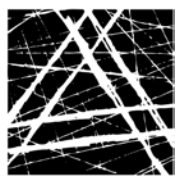


# #HASHTAG LIGHTIE

## EDUCATION MATERIALS



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# #HASHTAG LIGHTIE

**#Hashtag Lightie** is a new play which explores what it means to be mixed race in 2016.

## PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Written by **Lynette Linton** and directed by **Rikki Beadle-Blair**, the play explores the experiences of four mixed-race (Caribbean/white) siblings when the youngest, Ella, who is addicted to social media and is selfie-culture narcissistic, starts a YouTube channel called **#lightie**, celebrating mixed-race beauty and success at the expense of black beauty and achievement. When Ella is savagely 'trolled' online, her sisters and brother (and their romantic partners, who are themselves black and white) must excavate and face up to their own often-conflicting understandings of what it means to be mixed race in Britain today - culturally, psychologically and politically.

Told with heart and hilarity, **#Hashtag Lightie** is an entertaining, contemporary exploration of how the emerging generation can navigate race and social media whilst maintaining identity and positivity.

*There will be a question and answer session after each performance. Stay and chat to the cast and creative team.*

## LEAD CHARACTER - ELLA (age 15):

Ella is popular, addicted to social media, Queen of the Selfie, and mixed race. Her thriving YouTube channel has make-up tips, opinions, and videos of her boisterous family. But after one of her videos goes viral, Ella finds herself in the centre of a social media storm that leads to a family meltdown. With her identity and perception of beauty challenged, can Ella promote self-love without fuelling hate?



## PLAY DEVELOPMENT:

**#Hashtag Lightie** has had a successful **Arts Council** funded research and development journey, in conjunction with **The Gate Theatre, Notting Hill**. As part of this journey, we carried out two focus groups with mixed race people of different ages, who fed back on some of their experiences of being mixed race. These experiences heavily influenced the play, and many of these individuals have publicly supported the piece. The play was then further developed with a company of actors, and it had two audience sharings for which it received an extremely positive response.



One audience member said, “...When I saw this play, I couldn’t believe it. It was the first time I had ever found my voice represented in the theatre. It was so refreshing - it gave me hope. This is what I want to see in the theatre, and finally it is getting a platform. I am hoping there’ll be more and more in the future.”

More positive feedback on the play:



**#Hashtag Lightie** continues to be an interactive journey, with online social media conversation, workshops & discussion sessions with audiences both young and adult; and we plan to continue to engage on the topic well into the future.

# KEY THEMES / DISCUSSION AREAS FOR EDUCATION:



## Mixed Race:

- What does it mean to be mixed race in 2016?
- What is people's personal experience of this?
- How has the experience of being mixed race developed in the last two decades?
- What are the current benefits &/or challenges of being a mixed race *teenager* in 2016?
- Where can we still develop, especially in how we engage with each other and think about each other?

## Social Media / Cyber Safety:

- What is people's view on social media in 2016?
- Do they feel it benefits people's lives in any way?
- Are there any areas where it does, or can, harm us?
- How did they feel Ella handled her social media presence in the play? Is there anything she could have done differently?
- What were their thoughts on Ella's experience of being 'trolled'? Are there any learnings / new perspectives they have taken from seeing Ella's experiences with this? Is this something any of them have personally had experience of?
- What has people's personal experience of this been?

## Positive Cultural Development

- Are there any areas they feel we could develop further, to improve the positive experience of life for those who are mixed or of a different/same race to us, or for those who we are engaging with online?
  - In our immediate social / friendship group
  - In our wider community (e.g. school / clubs)
  - In the society around us

- How can this group of people (in the discussion) speak up or quieten down in any ways which will help to bring about positive social change in our world?

## **WORKSHOPS & DISCUSSION GROUPS**

The tone and content of #Hashtag Lightie, and its teenage protagonist, Ella, with her upbeat and contemporary approach to life, lends itself well to workshops, discussions and other interactive sessions to explore the various core topics the play deals with, with pupils aged 11 to 18. Experimenting with role plays, short drama pieces or group facilitations, teachers can work with pupils to explore the various core topics in the #Hashtag Lightie, and use the scenarios the students will have encountered through Ella's world, to then take an easy step on into the related curriculum areas and discussion points.

Broader topics the role plays / drama pieces could be used to explore, might include:

- different approaches to ethnicity and the various outcomes/impacts, positive or negative, different behaviours and words can have on each person's life (both the actor and the recipient).
- different ways (healthy or less healthy) of navigating the social media world;
- they can look at healthy boundaries and balance between the social media world and the tangible, face-to-face world;
- imagine / explore potential scenarios of how pupil's ideal interactive world would look/be (both on and off screen), then afterwards discuss potential actions they could take or changes they could make which would help to bring their real world one (or more) step(s) closer to this ideal, happier world.

The scope for curriculum-related group discussions which follow on from #Hashtag Lightie is extensive, and key areas on this are outlined in the next section.

## **KEY CURRICULUM AREAS:**

**#Hashtag Lightie** raises cross-curriculum themes and topics, so follow-up discussions or workshops can comfortably cover one or more of these.

## **PSHE**

#Hashtag Lightie is an excellent vehicle for PHSE workshops and discussions, to help pupils engage in finding positive & healthy ways of either being mixed race or interacting with mixed or other race peers; and to help them to see and better consider the potential consequences of their social media interactions / cyber presence and how they might more wisely & safely navigate these.

Key themes of the play which particularly pertain to PHSE are:

- Identity
- Social Media Safety / Wisdom
- The impact of our social media interactions on the wellbeing of others
- Race, and how the attitudes and behaviours of our friends & wider community impact our confidence, sense of self and optimism about life



- Ethical / moral aspects of how we engage in our interactions with others, both on and off social media

Questions which could be explored in this section (include):

### **Approach to Life:**

- Do you think the difference in perspective between Ella and her siblings in the first half of the play makes any difference to her life and, if so, what?
- Do you think Ella's perspective, or outlook, on life at the beginning of the play was good thing for her, now that you know the rest of the story? Discuss.

### **Identity:**

- Identity. How would you describe your personal identity? Who do you feel you are? What is about you that really makes you who you are? Is that positive?
- Is identity something which is fixed, or is it merely our perception or opinion on things? Can identity change? If it can change, what do you think are the things which can cause our identity to change?
- Does our sense of identity impact our behaviour in life and, if so, how?
- Do you think there is such a thing as our 'true identity'?

### **Wellbeing:**

- Looking at Ella's story, do you think the online 'trolling' will have any longterm impact on her life/ mental wellbeing? Will this be a positive or negative impact?
- If you were advising Ella in the play, how would you advise her to handle the experience, and situation, of being 'trolled' in order to best protect her wellbeing?
- Do you think our social media activity affects our wellbeing in any way?

### **Moral / Ethical Responsibility:**

- Do you think we, as members of the same community and wider society, have any moral obligation or responsibility to choose to positively impact those around us, on social media or in person; or is there no need for this kind of wider care for others, and we each just need to look out for ourselves?
- Is moral / ethical responsibility black and white in terms of what is right or wrong behaviour, or do you think there are some grey areas (ie situations which will require different behaviours according to the specific attributes)? Discuss with examples.
- What are the positive consequences, if any; of people choosing to take up their part in moral responsibility for others? What are the negative consequences, if any, of people choosing to up their efforts on moral responsibility for others? Weighing everything that has been discussed, do you think - on balance - that we as a society are better off or worse off when people take ethical or moral responsibility for the wider community and world around them?
- If you were to make one change for life in the way you behave towards, or about, others in your community (be it at school, the area you live in or another community you belong to), what change would you make and why? What impact would this have on you and others?

## **Psychology (cross-curriculum with PSHE)**

The key elements of the play which connect with the Psychology curriculum are Social Psychology elements such as identity, self-esteem, perception / outlook on the world, and the impact race has on our attitudes and behaviours; Psychopathology elements such as mental wellbeing / stability during, and after, stressful or traumatic events such as cyber bullying, particularly bullying that is related to a core element of who a person is, such as race; and Cognitive Psychology elements such as methods by which a person such as Ella might be taught to help her overcome any negative effects of the bullying.

## **History**

#Hashtag Lightie looks at change for people of mixed race backgrounds over a period of decades in one city, and one family. For history, the play can be used to help pupils engage in how societies adapt and change over centuries, what causes those changes and how those changes can improve or worsen the lives of particular groups. Questions which could be explored:

- If we look back through history in Britain in the last few hundred years, what (if any) changes have we seen for people of different, or mixed, races living here? Think about the jobs they do, their status in society, people's perception and treatment of them, opportunities, their own perceptions and behaviour, wealth, aspiration etc.
- What *causes* changes to how we treat particular groups of people in a society over time?
- What causes changes to how particular groups of people in a society behave over time?
- And has the arrival of social media in the last 20 years caused any further change in this experience and, if so, what?
- How can we explore bringing positive changes to our society at our point in history, which will create a better future for those who come after us? If your grandchildren were to look back on the history of changes that your generation made in the world and the impact that has had, what would you want them to see and have to say?

## **Science & Technology**

The central role social media plays in #Hashtag Lightie leads neatly into an exploration of the value, and impact (either positive or negative) of technology on our world. With Ella, the lead character, we see a girl who begins the play with optimism and a sense of the opportunity that she, as a mixed race child of the social media generation, feels she is offered. Her older siblings, meanwhile, have far less positivity in their approaches and perceptions of life, and this could be, in significant part, a consequence of having grown up before social media 'opened up the world'. The benefits of social media do not come without perils, however – as Ella finds out rather painfully when she is 'trolled'. The opportunity is here to discuss social media, the development of technology, merits and ethical issues. For example:

- Has the internet, particularly social media, impacted people's experience of being mixed race and, if so, how? For example, in the play, what difference had social media made to Ella's teenage years, that wasn't there in her older sibling's teens?
- Has the internet, particularly social media, had any impact on people's social interactions in life?
- Overall, would you say having social media has improved people's lives or worsened people's lives?

- Ethical considerations: should we always keep developing technology, even if it causes harm to some (or many) people?
- Future: Where / how do you think technology, or the internet, will develop next / in the future? Are there any areas of life or problems in the world, you would like to see technology develop a solution for; and what might that look like?

## **CORE AGE RANGE FOR THE PLAY:**

11-18 years

## **CORE CREATIVE TEAM:**

The core creative team is made up of versatile professionals from across the theatre industry.

### **DIRECTOR: RIKKI BEADLE-BLAIR**

Rikki Beadle-Blair has personally created 18 new plays in the last six years, including 'twothousandandSex' the live Version of 'Stonewall' plus 'Bashment' 'Familyman' and 'Shalom Baby' and 'Gutted'. His new musical 'Bromantics' Premieres in London in February 2016 plus later in the year 'Lena: A Lady Must Live' about the life of Lena Horne.

Named several years running on the Independent on Sunday's Rainbow List as one the 100 most influential gay people in Britain, Rikki has a commitment to creating challenging, transformative entertainment in different entertainment mediums. He created the production company 'Team Angelica' to pursue these goals and share opportunities with performers, and artists. He has written 18 plays, and has directed hundreds. He currently mentors 150 writers, 25 young directors and several hundred actors.

### **WRITER: LYNETTE LYNTON**

Lynette Linton is a director, and playwright of two sold-out shows at Theatre Royal Stratford East. She trained on the StoneCrabs Young Directors Course where she was also awarded the Jack Petchy award. She is currently the Associate Director of the Gate Theatre.

**Writing credits include:** *Step* (rehearsed reading, and school tour, Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Chicken Palace* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), which she also co-directed, *Ergo Sum* (Theatre Deli). She is also a member of the Soho Young Writers Alumni group.

**Directing credits include:** *Step* (Rehearsed reading, Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Naked* (Vault Festival 2015), *Pornado* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *This Wide Night* (Albany Theatre), *Stunted*, (Rehearsed Reading, Theatre Royal Stratford East) and Co-Director on *Chicken Shop* (R&D, Theatre Royal Stratford East).

**As Assistant Director:** *Gutted* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Image of An Unknown Young Woman* (Gate Theatre), *The Christians* (Gate Theatre)

In 2017, Lynette will be directing her first solo play, *Assate Taught Me*, at The Gate Theatre, Notting Hill.