

Play 6: *What's the Best Course of Action?* Support Notes

Issues Covered

Damage to school property, anger management, bullying, victimisation, effect on school community, repercussions for vandals.

Plot

Syd and Nick are kept back at school; their teacher is interviewing them about a bullying accusation. During this, Syd completely loses his temper and the teacher leaves, locking him in the classroom. Syd kicks the classroom door, damaging it. Once he's calmed down, Nick, who winds Syd up, suggests he breaks the classroom projector. They leave the classroom via a window.

Syd and Nick think they know who's made the bullying accusation, so they break into her locker and destroy her course work. They realise that all Year 10 and 11 lockers are new; angry about this they wreck all the lockers.

The teacher and the Year Tutor, Ms Basnett, discuss the situation. They need to work out exactly what damage Syd and Nick have done and if either of them is more responsible for it than the other. We also learn that there is no money in the school budget to replace the broken lockers, so all Year 10 and 11 students will have to carry all their books around.

Ms Basnett brings Syd and Nick into her office and starts the process of working out the best course of action . . .

Suggestions for Points to Notice and Follow-up

- Who's damaging behaviour is worse - Nick's or Syd's?
- Syd kicks in the classroom door when he has lost his temper - he's virtually out of control; later he damages things when he's calmed down. Should all the damaging behaviour be treated the same?
- Who are the various victims of Syd's and Nick's behaviour? - School, pupils, staff, Syd and Nick themselves . . .
- The Year Tutor, Ms Basnett, can prove some things and not others. What's her best course of action? Explore many possibilities - exclude both or one, keep them in school but separate them, call in the police? Create a chill-out space?

In addition

- Who is provoked into action in this play - and could the various provocations have been resisted, or reacted to better? (Be careful as you explore this not to let all the blame fall on the teacher for locking the door - what would have been the likely results of his not locking the door?)
- Why is Syd so angry?
- What are the ways of avoiding the escalating situation?

Filmed Audience Response

In this extract the discussion revolves around who's more to blame for the damage, Syd or Nick. The young people in the audience are also interested in the teacher's behaviour. The young people have differences of opinion about which of the boys is more to blame and they have good suggestions as to how the situation may be better handled.

The lads in the audience here are boarders at a school for young people who, through emotional difficulties, are unable to learn within the usual school system. You can see how directly they relate to the plight of young Syd in the play.

Syd and Nick will be in trouble . . . whoever is 'more to blame' and whatever damage they are found to have perpetrated. Notice how these lads in the audience can offer strategies for avoiding the damaging circumstances.

Role-play, Replay Possibilities

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

- Select a Nick and Syd and ask them to leave the room to work out what they say to each other while waiting to see Ms Basnett; meanwhile the rest work out what should happen to them. Ask them back in. Syd and Nick play out their talk; then Ms Basnett calls them in and tells them her decision.
- Play a scene between one of the teachers, Lucy (whose work was destroyed) and Nick or Syd; the boy has to apologise for the damage.
- Put together an imaginary school council of adults and pupils to discuss the issue of damage within the school.