



A PERFECT PLAY FOR THE GAMING GENERATION!

Helmet by Douglas Maxwell....a great new play to use with your students.

What is the play about?

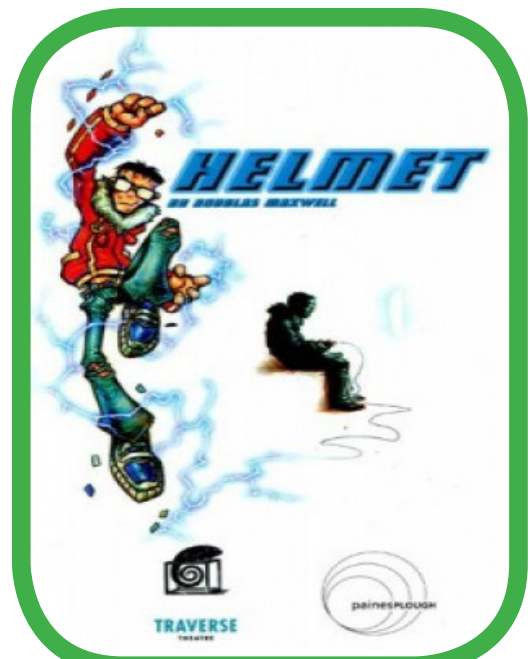
In a nutshell: we see two characters. One, Sal, a 25 year old Indian man struggling to make a living in his computer game shop. The other, Helmet, is a teenager who spends most of his time in Sal's shop. Video games are his life. Literally. The play follows the two characters on the night before the computer game shop shuts for ever. However, the characters are not created like real people-they are created to seem as if they are characters from a video game. They can lose a life, their energy depletes and can even die mid scene, causing the scene to start again. They can gain extra lives and use power boosts. Whilst their conversations are centred around video games, their words create a clever metaphor of how life mirrors video games. Soon the distinction between real life and fantasy seems to blur.

Students will admire the fact that the playwright has completely followed the format of a Playstation game (including power ups, levels and end of life). The play explores the way in which human beings deal with difficulties in life and the role fantasy and imagination plays in all of our lives, no matter what age.

The structure of the play would lend itself to some great teaching ideas and enlighten students to the idea that there are no rigid rules to drama. We don't get stage directions; we get gaming instructions. The audience are given the game instructions before the action begins and the game levels replace scenes. Topical gaming references might sound more alien to you, but you can guarantee they will ring true for your students and, in *Helmet*, many of your students will recognise themselves.

This play offers your GCSE students (or even your Year Nines, if you aren't bothered about a few tame swear words) some great chances for both original scripted and devised drama work. The play offers multiple teaching opportunities: in depth character work, the introduction of technological effects on stage, (using lighting to represent the decreasing energy and lives of the two characters), stylised movement, portrayal of emotion and many more. There really is something for everyone in this play.

A great drama game inspired by the play: pretend to be video game characters. Each time students hear a certain noise it means their energy levels have dropped or increased. Use a noise to signal death. When death occurs, characters should get up and repeat the scene only change their actions to try to avoid death.



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