



Artistic Director: Pam Schweitzer Administrative Director: Penny Rossetter

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TEACHER'S NOTES FOR "ROUTES" by AGE EXCHANGE THEATRE

We hope that teachers will find "ROUTES" to be a useful starting point for classroom work in many National Curriculum areas. These notes look at some CONTENT AREAS AND CONCEPTS which the play explores in the order in which they occur in the play, and offer some ideas which relate to Key Stages 2 and 3. We should be very happy to hear your response to the play, and to learn how you have used it as a trigger for classroom work.

A SUMMARY OF THE PLAY IS ENCLOSED. This will give you some idea of the story, which spans the lifetime of Kirtar up to his old age in Britain in the present.

AGE EXCHANGE ALSO HAS A REMINISCENCE BOX entitled "BORN IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT" which is full of objects to explore in the classroom. All Reminiscence Boxes are available for hire through Age Exchange.

WE HOPE AS MANY SCHOOLS AS POSSIBLE WILL INVITE OLDER PEOPLE (especially grandparents) TO WATCH THE SHOW WITH THE CHILDREN.

WE SHALL MOUNT AN EXHIBITION OVER THE EASTER HOLIDAY IN THE REMINISCENCE CENTRE OF THE CLASSROOM WORK RESULTING FROM "ROUTES", so please let us know if you have pupils' work to loan.

The performers will be speaking in PUNJABI AND IN ENGLISH, but they will always underline the meaning of their dialogue with action, gesture, and expression.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE is created by the actors in sounds and images. In MUSIC AND DRAMA, the children may like to make a similar representation of their own area. What are the sounds and images of their daily lives in an urban area? What would a visitor from a far away land notice about the area?

In GEOGRAPHY work, the class might locate India on a map of the world. The size of the country means that there are a range of climates. (AT2) They could locate the Punjab area from which Kirtar's family come, and see if it is flat or mountainous, well served by rivers or desertified, densely populated or mainly agricultural. (AT4) Maybe some of the children also come from that area and can give more detailed accounts of an Indian village, either first or second hand. (AT1)

If some of the children have parents or grandparents who know a great deal about an Indian village, perhaps the older people could visit the classroom and talk to the children in small groups, ideally enlisting the help of the children in translating. The children could start to understand the HISTORY of the family and its migration through ORAL HISTORY. (AT2) Where more than one source is available to the class, the children will certainly realise that there is more than one way of telling about the past, and more than one

way of interpreting what happened and why. This work will link in with the SPEAKING AND LISTENING component of the ENGLISH curriculum (AT1).

The class should understand that in an Indian village, many things we take for granted in London, like electricity, gas, running water, shops, supermarkets, factories, banks and public transport would not necessarily be available. The COMPARISON AND CONTRASTING of their own area with the village would relate to GEOGRAPHY studies (AT2), and also to the SCIENCE curriculum, considering what natural materials would be available in such a village, and how the people would cook, wash, buy food, make clothes, travel, etc. In ART, the children could produce a visual version of the Indian village, perhaps using the traditional images on the backcloth and programme cover as a starter, and a contrasting picture of their own immediate surroundings. The "ROUTES" design is based on a traditional method of painting on village walls, making the outlines of the images in rice grains set in mud or cow dung.

The land farmed by the villagers has often been in their families for many generations, and everyone in the family will help with the harvest. The crops will be dependent on rain at certain times, and there can be climatic changes (such as an early monsoon or a drought) which bring great hardship to the families. In GEOGRAPHY, (AT3) the class could contrast this dependence on favourable climate with the way they and their families lead their own lives, more or less regardless of the weather.

BORROWING MONEY is mentioned many times in the play. The children need to understand that the moneylender can be an important figure in a village when special expenses need to be met or crops fail. He may be paid back when the next harvest comes in, but he will charge INTEREST on what he lends, so families can get into severe difficulties. Perhaps in a MATHS lesson, the pupils can try some simple exercises with borrowing ten pence and having to pay back interest for each minute it is on loan, so that they can see how a person can be ruined by high interest mounting over a period. The play also involves some conversion from pounds into rupees. Perhaps the children could translate one kind of money into another, using their own experience, if any, of foreign travel to help them.

THE FAMILY STRUCTURE explored in the play, is one where the bride comes to live with the husband in his home. She joins the house-hold of the mother-in-law, and brings with her a dowry to enrich her husband's family. This dowry is her birthright, so the point in the play where she sacrifices her dowry to help her husband finance his visit to England has great significance for all the family, including her children. The sense of continuity with the past through significant objects and images would connect to the HISTORY curriculum.

VOUCHERS FOR WORK IN ENGLAND were made available in many commonwealth countries in the 1950s and 60s when there were labour shortages here, especially in heavy industry and public services. This availability of work created much migration of population, which will tie in with the GEOGRAPHY (AT4) and, in terms of change in a given area, with the HISTORY curriculum (AT3). The children might like to consider the impact on a family of having the breadwinner leave home for many years for another continent.

Many families took advantage of the opportunity to take better paid work abroad to solve financial problems at home. For many workers, THE JOURNEY to England would also be their first journey away from their village. They would

need to travel many miles to a big city in India first before leaving for Britain. What different KINDS OF TRANSPORT do the children think they might have had to use? What would be the nearest big city? From which town might Punjabi people have sailed or flown?

Many village people who came over did not read or write a great deal, and certainly would not read in English, so the LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES would have been enormous in finding their way round London or any other British city. The children might experiment with trying to interpret certain signs and instructions in another script in order to understand some of the problems experienced by Kirtar and others like him. This will link with ENGLISH work on READING and on SPEAKING AND LISTENING (AT1, 2 & 3).

Immigrants depended heavily on MUTUAL SUPPORT and would go first to family friends or relatives who would help them, so there will be growing communities from certain regions in different parts of Britain. New immigrants would need to learn A NEW WAY OF LIFE in order to survive, such as traffic law, getting from A to B on public transport, adjusting to a new social system and different modes of dress and behaviour. In DRAMA or ENGLISH, the class might like to divide into two groups and invent certain simple rules (eg. never sit down facing someone), customs (eg. special form of greeting) and five important new made-up words. The two groups could visit each other and see how they managed to communicate in the foreign land and language (AT1).

Often the breadwinner who came to Britain decided to bring the family over, rather than to return, since opportunities for continuing to earn would be more limited at home. In our play we show the IMPACT ON THE FAMILY OF MOVING TO BRITAIN, both on those who leave and those who remain behind. In CREATIVE WRITING IN ENGLISH (AT3), the children might consider the reaction of their grandparents and friends if they were to leave Britain now for many years, and maybe for ever. Would all of them want to leave behind the scenes of their childhood, all the people and places they had known, to follow their parent in an unknown land? A POEM on this subject or a short DRAMA scene would both be good ways of exploring these ideas.

The play touches on questions of BULLYING AND PREJUDICE in the classroom. Teachers may wish to use the experience of Kirtar's son, Sevva, in the play, to discuss these issues. What should a child do when s/he is the victim of bullying. Who should s/he turn to? Are all the class responsible if one of them is victimised. These questions could form part of ENGLISH (AT1) or RELIGIOUS STUDIES. There may be some opportunity for discussion with the actors in role as to why they acted as they did, or the pupils may have their own experiences to relate. The fact that the characters in the play practice Sikhism could also open up discussion on comparative religion, for example different kinds of wedding ceremonies.

All the scenes in "ROUTES" were suggested to us by the EXPERIENCES OF OLDER PEOPLE FROM INDIA AND PAKISTAN. The story is told from their point of view. Growing old away from home and watching one's children and grandchildren adopt a new language and culture can be a sad experience for older people. Many elders regret THE LOSS OF THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE over two or three generations, especially the barrier this creates between them and their grandchildren.

The class might discuss how many languages they speak between them and when they use their SECOND LANGUAGE and how important it is to them. They might

also consider what a lot/little they know about the CULTURE OF THEIR GRANDPARENTS (their music, their stories, their religion, their memories) and how much they know through events in the school and elsewhere about each other's language and culture.

There is a great deal of MUSIC in the play. All of it is PLAYED LIVE by the performers using traditional instruments. The children may be interested in the rhythms and sounds and also the very different kinds of songs they will hear. They may like to listen to recordings of other kinds of music from different countries and consider why certain instruments are in common use, and why certain rhythms are associated with different cultures. Maybe one of the children has a relative who can play a traditional instrument and would be willing to bring it to the classroom to show them.