Teachers suggested that there were “water damaged skirting boards, with missing parts and flaking white paint. There was rectangular patch on the wall, where a picture or a photograph had once hung”.
2. Wall with window (see Images 2,3,4). One teacher said: “The window overlooked a busy street corner, with possibly illegal comings-and-goings at the chip shop on the corner”.
3. Wall with kitchen.
4. Table, chairs, carpet, bags and toys. Teachers suggested that “the floor was made of oak. There were dents in areas where the furniture had been lifted – maybe implying that an additional chair had once been there”.

We thought about the toys that Norman was sorting, and which toy might end up where: kept, disposed-of, uncertain. We drew some of them, trying to be as specific as possible (see Image 5). Why is he making the choices that he does?

One of us enacted some of those moments, including going to the window to check for the Father. We tried out a few permutations of how this might work. How might even small differences suggest significant shifts of meaning?

Image 1 – The dragon doorknob



Image 2 – The window

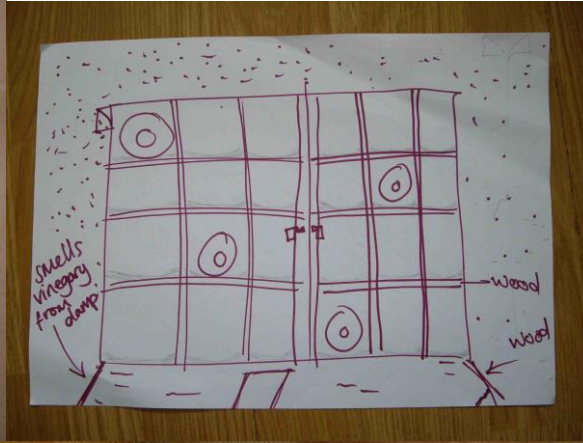


Image 4 –
View from
the



Image 3 –
Window
[detail]

Image 5 –
Norman's
toys



Analysing our responses to the image and/or what we have created in the site

Discuss: *Where do our responses come from?*

How do we deal with anything that may seem awkward or difficult in our responses? (eg humour, deflection, gravity, avoidance, a desire to create a tidy 'moral' or 'message' ...)

- a. As session facilitator, select a 'difficult' moment from the play that you think will be particularly significant in your school, for example the dead pigeon on page 7, or the Father bandaged and howling on page 14.
- b. Collectively brainstorm a range of possible reactions that young people might have.
- c. Discuss: *how would we support young people's participation in what we do or don't do? To maximise the moment? To maximise their learning?* (It may help to give an example, such as a young person behaving in a way that looks like they are simply seeking attention. Do we say nothing and risk validating 'inappropriate behaviour'. Do we 'sit on it' and risk silencing an authentic response? What is likely to be the best strategy?)

"If it's a response it's valid. Even if it's about embarrassment, giggling and so on, there might be something else going on." – Teacher comment.

- d. Discuss: *what do we bring as teachers to the responses we might give? How might they help or restrict us?* (For example, during a recent primary programme, where the children have to overcome a greedy giant, one adult - otherwise very sympathetic to the Company's work - found it almost impossible to accept that the children's solution could be to kill the giant - his own values would not allow for violence as a solution to the problem).

"Everyone has these moments where we might possibly frame the situation so strongly for ourselves that it's hard to allow for another way of looking at it." – Teacher comment

Once you have completed these activities, you can then discuss as a group how you will create space for young people to follow up the programme, and engage with its central ideas. In order to do this, you will need to have a good sense of how young people have responded to the programme (see following sections). It will be crucial to prioritise opportunities for building on young people's personal responses to the programme.

You may also want to look at the 'thinking spaces' ideas in section 6b, below, or some of our planning suggestions in the sections in this resource about Drama, English, Citizenship and PSHE.

You might also want to use the publicity image as a stimulus for follow-up work with young people. (We do not advise using it with young people before they have seen the play).