

ZEST THEATRE PRESENTS

# YOUTHQUAKE



PART SHOW  
PART TED TALK  
PART PARTY

AGE SUITABILITY: 14+

CONTAINS OCCASIONAL  
STRONG LANGUAGE AND  
EMOTIONAL THEMES

EDUCATION PACK

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# ABOUT ZEST

Established in 2007, Zest is a national touring theatre company creating eye-opening work for young people. Delivering over 100 performances and reaching nearly 20,000 people annually, we tour to theatres, outdoor spaces and schools with a variety of interactive, immersive, site specific and promenade productions. We place our audience right at the heart of the performance and our creative process, with work described as “unpretentious” (The Stage) and “invigorating” (The British Theatre Guide). We have eclectic tastes and love creating bold new ideas – this means that there is no such thing as a ‘Zest Style’. While each of our shows is ultimately different, innovation, humour, empowerment and accessibility will always be threaded through every show we produce, creating a DNA that is unmistakably Zest.

# ABOUT YOUTHQUAKE

*Youthquake* is an exciting, 360° theatre experience from the award-winning Zest Theatre. Developed through conversations with 800 young people from across the country, *Youthquake* uses their words and opinions to give voice to a generation often left unheard.

Becky is thirty years old and wants to make a difference. Frustrated with her peers, Becky wants to empower the next generation to stand up and change the world. Tonight she'll perform an inspirational presentation for you, the audience, designed to do just that. Except there's a problem. Becky's been talking so much that she's not realised the *Youthquake* has already begun.

Part show, part TED Talk and part party, *Youthquake* takes you on an exhilarating journey through the hidden lives of Teen Britain and asks what it actually means to change the world.

# HOW TO USE THIS PACK

This pack is primarily designed as a learning resource for groups who have recently watched a performance of Zest Theatre's production, Youthquake, however for some of the activities this is not essential. There are a variety of discussion points and exercises that can be explored in isolation or as part of a longer series of sessions. The exercises can be done in a mixture of groups, pairs, and individually. The pack covers the themes and content of the show, as well as the process of creating a production like Youthquake. This makes it suitable for PSHE, Citizenship and Drama lessons.

## ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES

For more information on how the show was made see the Director's interview in Appendix 4 or visit [zesttheatre.com/youthquake](http://zesttheatre.com/youthquake)

Before starting, it is important to set some ground rules for the session. This will help students to feel safe and more comfortable airing their views. It might be useful for the students to come up with these themselves, but some that work well are:

- Only 1 person speaking at a time
- Listen to each other's opinions, even if you don't agree
- Include everyone in the group
- Be brave and share your opinions

Bear in mind that the themes in Youthquake may provoke some strong responses and differences of opinion. This is fine and can be really interesting, as long as everyone gets a chance to have a say and people's views and feelings are respected. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions; they are designed to get students thinking more about the show's content and the wider themes around it.

Also, consider that not everyone will feel comfortable participating in group discussion. It doesn't mean they aren't engaging, they may just be processing the information in a different way. Our pack is designed with open-ended questions that encourage everyone to share their thoughts, but you may need to prompt or give extra help to some.

# EXPLORING THE THEMES OF THE PLAY

## Introduction Exercises

These exercises are designed to get you chatting about Youthquake. You may want to spend a couple of minutes sharing your initial thoughts on the show.

1. **(10 Minutes)** Working in small groups, list all the themes / topics which are explored, however briefly, in the play. For each theme, refer to how it is covered in Youthquake. Share and discuss your answers with other groups and reflect on how that topic helped contribute to the wider narrative.
2. **(10 minutes)** Do you think Youthquake reflects your experience of life? Discuss what is the same / different. Think about local, national and international issues.
3. **(10 minutes)** Think about the voices of young people you heard throughout the production, both live and recorded. These words have come from real people. How did it make you feel hearing some of this? Would you feel differently if this was a friend / family member speaking? Discuss as a class.

## Generation Z and Changing the World

It's not easy being young in Britain. The voices throughout Youthquake told us the realities of that experience. If you are born around 1996 – 2011, you are called Generation Z. As a generation you have no knowledge of life before 9/11, you have only known complexity and recession. A digital first generation, you're more connected to the entire world than at any point in history, yet often feel totally isolated.

But, as you will have seen from the show, between the news stories and the negativity, there are the rumblings of something exciting and new. As a generation you are realistic, yet optimistic for the future. You're authentic, transparent and allergic to BS. You're fun and love a good Cat Meme!

You might not know it, but across the globe your generation is challenging the system that's set against you, whilst positively redefining your future. You're breaking down the boxes of the past that defined and restricted your parents. Tolerance and equality are your heartbeat. Suddenly nationality, gender and sexuality become fluid. You're allowing yourselves to be who you are without the labels. Your influence is changing the world.



Or is it? What do you think?

Before we get going on this section, read Jack's speech from the end of the show together. You'll find this in the Appendix at the back.

- 1. (15 minutes including reading Jack's Speech)** Let's think about what things define Gen Z. In the speech you've just read, Jack says:

"Why all of a sudden do we wake up in the morning and go okay, it's Teachers vs. Students, Old People vs. Young. I don't understand why we can't—do it together?"

- a. In small groups, complete Worksheet 1 from the Appendix. In the 'Young People' circle, write as many things as possible that you think define Generation Z. Think of the good things, the bad things, the activities that you get up to and the clichés people think about you. Think locally, nationally and internationally. Do the same for the 'Adults' circle. In the centre, write all the things that we share in common.
  - b. As a class, share your responses. Do you think these are accurate descriptions of the different Generations? Or have we just focused on perceptions and stereotypes? Reflect on the list in the centre. Are there any ideas in that central area that could unite the age ranges? What could bring us together?
- 2. (15 minutes)** Using Worksheet 2 in the Appendix, let's now spend some time thinking about the issues you think effect you and your generation. Again, think about locally, nationally and internationally.
- a. Start with the middle column. Write as many Problems or Issues you think affect you or you are concerned about.
  - b. Next, look at the left hand column and write what you think causes those Problems?
  - c. Now, look at the right hand column. What do you think could be the solutions to those problems? The solutions might be big or small.
- 3. (10 minutes)** Use your thoughts on Worksheet 2 to discuss the realities of changing the world. What is possible? Could you make small changes that could make ripples, and even waves? Are there any solutions you could action for yourself before the next time this class meets? Or is it all beyond help? How do you feel about young people changing the world? Is it an opportunity or a burden? What will the world look like over the next decade or two when you take charge?

Hold on to your work! You can use your thoughts and ideas from these two exercises throughout the Making Youthquake section below

# MAKING YOUTHQUAKE

In this section we'll be getting you to think about your response to seeing Youthquake, as well as giving you a chance to try some of our devising techniques for yourself.

Let's start with getting you to reflect on the show you've just seen:

- 1. (15 minutes)** In your groups, discuss the format and structure of the production (how the play has been put together rather than what the story is). Some things to think about could include:
  - Did anything about the play surprise you?
  - Did the way the space is used enhance the experience? If so, why?
  - How does your experience compare to previous theatre visits?
  - What, do you think, are the advantages and disadvantages to staging a production in this way?
- 2. (15 minutes + sharing time)** Imagine Youthquake was your idea and you are pitching the show to a group of potential commissioners from a local council (a bit like Dragons' Den). You want to get them to fund the making and a tour of the production in your local area. Is it an important piece of theatre for teenagers to see? If so, why? What can be learned from it? What are the unique selling points of the show? Why should this be the project they fund? Present your pitch to the rest of the class.

Zest uses a collaborative approach to creating our work, with every member of the cast and creative team contributing to the making of each production. At the heart of this creative process is in-depth research and co-creation with young people, giving Zest a powerful insight into the lives and minds of our intended audience.

Through expertly led workshops and conversations, our unique practice gently unlocks the voices and creativity of young people, enabling participants to share their thoughts and feelings in the most incredible ways.

It's not rocket science - it's just conversation, but the impact is tangible and enriches our productions. Our participants leave feeling empowered, making their voices heard and discovering new things about themselves and their peers.

We call this the Zest Effect.



Zest's work aims to give young people a voice. In order to first understand what young people are thinking and feeling, the Zest team leads workshops using some of the techniques below. For Youthquake we led workshops with 800 young people! Have a go at these and discover the rich and insightful content you can gather from your own group:

**3. (30 minutes + sharing time).** One exercise we use regularly is called 'Streams of Consciousness' or 'Free Writing':

- a. Look back at the list of issues you created in your small groups earlier. Choose a topic from the list that you think most relates to you. Individually get a blank piece of paper and a pen. Set timer for 3 minutes. Then, when the timer starts, your challenge is to write continuously for 3 minutes about that topic. You must keep writing for 3 minutes without taking your pen off the page. Write whatever comes into your brain, no matter how random. Ignore handwriting, punctuation, grammar, spelling or sentence structure. This is your moment to get all your thoughts onto the page. You must keep writing for the full 3 minutes, no stopping! Don't put your name on the paper.
- b. Get into a small group with people you feel totally comfortable with.
- c. On your own, read back what you have written. In a moment you will share your writing with your small group. Before you do, think about how you feel sharing your writing. You have 3 choices: share your writing exactly how it's written, share but with an edit by scribbling out bits you want to keep private, or fold it up and keep it for yourself. It's up to you!
- d. Those that feel comfortable, put your writing in the middle of your small group and select a piece of paper at random to read. Read the writing. Then use a pen to instinctively highlight any quotes or phrases that you think are powerful, interesting or surprising. Don't judge or try to guess who the writing belongs to. Respect the feelings of those people in your group.
- e. Then, as a small group, take all these highlighted phrases and put them together to create a new speech. You can add the odd word or phrase in to help make it flow or make sense, but try to stay loyal to the original writing without changing the intention of the piece. Get creative in how you thread all the different themes and statements together. By the end you'll have one speech that sums up the voice of your small group.
- f. Share with the rest of your class.

**4. (60 minutes)** We think young people are amazingly inspirational, articulate, intuitive and honest. That's why we make the work we do, to allow those voices to be heard. At the end of each of our workshops we facilitate a conversation with our participants and record it. This helps us gather some incredible insights into the lives of our audience.

- a. Get a device that can record audio. This could even be your mobile.
- b. In small groups, imagine you are talking to your MP or local Councillor. If they were sat in your group, what would you say to them? What would you want to change? What do they need to understand about your community? What should they do to help? Discuss these points as if they were actually sat next to you listening. Feel free to get angry or show emotion if it's something that you care about.
- c. Listen back and type out the 'best bits' you think explain your opinions best.
- d. Select one member of your small group to become your Spokesperson. Imagine they have been asked to present your ideas to that MP or Local Councillor. Using the same method as in 3E above, take these 'best bits' and form them into a speech. You can add the occasional statement or phrase to make it flow and make sense. Make sure you argue your case clearly and that the imaginary MP really understands the emotion you want to convey.
- e. You've created your own political speech! All the Spokespeople should share their speeches with the rest of the class.
- f. Why not type up these speeches and actually send them as letters to your MP?

## **HOMEWORK TASK**

Between now and the next session, write a review of Youthquake. Things to comment on could include:

- The set
- What you thought of the topics and themes
- What you thought of the characters
- Any critique or improvements you think could be made



# APPENDIX 1

## Jack's Speech

JACK

Listen, everyone here is human and everyone's got issues with something and everyone wants things to go their way. You have pressure, we have pressures. Why all of a sudden do we wake up in the morning and go okay, it's Teachers vs. Students, Old People vs. Young. I don't understand why we can't—do it together? Why do we all go – it's just hard to explain –

Personally, I just struggle with the fact that adults can't take criticism from people our age. Why do you think you can't learn from us because we're younger than you?

Why does the fact that you've got a microphone and a fancy little rug make you better than us? Fair enough you might be better than me at putting this argument together which I'm clearly not the best at but I still feel like my views need to be put across.

Like, in school, I was the type of person when I got told off it would be not a conversation like what's happening right now, I'd be saying "You're a fucking twat" or something, pardon my language, but I'd literally like freak out, be sent out and be put in isolation for weeks.

But like, why not deal with why that I'm being like that rather than—The problem isn't going to go away by kicking me out. The problem won't go away unless you let me talk about it.

I just—I just hated going to school. I didn't understand – like fair enough yeah everyone has to deal with it like I'm not arguing with that, we all have to go through a system, I just don't understand why it has to be such an issue, and yeah, we're teenagers and we've got hormones and all that stuff and we just wanna be a bit like edgy but like why—I just really struggle to understand why school is such a hard place to go.

Like I used to get up in the morning and feel sick about going to school because I knew teachers would be there looking down at me, and I knew other kids were sitting there smiling and learning about Henry the Eighth and his fucking wives or something. There were kids that could sit there and could look at a whiteboard and take notes down and completely excel from that information and they could open the textbook to the right page and look at it and read it and do chemical formulas and shit, and there's me not knowing how to spell my own name.

Like everyone's different at everything and we've all got—everyone's amazing at something, surely everyone's amazing at something. I'm amazing at something maybe I haven't found it yet but-- I'm amazing at something...

And since I've stepped out of school, as soon as I've come into the "real world" as people call it, I've never looked at or used or done anything like that chemistry stuff. The most important thing I've learned from school is social skills... I might not have that many of them but I have learnt the... minimal... I don't know.

# APPENDIX 2

## WORKSHEET 1

ADULTS

YOUNG  
PEOPLE



# APPENDIX 3

## WORKSHEET 2

Solution



Problem



Cause

# APPENDIX 4

## MEET THE DIRECTOR

Zest's Artistic Director, Toby Ealden, has been making theatre for young audiences for over sixteen years, including youth theatres, school tours and national touring. His past work includes working as the youth theatre director for Nacro, the national crime reduction charity, before establishing Zest Theatre in 2007.



### What inspired you to make Youthquake?

The impetus for this new production actually came up during the process of touring our previous show, *What Once Was Ours*. That show was about young people's thoughts and opinions on Brexit. It used a handful of recorded voices from young people throughout the show and audiences reacted really strongly towards them. Those voices spoke with such clarity and honesty that it surprised our audiences. They weren't expecting to be hearing such articulate responses from teenagers.

This made me think. Why are we only sharing recordings of voices of young people, or just casting professional young actors to play our teenage audience. Why can't young people come on stage and actually speak for themselves? So that's how *Youthquake* came to be.

This is a real experiment. Whilst I've created lots of youth theatre productions in my career, this is the first time I've tried it with an extensive touring production. It's a logistical feat, with a brand new cast of young performers added into the show in each town we visit. But it's a challenge that we are so excited about! Who knows what will happen, but I can't wait to find out.

### How do you develop your ideas into a fully formed show?

The process of making a Zest show is a really collaborative one. I usually have an idea or premise to explore and then we set out to find the right cast and creatives to support the process. All our shows are developed alongside young people, so that their voices and experiences are at the forefront of our work. We don't make anything until we've talked to them first. We then start to develop material, experiment and play and see what comes up. There's usually a lot of talking at first whilst we work out what our focus is and strip away anything unnecessary, always making sure we are staying true to the heart of the piece.



Research and Development usually takes 4 weeks, after which we will have a rough script in place, that will be honed and edited during rehearsals. Youthquake was an 8 week process, due to the sheer numbers of young people we met. Lots of things will influence which direction a show takes, including input from cast, set design, young people and what is relevant in the news/society at that time. For more information on the process of making Youthquake visit our blog [zesttheatre.com/blog](http://zesttheatre.com/blog)

### **Why did you decide to make theatre for young people?**

Because they are incredible! I've always worked with young people and have seen first hand the struggles, passions and issues facing them every day. What's more, access to the arts is increasingly becoming something that is for a privileged few. We want to change that. We want to use the Arts to help facilitate important conversations, to provoke action and to help young people realise that theatre can be exciting, innovative and relevant to them. This generation are left unheard in our society, so most of all, I want young people to feel seen and heard.

### **What do you hope people will get from Youthquake?**

That's a big question that's not easy to answer because the show tackles such a broad range of topics for young people. I think the 'takeaways' will be different for everyone. I think many adults will have their eyes opened to the realities of living as a young person in the UK. For some young people it will just be the feeling that this is a show that has actually represented them and their story. I hope some will leave feeling inspired and empowered that they could make a difference. That might be the big stuff, like protesting or activism, but it's also in the small acts that are achievable every day. This generation go through so much, and most of what they think and feel goes unheard. But we've heard. Humans all need to have a sense of identity, belonging and meaning in order to thrive. *Youthquake* is just a 60-minute show, but it's a small contribution that I hope will help on that journey.



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