

Preparation

Rehearsal tip: as you work on the piece with the pupils, break the whole piece up into three segments, as indicated below. Work on each segment separately, then put the whole thing together. Don't try to do it all at once.

Warm-up

- **Preparation for vocal work - relaxing the muscles, and breath control**

Ask all the class to stand, feet slightly apart, hands to the side, heads looking forward. Explain that all professional singers and actors use special exercises like this to prepare for a performance by relaxing the upper parts of the body.

Posture: head down, look over shoulder, then back down, then look over other shoulder, look straight ahead, shoulders up, shoulders down (a few times), swallow (a few times).

Face: frown, look surprised (eyebrows up), repeating going from one to the other a few times.

Mouth: open wide, stick out tongue, wiggle it around.

- **Breath control**

Explain that all vocal performers learn to use their diaphragm to project their voices without shouting. With both hands, feel the bottom of your ribcage while breathing in and holding your breath. Hold one arm close to you, take a deep breath, then let it out slowly saying 'SSSSSSSSSS...' all the way, slowly extending the arm out in front of you to show how much breath you have left. Do this a few times. Get everyone to count to ten aloud. Explain that when most people speak, they only use the air in the top part of their breathing tubes to push the air out, and shouting strains that, so professionals stand straight and hold their breath deep down in their diaphragm to push the air out from deep inside their breathing tubes. Get everybody to hold their breath and count aloud up to 10 - feel the power! Explain that good public speaking involves breath control. When you read a text, you have to plan when to breathe. You can also add the 'dramatic pause' - when you stop for a moment to catch your breath and keep your audience waiting for the next line.

- **Getting used to singing and moving**

Choose a nonsense song to sing like 'My Bonny lies over the ocean'. Start by teaching the words, then set the challenge of marking when any word with a 'b' occurs - by sticking thumbs up, then thumbs down for the next 'b' word, and so on. Next, get them to sing the song while sticking their thumbs up/down at the same time. Do they all end up with their thumbs up/down? You could repeat this with different actions - for example, alternating right leg/right arm forward and left arm/leg forward at every 'b' word.

The Script

[Download the script here](#)



Information for teachers

This is a draft script, with suggestions for making the piece work as best as possible. However, you should use your professional knowledge (and knowledge of your pupils) to adapt and adjust things – if you're not comfortable with it, then your pupils won't be either! You may also want to add suitable background recorded music or occasional percussion, but this must not predominate over the sound of the words.

To start, sit the pupils on the floor in a semi-circle facing you, preferably in two lines. You will probably need a lectern or music stand to hold your script. As for your pupils, you need to decide whether they will have scripts or not. With scripts, they have something to fiddle with, rustle and hide behind. Without hand-held scripts, they will have to concentrate more and listen to each other for verbal cues. Alternatively, you could have the words displayed on a projector behind you, or on a display board. Ideally, scripts won't be necessary by the end.

The class needs to be split into two main groups of roughly equal ability and size, with a few selected solo speakers for key roles – Pilate, and possibly other narrators for later bits of dialogue, if a group finds the learning of words difficult. Pilate and any other soloists may appreciate being given their own scripts. This script is deliberately simple, to allow for lots of rehearsal, and for pupils to learn it by heart.

Encourage the children to stand for the performance, but give them something to 'do' each time. Avoid repeated 'standing up, sitting down' between lines – keep them standing when they perform the whole piece, to avoid time being wasted. In rehearsal, give them chances to sit down for a 'breather'. (If you want a quick alternative activity, practise the words of an active song.)

Ideally, each line spoken by the crowd should be delivered with an appropriate simple gesture to add drama and help the pupils memorise it. Ask them for ideas about the gestures, making notes on your script as you 'lead' them. Consider adding different facial expressions for each line – but remember you'll have to model that too!