



# BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY

By **Dalara Williams**

Directed by **Ian Michael**

**05 - 27 APR**

# BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY

BY DALLARA WILLIAMS | 05 - 27 APRIL 2025

We are thrilled to introduce to you *Big Girls Don't Cry*, a new play by Dallara Williams, directed by Ian Michael.

Redfern 1966. Cheryl, Lulu and Queenie are young and life is glorious, full of hilarity and joy, even if jobs are precarious, the police harass them, and racism seeps into everything. But as they gear up for the biggest night of the year – the Deb Ball – their lives, Redfern, the country are all about to change.

A sharp and celebratory new play from Gumbaynggirr/Wiradjuri woman Dalara Williams, that pays respect to a generation that led the way, and to Black women who won't take a backward step.

**These Learning Resources feature six lesson sequences tailored for students and teachers studying Drama in NSW. Designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to enrich their experience of watching *Big Girls Don't Cry* in 2025, these materials also help students hone their improvisation, playbuilding, and acting skills, aligning with the NSW syllabus requirements.**

## NSW DRAMA CURRICULUM LINKS

Belvoir St Theatre's production of *Big Girls Don't Cry* is well-suited for students undertaking **Stage 4, 5 and 6 Drama**. It also aligns strongly with Stage 5 History, 'The Modern World and Australia – Core Dept Study 4: Rights and Freedoms (1945-present)'

These **Learning Sequences** have been created by Belvoir Education to support teachers in their instruction of:

- **STAGE 5 DRAMA**

Outcomes: DR5-PER-01, DR5-PER-01, DR5-MAK-01 & DR5-MAK-02

- **STAGE 6 DRAMA**

Outcomes: P1.2, P1.3, P1.4, P1.6, P1.7, P2.3, P2.6

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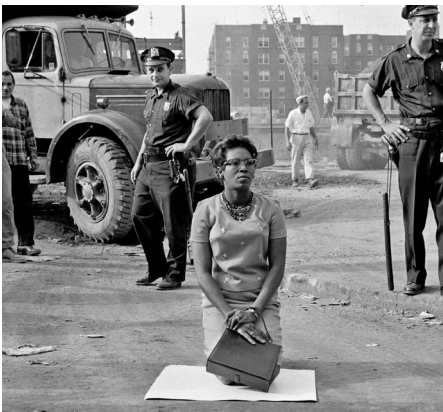


# LEARNING SEQUENCE 1: SPIRIT OF THE 1960s

## PRINT COPIES OF WORKSHEET 1.1

### A) READING - WORKSHEET 1.1 (5 MINS)

Globally, the 1960s were defined by a spirit of rebellion, liberation, and change. It was a decade marked by civil rights movements, anti-war protests, and cultural revolutions. The youth challenged traditional values, embracing ideals of peace, love, and equality. The feminist movement gained momentum, advocating for gender equality, while environmentalism began to take root. The 60s were a time of social upheaval, where people fought passionately for justice, civil rights, and a more inclusive society.



Source: <https://archive.nytimes.com/>



Source: <https://evome.co/>



Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/>

## THE US FREEDOM RIDES

The American Freedom Rides of 1961 were a pivotal civil rights campaign against racial segregation in the South. Activists, black and white, rode interstate buses together, challenging segregation laws. Despite facing violent resistance, their efforts led to federal enforcement of desegregation in public transportation, marking a significant civil rights victory.



Source: <https://time.com>

## WHAT WERE THE FREEDOM RIDES IN AUSTRALIA?

The Freedom Rides in Australia, inspired by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, took place in 1965. Organised by the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA), led by **Charles Perkins**, these rides aimed to **highlight the racial discrimination faced by Aboriginal people**. The group traveled through rural New South Wales, confronting segregation in public places like swimming pools and hotels. Their efforts brought national attention to the injustices Aboriginal people endured, challenging deeply entrenched racist attitudes. The Freedom Rides played a crucial role in raising awareness and paved the way for the **1967 referendum**, which **amended the constitution to include Aboriginal people in the census**.

## B) A CASE STUDY - THE MOREE BATHS (45 MINS)

During the 1965 Freedom Rides in Australia, activists **confronted segregation at the Moree baths** in northern NSW where Aboriginal people were banned from swimming. The group, led by Charles Perkins, brought Aboriginal children to the pool, forcing authorities to temporarily lift the ban. Their actions sparked national attention and highlighted racial discrimination in rural Australia.

*The Freedom Ride was probably the greatest and most exciting event I have ever been involved in. It was also a reaction to what was being done in America at that time. A number of students gathered together at Sydney University and thought that they might like to see a Freedom Ride eventuate here in Australia.*

- CHARLES PERKINS



SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.SMH.COM.AU/INTERACTIVE/2023/FREEDOM-RIDE/](https://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2023/freedom-ride/)

1. Introduce students to the Australian Freedom Rides by watching this short 5-minute documentary produced by *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

2. Print several copies of the article found at: (<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/diving-into-defining-moments-of-australian-indigenous-civil-rights-with-the-freedom-rides/6qxj5zu1r>) for your students.



YOUTUBE LINK: THE 1965 FREEDOM RIDE REMEMBERED

3. Divide the class into groups of 4-6 students.

4. Instruct each group to read the article thoroughly. They can either take turns reading aloud or appoint one person to be the 'reader' for the group.

5. Using the article, each group will create three tableaux—frozen images—that tell the story of the Moree Baths Protest. The tableaux could capture:

- The tension of the confrontation at the Moree Baths.
- The breakthrough moment when segregation is defined.
- The broader significance of the protest's impact on the civil rights movement in Australia.

6. Underneath each performance, play **Sam Cook's** song 'A Change is Gunna Come' (1964), a song that captures the hopeful yet meloncholic struggle for equality.

**REFLECTION:** How did each group effectively use space to communicate the story of the Moree Baths? What effect did the music have on the audience's response to and interpretation of the tableaux performances?

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 2: SCENE ANALYSIS

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## PRINT WORKSHEET 2.1 AND 2.2

### A) SCRIPT ANALYSIS (20 MINS)

This scene is from Act 1, Scene 2 of *Big Girls Don't Cry*. Cheryl and her brother Ernie arrive at a pub with their friends for a drink. The stage directions read: “*THE EMPRESS HOTEL. One of the few pubs that allows Aboriginal patrons. It’s busy and loud.*” While they are there, Officer Robinson, a young Anglo-Australian police officer, approaches them.

**Read the Scene:** As a class, read through the scene and discuss what the script reveals about the staging. Focus on how the environment and interactions inform the characters’ movements, placement, and mood on stage.

**Brainstorm Objectives:** Work as a group to brainstorm the objective of each character in this scene. What are Cheryl, Ernie, and Officer Robinson each trying to achieve throughout this interaction?

### A) REHEARSAL (40 MINS)

**Group Work (3 Students):** In groups of three, students cast themselves as Officer Robinson, Ernie, and Cheryl (if there is a fourth student, they may take on the role of the Director). Then, with the help of Worksheet 2.2, each group can work together to identify the specific “actions” each character takes to pursue their objective, line by line.

**Blocking the Scene:** Students then begin working on blocking the scene, experimenting with space, movement, and dialogue to enhance the tension and stakes of this scene.

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THE EMPRESS HOTEL ON REGENT STREET IN REDFERN

SOURCE: [dictionaryofsydney.org](http://dictionaryofsydney.org)



*OFFICER ROBINSON appears. He wanders through the pub.*

**CHERYL** Ernie, remember, don't do anything

*-Ernie ignores Cheryl*

**ERNIE** Curfew starting early tonight? Pub doesn't close for hours.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** Just checking up on things. See that there's no trouble going on here.

**ERNIE** No trouble here. Just people trying to enjoy themselves. You don't have to be here.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** I'm doing what I'm supposed to do.

**ERNIE** And what are you supposed to do, huh?

**CHERYL** Ernie.

*Officer and Ernie stand-off with each other.*

**OFFICER ROBINSON** How much have you been drinking, sir?

**ERNIE** Sir? You know that's the first time one of you have called me that. I never thought you had it your vocabulary.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** I'm gonna have to ask you all to leave.

**ERNIE** On what premise.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** Mine. This is my district and I'll make sure to protect it. To protect the people of it.

**ERNIE** And we're not the people? The owner said we're allowed to be here. It's his business and he's free to set his rules.

*Beat.*

**OFFICER ROBINSON** There's been some complaints

**ERNIE** Complaints.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** Noise complaints. That people are making a ruckus along those side paths.

**ERNIE** Maybe you should be out there, looking for the culprits than bothering us.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** Are you calling me a liar?

**ERNIE** That depends. You guys don't really have the reputation of being honest.

**OFFICER ROBINSON** You getting smart with me boy?

**ERNIE** Just helping you do your job.

*Officer Robinson steps closer to Ernie. He doesn't move, holding his ground. Not breaking eye contact.*

**OFFICER ROBINSON** Move it along and don't make me say it again.

*The officer turns around.*

**ERNIE** This is complete bullshit and you know it.

*The officer stops and reaches for his baton.*

**OFFICER ROBINSON** What did you say boy?

**ERNIE** I said this is --

**CHERYL** -- Nothing officer, he said nothing.

**ERNIE** No, he heard me.

**CHERYL** We're moving along sir, I'm waiting on a friend, I don't want her walking home alone so late at night. We're leaving.

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 3: CREATING CHORUS

## PRINT WORKSHEET 3.1

### B) CREATING A CHORUS (30 MINS)

1. In groups of 5-6, students will create a chorus performance using the provided text excerpt from Dalara Williams' *Big Girls Don't Cry*.

- They may use the text in its entirety or edit the lines to suit their performance.

2. Students should aim to incorporate five or more of the following chorus techniques:

**UNISON:** All group members speak together in harmony.

**SOLO LINES:** Each member speaks individually at different points.

**CANON:** Speak the same lines at staggered times to create a dramatic effect.

**OVERLAPPING DIALOGUE:** Have members speak simultaneously to create layers of dialogue.

**REPETITION:** Delivering the same line more than once.

**PACE:** Vary the speed at which lines are delivered for dramatic emphasis.

**VOLUME:** Adjust vocal dynamics to emphasize certain passages or create contrast.

**SOUND EFFECTS:** May utilize body percussion, claps, clicks, stomping, etc.

**BODILY MOVEMENT:** Integrate gestures and choreography to enhance expression.

3. After students have spent 30 minutes creating and rehearsing their choral performance, provide them with the opportunity to present their work to their peers.

4. Lead a class reflection: Which choral techniques were especially effective in conveying the ideas and emotions of the text?

#### TEXT:

They want to control us like puppets, and they've been throwing every obstacle to make us bend to their will. Genocide, displacement, What else? Oh, the removal of children. Years of lies upon lies, to the point where we start to believe them. Forcing their superiority on us. Telling us where we can walk, what place we can enter. And they stand there in their entitlement thinking that they're smarter than us. I've seen it with my own eyes. I hear it every day. Twisting and turning the truth for their own liking, and they've been doing this for years. A century - no, longer. Now, we're not gonna let these people keep us down. It's possible. When people come together and stand up for what they believe in. It's liberating, it's freeing. And the power that we create when we come together. It feels like that buzz in the air, right before a thunderstorm hits. That's us.

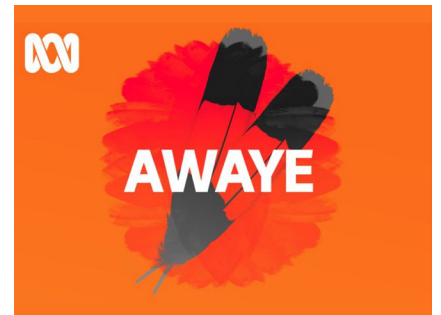


# LEARNING SEQUENCE 4: THE PLAYWRIGHT



**DALARA WILLIAMS AT BELVOIR ST THEATRE**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT BOARDMAN (2022)

In 2022, after being appointed as the new Balnaves Fellow at Belvoir St Theatre, Dalara Williams was interviewed by ABC journalist Rudi Bremer on AWAYE!



[CLICK ON ICON TO HEAR THE INTERVIEW](#)

## A) LISTENING AND REFLECTING

As a class, listen to Dalara's 15-minute interview and then engage in a discussion using the following guiding questions:

- How has Dalara Williams' family history of activism influenced her identity and career?
- What major themes are present in her work?
- What sparked Dalara Williams' interest in playwriting?
- What does she mean by "balancing the spectrum of Black storytelling"?
- What challenges come with performing emotionally heavy content on stage every night?

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 5: WRITING MONOLOGUES

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## PRINT WORKSHEET 5.1

One of the inspirations behind *Big Girls Don't Cry* came from conversations Dalara Williams had with her grandmother about the social life of Aboriginal women in Redfern during the 1960s. During the drafting phase of her writing, Williams conducted interviews with family and community members who had lived in Redfern at that time to deepen her understanding of their social experiences.

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## A) INTERVIEWING FAMILY/COMMUNITY

- As a pre-lesson homework task, ask students to conduct a brief interview with an older family or community member about their experience as a teenager or young adult in the area where they grew up. To guide their interviews, you may wish to provide students with the following list of questions:

*Where did you grow up?*

*What are your most vivid memories of that place?*

*What music did you enjoy listening to?*

*What are your best memories of socialising at that age?*

*What is one of the most challenging memories from that time in your life?*

*What do you wish you knew then that you know now?*

## B) WRITING MONOLOGUES

- After students have recorded their interview (either as an audio recording or in written form), they can begin composing a short 1-2 minute monologue from the perspective of the family or community member they interviewed. They may wish to only use the details provided by their interviewee, or they might fill-in-the-blanks with their imagination.
- Worksheet 5.1 contains a proposed structure for students to plan their monologue. It contains these four sections:

**Section 1: Setting the Scene - First-Person Description of Where They Grew Up**

**Section 2: A Detailed Recollection**

**Section 3: The Turning Point - A Challenge of That Age or Place**

**Section 4: Reflection - What They Wish They Knew Then**

- Provide students with the opportunity to either read or perform their monologue for the class.

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 6: COSTUME DESIGN

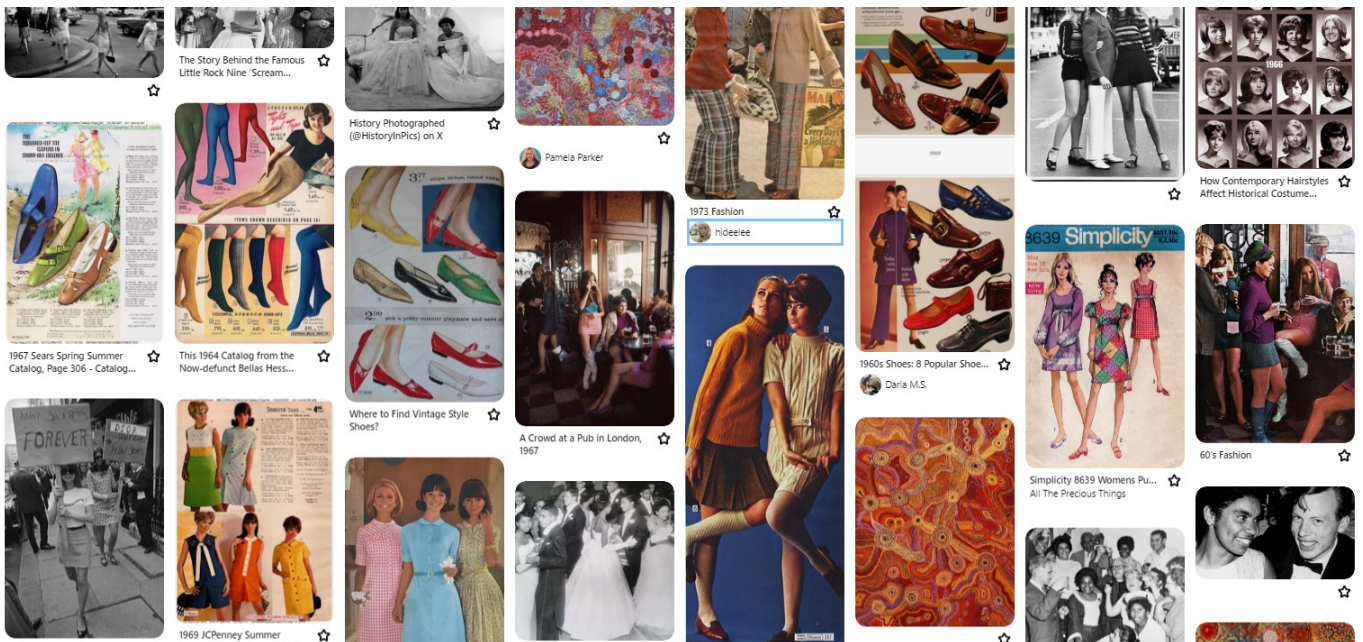
## B) PINTEREST MOOD BOARD (30 MINUTES)



*Big Girls Don't Cry* is set in 1966 in Sydney, in the suburb of Redfern. Fashion at the time was very different to what it is today, and the production's costume designer must ensure that what each character wears authentically reflects the era's styles and trends.

For costume designers, the research phase is crucial and often involves creating a mood board—a collection of images that inspire and inform their designs.

1. Ask students to research 1960s Australian fashion and create a moodboard on Pinterest with at least 30 images. These images should showcase clothing items, hairstyles, accessories, shoes, and fabrics. Here is an example:



2. Once students have completed their mood board, ask them to compose a short 50-100-word rationale explaining why they chose certain images for their mood board and how these selections reflect the styles and trends of the 1960s.

# WORKSHEETS

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## WORKSHEET 2.2

To accuse	To discover	To prepare
To acquiesce	To dismiss	To primp
To admire	To distract	To probe
To admonish	To embrace	To protect
To adore	To entertain	To put down
To amuse	To entice	To question
To annoy	To erupt	To reject`
To apologize	To escape	To rescue
To applaud	To examine	To retreat
To attack	To explode	To ridicule
To bask	To exult	To savour
To beg	To flatter	To scold
To belittle	To flaunt	To scrutinize
To bestow	To flee	To search
To boast	To flirt	To seduce
To brag	To gloat	To shock
To brood	To grieve	To show off
To brush off	To hide	To sneak
To buddy up	To idolize	To soothe
To caress	To ignore	To stalk
To celebrate	To impress	To startle
To challenge	To incite	To strut
To charm	To inspect	To surrender
To check out	To instruct	To surprise
To coax	To invade	To tantalize
To comfort	To invite	To taunt
To command	To lure	To teach
To confess	To mock	To tease
To confide	To mother	To tempt
To confront	To mourn	To test
To congratulate	To ogle	To threaten
To cuddle	To patronize	To trump
To defend	To perform	To ward off
To deify	To pester	To warn
To demand	To pleas	To welcome
To destroy	To ponder	To withdraw
To dis	To pounce	To worship
To discard	To preen	To yearn



### TEXT EXTRACT:

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**SECTION 1: SETTING THE SCENE**

- Begin the monologue with a vivid, first-person account of the place your family member grew up. Use sensory language to describe sights, sounds, smells, and feelings associated with the location. Aim to create an evocative picture that brings the place to life for the audience.

**SECTION 2: A DETAILED RECOLLECTION**

- Transition into a specific memory of socialising from that time. It could be a gathering, a special event, or an everyday activity with friends or family. Ensure the memory is described in detail and feels authentic and real. Include dialogue or moments of interaction if possible.

**SECTION 3: THE TURNING POINT - A CHALLENGE OF THAT AGE OR PLACE**

- Introduce a moment of difficulty, change, or growth that your family member faced during that time. Explore their emotions, reactions, and thoughts to give the audience insight into their internal and external struggles.

**SECTION 4: REFLECTION - WHAT THEY WISH THEY KNEW THEN**

- Conclude the monologue with a reflection on what they wish they had known during that time. This section should feel like a resolution, tying the story together with a meaningful insight.

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Our education program offers students and teachers an in-depth look into the work of Belvoir and the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education provides a range of opportunities, including student workshops, the Young Belvoir Theatre Club for young theatre enthusiasts, First Class – a professional learning program for teachers, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings, and a variety of online resources to support drama classrooms. Our access programs also help schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney engage with the company's work.

EXPLORE MORE AT: [HTTPS://BELVOIR.COM.AU/EDUCATION/](https://belvoir.com.au/education/)

