

# The Rising Sun

Four friends  
sitting on a  
hillside, waiting  
for the world to  
end.

\*Please consider the script while reading this booklet





We are living in a crisis.

We tell stories about a future world on fire.

We keep moving forward with business as usual despite every warning.

We barrel towards a world where peaceful and sustainable ways of life are impossible.

We believe this is all to come.

But...

What if it's already here?

The Rising Sun presents a future world that is barreling towards mass extinction. Humankind have now failed. Climate change has destroyed a peaceful and sustainable way of life. You, as an audience, will follow four powerless people living in the heart of that. But this show is not about that world we all fear is coming. It is about the world we live in today. It is about the warnings from decades ago. It is about young people growing up in fear that there is nothing they can do.

# The fear begins in the 80s

During the 1980s scientists around the world began accepting climate change as a very real and dangerous threat to the world. There had been talks about the crisis that was unfolding more and more each decade, however it was in the 80s when it became a widespread public knowledge.

*'During the hot summer of 1988, a few outspoken scientists, convinced by new evidence that rapid climate change might be imminent, made the public fully aware of the problem. Scientific discussions now became entangled with fierce political debates over the costs of regulating greenhouse gases. Corporations and conservatives spent large sums to sow uncertainty and denial of any danger from global warming. It was not until around 2005 that American media reported clearly that scientists had resolved the controversy, while films and ominous weather events gave citizens a better idea of what global warming might mean.'* – (Weart, 2020.)

It has been around 32 years since the public became fully aware of the dangers of climate change, and the need to act now. There has been very little change, with most of the changes made happening around the last 5-10 years. As stated above, politicians and other highly ranked officials poured money into keeping it hush, leaving us with very little time left to fix the problems placed at our feet.

The coming-of-age theme in movie and television has always been something that I have thought of when creating the characters for *The Rising Sun*. The characters I had in mind had to go through arcs similar to that of the types seen in coming-of-age frameworks. They need to learn about the world they're living in and about to fully transition into.

I wanted to take this further by using a specific framework that would also contribute to the style and look of my show. Due to the heavy link of the 1980s with climate change, I saw an opportunity to go for a *Breakfast Club* feel, and so it became a huge source of research while writing the play. I looked at the way that *The Breakfast Club* wrote its characters to oppose each other and in turn create conflict, as well the way that coming-of-age films portray the youthful perspective. In essence I wanted to make a play that put its characters at the forefront and had a style that made it feel like an 80s coming-of-age classic, linking into climate change in a subtle way.

The first ever  
Earth Day, 22nd  
April 1970



- Rocky Denver News, via Denver Public Library

# Early Process

At the beginning of my process I had an entirely different idea which centred around politics and the part it's played in the climate crisis. The story was of a family that the audience see placed in different decades, focusing on the progression of climate change and the decisions made by politicians that took us to the world we live in now. Through the initial research I found that I had packed too much into one idea and realised that I needed to focus my efforts into one topic. The climate change research I had done stood out to me a lot, especially looking into the psychological effects. The original idea was then scrapped, and I began looking into the psychological side of climate change.

I liked the idea of focusing entirely on younger characters. There is a lot of talk recently about the younger generations that are going to be left with the aftermath of these climate disasters, and so I wanted to show what they could be like (or what we already have become). This also gave birth to the coming-of-age framework in a way, as I wanted to show dysfunctional teens dealing with the world around them – something that the coming-of-age framework is all about dealing with.

Next, I needed to focus my meaning further and find a message I wanted to convey with my piece. Throughout the initial drafts of the script I went through some different ideas, eventually landing on the theme of helplessness and the idea that we could already be living in this world that my play portrays.

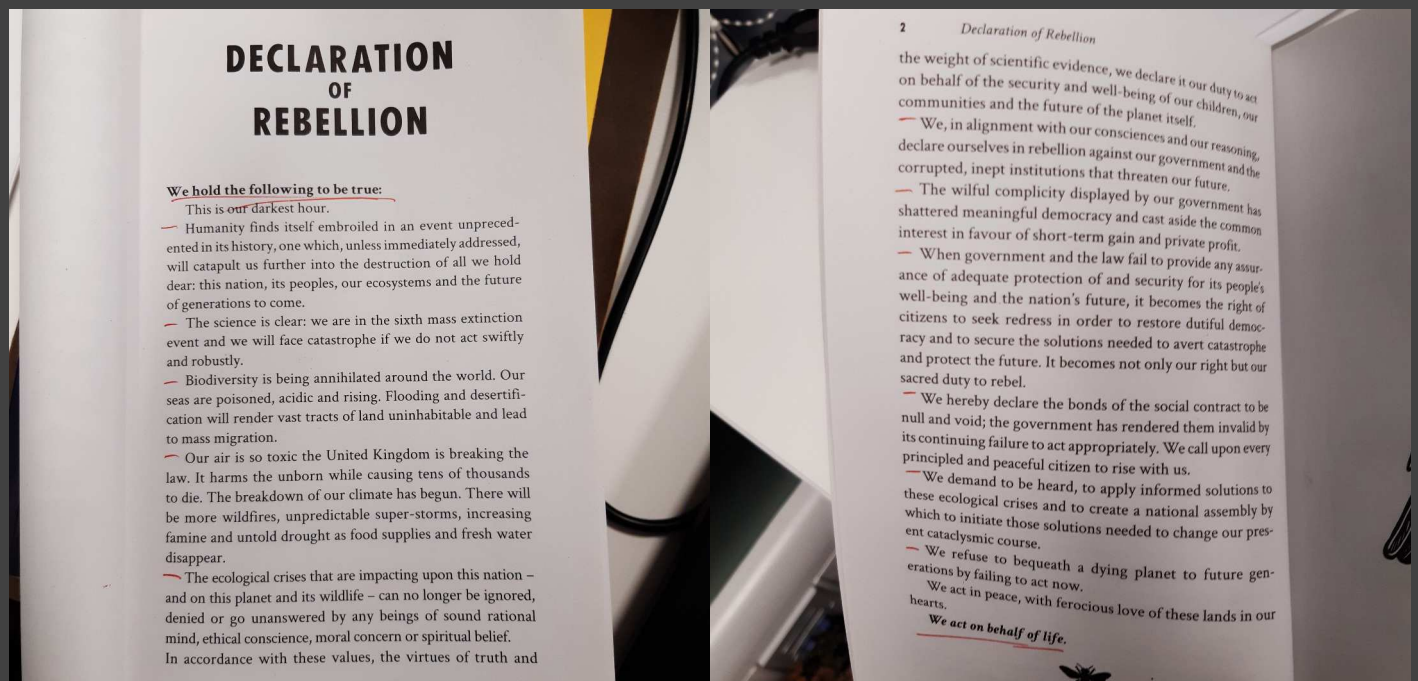


# Process coming to the end

Something that I have found interesting about this process is the ability my brain has to shut off all the fear that is dwelling inside. With all the evidence I have come across about the eventual fall of planet earth through climate change, I have felt extraordinary amounts of dread and horror at our highly plausible death. However, after only hours I have been able to turn off those feelings and continue with my day to day life. Human beings seem to have a talent of ignoring coming crises. When you are told for your entire life that an event is years and years into the future you are unlikely to feel a need to try and change it. This was something that I aimed to explore in the way that the characters talk about other people who have dismissed the tragedies until they became too severe to fix. Showing audiences that younger generations will look back on us in anger at our unwillingness to fight the problem head on. Once I had created the script, I went on to bring the show to life, directing my cast in the delivery of their lines and the way that the story comes across. My main efforts went into showing the changes in each character throughout the story. For Lisa, we end up seeing her truthful side, eventually seeing her as someone that has issues of her own that make life difficult. For Sam, we see him contextualise his thoughts, eventually coming to terms with them. For Anna, we see her go from doing anything for Sam to standing up to him and acting upon her own feelings. For Casey, she is able to use her experiences that have plagued her for years to help Lisa realise who she is.

# An Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion are a widely known activist group that have been leading the charge in the fight against climate change. They have held many peaceful protests, making sure that the general public are aware of the issues we face and how they can help to fix them. XR have shown solidarity, which is something that the world needs. They were established in the UK in May 2018 after a petition was signed calling for action against the climate crisis. Since then they have grown to an enormous stature and are known worldwide (having put together protests that span across the whole world). They are an incredible inspiration both for this project and also in general life, showing that when people do stand together, they can make noise which will hopefully incite change. That is what the ending of *The Rising Sun* is trying to say. They all sit together, as one group, hoping to live another day so they can make changes to better their worlds.



# Eco-Anxiety

Eco-Anxiety is a term that relates to people who are showing symptoms of anxiety and depression brought on by a fear of death from the climate crisis. It is a recognised condition; however, doctors believe that it is not something that should be considered medical because it is an obvious reaction to something as big in scale as the climate crisis. The way that *The Rising Sun* relates to eco-anxiety is that it is something I wanted to explore in the piece; choosing to look at climate change as a psychological threat as well as a physical one. The link comes into play through one of its characters, who I have written to be showing all the signs of eco-anxiety.

Sam shows each sign of eco-anxiety throughout the play, showing him as someone that is not mentally capable to be dealing with everything else going on in his life. I felt that the comparison between showing the mental effects (in Sam) and the physical effects (Alex) was very important because it gave a greater view to the things that will and are happening because of climate change.

‘Eco-anxiety, or climate change anxiety, can cause **sleepless nights, intense bouts of worry** and, in severe instances, may also lead to **drastic shifts in people’s behaviour.**’

– (Hind. 2019)















# Characters

The characters were very important to me when creating *The Rising Sun*. Mostly because I wanted a very human and real story, bringing to light that what these characters are going through is not too dissimilar to what people are going through right now. I wanted each character to be unique (linking to the way that each character in *The Breakfast Club* is unique) and I wanted to cover a spectrum of different states of mind in each person. To fully explore my topic, I felt that it would be interesting to see a character (Lisa) who is vastly different from the others and can push back to what they will all think of as normality.

The inclusion of the subplot of Anna's crush on Sam and moments like all of them drinking intends to remind the audience that these people are still young adults. They have so much more to deal with, but they also have feelings and thoughts like any other young adult would. Whereas inclusions like Lisa's sexuality crisis are things that young adults do experience but are also a lot more serious and require more care.

**\*See page 2 in script for characters and their descriptions**

# Hot seating

When the script was in its infancy and the characters were in their early stages of development, I held a workshop with my cast to try and explore each of their characters and create a clear image of who they were. The main creative device I used was hot seating. I gave each cast member a brief overview of their character and proceeded to ask them questions that I wanted them to answer as their character. This really helped the development and brought a lot more depth to the characters; as well as creating a bond that the actor had to their characters. By the time full rehearsals were taking place, everyone knew their characters inside and out and understood the motivations and emotions each was feeling in any scene.

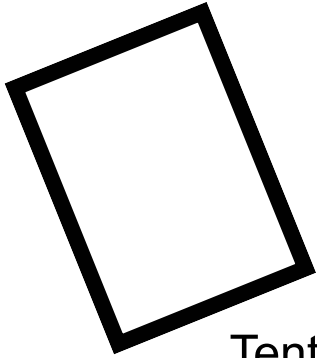


# Staging

As you can see on the right, my stage consists of: A tent, a tree stump, and a bench. This is meant to create the illusion that we are in the middle of a forest sitting on a hillside. Originally, I had planned to line the edge of the set with trees, however I found that it would be more impactful if their were no more standing – further showing the change that has occurred in this world where climate change is an imminent threat. The place that they are in, as previously mentioned, lives in an ethereal point that doesn't have a specific year or date. This is why the setting of a hillside works because whatever era it is in, it wouldn't look too dissimilar to any other time period.

There are other props that will also be lying about the stage. This includes bottles, bags, foods, and rocks. By filling the stage with empty bottles and empty food packets, it pushes the appearance that this group comes up here often to drink, as stated by Casey.

In terms of lighting, blue jells are used in conjuncture with a general wash to create the effect of being late at night. A spotlight shines on the back wall with a red/orange jell at the ending to give a stylistic final image of the sun rising behind the group. In Sam's final story he explains that the sun is something he doesn't want to face alone. He has become so helpless to the point that he doesn't think the world will go on, making it something he fears on an emotional level. That is why in the last scene it is important to see the sun while Sam sits in front singing with his friends, having now come to terms with his fear and ready to face another day.



Tent



Bench



Tree Stump



# Costume

As previously mentioned, a lot of the inspiration for the look of the show came from *The Breakfast Club* - specifically in the costume designs. I wanted each character to stand out as their own person, specifically showing the differences in who they are and where they have come from. Another element visible through the costume is that each character lives in this ethereal plane representing all eras of climate change, where the 80s sits at the centre. Showing that nothing has really changed in the decades since climate change was considered a real threat. There are pieces of the 80s, 90s, 00s, 10s, and also 60s and 70s – being eras when fossil fuels became highly sought after. The look is 80s but there are also props, like a phone, used during the piece. I want the audience to subtly understand that this is an era crossing show and that these teenagers could be going through these crises in any decade.

At the beginning of the process, when the 80s coming-of-age framework was still to be defined, I wanted to go for a much more futuristic setting. I had the idea to have each character in boiler suits that they would then remove to reveal more unique and rebellious clothing. This was scrapped however, in favour of the undefined era setting. Adding the boiler suits would take the audience out of feeling like this was a place they could be living in, instead showing them an entirely dystopian future that they are not entirely familiar with as they are usually portrayed in media.

**Sam (BLUE)**

Muddy blue washed jeans, white t shirt, blue letterman style jacket

**Casey (RED)**

Black jeans, t shirt, red knitted jumper, doc martens

**Anna (GREEN)**

Black corduroys, green jumper, boots

**Lisa (PINK)**

Pink Corduroy trousers, white turtleneck, fur coat

**Alex (BROWN)**

Big coat, Scruffy clothes, none fitting right



## Some thoughts by smarter humans

‘You often hear people say, ‘Well, we’ve been fine numerous times before, it’s no different.’ But now it is different. The preventative focus on vegetation management around homes, creating proper clearance, has not ben as effective as previously though.’

– (N/A. 2019)

‘Most politicians don’t want to talk to us. Good, we don’t want to talk to them either. We want them to talk to the scientists.’

-Gretta Thunberg



‘A football game or a film gala gets more media attention than the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced.’

– Greta Thunberg

‘When we can march through the streets, hand in hand with the miners and the oil-rig workers in a protest for climate action, then we will have unlocked the politics for transformative change.’

– (Nasheed. 2019)

‘we have been increasingly affecting our world, through a mixture of accident and design.’

– (Berners-Lee. 2019)

# Dear Diary,

The extract seen on the right is from a workshop lecture that was taught by Rita Marcalo about the state of the world and what we can do to change the way things are. It gave me a lot of the factual information that I kept in mind throughout the writing process, to make sure I wasn't putting out information that could be false. It also gave me an idea at one point to make the show entirely eco-friendly but that became difficult with the time constraints and the number of factors I would have to change to make it so. This is something interesting to think about though in terms of the future of theatre and how to make it more eco-conscious.

Below is an extract taken from earlier on in the process. The bullet point shows an idea I had to kick off the show, having Sam steal something and be on the run from the police. As that idea began to form, I saw that it brought too many factors to the story, and I wanted to simplify everything to make it easier to digest for the audience. The important thing was to keep the story simple so the characters could be more complex, and the meaning of the show could be digested easier.

the creative process

- Story point! They've stolen something. Police are coming for them. They're hiding till they get them, watching the sun rise. At the end they're dragged away and the sun is rising, we don't know if it is the last day or not. We don't know what they've stolen, it will be in some kind of bag.

## Rita Mocarto - Arts and Climate Change 2/11

- Position of an activist (not scientist)
- Deep Adaptation Forum - join!
- Dr. Jem Bendell (Prof. at U.K. of Lumbria)
  - download his latest paper
- The building is on fire but we're trying to grab our bags (keep trying to hold onto some nice things we have)

### The Signs:

- Last year's weather led to 20% decline in harvest in most European countries
- current carbon concentration = 415 parts per million: not since 4.5 million years ago when temperatures were 4 degrees higher & sea levels 40m higher than today
  - ↳ why hasn't this happened already?
    - (rise in ocean)
    - ↳ it's called lag. The energy is yet to be released.
- Some studies say ice-free arctic by 2030
  - The water is darker so absorbs more heat that then causes ice to melt. Less light ice to reflect heat. Light reflects heat

### Latest S

- it is extinct
- it is extinct
- it is collapse

### What co

- A re

### Increment

### Deep Adap

- Resilience
- Relinquishing
- Restoration
- Reconciliation

### what is

### • Full

### Latest Scientific Measurements:

- it is not yet too late to prevent human extinction.
- it is too late to prevent mass plant and animal extinction.
- it is too late to collapse prevent a collapse in our society. (within lifetime of people today)
- collapse is already unfolding

### What can we do...

- A revolutionary approach (don't have TIME!)
- Incrementalism - small steps to your goal

### Deep Adaptation

- Resilience
- Relinquishing
- Restoration
- Reconciliation

### • Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

- from ego-system to eco-system thinking

### what is my role?

- Full Volunteering scheme (work in CSA and get all paid) (1 year)

# This is happening now

Every day a new disaster threatens to sweep across towns, villages, and major cities. We have reached a point where natural disasters and heavy weather conditions feel like normality. This is not normality. My play aims to show the audience that the world they are seeing (that looks as if it could be years into the future) is happening right now. All you need to do is look at the news or outside your window to see that everything we have feared for decades is coming to fruition. However, people are unwilling to believe this certainty because they are not being told anything by people in power. The politicians and higher-ups of society don't want panic because that would threaten their business of power. People need to realise that climate change has happened. If we can all get to that point, maybe we can fix it.

**‘Climate crisis disasters are happening at the rate of one a week, though most draw little international attention’  
– (Harvey, 2019)**

# I feel powerless

The Rising Sun puts a lot of its emphasis on feeling helpless and powerless to the things going on around these characters.

At the heart of every case of eco-anxiety is a feeling that there is nothing you can do to change the world. Something that contributes to this is the government and high-ranking officials that fought and in theory could still be fighting to keep the truth about climate change reaching people. The general public will feel helpless to the cause when their own leaders are doing nothing - and if they themselves are unaware of the real dangers.

Sam feels powerless after losing his baby sister. His mind state begins to unravel and eventually his belief in the end of the world grows. It is stated through dialogue and the actions Sam takes that he does believe the world is going to end, however it was this original loss that sent him into the spiral that lead to this eventual belief.

Amy (Sam's baby sister) represents the world in many scenes, specifically the stories he tells. He feels powerless to help her, just as he feels powerless to save the world.

**Anna**

Do you really think the world is going end tomorrow?

**Sam:**

Yeah. I mean, it has to doesn't it? *(pause)* I just feel kind of helpless.

**Anna:**

I understand.

**Sam:**

Really?

**Anna:**

Of course, I do. I'm always here for you.

*Sam smiles.*

# Critical Analysis

The biggest issue that I faced during my process was to do with the script and the time it ended up taking to write. I had underestimated the work that went into it and ended up only having my final draft a few weeks before the show was to be performed. This was okay, because we had been going through completed scenes for months before. However, it was difficult on my cast with line learning and direction. Other issues that I came across was that of sticking to the meaning behind my play. I would end up focussing on other aspects and drifting from what my play meant. Such as the relationship with Casey and Lisa, that I ended up having to cut in favour of scenes that did more for the overall meaning.

A smaller issue I found was my ability as a director. Wanting to have the focus be on my writing, I did not prepare enough for the directing side of things and ended up not conveying everything I wanted out of my cast. Luckily, they are a very talented group and were able to bring out a lot of the emotion needed for these characters from the lines and character direction in the script.

Finding the exact props and set to bring the play to life in the way that I saw it in my mind was difficult as well, having to compromise on some aspects. The most evident to me was that I intended to have logs instead of a bench on stage left, but I couldn't find any in the time I had given myself but this didn't affect the overall play.



We believe there is hope.

We look forward for a light that awaits us at the end of the tunnel.

We try to stay positive in a world that is burning all around.

We are standing together against those who are unwilling to make the changes necessary for life to thrive again.

We put our faith in officials promising us cleaner air and a better tomorrow.

But...

What if it's all too late?









# The Rising Sun

Four friends  
sitting on a  
hillside,  
powerless to  
make a change.

By Jacob Newton