

Play 1: *Sticks and Stones* Support Notes

Issues Covered

Peer pressure, damage to domestic property, damage to empty or derelict property, who are the victims of this behaviour?

Plot

Teenager Rob is, reluctantly, helping pensioner Len with his allotment. However, Len's kindly attitude gradually coaxes Rob into talking and Rob enjoys learning new skills. Meanwhile Rob's two friends are smashing windows in a derelict building. Rob is drawn into their activity. His friends send him up about his work with Len.

Later, Rob's friends are playing football outside Len's house; when Len asks them to keep the ball away from his fence, they start deliberately kicking the ball against it. Rob intervenes. But his friends challenge him - 'You're with us or against us.' He is pressured into throwing a stone through Len's window. But at the point he is about to throw, Len appears . . .

Suggestions for Points to Notice and Follow-up

- Peer pressure - are you 'forced' to do things by your mates? What other choices do you have and what tactics can you use?
- Breaking windows (and other damage) of derelict buildings - Young people may not realise this is a crime (it is!) or may think it is OK and not really wrong as no-one cares (not so!). It may be seen as fun. Once a place starts looking run down, people take less care and it gets worse: is this what you want in your area?
- Escalating damaging behaviour against domestic property - What starts as accidental becomes deliberate, and is therefore more likely to be a crime.
- What are the young man's (Rob's) choices? - Explore different ways of not throwing the stone and saving face; throw the stone; throw to miss...
- Who are the victims in this situation? - Owners of derelict property?

In addition

- What's Rob's developing relationship with Len?
- What's Rob's relationship with his two mates and how do they relate to what Rob's getting out of the gardening?
- Do Rob's two friends have reasons for damaging the pub?
- What will Len's reaction to Rob be if he throws the stone / doesn't throw the stone?
- What are the local areas that could attract more damage - what could be done to improve them? Whose responsibility is this?

Filmed Audience Response

Notice the high level of concentration for the lads in the audience - this is particularly noticeable when the actors play out a later meeting between Len and Rob, following their instructions.

The young audience is engaged in this play by the central relationship between the old and young men. This enables them to talk through the pressures on Rob and ways of dealing with it. The emotional and social complexities of the situations are not missed by them.

Notice in particular the response to the actor's question: 'Which of these three is the strongest in this scene?'

You will see there is plenty of material to discuss with them; they have been personally and emotionally engaged in this situation.

Role-play, Replay Possibilities

Role playing can help young people examine rights and wrongs within a powerful emotional context.

- Continue the play from the point at which it finishes.
- Rob goes to see Len a few days 'after the play'; play the scene with Rob having thrown the stone and not having thrown the stone.
- Imagine that Rob doesn't throw the stone and his mates 'dump him'; imagine Rob then meets up with his mates a few days later - play out that meeting with Rob explaining his actions . . . make sure his mates stay in character.