



Exploring Junior Cycle Prescribed Drama *Once Upon A Bridge* by Sonya Kelly

Once Upon A Bridge by Sonya Kelly is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026, and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030)



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Methuen Drama



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for this Text

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Once Upon A Bridge* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

Before You Read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Warm-Up Discussion: Split-Second Moments

Guide students in thinking about moments that change quickly, such as near-misses, chances, or unexpected encounters.

Use a think-pair-share or mind map to explore questions like:

- How can a single moment alter someone's day?
- Have you ever witnessed something surprising in public?
- Why do we remember small moments so vividly?

Encourage students to reflect on how ordinary life can shift suddenly, preparing them for the play's central incident.

2. Title Prediction

Write the title on the board: *Once Upon a Bridge*.

Ask pupils to predict:

- What does the phrase "Once Upon" usually signal in stories?
- What might have happened on a bridge?
- Who might be involved in the story?
- Does the title suggest something dramatic, magical, or ordinary?

Invite pupils to jot down predictions in their copybooks and share ideas.

3. Exploring Perspective

Explain that the play tells a story from three different viewpoints.

Ask pupils to consider:

- Why might a playwright want to show the same moment from different perspectives?
- How can people understand the same event differently?
- What kinds of misunderstandings or assumptions arise when we only see one side of a story?

In pairs, pupils can create a short list of everyday situations where people might interpret events in different ways.



Extract

The following extract includes reference to two of the three characters from the one act play
'One Upon A Bridge' by Sonya Kelly

A MAN

I'm on the tube to work that morning,
And the passenger opposite's reading a paper
Massive picture splashed across the front,
So I lean in to read the headline underneath...

He reads to himself...

THE BUS DRIVER

They've been looking for this jogger for several months now
But still no one was charged,
And now the police would like to start a media campaign -

A MAN

Woman's Life Saved by London Bus Driver...

THE BUS DRIVER

And can they use my name.
To be honest,
I wasn't sure if I wanted the attention.

A MAN

*After being pushed into the path of his vehicle on Putney Bridge
By Passing Jogger on the 5th of May...*

The cogs turn... slowly.

Putney Bridge...

Fifth of May...

Was I there that day...?

THE BUS DRIVER

I'm quite a private person actually.
I don't like any fuss.

A MAN

So I glance up at the image,
See if I might know him...

His face drops like a hot pie.

No way...

That's not me.

It couldn't be...

And yet...

THE BUS DRIVER

Still I felt obliged to help.

A MAN

I get off the Tube at Piccadilly Circus.
Fall up the steps
Breathe in the morning air,
Thinking someone's playing a trick on me,
This is a joke,
A scam,
This isn't fair.
Then wham!
There I am -
I mean there it is again,
Splashed across the morning news:
Guardian,
Times,
Telegraph,
Same shirt,
Same shorts,
Same shoes as me.
In black and white and grey.
*Putney Bridge Psychotic Monster,
Police Seek Help To Identify Suspect... Captured on Video?*

He falls into abject despair.

Oh no...

You have got to be bloody kidding me!

(Kelly, Sonya, *Once Upon a Bridge*, 2021)

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Following the Clues — How Suspense Builds

In pairs, have pupils highlight and annotate moments in the extract where A Man gradually realises the newspaper story is about him.

Ask them to look for:

- Clues planted in the text (e.g., "Putney Bridge... Fifth of May...").
- Shifts in tone ("The cogs turn... slowly").
- Emotional reactions ("His face drops like a hot pie", "He falls into abject despair").



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance) continued...

Discussion Questions

- How does Sonya Kelly create tension and suspense even though the audience already knows the real-life story?
- Which line in the extract feels like the moment A Man finally accepts the truth? Why do you think so?

2. Step Inside the Characters

Split the class: Team A Man and Team Bus Driver.

Each team lists what their character knows, feels, and wants in this moment.

Optional: 20–30 second in-role mini-monologue.

Follow-up:

- How do both characters see the same event differently?

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the text. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Personal Response – Turning Points

Guide students to write a short personal response to the prompt:

“One moment can change how we see ourselves or others.”

Encourage them to refer to a key moment involving any character in the play.

2. Diary Entry – Perspective Taking

Ask students to write a diary entry from the perspective of A Man or The Bus Driver, describing the events of the day and their emotional response.

Encourage them to focus on thoughts, feelings, and reflection.

3. Persuasive Writing – Responsibility

Invite students to write a persuasive paragraph responding to the statement:

“People should take responsibility for their actions, even when it is difficult.”

Guide them to support their viewpoint with examples from the play.

4. Analytical Writing – Multiple Perspectives

Work with students to plan for a short analytical response exploring how the play demonstrates that the same event can be understood differently.

Prompt them to refer to at least two characters' perspectives.

5. Functional Writing – Media Statement

Ask students to imagine they are The Bus Driver and to compose a brief media statement explaining why they do or do not wish to be publicly named.

Encourage clarity, formality, and reference to the play's events