

# hairspray

SECONDARY EDUCATION PACK -

## ENGLISH LESSON PLANS



These lesson plans are designed as a starting point for curriculum-based activities for students in Key Stage 3. All activities can be developed to suit Key Stage 4 students.

# GOOD MORNING BALTIMORE!

## OBJECTIVE:

Studying setting and characterisation and the effects they have. Understanding how figurative language presents meaning.

## EXERCISE

Hairspray opens with the musical number “Good Morning Baltimore”. The song is sung by Tracy and the whole company, instantly introducing us to our protagonist and the world in which she lives.

## DISCUSSION

Provide the class with a copy of the lyrics to the song “Good Morning Baltimore”. In groups, ask the class to start a discussion about the different things we learn about Tracy from this first song. Some things might be explicitly implied, whilst others might be hinted or suggested at. Split these into categories:

- Physical attributes/appearance
- Personality traits
- Interests and passions

Now they have a picture of Tracy, ask the class to think about the effects the song has on the audience.

- What is the effect of learning so much about Tracy in such a short amount of time?
- At the end of the song, what is your opinion of Tracy? Do you think you would be friends with her?
- Other than Tracy, do we learn anything else from this song?
- Are any other characters introduced?
- How much information can we gain about the setting of the show, just from reading these lyrics?

## READING

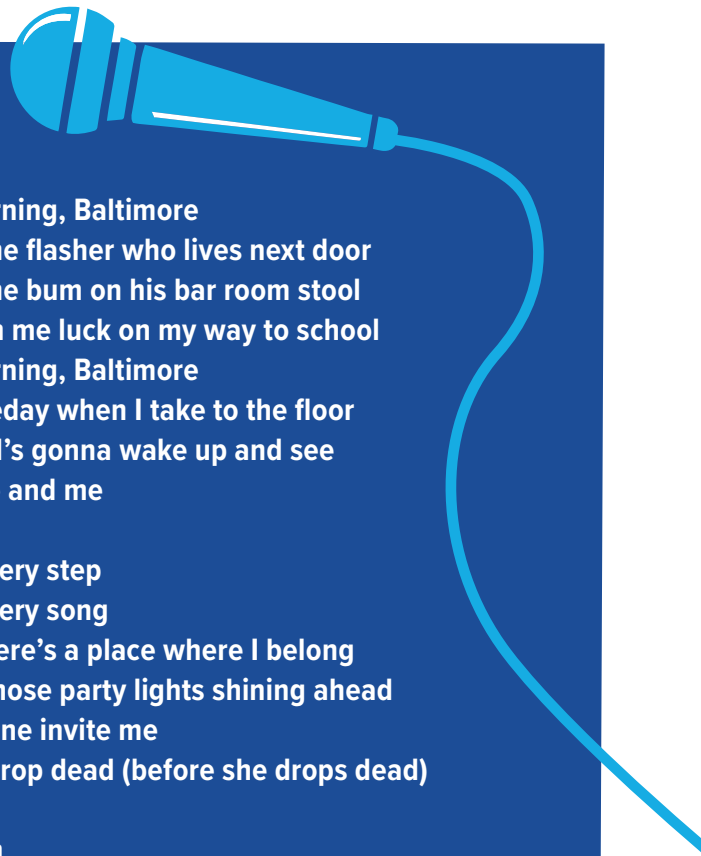
As a class, remind each other of key forms of figurative language. “Good Morning Baltimore” contains examples of all of the below.

**Simile Metaphor Personification Hyperbole**

Ask the class to go through their copy of the lyrics, and highlight and label the different forms of figurative language as they come across them.



# GOOD MORNING BALTIMORE



Oh, oh, oh  
Woke up today  
Feeling the way I always do  
Oh, oh, oh  
Hungry for something  
That I can't eat  
Then I hear the beat  
The rhythm uptown  
Starts calling me down  
It's like a message from  
High above  
Oh, oh, oh  
Pulling me out  
To the smiles and the  
Streets that I love

Good morning, Baltimore  
Every day's like an open door  
Every night is a fantasy  
Every sound like a symphony

Good morning, Baltimore  
And someday when I take to the floor  
The world's gonna wake up and see  
Baltimore and me

Oh, oh, oh  
Look at my hair  
What "do" can compare with mine today?  
Oh, oh, oh  
I've got my hairspray and radio  
I'm ready to go

The rats on the street  
All dance around my feet  
They seem to say  
"Tracy, it's up to you"  
So, oh, oh  
Don't hold me back  
'Cause today all my dreams will come true

Good morning, Baltimore  
There's the flasher who lives next door  
There's the bum on his bar room stool  
They wish me luck on my way to school  
Good morning, Baltimore  
And someday when I take to the floor  
The world's gonna wake up and see  
Baltimore and me

I know every step  
I know every song  
I know there's a place where I belong  
I see all those party lights shining ahead  
So someone invite me  
Before I drop dead (before she drops dead)

So, oh, oh  
Give me a chance  
'Cause when I start to dance I'm a movie star  
Oh, oh, oh  
Something inside of me makes me move  
When I hear the groove

My ma tells me, "no"  
But my feet tell me, "go"  
It's like a drummer inside my heart  
Oh, oh, oh  
Don't make me wait  
One more moment for my life to start  
Good morning, good morning  
Waiting for my life to start

I love you, Baltimore  
Every day's like an open door  
Every night is a fantasy  
Every sound like a symphony

And I promise Baltimore  
That some day when  
I take to the floor  
The world's gonna wake up and see (see)  
Gonna wake up and see (gonna wake up and see)  
Baltimore and me (yes, more or less, we all agree)  
Baltimore and me (someday the world is gonna see)  
Baltimore and me



# MOTORMOUTH MAYBELLE

## OBJECTIVE:

To read and analyse play scripts in order to discuss language use and meaning. To understand how vocabulary choice, text structure and organisational features present meaning.

## EXERCISE

As a group, read the below script excerpt from the show – Act One, Scene Nine. In this scene the audience, as well as Tracy and Penny, are all introduced to Motormouth Maybelle for the first time.

## DISCUSSION

In groups, ask the class to analyse the script, thinking about the following questions:

- What immediately stands out to you in regards to the structure of Motormouth's speech?
- What do you think this tells you about Motormouth's character?
- What impact do you think this has on the scene? Why do you think the writers have chosen for Motormouth speak in this way?
- Why do you think Motormouth's character has this name? What is the literal meaning of a motormouth?
- Can you think of any other literary characters whose names reflect their personalities? Many writers use this technique from Shakespeare to J. K. Rowling. What impact does this have on a character's identity?
- In this scene Penny and Tracy introduce themselves to Motormouth. How do their contrasting introductions reflect both their characters?
- Towards the end of the excerpt, Amber and Velma enter separately. How do their entrances compare? What effect does this have on the audience's perceptions of both characters?

## WRITING

Using the excerpt from Act One Scene Nine, ask pupils to re-write all Motormouth's lines, removing the rhymes. Spend time deciphering what Motormouth is saying, and translate each line into a more natural speech pattern. Once the lines have been re-written, choose a couple of examples to read as a group.

- What is the impact of the new script?
- How does the new language used change the impact of Motormouth as a character, and her influence on the scene?
- Which script do you prefer?



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SCRIPT





## Act One, Scene Nine

**MOTORMOUTH:** There's platters of tunes and food on the table. What else would you expect from...

**ALL:** Ms. Motormouth Maybelle!

**SEAWEED:** Mama, I brought some friends.

**MOTORMOUTH:** Whoop-dee-doo, What a coup! The ever sparkin', Sir Link Larkin!

**LINK:** Always nice to see you, Ms. Motormouth.

**PENNY:** I'm Penny Lou Pingleton and I'm very pleased and scared to be here.

**MOTORMOUTH:** You're welcome, Kitten, to come and sit in.

**TRACY:** This is just so Afro-tastic. Can I say how thrilled I am to meet you. I'm Seaweed's friend, Tracy.

**MOTORMOUTH:** Oh, yes, indeedy. I've seen you, sweetie. All aglow on Corny's Show.

**TRACY:** Gee, thanks. The only reason I'm on the show is because of your son. Why can't we all dance together like this on TV?

**MOTORMOUTH:** Think we haven't tried? We've pleaded, begged and lied. We pressured the Mayor, petitioned the Gov, and what did we get?

**MOTORMOUTH & KIDS:** One day a month.

**SEAWEED:** Enough talk. We came to dance. Let's play some hide and seek!

(MUSIC starts.)

**TRACY, PENNY, & LINK:** The dirty boogie! (THEY start to dance when the door suddenly bursts open.)

**AMBER:** Aaaaaaiiiiiieeeeeee!!!! Link! What are you doing in this huge crowd of minorities?

**LINK:** (Trying to fit in) What are you doing?

**AMBER:** I waited for you under the bleachers half way through the JV track meet, then I saw you getting on the North Avenue bus and I followed you here in my new car.

**LINK:** We're having a blast. Come, jump in. (The door bursts open again.)

**VELMA:** Aaaaaaaaiiiiiieeeeeee!!!!!! Amber! Has anyone touched you?

**MOTORMOUTH:** Y'all better hustle. Here's Von Tussle.

**VELMA:** I saw you getting into your darling, new car, so I followed you in mine. Motormouth, are you brainwashing these children?

**MOTORMOUTH:** They're only dancing.

**TRACY:** Yeah, we're dancing.

**VELMA:** (Taking in TRACY) Oh! I should have known you'd be at the bottom of this barrel.



# WITHOUT LOVE...

## OBJECTIVE:

To understand how figurative language can present meaning, how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance and how to recognise a range of poetic conventions.



## EXERCISE

The songs throughout Hairspray include many examples of figurative language. The below similes and metaphors are taken from the song “Without Love”. Throughout this song, the characters compare a life without love to some of their favourite things, in not such ideal situations.

## DISCUSSION

As a class, discuss the impact of using similes and metaphors in this way. What difference does it make painting a portrait of how dull life can be *without* love, instead of how wonderful it can be *with* love?

## WRITING

Ask the class to start by coming up with their own similes and metaphors, following the structure discussed in “Without Love”. As an extension of this exercise, pupils can be encouraged to string together two or more similes or metaphors to create poetic verses.



Without love, life is like the seasons with no summer.  
Without love, life is rock ‘n’ roll without a drummer.

Without love, life is like a beat that you can’t follow.  
Without love, life is Doris Day at The Apollo.

Without love, life is like a prom that won’t invite us.  
Without love, it’s like getting my big break and laryngitis.

Without love, life’s a ‘45 when you can’t buy it.  
Without love life is like my mother on a diet.

Like a week that’s only Mondays,  
Only ice cream, never sundaes.

Like a circle with no centre,  
Like a door marked ‘Do Not Enter’.



# DEAR TRACY...

## OBJECTIVE:

To study characterisation and its effects. To understand how to fluently and effectively compose formal and informal letters and to understand the difference between spoken and written language.

## EXERCISE

Ask the class to choose one character from Hairspray that they can relate to and write a letter as this character.

### WRITING

Once they have decided on the character they would like to write from, they should consider who their letter is going to be to, and the purpose of their letter. Some examples could be:

- A formal letter to Ultra Clutch Hairspray who sponsor the Corny Collins Show
- A complaint letter to Velma Von Tussle as the producer of the Corny Collins Show
- A fan letter to Link/Corny/Tracy/Motormouth
- A persuasive letter to the police or the teachers in the show
- A thank you letter to Edna

When the class know who their letters are going to be to and from, ask them to consider the tone and language their character would use. Help them to make some decisions by asking the following questions:

- How old is your character?
- What is their relationship to the person they are writing to?
- What is the purpose of the letter?
- What sort language would your character use? – (Positive? Formal? Persuasive? Emotive?)
- What impression are they trying to make?

The class should now be ready to begin writing their letters! Ask them to ensure they follow the important rules in letter writing, including:

- The basic layout of a letter, including the addresses and date.
- How to begin their letter:
  - Dear (First Name) OR (First Name and Last Name) OR (Title and Last Name) OR (Sir/Madam)
- A strong opening paragraph, stating the purpose of their letter straight away.
- Content to back up the purpose of the letter, including specific and relevant details in clear paragraphs.
- How to end their letter:
  - When to use Yours Sincerely/Yours Faithfully or a more informal sign off.

