

SHORT UP
ROUEN FILM FESTIVAL

2026

DOSSIER PÉDAGOGIQUE PROGRAMME COLLÈGE



A Sisyphean Task [UK / 2025]

réalisation : Gus Flind-Henry, George Malcher

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FILM POSTER



ABOUT THE FILM

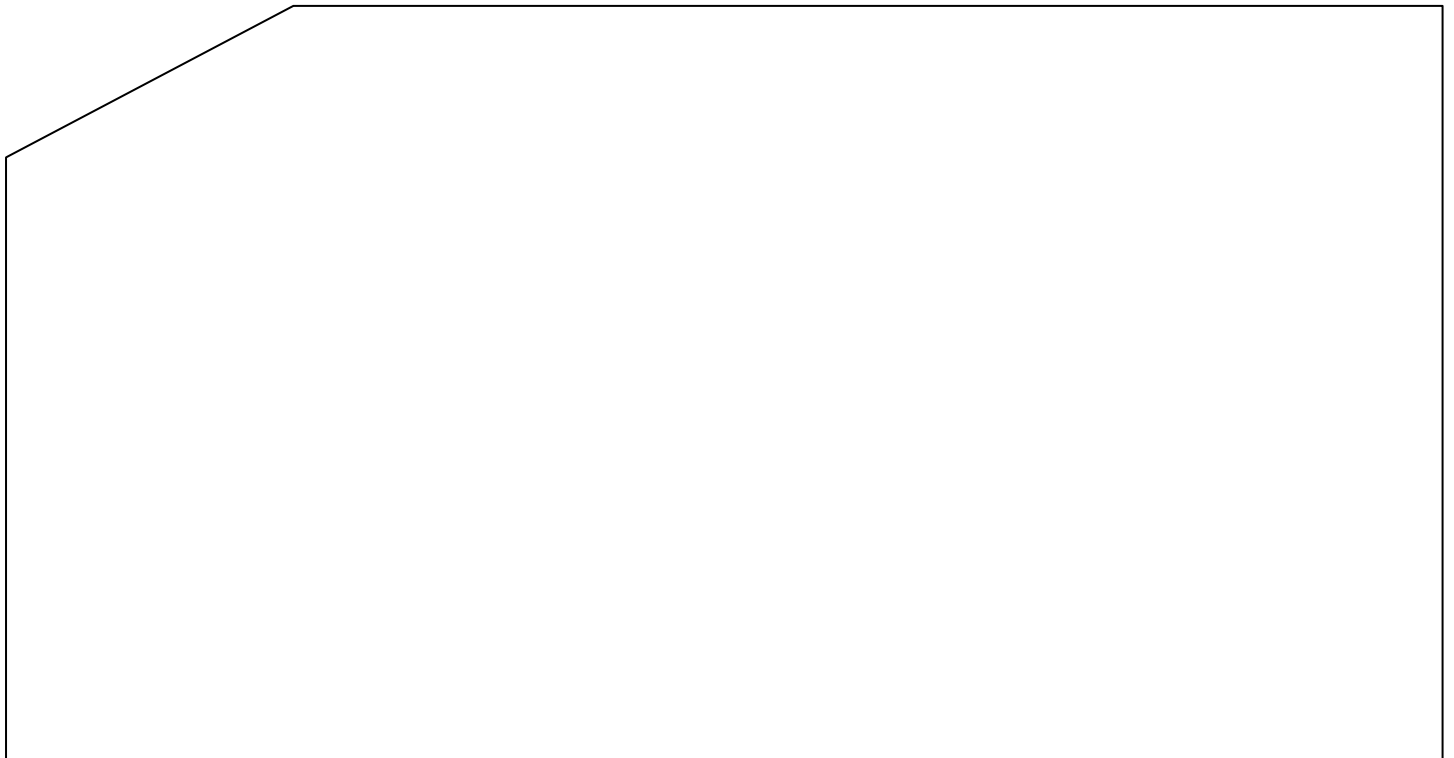
FULL CAST & CREW

- Gus Flind-Henry, George Malcher : Directors
- Gus Flind-Henry, George Malcher : Writers
- George Telfer : Producer
- Hugh Bonneville : Key Cast "The headmaster"
- Leah Balmforth: Key Cast "Lucy"

SYNOPSIS

'A Sisyphean Task' which follows Lucy, a 23 year old newly qualified teacher, through her first year of teaching. A bright yet unflinching glimpse into the British school system, all set within the walls of Lucy's classroom.

YOUR NOTES



ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

George Malcher and Gus Flind-Henry are a 24 year old London based directing duo who met whilst training as actors at drama school. They began writing and directing for theatre whilst studying in 2019. As actors they have worked with the National Theatre, BBC, ITV and Academy Award-winning Slick Films.

A Sisyphian Task is their debut short film as directors, which they hope will showcase their fast-paced, performance-driven style.

THEIR STATEMENT ABOUT THE FILM

For the last three years, I have worked in a state school in South London and experienced firsthand what it means to be a teacher in our school system. I came to understand the unrelenting chaos that the workforce of our schools battles against each day, and I developed a complete admiration for the persistence and dedication of our teachers.

Everyone who remembers their own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system.

With 'A Sisyphian Task,' we aim to tell a story that celebrates teachers and students alike and provides a peek behind the curtain at the highs and lows that occur every day within our school system.

This is a story about the vital importance of teachers and the significance of our school years. Everyone and everything within this story has been drawn from reality. Every year, we lose some of the brightest and most talented newly qualified teachers due to the lack of support, structure, and funding in our schools.

NASUWAT (The Teacher's Union):

"The teaching profession is in the midst of a crisis of recruitment, retention, and morale, with 40,000 teachers leaving in the last year alone."

"Over a third of England's teachers who qualified in the last ten years have left the profession."

TOPICS AND ISSUES

Classe de cinquième : Axe 2. Ecole et loisirs

Axe 6. Le Royaume-Uni

Classe de troisième : Axe 1. A la rencontre de l'autre

Axe 2. Travailler hier, aujourd'hui, demain

DOCUMENTS AND LINKS

Directors interview : Gus Flind-Henry and George Malcher :

<https://directorsnotes.com/2025/11/22/gus-flind-henry-george-malcher-a-sisyphean-task/>

The British education system explained : schools, GCSEs and more :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHVx68ipJBo>

THEMES to be studied in class :

Teacher in Progress

At first: chaos, doubt, loss of control

Then: gradual trust building

Eventually: teacher earns respect through consistency and understanding

Movies about teachers: Dead Poet Society, Dangerous minds, Sister act 2, Freedom Writers

Classroom / Newly Qualified Teacher

New teacher entering a difficult class, still learning the job while being tested by pupils

Respect in the Classroom

How does a teacher gain authority without violence or fear? What makes a respected teacher?

Teenagers / Questions about Life

Students challenge lessons, rules, and meaning

Class becomes a space of conflict, identity, and opinions

Teacher Roles / Multitasking

Teaching subject knowledge, managing behavior, supporting emotional needs, adapting constantly in real time, mediator, educator, psychologist, and authority figure...

School System Context

Link to careers, job reality, working conditions

What the job *really* involves vs expectations

Job description tasks, skills, qualities

Drama in the Classroom

Conflict, tension, misunderstandings

Power struggles between teacher and pupils

Emotional pressure, exhaustion

Lack of Resources

Not enough funding

Not enough support staff

Not enough training for real classroom situations

Symbolic Detail: Damp Spot

Small visible problem = deeper hidden issues

Neglect of the building = neglect of the system

Full Circle Structure

New teacher arrives → struggles → learns → survives or changes

End returns to beginning: another new teacher enters the same system

Cycle repeats

TASKS AND TO GO FURTHER

SPEAKING :

- Discuss the title: in Greek mythology, Sisyphus is condemned to push a boulder up a hill for eternity. In what way does this myth illuminate Lucy's experience as a teacher?
- What responsibilities does a school have towards a struggling teacher?
- What responsibilities does a teacher have towards a struggling pupil?
- What makes a respected teacher?
- Research project: compare the UK state school system shown in the film with the French collège system — staffing, class sizes, support structures...

WRITING :

- Write a short scene (a few lines of dialogue) imagining a typical day for Lucy in her class, balancing moments of humour and moments of tension.

GRAMMAR :

Teachers must / mustn't ... / should / shouldn't ...

Students must / mustn't ... / should / shouldn't ...

The staff should ...

The Board of Education should ...