

ROYAL COURT YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAMME

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE

EDUCATION RESOURCES



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INTRODUCTION

WHO WAS RACHEL CORRIE?

"My name is Rachel Corrie. I am 12 years old. I was born on April 10th, 1979 in Olympia, Washington, to my mother and father, Craig and Cindy Corrie, a brother Chris, a sister, Sarah, and a really old cat named Phoebe."

Rachel was born in Olympia, the capital of Washington State, located at the tip of Puget Sound, about sixty miles south of Seattle, U.S.A.

As she grew up, Rachel flourished as a painter and a poet, and was a prolific keeper of diaries. Her notebooks were a colourful mix of observations about the world around her, descriptions of her day and stories and poems about her friends and family. When she was 11, she graduated from a middle-school programme called Options, which encouraged her awareness of issues in the local community. In 1995 she travelled to Russia. Seeing another country for the first time affected her profoundly.

In 1997, when she was 18, Rachel enrolled in Evergreen State College, a liberal arts college in Olympia. At Olympia she found an opportunity to work actively with local community groups to protest and speak out against the injustices she saw around her.

At Evergreen, she also took a course in Middle Eastern politics, and felt strongly drawn to the situation of the Palestinian people there. She also learned about the International Solidarity Movement. The I.S.M. is an international volunteer group, lead by Palestinians, which works in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, through non-violent direct action to protect the lives and homes of Palestinians who live there.

"I'm being invited there. I need to go."

On the 25th January 2003, Rachel arrived in Jerusalem. From there, she travelled to Rafah, a border town in the Gaza Strip which is one of the main areas of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She joined other international volunteers and together they worked to protect Palestinian homes, water resources and other civilian infrastructure from demolition by Israeli tanks and bulldozers. The ISM used a method of non-violent direct actions such as standing in the way of bulldozers and tanks, sleeping at houses and wells, and riding on civilian trucks as they made repairs, to protect the local people from military action.

The volunteers believed their international status would protect them from any kind of military action against them. However, tragically, this was not the case. The following is an extract from an eye-witness account by fellow ISM activist Tom Dale about the death of Rachel Corrie, March 16th 2003.

"Rachel walked to place herself in between the home and the bulldozer. As the bulldozer turned towards them, it had about 20 meters or 10 seconds clear time directly with her in its view to see where she was. It continued toward her at some pace with a mound of earth building up in front of it. And as the mound of earth reached Rachel she obviously felt that in order to keep her balance, to keep her footing she had to climb on to this mound of earth to prevent being overwhelmed by it. When she did this it put her head and shoulders clearly above the top of the bulldozer blade and therefore clearly in the view of the bulldozer driver, so he knew absolutely that she was there.

She falls down the mound of earth and out of sight of the driver; so he has essentially pushed her forward down the mound of earth. And then she starts to slide and then you see one then both of her feet disappear and he simply continued until she was, or the place where she had been, was directly beneath the cockpit of the bulldozer. They waited a few seconds then withdrew leaving his scoop on the ground. Only later when it was much clear of her body did it raise its scoop.

I ran for an ambulance, she was gasping and her face was covered in blood from a gash cutting her face from lip to cheek. She was showing signs of brain haemorrhaging. She died in the ambulance a few minutes later."

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MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE – Notes on the Production.

Whatever opinions you have about Rachel, this play explores Rachel's evolution into a young woman who cared passionately about the injustices she saw around her, and was determined to make a change.

This is why it is important for as many young people as possible to see this play. You should ask yourself: what can I do to make a difference?

THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE PLAY

"The question is always where to start the story. That's the first question. Trying to find a beginning, trying to impose order on the great psychotic fast-forward merry-go-round."

The script of MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE is taken almost entirely from Rachel's own words – her diaries, notebooks, poems, emails and letters. Some emails from her parents have also been included, as has an eyewitness account of her death at the end. The edited script remained absolutely true to Rachel's own words.

After Rachel died, some of her emails were published in THE GUARDIAN newspaper. The actor and director Alan Rickman read them, and was inspired by their articulacy and dramatic power. He approached Ian Rickson (Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre) and Elyse Dodgson (Associate Director and Head of the International Department at the Royal Court) about creating a play based on Rachel's life. They agreed, and contacted Rachel's parents, Cindy and Craig Corrie. A year later, a 187-page document of some of Rachel's surviving writings arrived at the Royal Court. At this point, the American actress Megan Dodds was brought on board, who agreed to collaborate in the editing process and perform the finish piece.

Editing the 187-page document into a play was a long and delicate process. The aim was to tell Rachel's story as truthfully and dramatically as possible. As Katharine Viner (Editor of Guardian Weekend Magazine and co-editor of MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE) points out: "the biggest challenge in editing Rachel's words was making sure we stayed true to Rachel while turning her writing into an effective and true piece of theatre, which was not always the same thing."

Together Katharine and Alan found an 'editing principle' which allowed them to create a stage narrative, and make what are essentially retrospective diaries into living, breathing, present experiences. After 6 months, the play took the form it has today.

THE FORM OF THE PLAY

"Who is this person? How did I get here?"

Almost immediately, Alan and Katharine knew that the play should be a monologue, in this production performed by Megan Dodds.

Although the words are mainly Rachel's, other characters do appear in the play – for example, Rachel's parents Cindy and Craig Corrie, a lecturer at Evergreen and Dr Samir, whose house Rachel was protecting when she died. In this production Megan inhabits the other characters by changing her voice and physicality.

Alan and Katharine decided to open the play in Rachel's bedroom in Olympia Washington on the day before she leaves for Gaza. As she packs up her belongings she reflects on her childhood, her family, her ex-boyfriend and, as we so often do on the eve of a momentous event, asks 'How did I get here?'

Alan and Katharine decided to set the second half of the play in Gaza. In this section, the emails and diary entries are arranged in chronological order, and describe the horrors she witnesses day by day. The action spans from January 25th 2003 until the day before she died, seven weeks later.

The play ends with an eye-witness account of Rachel's death by her ISM colleague Tom Dale, followed by a video recording of a speech Rachel made when she was ten years old on world hunger.

THE DESIGN

"Rafah

Ghost homes

Glow-in-the-dark stars in teenagers' bedrooms

Tumbling of concrete

Constant anonymous night vision telescope."

Poem by Rachel Corrie

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE was designed by Hildegard Bechtler. Hildegard's idea was to create an environment based on Rafah, but which could also host Rachel's red bedroom in U.S.A for the first part of the play. Hildegard used a lot of visual images from books and videos to create an enormous concrete wall which ran the length of the stage, and which was riddled with bullet holes and littered with rubble.

In the first part of the play, Rachel's bedroom in the U.S.A was created in one corner of the stage, using a flat red panel, a bed, and books and clothes strewn over the floor. Details from the bedroom were inspired by an email sent by Rachel Corrie's parents describing her room for example, the ballet shoes, football boots and paintbrushes.

When the set changes to Gaza, the red wall is rolled back to reveal the full length of the concrete wall. Along the concrete wall, Hildegard added small, specific details such as a computer and a desk which represented different areas in Rafah like the internet café. Other areas represented included a garden and an apartment.

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IMAGE OF THE DESIGN



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INTERVIEWS

Interview with Alan Rickman; co-editor, director.

How did you first come across Rachel Corrie, and can you describe the process which lead you to turn her writings into a play?

I first read Rachel's emails in The Guardian in March 2003. They were so vibrant that they kind of demanded to be said out loud. I took them to Ian Rickson which then lead to a meeting with Rachel's parents, Elyse Dodgson and Katharine Viner. Ian took a big brave jump and said 'alright, I'll do it'. Almost a year later, we got the 187 page document which contained many of Rachel's journals, letters and poems which had been typed up very bravely by Rachel's sister Sarah Corrie.

Why does Rachel Corrie inspire you?

I suppose because we live in a time of such prevarication where people who are in the business of letting us know their opinions are careful and manipulative, and it is not always clear what they really think. Rachel Corrie, whether she was or not, seems to be like an arrow. Her thoughts, opinions and reactions are crystal clear. This is inspiring, especially from someone so young.

What do you want audiences to experience when they watch this play?

I want audiences to experience what they experience. As long as they think something when they watch the play, I don't expect anything that I could possibly predict. I hope they will be informed and realise that this is relevant to their own lives.

Can you describe the process of working with a design team to recreate Rachel's world? How hard was it to imagine Rachel's environments and experiences?

I had a fairly immediate image of a wall for the set of Rachel Corrie. Because I knew that there was going to be a solitary young woman on stage, the real question was what kind of backdrop to give her. A wall is divisive, immovable and inhuman. As well as referencing the actual environment of Gaza, the wall is also a metaphor. And then Hildegard Bechtler, the designer, made the set real and workable. We looked at photographs of Palestine, and many videos to get a sense of the physical environment, the sounds, the light and how different this world was from the world she left behind. America also exists in the set for the first part of the play, and it was essential to the power of the production that Megan could move from one world to another. America was a small, personal world which she created herself, rather than a world which was imposed in Gaza, which she had to find a way of living in. The play moves from personal to impersonal. In her bedroom, the walls are decorated with pictures, poems and photographs. In Palestine, the landscape is ruined, and there is a sense of people's lives being ripped apart.

What was your biggest challenge in staging Rachel's words?

My biggest challenge was that Rachel's words were not written to be staged. We had to create a kind of narrative and progression so that you could feel her mind alive and changing and growing. This also involved using the acting skills of Megan, and the luck of all sorts of gifts, such as suddenly hearing for the first time that Rachel had a very beautiful singing voice.

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Interview with Katharine Viner, co-editor.

Can you describe the process of editing Rachel's writings into a play? Was it very different from your usual job of editing a newspaper?

The process of editing Rachel's writings into a play was completely different from my day job. To start with, journalists are used to interviewing people, asking them what they think about a particular situation, or why they did something. In Rachel's case this was of course impossible, and there was no way of clarifying confusions. In addition, much of the material we have was not written for public consumption, but in the private form of a diary – which carried with it a great deal of sensitivities and privilege.

On the process, we did a lot of work as background for the play because we were unsure until quite late on that we wanted to use only Rachel's words. So I interviewed many of Rachel's friends from Gaza, talked to her family, and researched the entire situation in Gaza from the standpoint of the Palestinians, the Israeli soldiers and the settlers. In the end we didn't use much of this material – only the testimony of Tom Dale, an eyewitness to Rachel's death – but it was invaluable background to understanding the situation for everyone involved in the process, most importantly Megan. Essentially, we filtered an enormous amount of testimony both from Rachel and from other people in order to get to the essence of what we wanted to present. In journalism, a similar filtering of material occurs, albeit with different aims. On newspapers we are always thinking of 'the story' – what's the real story here, and what's the best way of telling it? While it was important to do this while editing Rachel's writings – you can't beat a good narrative in any medium – there were other crucial aspects to consider, such as the nature of performance, and what was going to be happening on stage at any particular moment. Sometimes we would include a line which did not obviously spring off the page, but which came alive when it was spoken on stage; and sometimes we would include a less interesting line, but keep it in because Megan needed something to say, for example, while she was moving some furniture on stage. Unlike newspapers, theatre is not only about the page. This was the crucial difference. Oh, and the high amount of hot emotion theatre people bring to every occasion – that is different!

Why does Rachel Corrie inspire you?

Rachel Corrie found a way to be political in a depoliticised age; she cared passionately for injustice, and unlike many of us, she tried to do something about it. There are few such figures in our commercialised culture.

What do you want audiences to experience when they watch this play?

I would like audiences to understand Rachel's motivations and how she came to go to Gaza; to see the world through her eyes and understand her response to it; to engage with her active life and terrible death; to feel inspired to go and do something about the world's inequalities themselves.

In her diary, Rachel often described her observations of the world around her. As a journalist, can you describe how you approach looking and writing down your observations of events? Is writing journalism very different from writing a diary?

When you are reporting an event, you're trying to find out the truth of a situation. You're looking for clues in all sorts of places: sights, smells, body language. But in journalism, you mainly get your information by talking to people and trying to work out from them what's really going on: aiming to find an 'objective truth' while acknowledging that you always bring your own assumptions and prejudices to a particular situation. A diary is vastly more subjective; its very point is subjectivity. It is always more concerned with a writer's response to a situation than the situation itself.

What was your biggest challenge in editing Rachel's words?

The biggest challenge in editing Rachel's words was making sure we stayed true to Rachel while turning her writing into an effective and true piece of theatre, which was not always the same thing.

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Interview with Megan Dodds, Actress.

How did you feel when you first read Rachel's diaries?

Impressed...terrified! I felt like it was a hell of a lot of material and there was no way I was going to be able to do it. At the same time, I felt like it was an incredibly moving and really important story, and that we really had to do it.

How did you approach developing Rachel as a character? Was it very different playing someone who actually existed to playing an imaginary character?

Yes, it was very different approaching playing Rachel. I had to be much more thorough about research, and to consider all the people in her life who are still alive. This piece is a tribute to Rachel as much as anything, and needs to stay completely truthful to the real person. You can't impose any ideas about what would make her more attractive or dramatically interesting. You just have to tell the truth. Usually when I am approaching a character, I break that character down to its intentions and objectives and what that character's function is in order to serve the play. I build the character from what it needs to do. But in this case, when all the writing was Rachel's own, the process of excavating personality or character was completely different. There was a lot of work on her point of view – on how she felt about different situations. Normally you don't have the luxury of finding out a character's feelings in such detail.

Why does Rachel Corrie inspire you?

Her selflessness inspires me – her willingness to put herself in a really dangerous place to help other people. Her bravery, given the fact that she was an American, and that kind of selflessness in America is very rare and worthwhile.

What do you want audiences to experience when they watch this play?

I hope it makes people think about the way that other people live. I hope they feel compassion and that there's a part of them that can relate to the idea of giving up part of their life to go and help other people. I want them to feel inspired.

What was your biggest challenge in performing MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE? How did you meet it?

My biggest challenge was getting over my own fear about standing up in front of that many people with no one else there, and speaking on my own for an hour and a half! Having said that, the idea was always much more terrifying than the reality. The reality was that the words just took over.

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THEMES

1. IDEALISM

"It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."

– Anne Frank, aged 15, diary extract July 15th 1944.

"I'm here for other children.

I'm here because I care.

I'm here because children everywhere are suffering and because forty thousand people die each day from hunger.

I'm here because those people are mostly children.

We have got to understand that the poor are all around us and we are ignoring them.

We have got to understand that these deaths are preventable.

We have got to understand that people in third world countries think and care and smile and cry just like us.

We have got to understand that they dream our dreams and we dream theirs.

We have got to understand that they are us. We are them.

My dream is to stop hunger by the year 2000.

My dream is to give the poor a chance.

My dream is to save the forty thousand people who die each day.

My dream can and will come true if we all look into the future and see the light that shines there.

If we ignore hunger, that light will go out.

If we all help and work together, it will grow and burn free with the potential of tomorrow."

– Rachel Corrie, aged 10, remarks from a fifth grade press conference on World Hunger.

"Disbelief and horror is what I feel. Disappointment. I am disappointed that this is the base reality of our world, and that we, in fact, participate in it."

– Rachel Corrie, aged 23, diary extract 27th February 2003.

EXERCISES

- Are there things, people or causes in your life that would be worth fighting for, even if it meant making sacrifices? Make a list of what you might do to achieve this aim – and what you would not be prepared to do. For example: I think we should fight for better conditions for old people. I would be prepared to demonstrate, but I would not be prepared to harm someone.
- Is there a moment in your life when you've had to make a difficult choice about something you believe in? For example, I had to betray the trust of a friend in order to do the right thing.
- Write a short passage describing the events leading up to your decision, and the moment you actually did what you felt you had to do – focus on how you were feeling, what you were thinking immediately before and after making the decision. Write as though you were writing in your diary, on the day of your big decision.

2. HOME

"I could write a history of my family according to discoveries I've made over the years in cupboards and drawers. Unfinished baby books. Duplicate containers of oregano from houses I lived in and moved out of, taking the seasoning with me. Placemats that defeated Cranberry juice and Oyster Stew and candle wax."

– Rachel Corrie.

The Shkirat Family

Extracts of an interview by Katie Mizrahi, published by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. Unlike many families whose houses are literally destroyed without warning and in the middle of the night, the Shkirat Family have been living with the threat of demolition for three years.

The Shkirat family has been living in a home slated for demolition for three years now. I went with a small group including a translator to talk to the family about their situation. The house is in the village of Jabal Mukkaber.

They have lived on this land for generations. They say that 20% of the village is from this family. The women of the house explain that before Israel existed, their grandparents grew up here, living much as the Bedouin do today. The family's ownership of this land is undisputed. The problem lies with building. Their land has been zoned as a 'green area' which means that they are not allowed to build on it.

I ask the women how this whole situation has affected their lives. They reply, We don't know where to go if we lose the house.

I ask about how this affects the children. What does the oldest one (12 years old) say?

If they come to destroy the house, he says he will throw stones. Of course, he says that. But when the bulldozers and police come, the kids are afraid. Everyone here is afraid.

Two of the kids have ventured in to watch the interview and I ask Ramadan, the ten-year-old boy, about himself. He says that he likes sports, soccer, handball. His slightly younger cousin, Hanin, sits with us too, holding her mother's hand. I ask her about what she wants to be when she grows up.

A doctor, she says. I think about the long list of the battles she will have to fight along the way if she is to be a doctor. I wonder if the loss of her home will be on that list.

EXERCISES

- The idea of home can mean many things to a person. It can mean the people who live there, or the objects that they own, or the physical environment. Create a character for whom one of these symbols of home has been taken away. This can be conceived on a very personal and private level – such as someone losing a close relative meaning they no longer have a direct link or tie to a certain place or area OR it could be something more public and widespread such as the scenes witnessed in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Write a short scene (this may well be a monologue) as though this character is addressing the person or symbol that is most dear to them, reflecting on their loss.
- Write a short history of your family inspired by details you've observed about your home, and discoveries you've made in 'cupboards and drawers'.

3. AWAKENING

"I don't know why I stayed. But one day I knew I had to. It was the same day I decided to be an artist and a writer and I didn't give a shit if I was mediocre and I didn't give a shit if I starved to death and I didn't give a shit if my whole damn high school turned and pointed and laughed in my face.

I was finally awake, forever and ever."

– Rachel Corrie

Final Notions

It will not be simple, it will not take long
It will take little time, it will take all your thought
It will take all your heart, it will take all your breath
It will be short, it will not be simple

It will touch through your ribs, it will take all your heart
It will not take long, it will occupy all your thought
As a city is occupied, as a bed is occupied
It will take your flesh, it will not be simple

You are coming into us who cannot withstand you
You are coming into us who never wanted to withstand you
You are taking parts of us into places never planned
You are going far away with pieces of our lives

It will be short, it will take all your breath
It will not be simple, it will become your will
– Adrienne Rich

EXERCISES

- Is there an experience in your life which opened your eyes to the way that other people live? With a partner or in a group discuss how this has affected you or anyone around you. Make a list of the effects of people's experiences.
- Write a scene for 2 characters, A and B. They are best friends. Friend A is trying to persuade Friend B to do something, it is something they have both done before on many occasions – however, on this occasion because of an 'awakening' or new way of seeing things, Friend B is not going to comply. Show how Friend B's position or stance affects the two friends' relationship.
- Imagine aliens landed from outer space. What details of life right here, right now would you share with them? Think about things like: your daily routine, the sort of problems you face, what your home is like. Make sure you tell them what issues are important in your community. You have been summoned to the Alien's Ruling Council to make a defence of your way of life. Write the speech you're going to make.

4. TAKING A STAND

"I look forward to seeing more and more people willing to resist the direction the world is moving in; a direction that persuades us that our personal experiences are irrelevant, that we are defective, that our communities are not important, that we are powerless, that the future is determined and that the highest level of humanity is expressed through what we choose to buy at the mall."

– Rachel Corrie

Rachel Corrie found a way to be political in a depoliticised age; she cared passionately for injustice, and unlike many of us, she tried to do something about it. There are few such figures in our commercialised culture.

– Katharine Viner

The Hand That Signed The Paper

**The hand that signed the paper felled a city;
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,
Doubled the globe of dead and haled a country;
These five kings did a king to death.**

**The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;
A goose's quill has put an end to murder
That put an end to talk.**

**The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the hand that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.**

**The five kings count the dead, but do not soften
The crusted wound nor stroke the brow;
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.**

– Dylan Thomas.

EXERCISES

- Give an example of something happening locally in your neighbourhood which you feel strongly about. What can you do to change it?
- Create a character who feels alienated from the decision making that happens around them, and which affects their life. The decision makers can be in their home, their school, their place of work, their local community, their country or the world. They can be their husband or the President of the USA. What does that character do to change their situation? What happens? What does that character do to try and change their situation? Write 2 short sentences of no more than 10 lines each and with no more than 3 characters in each scene, depicting what happens. Each scene has the following title:-
Scene 1 – Realisation
Scene 2 – Taking Action
Scene 3 – The Outcome

5. SPEAKING OUT

“We live in a time of such prevarication where people who are in the business of letting us know their opinions are careful and manipulative, and it is not always clear what they really think. Rachel Corrie, whether she was or not, seems to be like an arrow.”

– Alan Rickman

“I think we all have the right to be critical of government policies...any government policies, particularly those which we’re funding.”

– Rachel Corrie

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

– The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Article 19

EXERCISE

- Write as much as you can in ten minutes, without taking your pen off the paper, about something that makes you really angry, really happy or really sad.

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CREATING THEATRE FROM TESTIMONY

Taken from a conversation with Elyse Dodgson.

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE is an example of testimonial theatre. Testimonial theatre, or Verbatim theatre, describes a play whose script is taken entirely from words spoken or written by real people – rather than imaginary characters.

The Value of Testimony

The value of testimony lies in its detail and authenticity. There are also some big subjects – powerful or horrific – in which hearing the verbatim testimonies enables the audience to experience something that a writer or audience could never imagine.

Personal testimony can also help people discover things they never knew. One of the young women involved in Motherland [a Verbatim Theatre project at Vauxhall Manor School in South London, 1981-2, in which the pupils interviewed their parents about immigrant experiences] spoke about what the rehearsals meant to her: when you have to say the testimony that the women have said, when you have to sit there, when you think about it, to say it out, you're not just learning it, you're understanding it. You understand what your parents always told you.

Testimony is also an incredibly useful exercise for writing invented dialogue, because listening and transcribing real conversations makes you aware of how people actually speak and how different and specific their speech patterns are. Royal Court playwright Martin Crimp, for example, was a transcriber – he used to transcribe market research interviews I think. Playwrights may be inspired by their own experience and imagination but in between there are things they need to research and discover.

Transcribing Oral Testimony

When you transcribe dialogue, you transcribe every inflection – every um, er, ah – and also sometimes you will invent ways of writing down a particular piece of slang or an invented word. Oral testimony shows that there are no two people in the world who speak exactly the same way. It's like having your own fingerprint.

Using a Tape Recorder

The first thing to do is choose your subject. When you've decided what subject you want to investigate, you have to look for people to interview, and who wouldn't mind being recorded on tape. You should get as wide a range to meet as possible. Sometimes you will just need to ask people – other times you will know people.

Before you meet them for the interview, make sure you have 20-25 questions written down to refer to as a map. But once you start the interview you should be listening and responding to each answer as it arrives, so that each new question is detailed and specific. However if you get stuck, you'll have the map to refer to.

Oh, and you should always ask your participant to check the tape recorder themselves, so they do not feel intimidated by the machine.

How to Ask Questions

You should also remember that your aim is to get them to talk about things that they normally don't talk about. You are trying to get them to reveal things, and unusual things. The trick here is in the questions you ask and the way you ask them. You mustn't be intimidating or aggressive, or the person you are interviewing will just walk away.

Also, if you ask a 'yes or no' question (eg: 'Did you like it?') you will get a very limited response. If you answer the question yourself when you ask it (eg: 'I found it depressing, what did you think?') then the participant may feel uncomfortable expressing his or her own opinion. Try to ask more open questions (eg: what was it about this place which made you feel it was extraordinary?). This will lead to detailed examination and discussion. Above all you must really listen to the interviewee and be ready to respond with another question.

Elyse Dodgson is an Associate Director International at the Royal Court, and has continued to be inspired by creating theatre out of personal testimony for over twenty years. She has had the opportunity to introduce verbatim techniques to many people in many places including: women prisoners in Kamapala Jail, Uganda, people crossing at the checkpoints between the Westbank and Jerusalem in the Middle East, policemen on strike in Brazil, and homeless people in Moscow central station.

EXERCISES

- brainstorm amongst your group what they consider to be the 'hot' issues of the day – try and establish the top 3 issues for your group
- in pairs decide what you are going to interview each other about
- draw up a list of 5 open questions on the subject (s) chosen
- take it in turns to interview each other
- record each interview – each interview should be a maximum of 5 minutes long – try and get your interviewee to say as much as possible in that time
- transcribe a page of your interview in the first instance (purely for the purposes of this exercise – NB good and accurate transcribing is a very lengthy process, but also very rewarding)
- read your testimony out aloud to the rest of the group trying to include every inflection, stutter, repetition, change in tone, pitch, and pace – to all intents and purposes you are trying to become the interviewee and are trying to re-present them to the rest of the group

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OBSERVING THE WORLD

"I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train."

– Oscar Wilde

"A diary is vastly more subjective; its very point is subjectivity. It is always more concerned with a writer's response to a situation than the situation itself."

– Katharine Viner

Have you ever written a diary? Some of the world's most powerful and interesting stories come from the recorded daily experiences of seemingly ordinary people. Anne Frank's diaries are an excellent example of this.

Memory

On the whole, diaries start from memories. As you sit down to write your diary, you are aware of the process of remembering events, experiences, sensations and feelings, in order to capture them with words. Here are some exercises that help to warm up your memory. They all require 'automatic writing' which means you should write to time, as quickly as you can without taking your pen off the page, and without worrying about what you write. Just write whatever comes into your head.

EXERCISES

- For five minutes, make a list of 50 things you can remember from your journey to school or work this morning. Here is some of my list: a one-eared cat, three traffic wardens, a homeless person asleep, the cinema, a red sportscar.
- Choose three of these things which made the biggest impression on you. Spend one minute each remembering details about how they looked, smelt, felt, what they sounded like and how they made you feel. Also think about how you behaved towards them. Try to describe as much detail as possible. For example: 'the homeless person smelt like blood, and he looked dead because he was curled up in a doorway asleep, so I stopped, to see if he was breathing. I didn't touch him because I felt squeamish, but I watched to see if his chest rose up and down. It did, so I knew he was alive. I carried on walking to the tube station. I felt extremely guilty.'
- Choose one of those three things and, writing for one minute only, think about why you felt the way you did. Finish your explanation with a question. Be as specific as you can. For example, here is some of mine; "I felt guilty because I knew that the fact that this man was living in such extreme poverty should have made me stop to help him, but instead I rushed on to the tube station because I was late for work. How can homelessness exist in such a wealthy country as Britain?"

OBSERVING THE WORLD

FURTHER EXERCISES

- Often Rachel described people she had met in her diary. Find a partner and sit with them for 5 minutes. Ask them to tell you their life story. As they are talking to you, concentrate hard on listening. You are not allowed to write anything, but make mental notes of anything that strikes you as particularly interesting. This can be something they say or the expression on their face or body language when they remember something. Also observe how you are feeling when you hear their story. Swap over, so you tell them your life story. Then sit down with your notebook and take ten minutes to write down the story that they told you. Can you remember how it started? How it finished? Also write down as many details you remember about the person. What did they do with their hands? Did they look you in the eye? What part of the story seemed to be most important to them? How did they speak? What sorts of words did they use? Be as detailed as possible. How much of the whole experience can you remember? Then at the end describe how listening to the story made you feel, and which part of it you found particularly interesting.
- Keep a diary for a week. Think about these exercises and be as detailed with describing experiences you have had during the day as possible. At the end of the week reflect back to yourself. Did you enjoy the experience?

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FURTHER READING

Diaries

The diaries of the Bethlehem Schoolgirls

The Diaries of Anne Frank

Related links

The Rachel Corrie Memorial Website: <http://www.rachelcorrie.org>

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions: <http://www.icahd.org>

The International Solidarity Movement: <http://www.palsolidarity.org>

Peace Organisations

Gush Shalom: <http://www.gush-shalom.org>

Peace Now: <http://www.peacenow.org>

Women in black: <http://www.womeninblack.net>

International Observers

Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org

Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org

Media for further research

Al-Jazeera (English language site): www.aljazeera.com

Ha'aretz (Israel): www.haaretzdaily.com

The Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk

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Time Line of the life of Rachel Corrie

April 10th, 1979	Born, in Olympia Washington State United States of America, to parents Craig and Cindy Corrie. Rachel was the youngest member of the family – having an older brother and sister, Chris and Sarah.
1989	Makes a speech on poverty as part of her school conference on World Hunger.
1990	Graduates from the Options programme at Pre-School, and goes to Middle School.
1995	Travels to Moscow, Russia
1999	Enrolls at Evergreen State University. She supports herself by working as a community mental health worker. During this time she meets Colin Reese, with whom she has an on-off relationship. She becomes involved with local activism.
2001	Takes the local knowledge class at Evergreen, and her involvement in community activism becomes increasingly heavy. Among other things, she demonstrates against her government's response to the September 11th attacks, against war, and to promote global justice.
2002	Leads the effort to create a flock of doves for Olympia's earth day tribute, "The Procession of the Species."
November 2002	Is invited to join the ISM in Gaza.
January 25th 2003	Arrives in Jerusalem
January 27th 2003	Travels to Rafah in the Gaza Strip, where she works as a member of the ISM to protect Palestinian homes and livelihoods from demolition through non-violent direct action.
March 16th 2003	Rachel Corrie is killed by an Israeli bulldozer.

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Time Line of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict

November 2nd, 1917

The Balfour Declaration is issued by the British Government. It states that the government will work towards 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People.' At the same time, the government promises post-war independence for former Ottoman Arab provinces.

A month later Allied forces occupy Jerusalem and four centuries of Ottoman rule over Palestine end.

May 15th, 1948

Britain, who has given up its mandate, withdraws its last occupying troops and The State of Israel is declared. This is the first Jewish state for over 2000 years.

The announcement follows a year of battling in Palestine between Jews and Arabs, over the UN's proposed partition of Palestine into two states – one Arab one Jewish.

In the aftermath of the declaration of the Israeli state, more than 800,000 Arab Palestinian inhabitants are uprooted and displaced. Egypt, Syria and Jordan invade Israel, but are beaten back.

June 5th – 11th, 1967

The Six Day War. Mounting tensions in the region lead to a 6-day war that will completely change the face of the conflict in the Middle East. On June 5th Israel launches a 'preemptive strike' against the Arab troops along its borders, in retaliation for Egypt's closing of the straits of Tiran. Israel is victorious, and the entire territory of the former Palestine mandate comes under Israeli control, as do the Egyptian Sinai and the Golan Heights from Syria. East Jerusalem is annexed to Israel and the rest of the occupied territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip) are put under military administration. Talks have centered on a return to pre-1967 borders ever since.

The UN calls for "the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict...[and the] right [of every state in the area] to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats of acts of force." According to the UN, the conflict displaced another 500,000 Palestinians who fled to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

The Palestinian Liberation Army (which was established in 1964) is reformed under the chairmanship of Yasser Arafat. It claims to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people and vows to reclaim their land and destroy Israel.

1973

The Yom Kippur War. Unable to regain the territory lost in 1967, Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack on the Jewish day of atonement. Egypt retakes the Suez canal, and Syria reconquers the Golan Heights. However, Israel, supported by the US, succeeds in pushing back the

Syrians and threatening Damascus, regaining territory beyond the 1967 ceasefire lines.

- 1987 The First Intifada, a popular uprising of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation, begins in Gaza and spreads quickly to the West Bank, where the establishment of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land has continued systematically. Protest takes the form of civil disobedience, general strikes, boycotts on Israeli products, graffiti, and barricades, but it is the stone-throwing demonstrations against the heavily-armed occupation troops that capture international attention. The Israeli Defence Forces respond, causing heavy loss of life among Palestinian civilians. More than 1,000 die in clashes which last until 1993.
- 1993 The Oslo Peace Process begins, a period of frenetic Arab-Israeli negotiations, triggered by the election of a left-wing Labour government led by Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin's government is uniquely placed to talk seriously about peace with the Palestinians, and similarly, the PLO wants to make peace talks work because of its weakening by the Gulf War. Israel lifts a ban on PLO participants in the peace talks, and although the bilateral meetings in Washington are unsuccessful, secret talks in Norway bring results. The Palestinians consent to recognize Israel in return for the beginning of phased dismantling of Israel's occupation. Negotiations culminate in the Declaration of Principles, signed on the White House lawn and sealed with a historic first handshake between Rabin and Yasser Arafat watched by 400 million people around the world
- 1995 Oslo II and the assassination of Rabin. The first year of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho was dogged by difficulties. Bomb attacks by Palestinian militants killed dozens of Israelis, while Israel blockaded the autonomous areas and assassinated militants. Settlement activity continued. Opposition to the peace process grew among right-wingers and religious nationalists in Israel.
- On 24 September the Oslo II agreement is signed, dividing the West Bank into three zones:
Zone A comprising 7% of the territory (the main Palestinian towns excluding Hebron and East Jerusalem) goes to full Palestinian control;
Zone B comprising 21% of the territory goes under joint Israeli-Palestinian control; Zone C stays in Israeli hands.
- Oslo II is greeted with little enthusiasm by Palestinians, while Israel's religious right is furious at the "surrender of Jewish land". Amid an incitement campaign against Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Jewish religious extremist assassinates him on 4 November, sending shock waves around the world.
- 2000 The second Intifada (or al-Aqsa uprising). The Palestinians have very little to show for these years of peace-making and negotiations, and 2000 sees a second uprising against the occupation taking root. Violence flairs across the West Bank and Gaza Strip after Ariel Sharon makes a provocative visit to the Haram-al-Sharif mosque compound. As the Camp David Peace talks break down, the Palestinian Authority

police trade fire with Israeli soldiers; many are killed and hundreds injured, with most of the casualties Arab. The death of 12 year old Palestinian Mohammed al-Durrah, shot dead by Israeli troops, was broadcast around the world. By the end of 2000, over 300 people were dead. The following two years would see tensions increase further, with Palestinian militants launching a new wave of suicide bombings and Israel responding with the bombing of refugee camps.

2002

The West Bank is re-occupied. After waves of suicide attacks early in 2002, Israel re-occupies almost all of the West Bank in March and again in June. Palestinian cities are regularly raided and remain cut off from each other, surrounded and under curfew for long periods of time. In April, Israeli forces enter and capture the refugee camp in northern West Bank city of Jenin. The Palestinians claim a massacre. In May, a five-week standoff at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, in which a large group of Palestinians are seeking refuge, ends when 13 Palestinian militants are sent into exile.

A UN report criticises both sides for "violence that placed civilians in harm's way", and concluded that there was no massacre of civilians. However, a report by the human rights group Amnesty International concludes that the Israeli army had committed war crimes during its incursions into the West Bank towns of Jenin and Nablus. For the second year running, the peace process is in deep freeze. The Roadmap for peace in the Middle East is put on hold, until it is finally published after the US-led war in Iraq in April 2003.

2005

The Israeli Disengagement plan takes effect. This entails dismantling settlements in Gaza and four settlements in the northern part of the West Bank, but expanding the remaining settlements in the West Bank. The plan is endorsed by the United States, which therefore, for the first time, asserts Israel's right to retain most of the illegal West Bank settlements. Despite being judged illegal by the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Israel continues to construct a giant separation wall roughly along its pre-1967 borders, but which loops into the Palestinian areas. Over four million Palestinians who fled Israeli expansionism and the 1967 war are still in exile in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

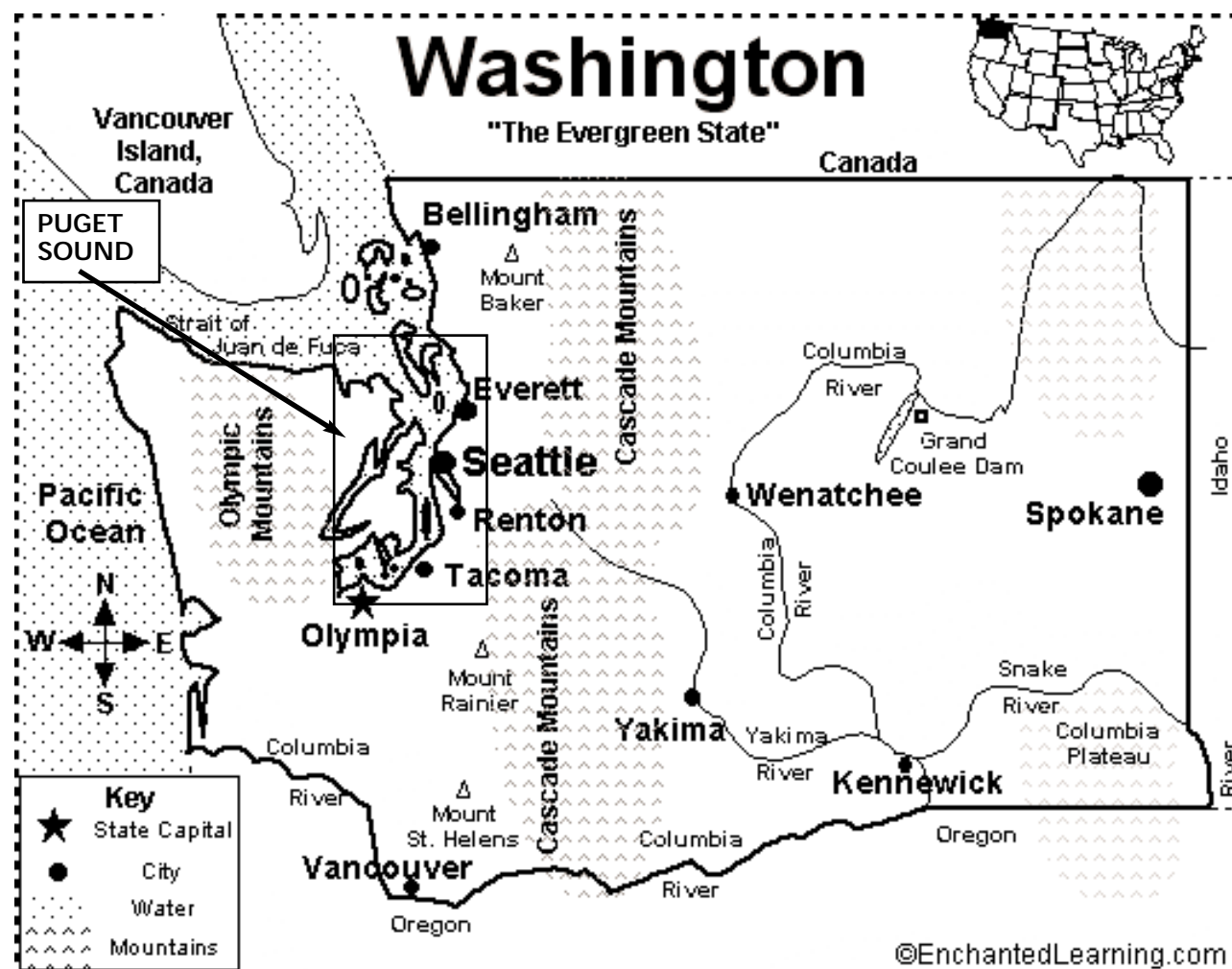
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MAP OF RAFAH, GAZA STRIP



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MAP OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON USA



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EDUCATION PROGRAMME

These resources were created by Tiffany Watt-Smith for the Royal Court Young Writers Programme, as part of our Education work. If you would like to know more about our Education Programme the contact details are as follows:

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We would appreciate any feedback you have on these resources as we are constantly trying to improve our service to teachers.

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