

ARENA THEATRE COMPANY

# GIRL WHO CRIED WOLF



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 

Teachers Notes  
HOUSE: ED 08

SUITABILITY

Years 5 – 9

DATES

Aug 5 – 8

# Introduction



These teacher's notes have been designed for classroom preparation and extension work for the Arena Theatre Company production of the, *Girl Who Cried Wolf*. We hope that this resource will assist you to further enjoy your performing arts experience back in the classroom. The activities are designed for students from Years 5-9. Drama educator Mathew Clausen has prepared the notes. Included are a number of activities that you can use with your students. These activities provide an opportunity for students to explore the broad themes and style. Syllabi written by NSW Board of Studies have been used as a guide for the planning of these activities. You should consider rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school. Some websites are suggested in this kit. It is recommended that before setting activities based on these, that teachers first visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school setting.

## **Classroom Context and Curriculum Links**

*Girl Who Cried Wolf* was inspired by recent media reports involving a young girl who invented a story of her attempted abduction by two men. The story prompted a massive police hunt and was widely publicised. The fusion of dramatic action, multi media and sound creates an exciting performance experience that explores many themes and issues including fear, conformity, isolation, fantasy, celebrity and the media. The consequences of actions are a key issue in this production with a particular focus on the impact that child abduction can have on society. The workshop activities in these notes provide the classroom teacher with many opportunities for related learning activities that link to the following subject areas:

**Primary:**

English: *talking and listening, contexts and texts,*

Creative Arts: *Drama- making, performing, appreciating, the elements of drama*

PDHPE: *interpersonal relationships, safe living, decision making, problem solving*

HSIE: *Change and Continuity -Significant events and people*

**Secondary:**

English: *the study of drama, Australian voices, responding to and composing texts*

Drama: *making, performing, appreciating, the elements of drama*

PDHPE: *problem solving, decision-making, self and relationships*

Photography and Digital Media: *responding to and interpreting digital and photographic works*

**Event Description and Synopsis**

In her playwright's notebook, Angela Betzien refers to the play, *Girl Who Cried Wolf* as a morality tale for our times. The central character, Laura Black is eleven years old and lives in a dark world where everything and everyone seems to be the same. The outward appearances of suburbia's security and normality are a flimsy disguise for the sadness and suffering that Laura knows exists in the world. She is frustrated by her anonymity and seeks to be different. What Laura desires most is the attention and fame that notoriety can bring her. In a world that appears to thrive on lies, half-truths and dishonesty, she finds it easy to invent a tale that places her at the centre of media attention over the suspected abduction of Catriona Dijon, the daughter of a successful property developer. As the search for Catriona intensifies, Laura desperately tries to prevent the truth from being uncovered. Her actions initially give Laura the attention she seeks but lead to very unfortunate consequences.



# Pre Performance

# GIRL

# WHO

## Curriculum Links

English/Drama/PDHPE **Upper Primary/Secondary**

### Activity One - Researching the Theatre Company and Playwright

#### English/Drama

#### Upper Primary and Secondary

1. The following web links provide some background information to the playwright, Angela Betzien and the theatre company that has developed the work, Arena Theatre Company.

Ask your students to visit the following websites and provide either written or oral responses to the following questions:

Interview with Angela Betzien

<http://www.theblurb.com.au/Issue05/AngelaBetzien.htm>

Arena Theatre Company

<http://www.arenatheatre.com.au/>

- What other plays has Angela written?
- What training has she had in theatre?
- Who are her favourite playwrights?
- What information can you find about these playwrights?
- Where is Arena Theatre Company located?
- What are the names of some other productions Arena has produced?
- Watch some of the video links and look at some of the photos from previous productions. How would you describe the visual style of Arena's shows?
- What do you think are the aims of the Arena Theatre Company?
- What expectations do you have about this production?



## Activity Two - I Want To Be Famous


English/Drama/PDHPE

Upper Primary/Secondary

2.1 In this activity your students will explore notions of fame and the implications of a desire to be famous. Ask your students to sit in a circle. Each person has to say the name of a famous person going around the circle one person at a time. Try and make the contributions of names rapid so that it is spontaneous and fun. Once the class has exhausted ideas, revisit the names listed and ask your students to think about the following:

- Which names came to mind first?
- What makes someone famous?
- Why are some famous people more noticed than others?
- Why does society want to make certain individuals famous?

2.2 Ask your students to divide into groups of four or five. Each group will prepare a short presentation that uses movement and voice to show the temptations of fame. The presentation will have one central character who desires to be famous. The other members of the group will use movement and voice to play the perceived benefits of fame. Encourage members of the group to think about how they might not only represent people but how they might represent more abstract notions of fame like being desirable, popular, successful, powerful etc. Allow the groups time to prepare and then present the work to the class. Have a discussion about the possible benefits but drawbacks of fame. You might like to bring into the discussion observations about television shows like *Big Brother*, *Australian Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance*.



2.3 In this activity your students will explore the more negative aspects of fame as represented in the format of gossip and scandal. Divide the class into groups of three. Each group will create a news report that focuses on the life of an ordinary person who for some reason decided by the group, is catapulted to fame. The final presentation is to include paparazzi snapshots accompanied by reporter/s commentary. The commentary and documentary footage should be exaggerated to make it funny and ridiculous. The groups must focus on criticizing the general public's hunger for scandal and news.

### **Activity Three - The Graeme Thorne Case**

**English/Drama/PDHPE**

#### **Secondary**


3.1 In this activity your students will use drama skills to create a visual representation of the impact of child abduction on society by looking at the impact that the Graeme Thorne case had on Australian society in the early 1960's. The following websites provide some information about this case:

The Crime Web

[http://www.thecrimeweb.com/murder\\_of\\_graeme\\_thorne.htm](http://www.thecrimeweb.com/murder_of_graeme_thorne.htm)

Wikipedia -Graeme Thorne Kidnapping

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graeme\\_Thorne\\_kidnapping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graeme_Thorne_kidnapping)



3.2 To supplement their research on this case, ask your students to view the Nigel Thomson artwork, *Graeme Thorne*, on the National Gallery website. Ask your students to discuss the possible feelings, messages and images that the artwork suggests.

National Gallery of Australia <http://www.nga.gov.au/federation/Detail.cfm?WorkID=26574>

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Each group is to prepare a three, four or five frozen pictures or tableau that show how this incident may have affected people at the time. The frozen pictures should be in sequence starting with the time before the abduction of Graeme and finishing with the consequences. Some ideas for frozen images could include:

- The very public media reporting of the lottery win
- The planning of the abduction
- The realisation of Graeme's disappearance.
- The police search
- Public gossip and speculation
- The media reporting of the abduction and the public's response
- The discovery of Graeme's body
- The arrest of the murderer.

In addition to the frozen images, your students may like to include quotes or case extracts that are spoken as each frozen picture is shown. Allow the students time to prepare and then present the work to the class.





## Activity Four - Secrets and Lies

### English/Drama/PDHPE

#### 4.1 Upper Primary and Secondary

Ask your students to find two others to work with. Each pair will tell a short personal anecdote to the class. One of these stories will be true but one will be fabricated. Allow each group time to prepare. Each group is to tell their stories to the class. The aim of the activity is to convince the listener that all the stories are true. Once each group has finished telling their stories, volunteers are to try to guess which story is false. Once all the groups have taken their turn, ask the class to discuss the techniques and strategies used to make the stories that were false seem true.

#### 4.2 Upper Primary and Secondary

In this activity your students will stand along an imaginary 'values' line that represents a scale ranging from strongly agree at one end of the line, neutral in the middle and strongly disagree at the other end of the line. Ask your students the following questions:

- It is impossible to not tell lies
- Some lies are necessary
- All lies have negative consequences
- Our politicians set a good example for telling the truth.
- When I have children I will severely reprimand them if they are caught lying
- There is a difference between lying and stretching the truth.

After each question is read out loud, ask the students to place themselves at a point on the values line, depending on whether they agree or disagree with the statement, and then sit down on the floor. Once all students have found a position on the values line, ask individuals to discuss their reasons for their position.





### 4.3 Upper Primary

This activity is designed for a Drama lesson but could be used as an English lesson activity by asking the students to write a story individually rather than prepare a play in groups.

Read the children's story *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* to the class as a starting point for this activity (see the web link below for a version of this story).

Divide the class into groups of four. Each group is to prepare a short role-play that begins with the main character telling a small lie. In the play it is important that the character who tells the first lie is almost caught as this leads them to tell more lies. This complicates the situation and builds tension as the protagonist attempts to hide their dishonesty. You might help students with ideas for their plays by asking for volunteers to share stories where this situation has happened.

Allow each group time to prepare and then present the role-plays to the class.

Story Arts- Aesop's ABC

<http://www.storyarts.org/library/aesops/stories/boy.html>

## Curriculum Links

English/Drama/PDHPE/History **Upper Primary/Secondary**

### Activity Five - Performance Imagery

#### English/Drama

##### 5.1 Secondary

This activity is an opportunity for your students to evaluate the production by focusing on the images created through the examples of playbuilding and stage action.

1. Choose five adjectives that you think best describe the mood and atmosphere of *Girl Who Cried Wolf*.
2. Describe any specific features of a set design that you thought made the performance effective.
3. What were the key issues and themes explored in the play?
4. Briefly describe one moment in the play you felt was memorable or powerful.
5. Use your chosen performance moment from the previous question and explain why you thought this moment was effective. You might comment on the actors, the use of space or the use of gesture, movement and posture.
6. Were any sounds or music used in the play? How effective were these choices? Provide one example of an effective choice and explain how it helped to add meaning and/or create mood and atmosphere.
7. Describe two costumes for two characters in the play.
8. What information would your costume designs communicate about the characters' personalities?



## 5.2 Upper Primary and Secondary

The playwright, Angela Betzien, has included in her initial notebook of ideas a list of key images that she imagined as part of the play. Some of these images include:

- The shadow of a wolf
- A girl busking as an angel statue
- Dead birds
- A rubbish dump
- Pop up books
- Lost notes

Using the list of images above, ask your students to develop their interpretation of these symbols by choosing from the following activities:

- Ask your students to create a poster for a production of *Girl Who Cried Wolf* using one or more of these images. The poster should include the title of the production and one key line or sentence that would encourage the audience to see the production.
- Ask your students to write an imaginative story that includes one or more of these images.
- Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to create a short role-play of their choice that uses one or more of these images.





## Activity Six - Understanding Conformity

PDHPE/Drama/English/History

### 6.1 Upper Primary and Secondary

Ask your students to work with a partner or in small groups. Each group is to brainstorm ideas, images and examples that relate to the core idea of conformity. Ask each group to share their ideas with the class.

Ask the class to consider and discuss the following questions:

- When might conformity be positive and constructive?
- When might conformity be oppressive or negative?
- Provide some examples of how the issue of conformity was explored in the production.
- What are the messages about conformity in the play *Girl Who Cried Wolf*

### 6.2 Upper Primary and Secondary

Ask your students to read the lyrics to the following song. If they know the tune they might sing it out loud together as a class. Ask the class to identify some of the key images in the lyrics.

#### **Little Boxes by Malvina Reynolds**

Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky tacky.

Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes all the same.

There's a green one and a pick one and a blue one and a yellow one.


And they're all made out of ticky tacky and they all look just the same.

And the people in the houses all went to university.

Where they were put in boxes and they came out all the same.

And there doctors and there's lawyers and business executives.

And they're all made out of ticky tacky and they all look just the same.



And they all play on the golf course and drink their martinis dry,  
And they have pretty children and the children they go to school  
And the children go to Summer Camp and then to university  
Where they are put in boxes and they come out all the same.

And the boys go into business and marry and raise a family  
In boxes made of ticky tacky and they all look just the same.


*Lyrics: Linda Kimura 2002; Melody: traditional*

### 6.3 Secondary

In this next activity your students will explore ways to create dramatic irony. This activity is more suitable for secondary students. The activity will ask the students to create a representation of the residents of the Dolphin Developments Pleasant Lakes Estate.

The list below contains some of the key ideas and catch phrases that the playwright used to define this suburb:

- Relaxed
- Happiness
- Living the lifestyle
- Safe
- A sense of pride
- Friendly
- You're not simply buying a home, you're joining a community.
- A feeling that lasts
- It's just a wonderful relaxed place to bring up the kids.
- It's the best decision we've ever made.



Ask your students to sit in a circle. Ask each student to say one of the words or phrases aloud. Encourage your students to explore how their vocal delivery might make the statements seem false or fake.

Once they have read through the list, ask your students to find a place to work on their own. Ask them to imagine the types of people and families that might live in Pleasant Lakes. Explain to the class that you will give them three counts, after which they are to take a frozen pose as a resident of Pleasant Lakes. As they hold their pose, encourage them to exaggerate their body posture and facial expression to heighten the irony of the representation. Repeat this activity two more times asking your students to create a new character for each repetition.

Divide the class into groups of four, five or six. Each group is to prepare a short presentation using movement, character work and voice. Their presentation will show the residents of Pleasant Lakes Estate and will use both the lyrics of *Little Boxes* and the words from the list above to give a snapshot of Pleasant Lakes. Encourage your students to highlight the irony of the setting and characters. Some ideas for staging include:

- The students might have each character or family group walk on stage one by one or start with a tableau of the community.
- They can represent the different types of people and families in Pleasant Lakes by saying one line or word each from the list. Including the use of movement and gesture.
- They may like to include moments of chorus work where lines from the song, *Little Boxes* are said or sung in between the statements from the residents.





## 6.4 Secondary

This activity extends on the work of the previous activities and explores historical examples of conformity and the negative consequences. Your students will work in groups to write three or four verses of a poem about the negative consequences of conformity. They will perform their poem using characters and imagery.

Divide your students into groups. Each group will research times in recent history when various societies have conformed to an idea or belief that has had negative consequences. Some topics for research include:

- The Australian Federal Election and the Children Overboard Affair.
- Germany in the early 1940s and the rise of the Nazi regime and the final solution.
- The American war on terror, Iraq and weapons of mass destruction.

Your students can use the following questions as a guide for their research:

- Explain and describe the key incident from your research.
- What were the social/political or economic factors that were connected to the incident?
- Why do you believe people conformed to the new idea or way of thinking that was a result of this incident?
- What were the consequences of people conforming?
- How could this have been prevented?

## Activity Seven - Character Work

### English, Drama

#### 7.1 Upper Primary and Secondary

In this activity your students will explore their interpretation of three characters from the play *Girl Who Cried Wolf* in extended improvisations.

Ask your students to complete written character biographies for each of the following:


- Laura Black
- Joe Black - Laura's Father
- Catriona Dijon
- Ada Douglas

Use the following character biography points as a guide for this activity:

*Name, age, date of birth, family background, hobbies, favourite film, favourite music/band/singer, what they like about Pleasant Lakes, what they don't like about Pleasant Lakes, life ambition,*

Your students may also like to find images from magazines or artworks to create a visual collage as a representation of each of the three characters.

Ask your students to share their character biographies either as a class or in small groups.



7.2 Ask your students to work in groups of three. Each group will use the following scenarios as the basis for improvisations or prepared role-plays. Each group member may choose to play the same character in each scenario or they may change their character.

### **Scenario 1**

It is Laura's birthday and her father has planned a special lunch for the two of them. During the lunch Laura asks her father questions about his involvement in the war in Iraq. He is reluctant to give too much information but conveys his lack of belief in governments, big business and other institutions. At the end of lunch he gives his daughter a special birthday present.

### **Scenario 2**

Catriona and Laura are in the line up for the auditions for Westfield Idol competition. They are forced to talk to each other while they wait. Their conversation is about the competition, friends, boyfriends and their parents. At a point in their conversation, one of the girls receives a very important mobile phone call.

### **Scenario 3**

Catriona is in the Pleasant Lakes communal park walking her dog. She bumps into Laura's father. The performers may decide whether they have met previously or not. Their interaction reveals their beliefs and attitudes about Pleasant Lakes and the people who live there. At a moment in their conversation one of the dogs runs to their owner. The dog has dug up something unusual in the park.





#### Scenario 4

It is many months after Catriona's disappearance. A popular current affairs program is interviewing both Laura and Catriona. The interviewer (played by one of the group members) is keen to make the story about the disappearance of Catriona as sensational as possible.

Ask your students to improvise the scenarios or allow your students time to prepare and then present them to the class. Discuss with your students both the interpretation of character and the new insights revealed about the key themes and issues that are the focus of *The Girl Who Cried Wolf*.

#### 8.1 Upper Primary and Secondary

This activity asks your students to identify some of the key elements of drama in the play *Girl Who Cried Wolf*. This activity could be a written task done as a review of the play or you might ask your class to identify the elements in class discussion. The *NSW Board of Studies Drama Stage 4 and 5 Syllabus* contains a useful description of each drama element.

Ask your students to provide examples of the following elements of drama as seen in the workshop:

- Characters - who?
- Situation - what is happening?
- Tension - the key issues, problem or question for the audience and the characters.
- Time and Place - where and when is the play set?
- Mood and Atmosphere - the feeling created by the situations and supported by the elements of production; set, sound costume and lighting
- Dramatic meaning - the message of the play for the audience

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