Jack Lear Resource Pack

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Jack Lear Plot Summary

Jack Lear always wanted sons but ended up with three daughters.

Despite their gender, he raised them as if they were boys, dressing them in a masculine way and making them work with him on the trawlers as fishermen.

Jack is greedy and tight, and resented by all three of his children.

During their childhood, there is some rivalry between the siblings, and they often lock swords with each other when having a disagreement.

The daughters decide they want rid of Jack, so they can claim his vast fortune between them. Jack agrees to hand over the kingdom and shares his ships and land out between the three girls.

During this scene, Victoria speaks up and washes her hands of Jack. Enraged by her actions, Jack rips up her share and leaves her with nothing. Victoria leaves, but not before claiming that she still wants what is owed to her.

Morgana and Freda plot together to sell the assets Jack has left to them. One night, Freda tells Jack that he and his drunken friends are no longer welcome in the family home, and that she doesn’t want to see him again.

Feeling betrayed, Jack vows that he will find Victoria to seek her forgiveness for cutting her out of his shares. Freda is against this, as she fears it will get in the way of her and Morgana’s plans.

At this point, we are introduced to Edmund, a lawyer who is trying to win over both Morgana and Freda.

Edmund reveals his past - he used to work for Jack and his life was put in danger due to Jack bending the rules, working the trawlermen too hard and putting several of them in danger.

Edmund is only interested in Jack’s fortune and is using both sisters to get to it.

Meanwhile, Jack is found raving drunk and half-dressed, wishing for the sea to take him.
After a battle for Edmund’s heart between Freda and Morgana, Edmund ends up sweeping Freda off her feet and wedding her.

Victoria returns home after finding out that Morgana and Freda have put Jack in a home, declaring that he’s gone mad. She says she is going to get Jack and bring him to live with her and her husband, after forgiving him for their upbringing.

Freda tells Victoria that Edmund is in control of all Jack’s fortune.

After this, Freda confronts Edmund for cheating on her with several women – including Morgana. The confrontation ends with Freda killing Edmund in a manner that reflects the way they used to gut fish on the trawlers.

Morgana enters the scene to find Edmund dead, which leads to the girls drawing their swords for a fight. Both Freda and Morgana deliver killing blows.

Victoria arrives at the nursing home to pick up Jack, and he plays out a scene dressed as a King in his high-backed winger arm chair.

Victoria informs Jack that Morgana and Freda are dead. Distressed, Jack tells Victoria that he doesn’t want to be a burden on her and her husband and believes that his time has come.

Jack has a heart attack and dies. The imagery suggests that he is drowning, and Victoria helps him along his way by singing all the taboo words you’re not meant to say at sea.
**King Lear Plot Summary**

Lear, the aging king of Britain, decides to step down from the throne and divide his kingdom evenly among his three daughters. First, however, he puts his daughters through a test, asking each to tell him how much she loves him. Goneril and Regan, Lear’s older daughters, give their father flattering answers. But Cordelia, Lear’s youngest and favourite daughter, remains silent, saying that she has no words to describe how much she loves her father. Lear flies into a rage and disowns Cordelia. The King of France, who has courted Cordelia, says that he still wants to marry her even without her land, and she accompanies him to France without her father’s blessing.

Lear quickly learns that he made a bad decision. Goneril and Regan swiftly begin to undermine the little authority that Lear still holds. Unable to believe that his beloved daughters are betraying him, Lear slowly goes insane. He flees his daughters’ houses to wander on a heath during a great thunderstorm, accompanied by his Fool and by Kent, a loyal nobleman in disguise.

Meanwhile, an elderly nobleman named Gloucester also experiences family problems. His illegitimate son, Edmund, tricks him into believing that his legitimate son, Edgar, is trying to kill him. Fleeing the manhunt that his father has set for him, Edgar disguises himself as a crazy beggar and calls himself “Poor Tom.” Like Lear, he heads out onto the heath.

When the loyal Gloucester realises that Lear’s daughters have turned against their father, he decides to help Lear in spite of the danger. Regan and her husband, Cornwall, discover him helping Lear, accuse him of treason, blind him, and turn him out to wander the countryside. He ends up being led by his disguised son, Edgar, toward the city of Dover, where Lear has also been brought.

In Dover, a French army lands as part of an invasion led by Cordelia in an effort to save her father. Edmund apparently becomes romantically entangled with both Regan and Goneril, whose husband, Albany, is increasingly sympathetic to Lear’s cause. Goneril and Edmund conspire to kill Albany.

The despairing Gloucester tries to commit suicide, but Edgar saves him by pulling the strange trick of leading him off an
imaginary cliff. Meanwhile, the English troops reach Dover, and the English, led by Edmund, defeat the Cordelia-led French. Lear and Cordelia are captured. In the climactic scene, Edgar duels with and kills Edmund; we learn of the death of Gloucester; Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy over Edmund and then kills herself when her treachery is revealed to Albany; Edmund’s betrayal of Cordelia leads to her needless execution in prison; and Lear finally dies out of grief at Cordelia’s passing. Albany, Edgar, and the elderly Kent are left to take care of the country under a cloud of sorrow and regret.
**Jack Lear Character List**

**Jack Lear**
A wealthy trawlerman who raised his three daughters like boys, setting them to work on the trawlers from a young age. Due to this and his greed, all three daughters despise him.

**Morgana**
The eldest daughter of Jack.

**Freda**
Jack’s middle daughter. She is the one to marry Edmund.

**Victoria**
The youngest of Jack’s daughters. She is removed from Jack’s will after a spat, but in the end is the only daughter willing to take him on when Freda and Morgana put him in a home.

**Edmund**
A lawyer and a womaniser. Edmund gets in with the sisters intending to seduce Morgana and Freda, so he can marry one of them and gain Jack’s fortune.

**King Lear Character List (Only apposite characters)**

**Lear**
King of Britain.

**Goneril**
The eldest of King Lear's three daughters. Along with her sister Regan, Goneril is considered a villain, obsessed with power and overthrowing her elderly father as ruler of the kingdom of Britain.

**Regan**
She is the middle child of King Lear's daughters and is married to the Duke of Cornwall. Like her older sister, Goneril, Regan is attracted to Edmund. Both sisters are eager for power.

**Cordelia**
The youngest of King Lear's three daughters, and his favourite. After her father offers her the opportunity to profess her love to him in return for one third of the land in his kingdom, she refuses and is banished for the majority of the play.

**Edmund**
Edmund is an illegitimate child who betrays his father to gain power and collaborates with Goneril and Regan.

**History of Trawling**

**What is Trawling?**

Trawling is a method of fishing that involves pulling a fishing-net through the water behind one or more boats. The net used for trawling is called a trawl.

**How did the Trawling industry start?**

Hull’s trawling industry started during the Victorian times (1837-1901) and came about by accident. One day in 1850, a fishing boat sailed out of Scarborough and put out its net in the ocean. But a big storm was brewing, and the little boat got blown off course, ending up in the River Humber.

When the boat came into the dock, all but one of its nets had been ripped up by the storm – and to the sailor’s surprise, the one that had stayed intact was bursting full of fish!

Sailors realised they must have been swept over a huge fishing ground somewhere near the river. Hull's fishing industry soon took off, and between 1854 and 1887 over a thousand 'Smacks' (a type of fishing boat) were registered at Hull. Many 'Smack-men' from the South East of England came to live and work in the city.

**What was it like to be a trawlerman?**

Hull’s trawlermen had a very ‘macho’ image, but were also described as quite ‘dandy’, which means that they were very elegant and refined dressers.

One of the traditions of the trawlermen was to visit their tailor when they returned from a fishing trip, to be measured for some stylish new clothes. They often wore trousers with high waistbands, wide bottoms and moon pockets, with matching jackets (in a range of colours, from sky blue to shocking pink!).

Hull’s trawlermen were called the “three-day millionaires”. This was because they were only home for about three days before going off on another fishing trip. If they had a good
trip and caught lots of fish, they would get their “settlings” and could walk home feeling like a millionaire!

**Trawling Superstitions and Taboos**

There are many things that people associate with bad luck: walking under ladders, black cats and breaking mirrors are all common superstitions in the UK. It is not unusual for a football fan to wear the same scarf every week or meet at the same pub because they feel it may somehow affect the result of the game.

The world of fishing and trawling is no exception to this and there are lots of strongly held superstitions practiced across fishing communities, perhaps due to the danger and uncertainty that came along with trawling. As there were so many factors that couldn’t be controlled, people were forced to lean on things that they could.

Below are some of the superstitions or taboos that appear in *Jack Lear*. It is certainly not an exhaustive list of the many superstitions held by the Hull Trawling community.

Our research for this section comes from these books:

*Superstitions: Folk Magic in Hull's Fishing Community* by Alex Gill
*Trawling: The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* by Robb Robinson

**Whistling**

**JACK LEAR**

The taboo of a lifetime now to break:
To whistle up the wind into a storm,

Trawlermen often avoided whistling, as they worried that whistling would encourage the strong winds at sea.

**Washing Clothes**

**VICTORIA**

I’ll wash his clothes, so wash him overboard

A common phrase amongst the trawling community was “Never wash the day he sails. You’ll wash him away.” People generally
thought this was tempting fate because of the very literal image of a man’s clothes coming in and out of the water as well as the actual phrase “to be washed away.”

Waving

VICTORIA

And worst taboo of all, oh deary me,
I’ll wave him off, no woman must do that!

It was thought bad luck for a woman to ‘wave’ goodbye to a sailor as a ‘wave’ may wash him away.

Words

VICTORIA

Remind him he must whistle up ill luck
And utter all the taboo words like cat
And rabbit, egg, dog, church and chapel, salt;
Must utter pig, not substitutes for pig:
Not bacon, grunter, p-one-g, but pig!

Trawlermen were often suspicious of words linked with the church because of the association with funerals and therefore death. Some people think that these fears also might have stemmed from the priest’s black clothing (black being also associated with death.) Either way, this meant that religious words like Church or Chapel were considered taboo.

Much like our superstition around black cats, felines were treated as mistrustful by sailors, but there was no animal more reviled than the pig. The fishing community would even avoid saying its name, instead choosing to say Grunter, Curly-Tail, or just spelling out the letters.
**Norse Mythology**

A who’s who of the Norse figures mentioned in Jack Lear

**Thor**

Thor is a hammer-wielding god associated with thunder, lightning, storms, oak trees, strength, the protection of mankind, hallowing and fertility. Thor has inspired numerous works of art and references to Thor appear in modern popular culture.

**Odin**

Odin is a widely revered god. Odin is associated with wisdom, healing, death, royalty, the gallows, knowledge, battle, sorcery, poetry, frenzy, and the runic alphabet.

**Njord**

Njörðr is a god among the Vanir. Njörðr, father of the deities Freyr and Freyja, is associated with the sea, seafaring, wind, fishing, wealth, and crop fertility.

**Frey**

Freyr, sometimes anglicised as Frey, is a widely attested god associated with sacral kingship, virility and prosperity, with sunshine and fair weather, and pictured as a phallic fertility god in Norse mythology. Freyr is said to bestow peace and pleasure on mortals.

**Freyja**

Freyja is a goddess associated with love, sex, beauty, fertility, gold, war, and death. Along with her brother Freyr, her father Njörðr, and her mother, she is a member of the Vanir – a group of gods associated with fertility, wisdom, and the ability to see the future.

**Gullbursti**

Gullinbursti, meaning "Gold Mane" or "Golden Bristles", is a boar. Intending to make gifts to Freyr, Eitri threw a pig's skin into a furnace, and manufactured the boar Gullinbursti which had bristles in its mane that glowed in the dark.

**Gerda**

Geðr is a jötunn, goddess, and the wife of the god Freyr. Gerðr is commonly theorised to be a goddess associated with the earth, who has inspired many works of art and literature.
Loki
Loki is a god and a shapeshifter in Norse mythology. He is the father of Hel, the wolf Fenrir, and the world serpent Jörmungandr. Loki's relation with the gods varies by source; Loki sometimes assists the gods and sometimes behaves in a malicious manner towards them. His positive relations with the gods end with his role in engineering the death of the god Baldr.

Jörmungandr
Jörmungandr is a sea serpent, the middle child of Loki. Odin was said to have taken Jörmungandr and tossed it into the great ocean that encircles earth. The serpent grew so large that it was able to surround the earth and grasp its own tail.

Fenrir
Fenrir is a monstrous wolf. Fenrir is a son of Loki and is foretold to kill the god Odin during the events of Ragnarök.

Hela
Hela, or Hel, is a being who presides over Hell, where she receives a portion of the dead. Hel rules over vast mansions with many servants in her underworld realm and plays a key role in the attempted resurrection of the god Baldr. She is another child of Loki’s along with Fenrir and Jormungand.

Baldur
Baldur is a son of the god Odin and the goddess Frigg. He has numerous brothers, such as Thor and Váli. Baldr was said to have the greatest ship ever built, named Hringhorni.
Classroom Activities

The following section has been designed to give teachers and group leaders inspiration for activities based on Hull Truck Theatre’s production of Jack Lear. These can be used to prepare your class/group for their theatre trip or used to connect the trip back to the classroom as follow-up activities.

The exercises are simply suggestions or ideas and can be adapted to fit your specific group and their needs.

Exploring the Plot

Jack Lear is a modern adaptation of Shakespeare’s King Lear. How much does your class or group know about the Shakespeare play?

Resources: Large paper, felt-tip pens and King Lear plot synopsis.

Before seeing the show:

Divide your class into smaller groups, with a large piece of paper and some pens. Using the King Lear plot synopsis if necessary, ask the class to pick the key points from the play and discuss how they could be adapted to suit a modern-day performance.

After seeing the show:

Divide your class into smaller groups, with a large piece of paper and some pens. Using the King Lear plot synopsis if necessary, ask the class to pick out the key points from the play and discuss how they were adapted to work within Jack Lear.
Common Themes in King Lear and Jack Lear

After seeing the show:

Using the worksheet, ask your group to compare the common themes within the two different plays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>King Lear</th>
<th>Jack Lear</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Justice</td>
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<td>Reconciliation</td>
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Exploring the Characters in Jack Lear

Tip: Use the character list provided within resources for this.

Activity 1
After seeing the show:
Give your participants the opportunity to recap the characters and discuss them in detail.

Using the character list provided in this pack on page 5, ask the participants to discuss each character. You may want to give them these questions as a starting point:

1. What is the character like at the start of the play?
2. What is the character like at the end of the play?
3. Has this character’s situation or outlook changed during the play?
4. What do you think this character wants/needs more than anything in the world?
5. What do you think is that character’s greatest fear and why?

Activity 2
After seeing the show:
Start a debate with your students about each character’s role in the story. Print off A4 sheets of paper, each with a character name on. You may want to limit this to key characters. Get a group of your students to stand up holding a name each so that the rest of the class can clearly read them.

Ask the remaining group to move their fellow students to stand in left to right order of:

- Who is the cruellest character?
- Who is the kindest character?
- Which character do you feel most sorry for?
- Which character is the most foolish?

You may find there is little debate over who is on either extreme (i.e. Most cruel and least cruel) but the most
interesting debates may come from comparing different characters. Who should be in second or third place for kindness? What have they done or not done that earns them these places?

Move the characters around until the class settle on a final order.

Activity 3

After seeing the show:

Use creative writing to enhance student’s understanding of the character’s emotions within Jack Lear.

Ask your students to write a diary entry from the perspective of Jack, Morgana or Freda. A key moment for a diary entry could be after Jack has been placed in a care home by Freda and Morgana.

Questions to consider:

- What was going on in their head before their decision?
- What other options did they consider?
- How did they feel before, during and after?
- What do they think will happen next?

Emotions to consider:

- Betrayal
- Denial
- Anger
- Justice
- Sadness
- Freedom
Writing and Performing Verse

Verse is a poetic framework of writing used in King Lear and Jack Lear. Typically, Shakespearean verse is written in lines of ten syllables, with an ‘unstress-stress’ pattern. The stress is naturally on the even numbered syllables.

Iambic Pentameter:

In poetry, a group of two or three syllables is referred to as a foot. A specific type of foot is an iamb. A foot is an iamb if it consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, so the word re-mark is an iamb.

Pent means five, so a line of iambic pentameter consists of five iambs - five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables.

For example, from Jack Lear:
Now **give me all the keys to this my house**;
ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba- BUM / ba- BUM / ba- BUM

Ask the students to write a short 4-8 line speech for a character of their choice. They don’t need to make it poetic or write it in iambic.

Using the worksheet below, encourage students to write their own verse and practise performing it to an audience.

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Comparing the storm scenes

King Lear Act 3 Scene 2

Enter KING LEAR and Fool

KING LEAR
Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,
That make ingrateful man!

Fool
O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry
house is better than this rain-water out o' door.
Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing:
here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.

KING LEAR
Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave,
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

Fool
He that has a house to put's head in has a good
head-piece.
The cod-piece that will house
Before the head has any,
The head and he shall louse;
So beggars marry many.
The man that makes his toe
What he his heart should make
Shall of a corn cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake.
For there was never yet fair woman but she made
mouths in a glass.

KING LEAR
No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing.

Enter KENT

KENT
Who's there?

Fool
Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a wise
man and a fool.
KENT
Alas, sir, are you here? things that love night
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves: since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear.

KING LEAR
Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simulur man of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

KENT
Alack, bare-headed!
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:
Repose you there; while I to this hard house--
More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised;
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in--return, and force
Their scanty courtesy.

KING LEAR
My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy: how dost, my boy? art cold?
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come,
your hovel.
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool
[Singing]
He that has and a little tiny wit--
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,--
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
For the rain it raineth every day.

KING LEAR
True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

Exeunt KING LEAR and KENT

Fool
This is a brave night to cool a courtezan.
I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:
When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues;
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;
When usurers tell their gold i' the field;
And bawds and whores do churches build;
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion:
Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
That going shall be used with feet.
This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time.

Exit

Scene Seven

**JACK LEAR** stripped to the waist. Behind him a
large sail slaps loose and limp in a light breeze. He
cups his hands to his mouth, whistles (a taboo action)

**JACK**
I'm married to the sea, I'm one with her;
Salt-licked, agape, embraced by briny arms,
I'll rise and fall, go her capricious way,
Be taken to her bosom when she will.
The land is set in all its ways, is fixed,
No joy for dogs like me, who never know
Which way the sea will turn, she's not so pat.
I've learned to love her rage. Her tangy wrath
Holds little fear for one who should by now
Have sprouted fins, his skin become enscaled,
So second nature has the sea become.
I warrant I am fit to be as one
With all the myriad fish not yet hauled in;
I'll be a more than average cod-end catch,
Among the cod a bass, a sole, a lear.
Like Ahab roped forever to his whale,
They'll heave me tangled up in net entrails,
The mesh-sac innards of the monster Boat,
That ravages the sea, insatiable.

He whistles again. The sail flaps more as the
Wind stiffens. He braces his sea-legs, staggers.

Give of your best this day Jack Lear's days,
I know you can do better, make it good;
Engulf me, take me, I am ready, lass,
To be as one with you, gigantic death!
No pond death do I crave, heave up, heave high!
I will not batten down, be Little Man.
Come on, Mad Mer, rise up, surprise me yet,
A sixty-footer, eighty, ninety, more?
Rise up and break before you reach the boat,
Then thunder down your tonnage, crush my bones
To instant powder, let me be as salt
In deep solution, man with sea, heave up!
Heave up, heave high! I'm ready, do your best!
Heave up, heave high! And take me or be cursed!
And if you need some help rely on Jack —
Jack Brag and Jack the Lad, Jack Pudding, fool,
Jack Tar, a common sailor, these I own,
And last but not least Jack Out Of Office –
The taboo of a lifetime now to break:
To whistle up the wind into a storm,
Defy the superstitious gods, assuage
My aching heart with their reactive might,
And change this baleful day to balefire night!

JACK whistles. Thunder, lighting as storm rages
And lights slowly fade to bring Act One to a close.

Discussion

The storm scenes in both plays are very distinct from each other. Ask your group to read them both and to discuss:

1. What poetic or literary devices are used in the scenes?
   a. Similes and metaphors?
   b. Personification
   c. Onomatopoeia
   d. Rhyme
   e. Alliteration
2. What is the difference between Jack Lear’s storm and King Lear’s storm?
3. What themes can you identify?
4. What is your personal response?
Exploring the Life of a Trawler Man

Using the History of Trawling sheet provided and the quote below from the play, explore what it was like to work as a trawler man.

EDMUND

You haul the net in, batten down, sit tight,
   But we worked on. I see it now, a wave,
Its white top higher than the masthead light,
   Came roaring at us: 'Water!' yelled the mate,
   And hang on fast was all that we could do.
The ship rose on the swell, up, up, it went,
   It felt just like a lift, a high-speed lift,
Then down it came and massive icy sea
   Broke 'cross the bulwarks, slammed me hard, neck deep.
   Why I was never lost, I'll never know.
Storm-racked, the men could only curse your dad,
   'Mad Jack'll sink us yet!'

Activity 1

Ask students to create a soundscape using noises they can create using their voices and bodies. Encourage students to enter the circle to surround themselves in the sound of a storm.

Activity 2

Ask students to create a montage of images using the quote as inspiration.

You could then explore these images further, delving into thoughts and emotions.

Activity 3

Consider exploring the hierarchy of the trawler men. Discuss with your class the difference in experience between Jack as the Captain and Edmund when he worked for Jack.

- Ask students to create monologues for both Jack and Edmund about their experiences.
- Develop these monologues by thinking about how the character’s posture, facial expressions and voices may differ.