

# Year 9 Scripted Plays – DNA

## Who is Dennis Kelly?

Dennis Kelly is a British playwright and screenwriter, born in 1970 in London. He didn't come from a theatre background—in fact, he left school at 16 and worked in supermarkets before discovering drama. He later studied at Goldsmiths University and became a successful writer.

He co-wrote the script (called a “book” in musical theatre) for the musical *Matilda*, with comedian Tim Minchin

Kelly is known for writing stories that explore difficult topics like power, morality, guilt, and group behaviour.

His plays often ask big questions and don't always give easy answers.

## Tempo Rhythm

Stanislavski used rhythm to help actors understand their character's emotional state. He believed actors should find the rhythm that matches their character's feelings. Think about how rhythm can influence your physical performance without using

## Sound Scapes

The group acts as a live ‘orchestra’ to create the sound for a scene. Using their voices (and body percussion if appropriate), the group paints a soundscape of a particular theme or mood. The purpose of a soundscape is to help the audience believe that you are in a specific setting. Soundscapes can be naturalistic or abstract, using repetition, fragmentation and patterns to create a non-naturalistic approach

## Storyboard

Storyboarding is where a series of still images are created which breaks the plot down to create a visual representation of a story

## Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is the transmission of messages or signals through a nonverbal methods such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and body language

## What is DNA about?

*DNA* was written in 2007 as part of a National Theatre project to create modern plays for young people.

It's now a popular text for Drama and English because it deals with themes that are relevant to teenagers.

The story centres around a group of teenagers who do something terrible—an act that spirals out of control.

Rather than face up to what they've done, they decide to lie and cover it up... and that leads to more problems.

At the heart of the play are questions like:

- What happens when loyalty to your group becomes dangerous?
- Is staying silent just as bad as doing something wrong?
- Can a lie ever be more helpful than the truth?

## Why is DNA important?

*DNA* looks at how people behave in groups.

It challenges us to think about responsibility and consequences.

It shows how easily peer pressure can push people into doing the wrong thing.

It's written in a really sharp, modern style—with fast, sometimes fragmented dialogue and lots of subtext.

## Non-Naturalistic Dialogue

The speech patterns, especially from Jan and Mark, are fragmented, repetitive, and incomplete. Often lines trail off, overlap, or are disjointed. Reflects panic, confusion, guilt, and a sense of realism without being fully naturalistic.

Example:

*“We were just, you know, we were just, we were just...”*

## Monologues

Leah delivers several long monologues to Phil, who remains silent. These reveal her inner thoughts, emotions, and morality, while also allowing the audience to reflect on the play's themes. The lack of response creates dramatic tension and shows the power imbalance. Monologues are a powerful device for character development.