

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 2026

Whitefella Yella Tree

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Youth and Education Program Partners



Overview

Suitable year levels

9 – 12

Warnings

Sexual references

Depictions of violence

Haze

Theatrical smoke

Sound pressure effects (loud noises)

Genre

Theatre, Poetic Realism

Synopsis

Once in a blue moon, in the middle of nowhere, two teenage boys meet under a lemon tree. After a rough start, a fragile friendship fruits into a heady romance.

If history would just unfurl a little differently, the boys might have a beautiful future ahead of them. But without knowing it, Ty and Neddy are poised on the brink of a world that is about to change forever.

When Neddy is assimilated into ‘Whitefella’ culture, he returns to Ty markedly changed; not only does his appearance and identity reflect the values of the White Man, his internalised sense of shame and fear is obvious, too.

Palawa playwright Dylan Van Den Berg has won most of Australia’s major playwriting awards—including the Griffin Award, the David Williamson Prize and the NSW Premier’s Literary Award for playwriting (twice!).

In *Whitefella Yella Tree* Dylan has penned a heart-warming and heart-breaking story about love, Country and Blak queerness through history.

Background Information

Whitefella Yella Tree was developed as part of Griffin Studio, an initiative of Griffin Theatre Company, with support from the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and Griffin Studio donors, and through Melbourne Theatre Company’s Cybec Electric Play Reading Series. The premiere production was supported by Griffin Theatre Company’s Production Partner program.

Whitefella Yella Tree was first produced by Griffin Theatre Company, 19 August – 23 September 2022 at the SBW Stables Theatre

Themes/Ideas

Cultural Heritage and Identity

Whitefella Yella Tree foregrounds the depth and diversity of Aboriginal cultures, emphasising that identity is inseparable from Country. Each Nation holds distinct relationships with land—mountain, river, desert, rainforest—shaping law, lore, language, kinship, and ceremony. Country is not merely physical space; it is a living entity that provides knowledge, healing, and belonging.

Ty and Neddy’s identities are deeply informed by their different mobs, reflecting the many ways First Nations peoples understand and relate to the world. The play uses poetic storytelling to show how cultural knowledge is carried and passed down, even amid disruption. In presenting this diversity, the work reframes Aboriginal culture as vibrant, adaptive, and continuous.

Colonisation and Its Aftermath

Set in the early 19th century, the play unfolds against a backdrop of rapid British expansion, violent dispossession, and the declaration of terra nullius. Colonisation imposed foreign laws, Christian moral codes, and assimilation policies that severed connections to land, family, and language. Aboriginal people were excluded from legal and political systems, denied rights, and often portrayed through racist narratives designed to justify their oppression.

These colonial systems attempted to erase Indigenous sovereignty and cultural ways of life. The play’s personal story is also political: every moment Ty and Neddy spend under the yella tree is shaped by structures designed to dismantle their world. This accentuates the emotional weight of the characters’ choices and the ongoing impacts of colonisation on contemporary Australia.

Resilience and Continuity

Despite immense upheaval, the story highlights the strength and endurance of First Nations communities. Cultural practices, connections to Country, and forms of knowledge persist even when violently suppressed. Ty and Neddy’s relationship becomes a site of resistance, tenderness, and survival.

The act of storytelling itself becomes a symbol of resilience. Through contemporary language, humour, and intimacy, the play bridges past and present, reminding audiences that culture adapts, heals, and continues. The characters’ love, curiosity, and commitment to each other embody the determination of Aboriginal people to maintain identity, sovereignty, and connection in the face of attempted erasure.

LGBTQIA+ Identities in White and Aboriginal Cultures

The play challenges two dominant myths: that queerness is modern, and that it is not part of Aboriginal culture. Prior to colonisation, many First Nations societies held fluid understandings of gender and sexuality, with roles and relationships that do not align with Western binaries. These identities often carried cultural or spiritual significance.

British legal systems, however, criminalised queer relationships and enforced strict norms around sexuality and gender. Colonial violence not only targeted Aboriginal land and culture but also erased Indigenous queer histories. Ty and Neddy’s relationship is not an anomaly but a continuation of long-standing cultural truths. Their love becomes an act of defiance against colonial moral codes and against the historical silencing of queer Aboriginal voices.



General Capabilities

The Arts Learning Area has a natural link to the elements of the General Capabilities. Specific learning activities have been linked with the following icons:

**Literacy**

**Critical and Creative Thinking**

**Personal and Social Capability**

**Intercultural Understanding**

**Ethical Understanding**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories**

Year 9 and 10 Drama

- Make and respond to drama independently and in small groups, and with their teachers and communities.
 - Explore drama as an art form through improvisation, scripted drama, rehearsal and performance.
 - Refine and extend understanding and use of role, character, relationships and situation.
 - Experiment with mood and atmosphere, use devices such as contrast, juxtaposition and dramatic symbol and modify production elements to suit different audiences.
 - Draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations.
 - Explore the drama and influences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and those of
- the Asia region.

 - Learn that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have converted oral records to other technologies.
 - Learn that over time there has been further development of different traditional and contemporary styles of drama and that dramatists can be identified through the style of their work.
 - Explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements and social, cultural and historical influences of drama.
 - Evaluate actors’ success in expressing the directors’ intentions and the use of expressive skills in drama they view and perform

SACE Stage 1 Drama

Understanding and Exploration

- UE1: Understanding and exploration of dramatic roles, conventions, and processes
- UE2: Understanding and exploration of dramatic ideas, texts, styles and/or innovations

Critical and Creative Thinking

- CCT1: Creative thinking and experimentation in the development of dramatic ideas
- CCT2: Analysis and evaluation of dramatic ideas, products, and technologies

Creative Application

- CA1: Application of dramatic skills
- CA2: Collaborative application of dramatic ideas and processes to realise outcomes

SACE Stage 2 Drama

Knowledge and Understanding

KU1 Exploration and understanding of dramatic theories, texts, styles, conventions, roles, and processes.

KU2 Understanding and evaluation of the artistic and cultural value of local, global, contemporary, and/or historical drama.

Critical and Creative Thinking

CCT1 Creative thinking and experimentation in the development of dramatic ideas.

CCT2 Analysis and evaluation of the student’s own drama-making and others’ dramatic works, styles, and/or events.

Creative Application

CA1 Application of dramatic processes, individually and in collaboration with others.

CA2 Application of dramatic skills.

CA3 Integration of theory and practice to make meaningful dramatic outcomes.

Stage 1 and 2 Society and Culture

Knowledge and Understanding

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of contemporary social and/or cultural issues in Australian and global contexts.

KU2 Understanding of connections between societies and cultures.

KU3 Understanding of ways in which societies and cultures are connected and interdependent.

Investigation and Analysis

IA1 Analysis of and reflection on contemporary social or cultural issues.

IA2 Analysis of how and why social change occurs.

Evaluation and Communication

EC1 Evaluation and use of evidence from a range of sources and perspectives, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.

EC2 Communication of informed ideas about societies and social and cultural issues.

Production

Music/Sound

The sound and music design by Steve Toulmin plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional world of the play and supporting its shifts between humour, tenderness, fear, and tragedy. The production relies on a carefully crafted atmospheric soundscape with layers of ambient tones, textured environmental sounds, and subtle musical motifs. These Expressionistic elements create an at times haunting mood that lingers beneath the action and amplifies the play’s emotional and cultural depth. Gentle rustling, wind-like breaths, sparse melodic fragments, and moments of echo or reverb evoke the Australian landscape while also underscoring the sense of ancestral presence and cultural memory. In this way, sound in the production mirrors themes of Country, kinship, and spiritual connection through Poetic Realism and Expressionistic devices.

As tensions rise in the story, particularly in moments that depict the characters’ sense of fear, forbidden connection, and the threat of violence, the soundscape grows darker. Low drones, pulsing rhythmic undertones, or strained harmonies heighten the dramatic mood reflecting the high-stakes or emotional danger of the characters situation. These choices allow the audience to feel the psychological pressure placed on the characters, even when the stage remains visually still.

Moments of intimacy, love, and discovery are supported by warmer, more resonant sound qualities, creating a contrast that highlights the characters’ vulnerability and desire. In this way, the sound design becomes a tool for reinforcing the play’s overarching tragedy

Set Design

Designer Mason Browne creates a performance space that feels simultaneously intimate, contemporary, symbolic, transformational, and timeless. At the centre is the yella tree itself represented through stylised branches suspended over loose concentric rings, reflective of the rings of a tree, painted on the ground. By options for abstract shapes rather than a literal tree, the tree functions as a metaphor for Country, cultural continuity, and the sanctuary the two boys find within its shade. The sparseness of the environment directs the audience’s attention to the characters emotional worlds while also evoking the vastness and spiritual resonance of the Australian landscape. The imagery of the rings of a tree, which indicate the the age of a tree, suggest the long-standing connection between the Aboriginal people and the land as well as the existence of LGBTQIA+ people from the earliest of times and cultures.

The upstage flats of layered carved bare plywood create the suggestion of mountainous ranges connecting Neddy to his Mountain Mob. Within the layered flats, LED strip lights are embedded that glow and change colour suggesting the changing light on the horizon and reflecting the river that connects Ty to his River Mob. The sparse set and environment invites the audience to imagine the world beyond the stage and to focus on the characters’ connection to place.

The openness of the stage also reinforces themes of vulnerability, exposure, and the characters’ limited privacy within a colonised world. When danger or tension escalates, the empty space contributes to a feeling of isolation. Conversely, the tree becomes a protective anchor—a place of growth, identity, and love. The design draws attention to how Country holds memory and how the environment becomes a witness to the boys’ experiences.

Lighting

Kelsey Lee and Katie Sfetkidis use a palette of warm golds, deep reds, and soft ambers in their lighting design to evoke the qualities of Australian sunlight filtering through leaves of the yella tree. These tones create a sense of safety around the yella tree, reinforcing its importance as a gathering place and emotional refuge, and the warmth and safety the boys find in each other.

As the story shifts into darker thematic territory, cooler tones such as deep blues or stark whites signal danger, colonial surveillance, isolation or emotional disconnection. These changes in the design allow light to capture a sense of the weather or time of day while simultaneously subtly influencing mood and atmosphere.

Lighting often isolates the characters within tight pools or shafts of light, emphasising moments of privacy, intimacy, or revelation. This occurs in poetic and expressionistic moments where the characters speak about their hidden feelings, reveal their inner truth and yearning, or confront their fears. Fear and emotional tension is often reflected in the weather; flashes of lightning with accompanying thunder allow the audience to catch glimpses of the landscape, tableaux and action in quick grabs of light between interruptions of confusing darkness. This is a visual and technical way of poetically reflecting the action and tension in the text.

Costumes

By dressing the characters in contemporary clothing, like shorts, t-shirts and baseball caps, despite the story taking place in the 19th Century, *Whitefella Yella Tree* forces the audience to consider the intersections of time, culture and power with regard to its central themes. Juxtaposing time periods in the text and design collapses the distance between past and present, reminding audiences that the play’s themes - the lasting impact of colonisation, identity, forbidden love, and cultural survival - are not confined to history but remain deeply relevant today. Contemporary clothing allows the characters to feel familiar and immediately relatable to the audience; their love, humour, and fears read as recognisably modern, prompting the audience to consider how the legacies of colonial violence and cultural disruption continue to shape First Nations and queer experiences in the present.

Against this modern aesthetic, Neddy’s eventual appearance in a colonial British uniform becomes a powerful and unsettling image for both Ty and the audience. The uniform becomes a symbol of assimilation; an external identity imposed on a young Aboriginal man whose personal and cultural loyalties lie elsewhere and which makes him question every aspect of his cultural, sexual and personal identity. Its rigid structure and military formality are in stark contrast to the youthfulness, innocence and freedom suggested by the earlier costumes.

This design choice also externalises the emotional and political conflict at the heart of the play: a visual metaphor for loss of self-determined cultural identity, power and control, and cultural erasure.

Characterisation

The two actors provide performances that capture intimacy, emotional truth, and a delicate balance between humour and tragedy. They depict the characters growth, adolescent awkwardness, curiosity, and impulsiveness – qualities that make their relationship feel authentic and fragile – to altered, mature and dislocated.

The play demands a balance between realism and more poetic expressionism. This is reflected in the design and technical elements of the production, but also in the poetic and emotional delivery of private truths and fears in heightened moments. In these sections of the play, the actors will break the fourth wall which simultaneously builds intimacy with the audience while redirecting them to the thematic concerns of the play. These are also moments when the actors convey the vulnerability of the characters as they reveal their hidden truths, identities, hopes, desires and fears.

Early in the play, Neddy is warm, playful, curious, and deeply connected to Country. His movement is open, his voice expressive, and his interactions with Ty offer glimpses of vulnerability and youthful freedom. He embodies possibility of love, cultural continuity, and an unbroken future.

After assimilation, however, his physicality and behaviour change dramatically. Neddy becomes more rigid, guarded, and constrained, mirroring the impact of colonial indoctrination on his identity and spirit. His speech and dialogue becomes formal and guarded, and his emotional expression becomes restrained. The earlier ease and fluidity in his interactions are replaced by hesitation, discomfort, or a sense of emotional distance. This is also reflected in his relationship with Ty which, once natural and tender, begins to feel strained, suggesting that assimilation has interrupted not only Neddy's cultural identity but also his ability to fully inhabit his personal truth.

This transformation embodies the emotional truth of the play: that assimilation is not merely a political project but a deeply violent psychological one. It fractures identity, disconnects individuals from community and Country, and forces people to choose between survival and selfhood. Neddy's change is tragic not because he becomes 'someone else,' but because the system leaves him no space to safely remain himself.

Dramatic Structure

Linear poetic structure

Whitefella Yella Tree employs a linear but poetic structure, moving through scenes that track the developing relationship between the two boys. The structure combines realism with lyrical imagery, allowing the play to shift fluidly between humour, tenderness, fear, and spiritual connection.

Scenes often build gradually in emotional intensity. Early moments are characterised by curiosity, awkwardness, and discovery, which creates a sense of innocence. As the boys' relationship deepens, the scenes shift into greater emotional and thematic complexity exposing their connection, vulnerability, looming danger, and ultimate tragedy.

Repetition and ritual

Repetition is an important structural device. The boys return to the yella tree again and again, creating a ritualistic pattern that reinforces the tree's symbolic status as a sacred meeting place. This is also symbolically reflected in the concentric recurring loose rings of the tree on the stage floor. These cyclical returns anchor the story while allowing time to pass between visits emphasising the tragic impact of the changes in the characters and their circumstances with each meeting.

Dramatic Form/Convention

Poetic Realism

The production is primarily shaped by poetic realism, a dramatic form that blends realistic character interactions and naturalistic emotional truth with heightened imagery, lyrical language, metaphor, and moments of theatrical abstraction. While most commonly associated with French cinema, Poetic Realism's influence in theatre can be seen in the more expressionistic works of playwrights like Tennessee Williams (*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*) and Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*).

In *Whitefella Yella Tree*, Poetic Realism is evident in how the characters speak, behave, and relate in ways that feel believable, even contemporary, yet their world is charged with symbolism. A particular symbol is the recurring image of the lemon tree, or yella tree, which acts as a meeting place, a shelter, and a witness to love and change. The dialogue often shifts between colloquial humour and poetic reflection, and while the setting references the 19th century, it avoids strict historical realism in favour of a fluid, evocative stage language.

While poetic realism heightens reality through lyricism and subtle symbolic layering, expressionism distorts reality overtly to externalise the inner psychological and emotional truth and experience of the characters. In expressionist drama, characters are often portrayed as archetypes, dialogue may be fragmented or surreal, and design elements such as lighting and sound tend to exaggerate emotional states. The world becomes subjective, filtered through a psychological or political perspective rather than naturalistic interaction.

By contrast, in poetic realism characters remain psychologically believable and their circumstances are emotionally truthful. However, poetic realism enriches this reality with metaphors, symbols and atmospheric detail that deepen meaning rather than distort it. In *Whitefella Yella Tree*, poetic realism is evident in

- Symbolic spaces; the tree as a pivotal meeting place and a place of emotional importance, truth and significance to the characters.
- Lyrical dialogue in moments where the characters express cultural memory and emotional complexity.
- Naturalistic acting paired with imagery layered in metaphor and symbol.
- Atmospheric soundscapes and lighting that simultaneously reflect the natural landscape and setting and enhance the mood and atmosphere capturing the emotional and psychological experience of the characters.
- The role that memory plays in the characters grappling with the impact of past events on their present lives.
- The nature of the characters seeking to escape or recapture a lost sense of innocence, beauty or belonging.
- The impact of past traumas, regrets and unfulfilled longings and social expectations and norms on individuals.
- Its concern with characters seen as outcasts, misfits or socially marginalised struggling with internal conflicts and external pressures and who fail in the quest for freedom or happiness.

Further reading about Poetic Realism in theatre: fiveable.me/history-theatre-iii-modernism-post-modernism/unit-10/tennessee-williams-poetic-realism-southern-gothic/study-guide/faYGfRgWAHZYWr5U While this article has a focus on the work of Tennessee Williams, it breaks down the elements of Poetic Realism clearly and succinctly allowing the reader to make quick and obvious parallels to *Whitefella Yella Tree*. It may also serve as a good resource for students viewing this production as a paired text with a play like *A Streetcar Named Desire* or *The Glass Menagerie*.

Further reading about Naturalism, Realism and Expressionism: thedramateacher.com/realism-naturalism-expressionism-compared/

Suggested Tasks

Questions for students:

- What stories from history or cultural memory do you think are often left out or under-represented in popular narratives?
- How might first love or youth experiences differ when viewed through the lens of different cultures and historical periods?
- What do you already know about early 19th century Indigenous history in Australia, and how might that context shape a story about young people?
- What role does Indigenous storytelling and oral tradition play in preserving cultural identity?
- How do you think theatre can help audiences understand difficult or painful histories?
- What expectations do you have about how the play might

represent time, memory or passage to adulthood?

- How do you think queer identities and Indigenous identities might intersect in theatre? What challenges or opportunities could arise?

ACTIVITY 1: Thinking Routine – Compass Points

This routine will help students explore tensions, uncertainties, preconceptions and values within the themes of the play and prepare them for the breadth of ideas, messages and provocations the play raises. It will help students unpack complex issues such as identity, belonging, forbidden relationships, and colonisation and prepare to engage with these perspectives in mature and informed ways.

Task: Label the four walls in the classroom as **N, E, W** and **S** reflecting the co-ordinates of a compass. Give students a stack of sticky notes and ask them to write responses to the following prompts (one idea per sticky note) and then stick them on the appropriate wall in the room:

E – Excited: What excites you or what feels hopeful about stories centred on identity or belonging?

N – Need to Know: What questions do you have about First Nations contexts, colonial history, or queer representation?

S – Stance/Still Concerned: What challenges or tensions do you think characters in such stories face? OR What is your current stance or concerns about the types of characters and themes presented in the play?

Year 9 and 10 Drama

ACADRR052 Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect

ACADRR053 Analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their drama making, starting with drama from Australia and including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider drama in international contexts

W – Way Forward: What attitudes or knowledge might help us approach this story with cultural respect?

Once students have placed thoughts on each wall, ask students in groups to group together the responses for each coordinate into common themes and ideas and feed these back to the rest of the class. Use this as foundation for discussion about the themes, ideas and questions of the group.

For Drama students, this activity inspires an inquiry into character motivation, conflict and emotional stakes. For Society & Culture students, this invites consideration of cultural perspectives, power and gender, Indigenous experiences, ethical engagement.

ACTIVITY 2: Thinking Routine – Circle of Viewpoints

In this thinking routine, students consider multiple perspectives, viewpoints and attitudes of different groups of people impacted by or represented by characters in the play.

Divide students into small teams and explain that each team a particular social group either featured, referenced or implied in the text. These groups are:

- First Nations youth
- Elders
- Colonial settlers
- Someone hiding their identity
- Country itself (as a living entity)

Choose a theme reflected in the play and ask students, working as a team, to prepare a statement from the viewpoint of the people they represent.

Themes to consider include:

- forbidden love
- colonisation
- tradition
- freedom
- LGBTQIA+ identity

In preparing their statement from each viewpoint, students should use the following structure as a prompt:

I am thinking about...

From the point of view of...

I believe/feel...

A question I have is...

For Drama students, this activity activates an understanding of role, perspective, subtext, given circumstances. For Society & Culture students, it helps to explored ideas of lived experience, cultural relativism, identity construction.





Suggested Tasks

AFTER THE SHOW

Questions for students:

- In what ways were Ty and Neddy similar / different, and how did those differences influence their choices and fate?
- How did the play use theatrical elements (lighting, sound, set, costume) to reflect internal conflict or historical change?
- Which moment in the play resonated most with you and why?
- How did the play challenge or confirm your expectations about Indigenous histories, colonial impact, or identity?
- How did humour and teenage banter function in the story, especially in contrast with the more tragic or serious elements?
- If you were negotiating the relationship between the characters' cultural responsibilities and personal desires, what would you have done differently?
- What message do you think the playwright / director wanted the audience to take away?
 - To what extent was the playwright / director successful in achieving their intentions?
 - What aspects of the production helped to convey this message?
- How does this play compare to other texts (books, theatre, film) you have studied that explore young love, identity, or cultural conflict?
- How might you adapt this story for a modern audience, or re-imagine it from another point of view (e.g. a supporting character, or set in a different historical / cultural context)?

Year 9 and 10 Dance

ACADAM020 *Improvise to find new movement possibilities and explore personal style by combining elements of dance*

ACADAM021 *Manipulate combinations of the elements of dance and choreographic devices to communicate their choreographic intent*

ACADAM023 *Structure dances using movement motifs, choreographic devices and form*

ACADAR025 *Evaluate their own choreography and performance, and that of others to inform and refine future work*

ACTIVITY 3: Thinking Routine – Values, Identities, Actions

This thinking routine supports students to explore rich social and cultural aspects of arts works. Discuss the following in response to seeing Whitefella Yella Tree

Values

- What values does this work invite us to think about?
- Whose values are they? Are they yours?
- What does the work inform, question or provoke audiences about these values?

Identities

- Who is the work speaking about?
- Who is the work trying to speak to?
- Is anyone left out of the story that should be included in it?
- To what extent do you 'fit in' to this story? Why?

Actions

- What actions might this work encourage?
- Who might be encouraged to take these actions in response to viewing the production? Why?

ACTIVITY 4: Thinking routine – Connect–Extend–Challenge

This routine helps students to consolidate learning and connect the performance to prior knowledge, preconceptions, and cultural frameworks. It helps Drama students to analyse form and style; in Society & Culture it links narratives to historical and social constructs.

Task: Ask students to reflect on the following prompts:

CONNECT: Students identify how the performance connected to what they already know about colonisation, queer Aboriginal narratives, or storytelling forms.

EXTEND: Students articulate what new ideas or perspectives they gained about identity, memory, or cultural intersectionality.

CHALLENGE: Students list questions or assumptions the production challenged for them—e.g., about masculinity, Aboriginal histories, or love under oppression.

ACTIVITY 5: Identity Foundations – Culture, Family, Place, History

First Nations people hold deep and enduring connections to their culture, family, land and history. It can be tricky to navigate working with interpreting First Nations texts in Drama especially for people who do not have a familial indigenous ancestry. Instead of trying to stage First Nations story with a non-First Nations cast, consider looking at the essence of

Year 9 and 10 Drama

ACADRM048 *Manipulate combinations of the elements of drama to develop and convey the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions in dramatic forms and performance styles*

ACADRM050 *Structure drama to engage an audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles and by using design elements*

ACADRM051 *Perform devised and scripted drama making deliberate artistic choices and shaping design elements to unify dramatic meaning for an audience*

ACADRR052 *Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect*

ACADRR053 *Analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their drama making, starting with drama from Australia and including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider drama in international contexts*

indigenous culture and storytelling and invite students to make their own connections to these aspects of their own lives.

This activity invites students to reflect on the important parts of who they are – their culture, family, significant places, and personal history. These reflections will form the foundation for creating the Meeting Place duologue which could be the basis for a devising and performance task such as Assessment Type 2: Responding to Drama or Assessment Type 3: Creative Synthesis in Stage 1 Drama, or in the creating task or part-task in Assessment Type 2: Evaluation and Creativity in Stage 2 Drama.

Ask students to respond to the following questions making notes on their reflections.

Connection to Culture

Where do your cultural stories come from? How do they shape you?

How has your culture influenced how you see yourself, others, or the world? Use the following prompts to guide this thinking:

1. My cultural background(s):
2. Cultural practices or values that matter in my life:
3. Cultural symbols, objects, or traditions that feel meaningful to me:
4. A story I know or have been told:

Connection to Family

Who are the people who shape you? What values or beliefs have I inherited from family (biological or chosen)?

1. Who is in my family (biological) and/or who do I consider family (chosen family)?
2. Who in my family (biological or chosen) has a significant impact or influence on me? In what ways?
3. What are family stories I hear often:
4. What does my family teach or expect from me?

Connection to Place

Where do you feel you belong? Where does your story live? How do places shape who you are and how you see the world?

1. Significant places in my life:
2. Why these places matter:
3. What is a place that I love to be with important people in my life that could become my “meeting place”?

Provide a description, mood board, image, drawing or photograph of the place.

Connection to History

What events, moments, or people made you who you are? How do these experiences influence the stories you want to tell?

Choose 3–5 prompts and describe:

1. An important turning point in my life
2. A challenge I faced
3. A moment of pride
4. A moment of joy or connection

5. A time I made a big choice
6. An experience that changed my view of myself
7. Something I learned “the hard way”
8. Something I wish people knew about me

TASK: THE MEETING PLACE SEED

Turn your reflections into creative foundations.

Based on your reflections on in the Identity Formations task, turn your responses into a creative foundation for a new or hypothetical performance.

TASK: Use the following prompts to synthesis your reflections from the previous task

- A place that matters to me is...
- A value that shows up strongly in my life is...
- A moment from my personal history that echoes the themes in Whitefella Yella Tree is...
- If there were two sides to my identity, they would be: (describe them and their personality, give them a name)
- These two characters or different sides of my identity could meet in this place by...
- These two character represent two perspectives of me by:

Write a 3–5 sentence seed idea describing the place, the two characters, and what might draw them together or pull them apart.

ACTIVITY 7: Meeting Place Duologue Creation and Performance

Inspired by the lemon tree encounters in Whitefella Yella Tree

Students create an original two-character duologue set at a symbolic “meeting place” that reflects their own culture, identity, family, place, or personal history.

1. Each student chooses a place that holds meaning for their own identity
2. In pairs, they devise a short scene in which two characters meet repeatedly over time in this same place.
3. Apply insights from the VIA routine:
 - Values: What value shapes the relationship? (e.g., loyalty, curiosity, fear, hope)
 - Identities: How are the characters’ identities represented respectfully and truthfully?
 - Actions: How does the place witness the characters’ growth or conflict?
4. Use at least one theatrical influence from Whitefella Yella Tree:
 - Time passing through repeated scenes
 - A symbol (like the tree) that shifts meaning
 - Changes in lighting/sound to reflect emotional arcs

5. Perform the duologue or present as a script extract with design notes.

Alternatives: Students interested in technical and design roles might choose to design for the duologue presenting sketches, moodboards or models of their intended set, soundscapes or lighting plots inspired by Poetic Realism and the production of Whitefella Yella Tree.

About the Creatives

Griffin Theatre Company

For nearly 50 years Griffin has been dedicated to the development and staging of Australian plays. They serve as one of the great engine rooms of Australian theatre—shaping and telling stories that reflect us, help us understand who we are, who we have been and who we want to become.

Griffin is synonymous with Australian theatre. They have premiered over 400 new Australian works since our inception in 1979. They have platformed some of the country’s most courageous stories. They have served as the launchpad for the nation’s most prolific playwrights. Stories with humble Griffin beginnings have gone on to stages and screens nationwide and beyond—even to the West End and Broadway. As former Artistic Director Ros Horin once said “We are the theatre of first chances”.

Declan Greene

DIRECTOR

Declan co-founded queer experimental theatre company Sisters Grimm with Ash Flanders in 2006, and has directed and co-created all their productions to date, including: for Griffin Independent and Theatre Works: *Summertime in the Garden of Eden*; Griffin Theatre Company: *Dogged*, *Green Park*, *Sex Magick* (co-directed with Nicholas Brown), *The Lewis Trilogy*, for Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company: *Calpurnia Descending*, *Blackie Blackie Brown*; for Malthouse Theatre, *Wake in Fright*: for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Lilith: The Jungle Girl*; for ZLMD Shakespeare Company: *Conviction* and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Little Mercy*, *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*; As a playwright: *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals*, or ‘Faggots’, *Melancholia*, *Pompeii L.A.* and *Moth*.

He was previously Resident Artist at Malthouse Theatre.

Amy Sole

DIRECTOR

Amy is a proud Wiradjuri/Worimi director, playwright, dramaturg and advocate. They are Creative Associate at ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and a graduate of NIDA’s MFA (Directing) and VCA’s Master of Theatre (Playwriting). Recent directing credits include *Whitefella Yella Tree* (STC/Griffin), *Robot Dog* (MTC), *Emu in the Sun* (MTC/ILBIJERRI), *Blak in the Room* (MTC/ILBIJERRI), *Scar Trees* (ILBIJERRI), *Forgetting Tim Minchin* (Belvoir 25a) and *Benched* (Darlinghurst). Amy’s work as a writer includes *Burning* (NIDA) and co writer of *Tracker* (ILBIJERRI/ADT), which toured nationally to Sydney Festival, Rising Festival, Adelaide Festival and Brisbane Festival. They have collaborated on major works such as *Gurr Era Op* (ILBIJERRI/Force Majeure, national tour), *Big Name No Blankets* (ILBIJERRI, national tour) and *The Black Woman of Gippsland* (MTC). A highly sought-after dramaturg and development director, Amy regularly works with theatre companies across the country to nurture and champion new Australian writing.

In 2024, Amy was awarded the Max Afford Playwright’s Award for their play *Nan’s Place*. Their practice is grounded in truth-telling and the transformative potential of theatre to connect, heal, and create space for First Peoples’ stories

Dylan Van Den Berg

WRITER

Dylan is a Palawa writer and dramaturg from the northeast of lutruwita/Tasmania, with family connections to the Bass Strait Islands where his great-grandmother was born. As a playwright, recent credits include: *Milk*; *The Chosen Vessel* (The Street Theatre); *Struthers* (National Institute of Dramatic Art); *Ngadjung* (Belco Arts); *The Camel* (FlickFlick City/Motley Bauhaus). As a dramaturg, recent credits include: *Mum Club*; *Sistren*; *Nucleus* (Griffin Theatre Company); *Nan’s Place* (ILBIJERRI Theatre Company); *Burning House* (Queensland Theatre); *A Better Tomorrow* (The Street Theatre).

For screen, Dylan has written extensively for Play School (ABC) and Reef School (ABC) and has joined writers’ rooms for Blackfella Films, Wooden Horse, and Warner Bros. For his writing, he has received the Griffin Award, two AWGIES, the David Williamson Prize, two NSW Premier’s Literary Awards for Playwriting, the Victorian Premier’s Award for Drama, and was shortlisted for the Bruntwood International Playwriting Prize. He is currently under commission with Griffin Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre.

Dylan studied drama at the ANU and the State University of New York and is undertaking a PhD at the University of Canberra.

Joseph Althouse

PERFORMER

Joseph ‘Wunujaka’ Althouse is a proud Pertame and Tiwi man who lives and works on Gadigal Country.

Since graduating from NIDA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting), Joseph has performed for theatre in *The Visitors*, *Lord of the Flies* (Sydney Theatre Company), *The Comedy of Errors* National Tour (Bell Shakespeare), *Black Cockatoo* (Ensemble Theatre), *The Lucky Country* (Hayes Theatre Company); *Green Park* (Griffin Theatre Company), *Amadeus and Angels In America* (Redline Theatre Company), the latter for which he won the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Male Actor in a Supporting Role in an Independent Production.

Joseph’s screen credits include ABC’s television series *Bad Ancestors*, *Mother And Son*, *Black Comedy and Preppers*.

As a young, queer Indigenous artist, Joseph wishes to use his voice to work towards curating a national identity that is inclusive and representative of who we are.

Danny Howard

PERFORMER

Born in Broome, WA, Danny grew up mostly in his father’s country, Barrd Country, in the far north of the Kimberley. Danny has First Nation ties all up and down the west of our great southern island, including the Barrd, Noongar, Yamatji, Bunuba and Ngadju Nations. Family, country and culture and seas are very important aspects of Danny’s life.

After graduating in 2017, Danny commenced a bridging course at the University of Western Australia, where he had the opportunity to be a part of the Dandjoo Barbalong program which allowed him to meet likeminded peers. That following year he completed WAAPA’s Aboriginal Theatre course, where a pathway in the performing arts became clear, leading him to complete his training at NIDA.

He is driven to expand and represent his First Nations background through the arts and hopes to be a role model for future generations.

Past theatre credits include Danny’s mainstage debut, *Jacky* (Belvoir Street Theatre).

NIDA credits include ‘Rovis / Threau’ in *First Love Is The Revolution*, ‘Edwin’ in *Our Lady Of 121st Street*, ‘James’ in *The Good Hope*, ‘Rakitin’ in *A Month In The Country*, ‘Romeo’ in *Romeo And Juliet* and ‘Juror Eight’ in *Twelve Angry Men*.

Steve Toulmin

COMPOSER/SOUND DESIGNER

Sydney Theatre Company: *Blackie Black Brown, A Flea In Her Ear, Black Is The New White, Power Plays, Little Mercy, Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness*; Griffin Theatre: *Whitefella Yella Tree, Dogged, The Bleeding Tree, The Homosexuals, Feather in the Web, Gloria, Kill Climate Deniers, A Hoax, Beached. Sport For Jove, Betrayal*; Belvoir: *Barbara and the Camp Dogs, HIR, The Rover, The Blind Giant Is Dancing, Jasper Jones, Ivanov, La Traviata, Blue Wizard, Is This Thing On?, 20 Questions, The Seed, Scorched*; Bell Shakespeare: *Othello, Richard III*; Ensemble Theatre: *Who’s Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?, Circle Mirror Transformation, Great Falls, Liberty Equality Fraternity*; Queensland Theatre: *Switzerland, That Face*; La Boite: *Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Tender Napalm, Attack Of The Attacking Attackers*; Malthouse Theatre: *Testament of Mary*; Sydney Festival: *44 Sex Acts in One Week, All the Sex I’ve Ever Had, Maureen*; Independent: *Chatter, Arlington, Queen of Wolves, Me Pregnant, Rommy. Film: My God Shaped Hole.*

Advertising: *Australia Post, Uncle Tobys, Common Ground, Oaks, Stella, Brisbane Racing Club.*

Daniel Herten

ASSOCIATE COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER, TOURING SOUND REALISER

Sydney Theatre Company: *Circle Mirror Transformation, The Picture Of Dorian Gray, Rules For Living*. Other Theatre: Griffin Theatre Company: *The Lewis Trilogy, Whitefella Yella Tree, SISTREN*, Flat Earthers: *The Musical, PONY, Sex Magick, Green Park, Wherever She Wanders*; Belvoir Theatre Company: *Grief Is The Thing With Feathers, Furious Mattress, The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time, Miss Peony*; Bell Shakespeare: *Twelfth Nigh*; Ensemble Theatre Company: *The Half-Life Of Marie Curie*; Hayes Theatre Company: *The Pirates Of Penzance, Ride The Cyclone, Murder For Two*; National Theatre Of Parramatta: *FADE*; Sydney Festival: *William Yang: Milestone*; Rising Festival: *Set Piece*; Clockfire Theatre Company: *Plenty Of Fish In The Sea*; Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Let The Right One In*; Tinderbox Productions: *Black Box The Musical*; Essential Workers: *Collapsible*; EARTH: *ARC, Shark Dive. Arc Circus: In the Arms Of Morpheus*; Performance Space: *Follies Of God. Sport For Jove: A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; Red Line Productions: *The Chairs, Hand To God*. Training: NIDA. Pronouns: He/ They.

Mason Browne

DESIGNER

Mason is a descendant of the Dharug people, living and working on Dharug & Gundungurra country, in the Blue Mountains. Sydney Theatre Company: *Debut, Whitefella Yella Tree*. Other Theatre: As Designer: Griffin Theatre: *Sex Magick, Whitefella Yella Tree. Throw Catch* Collective: *Escalate*. Hayes Theatre: *Darlinghurst Nights*. New Theatre: *Summer Rain*. The Theatre Division: *Ruthless!* Reginald Theatre: *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Tantrum Theatre: *Riot!, Powerforce Live, Savage Naked Love*.

As Costume Designer: Hayes Theatre: *Jekyll & Hyde, Young Frankenstein, American Psycho, Cry Baby. Dancing Giant*; Productions: *Eternityland*. Neil Gooding Productions: *Leap*. Australian Theatre for Young People: *The Deb*.

As Set Designer: Joshua Robson Productions: *In the Heights*.

Awards: Best Costume Design, 2019 Sydney Theatre Awards – *American Psycho*.

Other: Dark Mofo 2023 Curator & Creative Producer – Night Mass.

Training: NIDA. Pronouns: They / Them

Kelsey Lee

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sydney Theatre Company: *4000 Miles*. Other Theatre: As Lighting Designer: Griffin Theatre Company: *Whitefella Yella Tree; Sex Magick; The Lewis Trilogy*; Belvoir St Theatre: *Big Girls Don’t Cry, Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time; Well-Behaved Women; A Room of One’s Own*; Melbourne Theatre Company: *Destin*; re:group collective: *Autotune. Marrugeku: Mutiara. Force Majeure: Gurr Era Op*; Ensemble Theatre: *Masterclass; The Memory of Water; A Letter For Molly; Killing Katie*; Bell Shakespeare: *The Comedy of Errors. NTofP: Queen Fatima. Fervour: Life Is A Dream*; ATYP: *April Aardvark*; Green Door Theatre Company: *SISTREN; Good Dog; If We Got Some More Cocaine I Could Show You How I Love You*; Michelle Guthrie Presents/ Hayes Theatre Co: *Tell Me On A Sunday*.

As Set and Costume Designer: Sydney Dance Company: *Somos; Silence & Rapture, NTofP: A Practical Guide To Self Defence*.

As Set Designer: *NTofP: Nothing*; Hayes Theatre Co: *Catch Me If You Can*.

As Costume Designer: Ensemble Theatre: Switzerland.

As Set and Lighting Designer: Belvoir 25A: *An Ox Stand On My Tongue*. Griffin Lookout: *Jali*.

As Lighting, Set & Costume Designer: Australian Chamber Orchestra: *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge; There’s a Sea In My Bedroom*; NIDA: *Lulu: A Modern sex Tragedy*.

As Co-production Designer & Lighting Designer: Belvoir 25A: *Destroy, She Said*.

As Associate Lighting Designer: *Marrugeku: Cut The Sky*;Belvoir St Theatre: *At What Cost?*; Blue Film: As Art Department: *Long Story Short; Shang Chi: The Legend Of The 10 Rings*.

Awards: Sydney Theatre Awards: Best Set Design for *Destroy, She Said*. Training: NIDA. Pronouns: she/her

Katie Sfetkidis

CO-LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sydney Theatre Company: *Calpurnia Descending Other Theatre*; Malthouse: *Homo*; Melbourne Theatre Company: *Touching the Void, Abigails Party*; Ilbidjerri Theatre: *Blak in the Room Joel Bray Dance: Monolith, Garabari, Considerable Sexual License, Daddy*.

Awards: 2025 Green Room Award for Outstanding Lighting Design in Theatre Companies (Body of Work – *Blak in the Room / Homo Pentecostus*), 2005 Green Room Award Outstanding Lighting Design in Theatre Companies (*Meme Girls*)

Andrea James

DRAMATURG

Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai

Sydney Theatre Company: As Dramaturg: *Whitefella Yella Tree*.

Other Theatre Companies: As Director: Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Black Woman of Gippsland*; Griffin Theatre: *Ghosting the Party, Jailbaby, swim, Nucleus*; Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl*; Moogahlin Performing Arts: *Winyanboga Yurringa*;Jute Theatre: *Bukal*; Melbourne Workers Theatre: *Yanagail Yanagail, The Call, Non Parlo Di Salo, Magpie*.

As Writer: Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Black Woman of Gippsland*; Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl*; Griffin Theatre: *Dogged* with Catherine Ryan; Ilbijerri: *Big Name, No Blankets* in consultation with Sammy and Anyupa Butcher and Coranderk, *We Will Show the Country* with Giordano Nanni; Moogahlin Performing Arts & Belvoir: *Winyanboga Yurringa*. Jute Theatre: *Bukal*; Urban Theatre Projects: *Home*; Arthur Productions: *Bright World* with Elise Hearst.

Positions: Griffin Theatre: Associate Artistic Director. Carriageworks: Aboriginal Producer. Blacktown City Council: Aboriginal Arts Development Officer. Melbourne Workers Theatre: Artistic Director. Awards: Mona Brand Award for Women Stage and Screen Writers, National Theatre Award 2024. Training: VCA. Pronouns: She/her.

Isabella Kerdijk
STAGE MANAGER

Isabella graduated from the production course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2008. She has worked as a Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager on many shows, including: for Griffin: *And No More Shall We Part*, *Blaque Showgirls*, *Green Park*, *Replay*, *Sex Magick*, *swim*, *The Smallest Hour*, *This Year’s Ashes*, *Ugly Mugs*, *Whitefella Yella Tree* and *Wicked Sisters*; for Belvoir St Theatre: *Big Girls Don’t Cry*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Dog/The Cat*, *The Drover’s Wife*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *FANGIRLS*, *Girl Asleep*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *HIR*, *Jasper Jones*, *Kill the Messenger*, *Mother*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *My Name is Jimi*, *Stories I Want to Tell You In Person*, *The Sugar House*, *Thyestes* (European Tours), *Well-Behaved Women* and *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Blithe Spirit*; for Circus Oz: *Cranked Up*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Fourplay*, *Ride and Silent Night*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Benefactors*, *Boxing Day BBQ*, *Rainman*, *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* and *The Ruby Sunrise*; for Legs on the Wall: *Bubble*; for LWAA: *The Mousetrap* (Australia/New Zealand Tours); for Spiegelworld: *Empire*; for Sydney Festival: *A Model Murder*.

Isabella has worked as Production Coordinator for Opera Australia’s *Carmen* and Production Manager/Stage Manager for A-List Entertainment’s *Puppetry of the Penis*. She has also worked on various festivals, including The Garden of Unearthly Delights, Sydney Festival and the Woodford Folk Festival.

Tyler Fitzpatrick
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Sydney Theatre Company: *Debut*. Other Theatre: As Stage Manager: Griffin: *The Lewis Trilogy*; CAAP: *The Bridal Lament*; NTofP/La Boite: *Yoga Play*; GreenDoor Theatre Company: *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*. Merrigong: *As Luck Would Have It*, *Trash Talk*; Q Theatre: *The Ugliest Duckling*.

As Production Manager: Griffin: *Blaque Showgirls*, *Jailbaby*, *Pony*. Milkcrate: *Dust*; NTofP: *Nothing*; NTofP/Merrigong: *A Practical Guide to Self Defence*; Campbelltown Arts Centre: *The Other Side*, *Mirage*, *The Complication of Lyrebirds*; Blush Opera: *Chop Chef*; Shopfront Arts Co-Op: all productions from 2020-2025.

As Lighting Designer: Purple Tape Productions: [YOUR NAME], *Party Girl*, *Expiration Date*; Belvoir 25a: *Moon Rabbit Rising*, *Porpoise Pool*, *Aurat Raj*. QTopia: *Notes on a Scandal*, *I Want it That Gay*. Legit Theatre Co: *Misery Loves Company*.

As Producer: Purple Tape Productions: *werkaholics*, [YOUR NAME], *Fledgling*, *Party Girl*, *Expiration Date*, *Come Again*, *Maa Ki Rasoi*, Tape Over Festival.

Positions: Co-Founder Purple Tape Productions, Production and Operations Manager at Shopfront Arts Co-Op (2020-2025), Production Associate - Paperjam Partners (2021-2023)

Other: Touring Stage Manager with Little Squirt UK Tour 2025. Development Stage Manager - Garden of Sound (VoxSteps)

Awards: 2022 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Lighting Design (Independent) Moon Rabbit Rising. Training: University of Wollongong.

Pronouns: She/her

Bailey Turner
INTIMACY COORDINATOR

Bayley she/her) is a consultant on consent-based practice, inclusion, and intimacy coordination. She is also a performer and writer, who completed her Master’s thesis on consent and preventing sexual violence in the creative workplace.

She trained with Intimacy On Set and IDC Professionals. Her credits as Intimacy Coordinator and Consultant include Truth (Malthouse Theatre); *Hedwig & the Angry Inch* (Andrew Henry Presents); *Sweat* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Hamilton* (Michael Cassel Group); *The Almighty Sometimes* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Inheritance* (fortyfivedownstairs), *Whitefella Yella Tree*, *swim*, *The Lewis Trilogy*, *Jailbaby* (Griffin Theatre Company); *Spring Awakening* (VCA), *Things I Know to Be True*, *In the Club* (Theatre Works); *Overflow*, *Natasha*, *Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, *Let the Right One In* (Darlinghurst Theatre Company) and Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed* (Apocalypse Theatre). Screen credits as Intimacy Coordinator include *Neighbours* (Fremantle Media), *Ladies in Black* (Bunya Productions) and various short films. As an actor, Bayley recently opened fortyfive downstairs’ 2025 program in Thirty-Six (Bullet Heart Club), co-written with Jo Clifford. Bayley has also presented at various conferences and events on consent in the creative sector, including Creative Toolkit 2024, and SXSW 2024, 2025. Bayley is honoured to be part of trans storytelling and truth-telling and working with the next generation of artistic phenoms.

Note: Images of actors in this resource are those from a previous production and not ones performing here in Adelaide.

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