

VIDEO NASTY by MICHAEL THEODOROU

CAST

EDDIE FLETCHER - owner of a video hire shop
DEBRA FLETCHER - his wife
TYRONE FLETCHER - their son
ANGELA - Eddie's assistant
FATSO - classmate of Tyrone
EGBY - classmate of Tyrone
NEWITT - classmate of Tyrone
STOCKLAND - history teacher at their school
CHESTER WILLIAMS - about 21, a street racketeer
MRS BETTS

+TWO CRONIES of Chester's, self-styled bodyguards

This play comes with resource material and follow-up work. It is intended as a GCSE script, useful for either English or Drama at this level.

The cast size is 10, with 2 unspeaking extras as the Cronies. Of the ten, only three parts are for girls.

If used as an examination piece, all but the Cronies have enough to do and say to be examinable.

The running time is around forty-five minutes.

Though set firmly in the 1970s - because of the fact that one of the issues addressed is that of corporal punishment which was abolished in schools at that time - the material dealt with is just as relevant today. The main issues used as a basis for the play are:

Is the rise in street crime perpetrated by gangs of school children a direct result of the too-easy availability of 'video nasties?' - videos/DVDs that have an extremely violent or sexual content.

What contribution to youth crime can be blamed on lax parenting? Violence in the home - and at school, from the old-school style teachers - may also have a part to play suggests the writer.

Though no 'message' is thrust in our faces, we are aware at the end of the play of the spiralling crime these boys are getting into; we have witnessed the depressing home life of Tyrone, the main character, seen how video nasties are his and his friends' main form of entertainment, heard about a present of a crossbow given to one of the group and his enjoyment at practising his skill on the local birdlife, and observed Mr Stockland, their history teacher, and his views on keeping the children under control through violence - not to mention his own addiction to video nasties, probably of a sexual and perverted nature. The conclusions don't need to be underlined any further.

Authority in the play is symbolised by Stockland, who believes in violence. Characters in the play mostly react with loathing to any symbol of authority - the police or teachers; but experience has taught them to fear rather than respect these figures. Only Tyrone still has a residual respect for the police - though his burgeoning life of crime doesn't bode well for this dream.

What is most alarming about the group of four boys which are the centre of the play, is that these boys are clearly not street thugs or 'Chesters in the making.' They are obviously misfits, who hang together less out of a sharing of common ground, than convenience, because no one else will have them. We see Tyrone's homelife and the solitary person it has made him; his love of nature is not something picked up from

school or likely to make him popular - it is the hobby of the loner. Egby is a boaster who clearly is inadequate - he cannot ride a bicycle; probably he will never be very accurate with his crossbow - which might make him even more dangerous. Once again, he is the kind of boy who would be picked on by the school bullies. Newitt is a weed -picked on by everybody, including the main bully - the teacher, Stockland. Fatso is the kind of person always teased and bullied at school for his obesity. This is a group of loners, drifting onto the streets, made to feel big by watching video nasties, likely to cause violence less for attention-seeking than to revenge themselves on a world that is giving them very little of morality, warmth or kindness.

The play is not without humour. There is the character of Chester - probably the most inept gang leader ever. He attempts to run a protection racket, using intimidation on local shop-keepers like Eddie, Tyrone's father. The intention is there, but Chester is incapable of carrying it through - so far.

The other source of humour is Mrs Betts, who can clear the shop of Chester and his cronies by her stench alone.

In a way, the play does not finish. We are left with a number of situations waiting to happen: a group of young boys, inured by their daily viewing of violent videos, who will one day cause some serious damage - even more serious than the school windows - with a crossbow, or through their careless bullying of younger and weaker boys like Newitt; a gang leader, Chester, who may one day do some real harm when he gets his act together; a teacher who may one day be led by his addiction to perverted video sex to perpetrating his own serious sex offence. The play gives us an explosive situation and leaves us to our own conclusions.

EXTRACT ONE

Scene 1: The Video Hire Shop

Eddie and Angela are working at the counter. The door opens and Chester comes in, followed by his two cronies. Chester walks up to the counter.

CHESTER

Hi.

EDDIE

Morning.

CHESTER

Know who I am?

EDDIE

No.

CHESTER

I'm your local inspector, man.

EDDIE

Who?

CHESTER

I collect, man. I'm your local inspector.

EDDIE

What do you want?

CHESTER

What do you think?

EDDIE

Do you want to hire a video?

CHESTER

No, man. I don't want to hire no video.

EDDIE

Well, that's all I've got.

CHESTER

I'll give you a clue. These guys here, they get very uptight with people who have bad

manners. You know what I mean? Now, the last shop we went into, the proprietor, he say to me, 'You piss off you bastard.' So, you know what my friends did to his shop?

EDDIE

No.

CHESTER

That man didn't have a shop no more, man. These guys got so upset they started throwing things around. You know what I mean? Windows smashed, stock all over the place. It took that man a week before he could open up the shop again. Know what I mean? [*Chester has taken out a cigarette and put it in his mouth. He tries to light it with a lighter which does not work. To one of his cronies:*] Light! [*A crony lights him up with a match. Then, to Eddie:*] So - you see what I'm getting at?

EDDIE

I get the general picture.

CHESTER

Good ... Well, what's your answer?

EDDIE

Why don't you guys stick to drugs. There's more money in it.

CHESTER

Drugs? That's a dirty business, man. We're clean. We don't know nothin' about drugs, do we, fellas?

EDDIE

Alright. What do you want then? Twenty quid?

CHESTER *laughing*

Twenty? No way, man. A hundred.

EDDIE

Hundred quid?

CHESTER

Take it or leave it.

The door opens and Mrs Betts comes in. She goes up to the counter.

MRS BETTS

Morning, Mr Fletcher. Morning, Angela.

ANGELA

Hello, Mrs Betts.

MRS BETTS

Have you got that film I ordered yet, luv?

ANGELA

Oh, yes, I think so. Hold on a minute.

Angela goes into the back room.

EDDIE

It's on the top shelf, Angela. Top left.

They all stand there, waiting. Mrs Betts nods at Chester.

MRS BETTS

Hello. [*Chester grunts an acknowledgement.*] You waiting for something too, luv?

CHESTER

Yeah.

MRS BETTS

I like video nasties myself. Love 'em. What do you like?

CHESTER

I like Kung Fu.

MRS BETTS

Kung Fu? That's a bit old-fashioned, isn't it, dear? I thought they went out with Bruce Lee.

CHESTER

Look, we'll come back later. O.K.? Just think about what we said. [*To his cronies.*] Come on. [*As they exit - to his cronies.*] What's that funny smell?

The two cronies shrug their shoulders as they exit.

Scene 2: A street.

Tyrone, Fatso and Egby are returning home from school. Fatso is eating an ice-cream, Tyrone is swigging from a can.

EGBY

My dad's getting me a crossbow for my birthday.

FATSO

A crossbow? What are you going to do with that?

TYRONE

He's going to shoot himself in the leg.

EGBY

Go up to the lake. Shoot some sparrows.

TYRONE

Oh, yeah? Like to see you get one.

EGBY

You can come with me if you like.

TYRONE

No. I don't believe in killing things.

FATSO

Why don't he get a BMX like everyone else?

EGBY

Don't want one.

TYRONE

He can't even ride a bike. [*Pause.*] What do you want with a crossbow for?

EGBY

I can ride a bike.

TYRONE

Like to see you try.

EGBY

I'll borrow yours.

TYRONE

You what? You must be joking.

FATSO

He can shoot Newitt with his crossbow.

TYRONE

Yeah! Right between the eyes. Wham!

FATSO

Where is the little fart?

TYRONE

He ain't got a letter. He's gotta stay till the end.

FATSO

Serves him right. What time shall we come round tonight, Tyrone?

TYRONE

About nine. Me mum'll probably be at the pub.

EGBY

Will your dad be in?

TYRONE

Dunno. Maybe. He don't care what we do anyway.

EGBY

What's the film called?

TYRONE
You wait till tonight, Egby. You'll be scared shitless.
EGBY
Oh, yeah?
TYRONE
Yeah. And where's my fifty pee?
EGBY
I paid you!
TYRONE *to Fatso*
Did he?
FATSO
Yeah, he did, Tyrone. I saw him.
TYRONE
Oh, alright then. See you about nine.

They go off in separate directions.

Scene 3: Tyrone's bedroom.

Tyrone, Fatso - eating - and Egby are sitting watching a video. The lights are dimmed and we see their faces only in the flickering light of the TV screen. We hear the soundtrack of the video nasty and see their faces intent upon the screen. There is a knock at the door.

EGBY
Who's that?
TYRONE *going over to open the door*
It's fart face. Well, come on you little fart, come in if you're coming.
NEWITT *entering rather sheepishly*
The door was open downstairs.
TYRONE
Thought you weren't coming.
NEWITT
I've paid my share.
TYRONE *to Fatso*
Has he?
FATSO
Yeah.
TYRONE
Well, go on then. Sit down. We'll have to start the film again now.
EGBY
That's alright. I wanna see that first bit again.
FATSO
Yeah, in slow motion. Specially for Newitt.

Tyrone rewinds the tape.

TYRONE *to Newitt*
Do you want something to drink?
NEWITT
Yes. Alright.
TYRONE
Well, you can go and get it then. It's in the fridge, in the kitchen. Bottom shelf. And bring some for us while you're at it.
NEWITT
Alright.

Scene 4: The Fletcher's Lounge.

Eddie is sitting on a settee in semi-darkness. He is whimpering and has his head in his hands. He has been drinking heavily. He turns round as Newitt enters.

EDDIE

What do you want?

NEWITT

I was going to the kitchen.

EDDIE

Who are you?

NEWITT

Newitt.

EDDIE

Get out.

NEWITT

You alright, Mr Fletcher?

EDDIE

What if I ain't?

NEWITT

I dunno.

EDDIE

Don't just stand there. Move off.

NEWITT

Can I get you something?

EDDIE

Yeah. A new life. [*Newitt stares uncomprehendingly at him.*] Go on, boy. Push off.

TYRONE *entering*

What you doing in here, Newitt? [*He sees his dad.*] You pissed again, dad?

EDDIE

Yeah.

TYRONE

You should've gone out wiv mum.

EDDIE *tearfully*

She didn't want me to. She doesn't want me, your mum.

TYRONE

God, you've had a skinful, dad. You shouldn't drink that much.

EDDIE *rising*

I'll kill her, that's what I'll do. I'll kill her if I see her with that greasy wop again. [*Shouting.*]

Do you hear me, you old cow?

His eyes close and he passes out. He falls with a thud to the floor.

NEWITT

'Ere, Tyrone. Your dad's fainted.

TYRONE

Bloody hell. He weighs a ton an' all. Come on, help me get him up.

Tyrone and Newitt struggle to get Eddie up.

NEWITT

God, he ain't half heavy, your dad.

TYRONE

I know that, you wally. Go and get Fatso and Egby.

NEWITT

He ain't dead, is he?

TYRONE

'Course he ain't dead! He's just passed out...

EXTRACT TWO

Debra is sitting at a kitchen table with a cup of tea, eating a piece of toast and reading a newspaper. A transistor radio is blaring out pop music. She is wearing a dressing gown and has her curlers in. Tyrone enters.

TYRONE

Hello, mum.

He sits. Debra mechanically gets up, still reading the newspaper and puts two slices of toast in the toaster.

DEBRA

Tea's in the pot.

TYRONE *pouring his tea*

How's dad?

DEBRA

Snoring his head off.

TYRONE

Will he be up in time to open the shop?

DEBRA

I really couldn't care less.

TYRONE

I suppose Angela can manage.

DEBRA

I suppose so. [*The toast pops up.*] Here you are.

TYRONE

Thanks. [*He butters the toast and starts eating it.*] Mum?

DEBRA

Don't speak with your mouth full.

TYRONE

What's dad got against you?

DEBRA

What do you mean?

TYRONE

He sounded really bad last night. Kept saying you were letting him down. Going with another bloke.

DEBRA

Well, what does he know?

TYRONE

Are you going with another bloke, mum?

DEBRA

What's it to you, you bloody cheeky devil? And what's all the questions for? Who do you think you are? Bloody lawyer or something?

TYRONE

It's that foreign bloke, ain't it?

DEBRA

You watch your bleeding mouth.

TYRONE

It is, ain't it?

DEBRA

I don't know what you're talking about.

TYRONE

I've seen him coming up here.

DEBRA

I beg your pardon?

TYRONE

I've seen him. He's got his own key. I saw him from the other side of the road one morning. When I was bunking school.

DEBRA

Well, you can't talk then, can you?

TYRONE

So? ... [*Pause.*] Don't you like dad no more?

DEBRA

No.

TYRONE

Are you gonna get a divorce?

DEBRA

I dunno.

TYRONE

Egby's mum and dad got a divorce.

DEBRA

So?

TYRONE

He used to bash her up.

DEBRA

Did he?

TYRONE

One day she whacked him with the frying pan. Nearly killed him.

DEBRA

Oh, nice. Nice friends you got.

TYRONE

It's not Egby's fault. ... He ran away. [*Pause.*] I don't want to do that.

DEBRA

Well, you don't have to. Because we're not getting a divorce. At least, we haven't discussed it yet.

TYRONE

Dad makes a lot of money, don't he? That bloke of yours, I've seen him coming out the Labour. He's unemployed.

DEBRA

You're a right little know-it-all, aren't you? You ought to be a copper.

TYRONE

Yeah. I fancy that.

DEBRA

I'm not having a policeman in my family. [*A noise from outside.*] Ah, is that himself, risen from the grave?

Eddie appears, standing there in his pyjamas, looking extremely dishevelled.

DEBRA

My God! It's the thing from outer space!

EDDIE

Morning.

DEBRA

God, it speaks!

EXTRACT THREE

EDDIE

How's the term going, sir?

STOCKLAND

Bloody awful. Won't be able to control them after next year.

EDDIE

Why's that, sir?

STOCKLAND

Corporal punishment's being abolished.

EDDIE

Oh, dear.

STOCKLAND

Yes. My sentiments entirely. Bit of right arm exercise never did anyone any harm, that's what I say.

EDDIE

No doubt, sir.

STOCKLAND

Too many wets in teaching.

EDDIE

That's right, sir.

STOCKLAND

I still have boys coming up to me in the street, big boys you understand - boys who left years ago - they come up to me and say, 'Here, sir, do you remember me? You caned me when I was in the fourth year. My name's Hockley - or my name's Smyth.' And I say, 'No, boy, I can't remember you but you obviously remember me - at least you remember something about your school days!' And we all have a good laugh together. You see, it did them no harm at all. To some of them it was the highlight of their school career. Now what will they remember when they leave school? I'll tell you - Nothing!

EDDIE

Is there really no possibility of teaching them anything, sir?

STOCKLAND

No chance. Not without that big stick. Not around here.

EDDIE

Ah, well. I'm sure you'll do your best, sir.

STOCKLAND

Not me. Early retirement as soon as I can, me.

EDDIE

What will they do without you, sir?

STOCKLAND

I couldn't care less. They can swing from the lightbulbs for all I care.

EDDIE

Maddening, isn't it, sir?

STOCKLAND

Who'd have my job?

EDDIE

Not me, sir.

ANGELA

Or me.

STOCKLAND

Ah well, I'd better pay you, I suppose and get back to the madhouse. [*He hands over some money.*]

EDDIE

Thankyou, sir. I hope they enjoy 'Ben Hur.'

STOCKLAND

Oh, I shouldn't think so. Not for one moment. But at least it might keep them quiet for a bit. If I had my way, I'd instal a video in every classroom.

EDDIE

And rent from us of course, sir.

STOCKLAND

Of course. Well, cheerio then.

EDDIE
Goodbye, sir.
ANGELA
'Bye.

Stockland goes out.

EDDIE
Miserable old git!

EXTRACT FOUR

Scene 11: A lake or large expanse of water surrounded by trees.

Tyrone and Newitt are seen walking along a path beating the foliage with sticks and beheading the tops of flowers. It is a peaceful scene otherwise. No other people in sight. Rather beautiful.

NEWITT
What you doing tonight?
TYRONE
Nothing.
NEWITT
Watching the telly?
TYRONE
Nah.
NEWITT
Stockland was funny.
TYRONE
Bloody hilarious.
NEWITT
He did a mental on you.
TYRONE
I'll do a mental on him!
NEWITT
He cracked you one, didn't he?
TYRONE
Bloody perv! I'll smash his face in!
NEWITT
Like to see you try.
TYRONE
I'm not scared of him.
NEWITT *after a pause*
What's G.B.H.?
TYRONE
Grievous Bodily Harm.
NEWITT
Oh.
TYRONE
You're slow, guy.
NEWITT
I'm not that thick.
TYRONE
Yes, you are. You're as thick as that bloody tree, Newitt.
NEWITT
I can't help it.

Some ducks pass overhead. Tyrone pretends to shoot them using his stick as a gun.

TYRONE
Rambo!

Newitt picks up some stones and hurls them at the ducks who are now on the water.

TYRONE
Oi! Leave 'em!

NEWITT
You were shooting at 'em!

TYRONE
Yeah ... cos I'm Rambo and you're just a fart ... Listen.

NEWITT
What?

TYRONE
Hear it?

NEWITT
What?

TYRONE
That thrush.

NEWITT
I can't hear it.

TYRONE
It's a thrush.

NEWITT
Is it?

TYRONE
Yeah.

NEWITT
How do you know?

TYRONE
I like bird sounds. I got a book on 'em. Nicked it from the library.

NEWITT
Let's kill it.

TYRONE
You what?

NEWITT
Where is it?

TYRONE
You leave it! [*Newitt picks up a stone.*] Oi! Drop it. [*Newitt looks for the bird.*] Drop it.

Tyrone smashes him on the hand with his stick. Newitt drops the stone.

NEWITT
Ow!

TYRONE
I don't like killing things. Let's go and smash a few windows instead.

NEWITT
Where?

TYRONE
Up by the school.

NEWITT
It's not dark yet.

TYRONE
We'll wait a bit longer.

NEWITT
Got any fags?

TYRONE

No. You ?

NEWITT

Nah.

TYRONE

You don't smoke.

NEWITT

Yes, I do.

TYRONE

It stunts your growth.

NEWITT

Don't matter in my case.

TYRONE

True.

Pause.

NEWITT

You ever had a bird?

TYRONE

Nah. You?

NEWITT

Not yet.

TYRONE

Look. The sun's setting. [*They both watch the sunset for a few moments.*] Let's go and smash a few windows.

They go off....