



Nick is a film maker. He made a film 20 years ago, and it was good. Really good. So he says. The problem is that the film happened to star a young fifteen year old girl, and the film's writer and co-star, Hamish, unfortunately, got caught shortly after the movie premiered at Berlin outside a young girl's window... with images of her on his camera, topless.

And now, the Adelaide Film Festival wants to do a retrospective and a lot of questions are being asked. Who is responsible for telling what really happened? When does art replicate reality? Whose reality do we believe? And who decides what the content is?

In a world where we are constantly creating a narrative for ourselves, through social media, online platforms and masking ourselves who decides what reality is? Who decides who is cancelled and who is an artistic genius?

Commentary is for senior students, age 16 +, Yr 11 and 12.

It contains frequent coarse language, mature sexual themes, themes relating to age and consent,

Coarse Language

There are multiple occurrences of the words 'sh*t, f**k, f**king' and one use of the word 'c**t'. These are used by Nick, as his world slowly starts to spiral. Saskia, also swears quite a lot. The word 'f**ked' is used to describe the character of Hamish, and may be understood as reference to substance use, although this is not made explicit. They are not used in a violent or threatening manner toward other characters but as part of his vernacular, Saskia also uses coarse language throughout.

Mature Sexual Themes, Staged and Implied

Nick is married to Mish, however it becomes clear that he is having an affair with one of his film students, Genevieve, aged in her 20's. We discover through the play that this is not an isolated incident.

At the beginning of the play, two characters are depicted following sexual intercourse, however no sexual activity is shown or staged.

Stage directions:

Lights up on Gen, barely dressed, post-sex, on a bed. She's looking at Nick's laptop screen, the sound of a shower turning off. Nick is offstage. He enters with a towel around his waist

The first scene between Nick and Genevieve involves Nick on the bed while Genevieve straddles him, clothed in her t-shirt and underwear, and then pulls him down the bed while she gets on her knees. At the beginning of the scene, Genevieve pulls an opaque curtain across the stage. The action takes place behind the curtain and is visible only briefly in silhouette before the lights fade and the scene changes.

“Gen: I think it's only fair I get something out of this exchange.

Nick: And what do I get?

Gen undoes his towel.

Maybe the shower this time? Your neighbours.

Gen: I don't care.

Let's give them a show.

She rolls him over.

In this scene Genevieve is in control. It is clear she is very much getting something out of the affair. It is a moment where she has power over Nick. A theme relevant to the play and the question of power and consent. It is non-violent and consensual.

Nick hints to his wife, Mish, after hearing her tv series has been optioned for a movie, kisses her excitedly and it escalates, she jumps up and puts her legs around his waist, but then stops it when they hear a zoom call sound. She ends it by saying "We don't have time" They are both fully clothed.

In a scene in a cafe where Nick is sitting with Genevieve Gen puts her hand across and up under the table and presses it toward Nick's crotch, when he pulls back she says

"I'm not some dumb girl you f**k."

As Nick's world starts to spiral and he is feeling the world is against him, he and Genevieve begin to argue:

Nick: Don't - with all due respect, don't give me any f**king advice right now. You don't have the faintest idea what you're talking about.

Gen: You got it Teach. Shall I suck your d**k one last time?"

There is a tension between Genevieve and Nick that they both enjoy but we see it start to unravel as Nick faces more scrutiny over his actions. It does raise the moral question of an older University lecturer, who is/was a known film maker, having a relationship with a younger student. Whilst Genevieve is in her early 20's and of age, Nick is in his 40's and so there is a question here about the ethics across the relationship. This is discussed in the Study Guide in greater depth.

In a scene where there is adult content playing on his laptop in the background, we see Nick as he contemplates moving his hand to his groin. He is in boxers and a t-shirt and we understand what he is about to do. We hear the sounds, of someone panting, before he receives a phone call. The scene lasts approximately ten to fifteen seconds.

Themes relating to Age and Consent

The play deals with the original film featuring a girl, aged fourteen. It discusses the ethics of the original movie, and the subsequent charge against the writer and co-star of the movie of attacking a young girl, aged fifteen.

Nick: Does everyone think it's paedophilic?

Gen: The girls definitely do.

Nick: But he never touches her.

Gen: He just stalks her.

Nick: After she humiliates him. Which she gets away with because she's rich. It's about class. It's about obsession.

Gen: Yeah, a grown man obsessed with a teenage girl.

Nick: He's playing a seventeen year old.

Gen: Hamish never looks seventeen.

Nick: We tell you he's seventeen. We made that explicit.

Gen: But we have eyes. No seventeen year old looks like Hamish did.

Whilst Nick is in an interview with Anna Whitehead, a journalist, the following exchange occurs.

Anna: A man writes a story where he assaults a young girl - he jumps through the window to attack her -

Nick: We never show an attack.

Anna: And then, in real life, is found lurking outside the window of a young girl. We're meant to think what exactly?

This theme of consent runs throughout the play. What power does Nick, the older male

film maker have, when casting a fourteen year old? When he is trying to get the perfect promo shot for the poster. How much information does he give when his young actor may be placed in a precarious position with her physical safety? What is the relationship here? Can the fourteen year old actively consent to the directors choice.

Violence, Threats of Violence

During the making of *Low*, Hamish jumps through a glass window, which injures Saskia as it shatters. There is discussion about whether Nick directed Hamish to jump through the real glass to get the full effect, or whether it happened without his knowledge. It certainly happened without Saskia's consent.

She highlights the scar and how she uses a make up to cover it up. As an audience we should ask about whether artistic intent is valued over the safety.

After the screening Nick visits Genevieve's house, and is outside of her window harrassing her, he is inebriated and losing control. The script refers to him throwing the Silver Bear at her window but the staging has two female performers smash the window with baseball bats to shatter.

At the conclusion of the play Nick tries to convince Frankie that broken glass on set is safe, is made of sugar and that if she ran it on her arm it would not cut her. He then puts a piece of set glass in his mouth. Whereby he screams and we see a small dribble of blood before the play ends.

Whilst there are scenes that students would be exposed to in any 15+ film or tv series the play looks at the issue of power, truth, and consent and these scenes all ask to to think about how we percieve Nick. What kind of man is he?

The questions raised are very much in the contemporary space. Who creates the narrative? Through the play we see Nick creating a podcast on the situation, continually trying to control the content. We continually ask the question of each of the characters - what are their moral and ethical obligations.

How this applies to the social media and online world that many young people in particular find themselves in? How can we judge and is it so clear?

What is our responsibility as an audience? Who do we listen to? The charisma of the male film maker or the voices of the younger less heard women?