

Makutano Junction

A Kenyan TV soap opera



Activity

Helping you develop the **Global Dimension** across the **curriculum**

3 The structure of a soap

Activity Description

This activity uses Makutano Junction to introduce students to the key elements of soap opera and encourages them to analyse how they fit together to make good drama.

Aims

- To understand the key component parts of a TV drama series and understand its structure
- To enable application of these key principles to other plays or works of literature that the class may be studying
- To encourage students to analyse soap operas produced in Kenya

What you need?

- Series 2, Episode 5 “The Truth will be Out”

Curriculum links

- Media Language: Forms and Conventions (GCSE)
- Media Production Skills:
Narrative sequences appropriate to particular genres
- English KS3 and 4:
Cultural Understanding and Critical Understanding
- Geography, KS3 and 4:
Cultural Understanding and Diversity
- PSHE: Diversity
- Citizenship: KS3 and 4
Democracy and Justice
- Science: KS3 and 4
Applications and Implications of Science

Further details of how this activity meets requirements of the new Secondary Curriculum appear on the Curriculum Links table. For subjects outside the statutory curriculum, check your own exam board for their requirements. For general information on the Global Dimension across the curriculum, see www.globaldimension.org.uk

GLOBAL DIMENSION

Underlying the concept of a global dimension to the curriculum are **eight key concepts**. The following five are covered by this activity:



Citizenship – gaining the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to become informed, active and responsible global citizens.



Social Justice – understanding the importance of social justice as an element in both sustainable development and the improved welfare of all people.



Diversity – understanding and respecting differences and relating these to our common humanity.



Values and Perceptions – developing a critical evaluation of images of the developing world and an appreciation of the effect these have on people's attitudes and values.



Human Rights – knowing about human rights and understanding their breadth and universality.

The other three key concepts which can be explored using other Makutano Junction activities are :

Sustainable Development

Interdependence

Conflict Resolution

Find out more: www.globaldimension.org.uk

Top Tips

- Ask the class to think about their expectations of Kenyan life before watching series 2, episode 5 and repeat the exercise afterwards. Get them to reflect on their perceptions.

What you do

1 Brainstorm on an agreed UK soap opera (eg: Eastenders) on what component parts are:

Characters – portrayed by actors and a cast

- What happens to those characters – plot developments or *storylines*
- How do those characters communicate? – through script (and acting!)
- Where does action occur? – at different *locations*
- How is a soap divided? – series, episodes, scenes, scripts, music

Issues (not always, but sometimes). – how are these woven into the drama?

2 Break class into three groups. Each group is going to scrutinise a different aspect of Series 2, Episode 5 of Makutano Junction and present back to the class what they have found to be important principles about the following:

Group One: Characters – list and describe them all thinking especially of the following:

- Observations about each of them – describe them and describe what you feel about/towards them.
- Describe how you think they link together. What brings them together or do they float independently from one another?

Key Principles to pull out:

- Must be varied; age, sex, class/tribe/background, occupation, as well as in personality; mean, generous, nasty, nice, sensible, irresponsible. Funny v. tragic etc.
- Should be realistic and the audience should be able to identify with them in some way.
- Must link to give drama cohesion.

Group Two: Storylines – list and describe the different storylines, how they are presented and what are the key characteristics to storylining for soap:

- Observations about each storyline in episode: describe them and describe your reaction to them. How many storylines are there?
- Observe how each storyline is constructed. For example, who carries which storyline, how are the storylines presented in the scene structure, how is each storyline developed in each scene, how does each episode end? Why? How are storylines interwoven? How are educational issues woven into storylines?

Key Principles to pull out:

- One episode will have more than one storyline (variety and keeps audience entertained. Also can appeal to more than one audience segment).
- The art of good storytelling – keeping your audience in suspense is part of it.
- Each scene should, ideally, develop the plot in some way. Take the story forward.
- Balance of main plots and sub-plots – as one climaxes and then subsides, another one comes up.
- Cliff hangers at end of episode to keep audience hooked.

Group Three: Location – list and describe the different locations for each scene.

- Think about individual locations and also the overall location. Who meets where? Is this different to the UK?
- What are its characteristics? Why was it designed in this way?
- Draw an imaginary map of Makutano, identifying different locations for different scenes

Key Principles to pull out:

- Each consecutive scene differs from the one before (why?)
- Where do people meet in a Kenyan village? Describe a typical Kenyan village (Men/women/ young/old..) How does this differ from a UK soap and its locations/
- Every soap has a very specific overall location where its characters operate: e.g., EastEnders, Albert Square; Casualty, hospital; Brookside, a neighbourhood in Liverpool; Neighbours, a neighbourhood in Australia; Crossroads, a motel; the Archers, Ambridge. Rarely (though sometimes) do characters step outside this location.

3 Three groups present to the class their observations. The rest of the class comments.

4 Return to original three groups and ask each of them to devise an outline plot development for one of the following:

- i) Maria and Albert
- ii) Bishop Washington and the children
- iii) Margaret and her HIV+ diagnosis

Give each group flip chart paper on which they are to write down the plot sequence, who will carry the

storyline and where will action take place. Present back to class, with justification of why they have developed the story in the way that they have? What are they trying to communicate to the audience?

Variations

- This activity could be done without 4 and 5, if it needs to be shorter.
- It could also be expanded to apply the same principle components to other literature texts being studied by the class.
- The activity could also be skewed towards looking at the causes and prevention of malaria.
- This activity can form the basis for developing storyboards, sequencing scenes, producing treatments and writing scripts.

Follow-up/Research Questions

These relate to malaria, rather than the component parts of drama!

- What causes malaria?
- Where in the world is malaria most prevalent? How many people are affected by malaria and how many people die of malaria (plus demographics)? How do these figures compare with the incidence of HIV/AIDS?
- What have been historical ways of controlling the spread of malaria?
- What would you think are the symptoms of malaria?
- What are the best ways of preventing malaria?
- How do you cure malaria?
- How do you think malaria is linked to poverty?

Useful resources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soap_opera
Wikipedia - Soap Opera

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/TF33120/soaps.html>

The TV Soap Opera Genre and its Viewers

http://www.webooks.co.uk/Writing/tv-writing/Soap_Operas

How To Write For Television: Soap Operas

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A759639>
h2g2 - 'Coronation Street'