

Royal Docks Trust
Education Resource Pack

when
Chaplin
met
Gandhi

By
Jim Kenworth



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for

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When Chaplin Met Gandhi tells the story of Gandhi's remarkable 1931 visit to London, where he spent twelve weeks in the East End. Whilst staying at Kingsley Hall in Bow, **Gandhi** met with local children, teaching the youngsters from the rough-and-tumble streets of East London his philosophy of non-violent resistance. **Charlie Chaplin**, beloved across the world and in London at that time for the premiere of his new film *City Lights*, requested to see **Gandhi**, believing that they had a special connection in their affinity for the poor and the disempowered. Although Chaplin was at first dismissed by Gandhi's entourage as 'just a buffoon', Gandhi agreed to see the man who had created the Little Tramp – and the ensuing encounter brought together two of the greatest figures of the twentieth century.

When Chaplin Met Gandhi received its world premiere at **Eastlea Community School, Canning Town** in 2012, in a unique collaboration between professional theatre artists and a secondary state school. Following these performances, the **Gandhi Foundation** invited the company and cast of **When Chaplin Met Gandhi** to perform the play at **Kingsley Hall** in Bow, where Gandhi stayed and lived for three months in 1931. Again, it was a unique collaboration, involving a professional writer, director, designer and actors, working alongside drama students from Newham's **Eastlea Community School** and Tower Hamlets' **Langdon Park School**.



"While holding with its presentation of character, this play also passes on a surprising amount of information and in an educational context could provide a valuable starting point for exploration of the topics it touches on and discussion of the issues it raises."

British Theatre Guide

"Writer Jim Kenworth's play is an interesting take on two pint-sized men whose influence still lives on today."

Eastern Eye

When Chaplin Met Gandhi Can Help Support Engaging Your Pupils Across A Number Of Subject Areas:

Citizenship: Students practise their discussion and debating skills via a series of competitive debate games, e.g., Gandhi's spirituality versus consumerism and mass production.

English: Students develop their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing through scene analysis/exploration, rehearsals and performance.

History: Students learn about two of the most significant figures of the Twentieth Century, and find out what life was like in the poorest parts of London in the 1930s. Students also discover the origins of Indian independence, and the concept of non-violent civil disobedience.

PSHE: Students are encouraged to articulate and express their emotions and thoughts more freely, and think closely about how they would manage new or difficult situations in their lives at home, in school, or among peers, e.g., confrontation, anger, peer pressure.

School Testimonials

"The Royal Docks Community School had the pleasure of working cooperatively on the When Chaplin Met Gandhi drama project. Students were given a wealth of knowledge about the historic meeting between Chaplin and Gandhi. They were given the opportunity to work collaboratively with different people from different year groups. They were given the opportunity to explore the play text and develop their understanding of how to turn script into performance. This was an invaluable opportunity for them to work with professionals in the performance industry. It was a pleasure to watch students of all ability develop into confident performers."

Sam Clarke, Head of Drama, The Royal Docks Community School

"As a school which aims to teach a creative curriculum through music, dance, drama and art, we were delighted to be involved in this project. The children had a fantastic time and I hope that many more children get the opportunity to work with these resources."

Paul Jackson, Headteacher, Gallions Primary School

"As the Year 6 teacher who participated in the project, I was extremely pleased with the teachers who helped inspire and engage the children. The children had great fun during the project while also learning about Gandhi and Chaplin. I hope Gallions can take part again in this exciting project."

Ian Nicholls, Yr 6 teacher, Gallions Primary School

"The WCMG project was another wonderful opportunity for Kingsford pupils to work alongside Jim. Historically projects that he has brought to our students have offered them opportunities to be creative, question their ideas and engage with great work and this time was no different. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and enlightening experience for the students involved. Thank you!"

Andrea Downer, Subject Leader for Drama, Kingsford Community School

Pupil Testimonials

"I enjoyed working with others, and learning something new about different people"

"I enjoyed the drama activities, it helped me feel less shy"

"Aggressiveness is not the best answer"

"When we performed with different people I learnt how to join in and work as a team"

"We learnt about Gandhi and how he didn't fight back"

"You don't have to be violent"

Teacher Testimonials

"Children were very excited and thoroughly enjoyed the session."

Gallions Primary School

"Student comments outside of the workshops were very positive and during the workshops they were engaged and motivated."

Kingsford Community School

"Students were given excerpts from the original script which were stimulating and allowed them to explore deeper the connotations behind the meeting between Gandhi and Chaplin."

The Royal Docks Community School



WHEN CHAPLIN MET GANDHI

By Jim Keworth

Royal Docks Trust School Workshops Content/Programme

Workshop 1

Introduction

Key Issues:

- Who was Charlie Chaplin and what was his legacy?
- Who was Gandhi and what was his legacy?
- Who was Muriel Lester and what was her legacy?
- Why did Chaplin and Gandhi meet and what was significant about it?

Students to imagine an unusual/unlikely encounter between two famous public figures meeting in Newham, e.g., pop star, film star, politician, celebrity, spiritual leader.

Character Work:

- ✓ Basic facts
- ✓ What defines them? (Morals/Ideas/Actions)?
- ✓ Who would they want to meet and why?
- ✓ What questions or topics of conversation would they cover?

Students to act out/improvise a short exchange between these figures, imagining what might have happened in the meeting

Improvisation Rules:

- ✓ One person requested the meeting with the other – Who? Why?
- ✓ One person wants something from the other – the other will eventually give 'it' to them
- ✓ An EVENT has to happen in the scene

Workshop 2

The East End In 1931

Scene Work: Sc.2, Sc.3, Sc.5, Sc.6, Sc.10, Sc.11

Key Issues:

- The cultural, social and economic differences between young people living in the East End in 1931 and young people in London today, e.g., housing, education, speech, dress.
- Issues of diversity, inequalities in society, the nature of prejudice and how to combat it.

Introduction: East End in the 1930s

Show YouTube clips of 1930s East End, and encourage discussion/feedback about:

- What were the living conditions like?
- What were the houses/buildings like?
- What food did they eat?
- How did they dress?
- How would somebody your age speak and behave?
- How did they amuse themselves?
- What would you have found most difficult about living in 1930s?

Independent work: Create a Character from 1930s

- Name:
- Age:
- What do they look like?
- What are they wearing?
- Who do they live with?
- What is their favourite toy?
- What is their favourite food?
- How do they feel about the rest of their family?
- What responsibilities do they have?
- Do they live up to their responsibilities?

Group Activity: 1930s Scenes

Place all of your characters in a family who have received a surprise visit from Gandhi. He wants to see what life in Bow is like. He is very curious about the people of East London and therefore doesn't think that he might be causing any inconvenience by turning up at the front door of a stranger. Show us the scene when he visits your house. Try to answer the following questions through your scene:

- What were they doing when he came?
- What did they think he was thinking about them?
- How did they feel? Disappointed? Delighted? Shocked? Angry? Embarrassed?
- What did they have to offer him?
- What did he see? Where did he sit or stand or walk?
- Did something surprising or embarrassing happen?
- How do they all react to this?
- Is there anything Gandhi was able to help them with?
- How did the visit end?
- How did they feel after the visit?



Workshop 3

Gandhi's Philosophy of Non-Violence/Peaceful Protest/Satyagraha

Scene Work: Sc.8, Sc.11

Key Issues:

- Power of non-violent responses to aggression and injustice, and Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha in particular.
- Explain concept of Satyagraha
- Discussion around themes of non-violent resistance
- Examples of civil disobedience today
- Show clip from the film Gandhi
- Discuss actions of the characters in the film clip

Satyagraha

Satyagraha is the philosophy of non-violent resistance most famously employed by Mohandas Gandhi in forcing an end to the British Raj. It has been translated as civil disobedience, passive resistance, "truth force", or "The willingness to endure great personal suffering in order to do what's right". Satyagraha demands:

1. "Sat" - Truth; implying openness, honesty, and fairness.
2. "Ahimsa" - refusal to inflict injury upon others.
3. "Tapasya" - willingness for self-sacrifice.



Rules for Civil Resisters:

1. A satyagrahi, i.e., a civil resister, will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of ahimsa.
8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In the course of the struggle if anyone insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

Civil Disobedience is the active refusal to obey certain laws, demands, and commands which are unfair and unjust.



Workshop 4

Chaplin and Gandhi Meet and Debate – Materialism Vs. Spirituality

Scene Work: Sc.13

Key Issues:

- The current use and abuse of the planet's resources.
- Our use and abuse of resources and the dangers of consumerism.
- Issues of global interdependence, the vulnerability of some resources and communities, and the implications of exploitation and imbalance.
- How people live when they believe the spiritual is a significant part of their lives.

Games

Team games with an emphasis on working together and combining logic with focus: The Human Knot and Stranded.

The Human Knot

- 2 teams
- In each team they must stand in a circle.
- Everybody must grab the hand of somebody else in the group and keep hold of it for the duration of the exercise.
- The team now must untangle themselves until they are standing in a circle like the beginning.
- The first team to untangle themselves wins.
- Half way through the teams must be stopped and instructed to work in silence.



Stranded

- 2 teams
- Each team is stranded on a river bank with no food or clean water. On the other side of the riverbank is paradise. You must work as a team to get across as quickly as possible because the team to arrive first inherits the island and the other team becomes their servants.
- Each group has 3 sheets of paper which serve as floats to get the whole team across the river.
- Use the length of your classroom.
- Each team is only allowed to have three fails (three moments where somebody touches the real ground). If they fail three times they all sink. The other team however, doesn't win automatically; they have to get across without failing 3 times.

The 'Great Debate'

Divide into two groups. Read and discuss **Scene 14** and pick out **3** points about what your leader believed in and how they thought society should change to achieve what they believed. Each point must be given by a different person. Try to make it as clear as possible by completing the following statements:

- Chaplin/Gandhi believed that...
- He believed the benefits of this would be... (what he believed at the time)
- The negatives of this, of course, were... (what he believed at the time)
- The impact this belief has had on the future is... (a modern example of what positive impact you believe this has had on our generation and the future)

One member from the opposing team is allowed to respond to the point once the person giving the point has finished speaking. If the original speaker can return with a valid defending point they get a point. If not, the opposing team gets a point. The aim is for each team to finish with all of their points validated and with a few extra from revealing the flaws in the opposing teams points. The writer/director or teachers can act as 'judges' and award points to teams.



Workshop 5

Territory/Post Code Wars, Gangs

Scene Work: Sc.16

Key Issues

- Ways of dealing with conflict.
- Our actions have consequences and as an individual we can make a difference.
- Students exploring their own sense of identity and taking a pride in their individuality.

Show 2012 clip from play, involving gang confrontation

- What happened in the scene?
- Why did it happen?
- Was the boy right in not fighting back?
- Why did the girl respect his decision not to fight back?
- What do you think would be the reaction of the boys' peers?
- What would you have done if you were there?
- What other ways would there have been in dealing with the conflict?
- How was Gandhi's influence felt in this scene?

Create a scene of your own showing a way in which being a part of a group or gang can positively or negatively influence an individual. Make the scene as real/authentic as possible. If you can take a real situation and re-enact it, even better.

Students work in pairs or groups to focus on how they deal with conflict in their own lives.

Give their own examples of what it may mean to "turn the other cheek".



Workshop 6

Hopes and Dreams of the Future for East London

Scene Work: Sc. 16, p50

Key Issues

- Issues which students feel strongly about in their own lives and how they can effectively and realistically address them, e.g., jobs, education, community, safety, Olympic legacy.

Show clip from end of play and discuss with students the changes to society in the last eighty years. Which changes do they think have been positive and which have been negative?
Students to write a scene about their vision of East London in 100 years.

Think about:

- What does it look like?
- What does it sound like?
- What new technology is there?
- What is new? different? What has gone/is not there anymore?
- What has survived over the years?
- How much has it changed?
- Are your characters happy about the change or not?
- What changes would they like to see?
- Do your characters still want to live in Newham/East End? If so, why? And if not, why not?

Students to set their scenes in one of the following environments/contexts:

1. School
2. Job
3. Home



The Royal Docks Trust began its support of **When Chaplin Met Gandhi** in 2010 when it awarded the play a Main Programme grant, which enabled the play to be performed professionally at the Joan Littlewood Theatre, Eastlea Community School. The RDT has continued its support of the play with a further Main Programme grant in 2012/13, which has enabled the company to run a pilot series of educational workshops in schools in Newham, exploring themes and issues arising from the play. **Gallions School, Kingsford Community School** and **The Royal Docks Community School**, who are within the Trust's area, were chosen to take part in these workshops.



Tata Steel sponsored the performances of **When Chaplin Met Gandhi** at Kingsley Hall in August 2012. Their generous support is in recognition of the steel company's commitment to young people: to enhance their confidence and self-esteem.

A big thank you to the following partners, colleagues and supporters for their advocacy and support of **When Chaplin Met Gandhi** in schools:

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Kingsford Community School



Kingsford Community School



Gallions Primary School



Gallions Primary School



The Royal Docks Community School



The Royal Docks Community School



The Gandhi Foundation exists to spread knowledge and understanding of the life and work of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948). Our most important aim is to explain and demonstrate the continuing relevance of Gandhi's insights and actions for all of us in the UK.

