

Before the Show: What to Expect

- *That Face* is a contemporary play by UK playwright Polly Stenham. It was her first professional play, written when she was only 19.
- *That Face* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, London in 2007 and caused a huge stir.
- The running time of *That Face* is 1hr and 35mins approx. It is performed without any interval.
- *That Face* is a play for six actors, each of whom perform only one character.
- It includes scenes of teenagers bullying each other, to the extent of causing physical damage and mental distress.
- This play is intense and rewarding. We advise briefing your students beforehand about some of the content – particularly the intense tenor of the relationship between Martha and her son Henry.
- The character of Martha, mother to Henry & Mia, is deeply destructive, needy and manipulative. She adores her son Henry, who lives with her and cares for her, and rejects her daughter Mia.
- The dynamic of the relationship between Martha and Henry is over-intense with some disturbing moments that could be perceived as sexually charged, though the intent is more to control and to bind than for any sexual purpose. The play includes one moment in which Martha gives her own son a love bite, to provoke jealousy from the girl he's recently slept with.
- The play includes swearing and offensive language. The character of Martha makes some racist references to her ex-husband's new wife, which the playwright uses to indicate her jealousy.
- During *That Face* characters are shown drinking, smoking and misusing prescription drugs. The play doesn't endorse these practices, it questions them. The production includes smoke from herbal cigarettes, but no smoke or haze effects.
- The play refers to teenagers over 16 engaging in sexual activity but this isn't shown on stage.
- Characters are shown in states of semi-undress but not actually naked – an actor appears wrapped in a sheet at one point and at another Henry wears his mother Martha's dressing gown.
- Near the end of the play, the character of Henry wears a slip and necklaces belonging to his mother Martha. Traumatized by the failure of his attempts to take care of his mother, he deliberately lets go of any semblance of control and at one point, chooses to urinate on himself.
- Tickets for schools performances aren't sent out beforehand – don't worry if you haven't received your tickets; phone our box office on 9699 3444 if you need to check details of your booking.
- Please brief students about theatre etiquette before seeing the play. This includes switching all mobile phones off before entering the theatre, and refraining from texting throughout.
- Please remind students that this is a live performance and that the actors can see and hear them in the audience. Natural responses to the show are encouraged, but not calling out.
- After each school matinee performance there is a Question and Answer session with the cast. Teacher's Notes include activities to prepare your students for this Q & A session.