

The Croydon Avengers – Secondary School Educational Resources

Below we have put together a collection of activities based on [*The Croydon Avengers*](#), a new play by Oladipo Agboluaje that tells the story of three teenage refugees who develop superpowers and asks questions about how media messages can distort the truth.

The suggested activities are for Secondary School and are intended to stimulate students' creative engagement with two themes in particular: **Identity** and **Media Representation**.

We hope you and your students will enjoy them!

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Media Representation

Choose one of the following extracts from the play to focus on for the activities.

Scene Extract #1

LAURE, AISHA and PETR stop a moped gang from stealing a mobile phone.

PETR's shirt is torn.

PETR: (Miffed) My shirt.

AISHA lays into a gang member.

LAURE: You're hurting him!

LAURE runs over and pulls LAURE off the moped thief.

AISHA: Pull at my hijab again! I dare you!

They return the phone to the owner - REGINALD RUMP.

LAURE: Oh my days, it's Reginald Rump!

PETR: (Goes to a male audience member - 'REGINALD', hands him the phone) Your phone.

LAURE: Mind how you use your phone in public, yeah?

AISHA: Tell your mum The Unknowns saved you or we'll/

LAURE: Tell her we love Britain.

AISHA gives LAURE a hard, cold stare.

Scene Extract #2

Outside the Warehouse.

LAURE, AISHA and PETR stand in a line. LAURE holds a picture of fish and chips, AISHA a picture of a Muslim in a Union Jack hijab, and PETR a picture of boxer Anthony Joshua. LAURE and PETR are grinning widely. AISHA frowns. They have Union Jack flags tucked into their belts.

LAURE: My code name is Earth.

PETR: Me Wind.

AISHA: And I'm Fire. And together we are -

They say at the same time.

- Justice League UK!
- The South London Avengers!
- The Croydon Defenders!

LAURE: We haven't decided on a name.

PETR: But we no harm you.

AISHA: We are making the streets safe for you.

LAURE: We are young people. We want to make a difference.

They bring out the Union Jack flags and wave them.

Land of Hope and Glory plays.

PETR: We believe in a world where everyone is equal.

AISHA: Where everyone can practice their faith in peace.

PETR: Wherever you come from or whatever your sexuality.

LAURE: But most of all we believe in Britain.

AISHA: Don't believe what you read about us in the media.

PETR: Believe us.

AISHA: Believe in us.

The sound of a police siren.

AISHA: The police! They've found our hideout! Run!

PETR and AISHA make to run for it.

LAURE: They've seen our livestream! They know we're OK.

PETR: Laure!

LAURE: Paul!

LAURE moves towards the police car.

AISHA: Laure!

The police car screeches to a halt.

PETR: Hello officers. Me friendly neighbourhood/

Sound of guns cocked.

POLICE: (Off) Hands in the air! Now!

AISHA and PETR raise their hands.

LAURE: Where's Paul? I can explain/

POLICE: You are under arrest!

PETR panics.

PETR: Arrest? Wind Power!

LAURE: Petr, no!

He generates a whirlwind that sends the policemen flying.

PETR: I sorry. I sorry...

Creative Exercise 1 – Roleplay ‘impartial’ journalism

- Put the class into group of 5. In each group there is a **Journalist** and 4 **Bystanders**. Ask each group to improvise a TV broadcast & interviews reporting on the events depicted in the chosen extracts. Give each group one of the following instructions:

<i>The journalist in this group works for a pro-Avengers media establishment.</i>
<i>The journalist in this group works for a media establishment that is against the Avengers’ activity.</i>
<i>The journalist in this group works for a media establishment which aims to be unbiased.</i>

Challenge: All journalists in each groups will need to show that they are ‘impartial’.

- How the journalist will do this?
- Who are the bystanders that they choose to interview?
- What are the key questions that they want to ask the bystanders? How do they phrase them?

Let groups discuss these questions and get into role play.

- Once they have rehearsed, invite each group to share back their improvisation and use it to discuss:
 - What were the differences in the broadcasts?
 - How do you know what to believe?
 - What methods do the media use to try to persuade people to see their version of events?

Creative Exercise 2 [Follow-on] – An interview with...the Croydon Avengers!

- Let students work in pairs. One person is one of the Croydon Avengers (Laure, Aisha or Petr), the other is a journalist. Let them create a one-to-one interview.

In doing so, they should think about:

- Who is their audience?
- What does the journalist want to find out about the superhero?
- How can they get interesting answers?
- How do they ‘dig deep’?

Suggested homework/class research and discussion – Real Life Refugee Stories

Students to take this week’s newspapers and have find any refugee or asylum seeker stories. They should explore the stories to see what might be underneath them. What is the journalist or paper trying to achieve?

British Identity

1. What does it mean to be British?

Have students read the following scene from the play.

Scene Extract

LAURE: Best of all, we'll be British.

AISHA: I don't want to be white. I'm Iraqi.

PETR: Why you come here? Why you no go Muslim country?

AISHA: Don't confuse religion with nationality.

LAURE: Like you confusing skin colour with nationality?

AISHA: Everything white is right to you, Laure.

PETR: That because it true.

AISHA: Idiot. (*Jogs LAURE.*) And you. Why are you taking his side?

LAURE: Don't get it twisted. We promised we'd use our powers for good, whatever happens.

Discussion Points:

Discuss the idea of *British Identity*.

- What does it mean?
- Has it always been the same – how has it changed?
- What do you think are key elements to British identity?
- What are British Values?
- Can you name them?

2. What is Identity?

Have students read the following scene from the play.

SCENE EXTRACT

LAURE: Why do you keep hating on each other?

AISHA: Why not? Oh, because we're immigrants?

PETR: (To LAURE) Nine years you act like angel, UK still say you no British, go back to Congo.

LAURE: (Fingers her African fabric) My mother taught me it is good to be good.

AISHA: Please. Make a mistake or do something wrong and you're not a citizen you're on the next plane home. They can act anyhow they like, they can get angry, be prejudiced, but the second I step out of line, it's, 'Oh, you know what Muslims are like'. And I must explain myself for doing what people do.

PETR: Like I must explain myself because I gay.

AISHA: It's not the same thing.

PETR: Same difference.

LAURE: Look, we need a plan.

Discussion Points: Continue discussing the nature of Identity.

- What does it mean?
- How is it constructed?
- Are you in control of your own identity?
- Can you change your identity?

What if part of your identity is causing you to struggle? (e.g. Aisha feels as if she is treated differently because she is a Muslim, Petr says he must explain himself because he is gay, Laure has been told she is not British because she is from the Democratic Republic of Congo.)

Creative Writing Exercise: Choose one of the characters (Aisha, Laure or Petr) and imagine that you are in their shoes.

Write a poem to show how they are feeling at the moment. How do they feel about themselves? What are they confused about? How do they think others see them? Who do they want to be?

3. The Origin Story

Superheroes origin stories are important for us to understand who they are and why they are doing the things they do.

Reflective Writing Exercise - Ask students to answer the following questions about themselves in writing:

- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- Where do you come from?
- What events in your life have made you who you are?
- Who would you like to thank the most?
- What are three things that are important to you?
- Who do you value the most?
- How do you like to be seen by others?
- What are you good at?
- What do you struggle with?
- What makes you different?
- *[the list could go on...]*

Creative Writing Exercise - Imagine that you too have been covered in Regina Rumps Special liquid!

- How does it change you?
- What power does it give you?
- What do you want to do with your power?
- What will you change about your life, and those around you?
- How do you learn to control your power?
- How are you now seen by others?
- What is your Superhero name?
- What does being a superhero give you the confidence to do?

Students could combine this and the previous self-reflective exercise to create a narrative for their superhero character (this can be a homework). Back-up writing option: a poem or a comic story.

4. Becoming your Superhero: Physicality and Walks

Improvisation Exercise: Have students find a space in the room and stand in a pose that says ‘I am a Superhero!’ Count down from 5 as they find their pose. They should use a gesture that says something about their particular superhero.

Then, let them walk around the room as their own superhero and consider...

- Is she/he fast or slow?
- What part of the body leads them?
- Where do they look?
- How does their superpower show itself in the way they move?

Help students form teams of 3-4 people, ensuring they have different things they care about/they want to change in the world. They should form a team and create a short introduction to their team, including:

- Intro to themselves as individuals and a team (come up with a team name)
- A series of gestures and actions/movements as a group that show their powers
- How they are going to change the world.

Then each team should share their presentation with the rest of the class.

Final Thoughts:

- What difference did being a superhero make to you?
- What did it enable you to do that you can’t do now?
- Are there any things that you could do – without being the superhero?
- Choose three things to do/write or say next week, based on being that superhero.

Feedback and Social Media Contacts

Please share the work your students produced on our Social Media using the hashtag **#croydonavengers**

Instagram: [@mayatheatre](#); [@whycomicsorg](#)

Twitter: [@mayatheatre](#); [@WhyComicsOrg](#)

Facebook: [Maya Productions London](#); [Why Comics?](#)

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We want to learn from you and are very grateful for any feedback you might have! Please email us at info@whycomics.org to share your feedback.

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