

**National
Theatre**

**H E D D A
G A B L E R**

by **Henrik Ibsen**
in a new version by **Patrick Marber**

Education Pack

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Welcome to the National Theatre's education pack for *Hedda Gabler*.

Through imaginative and innovative in-school, on-site and online activities, NT Learning opens up the National's repertoire, artistry, skills, and the building itself, enabling participants of all ages to discover new skills and experience the excitement of theatre-making. If you've enjoyed this background pack or would like to talk to us about getting involved in NT Learning activities, please contact us on learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk or 020 7452 3388.

Jane Ball
Programme Manager, NT Learning
January 2018



Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts). Production photograph by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

THE NATIONAL THEATRE PRODUCTION OF *HEDDA GABLER*

by **Henrik Ibsen**
in a new version by **Patrick Marber**

CHARACTERS

Hedda, *Tesman's new wife*
Berte, *a maid*
Juliana, *Tesman's aunt*
Tesman, *an academic*
Mrs Elvsted, *a visitor*
Brack, *a judge*
Lovborg, *a writer*

Director
Set and Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Casting

Associate Directors

Associate Set Designer
Associate Lighting Designer
Associate Sound Designer
Fight Director
Company Voice Work
Assistant Director

Lizzy Watts
Madlena Nedeva
Christine Kavanagh
Abhin Galeya
Annabel Bates
Adam Best
Richard Pyros

Ivo van Hove
Jan Versweyveld
An D'Huys
Tom Gibbons
Sam Stevenson

Jeff James and
Rachel Lincoln
Paul Atkinson
Nadene Wheatley
Mike Winship
Bret Yount
Kay Welch
Alasdair Pidsley

FOR *HEDDA GABLER* ON TOUR

Company Stage Manager
Deputy Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
LX No 1
Sound No 1
Sound No 2
Wardrobe Supervisor
Wardrobe & Wigs Assistant
Technical Swings

Costume Supervisor
Production LX
Production Sound
Production Carpenter

Rehearsal Photographer
Production Photographers

Education Pack

Siân Wiggins
Tanith MacKenzie
Hayley Craven
William Brann
Matthew Russell
Tom Pickering
Ellie Carroll
Caroline Stevens
Ellie May Jones
Alistair Sutton
Erin Witton

Poppy Hall
Andy Taylor
Tomás O'Connor
Brian Watson

Ellie Kurtz
Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

Susie Ferguson

UNDERSTUDIES

Cate Cammack (Hedda Gabler/Mrs Elvsted),
Joseph Capp (Brack),
JP Conway (Tesman/Lovborg),
Kate Cook (Juliana/Berte)

SETTING

The main room of the Tesmans' new home, September.

OPENING

Lyttelton Theatre, 12 December 2016
UK tour from 2 October 2017.

The UK tour opens 2 October 2017 at Theatre Royal Plymouth, before going to the Festival Theatre, Edinburgh; Curve, Leicester; The Lowry, Salford; Theatre Royal, Norwich; New Theatre, Hull; His Majesty's, Aberdeen; Royal & Derngate, Northampton; Theatre Royal, Glasgow; Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton; New Victoria, Woking; Theatre Royal, Nottingham; Theatre Royal, Newcastle; Grand Opera House, York; and Milton Keynes Theatre.

LENGTH

about 2 hours 30 minutes, including 20-minute interval

SYNOPSIS OF HEDDA GABLER

Act One

Hedda Gabler, a General's daughter and well-known socialite, has recently returned from an extended honeymoon with her new husband, Tesman. Tesman has used this trip to continue his research as he is hoping to gain a professor post at the local university, having recently achieved his doctorate. It is clear that Hedda is already unhappy, despite the new home that has been arranged according to her specific wishes, whilst they have been away.

Hedda resents the presence of Juliana, Tesman's aunt who has raised him since the death of his parents. Berte, the maid, previously worked for Juliana, but now works for Tesman. Juliana has a sister, Rina, who is seriously ill, and Tesman's loyalty and close bond with his aunts is another cause of frustration for Hedda. Hedda also resents the insinuations that she may be pregnant.

Mrs Elvsted, with whom Hedda went to school, arrives at the house having left flowers earlier. She explains that Lovborg, an academic rival of Tesman's and a man with whom Hedda has previously had a very intense relationship, is in town. Mrs Elvsted is concerned that Lovborg, a reformed alcoholic who has been tutoring Mrs Elvsted's step-children, will fall in with negative influences. Lovborg has also published a book to great acclaim. Mrs Elvsted has secretly left her husband and followed Lovborg to the city.

Judge Brack arrives and breaks the news that the professorship Tesman had been hoping for may have to be decided through an application process – and Lovborg is a rival for the post. Tesman is immediately worried – he has overstretched himself financially in order to provide for Hedda, counting on the professorship as a source of income.

Act Two

Brack returns to the house. Hedda, standing at the door, threatens to shoot Brack with a pistol – one of two given to her by her father. Brack and Hedda discuss her marriage to Tesman and she vents her frustration at her new life. She had only expressed an interest in this particular house because it was a way of initiating conversation with Tesman. Brack suggests that he finds 'triangular associations' with married women very satisfying – tempting women into affairs whilst maintaining his own freedom.

Lovborg arrives with a manuscript – a follow up to his recently published book – and it is clear that Mrs Elvsted has had significant input into this work. Hedda sits with Lovborg on the pretence of showing him photographs from the honeymoon, but they talk quietly and intensely about their past together. This includes an incident where Hedda threatened to shoot Lovborg, but only refrained because she was afraid of the inevitable scandal it would cause.

Mrs Elvsted arrives and she talks with Hedda and Lovborg. Even though Hedda knows Lovborg is a recovering alcoholic, she encourages him to drink punch. Despite Mrs Elvsted's protests, he drinks several glasses of the punch and insists on going out for more drinks with Brack and Tesman. Hedda forces Mrs Elvsted to stay in with her for the evening.

Act Three

It is dawn. Both Hedda and Mrs Elvsted have waited up all night for the men to return – they were due back at 10pm. Tesman eventually enters, carrying Lovborg's manuscript which Lovborg drunkenly lost the night before. Tesman has not told Lovborg that he has it but he intends to return it. Tesman receives a letter from Juliana to say that Rina is dying, and he leaves as Brack enters.

Brack describes what happened of the night before: Lovborg became increasingly drunk and accused people of stealing the manuscript. Lovborg has been arrested and Brack has distanced himself from events in order to protect his own reputation. He says that Hedda must also distance herself from Lovborg, and he intimidates her, reminding her to protect their 'triangle' agreement.

Lovborg enters, and tells a distraught Mrs Elvsted that he has destroyed his manuscript by tearing it up. Hedda knows that this is not true. Lovborg describes the manuscript as his and Mrs Elvsted's 'child' and he admits to Hedda that he has in fact lost the manuscript. He draws parallels between looking after a child and having to admit to its parents that he has lost them through neglect.

Hedda hands Lovborg one of her pistols, as Lovborg comments that she should have shot him when she had the chance. It is clear that he intends to end his own life. Hedda tells him to 'make it beautiful'.

Hedda places Lovborg's manuscript into the fire and watches his and Mrs Elvsted's 'child' burn.

SYNOPSIS OF HEDDA GABLER CONTINUED

Act Four

Tesman and Juliana are in the house with Hedda. Rina has passed away and Juliana and Tesman comfort each other. Hedda tells Tesman that she has burnt Lovborg's manuscript as a way of furthering Tesman's career, allowing him to believe it was an act of love for him. She also suggests that she is pregnant, which delights Tesman.

Mrs Elvsted returns in an agitated state – she has heard rumours of Lovborg being shot following an altercation at Miss Diana's brothel. Brack enters and confirms that Lovborg has shot himself; he is gravely ill and unlikely to survive.

Mrs Elvsted and Tesman immediately begin making plans to rewrite Lovborg's manuscript, using the

notes that Mrs Elvsted has kept. As they begin these preparations Brack tells Hedda the truth about what has happened: Lovborg is already dead, having never regained consciousness, and he was found in Miss Diana's private bedroom. Brack knows that the pistol used had belonged to Hedda, and that should this become public knowledge, she would be the subject of great scandal and outrage. Having given a graphic account of what might have happened to Lovborg in his final moments, Brack blackmails Hedda, intimidating her into agreeing to whatever he wants.

Left with no option, Hedda retrieves the second of the pair of pistols and, whilst Mrs Elvsted and Tesman continue to work on what they see as Lovborg's final legacy, Hedda shoots herself and ends her own life.



Mrs Elvsted (Annabel Bates) and Tesman (Abhin Galeya)
Production photograph by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

CREATING CHARACTER PROFILES

Having read the play, or seen the production, consider each character in turn and create a profile for them based on the following:

- **What motivates this character's behaviour?**
For example, Juliana's actions could be solely based on making her nephew's life as comfortable and pleasant as possible.
- **Rank the characters from one to ten, with ten being the character who you like the most, and one being the least likeable.**
Be sure to include Berte, the maid – she's there for a reason.
- **Who do you think is most responsible for Hedda's suicide at the end of the play?**
Each character has a role to play. You may decide that only Hedda is responsible, but you must justify your response to ALL of the characters in the play.
- **Do you think Hedda's suicide is an act of revenge, cowardice or escape?**
Give reasons for your answer, finding evidence in the text where possible.
- **Ivo van Hove has set the play in modern day, despite its original setting of the late 19th century. Do you think women like Hedda still exist?**
- **Some critics call the role of Hedda Gabler 'the female Hamlet'. Having researched both plays in terms of plot, themes and characters, why do you think this claim is made, and do you agree?**
- **If you were the costume designer for a production of *Hedda Gabler*, how would you dress each character to suggest their personality and their relationship with other characters?**



Top: The company rehearse *Hedda Gabler*. Rehearsal photograph by Ellie Kurtz
Bottom: Tesman (Abhin Galeya) and Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts). Production photograph by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1) Staging a Scene – Act One

A key technique to finding ways to stage a scene is to search for **FACTS** and **QUESTIONS**. *Facts* are pieces of information that are clearly stated by the playwright, either within the dialogue or the stage directions. *Questions* are pieces of information that are not fully explained in the text, and which are open to interpretation or decisions by the director and production team.

Look at the opening two pages of dialogue in Act One of *Hedda Gabler*. For every fact that you find, ask three questions that will help you make decisions about how to stage the scene. For example:

Facts	Questions
It is morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the specific time?• How long have Juliana and Berte been awake?• What time would Tesman and Hedda usually be wake up?
Aunt Rina is ill, and in pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What specific illness does Rina have?• How long has she had it?• How long can Rina be left alone for?
Berte is worried Hedda will ‘take against her’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has Berte worked as a maid for anyone else except Juliana?• What is the age difference between Hedda and Berte?• Did Berte have any say in whether she moved to Tesman’s house, or was the decision made for her?

Once you have created tentative answers for those questions, experiment with staging the scene. For example, if you have decided that Berte and Juliana have been up for a number of hours already, perhaps Berte should demonstrate tiredness, as she was also up late unpacking for Hedda. If Juliana is worried about the length of time she can leave Aunt Rina alone, this might affect the speed and fluidity of her movement around the stage.

2) Creating Tension – Act Four

Look at pages 76–80 of the script, when Brack describes what has happened to Lovborg. There is a lot of information that needs to be conveyed to both the characters and to the audience. The pace of the scene is hugely important as we move towards the climax of the play.

In a group of four, read the extract from Brack's line, 'I'm afraid I bring more news' up to Hedda's question, 'what else?'

- Read the scene out loud once as fast as you can and as neutrally as possible.
- Read the scene aloud again, this time leaving a slight pause after each line. What is the effect of that? Are there particular words or phrases that might be emphasised for the audience by doing this?
- Read the scene aloud for a third time, with each speaker interrupting the previous speaker on the last word of his or her line. Are there particular moments in this extract where this would help create a realistic response to what is being said?

Having experimented with just reading the script, and making decisions about where pauses, interruptions and specific characters' reactions should be, rehearse the scene by including movement and blocking.

You might also like to experiment with:

- Making or avoiding eye contact
- Ensuring that one person is always sat down, and if they stand up, another person should sit
- Creating contrasts between characters who move a lot, and those who stay very still
- The physical distances between characters



Left: Brack (Adam Best) and Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts).

Right: Tesman (Abhin Galeya) and Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts). Production photographs by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

3) Creating Sympathy for a Character – Act Four

Hedda is not always a very likeable character. Many of her comments are designed to hurt and offend, for example when she pretends to mistake Juliana's new hat for the maid's old one. However, towards the end of the play, Brack blackmails Hedda, knowing that she will be reluctant to cause a scandal if her connection to the pistol that killed Lovborg is ever revealed.

In pairs, look at page 83, from Hedda's line, 'do you have it?' up until page 85 when Hedda says, 'must we?'

Using only one chair, rehearse this scene and experiment with different ways of portraying Brack's intimidation of Hedda.



Brack (Adam Best) and Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts). Production photograph by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

THE PRODUCTION CONCEPT

When approaching any text, a director and their team create a production concept. It combines ideas about how the play is to be performed, and also how the designs for set, costume, lighting and sound can contribute to the production.

When reading or watching a play, it is helpful to consider the following information and how it can be communicated to the audience:

- **Setting.** This includes time period and geographical location. In this production of *Hedda Gabler*, the play is set in modern day and could be located in any city in the world.
- **Interpretation.** As well as making the plot (story) clear to an audience, a director may also wish to explore certain themes or ideas. For example, *Hedda Gabler* is about a woman who is unhappy in her marriage, but also explores how people live their lives and the way in which their choices impact their own life and that of others
- **Intention.** A director will have strong ideas about how they want the audience to respond to certain characters and certain moments in the play. Most directors want to illicit an emotional and intellectual response, perhaps wishing to create sympathy for one character and strong dislike for another. There may be moments of great pathos (sadness) but this can be quickly followed by moments of comedy.
- **Mood and atmosphere.** Hedda lives in a world that she finds very claustrophobic. She is surrounded by people who threaten her own sense of self, and threaten to take away the little freedom that she does have. As well as the scripted dialogue, the director and the production team have many different methods to create a range emotions and atmospheres at their disposal.

Exploring the set and lighting design

Patrick Marber's script describes the set as, 'A large, almost empty room. A piano, a fire, an old sofa, flowers.'

Compare this with the more traditional stage directions for Act One of *Hedda Gabler* which describe a cluttered but more luxurious setting.

Jan Versweyveld (set and lighting designer) explains that in this production, the design concept is based on seeing the apartment from Hedda's point of view – in her own mind. In reality, it might be fully furnished. The furniture is ugly and mismatched, as if it has been found and placed there without much thought. Although it is obviously ugly, all of the people who visit the apartment tell Hedda how nice it is.

Hedda is accustomed to living a very comfortable life, surrounded by beautiful possessions. However, in this production nothing is pretty or comfortable. Even the flowers are placed in large buckets on the floor rather than in vases on tables or shelves. Hedda's surroundings seem to be functional, rather than decorative and only serve to remind her that she is unlikely to be able to live the life that she wants.

The large patio doors (stage right) represent the outside world. Hedda is the only character who does not leave the apartment during the play and although she approaches the window, she never goes out into the garden. She is trapped within her own home. Consider the choices made in having this window that is rarely used. Versweyveld also says, 'Out of the window is nothing, just darkness and occasional light'.

Look carefully at how lighting is used through this window. The blinds are sometimes open, sometimes closed. The shadow cast by the blind occasionally suggests the image of prison bars. At what point does this happen in the play? Why might it be particularly relevant at that point?

Consider what Versweyveld says about the apartment and the lack of exits for Hedda: 'For her it's like a jail, a tomb, a grave nearly'. How is that evident in the way that the set is used throughout the production?

Exploring the costume design

The costume design for this production is modern – 21st century. As you watch the performance, consider the following ideas:

Hedda is the only character who is not dressed to go outdoors. The fabric and fit of the chemise and robe give a sense of her being exposed, whilst all of the other characters have a layer of 'armour' because they are fully dressed, and are also able to go outside and interact with the world.

How does that make us feel towards Hedda? Do you think her costume makes her appear vulnerable?

Are there any moments when you think the way she is dressed actually makes her seem powerful or manipulative?

Tesman is fairly casually dressed and is sometimes barefoot. This allows him to appear much more comfortable in his own home, putting his feet on the furniture and even the walls. Compare his costume to those worn by Lovborg and Brack. Are the characters the same age? What evidence do you have that can support your answer?

Compare Mrs Elvsted's costume to that worn by Hedda. What comparisons does the contrast in costume help you make between the two characters? Consider the shape and style of Mrs Elvsted's costume, her choice of footwear and how her costume might help her maintain status in her interactions with characters other than Hedda.

Judge Brack is a powerful and influential man in society, as well as in his relationship with Hedda. How do you think his costume reveals this throughout the production?

Exploring the use of sound

Ivo van Hove's choice of Joni Mitchell's song 'Blue' is important. He explains this choice, saying that it is 'really about the scars of life; the scars of love, not being satisfied with life, the longing and desire. All of these things are in this very beautiful song that accompanies Hedda almost as a chorus through the whole production'. Research the lyrics of the song: how do you think they can be applied to an interpretation of Hedda as a character? How does the instrumentation in the song also help to create a sense of melancholy?

Hedda's piano is the focal point of the set in the opening scene, with Hedda seated in front of it, and it is clearly important to her. Hedda even uses it later in the play to express her frustration when words cannot. When the piano is played live, however, it is out of tune. Why do you think this has been done? What does it represent to you?

Nina Simone's 'Wild is the Wind' accompanies the final moments of the play. Not only does the piano music echo the style of 'Blue', it reflects the tragic mood created by Hedda's suicide. Research the lyrics to 'Wild is the Wind'. How do they influence your understanding of, or response to, Hedda Gabler as a character and as a play?

DISCUSSION POINTS

After reading or seeing the play, consider the following statements and form a response:

- **Patrick Marber, who created this new version of *Hedda Gabler*, describes the characters as people who ‘express themselves quickly and precisely because they are all intelligent people. And it is a play set in a semi-academic world, a bookish world. They are clever people’.**

As well as being *intellectually* clever, many of these characters are master manipulators whose aim is simply to get what they want, regardless of the cost to other people. What examples can you think of for each character that might prove this statement? Who do you think is the worst culprit for this?

- **When describing the play, Ivo van Hove says, ‘It is not a domestic drama – I consider this a domestic tragedy about normal people’.**

To what extent do you agree with this statement? You might like to consider this version and Ibsen’s original, in which Hedda’s class and background could have more influence on your interpretation of the play.

Do you think the characters in this version of the play can be described as ‘normal’? Give reasons for your answer.

- **Gabler is Hedda’s maiden name. Ibsen deliberately called the play *Hedda Gabler* in order to demonstrate that Hedda is her father’s daughter, rather than being Tesman’s wife.**

How might this view be communicated through acting, direction and design in a production of the play?

If you have seen the National Theatre’s 2017 touring production, do you think this production follows Ibsen’s original intention? Justify your answers with specific reference to the performance.



Lovborg (Richard Pyros) and Hedda Gabler (Lizzy Watts). Production photograph by Brinkhoff/Mögenburg

HEDDA GABLER LIVE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

Using information provided online, or by buying a production programme, complete the following information:

Hedda Gabler, by Henrik Ibsen, in a new version by Patrick Marber

Date production seen:

Production venue:

Production Team

Director:

Set and Lighting Designer:

Costume Designer:

Sound Designer:

Actors

Hedda:

Berte:

Juliana:

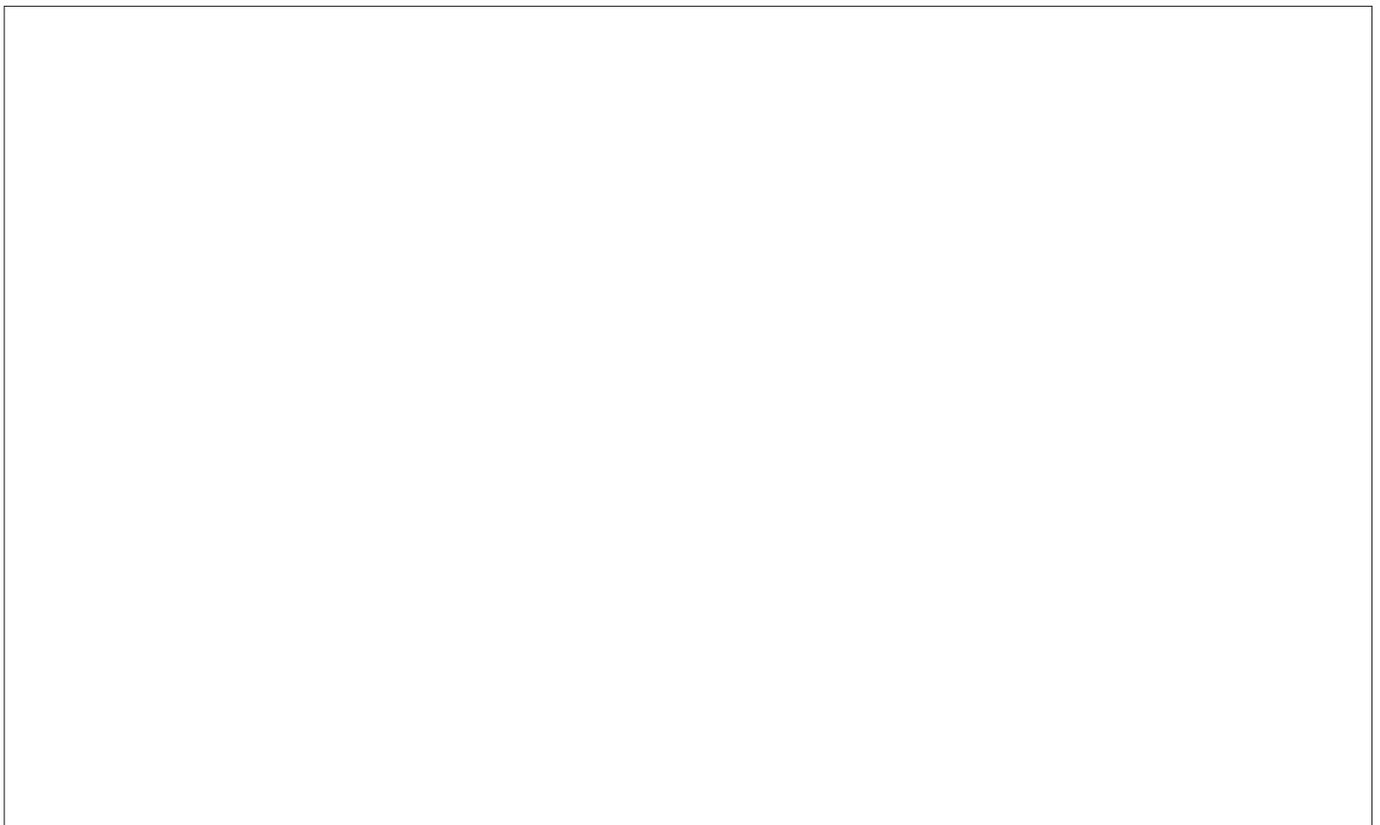
Tesman:

Mrs Elvsted:

Brack:

Lovborg:

Draw and label the set, in as much detail as possible.



In the table below, there are a number of reflection or discussion points to help you analyse the production. When considering your response, it can be helpful to think about:

- Use of colour, intensity and focus in lighting
- Use of live and/or recorded sound, including music and sound effects
- Costume design choices including: fabric, colour, fit, shape, the effect it has on an actor's movements and how the colours of one character's costume either complements or clashes with another character's. Changes to costume (becoming dirty, adding or removing costume items or accessories etc) are also useful points to track throughout the production, as the production team will have made specific choices and decisions regarding these elements.

Production design

<p>Pre-show: as you look at the stage, what do you notice? What atmosphere is immediately created? How has that atmosphere been created?</p>	
<p>The walls of the set are made of what looks like unpainted plasterboard. Why do you think the designer has done this?</p>	
<p>The unpainted walls are brightly lit and make the set appear stark. This is Hedda's new home, which was supposed to have been decorated in the way that she had requested. What mood and atmosphere do these design decisions suggest to the audience?</p>	
<p>Throughout the production, lighting changes allow us to track emotional shifts, as well as changes in time. Make notes about the lighting design, lighting changes and the impact they have.</p>	
<p>Act One and Act Two</p>	
<p>The opening dialogue is between Juliana and her former maid, Berte. How do the actors create a sense of the long and affectionate relationship between the two women?</p>	
<p>When Tesman enters, how is his relationship with Juliana established? Consider physical contact, eye contact, gestures and mannerisms.</p>	
<p>Hedda has several moments in the play where we are allowed to experience her moods and inner thoughts, through the use of lighting changes and the song 'Blue'. Note down what happens on stage each time this song plays. What is the effect on the audience?</p>	

<p>Tesman, Juliana and Berte all create a sense of friendly and affectionate interaction. Watch Hedda carefully. How does the actress create a sense of Hedda's isolation, resentment and unhappiness?</p>	
<p>Berte remains on stage throughout the performance. Why do you think this might be? Consider, in particular, how observed or trapped Hedda feels.</p>	
<p>When Mrs Elvsted enters, we see an interesting shift in Hedda's body language. She begins to circle Mrs Elvsted and becomes quite intimidating. Note down examples of how the actress uses her face, voice and body to create this sense of control and intimidation.</p>	
<p>Pay close attention to Hedda when Mrs Elvsted says, 'there's another woman'. How does the actress playing Hedda create comedy, as well as a sense of Hedda's self-absorption?</p>	
<p>Throughout the performance, observe Brack closely. Although he is friendly and personable in Act One, his behaviour towards Hedda becomes increasingly controlling and predatory as the play progresses. How does the actor use space, voice, facial expression, and his gestures and mannerisms to create this hostile relationship?</p>	
<p>Although the set is sparse, the furniture – particularly the sofa – is used in the blocking to demonstrate status and power within relationships between different characters. Write down examples from throughout the play – focus on Hedda, Tesman, Brack and Mrs Elvsted.</p>	
<p>Hedda and Mrs Elvsted also sit on the floor a lot. When and why does this this happen? What effect does it have on the audience's opinions towards Hedda and Mrs Elvsted, and their relationship?</p>	

<p>A particularly dramatic moment in the production is when Hedda staples flowers to the walls of the apartment, using a staple gun. Consider the sound this makes, and the way in which the actress moves across the stage. What is your response as an audience member? Why do you think the decision has been made for her to do this?</p>	
<p>The incident with the flowers and the staple gun precedes the moment where Hedda threatens to shoot Brack, who is entering the house from the garden. Why do you think Ivo van Hove has made this decision?</p>	
<p>Hedda's dissatisfaction with her life increases throughout the play. Write down some specific examples of how voice and physical movement are used to convey her growing sense of resentment, entrapment and frustration.</p>	
<p>Although this is a tragic story, there are various moments of comedy in the play. Note down at least two moments where this happens, and how this is created by the actors on stage.</p>	
<p>The characters of Brack and Tesman are very different. Watching their various interactions, note down how the actors use facial expression, voice and physical movement to convey these differences and the relationship between them.</p>	
<p>Watch Hedda's interactions with Lovborg very carefully. The actors must convey a range of emotions and the fraught relationship between the two of them. Consider the actors' use of vocal skills, physicality, eye contact and movement to note down how this complex relationship is conveyed.</p>	

During the interval it may be valuable to jot down some general thoughts about your response as an audience member. This response could include whether you like or dislike certain characters, whether you feel sympathy for anyone in particular, or how tension is created, particularly as the act moved towards the interval.

Act Two and Act Three

<p>Note down the ways in which the set has changed since Act One. How does it help indicate the passage of time, and the emotional changes that have happened during the night?</p>	
<p>Mrs Elvsted emerges from the sofa having used her coat as a blanket. What might this tell the audience about Hedda's 'hospitality' and the emotional state of both of these women?</p>	
<p>Look again at the set, and the places where actors enter and exit the stage. How does this help create a sense of Hedda's claustrophobia?</p>	
<p>The piano becomes a focal point of the blocking in several points during this act. Note down how it is used to create hostility and the sense of a power struggle between characters.</p>	
<p>The image of a child is used throughout the play, for example the suggestion/hope that Hedda might be pregnant, and the reference to Lovborg's book as his and Mrs Elvsted's 'child'. Look and listen closely to how the actors perform these moments. What impact does it have on your response towards those characters?</p>	
<p>Carefully observe the moment when Hedda burns Lovborg's manuscript. How does the actress create a sense of intensity, pain and anger? Why does Berte help Hedda commit this act?</p>	
<p>An unusual moment in this play is when the other characters and members of the stage crew board up the one window/patio door. The set designer has carefully choreographed how furniture is placed in front of the window. Write down everything that you can see during this key moment. What do you think it represents in terms of Hedda's physical and mental state?</p>	

<p>Focus on Brack and Hedda as Brack explains what has really happened to Lovborg and how Hedda might be implicated in his death. How does the actor playing Brack create tension, fear and perhaps sympathy for Hedda? What does he do that you find most shocking? How does he simultaneously create a sense of intimacy and intimidation?</p>	
<p>As the play reaches its climax, pay close attention to the use of live and recorded sound. How does it create mood and atmosphere and a sense of the inevitable ending to the play?</p>	
<p>Analyse the moment when Hedda shoots herself. Describe what each character is doing. Is there any sound? How do you feel about Hedda's suicide? Do you feel sympathy? Anger? Revulsion towards the other characters?</p>	
<p>The final song is Nina Simone's 'Wild is the Wind'. What impact does this choice have? How does it create mood and atmosphere? How do you feel as the play ends?</p>	

Having seen the play, it is a good idea to jot down responses to the following prompts:

- Has your attitude towards any of the characters changed in the second half of the play? Why? How has that been achieved in terms of what the actors, designers and director have done?
- What emotions did you feel at the end of the play?
- Overall, do you have sympathy for Hedda? Or do you think she brought all of her problems on herself?
- Was there a moment in the play that you thought was particularly effective? Why did it stand out for you?

POINTS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

If *Hedda Gabler* is one of your set texts, you may find the points below helpful in creating your own interpretation of the text.

Your interpretation of *Hedda Gabler* can be informed by your discussions and responses to the following questions.

1. Do you feel sorry for Hedda at any point in the play? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Do any of Hedda's deliberately unpleasant actions alter the level of sympathy you feel for her? In Act One she deliberately criticises Juliana's hat, pretending that she thinks it belongs to Berte. How would you expect Tesman to respond to her unreasonable behaviour? Does he fulfill your expectations?
3. Each of the characters is isolated in some way. How would you describe the different kinds and causes of their isolation? How much of that isolation is caused by social and cultural conventions of the period in which the play is set, and how much of that isolation have those characters brought upon themselves?
4. Why does Hedda resent the presence of Juliana (Aunt Juju) so much? What do she, and Juliana's former maid Berte, represent to Hedda?
5. Many commentators refer to the tragicomedy nature of the play. They sometimes refer to the farcical nature of some of what takes place, including Hedda's eventual suicide and the way it is perceived by the other characters on stage. What moments in the play would you highlight as possibly being funny? Why has Ibsen included them?
6. The play is in four acts, and takes place over 36 hours. It begins early one morning, and ends in the evening of the following day. As the Bloomsbury edition of the play points out, it is a compressed timeframe. What challenges does this play structure pose to a director, designer and actor?
7. Look closely at the way in which the dialogue is written. There are no long monologues, and there are often interruptions, entrances and exits made by the characters. How do these impact on pace, the creation of tension and the possible creation of comedy?
8. Look closely at how each act is structured. At the beginning of each act, the atmosphere is fairly calm, and then escalates to some kind of outburst by Hedda. This includes: playing with the pistols at the end of Act One; provoking a scene between Mrs Elvsted and Lovborg at the end of Act Two; burning Lovborg's manuscript at the end of Act Three; and Hedda's suicide in Act Four. How do these actions demonstrate Hedda's desire to control the people around her? What challenges are presented for the actors in creating and sustaining the tension towards the climax?
9. Tesman is a difficult character to interpret. He has been raised by his two spinster aunts after being orphaned as a young boy. He is studious and academic, and is also naïve and unaware of some of the social nuances that are important to Hedda. Does he expect certain behaviour from Hedda which is alien to her? Look at the moment where he encourages Hedda to be excited about his slippers that have been embroidered by his aunt. Why might Hedda find this moment so galling?
10. How do you react when Hedda admits that she only said she liked the house in which she now lives because she was making conversation with Tesman? To what extent do you sympathise with Tesman, and how much do you sympathise with Hedda's frustrations at her new, married life?
11. What does Hedda's apparent pregnancy represent to her? Consider not only what Hedda does/doesn't say about the pregnancy, but the importance of such an announcement to Tesman and Juliana. Tesman is so excited that he even rushes out to tell Berte. His excitement to share with someone of a lower status (i.e. the maid) is part of what antagonises Hedda in this act.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- *Hedda Gabler* tour trailer – October 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=WGYaFX7pa2k
- iTunes – National Theatre channel has several resources on Ibsen, including ‘Playing Hedda Gabler’
- *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen, in a new version by Patrick Marber (Faber and Faber, 2017)
- *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Michael Meyer, edited by David Thomas (Bloomsbury 2002)
- The character of Hedda – *Hedda Gabler* on tour October 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCkLV_fnFnc
- The cast describe *Hedda* in three words – *Hedda Gabler* on tour October 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNmQnbqDeul>
- Why audiences should see the play? *Hedda Gabler* on tour October 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpr3IJF1pwM>
- *Hedda Gabler* rehearsal diaries – National Theatre production
https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/sites/default/files/heddagabler_rehearsal_diaries.pdf



Abhin Galeya and Rachel Lincoln in rehearsal for *Hedda Gabler*. Rehearsal photograph by Ellie Kurtz