



B L O O M S B U R Y



# Shoebox Theatre Competition

outstanding Bloomsbury  
Lit in Colour Model Box

PLAY GUIDE

Submit your student entries at [www.weteachdrama.com/shoebox](http://www.weteachdrama.com/shoebox)

Browse play texts, free teaching resources and  
more inspiration at [bloomsbury.com/LitinColour](http://bloomsbury.com/LitinColour)

In collaboration with:

Lit in Colour



RUNNYMEDE

Bloomsbury are pleased to be collaborating in WeTeachDrama's popular Shoebox Theatre competition with a brand new category for 2024: Outstanding Bloomsbury Lit in Colour Model Box.

Bloomsbury's partnership in the Lit in Colour campaign is supporting schools to make the teaching of plays more inclusive, and the range of plays studied greater.

This new category will be awarded to the student's model box and concept that the judges feel is the most creative and reflects some of the key themes arising from the new curriculum play texts, as below:

*Gone Too Far!* by Bola Agbaje, page 3

*The Free9* by In-Sook Chappell, page 4

*Barber Shop Chronicles* by Inua Ellams, page 5

*A Doll's House* adapted by Tanika Gupta, page 6

*The Empress* by Tanika Gupta, page 7

*The Convert* by Danai Gurira, page 8

*Elmina's Kitchen* by Kwame Kwei-Armah, page 9

*Refugee Boy* by Benjamin Zephaniah and adapted for the stage by Lemn Sissay, page 10

*The Great Wave* by Francis Turnly, page 11

*Antigone* adapted by Roy Williams, page 12

## Prize Awarded



Selection of 28 Methuen Drama play texts, taken from the Bloomsbury (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List

Explore these new set texts for English Literature and Drama from across all exam boards. For more play ideas, download your free copy of the [\(Incomplete\) Lit in Colour Play List](#).

You can request your free inspection copies of any of these play texts at [bloomsbury.com](https://www.bloomsbury.com)

Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE Drama

# Gone Too Far!

Bola Agbaje

Nigeria, England, America, Jamaica; are you proud of where you're from? Dark-skinned, light-skinned, afro, weaves; who are your true brothers and sisters?

When two brothers from different continents go down the street to buy a pint of milk, they lift the lid on a disunited nation where everyone wants to be an individual but no one wants to stand out from the crowd.

Set on a London housing estate, this play depicts the experience of young multicultural Londoners and the issues of identity and culture that both unite and divide the characters. The play premiered at the Royal Court Theatre as part of its Young Writers Festival on 2 February 2007, and was awarded the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre, 2008.

This version is an abridged form of the play published as part of Methuen Drama's Plays For Young People series.



ISBN: 9781350261037 Publisher: Methuen Drama  
Themes: Society, Cultural Difference, Identity, National Identity, Race, Violence, Youth  
Content Warnings: Occasional Swearing  
[www.bloomsbury.com/gone-too-far-9781350261037](http://www.bloomsbury.com/gone-too-far-9781350261037)

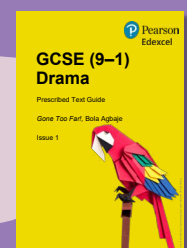
Also by Bola Agbaje: *Belong*, *Not Black and White*, *Off the Endz*



*Gone Too Far!* Production  
Photos by Isha Shah for National Youth Theatre



Additional teaching resources available:  
**Pearson Edexcel *Gone Too Far!* Teaching Guide**  
Royal Court Theatre In Conversation with Bola Agbaje



Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE Drama

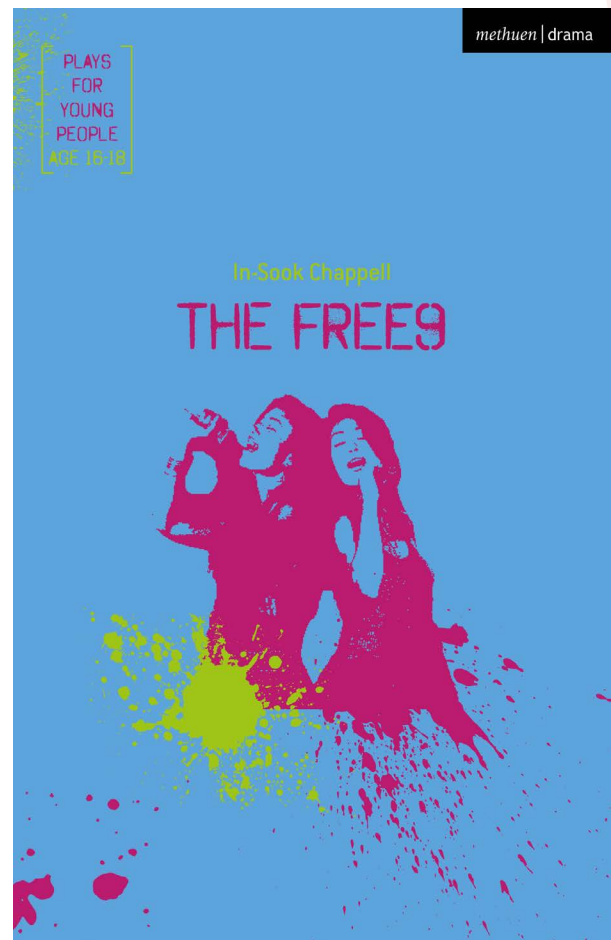
# The Free9

In-Sook Chappell

Nine teenagers flee North Korea, dreaming of new lives in the South. But the danger is far from over. With threats around every corner, perhaps the mysterious figure of Big Brother can help them? Or is he the very person they're running from?

As their lives hang in the balance, could the teenagers' fate ultimately come down to a garish South Korean variety show? Inspired by a true story, this is the tale of hope, escape and cultural difference.

Originally commissioned as a play for the National Theatre Connections Festival 2018 and with a cast size of 10 plus an ensemble, *The Free9* is a perfect contemporary drama for young people to study and perform.

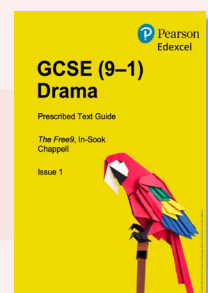


ISBN: 9781350258433 Publisher: Methuen Drama  
Themes: Cultural Difference, Identity, Immigration, Love, Youth  
Content Warnings: Drug Use; Swearing  
[www.bloomsbury.com/free9-9781350258433](http://www.bloomsbury.com/free9-9781350258433)

Also by In-Sook Chappell: *Pyongyang*



Additional teaching resources available:  
Pearson Edexcel *The Free9* Teaching Guide  
National Theatre In Conversation with In-Sook Chappell



Set text: OCR AS and A Level English Literature and Language

# Barber Shop Chronicles

Inua Ellams

Newsroom, political platform, local hot spot, confession box, preacher-pulpit and football stadium. For generations, African men have gathered in barber shops to discuss the world. These are places where the banter can be barbed and the truth is always telling.

*Barber Shop Chronicles*, which was partly inspired by verbatim recordings, is a heart-warming, hilarious and insightful play that leaps from a barber shop in Peckham to Johannesburg, Harare, Kampala, Lagos and Accra over the course of a single day.

It was first produced by the National Theatre, Fuel and Leeds Playhouse in 2017 and is here published as a Methuen Drama Student Edition with commentary and notes by Oladipo Agboluaje.



ISBN: 9781350200142 Publisher: Methuen Drama

Themes: Family, Friendship, Masculinity, Relationships, Black Culture, Racism

Content Warnings: Swearing

[www.bloomsbury.com/barber-shop-chronicles-9781350200142](http://www.bloomsbury.com/barber-shop-chronicles-9781350200142)

Also by Bola Agbaje: *Belong, Not Black and White, Off the Endz*

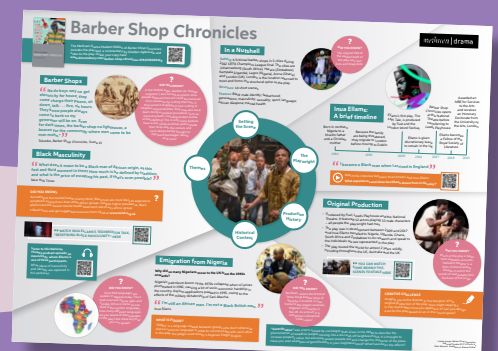


*Barber Shop Chronicles*, National Theatre 2017.

© Photo by Marc Brenner

Available in National Theatre Collection 2 on Drama Online.

Additional teaching resources:  
Play recording and learning guide  
Downloadable classroom poster





Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE Drama and WJEC A Level Drama and Theatre

# A Doll's House

Henrik Ibsen

Adapted by Tanika Gupta

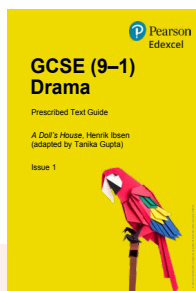
Niru is a young Bengali woman married to an English colonial bureaucrat – Tom.

Tom loves Niru, exoticising her as a frivolous plaything to be admired and kept; but Niru has a long-kept secret, and just as she thinks she is almost free of it, it threatens to bring her life crashing down around her.

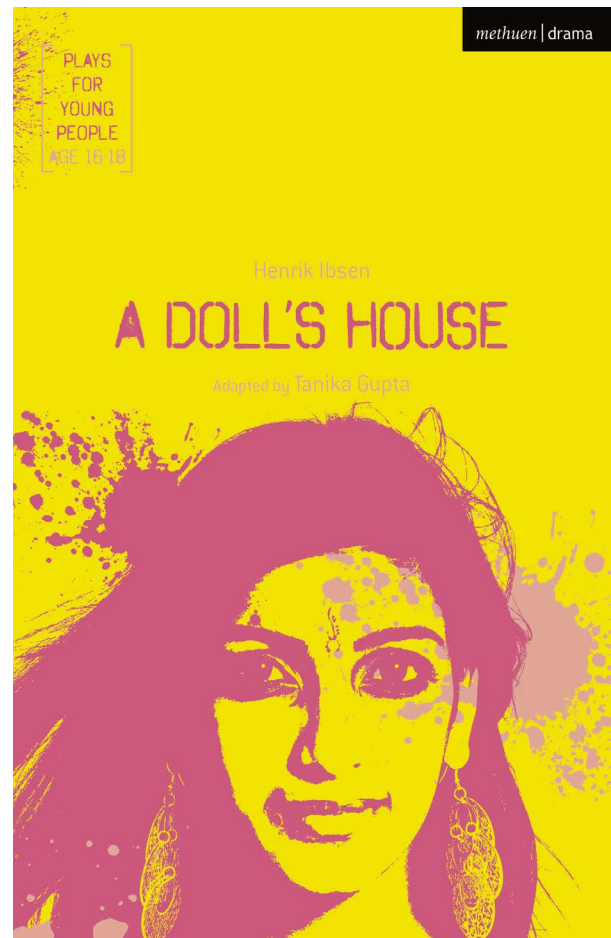
Tanika Gupta re-imagines Ibsen's classic play of gender politics through the lens of British colonialism, offering a bold, female perspective exploring themes of ownership and race.



Additional teaching resource:  
**Representation in Drama (RiD)**  
Interview with Tanika Gupta



Additional teaching resource:  
**Pearson Edexcel Teaching Guide**



ISBN: 9781350261075 Publisher: Methuen Drama  
Themes: *History, Colonialism, Women, Politics, Race*  
[www.bloomsbury.com/dolls-house-9781350261075](http://www.bloomsbury.com/dolls-house-9781350261075)

Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE English Literature and AQA GCSE Drama

# The Empress

Tanika Gupta

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 1887.

At East London's Tilbury Docks, Rani Das and Abdul Karim step ashore after the long voyage from India. One has to battle a society who deems her a second-class citizen; the other forges an astonishing entanglement with the ageing Queen Victoria who finds herself enchanted by stories of an India over which she rules, but has never seen.

Through narrative, music and song, *The Empress* blends the true story of Queen Victoria's controversial relationship with her Indian servant and 'Munshi' (teacher), Abdul Karim, with the experiences of Indian ayahs who came to Britain during the 19th century. With private romance being mapped onto world history, the action cuts between the ship and different royal residences, offering bright contrasts as well as surprising affinities. In doing so, the play uncovers remarkable unknown stories of 19th-century Britain and charts the growth of Indian nationalism and the romantic proclivities of one of Britain's most surprising monarchs.



*The Empress*, which premiered at Stratford-upon-Avon's RSC in 2013 returns to the RSC in Stratford and the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in London in 2023.

To book tickets, visit:  
[www.rsc.org.uk/the-empress](http://www.rsc.org.uk/the-empress)



## TANIKA GUPTA THE EMPRESS

EDITED BY JANE GARNETT

ISBN: 9781350190573 Publisher: Methuen Drama  
Themes: *History, Immigration, Race, Society, Women, Politics*  
Content Warnings: Swearing; Sexual References  
[www.bloomsbury.com/empress-9781350190573](http://www.bloomsbury.com/empress-9781350190573)

Additional teaching resources:  
**In Conversation with Tanika Gupta**  
Downloadable classroom poster

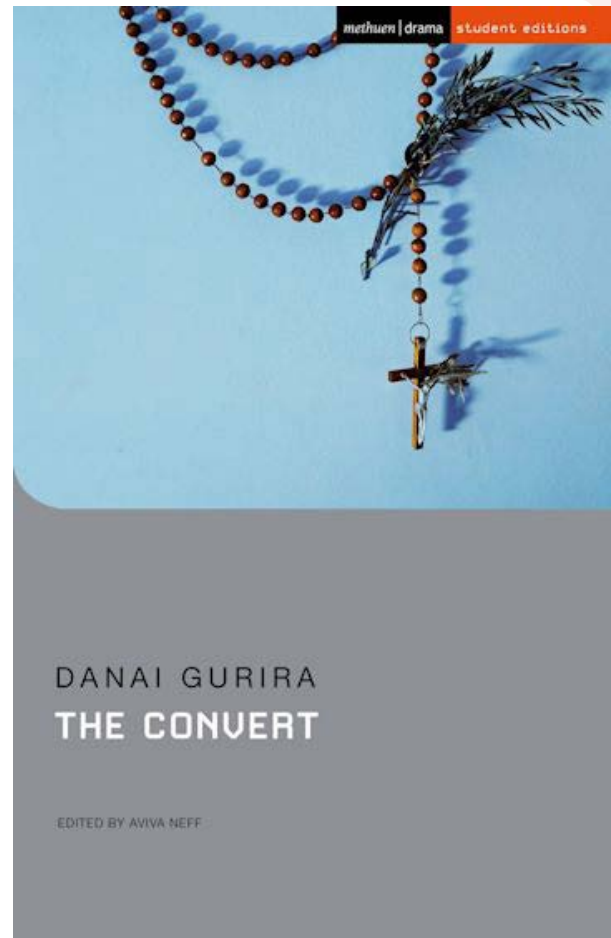
Set text: AQA A Level Drama and Theatre

# The Convert

Danai Gurira

It's 1896 in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Jekesai, a young Shona girl, escapes a forced arranged marriage by converting to Christianity and becoming a protégé to an African Evangelical.

As anti-colonial sentiments spread throughout the native population, Jekesai is forced to choose between her family's traditions and her newfound faith.



ISBN: 9781350340879 Publisher: Methuen Drama

Themes: Religion, Women, Family, Race

[www.bloomsbury.com/convert-9781350340879](http://www.bloomsbury.com/convert-9781350340879)



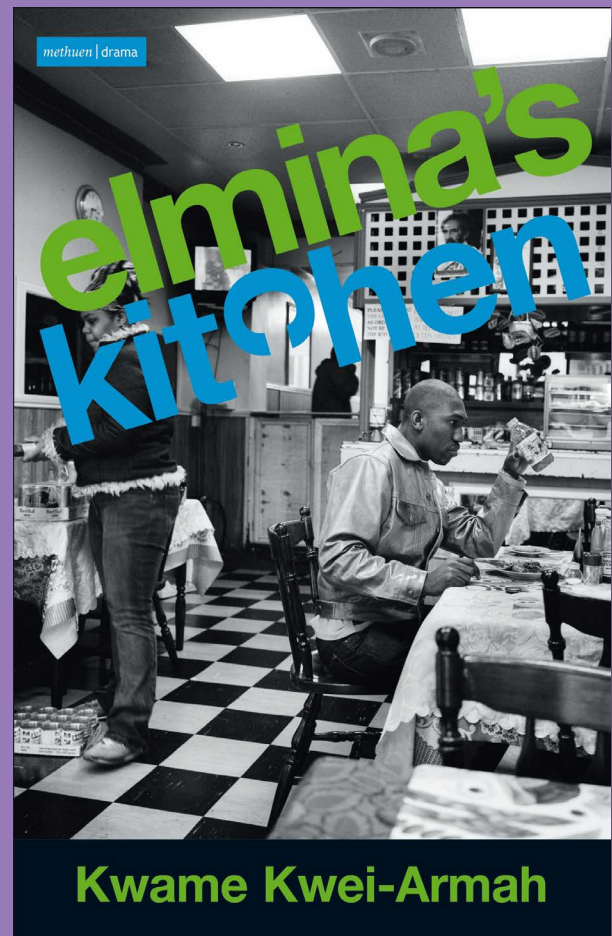
Set text: Pearson Edexcel AS and A Level English Literature and Language

# Elmina's Kitchen

Kwame Kwei-Armah

Deli is trying to revive the fortunes of his mother's restaurant in Murder Mile, Hackney. But where does his son disappear to on the night of the re-opening? And why does his friend Digger offer him protection? *Elmina's Kitchen* is a thrilling, engaging portrait of a one-parent family struggling to stay within the law while the Yardies are carving up the neighbourhood.

*Elmina's Kitchen* premiered at the Royal National Theatre, London, in May 2003 and was nominated for a Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play 2003.



ISBN: 9780413773630 Publisher: Methuen Drama

Themes: Relationships, Family, Race, Knife Crime, Racism

Content Warnings: Swearing; Racist Language; Violence

[www.bloomsbury.com/elminas-kitchen-9780413773630](http://www.bloomsbury.com/elminas-kitchen-9780413773630)

Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE English Literature and Eduqas GCSE Drama

# Refugee Boy

Benjamin Zephaniah, adapted for the stage by Lemn Sissay

As a violent civil war rages back home, teenager Alem and his father are in a B&B in Berkshire. It's his best holiday ever. The next morning his father is gone and has left a note explaining that he and his mother want to protect Alem from the war.

This strange grey country of England is now his home. On his own, and in the hands of the social services and the Refugee Council, he lives from letter to letter, waiting to hear something from his father. Then Alem meets car-obsessed Mustapha, the lovely 'out of your league' Ruth and dangerous Sweeney – three unexpected allies who spur him on as Alem fights to be seen as more than just the Refugee Boy.

*Refugee Boy* is an urgent story of a courageous African boy sent to England to escape the violent civil war, a story about arriving, belonging and finding 'home'.

The play was first published in 2001 and premiered at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (now Leeds Playhouse) in March 2013.

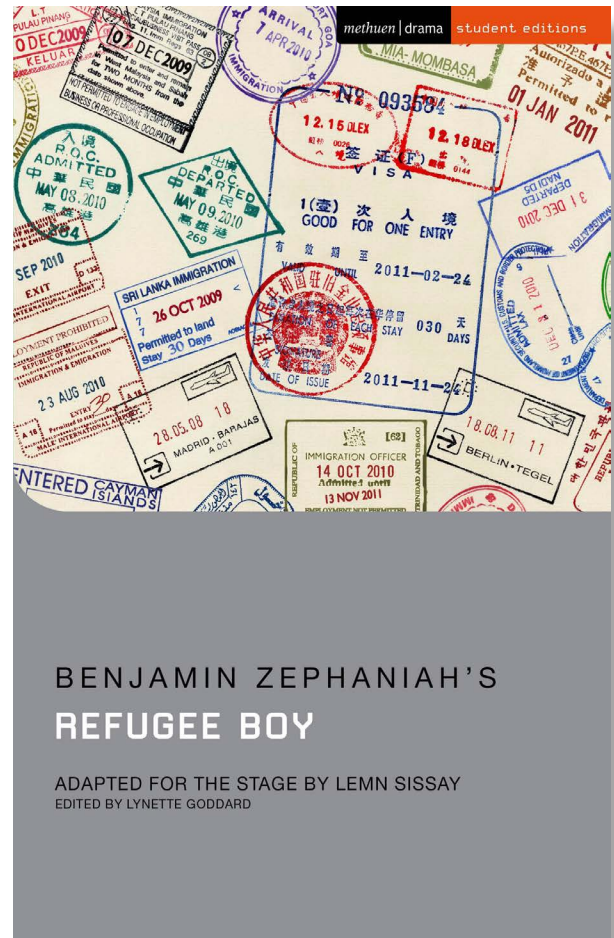


*Refugee Boy*. Fisayo Akinade (Alem Kelo), Dwayne Scantlebury (Mustapha) & Rachel Caffrey (Ruth).

© Photo by Keith Pattison

Additional teacher resources:

- In Conversation with Benjamin Zephaniah
- Pearson Edexcel *Refugee Boy* teaching resources



ISBN: 9781350171916 Publisher: Methuen Drama  
Themes: Immigration; Identity, Belonging; War, Youth  
Content Warnings: Swearing; Violence  
[www.bloomsbury.com/refugee-boy-9781350171916](http://www.bloomsbury.com/refugee-boy-9781350171916)



Set text: AQA GCSE Drama

# The Great Wave

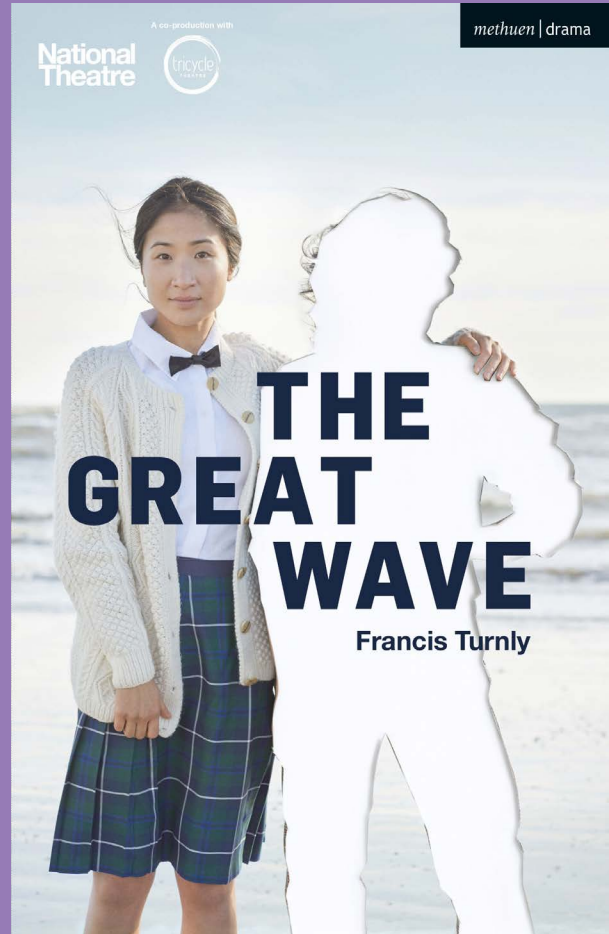
Francis Turnly

On a Japanese beach, teenage sisters Hanako and Reiko are caught up in a storm. Reiko survives while Hanako is lost to the sea. Their mother, however, can't shake the feeling her missing daughter is still alive, and soon their family tragedy takes on a global, political dimension.

The play was first published in 2018 and premiered at National Theatre as Tricycle Theatre's first co-production in the same year.

Additional teacher resources:

- Discussion Guide: Japan in Asia
- Discussion Guide: How Korea Became a Divided Nation
- Discussion Guide: Missing People



ISBN: 9781350076266 Publisher: Methuen Drama

Themes: History, Cultural Difference, National identity, Power, War, Women

Content Warnings: Swearing

[www.bloomsbury.com/great-wave-9781350076259](http://www.bloomsbury.com/great-wave-9781350076259)



Additional teaching resources:  
The Great Wave A2 poster



Set text: Pearson Edexcel GCSE Drama

# Antigone

## Sophocles

Adapted by Roy Williams

When Creon refuses to bury the body of Antigone's unruly brother, Antigone's anger quickly turns to defiance. Creon condemns her to a torturous death: she's to be buried alive.

Acclaimed playwright Roy Williams takes Sophocles' play and, by placing it into a contemporary setting, brings this classic tale vividly to life.

A timeless story about loyalty and truth, about how we make meaning out of life and death, and what in the end really does matter.

Roy Williams's adaptation of *Antigone* received its world premiere at Derby Theatre, in a co-production between Pilot Theatre, Derby Theatre and Theatre Royal, Stratford East, before going on a national tour.



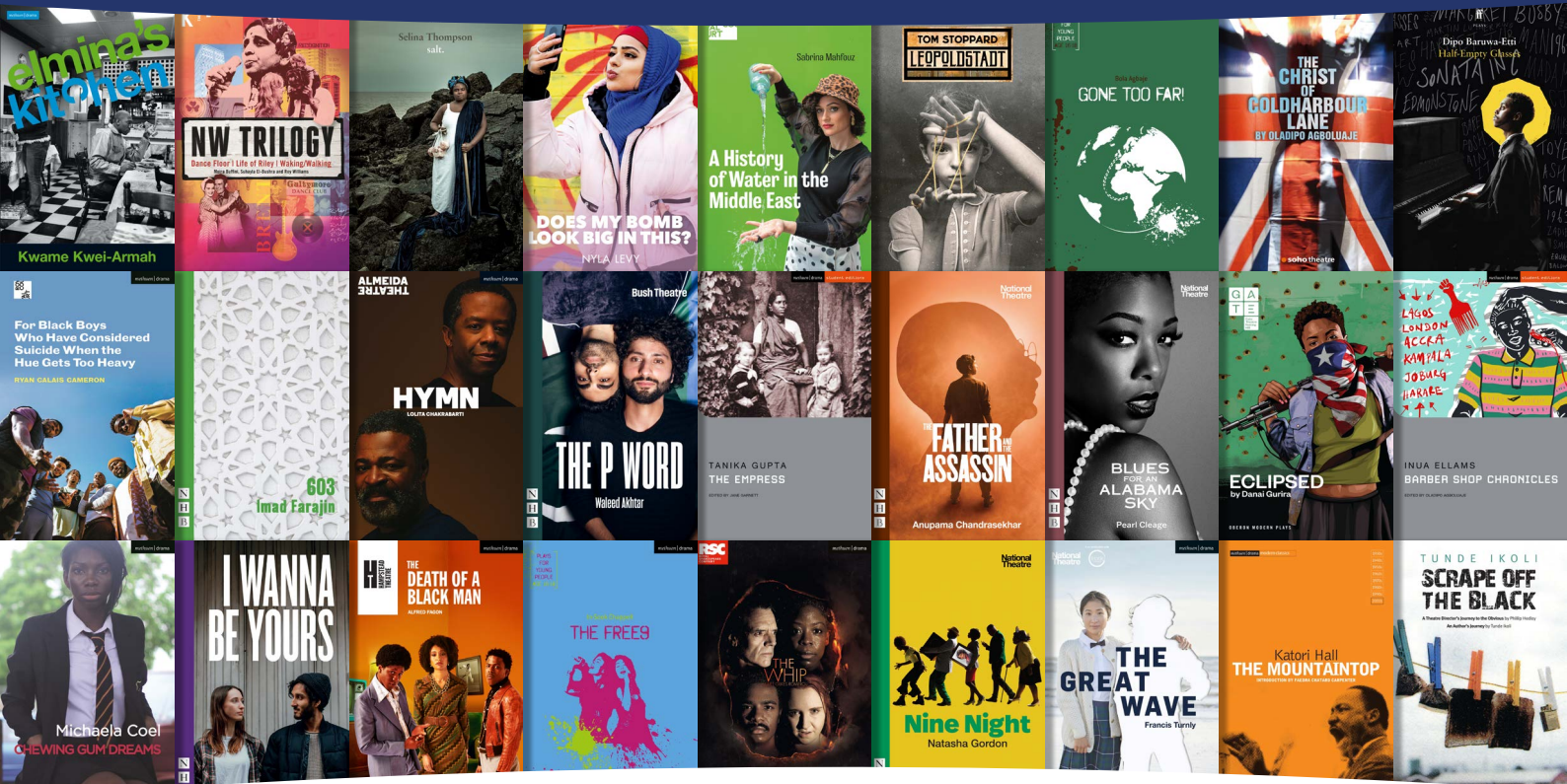
ISBN: 9781350260849 Publisher: Methuen Drama

Themes: *History, Classics, Family, Race*

[www.bloomsbury.com/antigone-9781350260849](http://www.bloomsbury.com/antigone-9781350260849)

# The (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List

Plays written by writers of colour for  
11-18 year-olds to study and perform



Can you recommend a play by a writer of colour? **Yes, we can**

This was a question asked by a teacher at a webinar looking for plays written by writers of colour that are suitable to teach in the classroom. It became the start of Bloomsbury's Partnership in the Lit in Colour campaign - placing the spotlight on plays and drama, and supporting schools to make the teaching and learning of English Literature and Drama more inclusive.

Bloomsbury's first (*Incomplete*) Lit in Colour Play List features an initial 57 plays written by playwrights of colour from the Methuen Drama portfolio and fellow play publishers, for students to discover, study and perform in the classroom.

With an overview of each play's plot and themes as well as links to additional teaching resources, this Play List is the perfect resource for teachers looking to introduce more diverse plays into their classrooms.



Winner of  
Outstanding  
Drama Initiative  
2024

Download your copy and start your Lit in Colour  
journey today at [Bloomsbury.com/LitinColour](https://www.bloomsbury.com/LitinColour)