

**'MAMMA MIA! IS THE
PERFECT WAY TO TURN
YOUNGSTERS ONTO THE
MAGIC OF LIVE THEATRE!'**

KCBS RADIO SAN FRANCISCO

MAMMA MIA!



STUDY GUIDE
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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

MAMMA MIA! is the smash hit musical based on the hugely popular songs of the Swedish pop supergroup ABBA.

It is the story of a mother, a daughter and her three possible dads, set to the well-known chart hits of ABBA from the 1970s and 1980s. The musical brings together the themes of identity, family and nostalgia with a moving story and a witty script.

MAMMA MIA! opened in London's West End on April 6th 1999, the 25th anniversary of ABBA's international triumphant debut at the Eurovision Song Contest in Brighton. It has gone on to achieve global success with productions across the world and still plays to full houses in London.

INTRODUCTORY UNIT

The Introductory Unit is designed to explore the story, characters, and music of the show. It consists of two 40-50 minute sessions and includes four worksheets.

The Introductory Unit covers objectives in English, History, Music and Media Studies, and can be addressed in any class where you have scope to study the production. These lesson plans are designed as a starting point for curriculum-based activities for students in Key Stage 4; however all activities can be adjusted to suit Key Stage 3 students.

THE DRAMA UNIT

The Drama Unit offers material and detailed suggestions to help GCSE Drama students develop skills and address assessment objectives. All objectives have been taken from the AQA GCSE Drama specification or Key Stage 4 English National Curriculum requirements, but can be adapted to accommodate requirements from other examining bodies.

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MAMMA MIA! Publicity leaflet

INTRODUCTORY UNIT

The musical MAMMA MIA! moves quickly. It includes spoken dialogue, the songs of ABBA, and dance. The following lesson plans cover two 40-50 minute sessions, in which students are invited to explore the story, characters and music of the show.

SESSION 1: THE STORY & CHARACTERS OF MAMMA MIA!

The following sessions are designed to introduce the students to the story and characters in the musical, and look at how the songs are used. This will be a valuable introduction to the show if carried out before your trip to the theatre, helping to prepare students for seeing the musical. In contrast you may choose to study these sessions after your students have seen the musical and explore the characters and music in more detail.

“Friday night and the lights are low, looking out for a place to go...”

Objective: To engage with a product that provides opportunities for interpretation and analysis, enabling students to develop an understanding of the ways organisations may target audiences through marketing.

Exercise: Allow students two or three minutes to look at the MAMMA MIA! publicity leaflet. The front cover shows a young woman in a white dress. The unfolded leaflet shows other characters.

Discussion: In small groups, ask the students to discuss the following points –

- What do you think this arrangement of the illustrations is meant to suggest about the show?
- From the illustrations, what other characters would you say are important in the show?

Exercise: Play the class the official MAMMA MIA! West End trailer.

Discussion: Ask the class if watching the trailer has altered any of their opinions of the show.

As a class, discuss the following points:

- Can you identify any of the characters from the leaflet in the trailer?
- What three words would you use to describe the show based on the trailer?
- Can you gauge any insight into what the story of MAMMA MIA! might involve from the leaflet and trailer?
- From looking at the leaflet and watching the trailer, who do you think the show’s target audience is? Why do you think this?
- Make a list of all the different types of people you think would enjoy MAMMA MIA!



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“Knowing Me, Knowing You...”

Plot

Objective: Understanding the connections between cultural, economic, military, political, religious, and social history; and between short and long-term timescales.

Exercise: Read together the introduction to the plot of MAMMA MIA! from Worksheet 1: Setting the Scene for MAMMA MIA!. It does not tell the story of the show, but sets the scene for the beginning and for what happens subsequently. The “...” in the diary extracts should be read aloud as “dot, dot, dot”.

Discussion: Check that the students understood what they read. Some words may be unfamiliar. Lead the class in a discussion about the plot of the show, based on what they have learnt from the worksheet. Points to consider include:

- From what Sheila Rowbotham says, do you think Donna is a true child of the sixties?
- Why do you think Donna is dismayed that her daughter has decided to get married?
- Which do you think is worse: Sophie reading her mother’s diary, or inviting her three possible fathers to her wedding?
- Ten characters are named in the worksheet. Who are they?

Small group work: In groups of three or four, ask students to look again at the leaflet for MAMMA MIA!. Allow them two or three minutes to see if they can now fit names to the characters illustrated.

Characters

Objective: To explore aspects of plot, characterisation, events, and settings; to look at the relationships between them and the effects they have.

Exercise: Students should work individually or in small groups to work through the characters in MAMMA MIA!.

Donna

- Look at the two photos of Donna on Worksheet 1: Setting the scene for MAMMA MIA!. One shows her in overalls. The other shows her dressed in the style of a 1970s pop star.
- Which photo do you think shows the ‘real’ Donna?

Rosie and Tanya

- Invite students to read the script extract printed on Worksheet 2: Excerpt from Scene 4. Words like “tyranny”, “wedlock”, “subversive” and “icon” may need explaining.
- What sense do we get of Rosie’s and Tanya’s lives?
- Do they see marriage and having babies as important to a woman?
- What do they have in common with each other?



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Bill, Harry and Sam

- Invite students to read the excerpt printed on **Worksheet 3: Excerpt from Scene 2**.
- Some words and references may need explaining: “Kalahari”, “Indiana”, “Happy Wanderer”, “Head Banger”, “Johnny Rotten”, “My other half” and “The Great White Hunter”.
- What sense do we get of the characters’ lives?
- What memories return to them at Donna’s taverna?
- If Bill, Harry and Sam have a mixture of motives for returning to the island they visited 21 years ago, which of their motives are present or hinted at in the script?
- What other motives would you guess they might have?

Sophie

- The lives of Donna, Rosie and Tanya might be said to represent a 1970s trend to reject marriage as a life aim. Sophie’s wish for a white wedding (a 1990s trend) may or may not represent a return to it.
- Why do you think some women in the 1970s began to reject marriage?
- What do you think is the appeal of a white wedding for Sophie?
- In groups of three or four, talk to each other and see if you can agree on the advice you would give a 20-year-old daughter who wants a white wedding. Write one sentence to sum up what you would say.

CONCLUDING THE SESSION

Advise students that the next session will be about the songs of ABBA used in the show MAMMA MIA!. Session 2 requires the ability to play music from the album ABBA Gold. More than likely, some students will have the CD at home or the ability to stream the album.

If students know that their parents or grandparents like ABBA’s songs, they might be interested in interviewing them to find out which songs they enjoy most and why.



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SESSION 2:

THE USE OF ABBA SONGS IN MAMMA MIA!.

“Thank You For The Music!”

MAMMA MIA! is based on some of the best-known songs of ABBA. Pupils may be surprised how many ABBA songs they know. Thanks to the 2008 film adaptation of the musical and the 2018 sequel MAMMA MIA! Here We Go Again, the group may already be familiar with many of the songs and aspects of the story.

Objective: To critically evaluate texts through reading for different purposes; summarising and synthesising ideas and information and evaluating their usefulness for particular purposes.

Discussion: Start a conversation with the group to see how aware of ABBA they are, or were before they saw the show. Discussion points could include the following:

- Are you familiar with any ABBA songs?
- Have you seen either of the films MAMMA MIA! or MAMMA MIA! Here We Go Again?
- If you have seen the show or one of the films already, were you surprised by any of the songs that you didn't realise were by ABBA?
- If you haven't seen the show or either of the films, which of ABBA's songs do you expect to hear in the show?
- What do the words MAMMA MIA! mean to you?

Review what students found out from interviewing their parents or grandparents.

Exercise: The session is devoted to considering four ABBA songs used in the show. Students are asked to think about the meanings suggested in the lyrics and the meanings they might have if sung by the characters considered in the previous session.

Give students **Worksheet 4: ABBA song lyrics**. Track references below are to the album ABBA Gold.

I Have A Dream

Play the pupils “I Have A Dream” (Track 7), and ask them to follow the lyrics on the worksheet.

- Why does the singer value “dreams” and “fantasies”?

Ask students to think back to what they learned of Sophie in the previous session.

- If Sophie was to sing this song as she thinks of her possible father, what might be her “dream” and her “fantasy”?
- How might the words “I'll cross the stream” apply to Sophie?

Play the track again. Ask students to listen carefully to the singer's phrasing as she sings the chorus and compare it to the punctuation given.

- Does the singer's phrasing (and implied punctuation) suggest a slightly different meaning?



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Money, Money, Money

Play the pupils “Money, Money, Money” (track 9), and ask them to follow the lyrics on the worksheet.

- What does the singer imagine in this song?

Ask students to think back to what they learned of Donna, Rosie and Tanya in the previous session.

- Is this really a song you would expect one of them to sing?
- What would you have to suppose about Donna if she were to sing the song? Play the track again.

Lay All Your Love On Me

Play the pupils “Lay All Your Love on Me” (track 5), and ask them to follow the lyrics on the worksheet.

- What is the singer shocked about?
- What does she want from her lover?

By changing a couple of words, the song could be sung by a man. If you divided the lyrics between Sophie and Sky so that they could sing this song together:

- Which verses would you give to Sophie? Which to Sky?
- Would you have them sing all the choruses together?

One Of Us

Play the pupils “One Of Us” (Track 16), and ask them to follow the lyrics on the worksheet.

- What is the singer regretting in this song?
- For what does she criticise herself?
- What does she claim has changed?

Adapting lyrics

Objective: To critically evaluate texts through analysing a writer’s choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features, and evaluating their effectiveness and impact.

Exercise: For the show MAMMA MIA! the words of some of ABBA’s songs had to be slightly changed to suit the story and characters. In the song “One of Us” the singer has been made to regret something quite different by changing just a few words.

Looking at the lyrics to “One of Us”, ask students to make the following changes to the lyrics of this song:

Verse 1:

Line 2 – Delete the full stop at the end of the line “all of those great romances”.

Line 3 – Replace “You were, I felt, robbing me of my rightful chances” with “Because of you’re robbing me of my rightful chances”.

Line 7 – Replace “and so I dealt you the blow” with “but then you dealt me the blow”.

Line 9 – Replace “Now it’s different” with “How you hurt me”.

Chorus:

Line 22 – Replace “Wishing she had never left at all” with “Wishing you had never left at all”.

Verse 2:

Omit altogether.

Discussion: Once the class have compared the lyrics of the original ABBA song to the adapted lyrics from the show MAMMA MIA!, ask them to discuss the following points:

- How has the meaning of the songs been changed?
- Who might sing this song in the show, and at what point?



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MUSIC AND MAMMA MIA! – FURTHER STUDY

Objective: To listen attentively to unfamiliar popular music and accurately describe musical elements and contexts, using musical language.

Exercise: By analysing the songs chosen in **Session 2 - The Use of ABBA songs in MAMMA MIA!** in further detail, the session can be adapted to accommodate GCSE Music requirements. The four songs chosen for consideration were done so partly for their musical variety, and each offers specific musical interest. For instance, “**I Have A Dream**” uses children’s voices for the last verse and chorus, and the use of bouzouki and guitar accompaniment evokes a ‘Greek’ sound; “**Lay All Your Love On Me**” has a hymn-like quality in the melody, emphasised by the use of an electric organ in a way suggestive of the timbre of a church organ.

By guiding students in their listening, the musical complexity of recordings will become apparent. Appraisal could include:

1. The form of the lyrics: verse and chorus.
2. Use of voice or voices: phrasing, pitch, tone, harmony etc.
3. Use of different instruments.
4. Melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, texture, introductions, repetitions, riffs etc.

A **Song Analysis Worksheet** is provided for students to analyse and make notes about the four songs.



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DRAMA UNIT

Suggestions are given for six sessions of practical drama, relating to the themes of identity and family, and based on characters and situations from the plot of MAMMA MIA!. They provide a variety of ways of working, suitable for Year 10 or 11 students taking GCSE Drama. These include hot-seating, teacher-directed whole-group work, small-group improvisations and working with drama scripts.

Teachers may wish to select aspects of these sessions and adapt what is suggested to their own preferred ways of working.

A note on addressing fatherlessness

This is one of the main focuses of the unit, especially in Session 4. For some students of single-parent families it may be a sensitive subject. Nevertheless, students are likely to welcome the subject receiving serious attention. It is an opportunity for them to exchange their thoughts and experiences about fatherlessness (or indeed about motherlessness) and to have them valued.

SESSION 1: MEETING THE CHARACTERS

Start the session by informing students that you will be working on themes related to MAMMA MIA!, in particular the themes of identity and family.

Sophie Asserts Herself

Objective: To learn how to analyse the work of live theatremakers by developing an understanding of the plot and characters.

Exercise: Read **Worksheet 1: Setting the Scene for MAMMA MIA!** and briefly discuss the questions from the Introduction Session on the Plot and Characters laid out in the session “Knowing Me, Knowing You”. The “. . .” in the diary extracts should be read aloud as “dot, dot, dot”.

Discussion: Refer back to the sentence: “... to Donna’s dismay, Sophie, now also twenty, is insisting on marrying Sky, a young man recently arrived from London...”

- What do you think Donna is probably most concerned about?
- What does the word “insisting” suggest to you?

Practical Work: Ask the group to work in pairs. Sophie has just told her mum she is going to marry Sky. One of the pair should act as Sophie, one as Donna. Donna’s job is to persuade Sophie that there are more important things than getting married. Use this as your starting point:

Donna: “I just don’t understand why you want to get married. A white wedding?!”

Allow students 10 minutes to work on this. Then ask them to select one minute from their improvisations that will forcefully illustrate Sophie and Donna’s different points of view. Invite pairs to present their improvisations.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups have performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they have learnt from their improvisations. Questions could include:

- How did it feel to put yourself in the shoes of one of the characters?
- What did you learn from having the freedom to improvise in character?
- How difficult did you find it to stay in character?
- Were you able to leave your own opinions to one side when thinking about how your character would behave?
- Which of the alternatives to marriage that Donna put to Sophie did you think were reasonable ones?
- If Donna made any mistake in her approach to Sophie, what was it?



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HOT-SEATING DONNA

Objective: To work collaboratively to generate, develop and communicate ideas.

Exercise: Read again the extracts from Donna's Diary for 1979 on **Worksheet 1: Setting the Scene for MAMMA MIA!**. We are told that sometime after reading her mum's diary, Sophie writes to her three possible fathers, inviting them to her wedding in her mum's name. We are not told if she confronted her mum about her diary or not, but let's assume for the sake of argument that she did, saying nothing about the letters she has written and posted.

Discussion: Lead the group in a discussion to analyse Sophie's behaviour so far. Discussion points should include:

- What does her mum's diary reveal to Sophie?
- How do you think Sophie (20-years-old) is likely to feel when she reads what her mother wrote? Amused, horrified, upset, angry, thoughtful, touched?
- If Sophie were to confront her mum after reading her diary, how would she begin? Agree an opening sentence for Sophie. It could be one like: "Mum, why didn't you tell me that you didn't know who my father was?"

Practical Work: Arrange chairs in a semi-circle; one chair should face the semi-circle for you as the facilitator-in-role as Donna. Students will all be in role as Sophie. They can question Donna in any way they wish. One rule: only one student at a time can speak, and they must speak in character as Sophie.

Invite someone to begin with Sophie's 'opening sentence'.

This is an opportunity for students to challenge Donna. It is also an opportunity for you, as Donna, to hint at the hurt, shame and anger she may have kept hidden all these years at her parents' rejection. Fruitful points of view for Donna to take include:

- What happened all those years ago is so unimportant.
- Does it matter who your father was?
- Men are just sperm donors.
- Would you be any better off knowing who your father was?
- How? What difference would it make to you?

Reviewing the drama: Lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt from the hot-seating exercise. Questions could include:

- Are students satisfied with how you acted in the role as Donna?
- Were there any questions that students particularly liked that they hadn't thought of themselves? What did they like about these questions?
- How has their opinion of Donna changed from hearing her answers to the questions?
- How will questioning her mother have left Sophie feeling?

Written work: When Sophie finds her mother's diary for 1979, she writes to her three possible fathers, inviting them to her wedding – in her mother's name. It has been 21 years since they last saw Donna. Ask the class to compose the letter that Sophie writes in her mum's name, Donna Sheridan, to Bill, Harry or Sam, to make sure they will come to her wedding.

The letters are important and will be needed in Session 3.



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SESSION 2: DONNA AND THE DYNAMOS

This session focuses on exploring Donna's background, and especially her parents' disowning of her. Advise students that the following sessions will be used to look at Sophie's fathers and how she might deal with meeting them.

Donna's Feistiness

Objective: To develop student's knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of dramatic works, including character motivation and interaction.

Exercise: Read again the first sentence from the extract from Sheila Rowbotham's autobiography on
Worksheet 1: Setting the Scene for MAMMA MIA!

Discussion: In what ways does Sheila Rowbotham suggest young people growing up in the 1960s were different to their parents?

- What do you understand by the word 'feisty'?
- Can any of you remember being 'feisty' about something recently at home or at school?
- Is being 'feisty' something that people generally like in a young woman?
- What might Donna's 'feistiness' at the age of sixteen have meant for her relationships with boys?
- Would her 'feistiness' have come more into play in acquiring a boyfriend, managing one, or 'dumping' one?
- What might Donna have wanted to confront a boyfriend about?

Nb: Feisty

'The Concise Oxford Dictionary' gives these meanings of feisty: aggressive, exuberant, touchy. The Bloomsbury 'Dictionary of Modern Slang' gives: spirited, tough and assertive, quarrelsome. The latter points out that although the word looks like Yiddish, it is in fact a southern American dialect word. The Bloomsbury 'Dictionary of Word Origins' states that the word is derived from the now obsolete English verb fist = fart. In 16th and 17th century England, a fisting dog (literally a 'farting dog') was the name applied contemptuously to a 'mongrel' or 'cur'. This was eventually shortened to feist, and the word feisty was born (mongrels being notoriously combative).

Practical work: Ask the group to work in pairs. One student should act as Donna at the age of sixteen, the other as the boyfriend she has had for some weeks. Donna is fed up with something he has been doing or not doing and has made up her mind to confront him. Ask each pair to decide what it is Donna is going to confront her boyfriend about, and have a clear idea of her motivation. Ask the pairs to explore in drama how she does this in the 'feisty' way we know is Donna's style.

Allow 10-15 minutes, then invite the students to present one minute of their improvisations, showing the outcome of the confrontation.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups have performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt from their improvisations. Questions could include:

- How hard was it to be 'feisty' in these situations?
- Was it easier for each character to stand their ground if they had a clear idea of their motivation?
- Do you think the characters would interact in the same way with other characters? When might their interactions change?
- Would Donna feel pleased with herself after confronting her boyfriend as she did?



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Donna asks her parents for help

Objective: To develop an understanding of how meaning is interpreted and communicated through a performer's vocal interpretation of character such as accent, volume, pitch, timing, pace, intonation, phrasing, emotional range, delivery of lines.

Exercise: Remind students that in **Worksheet 1: Setting the Scene to MAMMA MIA!** no mention is made of Donna having any contact with her parents or with any other relatives after settling in Greece. We are not told how hard it was for Donna as a single mum, settling on a Greek island at the age of twenty in 1979. All we are told is that Donna's parents 'disowned' her.

Discussion: Ask the group to imagine that Donna went back home to Britain to tell her parents that she was pregnant.

- Why do you think she would have wanted to tell her parents?
- How would Donna's parents feel at first to see their daughter again?
- What does 'disowned' mean?

Practical work: Ask the students to split into groups of three or four. One person should act as Donna and the rest as her family. The groups should explore how Donna tells her parents she is pregnant. Ask the group to experiment with the way they use their voice as a performance tool in their improvisations.

They should repeat the scene a number of times, choosing different vocal interpretations each time. Allow students a good amount of time to play with different delivery methods, then as an experiment ask them to see how the drama works if Donna's parents remain totally silent after Donna tells them she is pregnant.

Ask groups to decide on the most effective choice of their work and invite them to present their improvisations to the rest of the group.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups have performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt from their improvisations. Questions could include:

- Was it difficult staying silent?
- How did it affect the drama?
- How did volume/tempo/intonation affect the improvisations?



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SESSION 3: THE POSSIBLE FATHERS

In this session the focus is on providing students with a chance to build a broader picture of Sophie's three possible fathers. The session also serves as an introduction to making sense of a drama script.

Start with students reading their invitation letters that they wrote as Sophie, inviting one of her possible fathers to her wedding.

Using a script

Objective: To critically evaluate texts through summarising ideas and information, and evaluating their usefulness for particular purposes.

Exercise: Give students copies of the script – **Worksheet 3: Excerpt from Scene 2 of MAMMA MIA!**

- Who has looked at a drama script before?
- Two kinds of information are indicated in the script. Can you see what they are?

Students may, of course, already be familiar with stage directions (*italics*) and dialogue (*normal type*).

Reading: Ask the group for any volunteers to read the script. Once the excerpt has been read through, check that the students understood everything. There are a number of words and phrases with which students may be unfamiliar. Students should write explanatory notes on their scripts as these are discussed.

Ask for different volunteers to read the script again. Suggest that this time they should try to put whatever expression they think is needed into their reading of the words.

Reviewing the scene: Once the group have read through the excerpt a couple of times, lead them in a discussion to think about how useful it was to evaluate the text. Points to think about could include:

- How do the stage directions help you to understand the scene?
- What does Sam begin to suspect? How is this suggested to the audience?
- What is the effect of Sam's suspicions being hinted at, instead of being vocalised straight away?
- How did thinking about expression when reading the script change the meaning of the scene?



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A happy moment remembered

Objective: To learn how to create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in a devised theatrical performance.

Exercise: In 1979 when Bill, Harry and Sam were young men, they each found themselves having a nice time holidaying in Greece; a time when they were presumably carefree, when all hopes and dreams seemed possible to realise.

They each met Donna. They each had a brief love affair with her. Now twenty-one years later they will be forty or so, as will Donna, and most likely they will now have all sorts of responsibilities. Perhaps in some ways things have not worked out that perfectly for them, because in the real world they never do. What Bill and Harry say in the script suggests as much.

Discussion: What happy memory of that holiday in Greece comes to Bill's, Harry's or Sam's minds when they open and read the invitation? What moment might they picture?

- Sitting on the beach, watching the sun set with Donna?
- Holding hands with Donna at a café?
- Helping Donna dry her hair after swimming?

Practical work: Ask the group to split into groups of two or three. Each person in the group should act as Bill, Sam or Harry as a young man of twenty. Ask the groups to construct a frozen image of the happy memory that comes back to them when they read Donna's invitation. One of them may need to act as Donna, or whoever else is in this 'happy moment'. Ask the groups to consider body language, facial expressions, gesture and the use of levels as well as what they are doing in their frozen moment. Once they have done this, invite them to bring the frozen moment to life with one sentence each before freezing again.

Allow 10 minutes, then invite the groups to present their frozen moments with added sentences.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups are happy with the image they have created, lead the group in a discussion to think about the effectiveness of the frozen image as a performance technique.

Points to discuss could include:

- What could be the benefits of showing frozen images during a devised performance?
- How did adding different levels affect the image?
- How would changing the facial expressions of the characters alter the meaning of the image?



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Accepting Donna's Invitation

Objective: To explore aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings as well as the relationships between them and their effects.

Exercise: Ask students to look again at **Worksheet 3: Excerpt from Scene 2 of MAMMA MIA!**

Discussion: Lead the group in a discussion to further their understanding of the men's lives.

- What sense do Bill and Harry give us of their present lives?
- What about Sam?
- Think about this statement: "That's it! I've had enough. I've got this invitation to Greece. I'm going." What feeling do you think would be behind such a statement?
- To whom might Harry address it? And Bill? Sam?

Practical work: Ask the class to stay working in the same groups as before. They should recreate the situation that causes Sam, Bill or Harry to make this statement. One member of the group should act as Bill, Sam or Harry. The others should play people in their lives.

Allow 10 minutes, then invite groups to show the situations they created.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups have performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt from their improvisations. Questions could include:

- Have your improvisations given you a better understanding of the characters Bill, Harry and Sam?
- How has it helped your understanding of the plot by exploring possible back stories for the characters?
- Has exploring the characters in further detail changed your interpretation of the script in any way?



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SESSION 4: GROWING UP FATHERLESS

In this session, the focus is on helping students to explore some of the possible repercussions of being brought up by one parent, and of meeting an absent parent for the first time.

Advise students that in this session they will be looking at the situation of Sophie, the daughter of a very independently-minded single mum, who now wants to get married to Sky. Remind students of the letters they wrote as Sophie to each of her three possible fathers, inviting them to her wedding – in her mother’s name.

Being made to feel different

Objective: To critically analyse text through identifying and interpreting themes, ideas, and information.

Exercise: Read Anne Boston’s account of her fifth birthday at school from **Worksheet 6: The father I had never known**.

Discussion: After the excerpt has been read, lead the group in a conversation to start thinking about the themes of identity and family and how closely they are linked.

- How has Anne been made to feel?
- How might feeling different have an impact on Anne’s identity?
- What do you think the sister’s intentions were behind the announcement?
- How big an impact does family have on someone’s identity?
- How is Anne’s mum going to feel if Anne returns from school in tears and tells her what the sister said?

Practical work: Ask the group to work in pairs. One pupil should act as Anne’s mum, one as Anne. Anne’s mum wants to talk to Anne about their family and reassure her about her identity. Explore how easy or difficult it is for her to start the conversation, and how much the conversation helps both Anne and her mum.

Meeting the father I had never known

Objective: To develop the ability to interpret and perform a character as appropriate to the demands of the performance.

Exercise: Read Paul Palmer’s account of “The Father I Had Never Known” from **Worksheet 6: The father I had never known**.

Discussion: After the excerpt has been read, lead the group in a conversation to discuss the following points:

- At what times did the writer wish his father had been there?
- How did he feel about meeting his father?
- What happened when he did meet him?
- How do you think Paul’s father felt about meeting the son he had never known?



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Practical work: To critically analyse text through identifying and interpreting themes, ideas, and information.

Ask students to think now of Sophie's situation. She has written in her mother's name to her three possible fathers and Bill, Harry and Sam have arrived on the island. Let's suppose Sophie has seen them briefly, and let's suppose she has sent a note to Bill first, asking him to meet her, not at Donna's taverna but at a café early in the morning when she knows few people will be about. We know that Bill may already have begun to guess that Sophie is his daughter.

Define an acting space and arrange chairs in a half-circle around it so that students can act as the audience, observing and giving advice. Ask for a volunteer to act as Sophie and someone to act as Bill. Bill has arrived early and has been waiting for Sophie for 15 minutes. He has the letter from Sophie with him. Ask the whole group to consider the following:

- How will he be feeling?
- What might he be doing?
- How might he use the letter from (supposedly) Donna?

Now ask the student who has volunteered to act as Bill to proceed with acting as Bill waiting for Sophie to arrive and to keep this going as long as he can. Review. Repeat if necessary.

- If Sophie arrives late for her meeting with Bill, what does this suggest about what she is feeling?
- How should Sophie enter?
- How should Bill greet Sophie?

It is important that students are asked to think about Sophie's entry, both to give the students acting guidelines as to how they should act, and to bring out the full potential drama of the situation.

Ask the students to try out what has been suggested. If students agree that this works well, repeat the drama, beginning with Bill at the table waiting, followed by Sophie's entry.

Taking the drama further: From this point, the drama could go in several directions. For instance, if it is Sophie who speaks first, does she start by saying:

- "You knew my mother twenty-one years ago, didn't you?"
- "Are you feeling as terrified as I am?"
- "Can you tell me what happened between you and my mother all those years ago?"

Should they at first be tongue-tied, and then start talking suddenly at the same time? Agree with students how Sophie might best begin. Ask the two actors to try out what has been suggested as a starting point, and to see if they can continue. Allow this to go as far as seems desirable, then stop the drama. Take the audience's advice as to how the drama might continue, or finish here.

Reviewing the drama: Once the group are happy with the improvisations performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt. Questions could include:

- What will Sophie probably have been doing (like Paul Palmer) while she has been talking to Bill?
- What might she ask Bill to agree to before they leave?



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Getting Sky to understand

Objective: To develop students' knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of dramatic works, including character motivation and interaction.

Exercise: Remind students of Sky, the young man Sophie is going to marry. Ask them to think about the following statement made by Sky: "Sophie, we've been over this a thousand times. You don't need your dad. I'm here."

Discussion: Ask the students to consider what this suggests to them about Sky? If Sophie has just met Bill, how will she be feeling?

Practical work: Ask the class to work in pairs. One of the pair should act as Sophie, the other as Sky. Sophie is going to tell him of her meeting with Bill. Whoever acts as Sky should respond with the statement above. Ask the class to explore how Sky deals with Sophie's feelings, and the effect this has on Sophie.

Allow students 10 minutes to work on this, then invite them to present the most important one minute of their work.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups have performed, lead the group in a discussion to review what they learnt from their improvisations. Questions could include:

- What do you think was Sky's motivation when making his statement?
- How does it change your opinion of Sky to think about two contrasting possible mindsets? Firstly compassion, and secondly exasperation?
- Did different pairs interpret Sky and Sophie's interactions differently?



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SESSION 5: ROSIE AND TANYA

In this session, the focus is on providing students with a chance to build a view of the characters Rosie and Tanya. The session also serves as a further introduction to what is involved in interpreting a drama script.

Working with a script

Objective: To study and perform scripts in order to discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness, and action to add impact.

Exercise: Ask students to look at **Worksheet 2 – Excerpt from Scene 4**.

Reading: Ask the group to read the scene excerpt and consider the following points:

- What in the layout is similar to the drama script we read in the previous session?
- The stage directions this time contain more information. What kind is it?

There will be some words and phrases with which students will be unfamiliar, and the meaning of some parts of the dialogue may not be immediately apparent. Check that students are clear on all points before discussing the following questions:

- What sense do we get of Tanya's and Rosie's lives?
- What do they feel about marriage and having babies?

Discussion: Lead the class in a discussion about how words can often mean different things, depending on how they are delivered. For instance, Rosie's first "Oh!"

- What does Rosie mean to express when she says: "Oh!"
- How would she say the word to express this?
- Apply the same questions to the phrase: "What?... oh, as if?!"
- Can you see any other words, phrases or sentences to which we could usefully apply the same questions?

Ask for fresh volunteers to read the script again; this time trying to read the words with the kind of expression agreed.

- How did changing the expression behind words and phrases change the meaning of the scene?



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Rosie and Tanya Remember

Objective: To develop a range of theatrical skills and how to apply them to create performance.

Exercise: What it is that Rosie takes out of the trunk under Donna's bed and holds up?

- If it is a costume that one of them wore, when would they last have worn it?
- Which specific moment of that time in Greece in 1979 might the costume remind them of?

Practical work: This is a similar task to that in Session 3: to construct a frozen moment representing a memory. In groups of two, three or four, ask the students to construct a picture, a frozen moment of the memory that comes to Tanya's mind when Rosie holds up the costume.

Ask the group to remember the factors that made their frozen images effective in Session 3 and try to apply these to their new images.

Allow 10 minutes, then invite each group to present their frozen moments.

Reviewing the drama: Once all groups are happy with the images they have created, lead the group in a discussion to see if they have remembered how to maximise the effectiveness of their images. Have they thought about:

- The use of levels
- Character positioning
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Body language
- Gesture

BONUS TASK

Written work: Ask students to think of their work on Rosie and Tanya in the above session.

- If Sophie knows Rosie and Tanya well, what will she expect them to think of her getting married?
- How then would she begin a letter inviting them to her wedding?

Ask the group to compose the letter that Sophie writes inviting Rosie or Tanya to her wedding, taking into account what she knows of them.



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SESSION 6: SOPHIE'S WHITE WEDDING

In this concluding session, the focus is on students using their understanding of the plot and characters, as well as dramatic techniques and conventions to construct a piece of whole group drama: a moment in Sophie's wedding ceremony.

A frozen moment in the marriage ceremony

Exercise: Ask students to listen to the lyrics while you play the song "I Have a Dream", track 7 from the album *ABBA Gold*. Ask the students to consider the following points:

- Why does the singer value "dreams" and "fantasies"?
- If Sophie has a fantasy picture of her wedding, of which moment of the ceremony might it be?

Practical work: Define a stage area with students' chairs facing it in a semi-circle. Invite students to act as Sophie, Donna, Rosie and Tanya, Sky, Sam, Bill and Harry, Sky's best man, and Sky's and Sophie's friends: young men and women who live and/or work on the island. They should arrange themselves in the performance area to create a still image from a point in Sophie and Sky's wedding ceremony. Ask students in the audience to give advice on:

- Where characters should stand in relationship to each other
- How characters will be feeling
- What posture/gestures and facial expressions (including direction of gaze) will reflect each of the character's feelings

This will take a little time to work out and it will be necessary to take each character, or pairs of characters, in turn. When the group is happy with the moment pictured, do a countdown and ask the characters to hold for a 'frozen moment' their positions, postures, gestures and expressions.

The characters' 'second thoughts'

Discussion: Ask the group to consider the position of Sophie's mum Donna in the frozen image they have created. What thoughts might be occurring to her at this moment in time? What about the rest of the characters?

Practical work: As a whole class, take each character in turn and consider what their thoughts might be. Some might be emotional, others funny or conflicted. Stress to the group that there are no right or wrong answers, but they should use the understanding they have developed of each character through all your previous sessions to decide on their thought processes at this time.

Record students' ideas for characters' thoughts as sentences. Have the group rehearse the sentences, then recreate the 'frozen moment' of the wedding ceremony, with each character speaking their thoughts in turn.

Reviewing the drama: Ask the class to think about the frozen image, and the sentences that they have performed in character. Ask them to consider the following points:

- Was this effective drama?
- What could we have done to make it more effective?
- What have you learned from the work on MAMMA MIA!?
- What do you remember as the most effective piece of drama?
- If you could go back in time, what would you advise Sophie to do differently, if anything?



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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

From page to performance

Objective: To learn how to design and realise sets that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience.

Exercise: Using **Worksheet 2: Excerpt from Scene 4**, the below guidelines can be used to help students to start thinking about bringing a script to life, turning it into a performance. Similar work can be done using **Worksheet 3: Excerpt from Scene 2**.

Practical work:

Staging the scene

Define a 'stage' area with students' chairs around it in a semi-circle. Ask students to advise what should be on stage to represent Donna's bedroom, using whatever is handy to stand in for the items of bedroom furniture. Position the items as students think best, taking into account the need for an acting space front of stage for Rosie and Tanya.

Once the class is happy with the scene they have created, discuss how the stage design can be drawn to scale as a floor plan on graph paper. This can then be used to reinstate the items of furniture exactly.

Blocking Rosie's and Tanya's moves

Explain to the class that working out the movements and positions of actors in a scene is called 'blocking the scene'.

Invite two students to act as Rosie and Tanya. Ask them to stand in the acting area. For the time being, they will need to have their scripts in their hands and some actions will need to be mimed. The following questions will need to be taken in turn:

- Where should they be standing when the lights come up to start the scene?
- Will they have suitcases?
- Who will have the lilo?
- What does it make sense for them to do before Rosie tosses a coin?
- When should Rosie start unpacking her suitcase?
- How long should Tanya spend trying to blow up the lilo?
- Should Tanya begin unpacking her suitcase? When?
- When and how does Rosie find the trunk, pull it out, and open it?

Ask the two students to try miming these actions (difficult with scripts in their hands!) as they work through the script.

Reviewing the work: Once the class is happy with the blocking they have created, lead a discussion around the significance of defining a set and blocking a scene. Points to consider could include:

- Were there stage directions for everything we decided the actors should do?
- What work still remains for the actors to do to arrive at a polished performance?



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WORKSHEET 1:

SETTING THE SCENE FOR MAMMA MIA!

Donna and her two friends, Tanya and Rosie, had been in a feisty girl pop group – Donna and the Dynamos – in the 1970s.

In 1979, being booked to sing in a nightclub on the Greek mainland was for Donna and her two independent-minded friends, a chance for them to spread their wings, but Donna got pregnant. Twenty years old and disowned by her parents in England, she decided to stay in Greece, moving to the small island nearby and opening a taverna.

The island can be reached by boat from the mainland but is so small it is visited only by the most discerning of tourists. Still, the taverna has enabled Donna to make a living – the result of hard work and her resilient personality. Her taverna is enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. Apparently, Donna has not needed or wanted a man to make her life feel complete. She has managed alone, bringing up her daughter Sophie on the island.

Now it is 1999 and to Donna's dismay, Sophie, now also twenty, is insisting on marrying Sky, a young man recently arrived from London who has been helping with the taverna. Sophie wants a perfect wedding – a white wedding with her English friends Ali and Lisa there as her bridesmaids, and Tanya and Rosie, who she regards as her aunts. Sophie also wants her father to give her away but her mother has always refused to talk about him. The fact is, Donna is not sure who Sophie's father is.

Finding her mother's diary for 1979, Sophie reads of her mother's brief love affairs with three men – Sam, Harry and Bill. Realising that one of them has to be her biological father, she writes to all three inviting them to her wedding – in Donna's name. They agree to come, but only Sophie knows this. The show begins with Sophie telling her newly arrived friends Ali and Lisa what she has done and showing them her mum's diary. This is what Donna had written:

July 17th

What a night! After the show, Sam rowed me over to the little island. We danced on the beach and kissed on the beach, and...

August 4th

What a night! I was still feeling depressed about Sam but after the show, Bill rented a motor-boat and I took him over to the island. One thing led to another and...

August 15th

What a night! Harry turned up out of the blue, so I said I'd show him the island. I must need my head examined but he was so sweet, I couldn't help it and...

Remembering the Sixties

In her autobiography *Promise of a Dream – Remembering the Sixties*, Sheila Rowbotham writes:
“ ... class in British society was changing noticeably in 1967... the relative prosperity of the previous decade, along with low unemployment, had resulted in a generation of young workers who were shedding deference. Young working-class women on the pill had acquired just a bit more space and confidence to break the rules... and by 1967 they were making their way in miniskirted droves through ‘Swinging London’. I was impressed when two blonde sassy independent travellers visited our house. They had just gone round the world dancing in cages. I was sure I would never have had the bottle...”



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WORKSHEET 2:

EXCERPT FROM SCENE 4 (Reproduced by kind permission of Catherine Johnson)

Rosie and Tanya, arriving on the island on the eve of Sophie's wedding, have been welcomed by Donna and Sophie and are settling themselves into Donna's room at the Taverna. Rosie is a writer of books on cooking. Tanya is a 'woman of the world' who has made a career out of marrying a string of wealthy men. Neither have children.

Donna's room is cheerful and comfortable and crammed with the detritus of twenty-odd years on the island. There is a dressing table and a mirror. A trunk with the Dynamos' old stage costumes is under Donna's bed. Rosie flips a coin to decide who gets the bed or the lilo.

T: Heads.

R: Oh!

It's tails. Rosie gives Tanya the lilo. Tanya attempts to blow it up.

R: Blow, don't suck...!

T: (Throwing the lilo to the floor) Let's see what you're wearing for the wedding then?

Rosie holds up a pair of baggy shorts.

T: You're joking!

R: (All innocence) What?... oh as if?!

T: Well. You could have been making some sort of statement on the tyranny of wedlock.

R: You'd know more about that than me.

T: Oh darling, you'll meet Mr. Right.

R: I have. I do... and all they want is to settle down and have babies. No thanks.

T: No... children can become such subversive little sods! I mean, who'd have thought that Donna, an icon of female independence, would have a daughter getting spliced at twenty?

R: White weddings are trendy.

T: What's wrong with these kids? Do you remember those tee-shirts we used to wear: 'marriage is an institution...'

R: '... for people who belong in an institution...'

T: Girls today seem to think that a woman's greatest achievement is getting a man.

R: You've had three husbands.

T: I rest my case.

R: (Finding the trunk under the bed) Ooh, look!

T: Oh my God!



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WORKSHEET 3:

EXCERPT FROM SCENE 2 (Reproduced by kind permission of Catherine Johnson)

Arriving together on the boat from the mainland, Bill, Sam and Harry walk up from the jetty and stop at Donna's taverna.

H: I remember an old hut here – I was dreading bedding down with the goats.

B: Give me goats before camels. There was this time in the Kalahari, the sun was beating down...

S: ...Sorry to interrupt you 'Indiana', but the point is – this is my taverna... I built it! Well, I designed it. Drew up the plans – what? – twenty-one years ago...? I can't believe she's actually gone and built the bloody thing.

H: Who?

S: Donna, who else. This is something I scribbled on the back of a menu – I had no idea...

B: How do you know it's yours?

S: Buildings are like babies. You always know your own.

B: I wouldn't know anything about babies. I've been living out of a rucksack for most of my life.

S: The 'Happy Wanderer' eh?

H: (To Bill) Do you think the island will inspire some prose?

B: I bloody well hope so. When I got the wedding invite, I sold my editor a piece on 'Childhood Haunts Re-visited'.

S: You were born here?

B: Ah, no... I was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia, but my mother's Greek. No, the only time I came to Greece was a visit to my Great-Aunt on the mainland and that was twenty-one years ago.

S: Twenty-one years? You know, this is beginning to feel like a set-up – hey, Bill – here's a story for you. Three men – strangers – receive an invitation to a wedding. They are invited to a place they haven't been to for twenty-one years, by a woman they haven't seen for twenty-one years... why are they here?

B: That's not bad... OK, Harry – what's your story, eh? What's torn you away from the Bank of England?

H: Oh, is this an interview? OK, well for me, Donna's invitation brought back many happy memories. (Spotting a guitar hanging on the wall) Gordon Bennett!

B: Is that a quote?

H: No, no, I know this guitar! HB – 'Head Banger', that's what they called me in those days – and DS – Donna Sheridan – I bought this for her! Ten quid and my Johnny Rotten tee-shirt – so now who says I'm an unadventurous old stick-in-the-mud?

S: Who says that?

H: My other half. A big house, a fast car and a season ticket to Chelsea isn't enough for some people, is it? They want The Great White Hunter, too. Well, I can do spontaneity. That's why I'm here. Donna knew my wild side. I was on my sixth-form trip to Paris when we met, and I just followed her to Greece – spontaneously...



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WORKSHEET 4:

ABBA SONG LYRICS

I Have A Dream

I have a dream, a song to sing
to help me cope with anything.
If you see the wonder of a fairy tale,
you can take the future even if you fail.

I believe in angels,
something good in everything I see,
I believe in angels
when I know the time is right for me.
I'll cross the stream;
I have a dream.

I have a dream, a fantasy,
to help me through reality.
And my destination makes it worth the while
pushing through the darkness
still another mile.

I believe in angels,
something good in everything I see,
I believe in angels
when I know the time is right for me.
I'll cross the stream;
I have a dream,
I'll cross the stream;
I have a dream.

I have a dream, a song to sing
to help me cope with anything.
If you see the wonder of a fairy tale,
you can take the future even if you fail.

I believe in angels,
something good in everything I see,
I believe in angels
when I know the time is right for me.
I'll cross the stream;
I have a dream.
I'll cross the stream;
I have a dream.

Money, Money, Money

I work all night, I work all day
to pay the bills I have to pay.
Ain't it sad,
and still there never seems to be
a single penny left for me,
that's too bad.

So in my dreams I have a plan,
if I got me a wealthy man
I wouldn't have to work at all,
I'd fool around and have a ball.

Money, money, money,
must be funny
in a rich man's world.
Money, money, money,
always sunny
in a rich man's world.
Aha, aha.
All the things I could do
If I had a little money,
it's a rich man's world.
It's a rich man's world.

A man like that is hard to find,
but I can't get him off my mind.
Ain't it sad,
and if he happens to be free
I bet he wouldn't fancy me,
that's too bad
So I must leave,
I'll have to go
to Las Vegas or Monaco,
and win a fortune in a game,
my life will never be the same.

(Repeat chorus twice)



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One Of Us

They passed me by,
all of those great romances.
You were, I felt, robbing me
of my rightful chances.
My picture clear,
everything seemed so easy,
and so I dealt you the blow,
one of us had to go.
Now it's different,
I want you to know.

One of us is cryin',
One of us is lyin'
in her lonely bed.
Staring at the ceiling,
wishing she was somewhere else instead.
One of us is lonely,
one of us is only
waiting for a call.
Sorry for herself,
feeling stupid, feeling small,
wishing she had never left at all.

I saw myself
as a concealed attraction.
I felt you kept me away
from the heat and the action.
Just like a child,
stubborn and misconceiving,
that's how I started the show,
one of us had to go.
Now I've changed and I want you to know.

(Repeat chorus)

Lay All Your Love On Me

I wasn't jealous before we met,
now every woman I see is a potential threat,
and I'm possessive, it isn't nice,
you've heard me saying that smoking was my only vice.
But now it isn't true, now everything is new
and all I've learned has overturned,
I beg of you:

Don't go wasting your emotion,
lay all your love on me.

It was like shooting a sitting duck,
a little small-talk, a smile and, baby, I was stuck.
I still don't know what you've done with me,
a grown-up woman should never fall so easily.
I feel a kind of fear when I don't have you near,
Unsatisfied, I skip my pride, I beg you dear:

Don't go wasting your emotion, lay all your love on me.
Don't go sharing your devotion, lay all your love on me.

I've had a few little love affairs,
they didn't last very long and they've been pretty scarce.
I used to think that was sensible,
it makes the truth even more incomprehensible.
'Cause everything is new, and everything is you,
and all I've learned has overturned,
what can I do?

Don't go wasting your emotion, lay all your love on me.
Don't go wasting your emotion, lay all your love on me.
Don't go wasting your emotion, lay all your love on me.
Don't go wasting your emotion, lay all your love on me.



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WORKSHEET 5: SONG ANALYSIS

GROUP:

SONG TITLE:

DATE RECORDED:

Lyrics	Voice/Voices	Instruments	Music



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WORKSHEET 6:

THE FATHER I HAD NEVER KNOWN

Anne Boston

“On my fifth birthday an announcement was made at morning prayers by one of the two small portly sisters who ran the school where my brother and I were pupils. It was Anne’s birthday, said Miss Galley, and today everybody must be nice to me because ‘Anne doesn’t have a daddy’.”

From “Growing up Fatherless” by Anne Boston. In “Fathers: Reflections by Daughters” edited by Ursula Owen, Virago, 1983.

Paul Palmer

“When I walked into the restaurant, I knew immediately it was him. He looked older than I’d imagined. The only images I’d had of him were crinkly, yellowing photos from the late 1960s. He was taller than me and looked annoyingly fit (his passion is horses). His Barbour jacket was well worn, his shoes spotless. This was my father. Face-to-face, the questions I had prepared to ask him evaporated. A cliché, I know, but words truly failed me. Here was a man, charming, elegant, witty, affluent – and all too human. Not the ogre, the ‘callous bastard’, I had conjured up in my youthful mind in place of anything tangible...

To anyone observing us, the conversation was relaxed, informal. We might have been a boss and his younger underling catching a few pints at lunchtime. But beneath the surface, I wondered if he felt as terrified, as gripped by a knot in the stomach, as I did...

I was brought up an only child here, in London and Essex. But always at the back of my mind was this distant, anonymous figure: my real father. The man who was not there when I scored my first rugby try aged 10, never there to drop me at school for the beginning of term, not there when I graduated from Oxford, not there when I married my wife...

Over lunch, I found myself examining him like a laboratory specimen. His hands, the greying hair, the facial features and mannerisms that, I had been told by family friends, were identical to mine...

So we talked. And as we did, a whole uncharted life opened up before me. A grandfather was a school master at a boys’ boarding school, and he had once been in the ‘old IRA’. It took me a minute to come to terms with this. “The IRA?” I spluttered. “Yes, but it was very different then,” my father replied. “This was Ireland in the 1920s. It was more like a guerrilla war. Everyone was Republican then.”

And so it went on. A cousin high up in the Dublin literary scene, relatives involved in all aspects of Irish political life. As I learned about these faceless people, I felt strangely comforted: there was a family out there, a club of which I was not a member but to which, by birth, I belonged. And I found myself, against all expectations, laughing at the stories.”

From “The Father I Had Never Known”, by Paul Palmer, London Evening Standard – 19th March 2003.

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MAMMA MIA! ORIGINAL CAST RECORDING

No. 543 115-2. Polydor Ltd. (UK) 1999.

VIDEOS/DVDS

ABBA – THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL – THE ABBA STORY

Universal Pictures, 1999.

Includes extracts from rehearsals and extracts from MAMMA MIA!. Running time: 90 mins.

WEBSITES

www.mamma-mia.com – Official website for MAMMA MIA!

www.abbasite.com – Official ABBA website. Gives biographies of ABBA members, history of the group etc.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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