Life of Galileo by Bertolt Brecht

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Edited by: John Willett and Ralph Manheim

Encountering Conflict
Written and edited by Andrew Blackman and the CWTC actors.
Performance and Playing Space requirements:

Space requirements:
Please allow 6m by 6m of cleared performance space and access to power. If your school has access to a raised stage, CWTC would always prefer to perform on the stage to ensure everyone in the audience can see the actors. Please note, lecture theatre stages are not suitable for this production.

Lighting requirements:
If your performance space/theatre has a standard lighting rig, we would appreciate being able to use it. A general wash is required for the duration of the show; please let us know if a theatre technician is required to do this or if our actors can access the controls. We bring our own lighting tree for spaces without any lighting rigs and facilities.

Set-up/Pack-up time:
CWTC requires access to the venue 60 minutes prior to the performance start time to allow time for a comfortable set-up. Please allow 30 minutes after the show for the actors to pack up and clear the venue.

Performance length:
The performance runs for 90 minutes, including a short question/analysis session.

Suitability:
Suitable for Year 11 & 12 students.

Performance Costs:
Costs are $15.00 per student (incl. GST)
Minimum performance fee is $1800 based on 120 students or less (incl. GST)

Payment:
A tax invoice will be forwarded to the school on confirmation of final numbers. Full payment by cheque or EFT is due within seven days of a CWTC performance at your school.

Feedback:
CWTC appreciates any feedback from teachers and students. Feedback forms will be provided at the end of the show; please complete the form and forward it to our office. You can also log on to our website www.completeworks.com.au and complete the online feedback form.

Cancellations:
CWTC requires a minimum of 8 weeks notification if a VCE booking needs to be rescheduled or cancelled. Cancellation of the performance by the school within 8 school weeks of the scheduled date will result in the full minimum fee of $1800.00 being payable by the school.
Encountering Conflict – Life of Galileo by Bertolt Brecht

Complete Works Theatre Company’s workshop presentation of Life of Galileo by Bertolt Brecht is tailored to help VCE students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the play analysed though the prism of Encountering Conflict.

The scenes we have chosen are those that best support the points relating to conflict that you are likely to be discussing in class and are framed around causes, responses, consequences and resolutions.

Five CWTC actors present the workshop that consists of selected scenes or parts of scenes read, in chronological order, interspersed with commentary and narration. Due to the obvious time constraints some scenes will be referenced with a short synopsis, key quote and prompt.

Introduction
Berthold Brecht was one of the most influential dramatists of the twentieth century for developing, what he called, theatre of alienation. He asks the audience not to empathise with the characters in his plays but rather to stand apart and deeply consider their arguments and points of view.

You may have found by now that Life of Galileo is a long, dense work of intellectual argument. It is a challenging formula. Characters are drawn as functional entities or voices that clearly represent opposing views rather than a character driven narrative that may engage us more emotionally. If we have this idea in mind as we approach Galileo, we’ll come away with a more thorough understanding play and of a pivotal period in our history. Firstly, let’s frame our exploration with the definition of Conflict.

Conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests.

http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conflict?q=Conflict

Origin:
late Middle English: from Latin conflict- 'struck together, fought', from the verb confligere, from con- ‘together’ + fli gere 'to strike'; the noun is via Latin conflictus 'a contest'

What is the play about?

In board terms we can say that Life of Galileo examines the conflict between theology and science. – conflict between the established control of the Roman Catholic Church based on faith, and the development of new branches of science that directly challenged this religious order with the logic of proof - or reason.
The conflicts in Life of Galileo are personal, political and moral. They are closely linked and are embodied in the character of Galileo, whose private and public encounters with conflict have widespread ramifications.

We look at:

- Conflict between Science and Religion
- Conflict between the Individual and the State
- Conflict within the Self
- Conflict with the Community

**SCENE 1**

**Part 1 - P 5 – 13**

GALILEO, ANDREA, MRS SARTI, LUDOVICO

*Galileo’s modest study in Padua. It is morning. A boy, Andrea, the housekeeper’s son, brings in a glass of milk and a roll.*

GALILEO *(washing his torso, puffing and happy)*: Put the milk on the table, but don’t you shut any books. ...

**Part 2 - P 16 – 19**

PROCURATOR, GALILEO, ANDREA

The Procurator of Padua University arrives and refuses Galileo a pay rise.

THE PROCURATOR: What is worth scudi is what brings scudi in....

In Scene 1, Brecht establishes Galileo’s passion for science and that he foresees his work and future discoveries will shake long held societal and religious beliefs. This establishes the backdrop for the major conflict – science vs religion.

Personal and domestic conflicts arise because of Galileo’s financial position. His salary from the University is inadequate to support the household and Mrs Sarti is impatient that Galileo take on more students so they can ‘pay the milkman’ (p10). She is deeply troubled by Galileo’s theories and by the interest shown by her son Andrea. She worries about Andrea ‘slipping into sin’ (p78) through his involvement in Galileo’s research.

As a dedicated scientist, Galileo values scientific knowledge above religious faith; he can no longer accept the theory of Aristotle’s ‘crystal spheres’ (p6). He rejoices in the ‘new time’ when humanity will finally be able to ‘understand its bode’ and is convinced that:
.....‘where faith has been enthroned for thousands of years doubt now sits’ Galileo
p7.

This is a key quote raises some questions to take back to class –

Prompt:
- How does doubt create conflict?
- Can you think of a conflict in society that is fueled by doubt?

SCENE 2 - Not read

Galileo presents the Venetian Republic with a new invention.

To help pay debts and to fund continuing research, Galileo improves the telescope, recently invented in Holland, boldly claiming it as his own invention and presents it to the University. He announces it is the result of 17 years of research; a blatant lie and a case of shameless stealing of intellectual property. Happy to receive 500 scudi, Galileo shows no sign of guilt or repentance for his actions.

This sets Galileo in direct conflict with the University and the city fathers and also with the Procurator on an inter-personal level. Brecht offers us an insight into Galileo’s character; we see him here, not as a hero, but as an ordinary flawed human being. Galileo’s moral compass is brought into question.

Ludovico knows that Galileo has stolen the idea for the telescope and is making money from it.

Key quote: “And it strikes me that I’m starting to learn a thing or two about science.” Ludovico p22.

Prompt:
- What does Ludovico mean when he says this?
- Should conflict be sought when an injustice is present?
- How important are ethics when it comes to conflict?

SCENE 3
P 26 – 34
GALILEO, SAGREDO, VIRGINIA

10 January, 1610: Using the telescope, Galileo discovers celestial phenomena that confirm the Copernican system. Warned by his friend of the possible consequences of his research, Galileo proclaims his belief in human reason.

Galileo’s study in Padua. Night. Galileo and Sagredo, both in heavy overcoats, at the telescope.
SAGREDO *(looking through the telescope)* I feel something not all that remote from fear, Galileo. ...

The political conflict in Galileo is about to be intensified. The telescope suddenly provides scientific proof that the earth revolves around the sun. Galileo naively believes that this will silence the critics in Florence who hold fast to the Ptolemaic theory that the earth is the center of the Universe. We see Sagredo frightened of the consequences of bringing such truths to light. He warns Galileo that going to Florence armed with the truth will be his doom.

We see here too that Galileo is very dismissive of his daughter, Virginia, preferring to focus only on events that will help his cause.

**Key quote** “You may be a skeptic in science, but you’re as gullible as a child as soon as anything seems likely to help you pursue it.” Sagredo p33

**Prompt:**
- How is conflict fueled when one party is being unreasonable?
- How do we know the difference between being unreasonable and simply having a different point of view?

**SCENE 4**
**Part 1 - p 34**
**MRS SARTI**

*Galileo’s house in Florence. Mrs. Sarti is preparing Galileo’s study ready for the reception of guests.*

MRS. SARTI: There has been nothing but bowing and scraping ever since we arrived safe and sound in this marvelous Florence. ...

**Part 2 - p 35 – 37 not read**

Cosmo de’ Medici, the 9yr old grand duke of Tuscany, enters Galileo’s study to find Andrea at work. An argument takes place that escalates into a grappling wrestle on the floor and the Ptolemaic model of the universe is broken.

Brecht brilliantly sums up the major themes of conflict in the microcosm of two squabbling children fighting over possession of a toy. Here is the young Grand Duke, the embodiment of power and authority, wanting to physically hold the universe in his hands and Andrea, the exponent of all that is new in science, wresting it from him because he has no understanding of it’s true workings.

We are observing here the direct conflict of science vs religion, interpersonal conflict between Andrea and Cosimo as individuals and also the societal and community conflict between Galileo’s house and that of the rulers and the establishment, the
very people who are his patrons and those he must persuade.

We pick up the scene on p38 in the upstairs study of Galileo’s house where the arrival of the court scholars has interrupted the fighting children.

Part 3 - p 38 – 43

THEOLOGIAN (seeing the broken Ptolemaic model on the floor): Something seems to have got broken here. ...

The Philosopher and the Mathematician refuse to look through the telescope at the scientific evidence, clinging resolutely to their faith in Aristotle. Sagredo’s opinion in Scene 3, that people are not convinced by the ‘lure of proof’, is confirmed. The political conflict that engulfs Galileo in Florence arises from the Church’s need to discredit Copernican theories that ‘get rid of heaven’ (p24) even if these theories are correct.

The key quote in this scene, “Truth is born of the times, not of authority.” Galileo p42

Prompt:
- Is truth relative?
- Will truth always win over authority?

SCENE 5 - Not read

In Scene 5, the Plague arrives generating fear and panic. The household is evacuated but Galileo stays to continue his research. The townspeople ‘make noises to drive away the clouds with the seeds of the plague in them.’ p48 and Galileo scoffs at the absurdity of superstition.

Prompt:
- How does fear motivate people?
- How does fear fuel conflict?
- How does misunderstanding and superstition create conflict?

SCENE 6
P 50 – 54
FAT SCHOLAR, A MONK, ASTRONOMER, THEOLOGIAN, VERY OLD CARDINAL, GALILEO

Large hall in the Collegium Romanum, Rome. Great merriment. Before the scene opens, boisterous laughter is heard.

THE FAT SCHOLAR: Things have to make sense to be believed. ....
In Rome, religious faith is even more deeply entrenched. Despite Galileo’s small victory where reason seems to have ‘won’, the Church’s response to proof is preempted by the words of The First Scholar at the Collegium Romanum: ‘did in your heels and resist’ (p51).

The astronomers confirm Galileo’s findings but no one is brave enough to tell the Very Old Cardinal. The scene ends with the entrance of the Cardinal Inquisitor.

The Inquisition was the Church’s response to encountering conflict. It was a Church tribunal that investigated and executed heretics for promoting anything that would ‘shake men’s faith in the Church’.

If the accused confessed, judges handed out minor punishments like flogging, while denial of the charges and persistent heresy resulted in the most severe punishments: life imprisonment or execution accompanied by total confiscation of property. The sentenced heretic was handed over to the church authorities for execution, usually by burning at the stake.

**Key quote:** “……..you bear a remarkable likeness to what’s-his-name, you know, the man we burned.” Very Old Cardinal p53

**Prompt:**
- When should you challenge authority? When should you let it go?

**SCENE 7**
**P 55 – 61**
**VIRGINIA, GALILEO, BELLARMIN, BARBARINI, FIRST SECRETARY**

*Cardinal Bellarmin’s house in Rome. A ball is in progress*

**VIRGINIA:** I’m not dancing with anybody else but Ludovico. ...

Conflict between the Individual and the State is brought to the fore. On his daughters’ big night, Galileo is told that the church has decided not to endorse Copernicus’ theories that his discoveries support and prove. He is also told that he is allowed to continue his work, but only in the form of hypothesis. This way the Church is able to dismiss Copernican doctrine as ‘absurd, heretical and contrary to our faith’ (p.60).

The Church’s response shows how easily those in power can manipulate the truth. According to biblical scholars, ‘truth’ is found only in the scriptures and, as it is the Church theologians who interpret the scriptures, there is little chance of challenging doctrinal ‘truths’ and thereby destabilising society. The Catholic Church is at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy in Renaissance Italy, but cannot maintain this
position without God and Heaven. Cardinal Barbarini’s joke, ‘If God didn’t exist, we should have to invent him’, is more true than amusing.

We learn that the Cardinal Inquisitor is now actively gathering information on Galileo, and his every conversation is being written down. The stakes for all have risen, as the conflict now becomes a societal issue of the utmost importance.

For Galileo it is a realisation that, even with the esteem in which he is held and proof to back his discoveries, ultimately matters are beyond his control.

Key quote: “None of us seriously believes that you want to shake men’s faith in the Church” Bellarmin p61

Prompt:
- People are talking about Galileo and he has no control over what they are saying. What happens when conflict builds into a societal issue and is out of anyone’s personal control?

SCENE 8
P 64 – 68
GALILEO, LITTLE MONK

The social upheaval that could result from open acceptance of Galileo’s discoveries is discussed with the Little Monk in Scene 8.

THE LITTLE MONK: I have managed to see the wisdom of the decree. ...

The Little Monk fears the collapse of the established social order. Galileo responds by defending the need to tell the truth. The Little Monk resolves his internal conflict by giving up astronomy. His decision suggests the powerlessness of the ordinary individual against might of the Church and the State.

Key quote: “But don’t you think that the truth will get through without us, so long as it is true?” The Little Monk p68

Prompt:
- Is revealing the truth important above all else?
- When, if ever, is it better to withhold the truth? ...and for whom?

SCENE 9
P 74 – 68
GALILEO, MRS SARTI, VIRGINIA, FEDERZONI, LUDOVICO, ANDREA

After a silence of eight years Galileo feels encouraged by the enthronement of a new pope, himself a scientist, to resume his research in the forbidden field. The sunspots.
We pick up the scene on the bottom of p73.

ANDREA: There are great baskets full of letters. The whole of Europe wants to know what you think, you've got such a reputation now, you can't just say nothing. ...

Galileo and Ludovico are in conflict over Galileo’s continued research and his defiance of church’s orders. As a result Ludovico breaks off his engagement with Virginia, provoking the anger of Mrs. Sarti who accuses Galileo of ‘trampling all over his daughter’s happiness’ (p78). We learn that Ludovico’s mother has methods remarkably similar to these of the inquisition in confronting conflict, and similar reasons: to force discipline and order and a proper respect’ (p79).

Galileo declares that he will publish his findings not in Latin, but in the language of the common people, making knowledge available to the masses rather than keeping it sacred and under the control of the few.

Key quote: “I will write in the language of the people, for the many, rather than in Latin for the few.” Galileo p79

Prompt:
• How can choosing to do something radical lead to conflict?

SCENE 10 - Not read

Scene 10 is a carnival, 10 years later, that shows the common peoples response to Galileo’s publications, now written in the common language. The singers are telling a story of Galileo’s discovery breaking the authority of the bible, and therefore the church. These ballads suggest the freedom and the dangers that accompany radical change, and show that overturning the social order can be a source of both community conflict and individual anxiety.

Key quote: “Galileo Galilei, the bible-buster” The Ballad Singer p85

Prompt:
• The power of words: do words have power? Does it matter how you say something?

SCENE 11 - Not read

In Scene 11, Galileo is waiting in the naïve belief he is about to have an audience with the Grand Duke and hand over his new book. Despite its being banned, news of Galileo’s doctrine spreads and its effects are felt all over Italy. The increasingly influential business community values Galileo’s benefit to manufacturing. Vanni, a successful ironmonger, is caught up in the conflict because he knows that he will ‘sink or swim’ with people like Galileo. (p87) Galileo seems to be ignorant of the
very real danger he is now in.

**Key quote:** “I’ve written a book about the mechanics of the universe, that’s all.”
Galileo p88

**Prompt:**
- Naivety: How does being naive impact on the way you view the world, and the way you view the conflict you experience?

**SCENE 12 - Not read**

In Scene 12, The Inquisitor warns the Pope that a ‘terrible restlessness’ has descended on the world and Christianity. During the scene we see the Pope physically transformed with all the opulent garments and trappings of his powerful position. By the end of the scene the Pope is convinced that Galileo, must be firmly and quickly ‘brought to heel’ (p108). Brecht cleverly uses this dramatic device to reinforce the power of the church and it’s position at the centre of the revolving universe. Galileo now has nowhere to run.

**Key quote:** “These people doubt everything. Are we to base human society on doubt and no longer faith.”

**Prompt:**
- How does rapid change cause conflict in the world?

**SCENE 13**
P 94 – 98
VIRGINIA, FEDERZONI, ANDREA, THE LITTLE MONK, GALILEO

Before the Inquisition, on June 22, 1633, Galileo recants his doctrine of the motion of the earth. His pupils await the news.

THE LITTLE MONK: The Pope wouldn’t receive him. No more discussions about science. ..... 

The Church finally resorts to brute force to make Galileo ‘tow the line’ by showing him the ‘instruments of torture’. The suppression of the individual ‘who knows the truth’ is deemed necessary to keep the earth at ‘the centre of the universe’ and Rome at ‘the centre of the earth’.

Galileo’s recantation leads to distressing personal conflict between Galileo and his former protégé, Andrea. Andrea condemns his mentor. He resolves to have nothing more to do with Galileo. The Little Monk goes back to his religious life and Federzoni back to lens grinding.
Key quote: “Unhappy the land where heroes are needed.” Galileo p98

Prompt:
- Why does Galileo recant? Why do people give in? In what situation does this option seem the best one?

SCENE 14
P 104 – 109
GALILEO, ANDREA

Galileo is under house arrest. Andrea comes to see him before leaving for Holland. The guarding monk and Virginia, who now looks after Galileo in his old age, have just left the room, leaving Andrea and Galileo alone for the first time since his recantation.

1633-1642. Galileo lives in a house in the country near Florence, a prisoner of the Inquisition till he dies. The ‘Discorsi’.

(Andrea Sarti appears. He is now a man in his middle years)

ANDREA: I have to travel all night so as to cross the frontier by morning. May I go? ..... 

Galileo confesses to Andrea that he recanted because he was afraid of the torture he might suffer if he didn’t recant. While his recantation looks like cowardice it does enable him to do what he has always wanted to do – research and write. Something Andrea comes to accept in the end.

Key quote: “I recanted because I was afraid of physical pain.” Galileo p107

Prompt:
- When is it right to give in and right to make a stand?
- Virginia believes that Galileo has fully recanted. Does giving in require a complete change of beliefs or can you recant and hold on to your beliefs?

SCENE 15 - Not read

1637. Galileo’s book, the ‘Discorsi’ crosses the frontier. While Andrea, accompanied by is child assistant Giuseppe, is searched crossing the Italian border, he openly reads Galileo’s book. Children nearby are discussing, with conviction, that a local woman is a witch who can fly on a broom. The border guards, through laziness, let Andrea pass through the checkpoint. The boys ask Andrea if people can fly through the air. He answers that it is impossible for a woman to fly on a broom without some sort of motor attached and that one day, maybe ‘there will be’ such machines. Superstition and scientific truth are directly contrasted in the last
speech of the play.

**Key quote:** “There are lots of things we don’t yet know, Giuseppe. We’re really just at the beginning.” Andrea p.113.

**Prompt:**
- Andrea’s actions indicate that Brecht believes that truth will win out in the end. What do you think? Will truth always rise to the top?
- How does science create conflict? How can it help to resolve it?

In conclusion, let’s touch on the major points of conflict discussed in our presentation.

**Conflict between Science and Religion** - While Galileo is ultimately defeated by the triumph of faith and superstition over knowledge and reason, Andrea’s escape to Reformation Holland with the ‘Discorsi’ is a step toward resolving the conflict in favour of science.

**Conflict with the Self** - Brecht’s characters demonstrate how easily the individual evades moral responsibility by submitting to a higher authority, be it church, state, community, and so on, but also shows that moral compromise can create deeper inner conflict, which is not so easily dismissed.

**Individual vs. the State** - Brecht suggests that when the freedom of the individual to expose a fallacy and reveal the truth is denied, the ensuing conflict will always be resolved in favour of the state.

**Conflict within the Community** – In Life of Galileo, Brecht represents the Church as offering stability, but in a way that leads only to stagnation. The play demonstrates that conflict is essential in effecting change for the better. As with all serious conflict, the effects are always damaging and nobody escapes unscathed.

**References:**
1. Many of the ‘prompts’ are sourced from a VATE presentation on Life of Galileo (Monday 15th February, 2013), written and presented by Shelly Beamish, English Faculty Coordinator, Senior School, Chairo Christian School, Drouin Campus.