



Tina
THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL

In the Studio

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These activities are designed for students at Key Stage 4 and 5 who may be exploring *Tina* in the classroom and/or drama studio. They are informed by the work of Phyllida Lloyd (Director) and Nicholai La Barrie (Resident Director – London) and are written to support students in their work according to the four exam board specifications for Drama and Theatre.

Preparation

In order to get the most out of these activities and to ensure that they are completed in a safe and tolerant environment, teacher preparation is a key aspect of the process.

Teachers may wish to access the following resources in advance of leading sessions based on *Tina*. As with many of the issues reflected in *Tina*, the most beneficial sessions are those which are embedded in a longer term plan rather than a simple one off which will not necessarily allow students to fully explore the issues at play:

- Advice and activities for discussing race with children and young people, developed by the British Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/talking-with-children-and-young-people-about-race-and-racism##>
- Advice and activities developed by the British Red Cross to support discussion on the Black Lives Matter (please note that these have not been updated to reflect the trial of a police officer for the unlawful death of George Floyd in 2020): <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/black-lives-matter-resources-for-young-people>
- Show Racism the Red Card is an anti-racism educational charity. It has particular links with football following a donation by Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop who had himself experienced racism. The website has a number of helpful resources to download or purchase, including this helpful document for teachers on how to discuss racism in schools: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/574451fe37013bd0515647ac/t/589b3dd2d2b857e896c02888/1486568923566/initial-teacher-trainers-guidance.pdf>
- The PSHE Association has provided very helpful resources regarding abuse in relationships: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/disrespect-nobody-teaching-resources-preventing>

Talking about language

The script for *Tina* contains four uses of the N word. This occurs when:

- Richard uses it to refer to Zelma
- Ike uses it to refer to Raymond when Tina's pregnancy is revealed
- A police officer uses it to refer to, and threaten, Ike and the band in a parking lot
- A studio executive refers to Tina after her Abbey Road Studios showcase.

It is essential that students and teachers are aware of the historical context in which this term is used, and also have a discussion within their group/class regarding its use within the room.

Nicholai La Barrie, Resident Director of the London production of *Tina* explains:

“It's extremely important to understand the context for both the characters in the scene(s) AND for the place and time. We need to understand the power dynamic between the characters.

The historical context of the Jim Crow laws, slavery, and the American South (including the sheer vastness of the geographical area) is all at play: there were areas where black people were allowed to live. They were considered by many whites as sub-human – something to be controlled, maintained and kept in their place. A good analogy would be a roof which kept threatening to come off or break loose, and so it would be hammered back with nails to keep it from doing so. Those who were scared of black people claiming the rights to which they were entitled would therefore be keen to oppress them further to prevent what they saw as attacks on their own rights or superiority.

In rehearsals we spent a lot of time talking about the use of the N word. Many of the cast felt uncomfortable with the word, but as storytellers, it's our responsibility to communicate the fullness of the horror **and** the triumph of Tina, and her peers, in this atmosphere and in this environment. You *should* feel uncomfortable, but as actors we know we are *not* those people – we are communicating the fullness of the whole scene.

In the scene in the parking lot, (between Ike and the police) the dramatic tension comes from the completely opposing views of each other's world. The oppressor and the oppressed operate on entirely different planets.”

In the scene where Tina's pregnancy by Raymond is revealed, Ike tells Tina “this niggah's gotsa go”. Students may wonder why this word is used by Ike, given its history in the oppression of people of colour by white people. This is an example of the reclamation of language by some: if you own a word, it no longer has power over you to oppress you.

For more specific information and guidance, please see the notes for each specific scene, as set out below.

Anna Mae is used for the scenes that occur before Ike creates the Ike and Tina Turner Revue. It is important to make this distinction given the issue of having one's own name changes against one's will.

1. Creating Nutbush

In Katori Hall's script, the stage descriptions are very simple for the opening scene in *Nutbush, Tennessee*. The ensemble must create the atmosphere of the Baptist service, led by Richard Bullock, as well as communicating the intense heat of the day.

NUTBUSH, TENNESSEE - 1950

RICHARD BULLOCK, ANNA MAE's father, bursts thru the middle calling in his congregation with a TRIANGLE BELL.

Group task: 15 ensemble plus Anna Mae (later to become Tina Turner), Richard (preacher) and Zelma, Anna Mae's mother.

Although the ensemble does not contribute to the dialogue, they are a key element in the song *Nutbush, City Limits*, and they are a vital part of the exposition of Tina's story.

As a large group (up to about 15 people), create the opening scene.

In rehearsals for *Tina*, the actors would consider who their character was, their reason for being in that location, relationships with other characters in the scene etc.

You also need to decide how you will create a sense of location for your audience? What set will you have and how will you ensure that it is versatile enough to be removed at the end of the scene to segue into the interior of the Bullock family house? How will you create the sense of the heat of the day? In *Tina* lighting and video projection helps with this, but the actors use props (such as fans) as well as gestures and mannerisms to communicate the heat?

Decide which moment Anna Mae and Zelma should enter. How will you direct the audience's attention to them as the most important characters in the scene, before the singing is to start? How will you ensure Anna Mae remains the centre of attention so that we can see why Zelma might get so upset with her for her behaviour in the church?

How will you ensure that Anna Mae is endearing to the audience despite her 'naughty' behaviour? She is spirited, and moved by the music, rather than being deliberately disobedient and disruptive. Take note of this stage direction at the end of the scene:

ANNA MAE is at the front of the choir. The focus is on ANNA MAE, who is loving it, completely lost in the music. She is out-singing everybody else.

ANNA MAE keeps on speeding up the rhythm of the song. She speeds it up and all everyone can do is follow. ANNA MAE's feet start getting happy. She's struck by the spirit. Her feet are flying faster and faster until they move like the wings of a hummingbird—invisible.

The spirit is passed on and on and on until every single choir member is dancing, fast, and happy and free. All that wailing goes up into the clouds. ANNA MAE has released the entire congregation of their misery, of their pain.

2. The Bullock family home

In the following scene, the audience witness the first example of domestic violence in the narrative – that between Zelma and Richard.

One of the key techniques used in rehearsals was actioning: identifying the objective of each character with the lines that they delivered. This often opens up wider conversations about the characters but an agreement has to be reached in order to ensure that all of the actors are contributing to the same intentions for the audience.

Actioning asks you to identify a verb which you apply to each line or piece of dialogue in order to identify what the character is trying to achieve by saying/doing something. An example is laid out below.

ZELMA Anna Mae, you always too loud. *To admonish*

ANNA MAE Sorry. Ma'am. *To apologise*

ZELMA Like tonight at church, only voice in the choir could be heard was yours. *To belittle*

ANNA MAE Maybe the others should sing a little louder then. *To rebel*

You might then play the scene with these intentions, and then review your chosen verbs – are they strong enough? 'Admonish' is a synonym of 'criticise', but you might also choose 'to reprimand', 'to chastise'.

In groups of 4, use the script below to action this scene in the Bullock family kitchen. It is the moment where Zelma and Alline leave after a physical fight between the two adults. Ensure that you look closely at the stage directions, too. Anna Mae does not say much in this scene, but she is still on view to the audience throughout the scene. How do you ensure that you achieve Katori Hall's stage directions and communicate Anna Mae's emotional responses?

After you have rehearsed for 20 minutes, show your version to the other groups in your class. After your performance, share your actioning verbs and with the help of your audience evaluate whether you communicated those character intentions. What did your audience think and feel as a result of your performance?

This is also an opportunity to write an evaluation of your performance, based on the questions and prompts listed above. Practising this skill now will enable you to create a higher standard of work when it comes to writing your Non-Examined Assessment portfolio or supporting statements.

ZELMA Anna Mae, you always too loud.

ANNA MAE Sorry. Ma'am.

ZELMA Like tonight at church, only voice in the choir could be heard was yours.

ANNA MAE Maybe the others should sing a little louder then.

RICHARD and ALLINE *stifle a giggle. ZELMA cuts them a look. Silence, again.*

ZELMA You backtalking me?

ANNA MAE No. Ma'am.

ZELMA You embarrass me. You embarrass yourself. Up there, acting like you "catching the spirit," like you got some straight connection to God.....

RICHARD Zelma...

ZELMAWell, you up there, just a' lying—

ZELMA *reaches out to hit ANNA MAE.*

RICHARD Now, that's ENOUGH, Zelma!!

RICHARD *smacks ZELMA so hard, she almost flies to the other side of the room. The girls sit like statues.*

RICHARD [CONT'D]

What the devil done got into you? You ain't gone ride her cause she "get happy" in a week more times you done in your whole life.

ZELMA [ironic] You got that right.

RICHARD Leave the girl be, now, just leave her...

ZELMA You always put her first. Like she some kinda angel.

RICHARD Now, how I'ma put a child before the woman I love?

ZELMA Love? Cause you do. You forced my hand. I was just fine. Just fine with Alline!

ZELMA knocks her chair over. No one notices ANNA MAE. She has fallen deep inside of herself. It's as if she's in her own little world, witnessing the break up of her family.

RICHARD You pick that up. And you pick it up now.

ZELMA Make me.

RICHARD jumps on ZELMA again.

ALLINE Daddy no!

ZELMA Oh, the preacher man wanna beat on his wife. Come on. Come on and hit me.

ZELMA throws a couple of licks in, gets to the better of him. Bloodies RICHARD's nose. The CHOIR begins to turn their backs, ignoring the altercation, but singing, faster and louder repeating "City limits! City limits!" like the whistle of an oncoming train. ALLINE tries to jump in to protect ZELMA.

ALLINE Daddy, Daddy, please stop!

RICHARD struggles with them both.

ZELMA Don't you hit, Alline. Don't you hit my child!

RICHARD Don't go talking about your child when you be staying in Knoxville for months at a time.

ZELMA Don't blame me for wanting a job for coloured folk that ain't pickin' cotton.

RICHARD Aww, you think you're better than me? Well, I ain't no field niggah. I'm the overseer. I oversee them fields and I oversee this house!

ZELMA Come on, Alline. Get your things. We leaving.

RICHARD How the hell you leaving?

ZELMA You and Nutbush can go to Hell. I done had enough of you beating on me.

RICHARD [soft, apologetic-like] Zelma...

ZELMA I'm sick and tired of it. Just sick and tired!

ZELMA grabs ALLINE's hand and starts walking out the door. ANNA MAE watches from the table.

RICHARD But what about Anna Mae, huh? You can't just leave her. What about her?

Beat. ZELMA looks back to ANNA MAE sitting there alone.

ZELMA You the one made me have her. You wanted her so bad, you take care of her. Alline!

RICHARD I can't see my face in you, Anna Mae. Never did.

RICHARD, too, takes a small hobo bag and hoists it over his shoulder. He looks at ANNA MAE with sad eyes, then walks into the fields and he too becomes swallowed up by the horizon.

3. Zelma meets Ike

Zelma's character is a complex one. She has her own ambitions, which are quashed by her domestic situation in Nutbush, and she suffers at the hands of her husband, Richard. Zelma moves to St. Louis in order to achieve some of her own wishes and ambitions but suddenly finds herself once again sharing her house with Anna Mae – a bright, enthusiastic and ambitious young girl.

Discuss this moment, when Anna Mae arrives in St. Louis:

ZELMA [coldly] ...But she gone have to make herself useful. You graduate from high school?
TINA With honors. Ma'am.
ZELMA You might not wanna tell these negros 'round here that fact. We don't want folk to think you uppity. You gone have to get yourself a job. And you gone have to help your sister around the house. And since this my house you gone have to follow my rules—got it?

What does the audience need to learn about the relationship between Zelma and Anna Mae? Where do their sympathies need to lie?

Now look at the following scene where Ike approaches Zelma asking if Anna Mae can become part of his Kings of Rhythm act.

ZELMA Well, what brings you here tonight, Ike?
IKE I wanna apologize. You see I'm the one brought Anna Mae up there on that stage with me tonight.
ZELMA I find that hard to believe. That one right there? She do like to show her color.
IKE And a fine color it is. She favor you.
ZELMA [blushing] Well...we got Indian in our family. Cherokee.
IKE Y'all must be from Tennessee, then.
ZELMA [impressed] Nutbush! Where you from?
IKE Mississippi.
ZELMA You miss it?
IKE [darkly] I don't miss nothin' about Mississippi.
ZELMA understands. ALLINE brings in the tea.
IKE [CONT'D] Thank you, ma'am.
ALLINE giggles again.
IKE Well, Anna Mae was kinda put on the spot, so to speak, and she couldn't help but oblige me.
ZELMA Seem like that what most women do. Oblige you.
IKE Oh, you gone make me blush now, Mrs. Bullock.
ZELMA I mean, that what I heard, now. That you got your ways.
IKE Oh, I'm just like any other man. Got my passions. But my true passion is my guitar. My music. And Anna Mae, well... I ain't never heard no woman spit fire like that girl did tonight. World don't stop too many times and tonight she took club Manhattan to heaven.
ZELMA I thank she always sang loud.
IKE Naw, she sang pretty. And that voice could really be the centerpiece to my new band.
ZELMA But ain't y'all called the Kings of Rhythm?

IKE Not now we've found ourselves a Queen

IKE *winks at TINA.*

IKE *[CONT'D]* With your permission, of course, I'd like to take her on the road. Sang with me.

ZELMA I don't know about that now—

IKE You know she could make upward 'bout 25 dollars a week

ZELMA *about falls out of her seat.*

ZELMA Lawd....

IKE And I'm sure a sweet girl like Anna Mae would send some money home. To her mama.

ZELMA Hell, she betta.

IKE So what you say?

ZELMA *looks at TINA who now looks like a big dollar sign. She's still uneasy...*

The challenge in this scene is to communicate how both Ike and Zelma are attempting to manipulate the situation to their own advantage. Using the previous actioning activity as a starting point, identify the moments where:

- Ike has the upper hand
- Zelma has the upper hand
- Ike and Zelma are equals

How do the characters achieve their status in the scene? How can you reflect this on stage? Think about the use of levels (you may wish to create a basic set that reflects a small living room/dining room area of an apartment), their physical proximity to each other and their use of eye contact.

Although she does not say anything in this extract, Anna Mae is present throughout. Zelma and Ike are talking about her as if she is not there. How can you use space, levels and eye contact to communicate her responses to the scene in which she is essentially being discussed as a valuable asset, rather than a person?

4. Ike tells Tina about his father

Ike's story about his father is true. It is important for the audience to hear this story to then understand the context of the fear caused by the arrival of the police later in the same scene.

IKE Naw. When I was 12 my Daddy got beat something horrible. They thought he was courting a white woman. Well...he was. They broke him to the point his insides was on the outside. We took him to the nearest hospital, but they wouldn't take him. White hospital. Said "Nigger gone need a coroner by the morning." Well, we brought him home. We couldn't keep him in the house he stank so bad, so we pitched a little tent for him out in the yard. He spent two years out there. Dying. I made sure there was a little opening for him so he could see this sky on a good night. If there was ever any good nights.

*Though **IKE** seems very composed as he tells the story, but **TINA** can see the broken-ness through the façade.*

Working on a monologue like this is a complex process. The actor playing Ike needs to hold Tina's attention, but also communicate Ike's complicated character to the audience.

1. Highlight FIVE words that you think are the most important words in the monologue. These should be words that fully communicate the sadness and horror of the experience that Ike is relating.
2. Now read the entire monologue and aim for each of the five words that you've highlighted. How does this affect the pace, pitch, pause, tone and inflection in your delivery? Are you happy with how it sounds?
3. The actor playing Tina should now join you on stage, this time reacting ONLY to the five key words that you have highlighted. How can those reactions be portrayed through facial expression and body language. Where have you placed her on stage in relation to Ike?
4. Now discuss between you how you are going to use the words between each of your five key words to show the emotional journey that Ike is delivery to Tina? This will inevitably lead to a discussion about why Ike chooses to tell Tina this story at this point. What is he aiming to achieve? Is it only sympathy? Is it an attempt to coerce Tina into committing to being with him (and only him) so that she does not leave? We have already seen Ike being violent towards Tina, so how does this affect the way the audience perceives him?

Once you are happy with the delivery of this monologue, rehearse the following moment from the same scene:

TINA But why would you want to marry me?

TINA What about all the others—

IKE The others? They always gone be. Me & you, married though? You promised you'd never leave...

It'd be good for the band. Good for the business—

***IKE** looks over to the car (i.e. Raymond).*

Does this change how you will perform the monologue? What do you need to add or alter in your delivery of the monologue to enable you to convincingly deliver this part of the scene in which Ike is clearly manipulating and coercing Tina. (Don't forget they are also in a dark parking lot during this scene)

5. The police arrive

It is important to do some research about the social and historical context in which this scene takes place. Students should understand the fact that this scene takes place less than a decade after the violent death of Emmett Till, in an era where the Ku Klux Klan were active and at a time when the Jim Crow laws were still in effect. Students should also understand that this extract is from the same scene in which Ike explains what happened to his own father.

When rehearsing this scene, have an observer as well as the six actors. Bear in mind the following points:

- Ike and Tina would be genuinely in fear of their life.
- This is not an isolated incident.
- Police officers would be believed and trusted over the word of a black man or woman. The police represent society as a whole.
- Seeing a man holding a rope would suggest a potential lynching.
- The parking lot is isolated, there would be no help at hand.
- Attitudes towards race varied from state to state in America at this time. Black people in places like New York gained more acceptance than in the Deep South (as Raymond acknowledges when he complains about the treatment that the band receives). This was a risk that the band had to take in their touring schedule, however. It also did not matter that they were now successful in having a record that was being played on the radio.

As you rehearse and perform, ask your observer to stop you when they feel that you are not accurately representing the aspects outlined above. Remember that subtle detail can be a lot more effective than large actions, loud voices etc. Consider stillness, pause, low volume and experiment with vocal tone for all of the characters in this scene.

IKE embraces the unsure **TINA**. Suddenly they are interrupted by the glare of headlights.

TINA Ike, what's happening?

IKE Let's get back to the car.

TINA and **IKE** try to rejoin the group, but **TWO POLICE OFFICERS** stops them midstride—

POLICE OFFICER #1 Y'all need any help getting on your way?

IKE No, Sir. No help needed.

POLICE OFFICER #2 Why y'all folks ain't up in a Motel somewhere?

IKE Next motel ain't for miles. We'd never make it.

POLICE OFFICER #1 That right? Well...You still gotta pay yo' motel bill unless you wanna check out early...nigger.

POLICE OFFICER #1 points his gun at them. In the distance, we see fires burning like the stars in the sky. The faint outlines **TWO FARMERS** (Charlie Franklin, Ross Lekites) (one with a shotgun, the other with a rope) slowly orbit. A dog **GROWLS**.

IKE and the **OFFICER** stare at each other.

Beat.

IKE [with bite] Go on back to the car while I pay this kind officer so Motel Mississippi can get they money.

TINA tries to leave.

POLICE OFFICER #1 Hey, hey hey, hey.

POLICE OFFICER #1 & #2 laugh.

6. The hospital

After her successful performance at The Ritz, Tina visits her dying mother in hospital. This scene culminates in a change of attitude from Tina: she has spent much of her life wondering why she was not good enough for her mother to love as she had loved Alline. Nicholai La Barrie explains “Zelma was unforgivingly hard on Tina. In this scene, Tina is coming to the realisation that she cannot be as hard on her mother as Zelma has been on her. In this scene Tina moves to a place of compassion, forgiveness and acceptance: there is no point in fighting fire with fire. For the audience this is a difficult scene: Zelma asks Tina to reunite with Ike, the man who abused Tina for sixteen years. This is a scene that needs attention to small detail – you are not painting with broad brushstrokes, but going for the minute detail instead. This isn’t ‘big’ acting”

In this scene, explore how the following given circumstances might affect your performance:

- How long has it taken Tina to travel to the hospital?
- What time of day is it?
- How close are members of staff who might overhear the conversations in this scene?
- What’s the physical temperature in the room? (hospitals are often either very cold or very warm! These are conditions that can affect people’s physical and mental state)
- How long has Zelma been in this hospital? How long was it before Alline was able to contact Tina?
- Who does Zelma think is going to pay the hospital bills?
- How might being in the hospital with Zelma affect Ike, who has already shared his own story about how his father wasn’t able to be treated in a hospital?

IKE See you tomorrow, Zelma.

*And **IKE** walks out for the last time in **TINA**'s life.*

ZELMA You should be 'shamed of yo' self.

*Something has snapped inside **TINA**.*

TINA You should be 'shamed of yourself. Treating him better than yo' own flesh and blood.

***ZELMA** is taken aback.*

TINA *[CONT'D]* I'm your daughter, Muah, I'm part of you.

ZELMA Well that may be, but –

TINA (near sobbing) What the hell did I ever do that was so terribly wrong in your eyes? Why is it that you think I don't deserve any credit at all? Even now. Today. With everything I've accomplished. his question that's been haunting me day in and day out—Why? Why my Muah never love me?

*Silence. **ZELMA** is taking it in.*

TINA *[CONT'D]* Was I really so unworthy of your love?

ZELMA You've no idea...how much I love you, but fire is hard to hold. Fire is hard to embrace at night. Fire illuminates your own flaws. I was never gonna be a good mama to you, Anna Mae. And for that I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, but I needed to leave that hole in Tennessee... and just because you was born I got stuck there. In that hole, holding fire.

***DON'T TURN AROUND** rises up.*

***ZELMA** stays silent. **TINA** has had enough and gets up to leave.*

ZELMA Oh? So now you're leaving, too?

TINA I done learned leaving from the best.

ZELMA Don't mean I ain't regret that. One of the biggest regrets of my life was that I wasn't woman enough to raise you. Well...look at you. You done raised yourself. Ain't need my help.

TINA *[whispering with tears in her eyes]* I did, Muah. I did.

***TINA** starts walking away.*

7. Tina reclaims her story: recording at Abbey Road

Katori Hall says, “There would be no Beyonce without Tina Turner. There would not be a Rihanna without Tina Turner. There wouldn’t be this long line of Rock and Roll goddesses were it not for this woman who changed the game and showed people that I can be authentically black and still take over the world.”

With this statement in mind, rehearse the following scene. Tina finally uses the power and passion that she has on stage, in her dealings with the people around her. Before this moment, she has responded to the needs, wishes and even violence of others. At this moment, she refuses to do this any more.

TINA I thought we were going to start with the title track.

ASSISTANT But Roger said—

TINA THIS IS NOT ROGER’S SHOW!!

*Her gargantuan VOICE makes the walls of the studio shake. **ROGER** and everyone is taken aback.*

TINA I’m not just some rag doll you can shove in a dress made of scraps, stick a microphone in front of her face and expect to just follow your orders unquestioned. Ever since I got here you’ve been hell-bent on telling me what you think is right for me. Well, I’ll be damned if I go back to playing some man’s puppet.

The WOMAN she’s always been onstage has suddenly arrived in the building. She stands akimbo, seeming to sprout wings and become wide in this world for the first time.

ROGER No one thinks you’re a puppet, Tina. You hired me because I know what will work, and I’m always gonna tell it to you straight. I’m trying to give you everything you’ve ever dreamed of.

TINA You don’t know me, you don’t know my secrets so please don’t sit up here and try to tell me my dreams. You and them ain’t nowhere near acquainted. You think you’re giving me a new life, let’s get this straight. I. Picked. You.

ROGER Is that so?

TINA *[tearing up]* I have given my life for this. My life. If this doesn’t work out for you, you go back to managing Olivia Newton John. If this doesn’t work for me, I can lose my house. I can lose my kids.

ROGER *nods.* A **BAND MEMBER** steps forward with some news.

ASSISTANT Roger, the guys from Capitol are here.

As you rehearse this scene, remember that ACTION is always accompanied by REACTION, and INTERACTION by and between other characters. Whilst the audience focus must remain on Tina, how will you ensure that the rest of the reactions on stage are convincing and avoid undermining the emotion and meaning of the scene by playing more towards melodrama?