

***I Am The Wind*, by Jon Fosse
Translated by Simon Stephens
Education Pack**

THEMES:

IDENTITY

EXISTENTIALISM

SOLITUDE & COMPANY

GENRE: Absurdism

AGE RESTRICTION: 12+ (suicide)

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS: 2 (2M)

CHARACTER LIST:

THE ONE, a practised sailor and palpable depressive

THE OTHER, a nautical novice and pragmatic protector

SYNOPSIS:

The play is set in an unnamed location and at an unspecified time. Two men, The One and The Other, are on a fragile boat on a trip to sea. They have a few drinks, a bite to eat before one of them decides to push on to the open ocean. Suddenly there they are: among the distant islands, the threatening fog and gathering swell of the sea, bound together on an odyssey into the unknown.

I am the Wind sees two characters, presented to us with no names and no background, try to make sense of existence, and the choice between life and death, through the insufficient medium of language.

The play was originally written in the Norwegian in 2007 and was translated into the English language in 2011 to be performed at the Festival D'Avignon.

The play is in one scene.

KEY MOMENTS:

pp. 8-9 (2M)

The One and The Other talk about the heaviness of loneliness, a feeling which can infiltrate the soul even when in company. The One compares this feeling to a rock sinking to the bottom of the sea. Suitable for a duologue.

pp. 26-29 (2M)

The One and The Other exchange cloaked thoughts about the excitement and the fear of leaving their fate to the whims of the sea. Suitable for a duologue.

pp. 45-48 (2M)

The Other tries to make sense of their predicament at sea after The One jumps, or trips, and makes no attempt to rescue himself. Suitable for a monologue.

STEP ONE: EXPLORE

On p.8, The One talks to The Other about the discomfort of being alone with his own thoughts,

'then all I can see is myself

and all I can hear is myself
I don't like that'

What philosophical questions does this conversation raise in the students' minds? In groups, ask them to come up with questions based on the scene which have no easy answers. Think about universal themes raised and perhaps try to combine more than one concept in one question to broaden it out. For example:

- Can one still feel alone when in the company of others? Where does our solitude stem from?

Vote to select one of the questions and discuss it, keeping the fruits of your conversations (themes, further questions, provocations, points of discomfort...etc) alive as you go through the exercises below.

STEP TWO: EXPLORE

Exercise 1:

The title of this piece is 'I Am the Wind', likely in reference to The One's comparison of the lightness of the wind to freedom. The One also makes comparison to the sinking heaviness of a rock, and the bland greyness of it.

Tell the students that you will now go through an exercise through which they will become the rock and the wind. Ask them to spread out in the space and lie on their backs with their eyes closed, ask them to respond to the following questions – visually, physically, sonically:

- Ask them to visual a rock, and to call out the words they associate with 'rock'. If they need support, formulate some questions: is the rock heavy or light? What colour is it? Is it smooth or sharp?
- If they were a rock, what would their physical form in stillness be? Ask them to take on that physical form. If they were to move, what might their movement be like? Ask them to make that movement on a small scale (you may then choose to turn up the level of the movement).

- What might they sound like were they to speak as rocks? What might they say? Ask them to make that sound as they speak.
- As above, ask students to visualise wind in their mind's eye, then ask them to call out the words they associate with 'wind'.
- If they were the wind, what would their physical form in stillness be? What might their movement be like? What might the wind sound like, were it to speak? What might it say?

Exercise 2:

Building on the previous exercise, and maintaining the texture of the movement and the sound, select two students to read out the duologue on pp. 26-29 (described in the 'Key Scenes' section above). Tell the students that it is up to them to speak their lines as 'rock' or as 'wind'. You might get two students speaking as 'wind', or one as 'wind' and one as 'rock', etc. It is highly recommended that teachers make space for students to decide what voice they will speak in.

These textures could also apply to the monologue spoken by The Other after The One jumps (pp. 45-48).

Play around with this new-found texture of movement and sound as students speak the text. Then take both the movement and the sound down to a human level, whilst maintaining the spirit of it, so that the texture of 'rock' and 'wind' is maintained even as the characters speak as human.

Exercise 3:

Circular, repetitive text is a classic component of absurdism as a genre - it captures the meaninglessness and futility of it all. Throughout the play, the characters seem to be speaking *across* rather than *to* one another. They never quite seem to connect as they fill the space with 'words, words and more words'.

Ask students to prepare by reading pp. 21-24 in their own time. Keeping the texture of voice and movement from the previous exercises, ask two students

to read the lines with their backs to one another. Ask another two students to read the lines from opposite sides of the room, without making eye contact. Ask another two to read the lines in a close space, facing one another, making eye contact. Try other ways of placing bodies in a space.

Ask what happens to the 'connection' between the characters when their bodies are placed in these different ways in the space? How would they stage the scene if they were directing it? Discuss.

STEP THREE: FEEDBACK

Discuss what came up for the students. What are they still wondering about? What was the most interesting thing they learned? What was their least favourite part and why?