

Student 4: High Achieved

NZQA Intended for teacher use only

Research and analysis of the text for performance.:**Identifying the intention of the playwright – *The Katrina Project: Hell or High Water* by Michael Marks and Mackenzie Westmoreland**

This play is based on real interviews of survivors from Hurricane Katrina. The play follows a diverse group of characters as they reflect in and experience the devastation, heartbreak, anger and ultimately the hope of the thousands affected by the category 5 Storm. ①

Identifying the ideas, themes and messages within the chosen text

Hope came out of the tragedy and although Hurricane Katrina caused havoc, hurt and destruction, it also brought the community of New Orleans together so they could rebuild their city and their lives. The flood was on such an enormous scale that many people would have felt consumed by it and would have felt completely isolated when they were surrounded by water. People were in darkness (power cuts) and were helpless when this event struck in 2005. ①

Establishing the historical and social background of the text

The student has evidence of factual information on Hurricane Katrina in the portfolio. For example: Hurricane Katrina was one of the strongest storms to impact the coast of the USA during the last 100 years. From the Gulf states, the loss of life is unknown but will likely reach well into the hundreds possibly higher. It is clearly one of the most devastating natural disasters in recent US history.

As Hurricane Katrina hit during George Bush's time in office, the play talks about issues and feelings felt towards him by Americans regarding Bush's reaction and actions he took/had when he was first alerted to the tragedy. ①

Considering the development of the characters and action throughout the text

As the play is set in New Orleans which is a southern state. This accent could prove difficult for the audience to understand, hence I have chosen not to have accents, yet to keep the feel of the city I use the expression verbally and visually. The characters reminisce about the hurricane. I want to slow this down, in order to give the actors time to develop the emotion behind the story and engage the audience. I would like to try and show more of the imagery physically ④ and show their grief, loss and anger.

Each character has been analysed briefly: Kathleen Blanco is the former Governor of New Orleans, she helped to organise the relief effort by contacting President Bush and getting more support. Her presence on stage will be strong and yet when she tries to reassure the tired people of New Orleans, I want to show some vulnerability and hurt.

Formulating an explanation of the director's production concept.

I have chosen to structure my piece of theatre around Brecht's Epic theatre style. I want to capture Brecht's ideas about getting the audience to be more than just spectators, but walk away thinking about ideas and issues raised within the play. I feel that by having less complicated props and set, the audience won't be distracted by extravagant and unnecessary props which may distract them from the important ideas featured in the play. ②

Translating the scripted text to facilitate the enactment of the script from 'page to stage'**Communicating a concept to convey the intention of the play**

Black, white and neutral colours are a key theme in Brechtian style and I feel I can use these to demonstrate the emotions and feelings surrounding the event, which was a depressing and hard time for many which suffered from the disaster. Black and white is my overall concept idea for my play. I want to capture a

somber mood as it begins just after the initial hit of the storm, capturing people in an emotional and desperate time. I want to show peoples drive for survival and the lengths they will go for their families and their lives.

Costume, props and signifiers: I have chosen back, plain outfits as I am using signifiers to identify characters and want to keep them neutral whilst they are not in a scene yet they are still in stage. The umbrella is used as a signifier for the weather presenter Jane Gibbons. I have given Reniter Hosler a clipboard and paper to represent her status within the Red Cross. I chose a blazer for Kathleen Blanco. I want to show her professional status and responsibility in the situation. I have created a PowerPoint that shows a video of Katrina hitting New Orleans, images of the weather system, damage and clean up efforts. This will be played at the beginning of the play. Music will accompany it.

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I want to use sheets and wings to narrow the space where the play will be performed. I want to narrow the space where the play will be performed to draw the audience’s eyes inwards and down towards the projector screen. Because of the location of the stage I want it to hug around the audience creating a feeling of being amongst the action and to show how the disaster created a sense of isolation and fear.

Auditioning and Casting of actors

The student has composed an audition plan consisting of warm ups / improvisations and an activity to see their ability to react/give and receive gestures.

I found it difficult to place one of the actors in a role as I have many ideas of who she could play as she tended to be the most focused and was able to deliver lines effectively for each character. I particularly like her portrayal of Larry Hampton, she showed authority and control when we read it out together and I hope to develop this if I choose to lace her as this character.

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Developing and implementing a rehearsal schedule

Three rehearsals have been planned and reflected upon. Today we began to analyse further, gong into the characters relationships and some of their key traits. For the next rehearsal I want to begin blocking and focusing on the entrances and exits for the first and second scenes making sure they have fluid transitions.

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Supporting the development of roles and dramatic action

Due to the many of the event, people and their situation being obtained from real sources, I want to capture the essence of this situation surrounding that particular person, how it affected them, how it changed them as a person and how it may affect those around them. This is important to me because I want to emphasise my choice of doing the play in Brecht’s style, showing the truth behind the words of what these people say and the best way I can think of doing this is by using more physical attributes to convey the character’s situation.

I need to work on the monologue and see whether she can evoke anymore emotions similar to those that would have been felt during the storm and how we might achieve these emotions by doing some exercises. I began today’s rehearsal with a few focus exercises working in the girl’s command of the stage by getting them to walk with different places, and use different amounts of the space and the way they hold themselves. I did this because many of the characters hold a rank of authority within the script and I want to portray this power as convincingly and effectively as I can.

The student has annotated the script with blocking diagrams and brief notes on use of drama techniques.

Guiding the production team

A script is annotated with lighting cues.

Fostering a positive and co-operative working environment to enable the production to be realised.

A contract has been created that outlines requirements for actors in terms of rehearsals, absences, performances and cast obligations.