

National Theatre



The Next Morning

Learning Guide

Welcome to the Learning Guide for *The Next Morning*.

VE/VJ Day is a moment to celebrate the end of the strain of war and a new beginning. Our project marks the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day in two meaningful and connected ways: a film and staged reading, created from archive materials, entitled *The Next Morning*; and an interlinked, year-long schools engagement programme for Key Stages 3 and 4, embedded in a nationwide tour of James Graham's Olivier Award-winning play *Dear England*.

Within this programme, we highlight and celebrate the contributions made by a broad range of people to the country. *The Next Morning* and *Dear England* acknowledge the ideas of nationhood and nationality can be complex; while *The Next Morning* highlights the need to recognise the impact of conflict on combatants and non-combatants alike. War stories include those of refugees and other displaced people, migrants, and immigrants who helped rebuild Britain after World War Two. The war caused one of the biggest displacements of people in history and you can find out more [here](#).

Who is this resource for?

This guide is aimed at teachers of Key Stage 3 and 4 students and provides learning activities for subjects including History, Drama, English and PSHE. They are designed as one-off, standalone sessions, but you are welcome to combine them into a longer scheme of work should you wish. We have also provided suggestions for assemblies and activities, such as year 6 transition events, VE/VJ Day and remembrance commemorations. You are welcome to adapt the contents for your own setting, age group and your own subject areas – these are suggested activities rather than prescriptive. All activities are designed with non-specialists in mind, and we invite you to add your own talents and subject-specific knowledge to deliver these activities.

Creating a time capsule:

In *The Next Morning*, the concept of a time capsule is a key theme. Time capsules capture the present, so that future generations can learn from them in years to come. Time capsules can inspire, inform and educate; they can help demonstrate progress. Perhaps most importantly, time capsules can capture myriad voices that might not otherwise be heard. They can contain people's thoughts, dreams, ambitions and, for those who create them, they are an opportunity to say things about an event that they might not have been able to express out loud at the time.

The activities in this guide can help you work with young people to consider the idea of a time capsule, and may even inspire you to create one of your own. At the end of this guide, you will find ideas and suggestions about how you can work with your learners to create their own time capsule.

This learning guide was written by **Susie Ferguson** (Creative Education Consultant) and was commissioned by the National Theatre.

Contents

The activities listed below all relate to themes inspired by VE Day, *The Next Morning* and *Dear England*.

About <i>The Next Morning</i>	6
About <i>Dear England</i>	7
Assembly	11
– Aspiration	
Themed events	
Year 6 transition	13
– New beginnings: looking back and looking forward	
Remembrance	15
– Commemoration and memory	
VE Day	21
Drama lesson	24
– Telling our nation's story	

PSHCE	27
– Resilience	
– Inclusivity and community	
History	34
– Heroism and legacy	
English	35
– Hope	
Creating your own time capsule	37
About the National Theatre	38

About *The Next Morning*

The National Theatre's new film *The Next Morning* is written by stage and screen writer James Graham and features award-winning actors Julian Glover, Siân Phillips and Joseph Mydell. The film explores intergenerational perspectives on the end of the Second World War.

Through a series of intimate, interconnected stories, the film connects young people today with the experiences of an older generation, all of whom carry different memories of the war. As the children begin to understand the resilience of those that came before them, they will uncover deeply personal histories that challenge their perceptions of the past. *The Next Morning* is a heartfelt exploration of how the echoes of war reverberate through time, shaping identities, families, and our collective memory. *The Next Morning* was released online for the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025.

Watch it [here](#)



Still from *The Next Morning* film

About Dear England

Dear England is by playwright James Graham and was first staged in 2023. It is a fictionalised account of Gareth Southgate's time as the England men's football manager. Far beyond being a play solely about football, *Dear England* examines themes such as patriotism, national identity, resilience, teamwork and trust. It considers the idea of victory, and the different ways we can 'win'. The play captures a period of time in which Gareth Southgate hoped to lead England to a major victory after decades of disappointment.

The play had its premiere at the National Theatre in 2023 and transferred to the Prince Edward Theatre in London's West End the same year. It was then revived in a return to the National Theatre in 2025, followed by a national tour. The revival includes a new ending, taking in the 2024 Euros final in which England lost to Spain with a final score of 2-1.

The following clips from the original production of *Dear England* allow you to follow the narrative and also engage students in the story of Gareth Southgate and the England football team.

To request access to these clips, please [click here](#). Please note, this material is provided for educational purposes only. Any reproduction, distribution, or use for commercial or non-educational purposes is strictly prohibited without prior written consent.

1 Southgate recalls his missed penalty in 1996

2 Southgate meets Pippa Grange and asks her to work with the team

3 Southgate tells the team that they need a new story

4 Southgate recounts the experience of missing the penalty

5 The unbreakable chain and legacy of players past and present

6 Southgate creates his image through his clothing: an 'English gent'

7 Southgate encourages his players to be themselves

8 Southgate unites with the team to challenge racism

9 Southgate writes his 'Dear England' letter.

The Next Morning offers exciting opportunities to engage young people with topics which are also pertinent to *Dear England*:

	<i>The Next Morning</i> and VE Day	<i>Dear England</i>
Patriotism	<p>VE Day marked an important moment in Second World War, as the fighting in Europe came to an end. It was an opportunity to celebrate the nation, and its victory against oppression and conflict.</p> <p>The characters describe how that patriotism is expressed in <i>The Next Morning</i>.</p>	<p>The play explores the responsibilities of the players, and the football fans, in representing their country. Throughout the story it's clear that patriotism can also include sacrifice and a fulfilment of duty.</p>
Nationality	<p>During this time of conflict, nationality could be a source of division between people, particularly, those citizens of opposing nations (the Axis powers) living in Britain. However, "Britishness" also helped to unify the whole country as different communities came together to support the war effort.</p>	<p>Some of the players in <i>Dear England</i> are made to feel that they are 'less English' than other people because of the colour of their skin or because of people's own prejudices. They express the emotional difficulties that this causes them, and this is one of the main catalysts behind Gareth Southgate's 'Dear England' letter.</p>
New beginnings and new chapters	<p>The victory in Europe marked the end of the war against Nazi Germany. Although the the war against Japan in Asia and the Pacific continued, it was a time of hope and optimism.</p>	<p>Gareth Southgate's own journey in coming to terms with his past and the changes that he has made, alongside Pippa Grange, allowed the England team to look towards a different future, rather than dwelling on past defeats.</p>

	<i>The Next Morning and VE Day</i>	<i>Dear England</i>
Humility	<p>VE Day was an opportunity to reflect on the role played by everyone in the nation's victory in Europe. As well as serving military personnel, there were countless examples of bravery, sacrifice, teamwork, resilience and forbearance. This was an opportunity to celebrate everyone's contributions, not just those of one or two people.</p> <p>Although the film might include recognisable extracts from famous speeches that were given on VE Day, it is the voices of ordinary men and women that are heard here.</p>	<p>Throughout the story of <i>Dear England</i>, and in his 'Dear England' letter, Gareth Southgate demonstrates that he is a modest man who wishes to work with others to make positive changes. He is keen to dismiss ideas of hierarchy, and he makes decisions for the benefit of the team, not for individuals or egos.</p>
Solidarity vs division	<p>VE Day came nearly six years after the start of the Second World War. It was a moment where people could look forward to being reunited with loved ones and demonstrate forgiveness. War continued in East Asia until Victory over Japan Day on 15th August 1945, but VE signalled the beginning of a return to peace.</p>	<p><i>Dear England</i> portrays various moments of division, emotional pain, racism, conflict and resistance to change. Although Gareth Southgate was unable to see the England team win a championship, he left the team stronger, more united and more hopeful for the future. He has also encouraged everyone – players and supporters alike – to consider what their nation means to them, and what it can look like in the future to ensure that everyone can share a sense of belonging.</p>

About Gareth Southgate:

Gareth Southgate was formerly a football manager and player, best known as the manager of the England national men's team since 2016. As a player, he was a defender and midfielder, representing clubs including Crystal Palace, Aston Villa and Middlesbrough.

One of the defining moments of his playing career came during the semi-finals of Euro 1996, when he missed a crucial penalty in a shootout against Germany. His failed spot-kick led to England's elimination from the tournament, a moment that haunted him for years but also shaped his resilience.

As manager, Southgate has guided England to significant success, including the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and the Euro 2020 final, where the team once again lost on penalties. The final of Euro 2024 saw England being beaten 2–1 by Spain, after which Southgate resigned from the role of England manager.

Gareth Southgate recently gave the 2025 Sir Richard Dimbleby Lecture for the BBC, which can be found [here](#).



Image by Marc Brenner

Assembly

Aspiration

In this section of our *The Next Morning* toolkit, we've provided some brief prompts about how to link VE Day, the story of Gareth Southgate and the England football team, and the young people who are currently in their secondary phase of education.

You may wish to start the assembly with clip 9 from *Dear England* in which Gareth delivers his letter to the nation.

From Gareth Southgate's letter: *I am confident that young kids of today will grow up baffled by old attitudes and ways of thinking.*

Defining aspiration: A hope or ambition; a desire to achieve something.

- How many times have you been asked by an adult or peer, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' When you think about that question, what is your main focus? Is it the job you want to do, or is it the kind of person you want to be? Is it what you want to gain from the world, or is it what you want to give? What contribution would you like to make to society?
- As Britain woke up on Thursday 9 May 1945, it was the opportunity to make new promises, resolutions or decisions. The idea of living in peacetime was, once again, a realistic possibility. For the nation's young people, many of whom could not remember what it was like to live in peacetime, this was an opportunity to see what their future might hold.
- Even the longest held ambitions can feel difficult or even impossible. In the story of *Dear England*, Gareth Southgate must not only try to convince everyone to work towards the same targets, he must also come to terms with his own failures and difficult memories. However, he is able to help all his colleagues visualise success. Perhaps it is more rewarding if your ambition does sometimes feel completely beyond your reach.

- You might have heard the expression that doing the same thing and expecting a different result is the definition of madness. That comment is often attributed to Albert Einstein or Benjamin Franklin. In truth, we don't know who first said it, but it certainly seems to be true in the case of Gareth Southgate and the England football team. Southgate realised that the current method of trying to improve the team's success simply wasn't working. He shared his new vision of how the team should prepare for tournaments, and worked towards convincing everyone that it was possible.
- As young people, you may see the older people in charge of the country making what you consider to be mistakes. It might be the way they use technology, talk to people or do their jobs. If you're making these judgements, it means that you have a clear idea of how you would like to see things done. How might this help you define your ambitions and aspirations?



Towards the end of this assembly, offer students an opportunity to imagine what they would write to their future selves: this might be an activity that can then be completed fully in English or PSHE lessons, or as part of a pastoral tutor-time activity.

You can also refer to the end of this pack where we suggest ways to create a time capsule to reflect the community in which they live. You might like to use your assembly to launch the idea of a time capsule for your school or college.

Newspapers from World War Two with headlines of Victory in Europe (VE Day). Image: Piranhi / Alamy Stock Photo
GL Archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Themed events

Year 6 transition

New beginnings: looking back and looking forward

From *The Next Morning*: *‘I wonder now what the next morning shall be like? Tomorrow and the next and all the mornings to follow.’*

From Gareth Southgate’s letter: *It’s about how we conduct ourselves on and off the pitch, how we bring people together, how we inspire and unite, how we create memories that last beyond the 90 minutes. That last beyond the summer. That last forever.*

VE Day, and the days after it, provided an opportunity for people to celebrate, reflect on what had happened in the past, and dare to hope for the future.

The Second World War had changed society for ever. Women had different roles and responsibilities, people had met (and sometimes fallen in love) with people they might not otherwise have met. Families had moved, or been moved, to new places in Britain. Children had been evacuated from major cities to more rural locations in order to keep them safe, and lived with people who were initially complete strangers. Jewish children arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport in the run up to the war, while adults and children sought refuge in Britain to escape the conflict and persecution in their own countries.

As students make the transition between primary and secondary school, a helpful activity can be for them to write their own letter, reflecting on their successes and the advice that they would like to give their younger selves. Alternatively, they could write to Gareth Southgate, responding to his letter. Perhaps they might also like to make some predictions to revisit at the end of year 7, or even at the end of a key stage.

We have provided an example below, which you can share or adapt for your own students.

Dear Gareth

I know what you mean about the importance of memories. As I finish primary school, I'm thinking about the future but also remembering the past. I want to take the best bits with me, and use them to give me confidence in this next step in my life.

One memory that will stay with me forever is our class trip to London. We saw famous sights that I'd only seen in books and photos. We got the opportunity to do new activities, and even though the activities were competitive, we realised we all had lots to be proud of. The best thing, though, was how well everyone got on that day. Some people made jokes, others supported people who found a task difficult. I agree with you – this is what we'll remember the most. It's the people in our lives that make us happy, not just money or material things.

My hope for secondary school is that I'll continue to make friends and memories, as well as keeping in touch with friends from primary school. We might be moving to different schools, or joining different sports teams, like you I know that I'll try my best to make myself, and everyone else, proud.

Yours sincerely,
Your Name

Themed events

Remembrance: Commemoration and Memory

From *The Next Morning*: *'...it's a different world out there, waiting to be explored.'*

[...]

'Today I vow... to help them remember what you did.'

From Gareth Southgate's letter: *The idea of representing 'Queen and country' has always been important to me. We do pageantry so well in Britain, and, growing up, things like the Queen's silver jubilee and royal weddings had an impact on me.*

[...]

For many of that younger generation, your notion of Englishness is quite different from my own. I understand that, too.

I understand that on this island, we have a desire to protect our values and traditions – as we should – but that shouldn't come at the expense of introspection and progress.

[...]

Because of my grandad, I've always had an affinity for the military and service in the name of your country – though the consequence of my failure in representing England will never be as high as his. My granddad's values were instilled in me from a young age and I couldn't help but think of him when I lined up to sing the national anthem before my first international caps.

In *Dear England*, Gareth Southgate reminds his players that they are not just individual players on a pitch, which can be viewed in clip 5. They are one of a long line of people who have represented their country. He tells them,

'An England team': when we say you're a team, we don't just mean this one here right now, but that you're part of this unbreakable chain, a continuum of Englishmen going back and back and back for more than a century!

Harry Kane. Did you know, for example, we've established that your England legacy number is 1207. That's your 'place'. Harry Maguire? You're 1223!

Dear England by James Graham



Still from *The Next Morning* film

The message that Gareth Southgate is giving his players is that they are contributing to a legacy of the team. They are not only representing the team in the present day, they are also remembering and representing all of those who have gone before them. He marks their contribution to the history of the team, and of the nation. They are people who will be remembered and celebrated for generations to come.

With this in mind, draw your students' attention to local, national and personal connections between them and the VE Day commemorations. We encourage you to consider combatants, but also the civilian women and men of Britain engaged in the war effort. All of British society was mobilised to fight the war – in factories, on farms (Land Girls), Civil Defence workers (including fire services), Merchant Navy, and all those people were in danger too – from German bombs, flying bombs and rockets. All of these people have contributed to the richness of the nation as it is in the 21st Century.

Official records

From *The Next Morning*: *'For as long as I can remember it has only been war. But then this morning...'*

- War memorials and/or rolls of honour, in your school or college, town, city or local area (including local football clubs which often have a roll of honour).
- Churchyards, some of which may have Commonwealth War Graves Commission markers, indicating that servicemen or servicewomen are buried in the cemetery.
- Noticing that football teams often wear special edition kits bearing the image of a poppy (the symbol of remembrance) for matches played around Remembrance Day in November each year.
- Discussing family connections to people who have served in combat, particularly with Gareth Southgate's mention of his own grandfather who served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War.
- Consider that many people who were displaced by the war lost some or all of their official documents. Official records were often destroyed – in some cases deliberately, others accidentally, or lost in the process of gruelling journeys. You may wish to discuss the emotional and practical impact of losing your documented place in history.

Inspiring stories, beyond the battlefield

From *The Next Morning*: *‘I am writing this very late, for it is hard still to believe it... the war in Europe is over! And we have been celebrating “Victory in Europe day”.’*

VE Day also offers an opportunity to recognise communities that have been displaced by war or who migrated in its aftermath, and their subsequent contributions to the fabric of the nation. It is important to discuss non-combatants as well as combatants in order to capture the full range of stories and legacies. For example,

- The Jewish children of the Kindertransport – children whose parents sent them on trains to Britain in order to escape in the run up to the start of the war. Many of these children never saw their parents again, and settled in Britain permanently. You may like to draw attention to the film *One Life* in which the work of Nicholas Winton, and others like him, is portrayed
- Members of the Windrush Generation, who migrated to Britain in the late 1940s, answering the call for help to rebuild the country after World War Two
- Veterans from all over the world who fought alongside British soldiers, sailors and airmen, including Poles and Czechs who settled in the UK after the war

You might also like to draw parallels to the way in which Britain has provided sanctuary for those fleeing conflict in recent years.



Left to right: AC W P Ince of British Guiana, AC E Johnson of Jamaica and AC S E Johnson of Jamaica (Public Domain)



Troops of the 11th East African company in Burma during World War Two.
Image: Division piemags/archive/military/Alamy Stock Photo



Empire Windrush, 22 June 1948.
Image: Contraband Collection / Alamy Stock Photo



Kindertransport documents, c1939.
Image: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo



Pilot from no. 303 Polish fighter squadron in Britain, 1940s. Image: piemags/ww2archive / Alamy Stock Photo



British pilots get ready for flight next to a Spitfire, 1943.
Image: GL Archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Further resources:

War memorials and/or rolls of honour, in your school or college, town, city or local area (including local football clubs which often have a roll of honour).

City of Sanctuary UK's website has a comprehensive range of information about ways in which cities and schools can support those rebuilding their lives after arriving in the UK.

The UNHCR is the United Nations Refugee Agency. They explain more about the 1951 convention [here](#).

VE Day is explored through [objects and stories](#) by the Imperial War Museum and is a helpful visual guide to this key moment in history.

The Royal British Legion offers these [learning resources](#) for teaching the subject of remembrance.

The Imperial War Museum also has a range of [resources](#) to support work on remembrance. Although it is often approached from a First World War perspective, this page from the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) explains the changes that were made following the end of World War Two.

Themed event

VE Day: Hope for the Future, whole class activity

From *The Next Morning*: ‘I am writing this very late, for it is hard still to believe it... the war in Europe is over! And we have been celebrating “Victory in Europe day”.’

This activity allows students to imagine a future for their generation. This activity could be done within a tutor group, in subject lessons (for example English, PSHE or History) or as an extra-curricular activity. As a hook, you may like to play the extract from *Dear England* in which Southgate delivers some of the letter out loud. The film *The Next Morning* prompts students to consider what the next 80 years might look like, and this may also be an opportunity to consider how students might preserve their work for future generations to find. See the end of this guide for more ideas on creating a time capsule.

Using Gareth Southgate’s full letter, **‘Dear England’** as a stimulus, ask students to reflect on the world around them in the present day. Ask them to identify things that they like and/or are proud of; activities, places, people and events. For each idea, ask them to describe it in one or two sentences. Then, ask students to reflect on what frustrates or angers them about the world around them. This can be on a local, national or international level. Suggest that they reflect on what can be changed, and what alternatives there might be in order to remedy the situation they have identified.



Men and women of the US army in Japan, following the formal surrender of Japan on 2 September 1945.
Image: Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo

Share Gareth Southgate's letter, either in paper or digital form.
Highlight the following elements:

Salutation: 'Dear England'.

He addresses the entire nation: he suggests that everyone has a responsibility to act upon his comments and requests.

Acknowledgement: 'I know there will be a lot of emotion...?'

Gareth Southgate indicates here that he understands the challenges and difficulties ahead, and why people might be behaving in a certain way.

Direct address: 'You are part of an experience that lasts in the collective consciousness of our country.'

By speaking to the reader directly, Southgate reminds us of our own responsibility.

Personal recollection: 'The first England match I really remember watching was in the 1982 World Cup.'

Sharing one of his own memories encourages the reader to share Southgate's experience and makes him seem vulnerable and easy to relate to.

Emotive language: 'It's their duty to continue to interact with the public.'

By using words like 'duty', Southgate appeals to the reader who is likely to have an emotional response.

Definite statement: 'If we can do that, it will be a summer to be proud of.'

This final sentence is emotive, and by using the pronoun 'we', ensures that everybody is included in the possibility of feeling national pride.



Image by Marc Brenner

Once you have identified all of these different techniques in the letter, ask students to do one or more of the following:

- **Write their own ‘Dear England’ letter.** Once it has been written and redrafted, it might be typed and included in a VE Day / *The Next Morning* display
- **Create a script for a ‘Dear England’ video.** As well as writing the letter, students can select images that will be shown as the letter forms a voiceover. This activity might be supported by pupils studying Media Studies, or members of 6th form, prefect or house captain teams. (Please follow your school policy for including student images, and according to safeguarding procedures)
- **Record the letter and use an appropriate piece of music to underscore it.** A selection of these might be shared later at open evenings, in assembly or as part of a project such as creating a time capsule
- **Use the letters as part of a wider school literacy project**
- **Include letters in your own time capsule project,** imagining that these letters will help future generations measure how successful we have been in achieving what we have predicted in our letters.



Image by Marc Brenner

Drama lesson

Telling our nation's story – past and future

The following lesson outline can be used as a one-off lesson, or as the foundation of a longer scheme of work inspired by *Dear England*. (The full Learning Guide to *Dear England* can be found [here](#).)

‘We are all storytellers now’

From Gareth Southgate's letter: *Regardless of your upbringing and politics, what is clear is that we are an incredible nation – relative to our size and population – that has contributed so much to the arts, science and sport. We do have a special identity and that remains a powerful motivator.*



Image by Marc Brenner

One of the most powerful images in *Dear England* is that of Gareth Southgate standing confronting his memory (represented by video footage in clip 1) of missing a penalty in 1996. He stands alone on stage and the audience cannot see his face but his body language, as well as the music and video projection, communicate this image clearly. Then, as the action resumes on stage, we see characters taking steps to imagine and create a new future.

Using this moment from *Dear England* as a stimulus, ask students to create their own piece of drama entitled *The Next Morning*. The piece could be about World War Two, inspired by VE Day, or it could be the day after another significant event, either locally or farther afield from a period in more recent history.

You might like to use the following prompts to support students in devising their piece of drama.

- **How will you represent the memory?** This could be anything from a tableau upstage, a piece of film footage, shadow puppetry or simply a piece of evocative music
- **How will you make a clear transition from the character having a moment of memory, back to the full action of the scene?** This could be a lighting change, the entry of a character on stage, or a different dynamic of movement by the person experiencing the memory, therefore signalling the end of the memory
- **When does the character experience the memory?** Is it how your piece of drama starts? Does it come later in the piece, triggered by something another character says? Does the memory come at the end of the piece, as a character finally comes to term with their experiences?
- **How will the audience understand the significance of the memory?** What emotions do you want them to feel? How will you ensure this happens? What can they see and hear that will help them to access those emotions?

As your school or college marks VE Day or Remembrance Day later in the year, you might like to record performance of these pieces and ask students to write some reflective responses to the process. There are also a lot of opportunities to work on a cross-curricular basis with this task, with Music,

The Next Morning: the next chapter:

The Next Morning project encourages students and teachers to imagine how we will be remembered and represented by future generations.

Having considered how we might represent the past, we should also think about our own historical legacy. The task below can either be created during a one-off lesson, or could be a more detailed project in which a group, class or year group create a video to be included in a time capsule.

In groups of four to six, students should create a performance which communicates the theme of ‘our generation’. You could include:

- Your own ambitions
- ‘A day in the life’ for a school student
- A representation of your local town or city, and/or the country as a whole
- A top five, or top ten list of inspirational people (which could include sports women and men, scientific pioneers, celebrities, artists, etc)
- Vox pops (short, recorded snippets of people being interviewed) answering the question ‘my hopes for the future are..’)
- Refer to Southgate’s comment that ‘we are an incredible nation – relative to our size and population – that has contributed so much to the arts, science and sport’ by including examples of that.



Still from *The Next Morning* film

PSHCE

Resilience



From *The Next Morning*: *‘The peace has come. And everybody is overjoyed... But I cannot get into the feeling of it, that’s the truth. So many people have been lost, and the world will never be the same again...’*

In 2020, the 75th anniversary of VE Day was marked during the period of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Despite the lockdown conditions at the time, communities did everything possible to come together and mark the occasion in the face of the hardship, fear and separation being felt by everyone at that time.

On this, the 80th anniversary of VE Day, and the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the pandemic, we can ask students to reflect on resilience and the ability to deal with uncertainty. We can also make clear connections with moments from *Dear England* in which players are faced with difficult decisions and emotions. As the film *The Next Morning* demonstrates, and as Pippa Grange explains when she asks the England players to keep journals, writing down our thoughts can be a fantastic way of doing that, even if you don’t intend anyone else to read them.

Whether we are talking about conflict, sport or the school environment, resilience is often referred to as being a vital characteristic.

1. Ask students to define 'resilience'. You might also like to invite examples of when they, or others, have shown resilience.
2. Initiate a debate with students using the statement 'Resilience is innate. It cannot be taught or developed.'
3. Discuss the characters in *The Next Morning*. What can we understand about those characters based on their actions? What other scenarios can we imagine those characters have experienced that might have required or developed resilience?



Image by Marc Brenner

Now look at this extract from *Dear England*. It is it is Pippa Grange's presentation, found in clip 2, which Gareth Southgate attends before introducing himself to her for the

Fear can force us to make poor decisions. As people, institutions ... countries, even. If it comes from a place of panic, frustration, resentment.

So much of the modern world now is actually geared around helping us avoid decision-making. That's why there's this feeling right now – isn't there? Of 'paralysis', everywhere?

For me, the real tragedy of fear – if we don't use our power to harness it – is not what it does to us. It's what it takes. It robs us of joy. The job, we didn't apply for. Not telling that person how we feel...

As 'leaders', then...how do you cultivate an environment that isn't stale. That isn't full of fear. By helping your team confront their fears?

Dear England by James Graham

In this scene, Pippa Grange is talking to leaders, managers and business people who are learning to create a culture of achievement in their organisations. However, what she is saying is equally applicable to the way in which countries are led. The ideas below encourage your students to consider the wider implications of what Pippa Grange is suggesting about fear and leadership.

Once you, or a student, has read this extract out loud, ask students to respond to the following prompts:

- To what extent do you agree with Pippa Grange when she says that 'fear robs us of joy'?
- What does Pippa Grange mean when she talks about 'paralysis'? What do you think causes it, and how can we remedy it?
- Pippa Grange asks what leaders can do to 'cultivate an environment that isn't stale'. What does she mean by this, and what suggestions can you make to answer that question?

Once you have discussed these prompts, ask students to give feedback on their group or pair discussions. You may like to do this in discussion form or provide an opportunity for students to do some reflective writing.



Still from
The Next Morning film

PSHE

Inclusivity and community

From *The Next Morning*: *‘Oh yes, the bells... Tolling to one another, as though summoning the next into life, village to village, town to town.’*

From Gareth Southgate’s letter: *This is a special group. Humble, proud and liberated in being their true selves.*

Our players are role models. And, beyond the confines of the pitch, we must recognise the impact they can have on society. We must give them the confidence to stand up for their teammates and the things that matter to them as people.

[...]

It’s their duty to continue to interact with the public on matters such as equality, inclusivity and racial injustice, while using the power of their voices to help put debates on the table, raise awareness and educate.

Gareth Southgate’s letter was a response to a national debate about race. He used it as a platform to praise his players but also to engage the public in a further conversation about role models, about duty (that of individuals and of society) and the national identity of the country as a whole.

The letter exemplifies the approach that Southgate took to managing and leading the England football team. This included:

- Honesty, transparency and vulnerability
- A willingness to see failure as a necessary part of success
- An ability to act for the greater good
- To use his power and influence as a positive force for change
- Clear boundaries about what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour for players and fans alike
- A belief in treating everybody with respect and dignity

Symbols of belonging

In James Graham's script for *Dear England*, Gareth Southgate leads the England team in a discussion about the image of the England flag.



Image by Marc Brenner

Gareth: I mean, have we, do we, ever even ask about this? What is this? (At the Flag).

Jordan Pickford: ... Is that a trick question?

Gareth: These are going to be everywhere. In every car, millions of homes. And these things can be emotive, and complicated, we know that. Let's uncomplicate it – what do you think of, as the place you come from. Or want it to be –

Dear England by James Graham

Through this discussion, Gareth Southgate encourages the team to express how this symbol makes them feel. The play conveys an essential message about the importance of belonging. For some, the England flag can be a symbol of hope and pride, but for others it represents something more unwelcome or unfriendly.

Using this extract as a starting point, you can take the conversation in a variety of different directions:

- How a sense of belonging is created in the school or setting in which you are having the conversation
- How differences, as well as similarities, are celebrated and acknowledged as a way of creating a better community and society
- Focus on Gareth Southgate’s question: ‘what do you think of, as the place you come from? Or want it to be?’
- If we redesigned your national flag for the 21st century, what could – or should – it look like? How can it better represent the people who make up the nation? (The England flag’s Britannica entry can be found online [here](#))
- Clear boundaries about what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour for players and fans alike
- A belief in treating everybody with respect and dignity.

Using the discussions as a starting point, create a class, year group or school charter in which you outline the duties and responsibilities of the citizens or stakeholders within your school. Focus in particular on ensuring that everybody in the community feels safe, valued and cared for, regardless of age, race, sexuality, religious belief or culture.

These discussions also provide space for you to form a dialogue about ways to challenge people who are expressing difficult and/or challenging opinions.

If it is appropriate to do so, you could record the outcome of this activity in writing or as a film. It could be further supported by explaining what events have inspired this charter.

History

Heroism and legacy

From Gareth Southgate's letter: *It has been an extremely difficult year. Everyone in this country has been directly affected by isolation and loss. But we have also seen countless examples of heroism and sacrifice. It's given us all a new understanding of the fragility of life and what really matters*

Gareth Southgate wrote his letter to the nation in 2021. The country had been gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic for nearly 12 months. A collective determination to beat the virus quickly emerged. Communities came together to care for vulnerable people; members of the medical and science professions were hailed as heroes in caring for victims of the disease and developing a vaccine to fight it; people of all ages found new ways to be creative; individuals cared for and supported each other with small, random acts of kindness. The pandemic was a significant moment in the world's history and will be studied by future generations.

In your class, or in small groups, discuss the way in which your local area represents examples of bravery, sacrifice and heroism. Then, create a visual representation of your findings. This could be a collage, a painting, a photographic montage, a portrait etc.

Then, either individually or in groups, complete the following sentences (or write a whole paragraph!)

- 'In the year 2105, people will remember our generation for...'
- 'We find examples of heroism in our local area such as...'
- 'I'm proud to be from (location) because...'

On VE Day, Winston Churchill made a speech to the nation. You can hear some of it here: [VE Day - 8 May 1945 - International Churchill Society.](#)

English

Hope

The Next Morning project provides various opportunities to explore creative and discursive writing. Below are suggestions for English teachers wishing to explore some of the themes highlighted by the film and by *Dear England*.

From *The Next Morning*: *'I have something to show you, it's a letter I wrote but never posted...'*

From Gareth Southgate's letter: *Social media has been a key resource in giving our players a platform and has been a positive tool in so many ways. In fact, I feel like this generation of England players is closer to the supporters than they have been for decades. Despite the polarisation we see in society, these lads are on the same wavelength as you on many issues.*

Creative responses

1. Haiku

Create a series of Haiku communicating the feelings of the people in the film *The Next Morning*. A Haiku is formed of three lines: the first has five syllables, the second has seven syllables and the third has five syllables.

2. Storyboard

Draw and caption six or 12 frames for a film about VE Day, entitled *The Next Morning*. You may wish to choose a particular point of view based on a text you may have been studying with your class.

Discursive responses

1. Speech for school assembly

The title of the speech should be ‘Social media does more harm than good’. Use the section of *Dear England* found in clip 8 to support the creation of this speech.

2. A persuasive letter

Write a reply to Gareth Southgate, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of VE Day, telling him what you think has or hasn't changed since his original letter, written in 2021.

3. A newspaper article

Write a newspaper article, suitable for your peers and the wider school community, reflecting the VE Day commemorations in your school or college, in which you also reflect on some of Gareth Southgate's



Image by Marc Brenner

The Next 80 Years

Creating your own time capsule

From *The Next Morning*: ‘Dear the Future. Hello from our “now”!’

***The Next Morning* aims to inspire today’s young people to create time capsules to be opened in 2105, sharing their experience and hopes for the next 80 years.**

You can create both digital and physical time capsules. You could:

- Include audio recordings (be sure to label what kind of file they are!)
- A short film, in which you show life now, and how you imagine it might be in 80 years’ time. Consider the visual and aural information you are including, such as interviews, music and other sounds which communicate life in 2025
- Photographs which reflect you and your community
- Drawings, collages and montages
- Family trees
- Written or recorded stories about your own family and why you are proud of them
- Letters – to someone you know, or to the unknown person or people who discover your time capsule
- A call to action: what do you want the people who discover your time capsule to do? What do you want them to think about or reflect on?

Choosing a location

Your time capsule needs to remain safe and secure, so you should think carefully about where to leave it. In addition, you will have to consider how to let people know it’s there to be found. A plaque or a sign is often left above or near a buried time capsule for example.

Additional resources

The full *Dear England* Learning Guide is available [here](#)

The Imperial War Museum’s [detailed guide](#) of what happened on VE Day is a helpful foundation for the topics contained in this guide to *The Next Morning*.

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre makes theatre that entertains and inspires using its creativity, expertise and unique reach. The National Theatre shares unforgettable stories with millions of audience members across the UK and around the world – on its own stages, on tour, in schools, on cinema screens and streaming at home.

World-leading artists make their best work at the National Theatre with the widest possible audience and impact. The National Theatre invests in talent and innovation on stage and off, taking seriously its role as the nation's theatre. Of the new productions developed each year with a wide range of theatre companies, a third of that research and development resource is dedicated to shows staged at theatres outside London.

Through touring our work to local theatres and schools and nationwide education and community programmes, we are active in every local authority in the UK. A registered charity with deeply embedded social purpose, the National Theatre works with hundreds of schools and communities across the UK to fire imagination and inspire creativity, and to develop skills and pathways for careers in theatre.

For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk

National Theatre Learning: inspiring creativity and boosting skills

Tickets | tours | workshops | events | CPD | courses | placements | live | digital

National Theatre Learning works at scale with schools and communities across the UK to fire imagination and inspire creativity, and in depth to develop skills, open career pathways and access to training in theatre.

We want every child in the UK to be able to experience their National Theatre before they leave school.

Inspire:

We work with schools across the UK and internationally to support creative learning and teaching and enable access to theatre. We tour work to schools, we train teachers and support students to make the most of our shows, both live and online.

Participate:

We create programmes for young people and communities across the UK to take part in theatre and develop creative skills. We support young people to tell their own stories through theatre, and create opportunities for young people to collaborate with world-class theatre-makers across the UK.

Skills:

We support pathways, training and professional development for the breadth of roles in theatre and the creative industries, from secondary school onwards. We help to shape the creative industries workforce of tomorrow through an ambitious skills development programme designed by sector leaders.

For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/



Still from *The Next Morning* film

This learning guide was written by
Creative Education Consultant Susie Ferguson, 2025.

**National
Theatre**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**