



THE NIGHT WATCH

By Sarah Waters. Adapted by Hattie Naylor.

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TEACHER RESOURCE

This resource has been created by the Royal Exchange Participation & Learning Team. It has been written with Key Stage 3, 4 & 5 Drama and English teachers in mind, but many of the activities can be adapted to suit other subject areas and age groups. The resource aims to enhance students' understanding of THE NIGHT WATCH rehearsal process and spark interesting conversations about the production.

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OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

- Interview with Sarah Waters: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=I3SLIByVXUI>
- THE NIGHT WATCH trailer: www.royalexchange.co.uk/whats-on-and-tickets/the-night-watch

A PLAY ABOUT POST-WAR BRITAIN

I thought everything would change, after the war. And now, no one even mentions it. It is as if we all got together in private and said whatever you do don't mention that, like it never happened - Helen, Act 1 Scene 4

On 5 July 1945, Winston Churchill addressed a baying crowd at Walthamstow dog track. The year before, the Queen was spat at in the East End. Both of these events sum up the mood as the Second World War came to a close.

THE NIGHT WATCH (adapted from the novel by Sarah Waters of the same name) explores this sense of bitterness through the interwoven stories of Kay, Helen, Duncan and Viv. These 4 central characters have all lived through the trauma of war - with its constant threat of death and destitution - and experienced greater freedom in terms of their gender roles and sexualities. At the end of the war, the characters have to navigate the inevitable shift back to traditional roles.

THE PROSECUTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY

When the Labour government under Clement Attlee won a landslide victory in 1945, a number of political reforms were made to improve the standard of living in Post-War Britain. These reforms included the raising of the school leaving age to 16, a free health service (the NHS) and a house building programme.

However, it took over 20 years for a bill to legalise homosexuality to make its way through the House of Commons, despite the fact that the war had offered more opportunities for people to express their sexualities. As is shown in Act 2 Scene 4 of THE NIGHT WATCH, the Blitz and blackout procedures provided opportunities for liaisons at a moment when the authorities had more pressing concerns to attend to.

The legislation passed in 1965 was only a part victory. Gay people could still be accused of 'gross indecency' and subjected to electroshock, drug-based and behavioural therapies. As a result of this, relationships had to exist clandestinely in Post-War Britain, shrouded and buried by a society ill at ease with a whole spectrum of sexuality that had been given greater freedom during the war years.

WHY NOT?

Split your class into 4 groups and give each group one of the play's central characters:

- Kay
- Helen
- Duncan
- Viv

Give each group 2 extracts from the play (see APPENDIX A for suggestions) and challenge them to create 2 still images showing their character during the war and after the war. Reflect on the differences in each set of still images: how did each character's life change when the war ended? Did their lives change for the better, or for the worse?

ADAPTING A NOVEL FOR THE STAGE

Olivier-nominated playwright Hattie Naylor has created a thrilling and theatrically inventive adaptation of Sarah Water’s novel. But adapting a novel for the stage is not an easy task - particularly when the story moves backwards in time through the devastation of the London Blitz and threads together the stories of 4 different characters!

When undertaking this challenge, Hattie had to consider the different characteristic features of novels and plays. For instance:

NOVELS	PLAYS
Writing and reading a novel is usually a solitary activity.	Plays need action that can be performed by actors. Creating a play is a collaborative process involving writer(s), director(s) and designer(s).
Novels often include narrative, detailed description and direct and indirect speech and thought.	Thoughts are revealed through action as well as speech.
Reading time may extend over a period of days, weeks or even months.	Plays are usually 2-3 hours long and watched in one sitting by a live audience.
The viewpoint in a novel is usually from a first or third person perspective	Plays tend to be from an objective viewpoint: the action shows events instead of commenting on them.
Novels may use symbols or other figurative language to build meaning.	Performances are accompanied by music and lighting to add atmosphere and tension.

In order to turn THE NIGHT WATCH into a play, Hattie had to simplify the story and think of ways of turning the descriptions in the book into action for the stage.

One decision was to make Kay the central character. This is highlighted in the production when all of the actors come on stage dressed as Kay and perform choral movement alongside her. For example:

Act 1 Scene 1

A small room in a large house. KAY sits, rolls a cigarette. Members of the cast enter and also roll a cigarette, and follow her movement in the space. KAY wears a shirt and pants. We spend time with KAY and her solitude.

The other central characters from the novel (Helen, Viv and Duncan) are still featured in the play, but Kay’s experience is given the most weight on stage. This helps the audience to follow the narrative of the play and feel connected to the action, because they see it happen through the eyes of one character.

Another decision was to use lighting and sound to help take the audience back in time through WW2. A combination of sound effects (e.g. bomb blasts) and excerpts of popular music help to signal to the audience that the time period is changing, and removes the need for a description.

ADAPTATION ACTIVITY

In APPENDIX B, there is an extract from the **novel** that describes the character of Kay. Ask your class to read the extract and make a list of describing words that sum up what the character is like (e.g. fragile, sad, lonely...).

Ask your class to then have a go at reading the extract from the play in which the audience first meets Kay (also in APPENDIX B). How successful is the scene in capturing the character? What techniques has Hattie Naylor used in order to communicate the character to an audience?

Now write a list of words that describe the place that Kay is inhabiting in the extract from the novel. Using that list, challenge your class to think how they might use the following elements to communicate that place to an audience:

- Scenery
- Props
- Lighting
- Music

WHY NOT?

After watching the play at the Royal Exchange, try out these talking points with your class:

- What did you think of the structure of the story? Would the narrative have been different if it had been linear as opposed to going backwards?
- The play is partially at least about secrets. How did you feel when secrets were 'revealed' about each character? What did you think of the end being their beginnings?
- What did you make of the Duncan/Mundy/Fraser triangle? Is Duncan in prison even after release?
- We know lots about WW2, but did you learn anything new about the period? For instance, did you know that prisoners were kept in their cells during air raids while guards hid in their shelters?
- What did you think of the sections of choral movement? What was it like seeing the story from Kay's point of view?

DESIGN

THE NIGHT WATCH is a story about a city that has gone through a trauma. According to the Director, Rebecca Gatward, the play is as much about the bricks and rubble of London as it is about the emotions of the characters, and this needed to be captured in the set design.



As is always the case with set designs for the unique Royal Exchange theatre module, designer Georgia Lowe had to focus her ideas on the stage floor so as not to cause sight-line issues for the audience.

She chose a concrete grey colour to evoke the urban city landscape of Sarah Waters' novel and create a bleak and unremitting landscape for the characters to inhabit.

Lowe's design makes full use of the Royal Exchange's technical capabilities. The stage operates on 2 revolves that can move in opposite directions, allowing for the characters to walk on stage without actually going anywhere.

Part of the stage can also be flown in and out from the top of the module, creating the feeling of buildings falling apart in the Blitz. When Kay finds



Helen in the rubble at the end of the play, she is revealed underneath the part of the stage that can fly in and out, emphasising the danger and claustrophobia of London during WW2.

APPENDIX A

KAY DURING THE WAR

KAY is looking after Helen, who has been trapped in some rubble.

HELEN I'm afraid.

KAY There's no need to be, I'm here.

HELEN Would you like to be a Doctor?

KAY Not much. You?

HELEN Oh no. I knew a boy who wanted to be one.

KAY Did you?

HELEN He threw me over for another girl.

KAY Silly chap.

HELEN He's in the RAF now.
You're not in love with anyone are you?

KAY No.

HELEN Not married?

KAY shakes her head.

HELEN You're brave. I don't think I could be so brave.

KAY It's easier if you're out in it.

HELEN You full of secrets then?

KAY Oh yes, brimming with them. It's the very best way to be.

KAY AFTER THE WAR

KAY has gone to visit her friend MICKEY, who is working as a mechanic

MICKEY How have you been then?

KAY Good.

MICKEY Liar.

KAY I've been alright.

MICKEY Why didn't you come and see me?

KAY I don't know.

MICKEY Well it's good to see you, bloody good.
I've missed you. What've you been up too?

KAY I've been very busy.

MICKEY Like what?

KAY I'm in great demand.

MICKEY Doing what?

KAY Walking.

MICKEY Walking.

KAY And I go to the cinema.

Pause. MICKEY looks at her.

MICKEY On your own..?

KAY Sometimes I watch them twice. Sometimes I go in for the second half and then watch the first. People's pasts are much more exciting than their future, don't you think.

HELEN DURING THE WAR

HELEN and JULIA enter with torches. They are walking together through the black-out.

HELEN Where are we?

JULIA Hatton Garden I think.

HELEN Are we lost?

JULIA You can't get lost in London, even in the black out, even with no street signs. If you do you should be punished, like failing an exam.

HELEN And be sent to live in Brighton.

JULIA and HELEN laugh.

JULIA Yes, something like that. This way.

HELEN Where are you taking me?

JULIA To a little place I know.

HELEN and JULIA share a laugh/giggle and start holding hands as they move through the space.

DUNCAN And all the old ladies and children he's going to kill, that's what he's done in Poland, everyone knows that, everyone knows that! But they don't tell us.
 Alec said, Alec said.

VIV Duncan?

DUNCAN He said everyone who cares about important things like art and poetry should be allowed to go and live somewhere else.
 So we made a pact.
 To die.
 He's in my room.
 He did it first.
 I couldn't do it Viv.
 I couldn't do it.
 He's there on his own.
 There can't be a god.
 A god would stop the war.
 I couldn't do it.

VIV ignores him, goes offstage and returns horrified. DUNCAN is oblivious that VIV has left the room. Silence. VIV re-enters desolate and shocked and kneels next to her brother.

DUNCAN AFTER THE WAR

MRS ALEXANDER is showing FRASER around a factory. He notices DUNCAN.

FRASER Pearce! How the devil are you?

DUNCAN I. (*dawning on him*) Fraser?

FRASER is clearly delighted to see DUNCAN.

DUNCAN You look.. different.

MRS ALEXANDER How do you know each other?

FRASER We've known each other for years, years and years.

MRS ALEXANDER Good, well, that should help the article.

DUNCAN (*panicking*) The.. the article!?

MRS ALEXANDER Mr Fraser is writing an article on the factory for the Evening Post Duncan, and he wanted to interview a member of staff and so, I immediately thought of you. He'll want a photo too. Will that be acceptable Duncan? *DUNCAN hesitates.*

MRS ALEXANDER Such a good boy Mr Fraser, and I suppose you know his Uncle then, an invalid, an invalid! And yet Duncan looks after him. He reads too, don't you Duncan, you read?

DUNCAN mumbles an embarrassed response.

He reads. But then if you're old friends you'll know that.

FRASER

Yes.

VIV DURING THE WAR

VIV enters, exuberant. She's in a coat and hat, taking it off as she talks excitedly. She is carrying a tin of peaches and a tin of evaporated milk. She talks to her brother, Duncan.

VIV

Sorry I'm late back. Am I late?
I'll put the kettle on.

VIV giggles.

I've peaches and cream.
Tinned peaches of course and evaporated milk,
Condensed milk, no evaporated.
A man gave them to me.
On the train.
He was, well he was ever so nice, Duncan, he was so, so nice.
He was stuck in a toilet.
He was in there trying not to pay for a ticket.
They all do that. They shouldn't have to pay at all if they're in the
army.
He was in his uniform.
You'd think they'd let the army ride free.
He was in uniform, oh I said that. He looked ever so, ever so,
scrummy you know, ever so.
His Teeth. His teeth were great.
Well I know you shouldn't speak to strangers on trains.
But well, this was different.
I mean he was honest.
On leave to see his family.
Two children he said.
But he was so nice. Reggie. That's his name,
Reggie.
Made me oh, just.
(she giggles)
Peaches and cream and evap.

VIV AFTER THE WAR

FRASER, an old friend of Viv's, has turned up at her office at the end of the day

VIV *(gently)*

It's the end of the day. If you'll excuse me.

FRASER

Let me take you for a tea at least?
Just to talk a little longer, let me see if I can help you a bit.

VIV

I can't. I'm meeting someone.

FRASER

Well. He's a lucky fellow, whoever he is.

VIV

How like a man to assume that I'm meeting another man.

FRASER Oh. Sorry. My Apologies.

VIV Oh, go on then. I'm not sure if she'll be there.

FRASER You've not arranged to meet your friend?

VIV shakes her head.

VIV I saw her the other day, she was waiting for a bus but then the bus came and, I'm hoping if I go back at the right time, she might be there again.

FRASER How do you know her?

VIV She.. lent me something in the war.

FRASER What?

VIV ..

FRASER Sorry, I'm prying.

VIV No. No. sorry.

FRASER You don't have to tell me.

