

CABARET

THE MUSICAL AT THE KIT KAT CLUB

EDUCATION PACK THREE: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



Pack Three: Classroom Activities

In this pack, you'll find classroom and studio activities, and key information to help you write about the production for any Live Production Analysis required for your GCSE or A Level exams. This includes sample paragraphs about the different production elements, as well as photographs that you can annotate to help you revise later.

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You won't be able to take photos once inside the theatre so make sure you make detailed notes during the interval and after the show.

**THIS IS AN EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR EYES ONLY.
KEEP IT IN THE KIT KAT CLUB.**

'Everyone's having such a great time'

LIVE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

Before the show, allocate each person in your group to pay particular attention to specific elements listed below.

Before You Enter:

How does entrance to the Kit Kat Club differ to other theatre spaces you have visited? Note down the way in which the foyers and other public spaces are decorated.

What can you see and hear as you walk through the doors of the venue? How are you encouraged to immediately engage with the world of the production?

The Prologue:

In order to bridge the distance between 1929 and the present day, the Prologue presents a combination of dancers and musicians as the audience enter the building and eventually take their seats. How would you describe the music that you can hear? What are the different groupings of performers? Is there any kind of narrative to what you see?

How is the atmosphere of anticipation created before you enter the main auditorium?

What are the dancers and musicians wearing? How does that help you engage with the style and period of the performance?

When You Arrive At Your Seat:

Before the performance starts, create a rough sketch of the auditorium. How has Tom Scutt created the world of the Kit Kat Club? Consider colour, texture, the size of the auditorium and the size of the performance space. Where are the musicians? Are you aware of other audience members? What else can you see in the auditorium that might be integral to the production?

Watch the area around the stage – there are tables with lamps and phones. These phones ring and, if the audience answer, they are 'flirted with' by an unseen German voice (a member of the ensemble). They are served drinks and food by members of the hospitality team. How does this contribute to the atmosphere of a cabaret setting?

Act One:

As you watch the production, focus on the entrances and exits made by different characters. Although the performance space is smaller than a traditional theatre space, the design still allows for some surprises as well as the use of comic timing. Make a note of examples of these.

Unlike many musicals, there is no overture. Describe the opening moments of the production, considering lighting, sound, orchestration and visual imagery.

The production is performed in the round. How does the direction and design take advantage of this configuration in the narrative? How does that affect your responses as an audience member?

Consider how the Emcee begins to manipulate the audience. Consider use of comedy, dance and song, interaction with the audience, and interaction with characters on stage.

The ensemble is crucial to the production. Select two or three moments in Act One where they are particularly important and describe what they do, how they do it and why it is effective. This could be in musical numbers and/or during moments of dialogue.

How does the sound design in act one assist the storytelling? Set is minimal and so sound design helps to create location as well as mood and atmosphere. Select three examples of when this is achieved. This could be live or recorded sound effects, or the use of effects applied to microphones, for example.

During *Tomorrow Belongs to Me*, the lighting allows you to see other members of the audience. Why has this decision been made? How does it make you feel in relation to the song being sung?

Interval:

Reflect on how you felt at the end of Act One, which is 90 minutes long. What are your expectations in terms of narrative development, pace and tension and the outcomes for the characters on stage?

Has anything happened in the interval that maintains the idea of being in a Berlin nightclub?

Act Two:

The second half of the *Kickline* sequence changes the previously frivolous atmosphere. Describe this dance number using five adjectives.

How do the actors playing Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz create pathos in the scene where Herr Schultz tries to apologise for being drunk?

How does the Emcee create the idea of a failed marriage proposal with his wrapping of a glass and stamping on it during the scene between Schneider and Schultz? What happens after the 'window' is smashed? How does this visually represent the horror of what has just happened?

At the end of *Married* (reprise) how does the sound design reflect the Jewish wedding ceremony, hints of Nazi violence and oppression?

The Emcee sings *If You Could See Her*. How does this song create comedy and surprise before suddenly changing the atmosphere? How does this song challenge the audience and communicate the central message of the production? What is your reaction at the end of the song? How did the audience around you respond?

When returning the fruit bowl, Fraulein Schneider sings *What Would You Do?* What happens on stage during this song? How do the performers communicate their characters' reactions?

Whilst Sally is packing, the Emcee sings *I Don't Care Much*. What is your reaction to the lyrics of the song, and the way the number is staged in this production?

Describe the creation of the attack on Cliff by Max and Ernst. How do the actors deliver the dialogue and then being to use space and body language before the physical attack takes place?

Sally sings *Cabaret*. What is she wearing? How does her appearance contrast to how we see her earlier in the production? Why has the director chosen for us to see this 'version' of Sally? How do you respond as an audience member?

Describe how the actors playing Cliff and Herr Schultz create pathos and sympathy in their interaction as Cliff prepares to leave?

How is the train carriage created as Cliff leaves Berlin? Why does the Emcee play the role of the customs officer?

The script describes the company's final appearance as having '*no room for expression*'. How has the designer created this effect? What message does this communicate about Nazi Germany, and about the influence of the Emcee?

Describe the final moments of the performance up until the black out. How does is

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Analysing Costume Design

Annotate the following images to help you analyse the design. Remember to use as many technical terms as you can from the list below:













The role of the Ensemble is vital in CABARET. Madeleine Brewer notes that the company must work with complete cohesion: *'if I reach for the gin bottle, I know it's going to be there because someone in the ensemble has placed it there. The precision and spatial awareness demanded in the show is something I've never known before.'*

Q: During the production, when are you aware of the ensemble even when they're not on the main stage? How do they interact with the performance space, and with members of the audience?

DESIGN

There are several iconic stage productions of *Cabaret*. Research the following productions and explore photographs of the key design elements.

1968 production, starring Judi Dench

Bob Fosse's 1972 film, starring Liza Minelli and Joel Grey

1987 Harold Prince revival

Sam Mendes' Donmar Warehouse production, London 1993

Sam Mendes' Broadway production, 1998 starring Alan Cumming and Natasha Richardson

Once you have explored these and read the information about Tom Scutt's designs earlier in this pack, create your own design for the Kit Kat Club. Remember that there are two main locations: the interior of the Kit Kat Club, and Fraulein Schneider's house, in which Cliff and Sally share a room.

Harold Prince, 1966 (designer Boris Aronson). Look in particular at the mirror that was hung centre stage and which reflected the audience as they entered the auditorium. Tilted in different ways, the mirror could reflect the audience and their contemporary political situations, or the cabaret performers whose acts were intentionally distorted using the mirror to make them appear grotesque.

As well as the design elements, you may wish to track the interpretation of Emcee throughout these productions. In particular note that Joel Grey and Alan Cumming appear more than once in the role. How do these roles change as the time period in which they were performed also changed?

Research the work of George Grösz and Otto Dix. Both Tom Scutt and Sam Mendes referred to these artists' work during their research and Mendes even pinned images to the walls of the rehearsal room.

Tom Scutt's research sources also included drag costumes, with influences from Drag Race and drag artist Instagram accounts. Importantly, Tom suggests that when creating a design concept, we should not only lean into our instinct but, crucially, *'drive in the opposite direction. Extract the characters from their context and ask yourself what they would wear now'*.

Choose a character from CABARET and design two costumes from contrasting moments in the production. Justify your choices by annotating your design and presenting your ideas to your class or group.

MUSIC

There are a variety of different influences on the Kander and Ebb score, and in the way in which this production uses musical effects and orchestration.

With your group, research the following different styles of music:

Klezmer: an instrumental style of music used by Jewish communities in Eastern Europe particularly for celebrations and religious occasions

German jazz of the 1920s In order to write his score, Kander needed to research and absorb the sounds of the period. This included the music of Pater Kreuger (pianist) and the cabaret songs of Friderick Hollaender. Kander also credited female cabaret artists including film star Marlene Dietrich, Rosa Valetti and Lotte Lenya. (Lotte Lenya became the first actor to play Fraulein Schneider.

German propaganda songs: In *Tomorrow Belongs To Me*, Emcee sings a very nationalistic style anthem, which is accompanied by a recording of the actors voice arranged as a choir. This is played as a click track while Emcee sings live on stage.

Extension: Write a song that Sally or Cliff could sing at the end of CABARET as a solo, depending on what you think happens to them at the end of the story.

DANCE

Research Task

1. Much of the choreography of CABARET defies expectations of what the traditional choreography might be. Julia Cheng (Choreographer) and Kayla Lomas-Kirton (Resident Choreographer) have backgrounds in styles of dance other than musical theatre.

Explore Julia Cheng's company House of Absolute by watching their videos [here](#).

Explore Birdgang's films [here](#). These include videos choreographed by Kayla Lomas-Kirton.

Where can you see influences of Julia and Kayla's dance specialisms in the production?

2. One of the dance styles that is prevalent in the production is **waacking**. This is a dance style associated with street dance, and places an emphasis on arm movements. It takes martial arts as one of its influences. Discuss this with your group members, focussing on Mein Herr (Act One) and Kick Line (Act Two).

Describing what you saw:

In the previous pack, you'll see photographs of posters with key words that describe the dynamic of each dance. In pairs, what do you think might be on the posters for *Two Ladies*, *Don't Tell Mama* and *Mein Herr*?

Willkommen is the opening number of the show, introduced only by a blackout and a drum roll. The Emcee appears in the middle of the stage and commands our attention via a number of stylised movements and gestures before creating a lively dance which is reminiscent of childish play and of puppetry. The choreography also includes a series of poses or tableaux. At some moments, the Emcee is very static but at other times he moves with a fluidity and light-footedness which provides strong contrast with his more sinister appearance later in the show.

Choose ONE minute of music from *Willkommen*, which you can find on Spotify [here](#). Choreograph a small section for a soloist and ensemble based on:

- Varied travelling and jump sequences
- Light footwork – this should be playful, fun and with an inviting energy
- Phrases focusing on hand movements
- Appearing from unexpected places
- Shapes created by the ensemble (lines, circles, different groupings)

You may also like to explore the challenges of choreographing this piece in the round.

'I'm a writer'

WRITING ABOUT CABARET

If you're writing about the production for a Live Production question, use the ideas below to structure and support your ideas.

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A few things to remember:

- Your reader may not have seen the production. They should be able to act out, or draw, what you are describing.
- You do not need to tell the story of the production. Instead, describe moments from throughout the production that help you respond to the questions you have been asked.
- As well as describing or explaining what you saw, you must evaluate it. This means considering how successful your chosen moments were.

Before you start responding to exam-style questions, create yourself a prompt sheet below:

What are the production's intentions? What are you encouraged to think and feel?

What are the main themes of the production? Which scenes best demonstrate those themes?

What are the key technical terms to use in questions about performance, set design, costume design, choreography, direction, sound design, choreography and staging?

What was YOUR personal response to key moments in the production? How did you feel (emotional response?) and think (intellectual response)? How will you ensure that this is clear in your written answers?

Have you got moments from throughout the production that you can talk about confidently and in detail? If not, look back at the main resource pack and at the notes you made when you saw the production.

Here are some starting points for writing about the production.

Introductions

No need to tell the whole story! Keep it simple!

On (date) I saw CABARET at the Playhouse Theatre, London. This musical tells the story of the Kit Kat Club in Berlin in the late 1920s. Guided through the performance by Emcee, we see two main storylines: the relationship between Sally Bowles and Cliff Bradshaw, and the failed budding relationship between Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. The story is set shortly before the rise of the Nazis in Germany.

Describing style and genre

This production of CABARET, directed by Rebecca Frecknall creates a sense of performance as soon as you enter the theatre building. The Prologue creates the atmosphere of a piece of performance art, with musicians and dancers playing and improvising together in various areas of the theatre bars and foyers. This helps bridge the audience's experience of entering the theatre in the 21st century and then entering the Kit Kat Club for the main performance of CABARET.

CABARET is a musical, and it is non-naturalistic. In this production, the boundaries are blurred between when we are in the Kit Kat Club and when we are watching dialogue taking place in Fraulein Schneider's boarding house.

Evaluating the production's intentions

The story of CABARET exposes the audience to some difficult ideas and questions. For example, when most of the characters were singing *Tomorrow Belongs To Me*, the audience was lit as well as the actors on stage. It meant that I could see the audience across the auditorium for me and therefore forced me to consider how I would behave in this situation. The actors playing Sally, Cliff, Schneider and Schultz were successful in looking bewildered as the audience looked on helplessly as most of the characters seemed to fall prey to the Fascist ideology of the song.

One intention of the production was to show the vitality and diversity that would have existed in such cabaret clubs in the 1920s Weimar Republic. The costumes made the characters within the Kit Kat appear even more individual. For example, Lulu wore a knitted bikini top, and had a neon-tinted wig which was not what I was expecting. Accessories such as small pillbox hats, finger-wave wigs, and exaggerated make up also emphasised the individuality of both male and female characters.

Describing individual actors' performances

In the 'pineapple' scene, the actors playing Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz needed to communicate the nervousness their characters felt in their budding romance. As Schultz presented Schneider with a pineapple in a large brown paper bag, both performers

kept making eye contact and then breaking it away again as their characters became nervous. During the song *It Couldn't Please Me More*, the actors stood close together in the middle of the circular stage. However, they did not make physical contact, which created even more of a sense of nervous tension between them.

At the end of the song, Schultz has to put the pineapple back in the bag. The actors created effective comedy by moving very slowly, again maintaining eye contact. Schneider held the bag open and the actor playing Schultz slowly put the pineapple in and guided it right to the bottom of the bag. I found this moment very endearing as this is an older couple who are beginning a romance late in life. It also heightened the sense of tragedy later in the play when Schneider feels unable to continue their engagement because Schultz is Jewish.

Evaluating the contribution of set design

One of the main themes of the production is the difference between various members of society – the injustice and discrimination inflicted on some people by others who have different beliefs. The design of the stage showed this particularly well. The production is staged in the round, and there are four layers to the stage. There are three steps up to the doughnut revolve, which was used several times during production. However, the most effective use of this revolve was a parade of dolls that were placed there during act one, and which were then replaced at the end of Act Two as the Nazis' rule created displacement and removal of certain groups to the camps. I also thought that the revolve highlighted that history is cyclical and repetitive.

In the centre of the stage was a very narrow lift which allowed both the Emcee and Sally to emerge out of the stage unexpectedly. In *Tomorrow Belongs To Me*, this was used to particular effect when the Emcee conducted the characters in singing the song to chilling effect. It is a moment when the audience realise that Fascist influences are infiltrating the world in which these characters live. Because Emcee was much higher than any of the other characters, it also reminded us of how the power and influence of a few people can affect millions.

Talking about sound

Because the production is performed in the round, sound is used to create a sense of location as well as mood and atmosphere. One particularly effective moment was the use of a gramophone sound effect during Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz's engagement party. During the scene, the mood is jovial and excited as the characters mingle to celebrate. When Ernst Ludwig removes his coat and reveals a Nazi armband, the recorded sound effect of a gramophone coming to the end of a record (so it was just a repetitive crackle) made a very uncomfortable change in atmosphere. It made me feel uncomfortable because the crackling emphasised how none of the characters knew what to say or how to react. There was a sense of shock in the audience, too. A realistic sound effect such as this was successful in reminding me that real moments like this really took place. Even though this is a musical, it could still be shocking and it made me consider my own beliefs and feel sorry for Schneider and Schultz after they are betrayed by Fraulein Kost.

'What would you do?'

DEBATING TASKS

Fraulein Schneider

Fraulein Schneider is a survivor. Her first song, *So What?* demonstrates her ability to adapt to circumstances and absorb hardships. She is a realist and tells us *'you learn how to settle for what you get'*. However, when Herr Schultz asks how many times she has eaten alone, she answers *'twenty thousand'*. Despite her loneliness, she calls off her engagement with Herr Schultz because of the Nazis' attitudes towards the Jewish community.

Using your understanding of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, discuss your opinion of Fraulein Schneider's actions. Can you empathise with her at all? Do you feel any sympathy for her, knowing the likely ending to Herr Schultz's narrative?

What advice would you give to Fraulein Schneider about her engagement to Herr Schultz? Consider what both characters reveal about themselves throughout the narrative. Is Herr Schultz right to be so optimistic? Could love really save them through the horrors of Nazi Germany?

Cliff and Sally

Cliff encourages Sally first to travel to Paris with him, and then eventually to relocate to Pennsylvania, USA. Cliff is able to see the forthcoming conflict in Germany and wishes to protect Sally and her unborn child. Sally, on the other hand, lives a life based in fantasy and illusion which is supported by her work in the Kit Kat Club.

By travelling to America, Sally would have to give up her dreams of being a star. She would also have to conform to the demands and expectations of being a mother, and possibly a wife, which may suffocate her true ambition and sense of self. She determines to remain in Berlin, despite Cliff's pleas and obvious distress.

To what extent do you think Sally is acting irresponsibly? Consider her lifestyle at the Kit Kat Club in particular: is she as free and secure as she thinks?

At the end of the performance, both Sally and Cliff are both on the revolve with the rest of the characters. Do you think Cliff makes it out of Germany in time to escape? How do you think Sally's narrative ends?

'So who cares? So what?'

HISTORICAL CHANGE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Richard Katz, who plays Herr Schultz, sees the production as important at representing the way in which things start to change and become accepted without people realising. He says, *'there's a gradual creep as things start to feel normal, and at the moment there are people who think that gay rights, trans rights, the right to protest should not exist. There are strong views about refugee boats on the English channel. Ten years down the line, we might realise that problems actually started round about now, and we didn't notice.'*

Create a collage of newspaper front pages from the last three weeks. What do you notice about how quickly news stories appear and then disappear. What does that tell us about the news cycle, and people's appetites for recurrent news?

'But what does that have to do with us?'

HISTORICAL CHANGE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Read the poem, [First They Came by Pastor Martin Niemöller](#). How do the ideas expressed in this poem align with the narrative of CABARET?

Divide your class or group in half. One half will argue FOR and the other AGAINST the following statement:

What happens in CABARET is inevitable. Fraulein Kost, Fraulein Schneider and Sally simply do what they need in order to survive.

'Money makes the world go around'

SPENDING PRIORITIES

In the present day, we're experiencing a cost of living crisis, as well as the effects of political outcomes such as Brexit.

In a group of 3 or 4, decide on YOUR priorities if you were made Chancellor of the Exchequer. You may wish to do some research, for example information provided by charities such as:

[Shelter](#)

[Trussell Trust](#)

[Crisis](#)

Remember that you also need to cover health, education, defence, the environment, welfare, infrastructure, public services and international trade.

Having researched the most recent government budget announcements, (you can find up to date information from The Treasury [here](#)), create your own budget suggestions to tackle what you see as the priorities nationally and in your own local area.

In Money, the Emcee suggests that some people may be able to take financial problems *'on the chin, call a cab and begin to recover on (their) fourteen carat yacht'*. What statement is the Emcee making here that we might apply to the current economic climate, and indeed the audience at the production you have just seen?

'Relax. Loosen up. Be yourself'

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Sally, Schneider, and Kost live in a world where being a woman is near impossible. Although they have survived, they have done so at great personal cost. To what extent do you think this still applies to women in the current political, social and cultural climate? Consider the UK, but also consider countries around the world where women's rights to education, freedom of speech and personal liberty are challenged and restricted. What other films, TV, media, plays and literature deal with these issues? How does this production of CABARET compare to these?

Rebecca Frecknall and Tom Scutt agreed on the use of the suit as a symbol of both patriarchy and the removal of any sense of individual identity. Discuss how fashion and clothing aids the expression (or repression) of individual identity.

In this production of CABARET the production team have created a world in which diversity is celebrated. In addition to the storyline of Cliff's own sexuality, the idea of sex and what is 'sexy' is explored through the costume, choreography and direction in the show.

Discuss how this production welcomes and reflects the LGTBQ+ community. How is difference also celebrated in the casting of the production? Richard Katz (Herr Schultz) says, 'It's great that audiences can come to the show and see themselves reflected in what happens on stage.'

CREDITS

**This pack was written by Education Consultant Susie Ferguson
and commissioned by ATG Productions, Underbelly and AKA.**

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Laura Braid
Madeleine Brewer
Stuart Burt
Isabella Byrd
Julia Cheng
Lorna Cobbold
Lauren Dickson
Callum Scott Howells
Richard Katz
Kayla Lomas-Kirton
Tom Scutt
Jennifer Whyte
Liv Buckley