Education Pack

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child

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PROFESSORS,

We trust that you will find the suggested activities within this pack useful for your students. They will need only parchment, their quills and ink pots to complete them, as well as a keen mind and eye, of course.

Some tasks can be adapted for you to use as part of formal exam preparation. Others allow students to explore, create and imagine. All skills, we are sure you'll agree, that are just as important as learning their charms and potions. Most importantly, students should have the opportunity to revisit their enjoyment of the unique and wonderful Wizarding World.

You will find opportunities here for work before and after your visit to the show. But may we remind you to help keep our secrets; we will have no hesitation in using a memory charm on all of you if required...

Professors, look out for the following symbols which suggest different types of activities you may wish to try:

this symbol indicates an opportunity for students to complete a written task

this symbol indicates an opportunity for a practical drama exercise or task

this symbol indicates an extension task requiring higher level skills or additional effort

this symbol indicates notes or examples that are provided as a starting point for the teacher's use in activities and to aid lesson preparation

BEFORE SEEING THE PRODUCTION

In small groups ask students to consider the following:

- What do you already know about the production? What are you looking forward to?
- Having looked at the marketing and social media resources, what do you expect from the production? You might use the posters, website or Instagram page as a resource.
- What characters and settings from the Harry Potter stories do you expect or hope to see?
- How do you think the magical world will be created? What techniques and skills might be employed?

Working on their own ask students to consider the following
(these questions assume some knowledge of the Harry Potter stories):

- Do you have a favorite character from the Harry Potter stories? If so, why do you like them? Can you remember specific qualities they have or moments that you enjoy?
- What do you remember about the stories? Can you create a list of words that describe the kinds of things that happen to the characters, the emotions they experience and the atmosphere of the books?
- Write an email to a friend explaining that you are going to see the play. Include some of your thoughts and feelings about what you expect.

Upon turning this page some of the many secrets of the production will be revealed. You are respectfully advised to only proceed when you have seen the production to ensure maximum enjoyment and surprise.

AFTER SEEING THE PRODUCTION

Professors: These tasks are best completed as soon as possible after your visit. The tasks progress from helping students recall details from the production to formalizing critical responses as far as may be required. Most grouping suggestions can be adapted.

- **FIRST THOUGHTS:** Using only single words or two-word phrases ask students to record their first thoughts on the production. Encourage them to be honest and link thoughts to their feelings and reactions first, before moving onto elements of the narrative or characters that stuck in their mind. Students could write on sticky notes or small slips of paper that can then all be added to a board for shared discussion – this also allows you to explore patterns and links in their responses. You can group similar sticky notes together to create a visual memory board.

- **CIRCLE HIGHLIGHTS:** This task asks students to focus more on the narrative and the staging of the play. Seat small groups of students in a circle. First time around the circle each student should each offer one moment of the story they remember as a highlight. Second time around the circle students should offer a moment of staging they remember as a highlight. In the third time around the circle students should add to why they thought moments were highlights and can offer input on the suggestions of others aiming to flesh out the details of how and why certain moments were effective or memorable.

- **REVIEWS:** Ask students to imagine they are creating new posters and marketing material for Harry Potter and the Cursed Child. Working in pairs or individually can they create headlines or quotations as if taken from reviews that can be used to encourage people to see the show. You may choose to use real-life examples as a stimulus. Students should be guided towards short, snappy statements and may also wish to use a thesaurus to extend vocabulary. Writing a review – write a review of the production for your school newspaper or magazine. You may wish to read a theatre review first, online or in a daily newspaper to identify the key features of a theatre review.

- **GOALS:** Working in pairs allocate each pair up to three characters from the play. They should then discuss what they feel each of those characters desire most in the play; what is

their goal? They may then reflect on how the goals may change or develop with the action of the play. "Scorpius" – for his father to see him act bravely and know him, to find great friends, to make Rose his friend. Working individually ask students to note down their own goals perhaps in terms of family or school or personal hobbies. Do they recognize any similarities with any characters in the play? You may go on to discuss how our goals affect our behavior and relationships and/or how those goals might be achieved.

- **FAVORITE MOMENTS:** Working as a whole class revisit the First Thoughts sticky notes, the Review headlines and Circle Highlights. Ask students to select their own favorite moment and working individually write a paragraph explaining WHY this moment was effective. Aim to use only one or two sentences to explain what happened in the moment and the rest of the paragraph to explain how the moment was presented and why it was effective. You may want students to swap paragraphs and use some simple marking criteria to look for how effectively they are focusing on how and why moments were effective.

- **SURPRISE:** Think back to some of the many different locations and characters that appear in the play. Which of these surprised you or were you not expecting? Select one of your favorite unexpected moments either in terms of location or character and discuss with a partner why it was so enjoyable.

- **FEELINGS:** Ask students to list the full range of feelings and emotions that they felt while watching the performance then alongside this create a list of the feelings and emotions seen onstage. Think back to your expectations before the performance – does anything about the two lists surprise you? How did your feelings change from the end of Act One to the end of Act Two?

- **PERFORMERS:** Students should work individually and select two actors that they would like to focus on for an extended critical response. Encourage them to select two actors who are slightly different in their performance style, for example the two actors who play Scorpius and Draco or Harry and Delphi. For each actor select two or three of their key moments in which their performance skills engaged the audience. You may wish to first brainstorm performance skills to remind students and/or model an example on the board. ⚡ The actor playing Draco engaged the audience with his physical and vocal skills. In his first appearance he stood with an upright posture and often in a very static position using little movement but suggesting to the audience a sense of control and authority. However, he communicates his underlying hurt and concern with a certain restlessness as he delivers key lines "Astoria hasn't been well" by pacing and avoiding eye contact. Similarly, he used a strong, deep voice with very clear diction sometimes almost spitting out words particularly at Harry but when talking about his family his voice became somewhat softer and more impassioned and pleading. He gave away little in his facial expressions other than to sometimes frown showing his displeasure at having to ask Harry for help and a frown to show his anger when it is refused.

CHARACTER PROFILES

HARRY POTTER

Now a father to James, Albus and Lily, Harry works as Head of Magical Law Enforcement at the Ministry of Magic and is married to Ginny Weasley. Harry struggles with the demands of parenting while still fighting against the forces of Dark Magic. Memories from his childhood, and the pain and death he endured growing up and facing Voldemort, continue to haunt his thoughts. Despite this, Harry is now a grown man devoted to his family, wife and friends, and as ever, the importance of good over evil.

HERMIONE GRANGER

Hermione is now the Minister for Magic, and is a strong leader, not afraid to stand up and confront issues her predecessors tried to ignore. She is married to Ron and has two children, a daughter Rose and a son Hugo, whom she adores. Her close friendship to Harry remains as they work together as a team at the Ministry. Her fond frustrations with her husband Ron remind us of the many squabbles they had at school, but their devotion to each other is clear.

RON WEASLEY

A loving father and husband, Ron has two children that he looks after alongside running his own joke shop, Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. Affable as ever, Ron is a stalwart friend to Harry and a reliable and affectionate husband to Hermione. As in his youth, Ron is determined and quick to offer help to support Harry and defend the wizarding world.

GINNY POTTER

Married to Harry, Ginny works as a sports editor for the Daily Prophet. She stands alongside Harry as a supportive wife but also has to show great patience as he struggles with his relationship with his son Albus, while still grappling with his past. She understands Harry's troubled sleep and dreams and knows when he is not being totally open with her.

DRACO MALFOY

Just as devoted to his family as Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy is utterly committed to protecting his son Scorpius while battling against rumors about him and his parentage. Draco continues to mistrust Harry Potter and his many successes and openly attacks the decisions of the Ministry of Magic to try and get them to do what he thinks best. Always immaculately dressed, Draco reveals that for all his appearances of anger, his actions are just as rooted in love and family as the other characters.

ALBUS POTTER

The middle child of Harry Potter, Albus struggles with the weight of his father's reputation and past. He doesn't fit into Hogwarts in the way he thinks is expected of him. Surprised to find himself placed in Slytherin, he forms a close friendship with Scorpius Malfoy, Draco's son. Determined to prove himself, Albus is quick-witted and brave though perhaps shows some of the recklessness his father occasionally showed in his youth, trying to solve problems without fully grasping the dangers and consequences. Much of the trouble with his father stems from Albus wanting to be his own man while also wanting to know his father more closely.

SCORPIUS MALFOY

Extremely bright, clever and well-read, Scorpius can't wait to begin life at Hogwarts and all that will entail but he is well-aware of the rumors that surround his parentage. Close to Albus's and Scorpius's mother and keen to impress his father, he has a great deal to endure but reveals himself to be a devoted friend, brave wizard and extremely optimistic and enthusiastic young man. Scorpius is a character who never gives up and isn't afraid to speak his mind when necessary.

ROSE GRANGER-WEASLEY

Ambitious, clever and hard-working, Rose shares many of her attributes with her mother, Hermione and her father, Ron. She is eager to get to Hogwarts and begin her life there. Rose tries to remain friends with her cousin Albus, and despite drifting apart during the course of the action, it is clear she is likely to remain part of Albus's life, and perhaps Scorpius's, forever.

STAGING THE PLAY

Magic and Illusion

- A world of magic and illusion is created from the very outset of the play. Ask students to describe how the wizarding world is brought to life in the production. They may list aspects of the set and design but also moments of magic demonstrated by props or movement.

- You may wish to remind students of some of the following:

  Wands, sweets, bookcase in Hermione's office, Dementors, telephone entry to the Ministry of Magic, transformation using Polyjuice Potion, a Patronus, Draco and Harry's duel, Trolley Witch (exploding pasties and transfiguring hands into spikes), Expelliarmus spell.

  It will be more constructive to focus on the effect the magic has on the audience rather than trying to deconstruct how effects were created.

- Staircases – two large staircases on wheels can be moved across the stage by performers to create the illusion of the infamous moving staircases at Hogwarts. As performers walk up and down the stairs, often while they are in motion, the illusion of a constantly changing space and shape is created. The sense of traveling from one place to another around the school, and also the atmosphere of time and space shifting is enhanced. It also creates a sense of the characters confusion as they try and solve the problems of the narrative. The staircases also serve a practical purpose of creating a range of other settings including a platform from which Hermione can deliver her opening at the special meeting at the Ministry and a place from which students can listen in on Professor McGonagall's office. The effect of movement is also enhanced through the use of music with faster tempo and louder music used when scenes suggest the frantic atmosphere of time moving and a slower, more ethereal and sometimes threatening mood created by music in more sinister or eerie scenes.

- One of the most powerful moments of staging is at the end of Act One when the Dementors descend onto the stage. Can you describe how this moment was created using a combination of performance and design? What impact did it have on you and audience members around you? ⚡ The Dementors' appearance at the end of Act One is highly effective. Performers shrouded in long black and grey Japanese organza draped long over their bodies concealing their exact shape and face, swoop across the stage, eerily close to the audience. They appear to lean and reach out towards us as if trying to grab our souls. This movement is accompanied by a sound that begins as a shrill whisper and grows to a horrible screeching and screaming that gets louder and louder to the point of considerable discomfort before snapping off to silence and a complete blackout. The moment is extremely chilling and terrifying.

- 😊 It can be difficult to create fear and suspense on stage. In small groups with one person acting in a director role, create a short sequence without dialogue where one or more figures like a Dementor approaches an individual or the audience in such a way that creates the same kind of atmosphere and response. You may wish to consider movement and gesture, use of levels, masks, costume, stillness vs movement, music and sound.

MOVEMENT

- The early scenes of Act One create a sense of the passing of time as well as the infamous train journey aboard the Hogwarts Express. Discuss how this was created through the use of movement and simple props (cloaks and suitcases) in the production. 😊 Working in large groups or perhaps even as a whole class devise a sequence of action that suggests a busy train station and then a large number of people travelling by train. You may wish to create a soundscape or use simple music to enhance the action but should focus primarily on individual and collective movement to create the sense of travel.

- We see Albus, Rose and Scorpius starting school at Hogwarts in the sequence that looks to capture some of the excitement and nervousness of their first day at school. How did this sequence make you feel? How do you think it captured the feelings of some of the characters? 😊 Working in groups create a sequence of action that uses movement, gesture and facial expression to convey the feelings of different students on their first day at school. You may wish to think back and draw on your own experiences of your first day. Your movements should suggest a range of different possible emotions and feelings and you may wish to add music to the sequence to suggest an overall mood or feeling.

- The opening of Act Two looks to establish that we are no longer in a world where Voldemort was defeated at the Battle of Hogwarts. This is a world where Dark Magic reigns. How has the changed state and atmosphere been created through movement? ⚡ Movements are jerky, aggressive and hard. There are strong connotations of a militaristic regime, suggestive of repression and control, echoed in the repeated gesture of wrists bound. This is all enhanced with the use of black costumes and cloaks that violently swirl and seem to conceal and remind the audience of the swirling movements of the Death Eaters. The performers move as a group and create harsh straight lines and shapes that again suggest control and strength. The final diamond shape converging on the audience suggests the size and scale of an army that is controlling the world. 😊 Working in groups of four or six can you create a similar sequence that suggests the same intense atmosphere of repression and control? You may wish to use music to enhance the sequence. One approach would be to create three sequences in pairs that you present to the rest of the group which you then work on bringing together to create the same dynamic conclusion seen in the production.

- Think back to the staging of the scenes from the Triwizard Tournament. How was the sense of the crowd watching the challenges achieved? What did the crowds add to those moments? 😊 Working as a large group create a sequence of action using movement and sound that conveys the sense of a crowd watching an event, perhaps a sporting event or competition. How can you use a range of performance skills including gesture, facial expression and levels as well as sound and voice, to convey the feelings and emotions of the crowd? Consider how you would stage the scene so that the audience are convinced something exciting is happening without actually seeing the event itself.

Professors, some of these tasks are thinking points or questions for discussion while others result in a more formalized response.

Friendship

"I CAN DO IT WITHOUT YOU – BUT I WANT YOU THERE – BECAUSE I WANT US TO DO THIS TOGETHER."

ALBUS POTTER

- When Rose and Albus first board the Hogwarts Express, Rose is keen to concentrate on carefully choosing who to be friends with. Albus seems unsure and says that choosing who you want to be friends with for life seems scary. What is your experience of first making friends? Can you "choose" who to be friends with? If so, how would you decide? Think back to your own experience, perhaps on your first day at school or first time at a new club or activity – how did you become friends with people?

- Rose thinks that everyone will want to make friends with Albus and herself because of their family name and status. Do you think that can affect or create friendships? What factors do you think create friendships? In pairs make a list or spidergram to share with the class. ⚡ Possible suggestions: age, geography, family connection (parents know each other, sibling), shared experience, shared interest, similar style or clothes, similar attitudes or morals.

- Scorpius is clearly nervous about making friends knowing that the rumors surrounding his parentage might affect people – particularly a Potter or Granger-Weasley – from being friends with him. His mother has given him some sweets saying they might help make friends. Do you agree? Have you ever used a similar tactic to help create friendships?

- Just before they find the Time-Turner, Scorpius says to Albus that there is "a reason we found each other". Do you have a friendship that gives you a similar feeling?

- Harry knows the importance of his friendship with Ron and Hermione in helping him survive Hogwarts and even helping to save his life. We also learn that both Draco and Ginny envied the wonderful friendships Harry had. Draco goes on to suggest that Tom Riddle's loneliness may have been in part what led him to becoming Voldemort and that Harry must protect Albus from his own loneliness. Thinking back over the story why do you think some characters become such good friends? Can you think of examples from the play where friendship is important? Think back to scenes that show friends sharing good times, sharing problems, offering companionship and giving advice. In small groups discuss why friendships are so important? You need not refer to personal examples but may wish to do so.

- Write about a personal friendship of yours and why it is important.
  Differentiation – for a more basic task focus on describing the friend and narrating the friendship; a more advanced task would assess the qualities of the friendship and evaluate why the friendship is important. You may also wish to allow the option of writing about a friendship from the production rather than a personal friendship depending on the dynamics of your group.

"YOU MUST SEE HIM AS HE IS, HARRY. YOU MUST LOOK FOR WHAT'S WOUNDING HIM. DON'T BE BLINDED BY YOUR LOVE."

ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

Professors – do make clear that for this section students need not discuss their own families unless they wish to and no one should refer to a real family other than their own. They can choose to focus on families depicted in the production (Potters, Malfoys, Granger-Weasleys, Diggorys) or use families from other books, films or television shows to explore these questions.

- We see Harry and Ginny desperately trying to protect their son and worrying about him. The second conversation between Dumbledore and Harry at the Ministry also explores how Dumbledore tried to be a father figure to Harry but couldn't protect him as he wished to. In what ways do the characters in the play try to protect their children and how similar is that to the ways your parents try to protect you? – Think of an example and in pairs, compare your thoughts.

- "You are a constant curse on my family" – both Draco and Amos Diggory see Harry as responsible for the fortunes of their families. How important is it for the audience to hear these ideas about Harry? Does it affect what the audience think of him?

- Albus and Scorpius both have difficult relationships with their fathers. During the heated argument in Act One, Albus says he wishes Harry weren't his Dad and Harry says he sometimes wishes Albus weren't his son. What was your reaction to this moment? Did it surprise you? Why do you think Harry became so frustrated with Albus? Working in small groups discuss what you think makes a good father. You may draw on some of the moments from the play or think of your own ideas.

- Scorpius, perhaps out of friendly solidarity, confides that he sometimes thinks he can see his Dad thinking “how did I produce this?”. Discuss in pairs or small groups what can make relationships between parents and children difficult? Consider what might cause problems, how they might be resolved and when families might be closest? You should draw on what unfolded in the production as a starting point.

- Think back to the end of the play, how do you think the relationship between Harry and Albus has changed? You may wish to compare the closing scene of the play and the conversation between father and son with the earlier argument in Act One.

- Following the first attempt to go back in time Harry decides that he is no longer concerned with Albus liking him, instead he wants only Albus’ obedience in order, he believes, to protect him. Do you think Harry is right? Should parents be concerned with their children liking them or obeying them?

- Starting school is often an important stage in beginning to develop our identities. At Hogwarts which house you are in becomes a significant part of your identity. When Albus is put into Slytherin by the Sorting Hat, Rose exclaims “This is not how it’s supposed to be”. How did this scene make you feel? What do you think of Slytherin house or any of the other houses? 😇 Re-enact the scene where the Sorting Hat is making its selection. You may choose to present the Sorting Hat as it is staged in the production or you may devise another method. Focus on showing the reactions of those around Albus, including Rose and perhaps Scorpius, Professor McGonagall, James Potter and other Slytherins. Try and get across to your audience a range of different feelings through their reactions.

- Draco suggests that growing up is the hardest job in the world. Do you agree with this statement? What do you think leads him to say this? You may wish to comment on Albus’ realization that his actions were rooted in feeling that he constantly had something to prove. 🪶 Write a persuasive article for your school newspaper in which you argue either for or against the statement that growing up, rather than parenting, is the hardest job in the world.

- 🦅 Can you think of any examples in your life where an important element of your identity might be expected to be the same as your parents? Choice of career, sporting or artistic skills or physical attributes? Discuss in small groups how it feels to share in elements of your parent’s identity and how it feels to be different.

"THE TRUTH IS A BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE THING, AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE TREATED WITH GREAT CAUTION."

HARRY QUOTING ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

- The link between rumor and truth is established early in the play and much of the action is dependent on trying to prove truth in the face of rumor. In pairs quickly make a list of all the rumors you can remember from the story in the production.

- Scorpius says "I know what the rumor is, and it's a lie." How does Scorpius seem affected by the rumor that surrounds his parentage? He tries to use his physical similarity to his father to disprove the rumor – his hair, his nose, and he is quick to address it rather than ignoring it. Do you think this helps? Why might this rumor be so powerful? Why and how do rumors become so powerful? In small groups create a short scene where students are gossiping about the rumors about a new student at school. What might they discuss and what are their sources? Would anyone defend the student or speak against the rumors? (Teacher note – ensure this scene is entirely fictional – no names need to be used)

- Draco seems to think that Harry refuting the rumors surrounding Scorpius would put an end to the story. Do you think this would work? Why or why not?

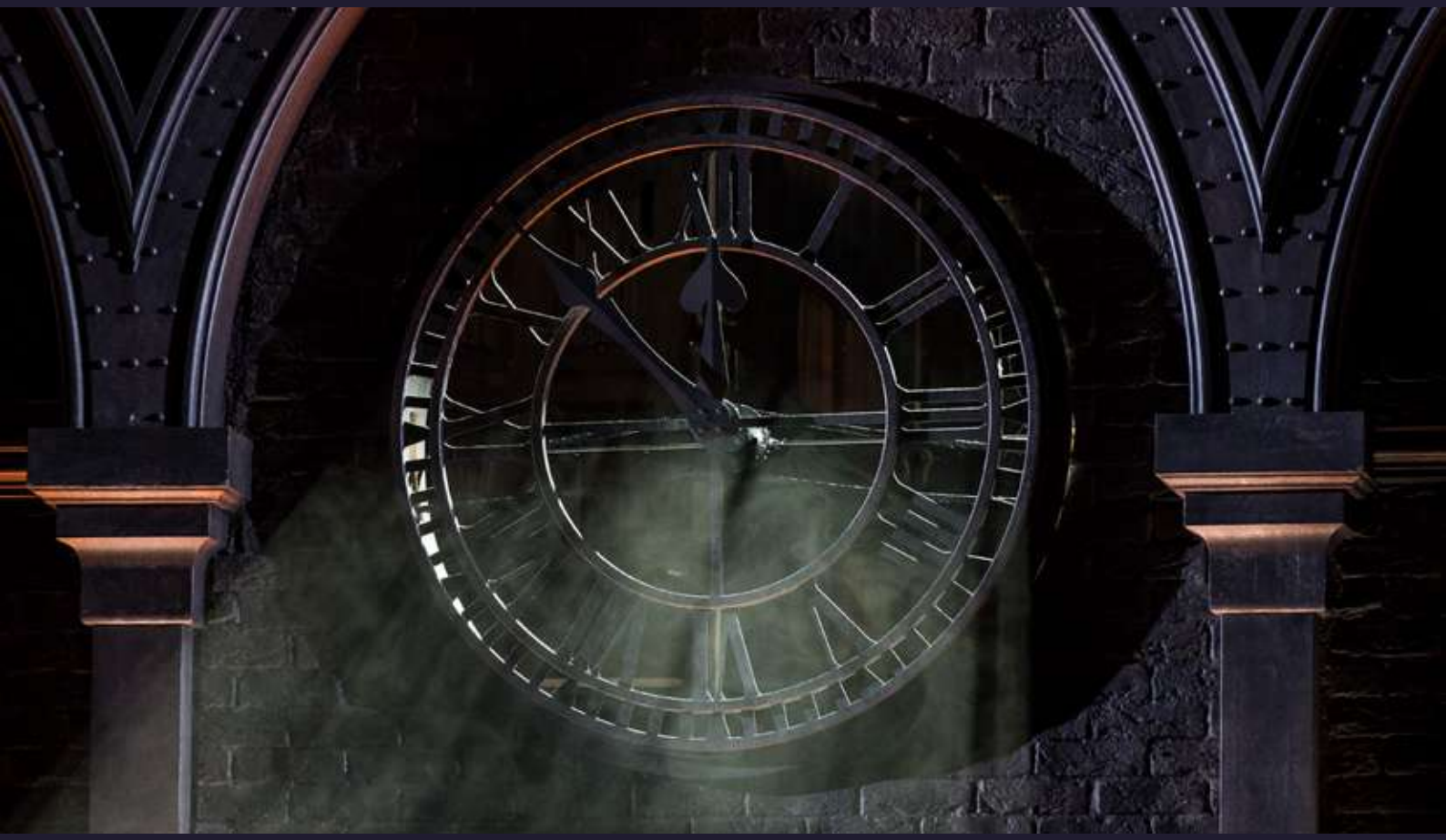
- Draco is initially dismissive of Hermione's concern about Voldemort's return referring to the regular rumors that appear in the Daily Prophet about his return. What part do you think the press and media play in creating rumors in the real world?

"THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE PAST."

DRACO MALFOY

- Harry has many connections to the past that are explored in the production. Think back and in pairs discuss as many references as you can remember to his life as a child. The Triwizard Tournament, the blanket from his mother, the Sorting Hat, his relationship with Dumbledore, Hermione's Time-Turner, Bane and the Battle of Hogwarts, the Invisibility Cloak and Marauder's Map and his scar hurting.

- Albus says "A mistake has been made and we're going to right it" and this is his reason for using the Time-Turner. He wants to help correct what he sees as one of his father's past mistakes and is convinced he must do it. Does Albus seem to understand the power of time and changing it? What are the general consequences of Albus and Scorpius returning to the past? Why do you think Albus is so convinced he must correct the past? Think back to your work on families and identity. You may also consider how the production explores Albus seeing this as "a journey" – what is it a journey of or towards?



- In the second act of Act One how is it revealed that time has been changed by the first visit back to the Triwizard Tournament? How significant are these changes? Are they what you would expect? You may also want to consider what doesn't change. The changes after the second visit back in time are even more dramatic and severe. What do you remember has been changed? ⚡ First visit: Ron and Hermione don't get married and therefore Rose isn't born (or Hugo), Hermione becomes a professor at Hogwarts and not Minister for Magic, Albus has been placed in Gryffindor. Second visit: Harry is dead, the world is under the control of Voldemort and Dark Magic, Dolores Umbridge is Headmistress of Hogwarts, Professor Snape is alive and still teaching at Hogwarts.

- Delphi says "Today you get an opportunity few are given – today you get to change history – to change time itself". Working on your own think back to an event or moment in your own life that you would like to go back to and change. What would you have to change and why would you want to change it? Would changing the event have any other consequences? ⚡ This need not be an entirely serious task particularly if you are aware of any sensitivities in the class – you can ask students to focus on a more light-hearted or trivial change such as stopping an embarrassing mistake or improving a sports result or performance.

- Ask students to brainstorm how the theme of time is reinforced through the set design and other design and performance elements.

- A large clock adorns the set and appears to be ticking. In the sequences where time is reversed the clock reverses and we see the hands turning quickly backwards.

- The sound effect of loud ticking speeding up accompanies sequences of time changing

- Lowered lighting levels and flashes

- Swirling cloaks and robes

- Rapid entrances and exits across the stage

- Use of the revolving stage

- Moving staircases

- Described in the script as “a never-world of time change”, the passage of time early in Act One is conveyed through a continuous sequence of short scenes to show the years passing for Albus at Hogwarts. Performers use their robes and cloaks in a grand swishing movement to cover the moving of props and set creating the illusion of things disappearing, and suitcases acting as train seats as well as luggage can quickly create the multiple train journeys departing from King’s Cross without needing a fixed set. The use of a revolving stage further conveys the sense of movement as scenes blend into each other from the Sorting Hat to Quidditch.