

The Final Days of Bedlam

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A Playlab Publication



The role of the silent child is designed to present a clear opportunity for an ensemble to add or create meaning. Who is the silent child? When are they present or absent? If you choose to perform ‘The Silence Speaks’ scene, what themes or symbols are important to convey? (There’s also no reason to suggest why there can’t be *multiple* silent children.)

Scene Guide

Below is a full list of the provided scenes and story blocks, with ideas for performance.

How We Got To Now

This is a scene designed for exposition. It's the most obvious choice to begin the play (but not necessarily the most interesting).

The dialogue here is to be broken up between the ensemble, who are acting like a chorus. Some lines may be presented as newsreaders, some as concerned parents, some as students.

Experiment with what lines might be presented with the entire ensemble saying them in unison. Or multiple people might repeat certain words.

This might be an opportunity to add an audio visual or design component.

This script was written in 2018, so the references to Australian politicians might be out-dated. Feel free to update.

The Perfect School

This is an advertisement. It may be filmed or presented on stage.

The New Curriculum Committee

The first scene is for a group of seven, although it can be made for a smaller group with some creativity: Smithy and JJ could become one role (delete JJ's lines or give them to Smithy), and Bee and Pod could become one role (again, delete Bee's lines or give them to Pod).

The silent child may be present for this scene.

There's no reason why these characters can't appear again in other scenes, just re-named.

The second scene in this story is for far fewer people and a couple of characters only. This scene could be removed without interfering with the first scene. The silent child re-emerges at the end of this scene and plays a potentially important role.

Secrets & Spies

This is a short story for three people, spread over three scenes. All three scenes can be performed in sequence, or broken up throughout a larger piece (as they are in this document). You may choose to perform just the first scene, or just the first two, or all three together.



The Start of Bedlam

This is originally written as a monologue. A student gives an oral presentation in class. This oral may belong to a character we've already met, or a new character. The character may be addressing an audience with no one else on stage. They could also have a full class and teacher to present to. They may have AV accompaniment, or even some kind of physicalised symbolic representation of themes.

Don't Panic

These are two scenes with a time jump in between them, designed for three actors. It's possible to perform either scene without the other, but they're probably easier for an audience to digest as a pair. There's an opportunity in these scenes for the actors to devise a 'team chant'.

In The Nurses' Office

This is three scenes designed to be performed by two people (although this is another example where the silent child could be present). These three scenes could flow one after another. You could choose to perform just the first scene, or the first two.

This'll Be On The Exam

A large ensemble or choral piece, like 'How We Got To Now'. This is a scene where cast aren't playing young people — they're playing teachers.

Results

A single scene between three people.

The Silence Speaks

As mentioned above, this is the scene most open to interpretation by the ensemble, and thus the most easily versatile to adopt to the themes or message the ensemble might want to convey. The scene includes suggestions of music, books extracts, or poems that may be useful reference points, but these are suggestions only.

A Gentle Offering

This is a monologue. Again, like 'The Start of Bedlam', it may be from a character we've already met, or a stranger to us. They may perform to the audience, or we may see the object of their affection. How that person responds in the final lines is up to the ensemble. The speaker or the recipient of the monologue *could* be the silent child, or anyone else we've met previously.

The Final Bell

A large ensemble or choral piece, designed to wrap up the show.

The Final Days of Bedlam

HOW WE GOT TO NOW

For the ensemble.

We are your sons and daughters.

This is how we got to now.

Good evening.

Good morning.

Good howdy-hey and what's-a-poppin'?

This is your news.

Announcements today for our education / system.

Big trouble for those awaiting medical treatment / in regional areas.

A shake-up in Parliament with *another* leadership spill.

Prime Minister Turnbull

Shorten

Plebiseck

Joyce

Wong

Joyce again

Hanson



Roy

Joyce *again*

Smith

Smith

Smith

“It is time.”

“Now’s the time.”

“Change.”

“Hope.”

“We must protect our individualism.”

“We must unify.”

Vaccinations are now optional.

“We must protect our right to choose.”

Scientists are calling it an epidemic / that could soon
spread out of control.

Experts, experts, experts / I’m an expert in my child.

I don’t like needles. They give me nightmares. I don’t
want needles.

Not *all* scientists agree.

That’s how science works. / There’s always going to be
contention but you can’t —

Please. My daughter. She can’t breathe. Please. Please help.

Stay home. That’s the clear message now being received by
parents who have a child / with allergies.

Peanuts? Gluten? Dust? We can no longer care for this /
many diets.

Every child is a precious snowflake / they must be protected.

Snowflakes melt.

It's just not safe. We home school. It's easier. We're in control.

I like it. I was bored at school but now I'm challenged all
the time. And I go to dance class for social life and / I don't
get bullied anymore.

I just wag most days. So yeah. Sure. I'm 'home schooled.'

Daily bunker drills are now a fact of life / for most schools.

We can't afford the bunker space, I'm sorry. / We're having
to make cuts.

Within a few weeks of each other, technical corporations
have announced new, private education systems that
students can undertake at their leisure and convenience.

Critics have already raised privacy concerns.

I'd rather they have my data than risk going to my local
school, I mean, you just can't / be sure anymore.

The pay is better. I can't afford to keep my family on the
public school wage anymore. / I feel bad but it's just the
way it is.

I teach here because it's easy. It was a well paying job with
my qualifications. What? God no. I hate kids.

Let's watch a video.

Are you crying, Miss?

You can't take my phone!



Don't touch me!

I'm warning you, sir!

I was alive when security scanners at school were just some crazy thing they did in the States / now it's here and thank God!

Today

Today

Today

Today

The government announced the end of public schooling.

All government schools will shut down at the end of the year.

Around the country, students are celebrating.

School's out!!!!

Yes!

You can't control our minds anymore!

Freedom.

This is the end.

These are the final days of Bedlam State High.

THE PERFECT SCHOOL

For the ensemble. Following lines may be distributed amongst many people.

It's dark.

PRESENTER

Confused?

Scared?

Uncertain of the future?

Me too.

We live in a dark time.

Political instability continues to rock the government.

Our nation is plagued by a continuing economic crisis.

The result? Panic and distrust.

We must all make choices.

PARENT1

I choose not to vaccinate my child. I simply can't take the risk.

PARENT2

I choose to arm my child. They need to be safe. That's my right.

PRESENTER

Children are sick.

Public health is collapsing.

Our education system is faltering under cuts.

And now ... they're closing the schools.

And kids are expected to stay at home and learn everything from a computer, with material that's been designed by billionaires living on the other side of the world!



PARENTS The children. Someone please think of the children.

PRESENTER That's where we come in.

Light. Change. Music.

At St. Mark's, we're committed to providing your kids with the education they deserve.

A KID is getting a vaccination. The NURSE applying it gives a thumbs up.

KID1 I'm getting a vaccination!

KID2 Me next! Me next!

PRESENTER We're not afraid of the hard topics. Our full curriculum is from the good old days: arts, science and religion!

Three KIDS are studying.

KID3 I'm learning about Shakespeare!

KID4 I'm learning about astronomy!

KID5 I'm learning about Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and more!

PRESENTER Hooray for education!

ALL Hooray!

PRESENTER Did I mention sports?

A KID is playing with a ball.

KID6 I play with balls!

PRESENTER Our school is funded by you — the hard-working parent — to ensure a quality and exclusive education. A full expulsion and discipline policy ensures errant elements are kept out!

KID7	I love St. Marks
KID8	Thank you St. Marks.
KID9	St Marks nurtured my curiosity.
PRESENTER	St. Marks. We're here for you.

PHI Ignore them. You could come to mine.

POD Gross!

BEE Why would we want to hang out on the Western side with the guzzlers?

POD The water's all contaminated over there.

PHI We have a big lounge room, and Mum and Dad are out all the time working, so I'm just saying ...

ALI Thank you for the suggestion.

POD It's yuck.

KAL Oi. Cut it out.

BEE Protecting your lover are you? Hey?

KAL Shut up.

POD You two probably just want a 'private classroom' to make out in.

BEE Yeah totally!

ALI Moving on. [*to PHI*] Your suggestion sounds great.

JJ What about the water though?

PHI That's a lie. Made up by idiots.

SMITHY So we should just believe you?

ALI If you're concerned you should bring your own water.

SMITHY It smells there though. The lake's gone berserk and —

ALI Look, no place is going to be perfect. And it's only temporary until we find somewhere —

JJ What if we just stay?



POD I heard they're tearing this place down straight away.

SMITHY I heard it's going to be a Bunnings.

JJ Sick!

BEE Dude, Bunnings is the best.

SMITHY Actually, we should totally sign up as a community group and sell sausages on a Saturday. That way we'll be able to afford a place in no time.

JJ That's genius.

BEE Dude, sausages are the best.

KAL We won't be able to afford a place just by —

SMITHY I don't know, they sell pretty quick.

POD Yeah, we raised a bunch for the football team last year.

PHI Great to see that money went to the football team, not, you know, keeping the school open.

BEE Oh whatever.

POD Objection miss/sir.

ALI You don't need to address me as —

POD Whatever. They were just racist against football players.

KAL There's no objections. No sir or miss. And you don't understand what racism means.

POD Go pash your secret lover, Nugget.

ALI Okay, can we just —

PHI What's a nugget?

POD and BEE laugh.

JJ It's just a word for crap. They're being dumb.

SMITHY This is insane.

BEE Dude, nuggets are the best.

POD No, nuggets are bad. Remember?

BEE Oh yeah.

ALI Ok, order.

KAL Yeah, order.

ALI I don't need your —

KAL I'm just helping.

ALI Ok. Next. Curriculum. We need to think about how we're going to learn, how we're going to teach. I'm going to open up the floor to —

SMITHY I can teach a course on the history and mythology of *Star Wars*. It would need three years.

PHI Oh my God.

ALI We need to make decisions about more controversial stuff.

SMITHY Like whether to include the prequels?

ALI Like how we teach science. Religion. Sex Ed.

BEE and POD giggle.

KAL Guys.

BEE You going to teach us Sex Ed? You two in your love fest?

PHI There's some pretty clear and clean stuff about anatomy online, we could —

POD You're going to teach us about sex?