

Play 5: *Swings and Roundabouts* Support Notes

Issues Covered

Damage to public property, being charged with criminal damage, arson, harassment of members of the public.

Plot

Sam is sitting on a swing, idly burning paper. Her mate comes along and we learn she's been truanting from school. Sam's swing breaks accidentally but this gives her the idea of breaking the other two.

Sam is summoned into her Year Tutor's office. Surprisingly we learn she's doing very well in some subjects. Her tutor decides to move her to a different form. Meeting her friend afterwards she lies and says she's just got into real trouble.

The two of them return to the children's playground and idle away time playing on a seesaw. This is loose and Sam seizes this as an opportunity to break it. They hassle a passer-by. Sam turns her attention to the children's slide and alone deliberately breaks this.

In the final scene the two young people are in the police station. The police officer accuses them both of breaking the slide (he has a witness). He asks them to tell the truth.

Suggestions for Points to Notice and Follow-up

- Sam and Craig are both involved in damaging the children's playground equipment - are they both equally to blame? Is the one who leads worse? Does 'not doing it yourself' constitute not guilty?
- The first swing is broken 'by accident' - is it really broken by accident or is it criminal damage? It is criminal damage because the swings are not made for people of Sam and Craig's age.
- What groups of people lose out as a result of Sam's behaviour? - Parents, young children, other park users, the people Sam harassed.
- Explore the several ways that Sam and Craig behave in anti-social ways. Breaking the equipment, hanging around while truanting, harassment, arson, rudeness.

In addition

- Explore Sam's school record and explore possible reasons for her behaviour.
- Explore possible reasons for Craig 'tagging along' with Sam.

Filmed Audience Response

In this extract you see the young people focusing in on the relationship between the two vandals. There is a 'twist' that's being explored that Craig didn't in fact break the slide although he's accused of doing it. There are interesting questions of morality to be explored here, all to do with 'fairness'.

The young audience is also quick to explain Sam's strange behaviour.

Role-play, Replay Possibilities

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

- Select a Sam and Craig character and let each decide what they would say to the police officer without letting each other know - the 'audience' should know what they said; let Sam and Craig meet up and tell each other what went on.
- Play out scenes between Sam and parent(s) and Craig and parent(s) before going to the police station.
- Play out one of the harassment episodes, then question all parties involved, in role.