A woman with short, curly red hair is standing outdoors in a white, strapless, floor-length dress with large red ribbons on the shoulders. She is holding a small white book or card in front of her chest. The background shows a green field and trees under a bright sky.

# MARY AND THE HYENAS

**Written by Maureen Lennon**  
**Music by Billy Nomates (Tor Maries)**  
**Directed by Esther Richardson**

**LEARNING RESOURCE B**

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# MARY & THE HYENAS

Presented by Pilot Theatre and Hull Truck Theatre  
Written by Maureen Lennon  
Music by Billy Nomates (Tor Maries)  
Directed by Esther Richardson

## Six microphones, an electrifying score and a feminist icon.

Meet Mary and the Hyenas, a band who will sing you the inspiring story of Mary Wollstonecraft. A woman centuries ahead of her time: trailblazer, feminist and literary pioneer.

From her passionate advocacy for women's rights to her tumultuous personal journey, *Mary and the Hyenas* captures the spirit and resilience of a woman who dared to defy the conventions of her time, and who kept going when so many wanted to bring her down. This is a witty, laugh out loud and searing tribute to the courage and determination of a woman who fought for equality and justice.

Featuring music by the acclaimed artist Billy Nomates, written by Maureen Lennon, and directed by Esther Richardson, prepare for our all female cast to roar onto the stage, singing and dancing with their chins up in defiance to the injustices of the world. Be prepared for petticoats to be lifted, boots stomped and voices raised in the determined pursuit of change.

# TOUR DATES

## Hull Truck Theatre

Fri 07 Feb – Sat 01 Mar 2025

## Wilton's Music Hall, London

Tue 18 Mar – Sat 29 Mar 2025

# ABOUT THIS PACK

Resource Pack produced by Pilot Theatre  
Written by Carolyn Bradley  
Edited by Oliver O'Shea  
Designed by Sam Johnson  
Photography by Tom Arran  
Filming - Ed Sunman  
Audio Description - Alice Gilmour  
BSL Translation - Helen Cottingham, CommPlus

This resource pack accompanies the theatre production *Mary and the Hyenas* and is aimed at educators who are teaching English at KS3-KS5, and those who are teaching Drama and Performing Arts at GCSE and A-level.

[Resource Pack – Part A](#) explores the life and historical context of Mary Wollstonecraft. This resource may be of particular interest to those teaching: English (KS3-KS5); the French Revolution for A-level History (KS5); and liberalism for A-level Politics (KS5). For those based in East Yorkshire and London, this resource could support the teaching of local history (KS3).

Resource Pack - Part C will be published in Spring 2025, and will support GCSE and A-level Drama and Performing Arts students to further explore the production. These resources will include interviews with the cast and creative team, as well as filmed scene extracts to watch again.

We are not responsible for the content of external links, and we strongly recommend checking the suitability of external content before sharing with your students.

If you have any questions or feedback about this resource pack, please contact: [info@pilot-theatre.com](mailto:info@pilot-theatre.com).

*Mary and the Hyenas* was developed with the support of the National Theatre's Generate programme. Supported by Arts Council England, Ovingdean Hall Foundation, and The Keith Howard Foundation.

# SYNOPSIS

## This synopsis contains plot spoilers

The play opens with Wollstonecraft giving birth to Mary Shelley, her second daughter, in 1797. Adult Mary Shelley is watching, and the two have a conversation about how they never had the chance to really meet: *"You will never know me. Ten days. You won't remember me. You won't remember me at all."* What follows is the story of Mary Wollstonecraft's life, told with Mary Shelley watching and commenting on the action.

This biographical play is based on true people and events from history, presented in scenes which are labelled 'chapters'. There are also contemporary songs which punctuate and comment on the action.

Chapter One takes us back to Beverley, in North Yorkshire in 1773, when Mary is 14. Mary Shelley says that living here taught Mary *"how to look sideways at the world. Which taught freedom and learning and yearning and, life."* Mary's father, Edward, comes home drunk and we see his violent nature. Mary and her mother, Elizabeth are told to pack as they are moving to London.

Chapter Two is set in London, 1774. Mary is reading when Fanny Blood arrives to meet them. Mary is in awe of Fanny, she paints and earns money for her work to support her family, and this independence is inspirational to Mary. They bond over the John Locke book Mary is reading. Mary tries to convince Fanny, and her sisters Everina and Eliza that they do not need to get married, that women can live independently.

Chapter Three moves on to 1781. Mary's mother Elizabeth is dying, and Mary is nursing her. Despite Mary being there, Elizabeth is asking for Edward, her husband, and Ned, her eldest

son. Mary repeats that Ned is not coming and is not interested. Mary urges her mother to feel angry about how she has been neglected: *"Can you not be angry with how they have left us. For how you are left now? For the waste of your life?"* Elizabeth dies, and Mary leaves angrily.

Chapter Four is set in Hackney, 1783, at Eliza and Meredith Bishop's wedding. Mary 'stages a rescue', grabbing Eliza and taking her away from Bishop. Mary, Eliza, and Everina then set up a school for girls in Newington Green. Eliza questions whether her child could have survived, if she had not left, and could have been raised in the future Mary is trying to create.

Chapter Five sees Mary in Newington Green, 1784, where she is teaching. Fanny has joined them, and together they go to hear a sermon at the Newington Green Unitarian Church by Dr Richard Price, *"famous insurrectionary preacher. Philosopher. Beard sporter. Revolt inciter."* Fanny is coughing and we see she is unwell, suffering from tuberculosis. They talk to Dr Price and are introduced to Joseph Johnson, *"publisher, purveyor of radical thoughts and dissenting minds."* Johnson suggests Mary write a pamphlet on the issue of female education.

In Chapter Six, the action has moved to Portugal, where Fanny moved to marry Hugh Skeys, but dies in childbirth. Mary is heartbroken, held back by the Chorus as Fanny is buried. Back at the school, Everina and Eliza tell her the school has failed. Mary decides she will go to Ireland to take a governess position.

In Chapter Seven, Mary is in Ireland in 1786 and meets her employer Lady Kingsborough, a wealthy aristocrat. Lady Kingsborough fusses over her pet dogs but does not seem to care much about her children. Mary meets Margaret Kingsborough, her pupil who will go on to be inspired by Mary.

In Chapter Eight, Margaret and Mary talk during their lesson, and Mary asks Margaret what she wants to do in life: "*A young woman of your potential needs to see the world. See it and make up your own mind*".

In Chapter Nine, Lady Kingsborough enters furiously, labelling Mary a radical and accusing her of encouraging defiance in Margaret, who is now refusing marriage. Mary is fired and returns to London.

Chapter 10 sees Mary publish *Thoughts On The Education of Daughters* with Joseph Johnson.

In Chapter 11, Mary attends a dinner held by Joseph Johnson, where notable fellow radicals are in attendance. She discusses ideas of liberty with Paine, Johnson, Fuseli and Godwin. Godwin suggests she is overbearing, and Mary rejects this notion, suggesting: "*Has it occurred to you, Mr Godwin, that the reason I appear 'overbearing' is simply because you are used to members of my sex folding themselves into the background and deferring to male opinion?*" She is incensed, and furiously writes *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Mary's book is published and the critics respond harshly, calling the work "outrageous" and "preposterous" (Chapter 12). Johnson suggests she relocates to Paris, where a new world is being formed through the Revolution.

In Paris in Chapter 13, Mary meets Helen Williams, a fellow radical, and joins one of her salons. Helen introduces her to Gilbert Imlay, an American diplomat. They flirt and begin a whirlwind relationship. Mary questions whether she can change what she believes and asks him to assure her it is a real relationship. The scene ends with Mary showing Mary Shelley

that she is now pregnant.

In Chapter 14, Mary and Imlay argue about him leaving her, amidst the increasingly tense situation in Paris. They agree to register as married to protect Mary, as the English were under suspicion.

The Reign of Terror begins (Chapter 15) and Mary is heavily pregnant, cold and hungry. She meets Marguerite, who becomes her maid and delivers her baby, named Fanny.

Mary, Marguerite and Fanny get on the ship to go to Scandinavia to try and find Imlay's treasure, through Marguerite tells her it is mad, and Imlay himself would go if he cared. Imlay sends Mary a letter, saying he is returning to London, and Mary feels upset and rejected. Marguerite comforts her, saying he is not worthy of her, and they return to London.

In Chapter 16, back in London (1795), Mary goes to Imlay's house. She confronts him about his other woman, and he ends the relationship, saying he is a free man and will not be made to feel guilty. He accuses Mary of harassing him. Desperate and heartbroken, Mary goes to Putney Bridge and considers ending her life. She battles with her inner conflict, hearing the voices of her critics. Mary Shelley tries to stop her, saying she must continue to fight. Mary jumps, and Mary Shelley pulls her out alive, cradling her body.

In Chapter 17, Mary recovers, and Marguerite, Fanny, and Johnson are all around her bedside. She explains that she felt overwhelmed and did not think she could go on. Her friends support her, and she resolves to tell the rest of the story.

Godwin comes to visit Mary at Johnson's (Chapter 18, 1796). Godwin admits he enjoyed her *Letters from Sweden, Norway,*

and Denmark, and asks if they could be friends, perhaps developing into something more. Mary is surprised but considers it. They agree to a "a marriage of equals", Mary will not stop working, and Godwin will support her writing.

In Chapter 19, Mary and Godwin are contently writing together, Mary is heavily pregnant. It is the end.

In the Epilogue, Mary asks her daughter if anything did actually change, "was it worth it? Do we change anything? Anything at all? Tell me. Tell me please." Mary Shelley replies: "So much. So so much." We see various women after Mary who have been influenced by her, who have fought for equality and change. Mary started the revolution which is still going on.

*This synopsis was prepared from the rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final version of the play.*

## CHARACTERS

*Here are short summaries for some of the key characters in the play:*

### **Mary Wollstonecraft**

The protagonist. We follow her story in a cyclical fashion, starting with her on her deathbed from a postpartum infection (an infection of the uterus and surrounding tissues) after childbirth, then going back to her childhood aged 14 in Beverley and witnessing all the major events in her life. We initially follow her from being a teenager, to moving to London and meeting her best friend Fanny Blood, and setting up her first school in Newington Green. She then moves to Ireland to be a Governess, and after clashing with her employer, moves back to London. She starts writing, and her work is published by Joseph Johnson.

In the play, Mary is depicted as a passionate advocate for education, with a resolute mind. She is bold, fiercely intelligent, and articulate. Once she has her mind set on something, nothing will sway her. She is determined to improve the education of girls and women, and an advocate for equality. She craves independence and does not understand why women should have to be dependent on men. She still desires to be loved, and initially seeks this from Fanny, and her mother Elizabeth. Her relationship with her mother is strained, she feels that her mother is weak in not standing up to her father, and she does not understand her mother's fear: "Can you not be angry with them mother? For me. Can you not be angry with how they have left us. For how you are left now?"

She can be argumentative with those who disagree with her, like her mother and father. She also clashes with Lady Kingsborough and Godwin when she first meets him, and is not afraid to pick a

fight: *"This is totally unfair. I have only ever cherished Margaret's mind and tried to grow her soul."* She is a trailblazer, championing new ideas which are controversial in society: *"We're going to start a school. All of us. Living together. Teaching together. Think of it."*

She moves to Paris during the Revolution and meets Gilbert Imlay. She is cautious about starting a relationship with him because she does not want to give up her principles, but falls for his charm. She craves the love and intimacy from Imlay that she did not have from her parents, and could not have with Fanny or Fuseli: *"It would be / Pleasure / I've never thought I deserve, / Pleasure, / But to be loved, / Fully, / It's tempting"*. After he rejects her, she attempts suicide and her mental health suffers. When she recovers, she starts a relationship with Godwin but is more cautious, wanting to keep her independence and not sacrifice her writing. She knows her mind much more now, and is not willing to compromise, to protect herself and the future of her daughters: *"I have fought hard to carve out my space in this world. I will not let someone shrink it again. For my sake. Or for Fanny's."* Godwin is loving and supportive of her ambition. In the Epilogue, we see the influence she had on her daughter and other women throughout history.

## **Mary Shelley**

Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin's daughter, born 30th August 1797. She became a novelist, most famously the author of *Frankenstein*, and married poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary Wollstonecraft died 10 days after she was born. In the play, she watches the story of her mother's life, and they have the conversations they were never able to have. She is depicted as a thoughtful, outside observer, she comments on the action, set apart from it but invested in it – as it is her story too. She keeps Mary on track with the narrative, prompting her and encouraging her.

She mourns her mother, wishing she had been able to meet her: *"I read every word you ever wrote again and again and again. I want so much to know you."*

## **Fanny Blood**

Mary's closest friend, whom she met through the Clare family in London, and with whom she had an intense relationship. Fanny was an intelligent young woman and an illustrator, receiving paid work, which Mary greatly admired. She married Hugh Skeys and journeyed to Lisbon to be with him, where she died in childbirth in 1785. In the play, she is described as *"angelic"* and Mary has strong feelings for her when they meet. She is depicted as ethereal, someone otherworldly when Mary first meets her, but then an articulate, intelligent woman, and a loving friend. She opens the school with Mary and her sisters in Newington Green. Mary suggests that she does not have to marry Hugh Skeys, and they could live together instead: *"I will take care of you. All of you. Somehow. I shall. I promise. I will find a way if it kills me. Then you don't need to marry. Then we can be free."* Later, Mary decides that Fanny must go to Portugal to marry Hugh, for the sake of her health. Mary is heartbroken after her death and names her first daughter after Fanny.

## **Eliza Wollstonecraft**

A younger sister of Mary, who helps her run her schools in London. She marries Meredith Bishop, a ship-maker in 1782. Early in the play, she is depicted as a romantic, she enquires about suitors, she wants to be married and looked after, but she also recognises that this is practical for young women: *"I would like to be loved and cared for....What else are we meant to do? We cannot work, we cannot inherit."* She is more practical and rational than Mary. In the play, after her marriage, Mary stages *"a rescue"*, getting Eliza away from Bishop. They have to leave the baby behind. When they have opened the school in

Newington Green, Eliza is heartbroken and grieving for her baby: *"Because she dies. Because Meredith will not let us have her back. And then, in the winter, without her mother she dies. Alone. Alone without me."* Eliza and Everina are not able to keep the school going without Mary.

### **Everina Wollstonecraft**

A younger sister of Mary, she also joins her, Eliza and Fanny in running the school in Newington Green. She is depicted as naive; she does not have the same passion as Mary for opening the school and finds it hard to keep the school going without Mary. She resents Mary for always going off to sermons when her and Eliza do the hard work at the school. She is closer to Eliza than Mary, arguing with Mary that Eliza wanted to be married, and wanted to stay with Bishop, and this should not have been Mary's decision to make. She can be blunt and speaks before she thinks, often telling us what the other characters are feeling: *"Mother is furious. You should hear what she is saying about you in the kitchen. Lazy, ignorant, rude, neglectful. She says she wishes she'd never had you."*

### **Elizabeth Wollstonecraft**

Mary's mother, of Irish descent. She married Edward in 1756, and had seven children: Ned, Mary, Henry, Eliza, Everina, James and Charles. In the play, she is fearful of her husband and makes Mary do what he says and apologise to him: *"She doesn't mean it. Edward. She doesn't."* We see her as submissive, which infuriates Mary, who thinks she should be stronger and stand up to him, but Elizabeth believes that this would make her situation worse: *"Thank you? Thank you for provoking him and humiliating me in the middle of the night? Go to bed Mary."* We see her dying moments as Mary comforts her. Despite Mary being there, she only asks for Ned. She rejects Mary even though Mary is pleading to be seen by her mother: *"You were never a kind girl.*

*You could never behave."* Their relationship is strained, and we see that Mary craves love and affection from her mother. Perhaps Elizabeth always felt judged by Mary, and Mary potentially made things more difficult for Elizabeth with Edward, as we see that he blames her for not being able to control Mary.

### **Edward Wollstonecraft**

Mary's father, a handkerchief weaver who entered into his father's business. Unlike his father, he was unsuccessful as a businessman and moved the family around a lot, escaping debt and starting new ventures. He was an alcoholic and frequently violent. After Elizabeth's death in 1782, he remarried and moved to Wales, prompting Mary to feel responsible for her sisters. In the play, he is drunk and physically and verbally abusive towards Mary, when she is defending her mother to try and keep her safe. He treats both Mary and Elizabeth with contempt: *"control this bitch Elizabeth. I mean it."* He is depicted as misogynistic and controlling, giving orders to the women and expecting to be obeyed: *"You'll do what I want. And thank me for it."*

### **Gilbert Imlay**

An American businessman and diplomat, who Mary meets in France during the Revolution. He is depicted as initially charming, and she is intoxicated by him. He describes himself as: *"Author, charmer, and, wait for it, male feminist. I know. I know. Thank me later."* Mary is swept off her feet by Imlay. They have a love affair resulting in the birth of Fanny Imlay, Mary's first daughter. In later scenes, his initial charm and flirtation are gone, and he starts to tire of Mary, thinking more of himself: *"I would prefer it if you didn't draw quite such attention yes. For both our sakes."* He shows little interest in the family, leaving Mary and returning to London. He asks Mary to travel to Scandinavia for him, and when she returns, rejects her. Mary finds him involved in



an affair with an actress, which prompts her suicide attempt. He is manipulative and cruel, placing the blame on Mary for 'driving him away': *"You harassed me Mary. I didn't know how to calm you. I did not want to upset you but the truth is, yes, my feelings have changed. You. You have driven me away."*

## **Marguerite**

Mary's maid and nanny who she meets in France. On the streets of Paris, Mary meets Marguerite when she is heavily pregnant, and Marguerite helps her and delivers her baby, Fanny. She is kind and warm, helping Mary, even though this is dangerous for her. Marguerite then tries to stop Mary going to Scandinavia for Imlay, saying that he would go himself if he cared enough about her: *"If he cared Mary. Truly. He would go himself. He would have been here months ago. If he was any sort of man at all."* She is a realist who can see Imlay for what he really is. She is trying to protect Mary, but she is a loyal friend, so she accompanies Mary and Fanny on the trip. When Imlay writes to Mary saying he is leaving them, Marguerite tells Mary she is worth much more. Later, back in London, she stays by Mary's side as she recovers from her suicide attempt.

## **William Godwin**

A radical thinker and early anarchist, who Mary meets through Joseph Johnson. Initially, at Johnson's dinner, they clash over their political opinions, and Mary thinks he is criticising her, but they agree on the issue of marriage, which Godwin opposes. He is reserved and polite, but principled and articulate: *"I am not objecting to your refusal to defer to male opinion, I am objecting to us not being able to hear that opinion, deference or not."* Later, when Mary returns from Paris, Godwin visits her and tells her he has enjoyed reading her work. He is still formal, and reserved, but his admiration for her comes through: *"I felt you had provided us with a window to your soul, and that was,*

*to make such a piece of art out of such heartbreak. It was very brave."*

He makes her an offer, to enter into a relationship. They live together and he is supportive and loving, giving her time and space for her work: *"A marriage of equals. We don't know if it's even possible. A partnership. But I'll get better at it. I'm willing to try."* They marry when Mary becomes pregnant, to protect their daughter's future. He is the father of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Shelley), and step-father to Fanny Imlay.

*For information on the social and political figures in the play, see the next section.*

# PEOPLE AND LOCATIONS

*The play contains lots of references to significant social and political figures of the time and moves around various locations. Here is a quick guide to some of the people and places which feature in the play:*

## People:

**John Locke** – A key liberalist thinker of the eighteenth century, he championed individual rights and freedoms, and also developed the theory of 'natural rights' and the 'social contract'. He wrote *Life, Liberty and Property*, which Mary is reading in the play.

**Dr Richard Price** - A philosopher and theologian, he is a minister of the Unitarian Chapel in Newington Green. One of the first radicals Mary Wollstonecraft met, he introduced her to many more. He was known for his support of the American Revolution.

**Joseph Johnson** - A bookseller and publisher who advanced liberalism through his publishing of radical texts in the eighteenth century. He became a good friend and supporter of Mary's, offering her accommodation, employment, and publishing all her work. As well as publishing Mary's work, he published work by William Godwin and Thomas Paine.

**Lady Kingsborough** – Caroline Fitzgerald, Mary's employer in Ireland. The Kingsboroughs were a wealthy Anglo-Irish family who hired Mary to be governess. Mary disapproved of Lady Kingsborough's frivolous and haughty nature, and only worked for the family for a year.

**Margaret Kingsborough** – One of Mary's pupils when she worked as a governess for the Kingsborough family. She was very fond of Mary and inspired by her to advocate for the education of women. Like Mary, she developed republican views and wrote political pamphlets. She travelled widely, and disguised as a man, undertook medical training in Germany, which enabled her to write medical advice books for women.

**Thomas Paine** - A key political and pro-republican thinker of the eighteenth century. Though born in England, he moved to America where he published *Common Sense* in 1776, which was highly influential for American Independence. His text *Rights of Man* supported French Revolution and also influenced Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

**Henry Fuseli** – A Swiss artist, known for his supernatural work, most notably the painting *The Nightmare*. He was friends with Johnson and he met Mary through this group, and it is thought they had a romantic relationship. But he did not want Mary to live with him and his wife.

**Edmund Burke** – A Whig MP who produced the famous pamphlet, *Reflections on the Revolution in France in 1790*, heavily criticising the French Revolution and defending monarchy. He wrote it in response to Dr Richard Price's sermon supporting the revolution, and Burke's paper prompted Wollstonecraft to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

**Theroigne de Mericourt** – Born in Belgium, she was an active player in the French Revolution, a passionate advocate for women's rights, and responsible for setting up clubs for women to speak publicly in Paris. She is thought to have fought during the Revolution and was involved in the killing of royalists. Though a Revolutionary, she supported the more conservative Girondins, and was viciously attacked by a group of radical Jacobin women in 1793.

**Helen Williams** – A British novelist and fellow radical thinker, who was also in France at the same time as Mary. She hosted salons, which were gatherings of intellectual thinkers, which Mary and Thomas Paine attended. She was arrested during the Reign of Terror.

**Olympe de Gouges** – A French playwright and activist, who spoke out about slavery and advocated for equal rights for women. After being entered into an arranged marriage at a young age, she spoke out about marriage as being a “tomb” for women. She wrote *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* in response to the French constitution. She opposed the violence of the Revolution and was executed in 1793.

**Madame Roland** – A revolutionary in Paris, who hosted important salons at her house, for like-minded political thinkers to get together. She was known for her intellect and ambition, and was an important figure in the Girondin party, a group of moderate revolutionaries. She was arrested and executed by the more radical Jacobins in 1793.

**Fanny Imlay** – Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay’s child, born in France during the Revolution in 1794. After Mary’s death, she was brought up by William Godwin and his second wife. In the play, Fanny is a baby and toddler. She goes with Mary and Marguerite to Scandinavia, and lives with Mary and Godwin when they start their relationship.

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning** – A poet of the Victorian era. She was inspired by writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine, and wrote about the abolition of slavery, women’s rights, and the forced labour of children in her work.

**George Eliot** – Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name George Eliot, was a leading writer of the Victorian era. She wrote *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner* amongst other works. She wrote an essay reviewing Mary Wollstonecraft’s work and was influenced by her in her political and social ideas.

**Millicent Fawcett** – A writer and political activist, the leader of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies. She campaigned for equal rights for women and for women to have the vote, and quoted Wollstonecraft in her campaigning.

**Virginia Woolf** – A modernist English writer, known for works such as *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando*, and *A Room With a View*. In her collection of essays, *The Common Reader* (1932) she wrote that Wollstonecraft was “alive and active” and her voice was still being heard, over 100 years after her death.



# THEMES AND TOPICS

## Feminism

Feminism is the belief in true social, political and financial equality between the sexes, advocating for women to receive the same opportunities and rewards as men. Feminism is a worldwide response to the gender-based oppression of women throughout history.

From her earliest experiences, Mary Wollstonecraft encountered inequalities which fuelled her work. Her brother Ned was entitled to a full education and entered into a career as a solicitor, but the daughters in the family were not taught anything beyond reading and writing. At the time, girls were encouraged to marry young, and it was very rare for women to have an occupation. Everina, Eliza, Mary and Fanny discuss whether girls can be independent in the play. Everina suggests “None of us can be independent Mary, we’re girls stupid” but Mary’s life’s work was focused on arguing for female independence. Eliza says she wants to be married and cared for: “What else are we meant to do? We cannot work, we cannot inherit” which speaks to the inequality women faced at the time.

Mary Wollstonecraft is regarded as a proto-feminist. The concept of ‘feminism’ as a movement was not established at the time, so it is often said that her ideas were ahead of her time. Mary advocated for education for girls, equal rights for women, and against the institution of marriage which trapped women, calling it a “bitter slavery”.

In the play, Mary argues for women to have an equal say in the deliberations of government with Thomas Paine, Joseph Johnson, Henri Fuseli and William Godwin. Joseph Johnson saw

potential in Mary’s ideas and encouraged her to publish pamphlets on issues such as education for girls. Mary’s passion for women’s rights led her to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Despite fellow radicals such as Paine, Johnson and Godwin being sympathetic to Mary’s cause, generally she was heavily criticised by the patriarchal society, and called a “hyena in petticoats.” Olympe de Gouges and Theroigne de Mericourt, also mentioned in the play, were also arguing for women’s rights in France at the same time.

Despite being attacked for her views, Mary’s writing and ideas influenced feminist thinkers of the future, such as the Suffragettes who fought for women to have the vote.

Questions for students to consider:

- How are Mary’s ideas about women’s rights still relevant today?
- How could the lives of the characters have been different if women had more equal rights?
- What laws and legislations have come into effect now that have protected women’s rights?
- How far has equality been achieved? What barriers do women still face?

## Family and Motherhood

Several family relationships are explored in the play, beginning with the mother-daughter relationship between Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, which frames the narrative. Despite never knowing each other, Mary Shelley was inspired by her mother’s work, and this play imagines the conversations they would have had.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s family life is explored in detail, and we see the relationship she has with both of her parents and her sisters.

Her father is abusive and dismissive of Mary, calling her an “*an impudent little slattern*” and physically assaulting her, when she is trying to protect her mother. Mary stands up for herself and her mother, arguing that “*You think you can treat us like this because you think you own us.*” This reflects the patriarchal society of the time, which Edwards abuses. Men did have more rights, and were the legal guardians of the children, which is why Eliza must leave her baby when she leaves Meredith Bishop, and the baby subsequently dies.

On her death bed, Mary’s mother Elizabeth calls only for Ned, her son, despite Mary being there to care for her. Mary begs her mother to see her, but Elizabeth calls for Ned, her “*darling baby boy*”, and Edward, her abusive husband. Mary questions what hope her mother had for the three girls when they were born and begs her mother to be angry for her waste of a life. Elizabeth tells Mary she was always jealous, and was never a kind girl.

Despite the lack of love and care Mary received from her own parents, she is a loving mother to Fanny, taking her with her to Scandinavia and vowing to raise her without Imlay’s help: “*My little girl, that I have loved and grown and cherished and fed and held and bathed and fought for.*”

Although women were expected to have children, pregnancy and childbirth came with risk and danger for women, due to poor standards of hygiene and lack of proper maternity care in the eighteenth century. In the play, Fanny dies in childbirth, and her child dies too; Eliza’s child dies after she leaves; and Mary dies ten days after childbirth, after the doctor introduced an infection when treating her. Mary had a retained placenta after giving birth and developed an infection, and a lack of medical knowledge, pain relief, antibiotics and sterilized equipment, led to a painful and slow, but avoidable, death for Mary.

Questions for students to consider:

- How has the concept of family changed since Mary’s time?
- How have conditions for pregnancy and childbirth changed and improved since the eighteenth century?
- What legal changes have been put into place now to protect parents and children?
- Why did women not have legal rights to their children in the eighteenth century?

## Education

Advocating for education for girls was central to Mary’s work. As well as working as a governess she set up schools for girls in Islington and Newington Green, and Eliza and Everina set up a further school in Ireland after Mary’s death.

Before the seventeenth century, girls received some education, but this was only provided at home and was connected to class and wealth for a long time. Girls from wealthy families would have a governess, like Mary, and would be taught reading, writing, and skills to help them be attractive as a wife, such as music, French and needlework.

From the seventeenth century onwards, boarding schools were opened for girls, but again this was for wealthy families, and girls were not allowed to go to university. When they were admitted to university, women did not receive degrees, only a Certificate of Proficiency. Oxford and Cambridge Universities did not start awarding degrees to women until 1920 and 1948, respectively. It was not until 1880, and the introduction of the Education Act, that all girls and boys had to go to school between the ages of five and 10.

Mary Wollstonecraft believed that for women to contribute fully to society they needed to be educated. She wrote *Thoughts on*

*the Education of Daughters* after working as a governess in Ireland. She was critical of girls spending too much time on their appearance, and argued that reading is vital for opening the mind. In the play, she opens a school with the aim of “teaching girls to cultivate their minds and bodies, to be able to speak for themselves, articulate themselves on their own terms. To defend themselves.”

Questions for students to consider:

- To what extent are educational opportunities equal for girls now?
- Is education the same for everyone around the world?
- What do you think still needs to improve to make education more equal?
- Why do you think Mary’s views were seen as so radical at the time?

## Relationships

Several types of relationships are explored in the play. We see the family relationships between Mary, her sisters and parents, but lots of close friendships and romantic relationships, such as:

- **Mary and Fanny** – Mary is besotted with Fanny when they meet, and is “transfixed”. Fanny is described as “the love of her life”, and though not explicitly stated, it is suggested that Mary has deep, romantic feelings for Fanny. Mary does not want Fanny to marry Hugh Skeys and wants to care for her instead. When it is clear that Fanny is unwell, Mary suggests she goes to Portugal where it is warmer. Mary is devastated by Fanny’s death, and names her baby after her best friend.
- **Mary and Marguerite** – Marguerite is a loving and loyal friend in Mary’s life, and stays with her until the end of her life. She tries to warn Mary off Imlay, saying that if he cared for them at all, he would not have sent Mary to Scandinavia with her baby.

- **Mary and Imlay** – Imlay is Mary’s first love, and even though she is cautious at first, she completely falls for his charm and is betrayed by him. He treats their relationship as a meaningless fling and uses her to try and do his work in Scandinavia for him. She is left with baby Fanny when Imlay moves on and he starts a relationship with an actress. He is romantic and charming to begin with, and later accuses her of “harassing” him and driving him away. This devastates Mary, and she attempts to end her life.

- **Mary and Fuseli** - Fuseli is portrayed as a flirtatious man, who is married but makes several suggestive comments to Mary. Even though he is willing to be promiscuous, he still fears scandal in public.

- **Mary and Johnson** – Johnson is a loyal friend and advocate of Mary’s work. He gives her a job as an editor and writer, and provides accommodation for her, allowing her to live and work independently, which was rare for women at the time. He publishes her work and encourages her to write throughout her life.

- **Mary and Godwin** – When they first meet, Mary and Godwin clash, as Mary assumes he is another misogynistic man who is trying to oppress women, but they find they agree on issues such as marriage. Godwin comes to admire Mary’s work, and proposes they start a relationship after she is back from Paris. Because of Imlay, Mary is wary at first, but agrees to a relationship if she can retain her independence. Godwin is kind and respectful, and they live peacefully together, living in separate apartments where they can both write. Godwin is heartbroken at Mary’s death and raises Fanny as his own child.

Questions for students to consider:

- Which of the relationships in Mary's life had a positive effect on her, and which were negative?
- To what extent do you think Mary's early relationships affected her later life?
- What were the differences between Mary's romantic relationships with Imlay and Godwin?
- How does Mary's relationship with Johnson shape her life?
- If Fanny was not unwell and had not died in childbirth, what do you think her and Mary's future would have been?

## Mental Health

Mary attempted suicide twice in her life, and frequently wrote about her mental ill health in her letters. In the play, we see Mary jump into the River Thames, after being rejected by Imlay and experiencing depressive thoughts: *"I wasn't sure I could do it anymore. I couldn't, I, I wasn't, and I thought Fanny would be better without me. I thought maybe everything would just be better without me."* The inequalities for women would have exacerbated Mary's situation, given that she was a single mother at the time. In the song, 'Strong Woman', she sings about feeling she has the weight of the world on her shoulders, trying to be strong and exceptional, but still wanting to be held.

Eliza also suffered with mental ill health, experiencing what we would now know as postnatal depression, or PND. There was very little understanding of mental health at the time, especially for women, who would have been regarded as being 'hysterical' or suffering from a 'nervous disorder'. Even up to the twentieth century, people who experienced mental ill health were not treated with care or respect. There was no understanding of therapy, and treatment was extreme. People were institutionalised in mental asylums, and often remained there for the rest of their lives, shut away from society.

Even today, there can still be a stigma in regards to mental health, and other factors affect our mental health greatly. This is called intersectionality – where factors of life overlap and create more disadvantage. For example, people who experience poverty are more likely to experience mental ill health, and people with mental ill health are more likely to encounter substance abuse.



# CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

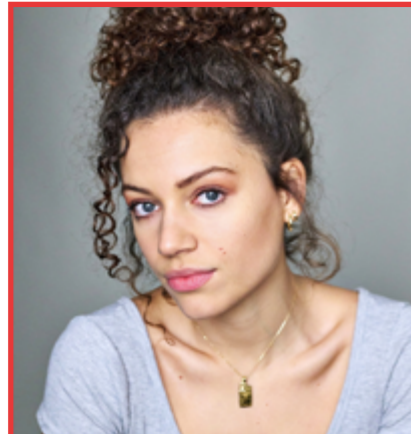
**Director** Esther Richardson  
**Designer** Sara Perks  
**Music** Billy Nomates (Tor Maries)  
**Lyrics** Maureen Lennon & Billy Nomates (Tor Maries)  
**Lighting Designer** Chris Davey  
**Musical Director** Emily Levy  
**Sound Designer** Adam McCready  
**Movement Director** Ayesha Fazal  
**Assistant Director** Eliza Beth Stevens  
**Master Carpenter** Chris Bewers  
**Workshop Carpenters** Luke James, Daniel Lewis  
**Scenic Artists** Sarah Feasey, Natalie Young

**Costume Supervisor** Siân Thomas  
**Costume Assistant** Molly Frankland  
**Company Stage Manager** Shona Wright  
**Deputy Stage Manager** Lily O'Connor  
**Assistant Stage Manager** Sarah Goodyear  
**Production Managers** Sarah Barton (Hull Truck Theatre), Luke James (Pilot Theatre)  
**Producer** Luke Dankoff (Hull Truck Theatre)  
**Executive Producer** Mandy Smith (Pilot Theatre)

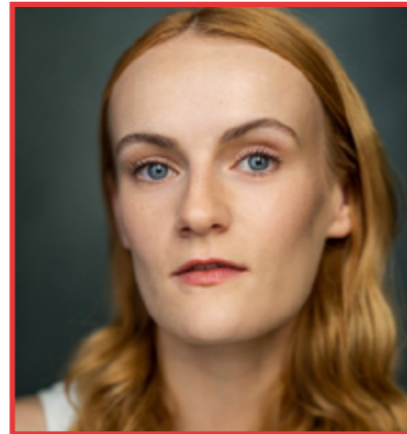
# CAST



**Laura Elsworth**  
Mary Wollstonecraft



**Ainy Medina**  
Mary Shelley, Thomas Paine, Marguerite



**Beth Crame**  
Eliza Wollstonecraft, Dr Price, Margaret Kingsborough, Theroigne de Mericourt, Fanny Imlay



**Elexi Walker**  
Doctor, Everina Wollstonecraft, Joseph Johnson, Gilbert Imlay



**Kat Johns-Burke**  
Fanny Blood, Fuseli, Edward Wollstonecraft, Helen Williams



**Kate Hampson**  
Elizabeth Wollstonecraft, Midwife, Lady Kingsborough, William Godwin, Olympe de Gouges

# INTERVIEW WITH THE WRITER, MAUREEN LENNON



[BSL version of the interview with Maureen Lennon, Writer.](#)

- [1. What was challenging about putting this story on the stage?](#)
- [2. How do you represent Mary Shelley on stage?](#)
- [3. What is the significance of music and song in the play?](#)
- [4. Who are the Hyenas?](#)
- [5. How will the rehearsal process influence the development of the script?](#)

# REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM ARRAN





# SUSTAINABILITY

Now more than ever, it is important that we make every effort to reduce our carbon footprint, as the world tries to become more carbon neutral and aim for net zero.

## **What does carbon footprint mean?**

The carbon footprint of a company, country, or activity is the amount of carbon emissions created by the activity or group, usually measured in tonnes of carbon emissions. The bigger a carbon footprint, the more damaging for the environment.

## **What does carbon neutral mean?**

You are carbon neutral if you are able to balance the amount of carbon dioxide released through emissions related to your activities, with the amount of carbon removed from the atmosphere. It is also called carbon "offsetting" – where you change your activities or make a positive action to 'offset' the damage being done to the environment.

## **What is net zero?**

Net-zero emissions means no greenhouse gases are being released into the atmosphere. The Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 was an international treaty where countries agreed to reduce their carbon emissions and aim for 'net zero'. The UK's net zero target is to have reduced carbon emissions by 100% from 1999 levels by the year 2050.

At Pilot Theatre, like many other organisations, we are trying to reduce our carbon footprint and make our work more sustainable, in light of the climate crisis. Here are three examples of how environmental sustainability underpins Pilot's approach as a theatre company: in our office, onstage, and what happens after our tours finish.

## **Sustainable Energy**

Pilot Theatre's offices are based in York at The Guildhall, where a heat pump has recently been installed as part of the building renovations. The water source heat pump takes water from the River Ouse near the offices and extracts heat from it, before returning the water to the river.

Large parts of the building are heated through underfloor heating from the heat pump, with further rooms being heated through FCUs – fan coil units taking heat from the water source heat pump, which use heated and cooling coils, providing warm air in winter and cool air in the summer months. The water source heat pump is a low-carbon energy source, significantly reducing the carbon footprint of The Guildhall.

## **Creating *Mary and the Hyenas***

In creating our production of *Mary and the Hyenas*, we are following an industry guide called [The Theatre Greenbook](#), which aims to reduce the environmental impact of making theatre.

We will achieve this by setting ourselves a series of targets; as a minimum, we are aiming for:

- 50% of all the materials for the set, costume, and props to come from reused or recycled sources.
- 65% of these materials to go on to future lives, through storage, re-use or being recycled

## Re-using scenery

After our productions have finished touring, we sometimes store the scenery to be used again in the future, or we consider carefully how we could dispose the materials in a sustainable way.

In 2021, Pilot produced the world premiere of *The Bone Sparrow*, with a set design by Miriam Nabarro, which toured to theatres across England.

The final place in which we presented this production was at Theatre Peckham, and the set was stored there after the final performance.

Theatre Peckham has since re-used the materials of the set and adapted them for further productions including: the festive performance of *Scroogealicious* in 2022, and a new play called *Sunny Side Up* in 2023.

## How can you explore this further with students?

To think about this further with students, you could consider the following activities:

- Students could research the climate crisis, global warming, and what a carbon footprint means, and could present their ideas back to each other.
- Students could discuss in groups the carbon footprint of their school, or their drama class, and could come up with a list of ways this could be reduced.
- For their next class performance or school production, students could try to make their performance sustainable – ideas are provided below to do this.
- Students could use 'sustainability' as a stimulus for devising.

## How can you make your school productions and performances more sustainable?

- Source costume second-hand from charity shops or from a costume store or use your own clothes. A local theatre or theatre group may be able to lend or hire out costume items.
- Source props and set second-hand, avoid buying or making new
- If you have to buy or make new props, set or costume, try to ensure they are reused again – they could be passed on to another school or theatre group
- In the performance itself, think about 'doing more with less' – locations can be created through physical theatre or soundscapes without the need for elaborate set
- Make an e-programme, this could be sent by email to the audience, it could be on a website, or you could set up a QR code to be scanned on the night
- Do not print physical tickets – ask audience members to show a screenshot of their ticket confirmation
- If you offer refreshments, try to ensure they are in recyclable or compostable containers and advertise opportunities for audience members to recycle their rubbish
- Ban single-use plastics – ensure cast and crew all have refillable water bottles, and instead of selling water bottles, provide jugs of water or access to a tap which can be used to refill audience members' water bottles.

# PRE-SHOW WORKSHOP AND EXERCISES

These exercises can be used to introduce students to the themes and narrative of *Mary and the Hyenas* before they watch the performance. You could pick and choose from these activities or put them together for a longer workshop. Some activities are suitable for all key stages and some activities are more challenging and designed for KS5.

**Content warning:** *The themes and synopsis contain detailed information about death, grief and mental ill health which may be triggering, please ensure this is appropriate for your group before sharing.*

**1. Exploring the themes:** Put students into groups and give each group one of the themes from this resource pack. Ask students to read the information and to research their theme and present back to the rest of the class. This could be done as a flip-learning task, where students take away the theme and research it as homework before coming back and presenting it in class.

**2. Understanding the synopsis:** Put students into groups and give each group a copy of the full synopsis from this resource pack. Ask students to read the synopsis aloud, taking turns in reading to develop oracy. Then, ask students to break down the synopsis into key moments, which could be done using the 'chapters' of the play, and to write these on to a large piece of paper. This helps students to digest the synopsis and simplifies it for younger learners.

**3. Still images:** Using the key moments from the synopsis, ask students to create a still image of each key moment. Encourage them to use levels, space, physical contact and to consider their body language and facial expressions. The images could be performed to music to create an emotive piece of physical theatre.

**4. Performing Mary's words:** Take an extract from Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, below, and ask students to physicalise and stage this in groups. Using the text, they should find creative ways of bringing this to life on stage: they could use choral speaking, rap, song, music, still images, gestures, choreography, or multimedia. Ensure students do not change the words, but the section could be shortened for younger students.

## **Extract from *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, 1787:**

*It is an old, but a very true observation, that the human mind must ever be employed. A relish for reading, or any of the fine arts, should be cultivated very early in life; and those who reflect can tell, of what importance it is for the mind to have some resource in itself, and not to be entirely dependent on the senses for employment and amusement. If it unfortunately is so, it must submit to meanness, and often to vice, in order to gratify them. The wisest and best are too much under their influence; and the endeavouring to conquer them, when reason and virtue will not give their sanction, constitutes great part of the warfare of life. What support, then, have they who are all senses, and who are full of schemes, which terminate in temporal objects?*

*Reading is the most rational employment, if people seek food for the understanding, and do not read merely to remember words; or with a view to quote celebrated authors, and retail sentiments they do not understand or feel. Judicious books enlarge the mind and improve the heart, though some, by them, "are made coxcombs whom nature meant for fools."*







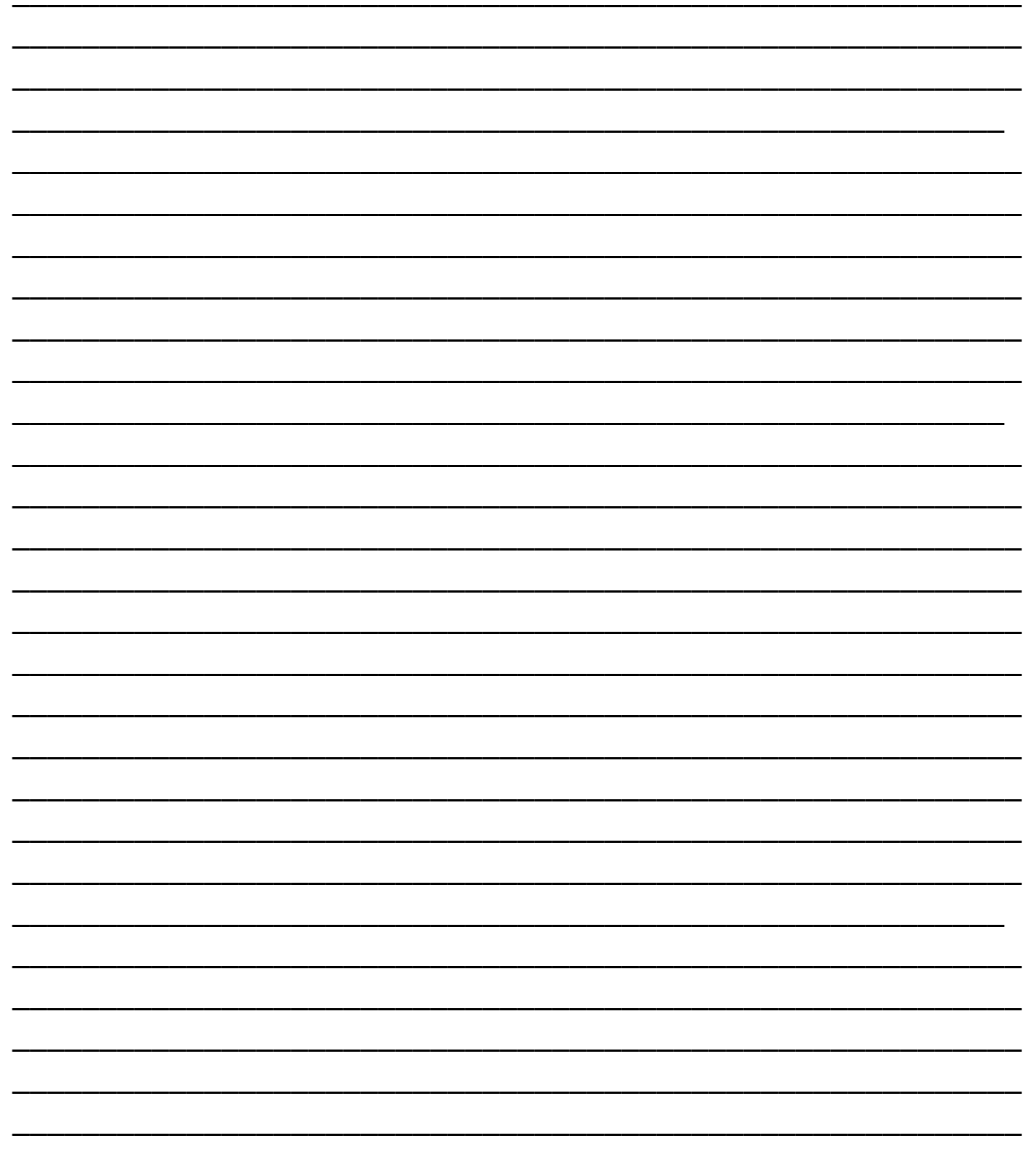
## Sketch the Set:

Use this space to sketch the set of *Mary and the Hyenas*. Label it with details of colour, materials, fabric, size, shape, levels etc



## Acting Moments:

Here, make notes on the use of acting skills used to create specific effects at particular moments in the production. Focus on one or two characters. Try to be as detailed as you can.





# SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Here you will find information about support organisations for those who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse, bereavement, suicidal thoughts or postnatal depression. This information is correct as of 29/02/2025.

## Domestic Abuse

National Health Service

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>

Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline:

0808 2000 247

Home Office

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>

Womens Aid

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

## Bereavement Support

National Bereavement Service Helpline:

0800 0246 161

[www.thenbs.org/](http://www.thenbs.org/)

Cruse National Helpline:

0808 808 1677

[www.cruse.org.uk/](http://www.cruse.org.uk/)

Compassionate Friends Helpline:

0345 123 2304

[www.tcf.org.uk/](http://www.tcf.org.uk/)

Child Bereavement UK Helpline:

0800 02 888 40

[www.childbereavementuk.org/](http://www.childbereavementuk.org/)

Winston's Wish Helpline:

08088 020 021

Child Death Helpline:

0800 282 986

[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk/](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk/)

Suicide Prevention Helplines and support

National Health Service – help for suicidal thoughts

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/help-for-suicidal-thoughts/>

The Samaritans

116 123

<https://www.samaritans.org/ni/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Silence of Suicide

0808 115 1505

<https://sossilenceofsuicide.org/>

National Suicide Prevention UK Helpline

0800 689 5652

<https://www.spuk.org.uk/>

## Postnatal depression support

Pandas Foundation

<https://pandasfoundation.org.uk/>

Association for Postnatal Illness (APNI)

0207 386 0868

<https://apni.org/>

Tommy's – Your Mental Health after Birth

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/after-birth/your-mental-health>



## UPCOMING RESOURCES AND WORKSHOPS

### Resource Pack - Part C: available from March 2025

Ideal for students preparing for the Live Theatre component of their GCSE / A-level Drama exams, this resource will include filmed scene extracts from the live performance, allowing students to watch key scenes again, with accompanying analysis. It will also feature interviews with members of the cast and creative team.

### Workshops

A practical drama session exploring the play, production, characters, and themes delivered by a Pilot artist. The workshop can be tailored to using *Mary and the Hyenas* as a creative stimulus for devising, or examining social justice issues related to the play.

We can also offer workshops focusing on creative writing and music in relation to this production.

All workshops are bespoke and tailored to the needs of your students, and can be scheduled pre- or post-performance at your school, college or university. To arrange a workshop, please email us directly: [info@pilot-theatre.com](mailto:info@pilot-theatre.com)

For state schools and colleges:  
2 sessions or a full day: £350 + VAT  
1 session (up to 2 hours): £275 + VAT

For private schools and universities:  
2 sessions or a full day: £475 + VAT  
1 session (up to 2 hours): £400 + VAT

## Mailing List

If you would like to join Pilot Theatre's mailing list to hear about our future projects, [please sign-up here](#).

## Feedback

If you have any feedback about this resource, please do share it with us!

We would love to hear your thoughts: [info@pilot-theatre.com](mailto:info@pilot-theatre.com)

## Support Us

We are grateful for the support of our funders and donors which enables us to make this resource freely available to all.

If you would like to consider supporting Pilot Theatre and to help us continue creating learning resources alongside our productions, please visit our website for more information: <https://pilot-theatre.com/about/support-us/>





# TOUR DATES

**Hull Truck Theatre**

Fri 07 Feb – Sat 01 Mar 2025

**Wilton's Music Hall**

Tue 18 Mar – Sat 29 Mar 2025



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