

***Going Through*, by Estelle Savasta
Translated by Kirsten Hazel Smith
Education Pack**

THEMES:

HOPE

FEMALE IDENTITY

ANCESTRAL LINEAGE & LANGUAGE

GENRE: Fantastic / Magic Realism

AGE RESTRICTION: 14+ (might have trigger warnings for sensitive students)

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS: 2 (2F)

CHARACTER LIST:

YOUNNA, adult, age not specified, deaf and communicates through sign language.

NOUR, early teens and then young adult, verbal.

SYNOPSIS:

"It's not always children's stories that happen to children."

In a poverty stricken land, Youmna, who is deaf and communicates non-verbally, is caring for Nour, until Nour is able to join her mother in Europe. One day, Nour has to make this perilous journey to the land of opportunity alone. She conjures the image of Youmna to help her through this journey's terrible ordeals. By any means necessary, she manages to travel across borders accompanied by the sound of gunfire. As Nour navigates adolescence, she discovers the woman she wants to be as she remembers the women who have come before her.

Any production should be accessible to hearing and deaf audiences, combining verbal and non-verbal communication media.

Going Through is the English premiere of Estelle Savasta's critically acclaimed French play *Traversée* (2011) and is translated by Kirsten Hazel Smith.

KEY MOMENTS:

Part I / Scene 11 - pp. 13-14 (2F)

Nour, Youmna – The mother is calling her.

Part II / Scene 5. - pp. 26-27 (2F)

Nour, Youmna – Youmna becomes a tree, and they talk (entirely non-verbal scene).

Part III / Scene 12 - (pp. 42-44) (1F)

Nour – The little box and the truth about her origins(Youmna is her mother).

STEP ONE: ASK

What questions come to the pupils' minds when they read the key scenes above? In groups, ask them to come up with questions based on the play which have no easy answers. They might want to use the themes as a starting point and consider:

- a refugee's journey and the hope for a better future
- female identity: gender and ethnic intersectional issues
- ancestral lineage and the language that connects us

Think about the themes raised above and try to combine more than one concept in each question. Here are some examples:

- What part does language play in intimacy? Have you felt connected to someone through a language?

- Based on the most up to date news of the refugee camps in Calais and their plight through the adverse weather, what do you think makes the journey they take worth taking? What could be done to help them? Who is responsible for them?
- Why is the journey harder for girls than it is for boys?

STEP TWO: EXPLORE

Exercise 1:

The group makes a circle; one pupil stands in the middle, eyes closed. Everyone else silently chooses one member of the circle to be the leader, then begins to mimic any body movements the leader makes. The person in the middle opens their eyes and tries to determine who the leader is. Once the leader is spotted, they come to the middle of the circle and close their eyes. Group repeats the process, until everybody has a go. This is a good exercise to establish non-verbal communication and identifying languages through action.

Exercise 2:

At Part I / Scene 2 (p. 2) we are introduced to the idea of a routine ritual between Youmna and Nour, which they go through quite often in their confined space.

The group is split into pairs, and asked to perform a daily task together, without using verbal communication. Tasks are to be chosen by the pair, and not shared with other pairings; they may vary - serving breakfast, getting ready to go out for a party, washing the dishes, assembling furniture, etc.... As they perform the task, the rest of the group has to shout out what they are doing. The pair can only conclude their performance if the rest of the group gets their activity right.

Participants should then compare their tasks and discuss what made a task clearer than others and how it was to communicate in a scene without using words.

Exercise 3:

Following the interpretation of what it means Youmna slowly becoming a tree on Part II / Scene 5, this exercise will require music for background(it can be chosen by the teacher, preferably instrumental only).

Individually, each pupil will take the stage and, moved by the song or musical passage chosen by the teacher, they have to show what their interpretation of becoming a tree is. Make sure to emphasise that they should follow their own pace and allow the song to guide their process. Ask them what they felt changed in their body during the process of becoming a tree? Are there similarities in their journeys?

It is important that most exercises for this play are non-verbal, as there needs to be a language built between the characters in the scene. The play can be construed as essentially a monologue, but the verbal character must be completely comfortable with non-verbal communication.

STEP THREE: FEEDBACK

Discuss what came up for the pupils. Can they relate with the plight of the characters? What was the most interesting thing they learned? What is the journey they are taking by studying this text? Bring students to return to the text and analyse what they are taking away from the exercises and for their character study - if they can be assigned their characters already.

APPENDIX

STRUCTURE:

This play is divided into three parts, fourteen scenes for the first part and thirteen scenes for both second and third parts:

Part I

Scene 1. Nour, Youmna – Character introduction.

- Scene 2.** Nour, Youmna – Routine (entirely non-verbal scene).
- Scene 3.** Nour, Youmna – Nour’s mum backstory.
- Scene 4.** Nour, Youmna – Shadow puppets bedtime story (entirely non-verbal scene).
- Scene 5.** Nour, Youmna – The absent father is mentioned.
- Scene 6.** Nour, Youmna – The list of things they own and the mysterious little box.
- Scene 7.** Nour, Youmna – Youmna’s superpowers and her relationship with the external world.
- Scene 8.** Nour, Youmna – Nour’s relationship with the external world (school).
- Scene 9.** Nour, Youmna – The journey and why the mother is not there.
- Scene 10.** Nour, Youmna – School is closed, for the girls.
- Scene 11.** Nour, Youmna – The mother is calling her.
- Scene 12.** Nour, Youmna – Insomnia pre-journey.
- Scene 13.** Nour, Youmna – Youmna cuts Nour’s hair.
- Scene 14.** Nour, Youmna – Promises and the hard goodbye.

Part II

- Scene 1.** Nour – Journey introduction, and the driver.
- Scene 2.** Nour – Remembering Youmna and the first stop.
- Scene 3.** Nour – Nour’s left alone, waiting.
- Scene 4.** Nour – Youmna is still there, like a statue (What if no one comes?).
- Scene 5.** Nour, Youmna – Youmna becomes a tree, and they talk (entirely non-verbal scene).
- Scene 6.** Nour – The second driver arrives; 31 hours late.
- Scene 7.** Nour – The bus leg of the journey, and a temporary father figure.
- Scene 8.** Nour – The watermelon lorry, and Nour remembers the woman who awaits her (she doesn’t call her ‘mother’)
- Scene 9.** Nour – The walking journey among men.
- Scene 10.** Nour – Men, guns, death and crossing the border.
- Scene 11.** Nour – A resurrection or ‘He’s alive!’
- Scene 12.** Nour – He’s not coming and the dangers of the clandestine journey.
- Scene 13.** Nour – No sign of the woman who bore Nour, but she finds a female saviour.

Part III

- Scene 1.** Nour – The new school in the new country. 12 different languages.
- Scene 2.** Nour – A medical check-up, being naked, and how you cannot hide being a girl for long.
- Scene 3.** Nour, Youmna – Watching over Nour. (entirely non-verbal scene).
- Scene 4.** Nour – Nour makes friends and the intimacy in the silence.
- Scene 5.** Nour – X-ray to prove your age, and a friend doesn't pass the test.
- Scene 6.** Nour – The college time and how good a learner she is.
- Scene 7.** Nour – The coming of age, hair grows (18 years old), the lottery where you don't get to choose the numbers, and the support of others.
- Scene 8.** Nour – Success, she gets to stay (the residence card).
- Scene 9.** Nour – The dawning of her existence (was it all pointless?).
- Scene 10.** Nour, Youmna – Waking Nour up. (entirely non-verbal scene).
- Scene 11.** Nour – Graduation and the delivery of a baby from a mum who speaks her language, sign language. The day she becomes a woman.
- Scene 12.** Nour – The little box and the truth about her origins(Youmna is her mother).
- Scene 13.** Nour – The final list and the forever-wait.