

**National
Theatre**

Everyman

Learning Guide

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About

This learning guide supports the National Theatre's production of **Everyman**, directed by **Rufus Norris**, which opened on **29 April 2015** at the **National Theatre**.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Here you'll find all the information you need to enable you to study the production and write about it in detail. This includes notes about all the key elements from performance style to design. You'll also find pointers for further research.

Background Information

Recording Date – 15th July 2015

Location – Olivier Theatre, National Theatre

Age Recommendation – 15+ (very strong language and drug misuse)

Cast:

Everyman.....Chiwetel Ejiofor

God / Good Deeds Kate Duchêne

Death..... Dermot Crowley

Fellowship / Senses & Wits:

Sound..... Paul Bullion

Passion Adam Burton

Vanity Amy Griffiths

Strength..... Nick Holder

Smell Nicholas Karimi

Sensuality Joshua Lacey

Conscience..... Coral Messam

Touch..... Nadine Cox

Taste..... Itxaso Moreno

Sight Ira Mandela Siobhan

Discretion..... Kiruna Stamell

Insecurity..... Clemmie Sveaas

Goods:

Adam Burton

Amy Griffiths

Joshua Lacey

Clemmie Sveaas

Musicians:

William Lyons

Nicholas Perry

Arngeir Hauksson

Louise Morgan

Sola Akingbola

Creative Team:

Director Rufus Norris

Choreographer & Movement Director Javier De Frutos

Set Designer Ian MacNeil

Costume Designer Nicky Gillibrand

Lighting Designer Paul Anderson

Video Designer Tal Rosner

Music..... William Lyons

Sound Designer..... Paul Arditti

Music Production Dominic Betmead

Teaching Information

This production is particularly suitable for:

- Anyone who is studying morality plays, particularly those with an interest in contemporary adaptations of them.
- Drama students who are studying Rufus Norris as a contemporary theatre practitioner as part of an A Level course.
- Anyone with an interest in the work of playwright and poet Carol Ann Duffy, including English Literature students.

In particular you might like to explore:

- The idea of adapting morality plays for a contemporary audience.
- The movement and choreography in the production.
- This production alongside some of Rufus Norris' other productions available on the NT Collection, including *The Threepenny Opera*, *Small Island*, *Hex*, *Macbeth* and *wonder.land*.
- Carol Ann Duffy's poetic language.

Production Notes

The following notes have been compiled to help guide you through the significant design and performance aspects as you watch the production, or to remind you of them after you have watched it. You may also want to make your own notes and form your own opinions on the effectiveness of these aspects as you explore the production.

Contextual Information:

- Carol Ann Duffy's updated version of *Everyman* highlights the issues of money & consumerism, lack of regard for ecology, and the future of the planet.



Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Set

- The Olivier stage has a drum revolve, the upstage half of which is left open. It provides an exit and entrance point but can also suggest hell. Given that Everyman is leading a hedonistic lifestyle up to this point, the idea of Hell being his ultimate destination is suggested through this design choice.
- The use of aerial descent brings Everyman on to the stage from above (it later becomes clear that he falls from a roof, and this is how he dies).
- All items of set, including tables for example, are moved on and off stage for the scenes in which they are needed. The stage is left as clear as possible to facilitate the highly physical dance and movement sequences. It also makes Everyman seem even smaller and more insignificant at times, as he is confronted by Death.
- Temporary items of set include two leather wing-backed chairs to suggest his family home; the three glass-topped tables from which the ensemble snort drugs and on which people dance. Piles of plastic bags also appear in the second half, moved and manipulated by members of the ensemble.
- The floor is dark, which makes it more versatile when suggesting various different realistic or abstract locations. There are also stairs down into the auditorium, on which God/Good Deeds makes her first entrance.
- There is an interesting interaction between the set and direction: notice that Everyman comes much further downstage (i.e. closer to the audience) than other characters do. This is appropriate to the everyman morality play genre, in which everyman is representative of everybody (i.e. the people in the audience).
- God appears on a bed of plastic bags under a sleeping bag-style cover when Everyman is talking to Knowledge.
- Notice that the designer has had to strike a careful balance to make sure that the large scale of the Olivier stage does not dwarf smaller elements of set. This is partly done through colour choice, and also the way in which lighting is used to create individual spaces on stage.

Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Costume

- God/Good Deeds appears wearing a brown skirt and a blue tabard with large pockets on the lower half of it. She wears grey, flat shoes, suggesting practicality rather than style. She wears her hair loose.
- The ensemble (Fellowship) all begin the play wearing black costumes of various styles and fits. This includes trousers, leggings, dresses, skirts etc. They are partygoers, celebrating Everyman's 40th birthday.
- Everyman wears a bright blue suit with a lighter blue shirt and blue shoes. This immediately marks him out as our central focus in each scene.
- Death wears a grey suit jacket and trousers with a black and white shirt that has a swirling pattern. He wears black shoes. He wears a white forensic suit and green latex gloves during his interaction with Everyman. Death also later appears wearing a beanie hat which is black with yellow and orange flame patterns around its edges.
- Fellowship wear green or orange-red masks as they sing happy birthday to Everyman. They are fairly grotesque, perhaps suggesting they are a bad influence on Everyman, as they descend into decadent and immoral behaviour.
- Everyman's sister wears a white and grey checked shirt with a grey vest top underneath, with very pale jeans.
- Mother wears a floral dress, and a fitted cream jacket. A light scarf is also around her neck. She is also attached to a mobile oxygen tank, suggesting ill health and frailty. Father wears grey trousers with a cream cardigan/jumper and a gilet with popper fastenings.
- Goods wear gold wigs which appear highly stylised and deliberately plastic. They wear gold sunglasses, and their look could be described as highly consumer/bling inspired. This emphasises the idea that Everyman has been seduced by the trappings of money, artifice and consumerism.
- Knowledge wears a grey suit that is very obviously too big for her, with a blue t-shirt underneath. Her appearance is grubby and unkempt.

- During the storm, the male and female reporters wear grey suits, of the style you would expect to see in TV news reports.
- Everyman meets his younger self later in the play. Everyboy wears a short-sleeved shirt with a printed pattern of astronauts and rockets. He is wearing grey trousers, and trainers. He rides a blue scooter. Notice that the blue colour of Everyman's costume is reflected in Everyboy's costume, to suggest the connection between the two characters and the notion that every boy becomes a man.
- The Five Senses wear costumes in various styles of blue suits – suggesting a connection with Everyman and his way of life.



Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Lighting

- The cyclorama displays various lighting and video effects. This is often bright abstract shapes, or blocks of colour which change at key points in the piece.
- The vast space of the Olivier stage is lit with lights above and to the sides of the stage. Everyman is often seen highlighted by a bright white spotlight, from above.
- The lighting must be carefully balanced to allow the videos which play on the cyclorama to appear vivid and have the intended impact. The cutting between different images in the video sequences means that the audience feels a sense of distortion and discomfort, in the same way that Everyman does.
- As well as video footage, bright shapes such as vertical or horizontal blocks also appear on the cyclorama.
- The domestic scene with Everyman and his family is lit with a warm wash from above and either side of the stage: as a more domestic scene (rather than stylised) the lighting suggests a family home.
- Imagery included in the video projection includes tsunamis and rainstorms. During the storm footage, the lighting turns green, coming from both sides of the stage.



Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Sound

- There is an original score, much of which underscores various scenes to create mood and atmosphere.
- Instruments include the oriental flute, and the guqin – a Chinese stringed instrument which is plucked to make sound.
- Brash, modern music, and rap (performed live by the ensemble) is also used in the production.
- We also hear recorded sound such as the voicemail left by Everyman's sister.
- The sound of chimes is used to punctuate certain speeches, for example God/Good Deeds' speech early in the play.
- The music and sound designs include synthesized keyboard and drum tracks. Elsewhere in the performance orchestral percussion such as triangles and cowbells are used (for example when Knowledge is talking to Everyman).
- During the storm sequence, *Stormy Weather* is sung live by Everyman's mother. This is accompanied by recorded sound effects of thunder and lightning. There is a strong juxtaposition between the beauty of Mother's voice and the destructive scale of the storm.



Production Notes

Key Design Elements: Wigs, Hair and Make-Up

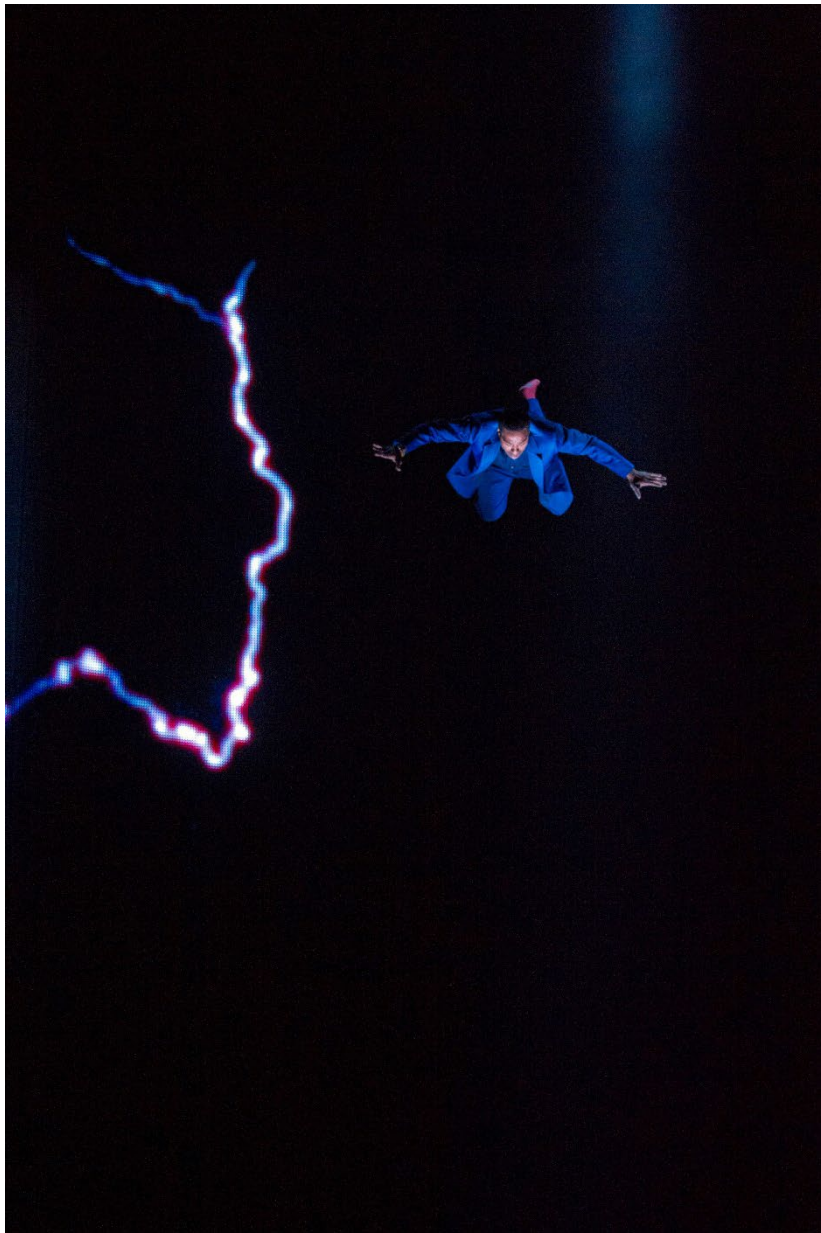
- Goods wear gold wigs.
- Make-up is used to make Knowledge appear grubby, for example dark smudges to suggest dirt.
- Other hair styles are fairly natural and generic, which assists in the ensemble and multi-rolling nature of the production.



Production Notes

Performance Style

- Direct address is a key element in this production: Death, Everyman and God/Good Deeds all speak directly to the audience.
- There are several movement set pieces in this production. Canon and unison movement, and choral speaking/singing are used a number of times in the 90-minute performance.



Production Notes

Key Moments

- God/Good Deed's introduction, followed by the rap, delivered by the ensemble (00.00.00 – 00.07.22) is an excellent demonstration of how an audience's attention is engaged and sustained, and how pace is quickly built before the entrance of Everyman.
- The interaction between God and Death begins at 00.17.36 and segues into the Fellowship scene at 00.26.12
- Everyman's monologue which begins "I hurt and hurt and Time's a haemorrhage" begins at 00.40.53. Between this point and 00.51.39 there are excellent opportunities to observe the use of ensemble (with Goods), the use of lighting, costume and set design interact, and the way in which only Everyman is lit (therefore the rest of the stage remains in darkness). In this section you will also be able to hear the use of electronic music.
- Towards the end of the play (01.09.04) Knowledge recites Latin whilst Everyman flagellates himself. The use of ensemble voices is particularly effective here and the lighting/projection includes blurred white shapes on the cyclorama. Watch this extract until 01.19.10 to look closely at the use of ensemble, the use of music (such as organ music) and video.
- Pause the video at 01.17.03 to analyse the placement of the ensemble and study the interaction between the lighting and set design.
- Everyman's explanation that he fell off the roof during his 40th birthday party begins at 01.19.11. Notice the creation of comedy in the interaction between Everyman and Death. Watch how the ensemble makes its way off stage in an unusual way.
- Death has the final say – which is one of the main points of the play – and his final monologue (directly addressed to the audience) takes place between 01.29.36 – 01.30.40.

Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

Prologue: 00:02:20

Enter God/Good Deeds in a cleaner's uniform. She cleans the stage with a Swiffer mop and clears a final piece of golden party decorations.

“She who cleans the room before the party,
Mops up afterwards...a vicious circle...
Skivvyng for those who are Immortal... or so they think”

She sets the scene for an incoming party.

Scene 1: 00:04:18

We see fragments of modern London projected onto the stage cyclorama. A birthday cake with lit candles, Enter Everyman, falling in slow motion against this backdrop of London.

Scene 2: 00: 05:20

A thudding bass beat. Enter our partygoers. It is Everyman's 40th birthday. Drinks are flowing, cocaine is snorted in euphoric excess. “What Have I Done To Deserve This” by The Pet Shop Boys plays. Everyman has several missed calls from his sister, who wants him to speak to his parents on this birthday, which he ignores. The party continues and continues to build in intensity. The party later breaks down into aggression, lewdness, ending with Everyman wrapped in police tape, passed out on a table.

Scene 3: 00:15:15

God/Good Deeds lays down a bucket for Everyman to vomit into.

God/Good Deeds laments how she has created all. She talks of the incredible things achieved, and how it is now all been trashed by the evermore sinful mankind, living only for their pleasure. "The angels weep to see the ruin of the Earth."

Good Deeds calls upon Death, and instructs Death to ensure Everyman brings her a reckoning of how he has used his time in life that God has granted him.

Scene 4: 00:20:00

Everyman coughs himself awake. He unwraps himself from the table in a hungover state. Death speaks to him, and tells Everyman that he has been sent to him by God directly for his reckoning. Everyman does not believe him at first, until Death touches him, and Everyman's life flashes before his eyes. He sees the end of days. Everyman is terrified. He tries to bribe Death to give him more years, to which Death reminds him that "no man cheats Death". He sends Everyman off to find one good deed that he has completed in his life to present to God.

Scene 4: 00:27:23

Everyman returns to the party and begs his friends for help. They are disturbed by what he is telling them: that Death has ordered him to present a reckoning before God. His friends do not want to entertain this negativity at a party, and grow uncomfortable at this reminder of mortality, and though they say they love him, they leave him, alone.

Everyman can feel the shadowy presence of Death, watching him.

Scene 5: 00:33:30

Everyman tries to think of who actually loves him. He visits his parents, and his sister who cares for them in their old age. The "best son" has returned. However, Everyman is

quickly reminded how he has neglected his aging parents. When they have tried to contact him, he has been too busy, he has ignored their deteriorating health, who he has left in the sole care of his suffering sister.

Everyman cries to them about what Death has instructed for him and asks his parents to accompany him while he stands before God, to protect and defend him. His sister refuses, "Not at their age." Death comes knocking at the door. Everyman escapes through the back, pursued by Death.

Scene 6: 00:43:10

Everyman feels his heart break for every mistake he has made. He asks God to show themselves, to answer for all the pain, misery and suffering in the world. Everyman offers to bargain his reckoning with his earthly wealth and material goods.

Everyman arrives at the Cathedral of Consumerism. The Goods offer everything he could ever purchase. Everyman asks the Goods to come with him to God, to prove to God what he is worth. They respond that in the face of god, his material worth is zero. He cannot buy their loyalty or their help. They leave Everyman, and the Cathedral disappears.

Everyman cries: "How can God know me if God cannot see my riches?"

Everyman throws his cards and his cash to the ground, he gives it all away. "Have it, have it. It's useless."

Scene 7: 00:53:30

Everyman arrives at a plastic wasteland. He has given up his material wealth. He laments his life to a kindly homeless stranger (Knowledge), who tells him that they too once also mattered, but not anymore. Everyman reflects how he did help someone, he gave a woman £10 earlier that day, even though he could have given her £100. The stranger tells him that Good Deeds is what he needs. Good Deeds is summoned, though she is weak, unable to stand after being neglected by Everyman for so long.

Good Deeds knows that she has been summoned due to Everyman's fear of Death and his reckoning before God. She cannot accompany him for she has been so neglected, and she tells Everyman to take Knowledge as his guide as a storm approaches.

Scene 8: 01:01:50

Everyman tries to refuse Knowledge as she speaks, and sarcastically jokes how he couldn't have saved the earth from climate change singlehandedly. The plastic wasteland begins to bend and swirl in the wind. News reporters tell of an incoming tsunami, as images of natural disasters play in the background. Turbine winds blow across the stage, all building into a terrifying crescendo. Everyman clings to Knowledge to weather the storm. Everyman's mother sings "Stormy Weather"

Everyman confesses that he has ignored the warning signs, and continued to consume.

"I thought the Earth was mine to spend, a coin in space."

A vision of Everyman as a young boy appears, and he reflects how his life is not what he thought it would be, based on his selfish actions. He speaks to his younger self, who encourages him to show that he is sorry.

Everyman believes that he must suffer to show that he is sorry. He swaps his clothes with Knowledge's filthy ones, he walks barefoot on broken glass so that he bleeds. He begins to whip himself with his belt. He knows this will not work.

Knowledge suggests that he knows he must also give thanks. "I give thanks for my body, at the hour of my death."

Everyman laments and shows gratitude for the life he has been able to lead thanks for his body, his personality, his drive and his life, and the people in it. He also acknowledges his faults:

"I have followed Lust instead of Love.
I have envied my peers.

I have wallowed in Sloth, in greed, in gluttony.

I have let my anger off it's leash,
and let pride govern every inch of me."

He reflects on every person and everything he is thankful for, but has never acknowledged, from the everyday to the significant moments in his life. It begins to rain.

Scene 9: 01:21:21

The Reckoning. Everyman tells of how, aged 40, he got wrecked at his birthday party and fell off the roof. God reminds Everyman that his death is not personal.

Death appears to greet Everyman, for his final moments. We hear the final words and thoughts of many consciousnesses.

Everyman reflects on how he does indeed have a soul, and ponders and what will happen once he has passed. He asks God for forgiveness.

"Thy will be done." Everyman has passed. God reflects on how his parents mourn, his friends sing as his funeral, and how his company promote someone else into his job. Life goes on.

God must give perpetual love to Everyman, for God's love cannot die.

"Let there be light. And let him see his God." God takes Everyman with them to his reckoning.

Death, vexed by Everyman's parting words, picks a new target.

Suggestions for Further Activity

- Using *The Guardian*'s review by Michael Billington (<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/apr/30/everyman-review-chiwetel-ejirofor-national-theatre-carol-ann-duffy-morality-play>) as a model, write your own review of the production. Ensure that you mention the sound, lighting, costume, movement and set design as well as the acting skills of the cast.
- Research the movement work of the choreographer Javier de Frutos, starting with this [article](#) from *The Guardian*.
- Look at the marketing posters for *Everyman*. After you've watched the recording, analyse and evaluate why you think the marketing team decided on this image. Working with a partner, design a new poster to advertise the recording, and make sure you can justify all of your decisions about image, colour, scale and layout. You may wish to consider how you would explain the play on a theatre website. Use the National Theatre's own copy as a starting point: "Everyman is successful, popular and riding high. When Death comes calling, he is forced to abandon his hedonistic life and embark on a frantic search to find a friend that will speak in his defence. But with Death close behind, his time is running out."
- Morality plays typically show a character struggling with abstract ideas and influences. In your drama class, consider what a modern-day morality play might look like. For example, the influence of social media, disregard for the environment, misogyny and capitalism might all be influences which you explore in a devised piece of drama inspired by morality plays.
- Other non-naturalistic productions which reflect the world around us includes *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Rufus Norris at the NT and also available on the NT Collection.
- Carol Ann Duffy has adapted other well-known works of literature, such as *Grimm Tales*. You could explore her work in your own practical lessons.
- The British Library has further information on morality plays: you can find it [here](#)

Find out More

Learning Hub

You can find more resources for schools and teachers on the National Theatre's Learning Hub. Search by key stage, subject, theatrical style or practitioner and discover an ever-growing library of short films, learning guides and digital exhibitions.

Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/>

National Theatre Archive

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit.

Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive>

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and studying **Everyman**. Don't forget that there are many more fantastic productions to explore as part of the NT Collection. We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. [Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?](#)

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Thank you