



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

Blue

14 JAN - 29 JAN 2023



**LEARNING
SEQUENCE**

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Belvoir Street Theatre 2023

SUGGESTED DURATION

3 x lesson activities (allow approximately 60 minutes each)

RATIONALE

These three independent learning activities can be used selectively by teachers to prepare students for viewing Blue. These activities are designed to introduce some of the conceptual and structural aspects of the show and to provoke student thinking about the performance and its meaning.

STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- Why is the way we communicate important for our relationships?
- How is our relationship with the ocean an important aspect of the Australian experience?
- How is writing, performance and expression a powerful process to deal with tragedy?

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Students:

- express their own creative expression of friendship and their perspective on relationships
- reflect on their own relationship with the ocean
- consider how writing can be a powerful form of catharsis.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM ENGLISH (VERSION 8.4) LINKS

Year 9

- Understand that roles and relationships are developed and challenged through language and interpersonal skills (ACELA1551)
- Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Year 10

- Identify and explore the purposes and effects of different text structures and language features of spoken texts, and use this knowledge to create purposeful texts that inform, persuade and engage (ACELY1750)
- Use organisation patterns, voice and language conventions to present a point of view on a subject, speaking clearly, coherently and with effect, using logic, imagery and rhetorical devices to engage audiences (ACELY1813)
- Create sustained texts, including texts that combine specific digital or media content, for imaginative, informative, or persuasive purposes that reflect upon challenging and complex issues (ACELY1756)



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**PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY ONE
LETTER WRITING**

I get home and there's a letter from my mother waiting for me on the table...It's on yellow lined paper, the note. The words Dear Mark etched into the top fold in black ink.

Ideally this activity should be completed 2-3 weeks out from the performance, and can be slotted into lessons when convenient. Teachers can complete all options or the option most suitable to their classroom context.

Learning Intention Understand the significance of expressing feelings and thoughts through letters between friends or strangers, and how letter writing can act as a form of catharsis.

CLASS DISCUSSION

- What is a letter? Have you ever received a letter?
- What are the features of a letter?
- What can letters do that other forms of communication can't?

Teacher led discussion on letter writing and the role of letter writing in our world. This is obviously a practice which has fallen away with the advent of technology but there is opportunity here to build student interest. After introducing letter writing students should write a short response using the following title:

Why is letter writing a beautiful thing?



THE ART OF LETTER WRITING

Students will now engage in their own letter writing. They can write a letter to a friend in the class, OR to an anonymous pen pal AND a letter to themselves. Teachers can provide plain paper (yellow is mentioned in the performance and, if available, could add some symmetry with this activity) and envelopes.

1. Letter to a friend

Group students in pairs, or threes, and writing pairs should be noted by the teacher to ensure equity. Students will then write a letter to their partner. These responses should be sealed in an envelope and 'delivered' to the recipient a few days after composition. Students can then compose a response and this process can continue for a couple of weeks.

OR

2. Letter to an anonymous pen pal

Provide students with these instructions:

We are going to engage in the ancient art of letter writing. In our letter writing lessons I will give you a sheet of paper and an envelope. First, you will be writing an introductory letter about yourself and I will randomly deliver these letters to other students in our class. Each letter lesson I will give you prompts to help the conversation along but ask questions, make observations about what is going on in the world. You will sign off your letters with a code name - start thinking of one. The aim of the game is to keep your identity secret, but to develop an understanding of your pen pal.

Process to keep things anonymous.

- Students write an introductory letter about themselves and place it in an envelope. Put a post-it on the front with their chosen pseudonym.
- Create a spreadsheet which links names and pseudonyms
Teacher delivers letters. When writing the response, students should write the pseudonym of the recipient on a post-it on the front. Teacher to collect and deliver and so on.

AND

3. Letter to themselves

Here, students can be encouraged to write deeply and personally about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. This letter will be delivered at the end of term, or perhaps at a significant juncture during the school year. Teachers should collect and safely store these responses.



POST-ACTIVITY REFLECTION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How did you feel when you got to open your letter? Was it different compared to the letter to yourself?
- How did the length of time passing between writing and reading impact you?
- What surprised you during this experience?
- What has this letter writing process given you?

Students can then write a response to their pen pal and to their friend. These letter writing sessions could be sustained throughout the year.

CONNECTING AHEAD TO *BLUE*

GUIDED DISCUSSION

To prepare students for viewing *Blue*:

1. When we view the performance how does the act of letter writing help Mark?
2. How does the act of letter writing help the audience to understand Mark's struggles?
3. Did you notice any similarities between your experience of writing and Mark's?



**PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY TWO
EXTENDED METAPHOR**

When we swim in the ocean it's a kind of therapy. The journey of getting there, the smell of salt growing, the excitement of seeing the water first and the readiness to jump in the moment we arrive.

The ocean itself is kind of brilliant, it can be dangerous and...scary, but calming and healing?

The sequence of events in the production of *Blue* is largely situated around the ocean and its role in the protagonist Mark's life. The ocean is used as a powerful metaphor to explore the emotional state of the character and to reflect many of the difficult concepts the play explores such as grief and loss.

Learning Intention Develop students conceptual understanding of an extended metaphor and how this can be used to show character progression.

CLASS BRAINSTORM

- Create a list of all the features of the ocean*
*These could include the tide, waves, currents, rips, shoreline, ripples, horizons, depth, shallows, waves on sand and rocks.
- Create a list of adjectives to describe the ocean, eg; calm, tumultuous, violent.

Taking the list created, students are to connect each feature of the ocean with an emotion. Next, students are to select three pairings and write a simile connecting the emotion with the ocean feature. For example; her stomach churned like a frantic rip.

CREATIVE WRITING

Students are to spend some individual writing time responding to one of the following prompts:

1. Imagine that the ocean is a place that holds memories. Compose a first person vignette where the protagonist dives into the ocean, exploring the underwater landscape as a metaphor for diving into their own memories of loss or grief. Consider how the movement of the water could also be used to show the changing emotional state of the character.

OR

2. Imagine you are seated on the beach on a quiet evening as the sun sets. Compose a first person vignette about how the colours of the sky reflect the emotions associated with loss or grief. Consider how you can use colour as a metaphor for the changing emotional state of the character.



POST-ACTIVITY REFLECTION

WRITTEN RESPONSE

Individual writing time on the following question;

Why is the ocean an effective metaphor to use when exploring the concepts of loss and grief?

CONNECTING AHEAD TO *BLUE*

GUIDED DISCUSSION

To prepare students for viewing *Blue*:

1. When we view the performance, consider the way the ocean was used in the performance compared to your own writing?
2. In Australia, time spent by the ocean is a universal experience for many. During the performance do you feel you were able to better understand the experience of Mark through his metaphorical use of the ocean?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES**RESPONDING TO THE PLAY**

Learning Intention Extend students' interpretive and reflective skills to develop their understanding of the perspective of others.

CLASS COLLABORATION

Students write down what words or emotions they would use to describe the performance. Students contribute these to a collaborative word cloud for display on the board.

Some guiding questions for this activity could include:

- How did the performance make you feel?
- What aspects of the show resonated with you?
Can you distil this into one phrase or word?
- Were there any surprises or unexpected elements?
- How did the performer's use of storytelling, body language, or expressions impact your response to the performance?
- Were there any moments where you felt a strong emotional connection?

THINKING ROUTINES

Then, using one of the following Harvard Thinking routines from *Project Zero*, guide students through a discussion of the core ideas and perspectives raised in the play.

HEADLINES

Write a headline that captures the most important aspect of this topic/issue. How does your headline differ from what you would have said yesterday? Or, how does your headline differ from your peers?

OR

LENSES

This routine is designed to encourage critical thinking and the role our personal experiences or biases impact our interpretation of material. Work through the following sequence with students:

SEE What were your initial thoughts on the show (refer back to opening activity)

LENS Think about the lens through which you view the world. These could be related to your family, your friends, your race, your ethnicity, your gender or your social-cultural upbringing. With a partner or in a small group choose a particular lens and discuss how you would view the experiences of Mark through that particular lens.

PROBE Ask a question to encourage deeper exploration of each other's perspective.

Encourage note taking. Suggested questions;

Can you tell me what you mean by...

What elements of your chosen lens impact your perspective on...

Your ideas on ... differ from mine, why do you think that is the case?

REFLECT Take a few minutes to refer back to your initial observations and notes taken during the lens activity. What aspects of the show have 'bubbled to the surface' that you may not have considered?

CULMINATING WRITING ACTIVITY

Using their observations and notes from the previous activities, students respond to the following question:

How has the performance Blue explored complex ideas for you and your peers?