

HOODIE

A VIGNETTE PLAY BY
Lindsay Price



CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

Hoodie is a middle school vignette play that examines self-image and appearance.

Playwright Bio

Lindsay Price has been involved with theatre education for over 25 years as a playwright, adjudicator, workshop instructor, resource writer, curriculum supervisor, professional development creator, and keynote speaker. Her plays have been performed in schools all over the world with over 1000 productions a year.

Synopsis

Hoodie is a vignette play made up of short scenes on a theme. Each scene looks at a different aspect of self-image and appearance. Scenes address such issues as standing out and being an individual, how clothes are perceived as personality, going through puberty changes, the fear of having the wrong friends, and how middle school students can and do fight these issues. The play asks middle schoolers to answer what may be the most difficult question of all – Do I stay in the clump or do I stand alone?

Characters

As this is a vignette play, actors will play multiple roles in a variety of scenes. The majority of characters are middle school students. Generally, each scene contains a set of characters that only appear in that one scene.

There are three recurring characters

- ★ **The Clump.** This group represents the fear and anxiety middle school students have about standing out or being an individual. They move and speak as one throughout the play. The play is written for a Clump of ten mixed gender actors.
- ★ **Dr Lou.** Appears in two scenes. Dr. Lou is a quirky, larger-than-life character. It's not entirely clear that they are a real doctor.

- ★ **Hoodie.** This character is defensive and wears a hoodie like it's armour. Something happened in their past, which makes it hard to walk down the hall without being stared at. The specifics of the past are up to the actor playing the part.

Other Characters

Jonah: Has trouble with the gym teacher.

Briana: Head cheerleader. Mad with power.

Mom: Has something to say about the type of shoes her son wants.

Father: Is concerned that his son is happy.

Trilby: Unfriended by Charlotte. Knows the truth about who will be happier in the end.

Charlotte: Thinks unfriending Trilby will solve her popularity problems.

Flimflam: An image hustler.

Bamboozle: Flimflam's partner in crime.

Jeremy: Thinks shoes will solve all his problems.

Mother: Wants to know why her son is so well-adjusted.

Amber: Super friend to Briana.

Emily: Thinks Emma looks fabulous.

Emma: Thinks Emily looks fabulous. Except for the shoes.

Rachel: Wants to know what's so wrong with Tina's current nose.

Tina: Thinks getting a new nose will solve all her problems.

Ben: Is not going to get hit by capital letters.

Nicholas: Has a father and mother that expect him to crumble. Doesn't.

Ashley: Thinks cheerleaders are important.

Aiden: Knows there's nothing wrong with being himself.

Natalie: Has her confidence shaken.

Jazz: Thinks Briana is a pain. Quietly.

Neve: Likes the Hoodie.

Lucas: Once saw someone eat thirty-seven hot dogs.

Bailey: Also dislikes Briana. Quietly.

Jimmy: Doesn't think it's hip to be square.

Ryan: Wonders if Jimmy just woke up that way.

Addison: Does not want to turn into a square.

Layla: Does not believe it.

Boy: Trying to find that sweet spot between too much and too little cologne.

Themes

Identity, Body Image, Peer Pressure, Self-image

Pre-Read Questions

- ★ How do you see yourself?
- ★ How do you think others see you?
- ★ What makes up a person's identity?
- ★ How do you identify yourself? Do you have more than one identity?
- ★ Does anyone see you as different than how you identify yourself? How do you deal with that?

- ★ Would you rather stay in a group or stand out? Why?
- ★ Do you judge people based on what they wear?
- ★ Do you equate clothes with personality?
- ★ Do you think the right clothes can solve problems?
- ★ How long does it take you to decide what to wear?
- ★ What are you wearing today? Why did you choose it? What does it say about you?
- ★ Have you ever chosen not to wear a certain item of clothing? Why or why not?
- ★ Do you dress to blend in or stand out?

Pre-Read Activities

Opinion Poll

- ★ One aspect of identity is the choices we make. Ask students to share their opinion by standing to indicate that they agree with a specific choice. State the choices and then repeat them so students can stand. Each choice will have three options: the first choice, the second choice, or neither.
- ★ For example, if the choices are Summer or Winter, you would say: Summer, Winter, or Neither. Then repeat slowly: Summer (give students a chance to stand and then sit), Winter (give students a chance to stand and then sit), or Neither (give students a chance to stand and then sit).
- ★ Possible Options:
 - » Summer or Winter?
 - » Meat or Vegetables?
 - » Music or Reading?
 - » Music or Movies?

- » YouTube or Instagram?
- » Travel or Home?
- » Family or Friends?
- » Sweet or Salty?

Mirror Monologue

- ★ This is a nonverbal exercise. It is suggested that everyone goes at the same time, so that no one is signaled out. You can have students facing in different directions so that they are in their own space and not looking at others or being looked at.
- ★ Say to students, imagine you are standing in front of a mirror. When do you look in the mirror? What do you do when you look in the mirror? The goal is to get students to start a simple action. You may want to give some suggestions: Do you brush your teeth? Do you check what your clothes look like? Do you wash your face? Do you wear contacts? What are you doing?
- ★ Say to students: How do you see yourself? When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Do you see yourself as confident? Make a pose or gesture that shows that. Do you see yourself as insecure? Make a pose or gesture that shows that. How do you see yourself?
- ★ Say to students: How do you think others see you? When others look at you, what do they see? Make a pose or gesture that shows how others see you.
- ★ Bring students back to neutral, and change the tone of the moment with an upbeat game or improv exercise.
- ★ Afterward, have students reflect in a journal or exit slip on how they responded to the exercise. What were the similarities and differences in the way they see themselves and how they believe others see them?

Identity Chart

- ★ Have students make an identity chart for themselves. An identity chart visualizes different aspects of the question, "Who am I?"

- » Students will need paper and something to write with.
- » You may want to complete an identity chart for yourself as a model.
- ★ An identity chart starts with students putting their name in a circle or square in the middle of the page.
- ★ Then students draw lines from the centre. At the end of each line, students write one word that describes them (tall, sister, Canadian, drama club, piano). Possible categories include:
 - » Family identity
 - » Social identity
 - » Background
 - » Physical appearance
- ★ Ask students to reflect on the final product. What shapes their identity?
- ★ Ask students to choose what they feel is the most important part of their identity and write a paragraph describing why.

Identity Collage

- ★ Create a collage that visualizes your definition of “My Identity.” How do you see yourself?
 - » Brainstorm images, symbols, and words that represent your identity.
 - » Decide what materials you will use to visualize your identity.
 - » After you create your collage, write a one-paragraph description of the choices you made and why.

Identity Scene

- ★ In small groups, students will create a one-minute scene on the theme of identity. How will you visualize “Who am I?” “How do I see myself?”

- ★ Groups will rehearse and present.

The Clump Movement Moment

- ★ Introduce this important group of characters in the play with a pre-read exploration.
- ★ Divide students into groups. Tell them to create a moment in which they are all one character. They must move as one, gesture as one, and speak as one.
- ★ The group must enter, say something and gesture when they reach centre stage, or the centre of the space, and then exit. Give them time to practice.
- ★ To add another layer, tell students that this group, or this clump character, is afraid of standing out. They move and speak as one because they are afraid of individuality.
- ★ With this new information, have groups revise their movement moment. How does the moment change with the addition of a specific trait?
- ★ Use this activity as an introduction to a conversation with your students about whether they fear standing out.

Clothing Reflection

- ★ Have students choose their favourite piece of clothing and write a reflection about it. What is it? Have students describe the clothing in detail. Why is it their favourite piece of clothing? Why and why do they wear it? What does this piece of clothing say about them?

Clothing Scene

- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group is to do a scene in which characters act and react based on the clothing someone is wearing.
 - » How do you judge/respond to what people wear?
 - » How do you think people respond to what you wear?
 - » Do people judge you unfairly based on what you wear?

Clothing Scene (2)

- ★ Divide students into groups. If possible, give each group a piece of clothing that they wouldn't normally wear. If you have a costume closet with pieces from different periods, that would be ideal.
- ★ Groups will create a one-minute scene based on the piece of clothing. How do they use the information they infer from the piece of clothing to inspire a scene?
- ★ If the clothing piece comes from a certain era or has a specific use, share this after students present their scenes.
- ★ Use this activity to discuss with students about clothing choice, being able to choose what you wear, and how it connects to identity.

Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze Hoodie, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions.

Read One: What is happening?

1. What is your first impression of the play?
2. Who is the first person who appears on stage?

3. Is Natalie's confidence genuine?
4. What does Emma not love about Emily's outfit?
5. What happens to Lucas?
6. Does Aiden want to blend in or stand out?
7. Who are Charlotte's new friends?
8. Why are Mother and Father upset with Nicholas?
9. What is Jimmy's body shape?
10. How much are the shoes that Jeremy wants?
11. What does Jonas do at the end of his monologue?
12. What does Tina want from the body factory?
13. What do Flimflam and Bamboozle offer Briana?
14. What does Neve do?
15. What is the key idea of the play?

Read Two: How does it happen?

1. In your opinion, why does the playwright choose to share the subject matter episodically through scenes, rather than following one story from beginning to end?
2. There are a variety of styles in the play (monologue, comedy, non-verbal, absurd, movement exploration). In your opinion, why does the playwright use different styles to theatricalize the subject?
3. Analyze Trilby's use of language. What kind of words does she use? What can you infer about her character based on her vocabulary and word choice?
4. Based on the way that Hoodie speaks, how would you visualize her? What is her physicality?

5. In your opinion, why has the playwright chosen to use a bare stage with cubes to stage the play? How would the lack of set impact the staging?
6. In your opinion, why has the playwright chosen to call the group used throughout the play “The Clump?”
7. What is the significance of the line, “Perfect is happy. Perfect is popular. Perfect is the best”?
8. What is the significance of the line, “This shirt is a straightjacket. I wear it because everyone does”?
9. What is the significance of the line, “I don’t need to change for anyone. You need to change to be liked”?
10. How would you costume Flimflam and Bamboozle? Use the text to support your answer.
11. Why does the playwright choose to modernize and adapt “The Emperor’s New Clothes” in the scene with Briana and her power hoodie?
12. In your opinion, is there a common conflict throughout the feature scenes? If so, what is it?

Read Three: Why does it happen?

1. In your opinion, why is the play called Hoodie? What does the hoodie represent?
2. What is the playwright trying to say about identity? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. What is the playwright trying to say about self-image? Cite the text to support your answer.
4. What is going to happen next for Hoodie?
5. What is going to happen next for Briana?
6. Compare and contrast your own personal experience with self-image with what happens in the play.

7. Compare and contrast your own personal experience with identity with what happens in the play.
8. How does the author want you to respond to this play?

Post-Read Questions

- ★ What is one question that you still have about the play?
- ★ Which character resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- ★ Did any scene make you think about your self-image?
- ★ Should anyone else be able to define your identity? Why or why not?
- ★ Have you ever found yourself acting like the Clump characters?
- ★ Did you connect to any one of the storytelling styles? Which one? Why?
- ★ Do you prefer a different storytelling style? Which one? Why?

Post-Read Activities

Poster Design

- ★ Based on what you've read, design a poster for the play. How would you visualize the play in a single image that would attract an audience? What font would you use for the title? What information other than the title would you include?

Character Costume Design

- ★ Choose a character and design their costume.
- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colours and textures would they choose?

- ★ Draw a colour costume rendering.

Set Design

- ★ There is no specific set design for this play. Have students write a description of their set vision, or draw a colour rendering. How would you visualize the themes of the play?

The Clump Movement Moment with Dialogue

- ★ Students explored the clump through movement in the pre-read section. This time, have students add dialogue from the play to their moment.

Line Tableau

- ★ Divide students into groups. Give each group a line from the play such as, "Perfect is happy. Perfect is popular. Perfect is the best."
- ★ Each group will discuss and decide how to visualize this line in a tableau.
 - » Emphasize to students any principles of tableau that you use in your class. Do they need to incorporate levels? Connection between individuals?

Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
 - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
 - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
 - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

The Clump Original Scene

- ★ Based on the themes of the play, divide students into groups and have each group create their own original scene using the Clump.
- ★ The scene has to fit with the personality of the Clump — a group of characters who move and speak as one because they are afraid to stand out in any way.
- ★ The scene should be one minute.

Hoodie Original Scene

- ★ Based on the themes of the play, divide students into groups and have each group create their own original scene. How will they explore self-image and appearance?
- ★ The scene must fit within one of the styles explored in the play.
- ★ The scene should be one to two minutes.

Change Scene

- ★ In one of the scenes a character says, “I don’t need to change for anyone. You need to change to be liked.”
- ★ In groups, students will create a scene in which they explore their own struggles with identity, specifically the idea of changing in order to be liked.

Clothing Scene

- ★ One of the scenes adapts “the Emperor’s New Clothes” as a way to visualize the relationship between clothing and identity. Divide students into groups and have them choose a story to adapt that features an article of clothing (e.g., Red Riding Hood, Cinderella) and focus the new scene on the relationship between clothing and identity.

Playwright Process

Playwright Lindsay Price talks about her process writing Hoodie. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.

What was the originating idea for the play? Where did you start?

I was working in a number of different schools with “No hat” policies. As an outsider, I didn’t understand this, especially as someone who loves wearing hats as part of my clothing identity. This was the inspiration for further research into what appearance means as part of our identity, how we see ourselves and how we think others see us.

What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

From the very beginning of the writing process, I knew I wanted to theatricalize the fear of standing out as a character group called “The Clump.” But figuring out how to write that on the page so that anyone who picked up the play would understand my intention with this group. It took numerous workshops and a lot of trial and error and if I’m honest, I don’t think I fully solved it. How to stage the Clump is the number one question I get from those staging the play. Having said that, when I see productions of the play, seeing the Clump in action is one of my favourite things.

As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play?

As I said above, I love seeing the Clump in action. It’s fun to personify concepts into characters and see them brought to life on stage. If I had to pick a favourite character it would be Trilby. She is such a unique character from her name to her language and I can just imagine what clothes she would choose for herself. Beyond that, she has a positive self-image and I love presenting unique characters who stand up for themselves.

What is harder: coming up with ideas or rewrites?

Rewrites always! Ideas are fun because it’s the brainstorming phase where everything can change. I don’t feel that ideas are precious, they are just a starting point. Rewrites are specific and need to relate directly to moving the play forward. Sometimes, I can rewrite all day and hardly have anything to show for it because I’m trying to work on a moment or a character. But, while the idea stage is more fun, rewrites are more

rewarding. Plays become the best they can be in the rewrites, they are never fully written or realized in a first draft.