

Jojo Rabbit - Screenplay

By Taika Waititi

(based on the book *Caging Skies* by Christine Leunens)

Suggested Roles: ACTRESS: Rosie, Voice/IF Adolf, Captain K (Klenzendorf), Christoph/Hans, Yorki, Elsa, Woman
ACTOR: Jojo, Finkel, Fraulein Rahm



NOTE: This cutting asks each student to portray multiple characters, which is permissible for Nationals and SOME states. It may not meet the rules requirement for DUO in your state! Be sure to check your STATE rules before performing at local tournaments.

Jojo and his mother Rosie are walking near the banks of the river . . . she has a skip in her step; it's as if she wants to dance, but is trying to control the urge.

ROSIE: (Pg 51) These banks used to be full of lovers. There'd be singing, dancing, romance.

JOJO: There's no time for romance, we're at war. *(he stumbles)*

ROSIE: Surprise, surprise, your shoelaces are undone. **Again.** *(she ties his laces)* **(Pg 52-53)**

You're growing up too fast. A ten-year-old shouldn't be celebrating war or talking politics. You should be having fun, climbing trees . . .

JOJO: But the Fuhrer says what when we win, it is us young boys who will rule the world.

ROSIE: Pah! The Reich is dying. We're going to lose this war and then what will you do? All I'm saying is that life is a gift and we must celebrate it, hold on to it. We have to dance *(she does a small twirl)* to show God we are grateful to be alive. Dancing's for people who are free. It's an escape from all this.

JOJO: (petulant) Well I won't dance!

INTRODUCTION

ACTRESS: *By 1936, all "Aryan" children in Germany over the age of six were required to join a Nazi youth group.*

ACTOR: *At ten, boys were initiated into the **Jungvolk** (Young People)*

ACTRESS: *Their sisters joined the **Jungmädels** (Young Girls).*

ACTOR: **Hitler hoped that: "These young people will learn nothing else but how to think German and act German . . . And they will never be free again, not in their whole lives."*

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ACTRESS: *Indoctrination into a political ideology at such a young age had a profound impact on the children of Germany; one that was quite difficult to overcome as you will see in . . .*

ACTOR: *Jojo Rabbit – An Anti-Hate Satire*

ACTRESS: *Based on the book Caging Skies by Christine Leunens*

JOJO: **(Pg 1-3)** *(at home, getting dressed. He tightens his belt, pulls up his socks, clicks his heels together and stops one foot down hard on the floor. At attention, he stares into a full-length mirror and takes a deep breath and encourages himself)* Jojo Betzler, today you join the ranks of the **Jungvolk** in a very special training weekend. Today you become a man. *(deep breath, nervous)* I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the savior of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am willing and ready to give up my life for him, so help me God.

A strange adult figure passes behind him dressed in a Nazi uniform. It feels ghostly and fantastical. We'll find out who this guy is very soon.

VOICE: *(off-stage; comedic German accent)* Now, Jojo Betzler, what is your mind?

JOJO: *(a military response)* A snake mind.

VOICE: *(off-stage; comedic German accent)* And Jojo Betzler, what is your body?

JOJO: *(a military response)* A wolf body.

VOICE: *(off-stage; comedic German accent)* And Jojo Betzler, what is your soul?

JOJO: *(a military response)* A German soul. *(pause)* Adolf, I don't think I can do this.

The voice materializes on stage. It is Jojo's imaginary friend Adolf Hitler. He can only know what Jojo knows, so he's more of a charming buffoon who floats through life with whimsical abandon.

ADOLF: What?! Of course you can. Sure, you're a bit scrawny, unpopular and still can't tie your shoelaces, but you're the bestest little Nazi I've ever met. You're gonna go out there and have a great time, Ok? Now Heil me man.

JOJO: *(with little gusto)* Heil Hitler

ADOLF: You can do better than that. Heil Hitler!

JOJO: Heil Hitler!

ADOLF: That's it! *(They start jogging, maybe dancing? on the spot, chanting together)*

JOJO and ADOLF: Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! HEIL HITLER! HEIL HITLER! *(They scream and Jojo sprints out)*

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*****Hitlerjugend Camp*****

CAPTAIN K: (Pg 5-6) Welcome to the Hitlerjugend training weekend in which we will make men and women of you all. My name is Captain Klenzendorf - you may call me Captain K.

FINKEL: Captain K! Woo!

CAPTAIN K: This is sub-office Finkel. And Fraulein Rahm (*Fraulein Rahm responds in an awkward way; be creative*) Over the next two days you little critters will get to experience some of the things that the mighty German Army goes through every day. You have all been issued your Deutsches Jungvolk Daggers. Never be without them. And don't try to stab each other.

FINKEL: No stabbing!

CAPTAIN K: Today you boys will be involved in such activities as bayonet drills, grenade throwing, gas defense, ambush techniques, war games, firing guns and blowing stuff up. (*huge cheers from the boys*) The girls will practice important womanly duties such as dressing wounds, making beds, and learning how to get pregnant. (*groans of disappointment from the girls*) Alright, let's get to it.

FINKEL: On your feet you little Nazis! Let's go!

***** (Pg 6-7) Montage scenes of Jojo and his friend Yorki "training"*****

Be creatively funny (calisthenics, war games, knife throwing, etc.)

*****Scene – Academic Training*****

Jojo sits in a group of boys and girls. Fraulein Rahm is at the head of the class, writing the children's responses on the blackboard. One by one the children call out.

JOJO: (Pg 7) Horns! **YORKI:** Fangs!

FRAULEIN RAHM: Excellent work children. You forgot that the Jew is the offspring of Satan and sucks the blood of Christian children. Now, get your things together kids, it's time to burn some books! (*children cheer*)

YORKI: (Pg 9) Jews sound scary, huh?

JOJO: Not to me. If I met one I'd kill it like that. (*tries to snap his fingers*) Like. . . that.

*****Scene*****

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CHRISTOPH: (Pg 10-12) There is no room in Hitler's army for those who lack strength. We want hardened warriors who are prepared to kill. Can you do that? Johannes? Can you kill?

JOJO: (with bravado) Pff, of course. I **love** killing.

CHRISTOPH: Good. . . *(uncovers a cage, takes out a bunny and holds it out towards Jojo)* Kill it.

JOJO: Hummm???

CHRISTOPH: Wring its neck. Kill the rabbit.

JOJO: Oh, I'm ok. I might do it later . . .

CHRISTOPH: No later, NOW. Or are you scared?

JOJO: I'm not scared. I'm just allergic to fur and I don't want itchy hands all weekend.

HANS: (takes the rabbit and shoves it into Jojo's hands) Both hands around its neck and then one hard twist.

JOJO: (shaking, holds the bunny and looks it in the eye. He gulps, then drops the bunny and tries to shoo it away)

HANS: He's scared and so are you. You're as scared as a rabbit. Jojo Rabbit!

CHRISTOPH: Maybe we should snap **your** neck. *(everyone laughs and begins to chant)* Jojo Rabbit! Jojo Rabbit! *(Jojo runs away)*

*******Scene – Academic Training*******

CAPTAIN K: (Pg 36) (lecturing) If you see a Jew, tell the Gestapo and they tell the SS and then they go and kill the Jew. And anyone who helped the Jew. And, because these are very paranoid times, probably some other people just in case. It's a pretty drawn out process.

JOJO: Even if the Jew hypnotized someone to make them hide the Jew in the first place?

YORKI: (Pg 9) But how would you know if you saw one? They can look just like us.

JOJO: (boastfully) I'd feel it's head for horns. And they smell like Brussels sprouts.

CAPTAIN K: (Pg 36) Without their funny hats it's damn near impossible. Someone should write a book on the subject. It'd make everything a lot easier. *(This sparks an idea in Jojo's head, (tries to snap his fingers and gets it on the 2nd try)*

TRANSITION

ACTRESS: *But Jojo's patriotism is challenged when he discovers that his mother, a member of the resistance, is harboring a young Jewish girl, Elsa, in their attic.*

ACTOR: *Faced with a real person, rather than the monster he's come to expect, his understanding of the world begins to change.*

ACTRESS: *His training tells him to turn her in to the Gestapo; but if he does, he also puts himself and his mother at risk.*

ACTOR: *And so, he arrives at a different solution . . . A solution that will force him to confront his allegiance to the Nazis and to question the belief system he has been taught.*

Jojo approaches Elsa's door. He knocks twice. (KNOCK-KNOCK) The door opens and Elsa sits in the doorway.

JOJO: (Pg 37) Ok, here's the situation. If I tell on you, you'll be in big trouble and I don't think you want that. But then you'll tell on me and my mother and we'll be in trouble which I don't want. So I will not cause any trouble for you if you promise to tell me everything about the Jewish race.

ELSA: We're like you but human. Done.

JOJO: Please take this seriously. I want to know all your secrets. *(he takes out a notebook)*

(Pg 60) I'm writing a book! "Yoo-hoo Jew"— It's an expose on Jews **(Pg 73)** for the Fuhrer.

ELSA: (Pg 37-38) (laughs) Ok. Obviously we are demons who love money, right?

JOJO: (writing it down) Obviously. Everyone knows that.

ELSA: Your mother . . . she's kind. She treats me like a person.

JOJO: But you're not. Not a **proper** person.

ELSA: (looking him up and down) Are you?

JOJO: How dare you, Jew. You are weak like. . . an eyelash. I am born of Aryan ancestry. My blood is the color of a pure red rose and my eyes are blue like sapphires- *(suddenly, Elsa has Jojo in a headlock, twisting his arm behind him)* Ow ow ow ow ow. . .

ELSA: Break free, great Aryan. There are no weak Jews. I am descended from those who wrestle angels and kill giants. We were chosen by God. You were chosen by a pathetic little man who can't even grow a full moustache. *(releases him)* The stronger race, huh?

JOJO: (Pg 40) (to audience) This book is going to be harder to write than I thought. *(tries*

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another approach - passes a pen and paper to Elsa (Pg 44) So, I'd like you to draw a picture of where Jews live. A typical hive; where you all sleep, eat, and where the Queen Jew lays the eggs. I need background.

ELSA: You really are an idiot. Where Jews live. Ok. *(quickly drawing)* (Pg 47) Finished!

JOJO: I said to draw where Jews live. This is just a stupid picture of my head.

ELSA: *(pushes her finger into his forehead)* That's where we live. (Pg 54-55) *(Jojo sighs)* What's wrong? *(beat)* You want me to tell you about the Jews? Okay, in the beginning we used to live in caves, deep in the center of the Earth.

JOJO: Wait. *(grabs his books and starts writing)*

ELSA: Scary places full of strange and wonderful creatures all with one thing in common. . .

JOJO: *(nodding, knowingly)* Stealing the ends of penises.

ELSA: *(laughing)* No, you idiot. A love of art. You want the story or not?

JOJO: Continue. But I know it's true, the penis thing. Rabbis use them for earplugs. *(beat)*
Where are your horns?

ELSA: *(thinking quickly)* I'm too young. They grow when you turn 21.

JOJO: Ahhhh . . . *(writing furiously)*

ELSA: So, after many years of developing magic and spells, we slowly moved out of the caves and into the towns. These days we live among normal humans but often we will take over a house and hang from the ceiling when we sleep, like bats. *(long beat)* (Pg 65-66) *You're not a Nazi.*

JOJO: What are you talking about? Of course, I am. I'm massively into swastikas, so I think that's a pretty good sign right there.

ELSA: You're not a Nazi, Jojo. You're a 10-year-old kid who 'likes' Swastikas and 'likes' dressing up in a funny uniform and wants to be part of a club. But you're not one of them. (Pg 75) Jews and Nazis are not friends. *(this hits Jojo; beat)* (Pg 78) The last time I saw my parents was at the station. They were put on a train. I ran. Slowly found my way back to the city. A friend of my father's hid me. Then another friend, then friends of friends. . . till your mother took me in. *(beat)* I am still here. But my parents went to a place you don't come back from.

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JOJO: What is the first thing you'll do when you're free?

ELSA: Dance. *(a large explosion sends Elsa scuttling for the attic as JoJo heads to the window)*

JOJO: **(Pg 79-80)** *(calling to the street below)* Yorki, what's going on out there?

YORKI: *(off stage)* The Russians Jojo, they're coming. And the Americans from the other way.

The whole world is coming! **(Pg 81)** And Hitler's dead. He gave up and blew his brains out

JOJO: No. That's impossible!

YORKI: Turns out he was doing some really bad things behind everyone's backs. I'm not sure

we chose the right side. I'm beginning to wonder if we might be the bad guys. **(Pg 82)**

(suddenly there's a huge explosion and the street is engulfed)

JOJO: Yorki!!! Where are you? *(music blares an anthem of some sort as American troops enter the city)*

WOMAN: **(Pg 83)** The war is over! America is here! Everyone is free! We're all going to get Levi jeans! America! Americaaaaaa!

JOJO: *(turns back)* **(Pg 89-90)** Get your things together. We're leaving! *(but instead of Elsa he sees his imaginary friend Adolf standing in his way)*

ADOLF: Oh, no you're not. You betrayed me, traitor.

JOJO: You betrayed everyone! I believed in you!

ADOLF: But you stopped believing; and now you're best friends with that thing in the attic.

JOJO: That thing is a girl.

ADOLF: Fine. But you need me! I'm all you've got! You're a scared little rabbit. You'll die without me. Forget about that disgusting Jew up there. Come back to me where you belong.

JOJO: No . . . No . . . NO!!!! *(he kicks Adolf as hard as he can between the legs – Adolf screams in pain and disappears into oblivion)* **(Pg 26)** *(Jojo goes to the CLOSED secret door and*

knocks twice) KNOCK-KNOCK. Excuse me? Hello? Um, Jew girl in the wall? *(beat)* Yoohoo,

Jew? *(beat. The door opens)* **(Pg 78)** What is the first thing you'll do when you're free?

(Elsa smiles and the smile spreads to Jojo, then they begin to dance - not for anyone else, just for themselves and each other)

SOURCE INFORMATION

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Introduction

** Hitler's Quote Source: Max von der Grün, Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany (New York: W. Morrow, 1980), 118–19.*

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