

*Baby Girl*  
by Roy Williams

*DNA*  
by Dennis Kelly

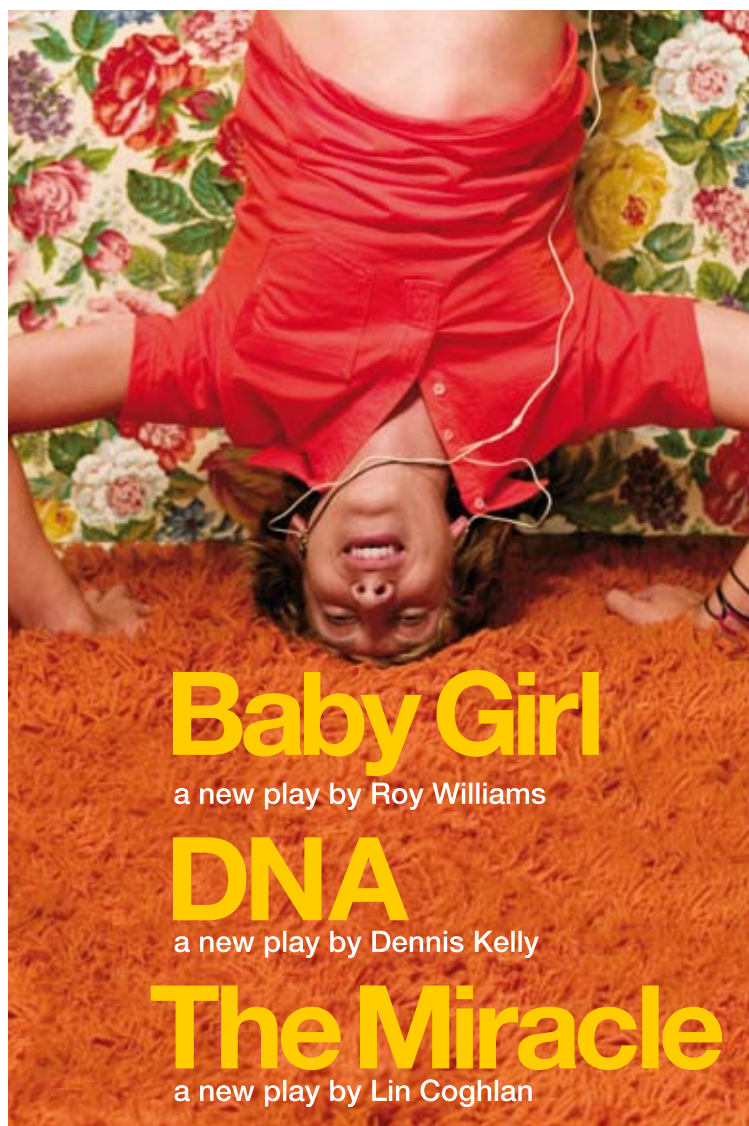
*The Miracle*  
by Lin Coghlan

## Workpack

The National's production

### Contents

Introduction	2
Synopsis	3
Young people's voices	4-6
Character and Movement	7-9
Environment and Staging	10-11
Themes and Issues	12-13



# Baby Girl

a new play by Roy Williams

# DNA

a new play by Dennis Kelly

# The Miracle

a new play by Lin Coghlan

#### Further production details: [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

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## Introduction

This workpack accompanies the National Theatre's programme of three new plays for young people, *Baby Girl*, *DNA* and *The Miracle*. It has been compiled with English and Drama teachers and young people's theatre practitioners in mind and comprises a series of exercises and classroom activities.

The activities do not form a scheme of work, but can be used as and when you deem it appropriate for your group. The exercises make specific reference to the three plays, but many of them are flexible and easily adaptable for use on other texts.

The pack includes synopses of the plays written by the playwrights. Complete scripts are available in the NT Connections anthologies for 2006 (*The Miracle*, ISBN 0-571-23398-8) and 2007 (*Baby Girl*, *DNA*, ISBN 378-0-571-23898-9), published by Faber & Faber, which are available from the National's Bookshop (secure online ordering available):  
[www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/bookshop)  
 020 7452 3456

### The National's productions, 2008

Director **PAUL MILLER**  
 Designer **SIMON DAW**  
 Lighting Designer **PAULE CONSTABLE**  
 Sound Designer **RICH WALSH**  
 Associate Video Designer **PAUL KENAH**  
 Company Voice Work **KATE GODFREY**  
 Children's Casting **JESSICA RONANE**

### Casts

#### BABY GIRL

A new play by **ROY WILLIAMS**

Kelle **CANDASSAIE LIBURD**  
 Samantha, *Kelle's mother* **PETRA LETANG**  
 Danielle **APAIKETUYA MARCHANT**  
 Nathan **WINSTON SARPONG**  
 Yvette **CLAIRE LAMS**  
 Richie **TROY GLASGOW**  
 Josie **NICOLE CHARLES**

#### DNA (DeoxyriboNucleicAcid)

A new play by **DENNIS KELLY**

Mark **GREGG CHILLIN**  
 Jan **CLAIRE FOY**  
 Lea **RUBY BENTALL**  
 Phil **SAM CRANE**  
 John Tate **JACK GORDON**  
 Danny **BENJAMIN SMITH**  
 Richard **TROY GLASGOW**  
 Cathy **CLAIRE LAMS**  
 Brian **IAN BONAR**  
 Adam **RYAN SAMPSON**

#### THE MIRACLE

A new play by **LIN COGHLAN**

Ron **RUBY BENTALL**  
 Zelda **REBECCA COOPER**  
 Mrs Sheehan, *Ron's mum* **CLARE BURT**  
 Ginger, *Zelda's dad* **PAUL THORNLEY**  
 Mrs Ginger, *Zelda's mum* **KELLIE SHIRLEY**  
 Trousers, *Ginger's best mate* **GREGG CHILLIN**  
 Angela Brickman **CLAIRE FOY**  
 Barry O'Donnell **BENJAMIN SMITH**  
 Miss Lowery, *Head of School* **PETRA LETANG**  
 Lorenzo Hammond, *a soldier returning from the Iraq war* **HENRY LLOYD-HUGHES**  
 Billy Hammond, *Lorenzo's brother* **RYAN SAMPSON**  
 Header Hammond, *Lorenzo's dad* **JACK GORDON**  
 Peter 'Chewy' Zapadski **IAN BONAR**  
 Lanky Girls **NICOLE CHARLES, CLAIRE LAMS, KELLIE SHIRLEY**  
 PC703 **SAM CRANE**  
 Mr Rodgers, *long dead* **TROY GLASGOW**

*All other parts played by members of the Company*

## Synopses

In Roy Williams' *Baby Girl*, Kelle is 13 years old and, to the shock of her best friend Danielle, is still a virgin. Now if Danielle knows, then the whole school knows, and Kelle isn't having that, even if it means sleeping with creepy Nathan who smells like old people. Getting off with a 'yat' like Kelle is just the kind of street rep Nathan needs if he is to be a 'wide boy' like his big brother Richie. But neither one counted on Kelle getting pregnant, or Richie falling in love. Now Kelle's mum wants to throttle her, Nathan is cruising for a bruising if his antics have ruined Richie's chances with the lovely Josie, and Danielle thinks the baby should be called Lady Sovereign. Perhaps life in the big wide world is as scary as they were told. (Synopsis by Roy Williams)



### *DeoxyriboNucleic Acid*

If you're a teenager and you do something bad, really bad, what should you do? Tell your parents? Tell the police? Tell a teacher? No, you should do what exactly what adults do; cover the whole thing up and hope no one finds out.

*DNA* is about a group of teenagers who are brought together by the act of doing something bad. But when things begin to unravel their newfound sense of solidarity begins to crack. (Synopsis by Dennis Kelly)



*The Miracle* takes place in a town which could be your town, where something strange has happened. After the rain, the canal broke its banks, a lot of debris got shifted and when a holy statue burst up through the floor of 12-year-old Veronica Sheehan's bedroom, no one was more surprised than she was. With the enthusiastic support of best friend Zelda, the two girls set about using their new-found skills to help their ailing community. The young people of the town tell us the story in their own words, showing us their parents, teachers, friends and enemies, as an entire population finds itself hungering unknowingly for something magical to come into their lives.

When the story reaches its dramatic conclusion only Ron will have the power to turn things round and change a life for the better, but will she have the courage to do it? (Synopsis by Lin Coghlan)



Rehearsal photograph of members of the company by Catherine Ashmore

## Young people's voices

### Classroom exercise 1

**Aim**  
to understand the importance of maintaining clarity of thought behind each line.

#### Instructions

Taking this section from *DNA*, ask the actors to say a line and then say what they are really thinking as an aside. Beware of overanalysing – encourage the readers to make quick decisions about what they think the subtext is.

#### Alternatives

- Invite members of the rest of the group to offer their suggestions of what the subtext might be
- Have two group members read the section through once, then ask students to work in pairs to improvise their own version of the conversation, building in the subtext unarticulated in the original



Rehearsal photograph of members of the company by Catherine Ashmore

### Excerpt: *DNA*, scene 2

A street. Jan and Mark.

Pause.

JAN What?

MARK He's not going

JAN What do you mean he's not going?

MARK He's not going.

JAN He's not going?

MARK Yes.

JAN That's what he said?

MARK Yes.

JAN He said he's not going?

MARK Yeah, he said he's not, he's not...

JAN What?

MARK Going.

*Beat*

JAN Is he off his head?

MARK I know.

JAN Is he insane?

MARK I know.

JAN Is he joking?

MARK I know, I know.

JAN No, that's a question.

MARK He's not joking, he's not going, he's said he's not going, I said you've gotta go, he said he's not going, 'I'm not going' he said.

JAN That's what he said?

MARK That's what he said, I'm saying that's what he said.

JAN Fuck.

MARK Exactly.

*Beat*

JAN What are we going to do?

# Young people's voices

## Classroom exercise 2

### Aim

to consider why writers use or avoid everyday speech patterns.

### Instructions

- Dividing into pairs or small groups, give each small group a copy of one of the pictures below.
- Invite students to list all the factual information they can get from the picture: 'it is daylight', 'it is in a park' etc.
- Ask the group to list a number of questions that the picture causes them to think about: eg, 'who is that girl?', 'what is she talking about?' When the group have a list of questions, ask them to choose the one that they think is most interesting / intriguing.
- Ask the group to imagine that they are interested parties in whatever the question refers to. Their interest could be the result of really close involvement (eg, family members or neighbours), detached curiosity (eg, readers of a magazine article) or anything in between.
- The group should discuss the question and record onto tape exactly what is said. They should speak for ?? minutes and then transcribe the conversation. Another group then performs the script that is produced to the rest of the group.

### Questions

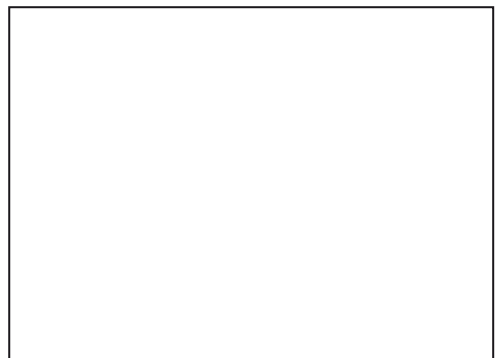
What does it sound like hearing everyday speech being performed?

How easy is it to convey the meaning?

What do performers need to think about if the style of the text is very naturalistic?



Rehearsal photograph of members of the company by Catherine Ashmore



# Young people's voices

## Classroom exercise 3

### Aim

to help build rapport between members of the group. To free up actors unfamiliar with the script.

### Instructions

1. Choose a scene from any of the three plays. The actors playing the scene give their scripts to a "feeder".

- The feeder stands behind the actor and reads out manageable chunks of text to the actor. It is important that the lines are fed flat, with no intention.

The actor then plays the line.

### Questions

What happens to the rhythm of the piece?

How important are rhythm and pace to understanding the meaning of the language?

2. Discuss in the group what the characters want to achieve by the end of the scene. Each actor should decide on one objective for their character and try hard to achieve the objective as the scene is played out. The audience can try to guess what the objective was.

### Questions

What difference does the playing of a clear objective have on the performance?

What tactics were used in trying to achieve the objective?

How successful was each character?

3. Invite the actors to invent a physical objective that each tries to get the other to perform as they play the scene – this should be completely removed from the reality of the scene, eg, 'I want to make Kelle sit in the corner of the room'

### Questions

What changes do you notice when the physical objective is introduced?

What do we read into the actions, even if the goal is unrelated to the scene?

## Character and movement

### Classroom exercise 1

**Aim**  
to develop empathy with characters and build emotional understanding into staging decisions.

#### Instructions

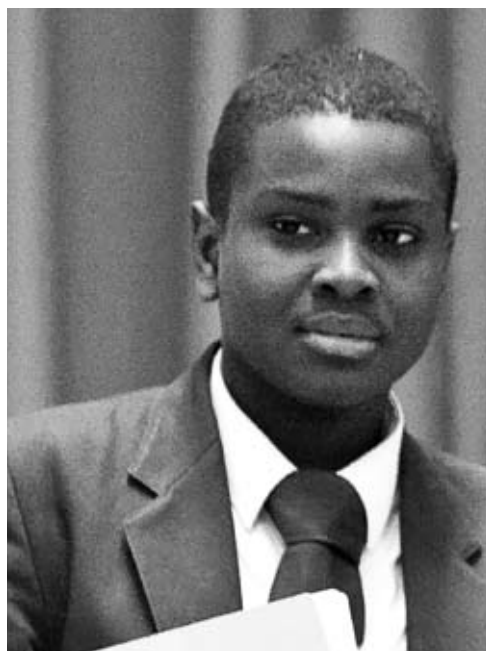
- Plot an imaginary line from one end of the room to the other and invite two volunteers to stand on the line, facing one another.
- Give each the script extract (right) and allocate a part to each volunteer.
- The two actors must stay facing each other but can move back and forth along the line to indicate either their emotional closeness or their level of fear/bravery. Each actor can only move while they are speaking their own lines. The two actors cannot pass one another. There are no right or wrong moves – encourage the actors to make bold choices.

#### Questions

What happens if all the movements are very big?

What happens if they are very small?

What if one actor can only move backwards/forwards?



Rehearsal photograph of members of the company by Catherine Ashmore

### Extract from *Baby Girl*

*Nathan's living room, Kelle enters, followed by Nathan.*

**NATHAN** Hey!  
**KELLE** What?  
**NATHAN** Feet. (Kelle moves one foot) Kelle?  
**KELLE** Yeah?  
**NATHAN** Move yer feet off the coffee table.  
**KELLE** Awright, ease up. I'd thought you'd be glad to see me, aren't you glad to see me? Bye den.  
**NATHAN** I am glad to see you.  
**KELLE** Good boy. (Giggles)  
*Kelle puts her feet up on the table again.*  
**NATHAN** You have to put yer feet up?  
**KELLE** Yes.  
**NATHAN** Careful.  
**KELLE** What is it?  
**NATHAN** A ornament, one of Mum's, put it back.  
**KELLE** Alright.  
**NATHAN** Is that where you found it?  
**KELLE** Yeah, I think. You tell me dread. Wass the problem?  
**NATHAN** She don't like any one touching her things. Do you have to pick up everything?  
**KELLE** I don't see yer mum here. Maybe we should wait for her.  
**NATHAN** Are you seriously mad?  
**KELLE** You don't want her to know she's going to be a grandmother?  
**NATHAN** Never.  
**KELLE** Don't make me buss yer head, yeah.  
**NATHAN** (giggles) Come on then.  
**KELLE** Don't laugh at me.  
**NATHAN** Or what?  
**KELLE** I will buss yer head.  
**NATHAN** In your condition?  
**KELLE** It's only three months.  
**NATHAN** Can you feel it?  
**KELLE** Moving? Yeah, starting to. Mum said she couldn't feel me at all, she got worried, though I was dead or summin.  
**NATHAN** Shouldn't say that.  
**KELLE** Ease up. Like you care.  
**NATHAN** I do care.  
**KELLE** So?  
**NATHAN** Yer stupid.  
**KELLE** I'm stupid?  
**NATHAN** You said it wouldn't happen.  
**KELLE** How was I to know?  
**NATHAN** Well it ain't my fault.  
**KELLE** Don't start acting the big man Nathan! Yer lucky I gave you the time of day. You know what the girls say about you in school? That yer broc, yer butters, yer ugly as sin. You smell like old people!

# Character and movement

## Classroom exercise 2

### Aim

to explore the effects of changing the relative status of characters.

### Instructions

- Invite two actors to read the following section of the play (or use the 'feeding' technique described above), and assign one of them high status and one low status.
- When a designated person claps their hands, the status roles should reverse. When someone clicks their fingers they should even out, so that status is equal.
- If another clap comes, they should return to the initial levels.
- Experiment with where status changes should come – don't always stick to the obvious!

### Questions

What effect does status have on voice, physicality, movement and rhythm?

What do we enjoy about seeing Kelle and her mum shifting their relative status?

What are the positive and the negative aspects of having high or low status for Kelle and her mum?



Rehearsal photograph of members of the company by Catherine Ashmore

### Extract from *Baby Girl*

*Sam (26) enters hovering, singing along to 'Hung Up' by Madonna, which is coming from the radio. Kelle (13), her daughter enters, wearing an extremely short skirt. Sam turns the radio off.*

**KELLE** Yeah, what?  
**SAM** I don't think so, somehow.  
**KELLE** Oh Mum!  
**SAM** No, no, no.  
**KELLE** What?  
**SAM** Don't you mum me.  
**KELLE** Oh sorry, Sam!  
**SAM** Oi!  
**KELLE** Well which one is it, Mum or Sam?  
**SAM** Kelle?  
**KELLE** What?  
**SAM** I'm not playing.  
**KELLE** At what Sam... I mean Mum?  
**SAM** You winding me up. (Kelle sighs). I know all the tricks yeah. I did it with your gran.  
**KELLE** Is it?  
**SAM** Yes it is. And do you know what? I was better.  
**KELLE** Do I look like I'm playing any tricks?  
**SAM** Yes you are.  
**KELLE** All I want to do is wear my skirt.  
**SAM** No way.  
**KELLE** Ain't that short.  
**SAM** You sure!  
**KELLE** Yes.  
**SAM** Lie bad. Look at it, it's a belt. You want every boy round here, come at you like dog?  
**KELLE** Do already.  
**SAM** Well they're pervs man.  
**KELLE** Deh boys.  
**SAM** I am talking about the older ones.  
**KELLE** Yeah well they're pervs.  
**SAM** That is what I just said. I see no reason at all in putting it on a plate for them. Wear your longer one.  
**KELLE** Are you deliberately trying to shame me?  
**SAM** Stop yer whining.  
**KELLE** You used to wear skirts like this.  
**SAM** Who told you that?  
**KELLE** Gran.  
**SAM** Yer Gran has an enormous mouth.  
**KELLE** You turned out alright.



# Character and movement

## Classroom exercise 3

### Aim

to use the text in developing the unique physicality of different characters.

### Instructions

- Take a speech or a series of lines for a character in a scene.
- Pick out ten words that you think are interesting or that give an indication of what you think the character is like.
- For each word, make a physical gesture, using your whole body, which you can remember and be able to repeat. Nb, a gesture is different from a stance or a pose – it has movement! The gestures can be literal or totally abstract, or a mixture of both.
- Play the scene and when each word comes up, perform the appropriate gesture.

### Questions

What does the audience/actor get from performing the gestures?

How can we turn these big, non-naturalistic gestures into movement that our character might actually do?

## Classroom exercise 4

### Aim

to use the text in developing the unique physicality of different characters.

### Instructions

- Set out a circle of chairs, one for each group member, plus an empty one in the middle.
- Ask the group to imagine that the empty chair represents either one of the main characters or the main event of the play (they can decide what they think this is).
- Invite the group to suggest who in the play might have a strong point of view about that character or event. As they call them out, ask each group member to hold the role of one of those interested parties. If there aren't enough characters in the play, ask the remaining students to choose characters who are mentioned, but never seen.
- Going round the circle, ask each group member to speak from the point of view of the role they are holding. Help them to get into role by asking simple, factual questions, before asking more complex ones about opinions or feelings.
- If the exercise is working well, some of the 'characters' will start to argue or debate with each other, but try to steer group members away from getting too deep into arguments, so that every member of the group gets a chance to speak.

## Environment and staging

### Classroom exercise 1

**Aim**  
to consider the impact of environment on the way a scene is played.

#### Instructions

- Before playing a scene, lead the group through a visualisation of the exact location in which the scene takes place, including references to the light, air temperature, time of day etc. The group should add in details as appropriate.
- After playing the scene, invite the actors and the audience to discuss what impact thinking about the physical environment had on the performances.

### Classroom exercise 2

**Aim**  
to explore non-naturalistic staging

#### Instructions

- Set up a row of six chairs across the stage or room and invite 6 people up to take a seat.
- Allocate each with a part from the section of *The Miracle* (overleaf), making sure that Ron is seated towards the centre.
- Read through the script, making a really clear distinction between when characters are talking to each other and when they are talking to the audience.

#### Variation

- Ask the actors to sit on their hands and instruct each to focus the expressiveness of their bodies into one body part or other: eg, left shoulder, right foot etc.
- What's the effect on the audience of staging it like this?
- Where do we imagine it's taking place?
- Can the audience guess which body part the actor has been using?

## Environment and staging

### Extract from *The Miracle*

**ZELDA** Must have been a week or so after that we was called into Miss Lowery's office one day, me and Ron, and our mums and dads was there too.

The Head's Office. Zelda, Ron, Ron's Mum, Ginger and Mrs Ginger.

**LOWERY** It's been going on clandestinely.

**GINGER** Talk straight woman.

**MRS G** Oh why can't you just listen for once?

**GINGER** What's up with you now?

**LOWERY** Veronica is clearly the main influence.

**ZELDA** She talked like I didn't even have a mind of me own – int that right, Ron?

**LOWERY** She's been meeting people - in the toilets.

**MRS S** Ron?

**GINGER** What kind of people?

**LOWERY** She's been giving them advice, or their problems, suggesting treatments.

**MRS S** Ever since the flood...

**LOWERY** I am aware what happened at your house Mrs Sheehan.

**MRS S** It was - wonderful.

**GINGER** Here go. You told the Pope yet have you? Next thing we know she'll have a plaque over the door and it'll cost you a fiver to go in and take a look around the place.

**LOWERY** I understand some debris was washed up when the canal burst its banks.

**MRS S** Veronica woke up with a statue of St Anthony in her bedroom. In the bottom bunk. I've always felt very close to St Anthony.

**LOWERY** I believe the entire contents of St Saviours was affected by the high rainfall that night.

**MRS S** But to find St. Anthony, in your bed room... I mean – how did he get in?

**GINGER** [Sneering] Maybe he came fown the chimney, like Santa Claus?

**ZELDA** My dad always said stupid things like that, I mean, Ron didn't have a chimney in her bedroom, did she?

**LOWERY** There were all sorts of things washed around the streets that night, my own neighbour found her microwave stranded on the pedestrian crossing at the end of her road.

**MRS S** But, that wasn't the case with us. We were virtually untouched by the storm. It's got to be an omen, at least.

**GINGER** An omen? What planet are you living on woman?

**MRS G** He has no faith in anything.

**GINGER** What are you asking me to have faith in, a bloody statue coming down the chimney?

**ZELDA** It didn't come down the chimney!

**MRS S** I mean, he wasn't even storm damaged. He looked – pristine.

**GINGER** Who did?

**ZELDA** St. Anthony!

**LOWERY** Veronica, have you anything you'd like to say?

## Themes and issues

### Classroom exercise 1

#### Aim

to explore themes of danger and coping strategies.

#### Instructions

- Ask the group to find a space in the room.
- Ask everyone to choose two people in the room, without letting anyone know who they have chosen. They should not choose you.
- Without telling anyone, they should then label the two people 'A' and 'B'.
- Instruct the group that A is a bomb and B is a shield that will keep you safe.
- When you say 'Go!' everyone should attempt to keep their shield between them and their bomb at all times. This is a non-contact game – grabbing your shield is not allowed.
- After a few minutes play, count down from five to zero and call 'Freeze!'
- Check in with the group as to whether they were safe or not at the end and ask them to point out who they had picked.

#### Questions (examples)

If a 'bomb' was something that was dangerous or difficult and a 'shield' was something that protects, what bombs/shields do characters in the plays have?

Which of these bombs and shields are internal to each character and which are external? Is it easier to deal with internal or external bombs?

#### Questions for *Baby Girl*

How does pregnancy at a young age work as a 'bomb'?

How might it be perceived as a shield?

Do boys and girls have the same bombs and shields?

When are they the same/different?

#### Questions for *The Miracle*

Are parents/teachers/adults in the play bombs or shields?

Are they ever both at once?

Are Ron's special powers a bomb or a shield (for her or for the others in the play)?

#### Questions for *DNA*

The characters in the play use a lie – that someone else has killed Adam – to shield themselves against being found out. When else do we use shields that have the potential to become bombs?

Why do we do it?

# Themes and issues

## Classroom exercise 2

**Aim**  
to explore thoughts and feelings of characters under pressure.

### Instructions

- Number a set of small pieces of paper from one upwards, so that there is one for each of your group.
- Ask the group to stand in a circle, and to take a piece of paper from the pile. They should not tell anyone else what their number is.
- Invite a volunteer to come into the middle of the circle and to pick two numbers from among those that have been handed out, discounting their own.
- The two group members in possession of the chosen numbers should then try to swap places in the circle before the person in the middle can get into one of the spaces left vacant.
- Whoever is left in the middle should then repeat the exercise. Continue until everyone has had a turn in the middle.

### Questions (examples)

What feelings do you experience when you are in the middle of the circle?  
What thoughts did you have about the people in the middle/in the circle when you were in the other position?  
When do characters in the plays experience thoughts and feelings like those?  
How do they respond to those thoughts and feelings?  
What might you do if you were in their position?

### Questions for *Baby Girl*

Think back to the game, when one person has to guess at what everybody else is thinking and trying to do behind their back.  
How easy is it to get an accurate idea of what is going on around you?  
What connections can you make between this and why Kelle is so concerned that everybody thinks she is a virgin?

### Questions for *The Miracle*

In the play, Zelda says that Ron is 'vilified' by the other people in the town and Mrs Lowery accuses her of being 'an isolated girl' who wants to be a 'celebrity'.

How does Ron deal with being the centre of the town's attention – does she feel like the person in the middle of the circle during the game?  
How do we feel if we know something's true, but the people in authority around us don't believe us or believe in us?  
What can we do about it?

### Questions for *DNA*

In the game, people in the middle often report feelings of paranoia. Which characters in the play feel paranoid and how do they express it?

People often talk about 'peer pressure' with regard to how gangs behave. Where does peer pressure come from?  
What strategies can you put in place to deal with the pressure to do things you know to be wrong?