

Elements of Drama Production

Program:	Mortified
Year Level:	Year 4 to Year 8
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; The Arts (Media); Humanities; Health and Physical Education (Personal Development)
Themes/Topics:	Adolescence; Families; Self and Relationships; Genre; Change; Growth and Development; Narrative Structure; Film Language; Humour and Satire; Stereotypes
Description:	This sequence of learning experiences draws upon <i>Mortified - Behind the Scenes Docu, Mortified: Episode 1 and Episode 9</i> , to introduce what the story is about, the central characters, key themes, and how it was produced.
Resources:	Episode 1: Taylor's DNA Episode 9: Return of the Mothership Worksheet 1: Using the Camera to Create Characters

Lesson plan:

1.1 What's the Story?

Introduction: What is *Mortified* all about?

Clip 1: *Mortified – Behind the Scenes Docu*

In this section of the documentary, Marny Kennedy, who plays the lead role of Taylor Fry, the Director, Pino Amenta, and key actors talk about the series. View this clip and have students record information about the series. The following questions may assist students to gather useful information:

- What is the series about? How did the director and actors describe what the series is about?
- What are the main ideas that each person conveyed about the series? List them.
- What descriptive words did the director and actors use about the series?
- Which visuals are used to align with these words? For example, the actor Andrew Blackman, who plays Taylor's embarrassing father, gives his interview dressed in hippy outfit. Describe the clips that have been selected for this scene. Why do you think they are important to convey a message?

1.2 Characters and Characterisation

Teachers should introduce students to look at:

- the concept of characterisation (the process of creating characters in fiction) and explain that TV/filmmakers use special techniques to create this concept.

- the headings detailed in the chart below as a way to focus attention on techniques that TV/filmmakers use to create characters. Discuss each of the categories and have students make some suggestions about how information, gathered from Lesson 1.1, could be sorted to fit into these categories.

Reading a TV character				
Character's name	Actor/Director's descriptive comments	Images (clips selected, costumes, make-up, props, camera angles, editing)	Action (acting, facial expressions, body language, special effects...)	Sound (music, dialogue, sound effects, silence)
Taylor Fry				
Hector				
Brittany				
Leon				
Don Fry				
Glenda Fry				
Layla Fry				

Individually, students are to sort sourced information onto their own copy of this chart. This can be done on paper or as an electronic spreadsheet.

Clip 2: *Mortified* - Behind the Scenes Doco

View the clips and consider what is said by the Director, Pino Amenta. Consider how each of the actors describes their own character.

1. Marny Kennedy plays 'Taylor Fry'
2. Nicholas Dunn plays 'Hector'
3. Maia Mitchell plays 'Brittany'
4. Luke Erceg plays 'Leon'

Have students cut up their lists and use removable adhesive to stick and move the information about on their charts. They can choose to use images and symbols as well as words to record the information.

In small groups, have students share their charts and identify similarities and interesting information. Encourage them to make changes as they think they are needed.

Use Worksheet 1: Using the Camera to Create Characters to make notes while viewing the selected clips, listed below. Encourage students to use these notes to add additional information to their charts.

Clip 3: Episode 1, *Taylor Speaking to Camera*



close up shot



mid shot

Observe how the director uses a close-up shot and a medium shot of Taylor.

- What do you learn about Taylor's character?
- Why do you think the filmmakers decided to have Taylor speak directly to the camera?
- How does this technique contribute to viewers' understanding about Taylor's character?

Clip 4: Episode 1, *Taylor Introducing Brittany*



extreme close up

View Clip 4 and answer the following questions:

- Why do you think extreme close-up shots have been used in this segment?
- What does this scene tell you about Taylor and how she perceives both herself and Brittany?

Clip 5: Episode 1, *Taylor Introducing Her Mother and Her Father*

View the Clip 5 and answer the following questions:

- What do these scenes show you about Taylor and about how she perceives both herself and her parents?
- Why do you think the TV/Filmmakers included a shot of Taylor's mum, Glenda, singing beside the mannequin?

While viewing this scene, observe Taylor's facial expressions and in particular her eyes and those of her school mates. Listen carefully to the dialogue to gain additional information.

Clip 6: Episode 1, *Taylor Introducing Her Sister*

View the Clip 6 and answer the following question:

- How does this scene build your understanding of Taylor and how she perceives both herself and Layla?

Clip 7: Episode 1, *Taylor Watching TV and Talking with the Dog*

View the Clip 7 and answer the following question:

- What additional information do you gain about Taylor's character during this scene?

Clip 8: Episode 1, *Taylor Interacting with Friend Hector and Sister Layla*

View the Clip 8 and answer the following question:

- What additional information do you gain about Taylor, Hector and Layla during this scene?

Clip 9: Episode 12, *Taylor, Her Sister Layla and Her Mum in the Kitchen Discussing the Year 6 Disco*

View the Clip 9 and answer the following question

- What additional information do you gain about Taylor, her Mum and Layla during this scene?

1.3 Getting the Part - Characters and Casting

Clip 10: *Mortified - Behind the Scenes Docu*

In this clip the actors describe their reaction to getting their parts for the series. Director, Pino Amenta, says 'It's the actors that make it come alive.' Discuss what he means by this quote. What does he mean when he said he was looking for "magic" between the actors?

- Compare what the Director, Pino Amenta, originally thought the characters of Taylor and Hector should look like, and what they finally became. Why did this change occur?
- Can you think of other television or film characters who do look more like the original descriptions of Taylor and Hector?
- Why do you think the casting director/s found that these two actors, Marny Kennedy who plays 'Taylor Fry' and Nicholas Dunn who plays 'Hector', perfect for these roles?

Students should use [Worksheet 2 - Casting Decisions](#) to explore these casting decisions.

Clip 11: *Mortified Moments 1 - Similarities to Character*

In this clip many of the actors talk about how they are similar to and different from the characters they play.

For further research on casting, students can explore the Live Action Teaching Kit in The Learning Centre at www.actf.com.au/education .

Working in pairs, have students create a 30 second news report about the casting for *Mortified*. This may be completed as a:

- TV news story
- web story
- blog
- newspaper story
- radio broadcast
- podcast

1.4 Production Design - Creating the 'Look' for the Series

Discuss with students the concept of 'production design' (the organisation and supervision of the making the series).

Clip 12: *Mortified – Behind the Scenes Docu, The Look*

Have students list what Director, Pino Amenta, describes as the main visual elements that influenced the design for this series, for example, visual humour, a surfing 'look', light and colour.

- What is the job of the production designer, Georgina Greenhill?
- What does the Art department provide for the film?

From the clips, freeze frame a few of the scenes. As a class, have students observe and list the design elements provided for the characters within each shot, for example, clothes, shoes, accessories, hair and makeup.

Repeat these observations and descriptions with another scene/s that shows a different location or set.



In small groups, students can work together to create a production design for Hector's or Brittany's bedroom. Students should write a design brief describing the 'look' they are attempting to create, giving reasons why and present their work as a poster with colours, fabric samples, drawings or magazine cut outs of furniture and accessories to suit a character's look .