

# Year 11 portfolio on homelessness essay sample



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### Response Phase:

Firstly, we began by looking at a photo of Anne Smith, a homeless woman that has lived in an old, battered, Ford Consul in a leafy area of London for at least 12 years. We also looked at some of the issues surrounding this, because we found that some of the surrounding neighbours disliked the fact that she lived in a car, the state and hygiene of the car and the area around it. We also looked at the problems and issues that Anne faced and her human rights to live in the way that she likes.

The class came up with many positives and negatives towards the idea of Anne Smith's living conditions. The positives were that she should have the right to live however she chooses, she was a polite woman that had lived there for 12 years without any problems and many people felt that she symbolised a sense of community in the area. The negatives we found were; the hygiene of the vehicle, and area around it were covered in litter, and, some neighbours even spoke of rats. In addition, the health and safety of passers-by could be affected by the car, for example; the children that live in the area could get hurt. In addition, the image of the street is degraded by the sight of her car and it could potentially affect the price of the houses in the surrounding areas.

As you can see, the results of this showed that her presence may have affected the street and may have caused arguments and quarrels among the neighbours.

### Character Response:

After a warm-up, we stood silently with our eyes closed and were asked to devise a character. This is the description of my character:

Name: Dawn Fitzgerald

Age: 23

Job: Store manager of a large clothes shop

Family Circumstance: Engaged for one year. Recently moved onto the street where Anne lives with fianc.

House Circumstance: The house is owned with fianc, and it is on the street where Anne Smith lives in her vehicle. The house is a four story terrace.

Thoughts on Anne Smith: Anne Smith is a polite woman and although she and I have never been properly introduced she always gives a friendly smile as I walk past. I think that the poor woman needs help, and if anyone of the people that judge her even bothered to find out why she lives in the way that she does, they may find that there is more to her and her past than meets the eye.

Proxemics Exercise:

The diagram shows an exercise we did in lesson, there was a chair placed in the centre of the room and we all had to stand either side of it to represent how our characters felt about the situation of Anne Smith.

- I stood here as I believe that every one should have a choice on how and where they live but I think that she should clean the car and the area surrounding it as it is becoming an issue to the community.

We then separated into groups to work on a scene between the neighbours in the area. When I was in my group with Emma, Neil, Jackson, Abbie, Chahida, Kristy, we decided to hot seat all of the characters so we could see what the group consisted of. From this, I learnt that my character was engaged and was just moving into the area so I did not really know Anne Smith. The responses of the other characters were mixed as some thought that she should be moved away, and some thought that she should be able to choose where she lived. Others were neutral on the topic, I felt that it was good that everybody had their own opinions on the situation but I think that some of them were not very empathetic.

We then created a piece of drama that had to show many different opinions towards the situation, most people did a dinner party but we did a gathering on the street.

- I thought that it might be a good idea to try something different so our characters met on the street, around Anne's car. Neil and I played the part of the new couple that had moved in around the corner, and we wanted to know about Anne's car. Emma and Jackson played the part of an older couple who were quite fond of Anne, Chahida played the part of a teenager completely against Anne Smith living outside her house, and Kristy played a small girl that liked to talk to Anne.

- Abbie played the part of Anne, as we wanted to include the opinion of Anne in our piece.

- We included all sides of the argument, as we wanted it to be balanced.

- The two characters that made up the new couple were picked, as they were a similar age. We had a variety of ages and background within the piece, which gave it more relevance to the audience.

- We wanted it to be a posh area to show the contrast between the homeowners and Anne Smith, so we gave most of the characters posh accents. We made the two couples obvious by linking them together, Emma and Jackson were linking arms and Neil had his arm around me.

This is a plan of the stage:

Next, we looked at two photos of " Big Issue" sellers and talked about the long-term and short-term affects that they would have to deal with.

Long-term

Short-term

1) Living Standards - money, food & drink, hygiene.

2) Health standards.

3) Safety.

4) Addictions.

1) Criticism.

2) Emotional.

3) Food & drink.

4) Shelter.

Both of the people had very different situations and backgrounds.

Dave aged 28, had an accident at work and this meant he had to leave his job; he then turned to alcohol, which led to his wife and child leaving him. He has two major health problems.

Tara aged 21, used to live in a squat but is now sleeping rough. She has a dog to keep her company and protect her; this is good as she gets many men coming up to her, asking her to go home with them.

Then we were asked to think of three still images in our heads that will show and describe different points throughout their day, we then performed them to the class.

I chose these three still images because I wanted to show some of the different situations that would have been placed upon them. I chose to show that I was walking my dog with my head down carrying everything that I had with me. In the next still image, I am portraying my character to be begging on the street, as this is one of the main ways to make money while homeless, other than stealing and dealing drugs. I used a pleading expression on my face to show the desperation of my character. Next, I showed her sleeping, curled up on the floor, warming herself with the little covers that she had, scared for her life. I saw that many people had similar

idea to me, and showed different points throughout the day, whereas others showed things like the outcomes of being homeless, e. g. drinking.

In the Forum Theatre piece, we all sat in a circle around the actors and could freeze the piece at any point to add input into the piece.

We did two stories, one included Chahida and Adam and one with Ben and Craig. The story with Chahida and Adam was that Adam was a top entrepreneur on his way to an important meeting. Chahida stopped him, on his way, to ask for money, and she soon realised that she knew him from school. They started talking about her past and the things that had happened to her and it turned out that she used to run a successful salon that turned bankrupt. In the end he gave her some money and they went to talk some more.

In the story between Ben and Craig, I thought it would be a good idea if Ben played an aggressive, old-fashioned, ex-soldier, because it would give a license to have a conflict-. Ben had passed a teenager trying to sell him the “Big Issue.” Ben then went into a rant about how “Teenagers these days, can’t even be bothered to get a job and not even staying in education.” It ended with Craig pleading with Ben to buy at least one copy of the magazine, but Ben just walked away.

Then, we looked at an article about the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I was quite shocked to learn about the low standards of living in the favelas, and that the only jobs available to the people were the lowest, most disgusting jobs that you could think of. Of course, you hear about such things on the news, reading the article, and knowing that it was a true story, really

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made me feel for these people. It also helped me to understand the hardships that they face every day. It also included a story about a man called Felix, he tells the story of how he came to live on the streets of Rio. We learn from him that he was involved in a drug running gang and, to make a little money on the side, he decided to take a cut of the drugs that he was running. His "boss" found out and tracked him down to his house, when they arrived there; they found only Ernesto (Felix's younger brother) and killed him as Felix got away.

In a group with Clare, Chahida, Joe, Craig, Sydney, Abbie, Angela and Simon, we created a piece of drama surrounding some of the different situations that they face each day performing to a piece of music. We focused on three main themes of the article. We separated into three groups consisting of Joe, Craig, Sydney, and Simon, Clare, Abbie and I, and Chahida and Angela. Joe's group showed the story of Felix and his brother Ernesto, and the night of his death. My group showed the profession of prostitution and Chahida's group showed thieving as a way to make money. We did this by firstly all starting, facing the back of the room in order of stage entry. Joe's group started the piece by beginning with movement and freezing in position at the end, my group then started moving into our positions and used three poses to show our position and the froze at the end, then Angela and Chahida moved into their position and froze, we then all said a word to describe our situation. I used to word "dirty" to describe my feelings because it is a difficult situation and I think it would make you feel degraded and your self-confidence would be zero.

Development Phase:

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In this section, we were asked to create a piece of drama surrounding the area of a squat.

Here was our brief:

- \* It has to be a T. V. documentary style.
- \* Narrator (voice-over).
- \* Profiles of characters in a 'squat.' Television style techniques e. g. cross cutting.
- \* Development - Carefully structured scenes (4 max)
  - A range of drama techniques.
  - A conflict between squatters.

Early on in the piece, we decided what characters were going to be involved. There were six of us in the group - Ben, Joe, Kristy, Craig, Jodie and I, and we all had different stories of how we became homeless. People being away made rehearsing the piece difficult and as some people were, away for two lessons that we were using we had to cut them from the piece in case they did not turn up on the day. This meant that we had to create a part at last minute for Kristy, as she had been ill. I thought that it would be a good idea to involve facts about the homeless at the end of the piece, as this would show that we had done some individual studying and to make the piece seem more authentic to a real T. V. documentary. We gave Kristy this part so that she could be involved in the piece without having any rehearsal time.

We decided that the aim of our piece should be to show the audience that there are many different reasons for people becoming homeless and not to judge without knowledge of the situation.

Piece Structure:

1) It begins with all of the characters stood in a line, frozen in a position that portrayed their character. Ben (the programme presenter) introduced the characters in the squat and gave a summary of their lives.

2) As Ben introduces each character, the story of how each of them came to leave their home is shown to the audience.

3) It starts with Jodie, playing the part of Joanne Down, a young teenager that had gotten herself pregnant whilst living with her very catholic parents. We find out this through a letter that Joanne and left her parents, we showed this by Craig and I playing the role of her parents reading the letter to ourselves and her narrating what the letter said. We then froze back into our positions.

4) Next, the story of Lucy McNamara, my character, was shown. She was a 16-year-old girl and we learn that she was told to leave home after hitting her younger brother (Craig) again. Her mother (Jodie) decided that it was enough and asked her to leave. She then turned to prostitution.

5) Craig's part of Derrick Poulton was shown being thrown out because of stealing from his mother's purse to buy drugs and alcohol. He then moved in with his brother (Joe) and lived there until his brother found out that he had been taking money from him as well. He was then asked to leave.

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6) Joe had the part of a father and husband, named Jason Smith, which had a past of Heroine addiction. One morning his daughter (me) asked him for a lift into school. When he refused, his wife (Jodie) asked why, and discovered that he had been using Heroine again. He was asked to leave, and the scene ended with a mimed argument to music with him packing a suitcase in slow motion.

7) Then Ben talked about all the different situations and encouraged people to think about the reasons for people being homeless, and that it's not always their fault.

8) Kristy then gave some facts about homelessness and the piece ended.

Set design:

We chose to have our characters stood in a line at the back, as we wanted it to look more like an authentic documentary; only instead of using large photographs and media, we used still images. We thought that by showing a story for each character it would involve everybody and give equal stage time and opportunity to play other roles.

Character:

Name: Lucy McNamara

Age: 16

Last Permanent address: 4 Devon Road, Droylsdon, Manchester

Current sleeping arrangements: Staying with a friend.

Family Situation: Mum and Dad divorced because of his adultery.

Interests: Dance, music, performing and seeing friends.

Reasons for being homeless: I became violent towards my family and my friends, this led to my character, told by her mother, to leave the house, permanently. I also got involved in alcohol and drugs.

Ambitions: Get out of prostitution, finish school and get a proper job and my own house.

Income? Prostitution

I developed my character in rehearsals by having a hot seating session with my group. From this, I found that my character lived in a squat and was providing the main income for the squatters, which on the main necessities. I used a Mancunian accent to show where I was from I was quite brash and open. In my scene, I tried to show my character being extremely stressed and did not really want to leave her home, although she would never admit to that fact. In my still image, I stood in quite a sluttish position to show my character's line of work. I had to show quite a violent moment towards my younger brother.

The argument was built around something extremely petty, he would not let me use the remote, and I then proceeded to slap him round the face. It worked well and Craig reacted well to the slap. I found it difficult to channel the anger and aggression into the moment, as I have never been in a situation where these emotions have been needed. However, to help with this, I tried to think of all of the things that have ever made me angry or

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annoyed in the past and channel it into the piece. It helped a lot and I think that it made the moment more real and pulled the audience into it a bit more, as they could see that I was committed to the moment by my body language and facial expressions. This was quite an emotional moment and I wanted to make it as real as possible.

#### Writing In Role:

To help me get into the role of my character, Lucy, I wrote a letter to her mother from her point of view.

Dear Mum,

I am so sorry. I never meant hurt anyone, it just started to get to me a lot and I didn't know how to cope. I don't expect you to forgive me or want me to come home but I wanted to let you know that I love you and I miss you all.

Life's not great right now, I dropped out of school and I got a job. It's not a great job, but the money's good and you get a good opportunity to meet many different people, not all of them are that nice but I guess I'll get over it.

I've made some good friends; we're living together now. The house isn't too good but as I'm making some money now, things are going to get better; I hope to go back to school at some point and re-sit my GCSEs, and take some A-levels so I can make a real living for myself, get my own house and make you proud.

I miss you mum, and dad. How is he? I know you don't like talking to him, but I hope things are easier between you two now. How's Craig? Tell him I'm

sorry, that I didn't mean anything I said to him, and that it wasn't his fault you and dad got a divorce. I know that for myself now, that it wasn't my fault. I've learnt a lot since I left. I think about you all everyday.

I miss you all, I love you all and I'll see you soon.

Your daughter, always,

Lucy McNamara

P. S. When I've sorted myself out, perhaps you could come and visit me? I love you. Xxx

Scene:

Here, I am going to provide part of the script from the piece. I have chosen to write the scene between Joe and Jodie (scene six).

The scene is set in a family house in the master bedroom and there is a chair centre stage and a suitcase behind it. On the chair there is sat a middle-aged man named Jason. He is wearing a tracksuit and has one of his sleeves rolled up, he is grasping the top of his arm. His 8-year-old daughter is talking quietly to her mother off stage right.

Daughter skips into the bedroom.

Daughter: Daddy, I'm ready.

Jason: (agitatedly) Ready? What for?

Daughter: (stating the obvious) For school, silly... (Rolls eyes)

Jason: I'm not taking you to school today.

Daughter: (surprised) What?

Jason: (more forcefully) I'm not taking you to school today.

Daughter: But daddy! You said you would take me today.

Jason: Well I'm not. So go and ask your mum.

Daughter: But daddy, you said you'd take me to school today; you know mummy can't take me. (rambling)

I said "daddy, can you pretty please take me to school

tomorrow?" and you said yes, so it's not fair for you to say

that you're not taking me now, is it? And school is really far away

and...

Jason: Be quiet!

Daughter: But daddy... (crying)

Jason: (Shouting) Just be quiet!

Mum: What's going on in there? What's with all the shouting? (Coming hurriedly into the room)

Daughter: (crying and sobbing) Daddy won't take me to school!

Mum: Why not?

Jason: (quickly) I'm busy.

Mum: (confused) Doing what?

Jason: I'm just busy, alright? (Hiding his arm)

Mum: (concernedly) What are you hiding?

Jason: (defensively) Nothing, don't worry.

Mum: (Demandingly) Let me see your arm.

Jason: (exasperatedly) No, just drop it ok.

Mum: (grabs arm) What the hell are you thinking?

Daughter: (scared) Mummy, what wrong with daddy's arm?

Jason: Just go to your room, ok?

(Daughter runs off and atmospheric music starts to play softly.)

Mum: What in heavens name are you doing to yourself, to your family?

After everything we planned after last time, all the help people gave

you having a beautiful daughter together? (Getting hysterical)

Doesn't any of this mean anything to you? I spend my life looking

after you, cleaning up after you, doing your washing, looking after

our daughter 24/7, isn't this enough?



Jason: (Sadly) No, im so sorry but it's not...

The argument turns into a mimed, extremely emotional argument with atmospheric music is turned up. Argument should depict Mum getting really angry and then really upset and confused. Then she should show that she is telling him to leave, Jason packs his suitcase in slow motion, walks away slowly, from his wife who is sat on the floor, crying, and turns to look back sadly and then returns to his original place frozen in the exact same position that he began in at the beginning of the piece.

I chose to write this part of the script as I think it was a great chance to use a lot of stage directions and show a lot of emotional descriptions. This scene is my favourite as it is a really emotional feel to it and the music worked really well with it. It was also a good opportunity to use a lot of drama techniques.

Evaluative Phase:

From studying this topic, I have learnt a lot about homelessness. I have learnt that not everybody has the same reason for being homeless, and that everybody needs help. It has really given me a chance to try and empathise with how they feel and I found that it wasn't as easy as it looks. I think that this topic has changed, not just my opinion, but, the opinion of the whole class as I think it has given an insight into the real lives of homeless people. You don't see what hardships that people have to go through everyday, and it's difficult to see and hear about the low quality of life that homeless people come to expect and live with. I was really interested in learning about the squatters and how they live; it seems bizarre to think that it could be happening on the street where I live. And learning about the favellas and the <https://assignbuster.com/year-11-portfolio-on-homelessness-essay-sample/>

story of Ernesto and Felix really proved that homelessness is happening all over the world and really made me appreciate what I have.

I think that I have developed how to empathise with the character that I am playing. I found a really useful way to do this is to be hot seated before hand as you can learn a lot about your character and really get into your role by trying out an accent and things like that. I think that I have become more confident in using accents as I used a Mancunian accent in my piece this has encouraged me to try more different accents and vocal techniques.

I think that in " The Squat" piece, it really gave us a lot of license to use different drama techniques, as, being a TV documentary, we could use things like rewind, still images and " reconstructions".

Working in a group like this gave me skills such as learning that I'm not the only person in the group that has good ideas, this meant that I needed to listen more to what other people said rather than only listening to myself. I think that the class all really got involved with the piece and found it really interesting to learn about. I think that everybody enjoyed learning about it as it something that is relevant to us.

Jodie really impressed me with her performance in " The Squat." I think that she was really confident with this piece and it showed throughout her performance. She knew her cues and her lines extremely well and didn't corpse during any of the pieces in this unit. I think that the piece she impressed me most in, was scene six of " The Squat," she played the part of the mother and she got really into the role, she showed a lot of emotion throughout the scene. The mimed argument was really emotional and

touching. Most people seem to think that to show anger and sadness you have to be vocal about it but the mime was performed in such a way that it was obvious what was going on and you could tell exactly what emotions she was going through, this was shown clearly through her facial expressions and stance.

The class showed that they could empathise with the homeless people very well and this was shown through the pieces. They understood what was asked from them and they did exactly that. All of the pieces performed throughout this unit were of an extremely high quality.

From this experience I have found that, I can work well in groups if I listen more, I can use accents and swap well between characters. I think that overall, this was an extremely positive experience for the whole class and I think that everybody really enjoyed learning about this topic.