

INTRODUCTION

A citizen is not just someone who lives in a city. In this resource, a citizen is a “citizen of the world”, who knows about how people are connected, and who acts accordingly. So between them the plays cover a wide variety of topics - political candidates and multi-national business, the funding of education and violent crime, writing protest letters and marching down the street.

A good citizen is not just someone who keeps the rules - picking up litter and keeping to the speed limits. A good citizen knows and thinks about how people treat each other, and how their own actions affect those of other people. That means finding out and asking questions, as well as doing the right thing.

There may not always be a right thing. There may be two right things to choose between, or two wrong ones, where the problem is to choose the least bad. Or there may be more than two alternatives. The purpose of this material is not to narrow down to a course of good behaviour, but to open up thinking, to help people become more aware of what is happening, and how they can affect it.

Sometimes that is depressing. Often it looks as though “there’s nothing we can do” or “whatever I think will make no difference.” That gloom is a part of the picture, although it should not paralyse the thinking. But the thinking should be shared, people working out ideas together, and that is why the basic pattern is “play plus questions” rather than “text to read plus individual test.” People do need to think for themselves, and to come up with their own answers, but they also need to do that with others. In that way they recognise the importance and values of the answers that other people come up with, even if they don’t agree with them.

Teachers will decide the pattern of lesson which best suits their pupils, but students are most likely to be fully involved in exploring the issues where they can speak freely and often. That means small independent groups, possibly feeding back into a plenary session, rather than whole-class discussion for a long time. There is also the option to explore the factual background to these plays, possibly with pupils carrying out their own research - see “Did this really happen, Miss?”