

**19 - 26  
MARCH**

Birmingham Repertory Theatre,  
in association with Ramps on the Moon, presents

# **THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR**

**By Nikolai Gogol  
Adapted by David Harrower**



**BIRMINGHAM  
REPERTORY  
THEATRE**

**A fresh and funny new adaptation  
of Gogol's classic comedy**

# The Government Inspector REP Insight

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## Introduction

Welcome to this REP Insight on **The Government Inspector** directed by Roxana Silbert. The script is David Harrower's 2011 adaptation, first produced at London's Young Vic Theatre and directed by Richard Jones.

Nikolai Gogol's satirical Russian classic has also been translated in English under the titles *The Inspector General* and *The Inspector*. **The Government Inspector** premiered at the Alexandrinsky Theatre, Saint Petersburg in 1836. Nicholas I, Tsar at the time and one of the first to see **The Government Inspector**, is said to have taken a liking to Gogol's masterpiece, commenting that the play ridiculed everyone, most of all himself.

There is no denying that Russia has a long and complicated history which at times has been terribly bleak. "The timeline of Russian serfdom stretches for an incredible 800 years and in the main, was the backdrop for unspeakable hardship and suffering." (Reed, 2011)

Allegedly based on an anecdote recounted to Gogol by Pushkin, mistaken identity acts as a lynchpin in the plot of **The Government Inspector**. The play itself deals with prominent issues of its time; human corruption, bribery and dishonest bureaucracy yet these themes are still relatable today. Revised in 1842, **The Government Inspector** is set in Imperial Russia under the reign of its gargantuan empire. The timeless classic satirises human greed and stupidity. It pokes fun at the stuffy higher classes of Imperial Russia, steeped in antiquity. **The Government Inspector** is a comedy of errors ridiculing the extensive political corruption of Imperial Russia at the time. Gogol was part of the revolution that held a mirror up to society and made Russia take another look at itself, shaming it into improvement.

**The Government Inspector** is relevant to a modern audience both in the themes it portrays and in how they are dramatically presented. Class systems, governments, authority, power, public services, inspection fever or 'the Ofsted factor', fear of the unknown and keeping face all feature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century play as well as being current and relatable themes today. **The Government Inspector** illustrates these themes through the use of disguise, slapstick and mistaken identity – some of the founding dramatic devices in use since at least 16<sup>th</sup> century – so simple, and yet so utterly effective.

These resources contain background information on the play, the production and creative team, Ramps on the Moon project, suggested Drama and English activities and an interview with the director. We hope you find them useful.

## **Characters in the play**

Anton Antonovich – the Governor or Mayor of the town

Anna Andreyevna – his wife

Maria Antonovna – his daughter

Luka Lukich Khlopov – director of schools

Madame Khlopov – his wife

Ammos Fyodorovich Lyapkin Tyapkin – a judge

Artemi Philippovich Zemlyanika – charity commissioner and warden of the hospital

Ivana Kuzmich Shpyokin – a postmaster

Ivan Alexandrovich Khlestakov – a government civil servant

Osip – his servant

Pyotr Ivanovich Dobchinski – Independent gentleman

Pyotr Ivanovich Bobchinski – Independent gentleman

Dr Christian Ivanovich Hubner – a district doctor

Karobkin – another official

Madame Karobkin – his wife

Ukhavyortov – a police superintendent

Pugovkin Abdulin – a shopkeeper

Mishka – servant of the governor

Another shopkeeper

The locksmith's wife

The sergeant's wife

Waiter at the inn

## Synopsis

The Mayor of a small Russian town receives a letter informing that an incognito government inspector will arrive shortly to investigate the town. A hubbub of activity begins as the crooked Mayor and his corrupt cronies attempt to cover up their misdeeds.

It is reported that a suspicious person arrived recently from Saint Petersburg and is staying at the inn. This person is Khlestakov, an impoverished young civil servant. When the Mayor and his crew learn that Khlestakov has been charging his large hotel bill to the crown, they think **he** is the dreaded government inspector!

The Mayor and his associates treat Khlestakov with the most lavish welcome, showing him round the town. Eager to impress, they hope they've done enough to cover up the shoddy operation of their school, hospital, police station and court house – the latter was operating as a hunting lodge until they heard of the inspector! Accepting generous bribes from the town officials, Khlestakov soaks it all up. Upon realising they've mistake his identity; Khlestakov spins elaborate yarns of his life as a high-ranking government official. Khlestakov plays along with his little game, reaping the rewards of authority. He finds humour in the officials' terrified deference and chuckles to himself that he's landed on his feet in this town.

The Mayor offers his house for Khlestakov to reside in who accepts and flirts outrageously with Maria and Anna, the Mayor's wife and daughter. Getting carried away with the facade, Khlestakov proposes to Maria.

Sick and tired, the village merchants beg Khlestakov to have the Mayor dismissed for the ridiculous bribes he offers for his demanding orders. Khlestakov agrees, promising to oust the Major from his position while pocketing still more "loans" from the merchants. The sergeant and locksmith's wives also put a word in Khlestakov's ear about the Mayor's cruel and greedy heart.

The Mayor arrives home flustered, denying all accounts of misconduct to the 'inspector', fearful he has uncovered the town's wrong doings. Anna announces Khlestakov's proposal to Maria and the Mayor proudly gives his blessing. Meanwhile, Osip had reasoned with Khlestakov, persuading him it would be wise for them leave town before Khlestakov blows his own cover, pointing out that the inspector façade and now a marriage proposal are too dangerous to keep up. Osip enters just as the engagement is arranged and Khlestakov announces their departure back to St Petersburg for a, "Couple of days tops."

The Mayor's friends arrive, singing his praises. He summons the merchants; sure he has the upper hand now his daughter is engaged to the inspector and boasts of the proposal...

Suddenly, the Postmaster arrives with an intercepted letter from Khlestakov to a friend. He writes of his lavish time in the town and how they mistook him for a government inspector as well as his opinion of them all!

The Mayor is furious and the group start to argue. Another message arrives, this time announcing the arrival of the real government inspector and asking the mayor to report to the inn immediately.

## About the author: Nikolai Gogol

Born in Ukraine in 1809, Nikolai Gogol's literary talents started early when he wrote poetry and prose for his high school magazine and became known in school performances for his comic portrayal of old men and women. Gogol is considered to have built foundations for 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian realism with his novel *Myortvye Dushi (Dead Souls)* and short story *Shinel (The Overcoat)*.



In 1828, Gogol moved to St Petersburg in the hope of working as a civil servant. He soon realised his lack of money and connections would get him nowhere in this field. He tried out as an actor but with an unsuccessful audition, he turned to poetry. Seeking to succeed as a poet and remembering something he wrote in high school, he took a chance and published the poem. Unfortunately, it was a complete flop and Gogol burnt every copy. With the idea of emigrating to America, Gogol embezzled his mother's money for the mortgage on her farm and sailed to Germany. He never reached America but instead toured Germany, soon running out of money and returning to St Petersburg where he started an ill paid government post.

The Ukrainian countryside inspired Gogol from a young age and this is what he was drawn back to in beginning his writing. Gogol wrote for periodicals while in his government post. He wrote of the colourful countryside and its people that he remembered as child and blended these with Ukrainian folklore. Published in 1831–32 under the title *Vechera na Khutore Bliz Dikanki (Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka)*, Gogol wrote eight narratives in two volumes in an upbeat and sometimes colloquial prose, an enticing breath of fresh air for Russian literature.

Gogol became famous overnight and poets Alexander Pushkin and Vasily Zhukovsky, among many others, admired his work. Pushkin would become a trusted friend; Gogol valued his taste and criticism. Gogol was teaching history at a girl's school then became a history professor at St. Petersburg University in 1834 but left after a year feeling ill equipped for the position. Gogol concentrated his efforts in the next year on *Mirgorod* and *Arabeski (Arabesques)*, published in 1835. Though humour and satirical writing, Gogol's later work revealed a pessimism and bitterness, reflecting the gap between romantic escapism and the harshness of real life.

Pushkin inspired Gogol with the themes for his next works, *The Government Inspector* and *Dead Souls*, which were prominent landmarks in both Russian literature and Gogol's future. Tsar Nicolas I ordered *The Government Inspector* to show specially, however, press, critics and officials were not pleased. Gogol fled to Rome where he was more suited to the Italian lifestyle and it was here that he wrote *Dead Souls*.

*Dead Souls* and the first edition of Gogol's collected works were published in 1842. Within Gogol's writing, democratic intellectuals spotted a spirit akin to their own liberal aspirations. When Pushkin died, Gogol was seen as the literary head of Russia. Gogol recognised his ability to chastise abuse through the power of laughter and thus sought to show Russia how to live righteously in an evil world. He continued *Dead Souls* as a sort of *Divine Comedy*, with part one already published and

acting as *Inferno*, intending to create parts two and three in which Chichikov's moral regeneration takes the roles of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

Gogol attempted part 2 over the next 10 years but found his creativity worn out. The drawings of his negative characters had life but the portrayal of his virtuous characters, the ones he was so eager to capture, appeared dull and lifeless. He believed God no longer wanted him exemplify a more worthy existence in his writing. Instead Gogol turned his attentions to *Bybrannyye mesta iz perepiski s druz'yami* (1847; *Selected Passages from Correspondence with My Friends*). He seems to undo the satirical work of his past, praising those he ridiculed previously. Belinsky, once his admirer, fiercely criticised Gogol's latest work. Gogol submerged himself in his religion and in 1848 made a pilgrimage to Palestine. He finally settled in Moscow but here came under the influence of a fanatical priest who ordered Gogol to burn (what we assume to be) the completed manuscript of the second volume of *Dead Souls*. Ten days later, in early March 1852, Gogol died from a quasi-religious rite of fasting and boiling baths.

Gogol's influence on Russian literature was enormous, even despite the twists and turns in his life. His works like *The Government Inspector*, *Dead Souls*, and *The Overcoat* formed the basis of Belinsky's "natural school" which set the trend in subsequent Russian fiction. Fyodor Dostoyevsky adopted Gogol's elaborate and restless prose and satirist Mikhail Saltykov, followed Gogol's realism, while Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky continued Gogol's effort to transcend "mere literature."

## **Ramps on the Moon & Graeae Theatre Company**

*The Government Inspector* is the first of a series of productions as part of Ramps on the Moon project.

Ramps On The Moon is a ground-breaking touring project that signals a step change in disability arts provision in the UK.

Led by New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich, 'Ramps on the Moon' will bring together a collaborative network of seven national portfolio organisation theatres including New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich (with Graeae as strategic partner), Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Nottingham Playhouse, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse and Sheffield Theatres. The network, which spans the country, includes theatres that are committed to offering opportunities to disabled people by putting disabled artists and audiences at the centre of their programmes, to help the mainstreaming of disability arts and culture.

Awarded £2.3million to fund the first three years of the ambitious six-year project, it will create three new pieces of high quality touring theatre. Each venue will co-produce shows over consecutive years, aiming to give all the organisations direct experience at working with disabled artists and learning how to develop disabled audiences. This will teach each theatre how to integrate disabled people into everything they do going forward, create a collaborative circuit of regional theatres and tackle the current low levels of attendance by disabled audiences.

Disabled people are at the heart of this project – artists will be integrated into casts in a variety of ways such as using sign language, screen projections and live audio descriptions – and organisations will reach out to and develop disabled audiences in each area and beyond.



## Interview with the director: Roxana Silbert



1. What drew you to directing *The Government Inspector*?

It's a classic masterpiece; it's a flawlessly created play. I love what it's about. I love the style of the way that it's written. I think it's about self deception. It works on so many levels, this play. But it's a play that on one hand is about corruption – which of course is all over the news and very present at the moment – but on the other, and on a more emotional level, it is about how people deceive themselves and deceive others and the social and personal costs of deception. And I think its challenge for a director is that it lives in both worlds: it lives in a very naturalistic, realist world, and it also lives in a more philosophical, world of the soul. And trying to marry both those things is a real challenge.

2. What is it like to direct a play that is set two centuries ago, is your process different from directing a contemporary play?

Yes, it's completely different – my background is completely in directing new plays. So I've always worked on new plays, really until very recently and of course you always have the writer in the room. And often you've been involved in that play from its inception: so you've known what it's going to be about; you've read various drafts of it – so you've **really** understood the writer's brain – what the writer's doing; how they're doing it; what they're trying to achieve. It's an organic being: there's a really interesting thing about directing new plays which is the Venn diagram of where the director gets very involved in the writing of the play and where the writer has quite a lot of influence on the production – because often a first production is a very genuine collaboration between a director and a writer.

3. Does *The Government Inspector* have a message, what is it for you?

I think brilliant plays don't have messages but I think they ask a lot of questions. I think the question in this play is about public and private selves and about authenticity and the cost of not being authentic. I think we are in a culture which celebrates the extrovert character, the extrovert personality, the achiever, the person who makes a lot of money, who has a lot of material goods. And then there's a sort of counter culture which is very strong where there's a lot of apps where we do headspace and meditate and try and connect with our inner being and we all do yoga and drink lots of water. And these things are in absolute tension with each other, and I think this is something that this play really taps into. So I think it **is** very resonant. And because of the cast we have, because we have a cast that is an integrated able body and disabled and D/deaf cast, the strand of the play that is about **show** I think is heightened. Because the body fascism that exists now is horrendous, it is awful, and it is terrible for young people, and that sense that you're never going to be beautiful enough, or strong enough, or anything enough – it's impossible. The models that are set in front of you are impossible to achieve, however much you diet, however much you exercise. That is as much about deceiving others, not being able to present yourself physically, as you actually are, is part of that deception in our culture.

4. Is there a medium that is important to you when directing or that you particularly like to include in your work e.g. music, choral speaking, physical theatre? What can we expect to find in *The Government Inspector*?

I think the joy of theatre is that it is a medium that uses all other mediums and scavenges from them. So there is a composer and a sound designer on board who will create new music and a soundscape. I think sound is really important because often it can create atmospheres that you can't create just through the text. It can create the world outside, so in this play we're inside a room but there's this whole other world outside of the play that's always impinging, which we don't see, but that maybe the music can support.

I will work with a movement director. It's a very physical piece. It has real elements of commedia and physical comedy in it. Aisha is the movement director, she's brilliant, she trained at Lecoq and she runs an MA in movement and she's trained most of the movement directors in this country. So she will come in and work with the actors to explore the physicality of characters. Because it's a slightly heightened world but you've got to stay very truthful and it's how you find that in your body.

And then there's a new element which I've never really worked with before which is video. This is a project that aspires to be completely accessible, so signing, surtitling and audio description will be absolutely integrated into the production; these are technologies which I haven't really worked with before which I'm really excited about. So there's a fantastic video artist called Tim Bird who is projecting the surtitles, but once you've started working with someone, you see all the other options and opportunities for projection. One of the things we've talked about is the problem with this inspector who comes; he is himself, but it's the stuff that everyone else projects onto him, and what they project onto him is all the dreams and aspirations that they have for living this incredibly European and exotic life in St. Petersburg. But also the terrible fear that he might find out what terrible things that they have been doing in their town. So there's something in the projection which is also a metaphor for the way that they engage and communicate with this man.

5. What's the first thing you do in rehearsal when starting work on a new show?

I'm afraid I'm really, really dull and what I do is I get the cast to read it. I feel it's like rite of passage that nobody particularly likes but everyone has to do. And I think it's really important that the actors start doing something together. So I'll show everybody the model box, because it's good for them to have a sense of how we're placing it and what our world of the play is. Then we'll have 2 or three days which is round-the-table and it is an opportunity to ask all questions. All questions, any questions, at all. Some of it might be historical, some of it might be the research type of stuff that we were talking about, some of it might be about character or not understanding a word, not knowing a place, talking about characters that are described off stage and making them live. We're having an academic come in, who is a Gogol expert, to talk. The assistant director has done a lot of visual research so there'll be a lot of images on the walls of the places that are mentioned, clothes that people would be wearing, all of the things that we've talked about, and often we'll then get up and start working physically, so Aisha will start just feeding in some of the physical work that we expect to kind of trickle through into the play.

6. What is it like to be directing a play where you have no contact with the writer?

Now obviously when you direct a classic play, you don't have the relationship I spoke about earlier with the writer. So you have to **find** ways of researching the play. And that research is multi fold.

There's lots of things that I probably need to know about Russia, which I have done quite a lot of research on: specifics of this period, all the references, the place, the sense of space of Russia – the **vast** distances – when they talk about someone coming from St Petersburg, and it taking **five** days to get there and that there's **nothing** around. Then it's about trying to get into Gogol and what was going on for Gogol and in a way, trying to find the writer in the play. So I do quite a lot of research around reading other plays, reading biographies, watching movies. And then getting a feel for the **tone** of the play – and often the most difficult thing about directing is getting the tone of a play right.

7. Describe the play in three words.

It's dark, it's funny and it's existential.

## Production design

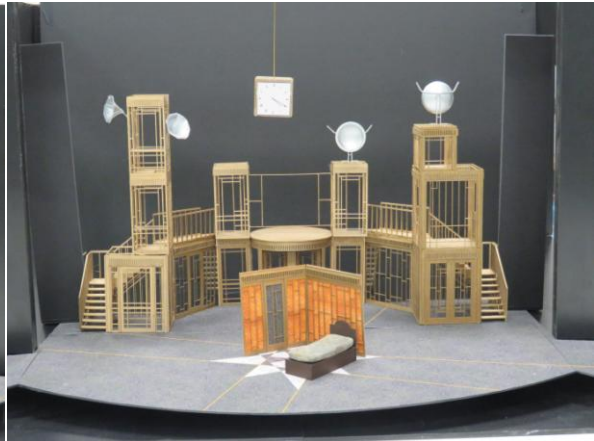
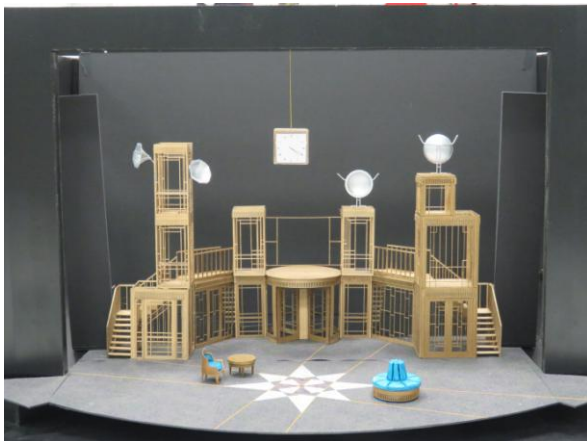
### Creative Team

**Roxana Silbert** Director  
**Ewan Marshall** Associate Director  
**Ti Green** Set and Costume Designer  
**Chahine Yavroyan** Lighting Designer  
**Ben and Max Ringham** Composers and Sound Designers  
**Timothy Bird** Video Designer



### Set Design

Below is a miniature version of the set called a **model box**. The designers and production team make this before they create the real thing. They create the moveable set to go inside the scene too like the bed and chairs you can see in the photos below.



### Costume design

Before any costumes are made, the designer gathers research and ideas for potential design. Below are some photos collected for design inspiration.

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Khlestakov



Mayor



Maria



Bobchinski and Dobchinski



## Drama activities

### Moving in character

Begin by walking neutrally around the room and releasing all tension. We all hold tension in different parts of our bodies. It could be your shoulders, your back or even the back of your knees. Identify where it is for you and focus on letting this tension go. Choose a character from *The Government Inspector*. Make decisions about how your character walks and how it differs from you:

- Is it slower?
- Do they take longer strides?
- Do they have any habits such as fiddling with their hair or clothes or keeping their hands in their pockets?

Identify at least one physical trait your character has and demonstrate this to the rest of the group.

Finally, walk across the room as yourself. Repeat the walk but this time as your character. Make the differences clear to the rest of the group.

### Finding your voice

Using your chosen character from *The Government Inspector*, consider the way in which your character speaks and how this differs from your own voice:

- Do they speak quickly?
- Do they have a different accent?
- Is their pitch higher or lower?
- Are they softly spoken or do they have a loud voice?

Identify at least one vocal trait your character has and demonstrate this to the rest of the group.

Finally, choose a line from the play and say this in your own voice and then in the voice of your chosen character.

### Still images

Create five still images of the most important moments of the play.

Explain to your classmates why you have selected these images. What might the characters in your images be thinking or saying during the moments you have selected?

### Thought tracking

Using your still images, have one person from the group move through the image and tap characters on the shoulder to hear their thoughts.

### Hot-seating

Select key characters from the still images and put them in the 'hotseat'. One member of the group chooses one of the characters and sits in facing the class, this is the hot seat. The group take turns to ask questions of the person in the hotseat who answers as their chosen character.

### Unseen scenes

Discuss events in the play that are talked about but not seen.

Work in small groups to compile a list and identify sections of the text that indicate the events, e.g:

#### Act 1 Scene 2

- Bobchinski No no me..! After I left you, sir, after you opened that letter from whatsisname, you're godfather to his son, I ran fast as I could, to Korobkin's house
- Mayor Like I told you to...
- Bobchinski Exactly. Like you told me to. But he wasn't in. So I ran on to Raskakovski's house, no-one there either – so next was Ivan Kuzmich's house and he was there – weren't you?
- Postmaster I was. I was there.
- Bobchinski ...so I told him what you told me and as I was leaving there I bumped into him.
- Dobchinski Near the pie shop.
- Bobchinski THANK YOU. Near the pie shop.

#### Act 4 Scene 9

- Shop-keeper 3 The Mayor's a thief and a liar – he's ruining us, destroying us. Every kopeck we make goes into his stomach.
- Shop-keeper 4 Evicting our families, pulling down our houses, stealing the milk from the mouths of our babies.
- Shop-keeper 5 I sell wheat and corn to make flour and bread – every deal I make he takes 20 per cent.
- Khlestakov I didn't realise he was such a...
- Shop-keeper 5 He's got a secret plan – he wants to own the whole town. The young and the old – rule over us all.
- Shop-keeper 1 He wants to be the Czar – no, he wants to be God. He's the anti-Christ, sir, he's the Devil in disguise.

#### Act 4 Scene 10

- Khlestakov And you are?
- Serg Wife The Sergeant's widow. Ivanova.
- Khlestakov What did he do to you?
- Serg Wife Had me flogged.
- Khlestakov Oh.
- Serg Wife Twenty lashes.

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Khlestakov      Why?

Serg Wife      Police arrested me. There was a punch-up. Some women at market. Nothing to do with me. I was alone in a cell for three days.

Then work in small groups to improvise one of these unseen scenes and share with the group.

### **Improvisation**

Work in small groups to improvise:

- The start of the play when the Mayor tells his delegates that an inspector is coming.
- A little later when Bobchinski and Dobchinski arrive with news of a stranger at the inn who they think is the inspector.
- When the Mayor and Dobchinski meet Khlestakov and Osip for the first time at the inn.
- When Khlestakov woos Maria and Anna
- The Mayor gives his blessing for Anna to marry Khlestakov but Osip enters announcing their departure.
- What other key moments could you explore?

Once you have shared these short improvisations, ask the class to 'hotseat' selected characters.

### **Time to act**

In groups, choose an extract of the script. Rehearse it then perform it to the other groups.

Give each other constructive criticism after each performance:

- What did you think worked well?
- What could be better if you did the scene again?
- How did your textual analysis and character work help?
- Did you feel you had a stronger sense of who your character was?
- Was there anything you felt needed more work in terms of character development?

### **Set design**

What elements would you need to make your own version of the play?

How would your set look different from this production? Would you create different images? Would there be different settings in your version? How would your set and props differ from this production?



## English activities

### Exploring the characters

Give one of the names of the characters from *The Government Inspector* out to each student. Ask each student to write a profile of that character, adding words that they feel describe or that they associate with the character plus key quotes, from them and about them.

Pair up the students who have worked on different characters and pool ideas adding more comments. Group students together who have worked on the same character and discuss similarities and differences.

Use these profiles as a resource when writing in role, or when being hot-seated.

### Letters

Imagine that you are the characters below and write letters from:

- The Locksmith's wife to her husband after she has met Khlestakov
- Maria to Khlestakov after he has left
- The Mayor to Khlestakov at the end of the play

### Monologues

Write a monologue for the Mayor or one of his delegates looking back over the recent events of the play. It could be on the day Khlestakov leaves or a week or so later, include their thoughts and feelings.

Now choose someone you know from your life and do the same exercise. You can invent things to aid the story of the monologue.

When writing about the memory, include colours, smells and sound – this will bring your writing to life.

### Focus on leadership & deception

1. Working in groups, think about the qualities which make a good leader. Then think about what makes a poor leader (or at least one you wouldn't want to listen to!).
2. Working with a partner, select an important incident involving the Mayor and one of his associates and create a comic strip/photo story of it.
3. One person narrate the incident from the Mayor's perspective while the other person narrate it from the perspective of one of the people who works in the town.
4. Complete a diary entry based on the incident you chose with your partner. The quality of your entry will depend on your ability to reveal a character's inner thoughts, as opposed to his/her words or actions.

5. Plan and write the essay:

'How does the Mayor **deceive** himself? What are the consequences of his self deception? Is he a different person to different people? Analyse the difference between his personal and public self.'

**Comparing different stage productions**

Watch a different stage production on the internet of *The Government Inspector*.

- Analyse the similarities and differences in production aspects of the two versions e.g. costume, set, props, lighting & sound?
- Analyse the similarities and differences in tone and style i.e. was one more comical and played on the funny elements while the other focused on a more topical issues of today?
- What would you have changed about one of the versions?

Write a review comparing the two.

## Activities using the text

### **Extract 1:**

Bobchinski Wait till you hear this!

Dobchinski Sir, you've got to get everyone together..! *(takes them all in)* You are all together.

Mayor What is it? What's happened?

Bobchinski What's going on here?

Dobchinski What are we missing?

Bobchinski Why weren't we told?

Mayor For God's sake, tell me what's going on!

Dobchinski I will.

Bobchinski No, I will...

Dobchinski No, I will. It was unbelievable...

Bobchinski We were at the inn.

Dobchinski He asked me. AND YOU GET DETAILS WRONG

Bobchinski Not if you don't interrupt me, I don't...

Mayor Just tell us, one of you... I need to sit down. Standing makes it worse. *(He sits down)* Right. Talk.

- What does this scene tell us about Bobchinski and Dobchinski?
- How well do you think they get along as friends?
- Rewrite this conversation and imagine it is 2016 instead of the 1836. What are the differences?

### **Extract 2**

Anna Breathtaking.

Maria He's a darling.

Anna His manner.

Maria His teeth.

Anna His elegance. Stateliness. Poise. His manners are exquisite. But of course that's St Petersburg for you. And he's so young...I've a passion for young men like him... You could tell he liked me. Did you see it? How he directed things to me. How he looked across the room to me. How our dark eyes met...

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Maria Mummy, he was looking at me.

Anna No, Maria.

Maria Mummy, he was looking at me.

Anna No, darling, he included you. He was being generous.

Maria No, He really was.

Anna Why would he be looking at you?

Maria When he talked about literature and books – right at me – and the games of shuttlecock with Ambassadors of Major Powers...

Anna He might have glanced at you, Maria, but only out of politeness. ‘Ah well,’ he’ll have thought, ‘Rude not to give her a quick look.’

- How would you describe the relationship between this mother and daughter?
  - What is Anna’s opinion of her daughter?
  - How do you think Maria feels towards her mother?
  - Have you ever been in either Anna or Maria’s position, perhaps towards a family member?
- Write a short monologue telling us about your memory.

**Extract 3**

Lyapkin-Tyapkin (Aside) I’m a dead man. A dead man.

Khlestakov It’s money.

Lyapkin-Tyapkin It’s over. It’s all over. I’m finished.

Khlestakov I’ve just had a thought. You couldn’t lend me this, could you?

Lyapkin-Tyapkin Lend you it? But it’s not mine.

Khlestakov I’m in need of a little top-up. Just as a loan.

Lyapkin-Tyapkin In need?

Khlestakov I somehow managed to spend all I had on the journey here.

Lyapkin-Tyapkin Yes, yes, take it... Please. Of course. Take it. Have it.

Khlestakov I’ll send it to you as soon as...

Lyapkin-Tyapkin Whenever, your Excellency. No rush. I’m fine with it. Honestly. Glad to be of help. I always try to serve the State the best way I can. Use what little power I have. I’ll leave you now. Have you any directives or orders for me?

Khlestakov Directives and orders?

Lyapkin-Tyapkin Pertaining to the town court and...

Khlestakov Well, let me...uh, let me think about that.

*The Government Inspector* REP Insight

Lyapkin-Tyapkin            Absolutely...

Khlestakov                No. Can't think of anything.

Lyapkin-Tyapkin            Thank you, your Excellency. (bows)

- How do you think Lyapkin-Tyapkin is feeling and what does he think of Khlestakov?
- What do you think Khlestakov is thinking in this scene?
- Think about people you've met. Have you ever felt nervous and under pressure or been in a situation similar to this one?

## Useful links

The Birmingham REP Theatre

<http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/event/the-government-inspector>

Encyclopaedia Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Nikolay-Gogol>

History World

<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=2389&HistoryID=ac14&gtrack=pthc>

History of Russia

<http://historyofrussia.org/russian-serfdom>

Ramps on the Moon

<http://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk>

Graeae Theatre Company

<http://www.graeae.org/news/ace-awards-2-3m-to-touring-project-for-disabled-artists>

Disability Arts Online

<http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/new-wolsey-theatre-ramps-on-the-moon>