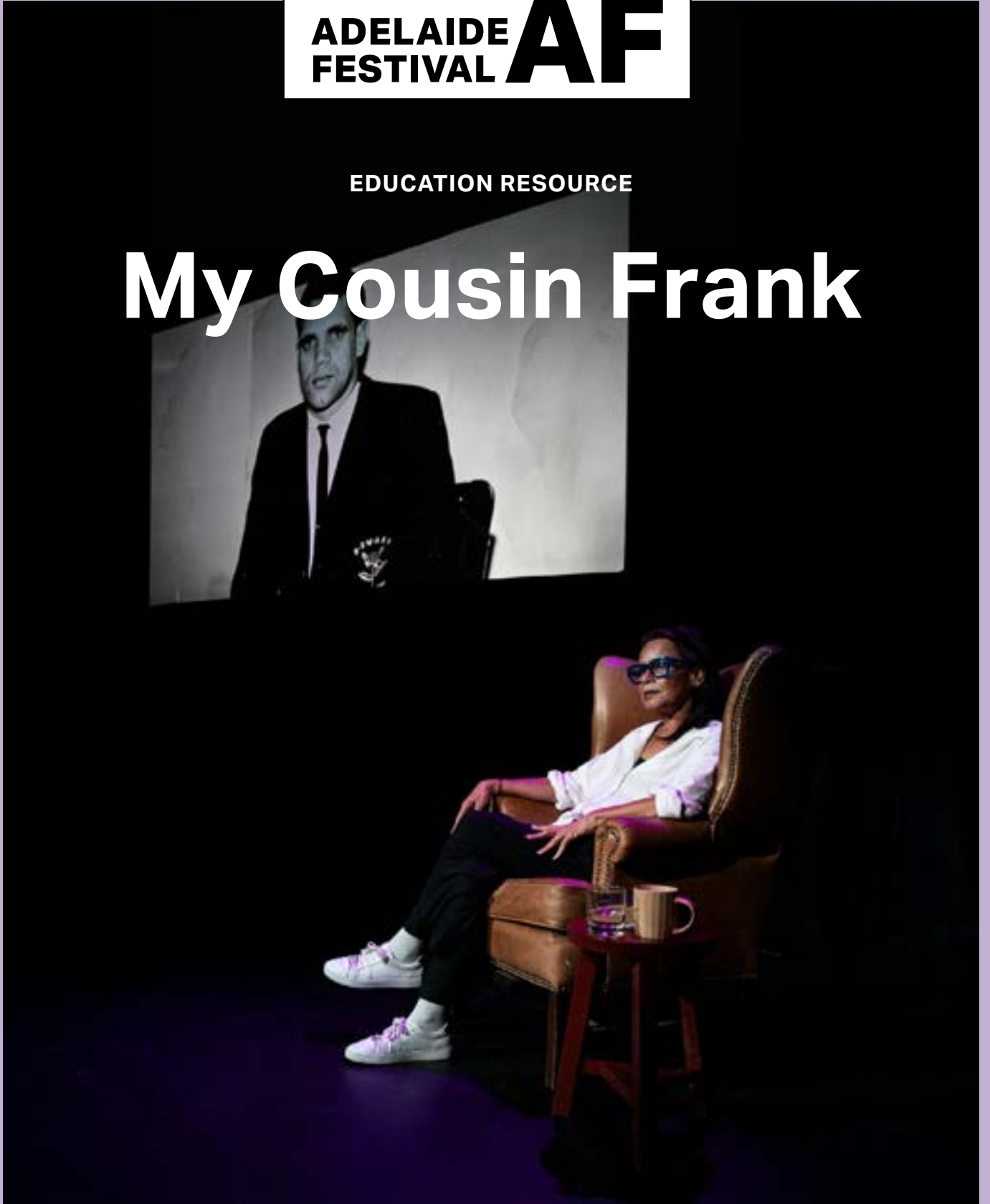


ADELAIDE FESTIVAL **AF**

EDUCATION RESOURCE

My Cousin Frank



Youth and Education
Program Partners





Suitable Year Levels

Year 7 – Year 12

Warnings

Depictions of racial abuse.

Contains images of deceased Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Contains names of deceased Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Genre

Theatre, First Nations Storytelling

Background Information

This event has been made to develop the new NORPA production 'First Aboriginal Olympian' coming to the stage in 2026.

Synopsis

In 1964, Francis 'Frank' Roberts, the first Aboriginal Olympian, travelled to Japan to compete in the Tokyo Olympics as a champion boxer and dine with Emperor Hirohito. There was one catch he couldn't use an Australian passport because Aboriginal people weren't considered citizens.

Rhoda Roberts AO brings the fighting spirit of her first cousin, the man they called 'Honest Frank', and her mob to life on stage as she recalls a family's journey from the tumultuous era of dispersal and silence to navigating a world controlled by Government policy.

These are the important stories about the places Rhoda calls home,

our shared past, and aspirations for a better tomorrow. With a great mix of nostalgia, empathy, and humour, *My Cousin Frank* sheds light on the history of the Northern Rivers, of a Widjabul Wia-bal and Githabul man from Cubawee, and the fighting Roberts family of Lismore.

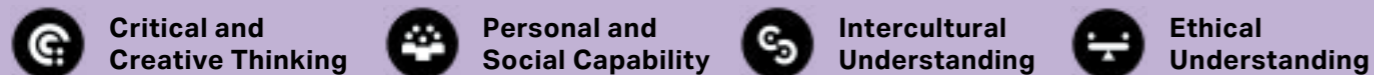


Curriculum Links

This education resource has been developed with links to the Australian Curriculum. Activities have been created to reflect each of the achievement standards, depending on the year level, including content descriptions within each learning area and the general capabilities. The resource aims to provide teachers with information to help prepare students before attending the performance, as well as structured learning activities for the classroom after viewing the performance.

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:



Cross Curriculum Priorities



Drama

Years 7 and 8 Drama

- Incorporate language and ideas and use devices such as dramatic symbol to create dramatic action and extend mood and atmosphere in performance
- Draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience drama
- 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, including contemporary styles developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dramatists, as they explore drama forms
- Explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements including voice, movement, situation, space and time, and tension as they make and respond to drama
- Consider social, cultural and historical influences of drama
- Evaluate the directors' intentions and expressive skills used by actors in drama they view and perform
- Build on their understanding from previous bands of the roles of artists and audiences as they engage with more diverse performances.

Years 9 and 10 Drama

- Draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience drama
- 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, as they explore drama forms
- Explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements, and social, cultural and historical influences of drama as they make and respond to drama
- Evaluate actors' success in expressing the directors' intentions and the use of expressive skills in drama they view and perform
- Build on their understanding from previous bands of the roles of artists and audiences as they engage with more diverse performances.

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

- CCT2 Analysis and evaluation of dramatic ideas, products, and technologies.

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

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

Creative Application

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

Humanities and Social Sciences

Civics and Citizenship

Year 7

- Study of the key features of Australia's system of government and explores how this system aims to protect all Australians.
- Examine the Australian Constitution and how its features, principles and values shape Australia's democracy.
- Look at how the rights of individuals are protected through the justice system.
- Explore how Australia's secular system of government supports a diverse society with shared values.

Year 8

- Study the responsibilities and freedoms of citizens and how Australians can actively participate in their democracy.

- Consider how laws are made and the types of laws used in Australia.
- Examine what it means to be Australian by identifying the reasons for and influences that shape national identity.

Year 9

- Understand Australia’s political system and how it enables change.
- Examine the ways political parties, interest groups, media and individuals influence government and decision making processes.

History

Year 10

- A study of the history of the modern world and Australia from 1918 to the present, with an emphasis on Australia in its global context. The twentieth century became a critical period in Australia’s social, cultural, economic and political development. The transformation of the modern world during a time of political
- turmoil, global conflict and international cooperation provides a necessary context for understanding Australia’s development, its place within the Asia-Pacific region and its global standing.
- The content provides opportunities to develop historical understanding through key concepts, including evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy, significance and contestability. These concepts may be investigated within a particular historical context to facilitate an understanding of
- the past and to provide a focus for historical inquiries.

Aboriginal Studies

Aboriginal Studies SACE Stage 1

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding of narratives as told by Aboriginal peoples.
- KU2 Knowledge and understanding of how the past influences the present.

Deconstruction and Analysis

- DA1 Deconstruction and analysis of experiences that are of significance to Aboriginal peoples and/or communities.

Evaluation and Reflection

- ER1 Reflection on own learning from and with Aboriginal peoples, communities, and other sources of Aboriginal voice.
- ER2 Evaluation of own respectful understandings.

Aboriginal Studies SACE Stage 2

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding of narratives as told by Aboriginal peoples.
- KU2 Contextual application of knowledge and understanding of narratives.

Deconstruction and Analysis

- DAS1 Deconstruction and analysis of how the past influences the present and the future.
- DAS2 Deconstruction and analysis of experiences that are of significance to Aboriginal peoples and/or communities.
- DAS3 Synthesis of learning from and with Aboriginal peoples and/or communities.

Evaluation, Collaboration, and Reflection

- ECR1 Evaluation of and reflection on own learning .

Modern History

Modern History SACE Stage 1

Understanding and Exploration

- UE1 Understanding and exploration of historical concepts.
- UE2 Understanding and exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.

Application and Evaluation

- AE1 Application of the skills of historical inquiry to examine and evaluate sources and interpretations.
- AE2 Use of evidence to support arguments and draw conclusions.

Analysis

- UE1 Analysis of short-term and long-term impacts of developments and/or movements in the modern world.
- UE2 Analysis of ways in which societies in the modern world have been shaped by both internal and external forces and challenges.

Modern History SACE Stage 2

Understanding and Exploration

- UE1 Understanding and exploration of historical concepts.
- UE2 Understanding and exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.

Application and Evaluation

- AE2 Understanding and exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.
- AE3 Communication of reasoned historical arguments, with appropriate acknowledgements of sources.

Analysis

- A1 Analysis of ways in which the development of the modern world has been shaped by both internal and external forces and challenges.
- A2 Analysis of interactions and relationships in the modern world and their short-term and long-term impacts on national, regional, and/or international development.

Society and Culture

Society and Culture SACE Stage 1

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.

Investigation and Analysis

- IA1 Analysis of and reflection on contemporary social or cultural issues.
- IA2 Analysis of how and why social change occurs.
- IA3 Investigation and analysis of a range of sources and perspectives.

Collaboration

- CI2 Reflection on learning and sharing of learning with others.

Communication

- Cm1 Communication of informed ideas about social and/or cultural issues and societies.
- Cm2 Communication of opinions supported by evidence, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.

Society and Culture SACE Stage 2

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding of different aspects of and issues related to contemporary societies and cultures, in local and global contexts.
- KU2 Knowledge and understanding of the nature and causes of social change.
- KU3 Understanding of ways in which societies and cultures are connected and interdependent.

Investigation and Analysis

- IA1 Investigation and analysis of different aspects of and issues related to contemporary societies and cultures, in local and global contexts.
- IA2 Investigation and analysis of ways in which power structures operate in societies.

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.



Performance Literacy

As students engage with and view live theatre, they develop a deeper understanding of the language of performance art. They develop literacies allowing them to 'read' the gestures and movements of a performer, and an understanding of the intention of the set, costume, lighting design and reflect on how they contribute to the narrative. Students consider the intended meaning of the choreographers, playwrights, directors and/or artists' in choosing a setting, character, or artistic form as well as what they are looking to communicate through their work.

Attending live theatre and responding to performances, addresses the criteria for Literacy in line with the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities.

...students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

Art is a means of expressing emotion, a way of transmitting feelings, culture, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience or viewers. Some art is created for the explicit purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience and

there is a myriad of emotions that students will experience when they are viewing live performance from happiness to anger, surprise, annoyance, and confusion, just to name a few.

The **Before the Show** activities are designed to support students to develop these literacy skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to their Adelaide Festival experience.

The **After the Show** activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to discuss, analyse and comprehend their responses to the show. Having a strong knowledge and understanding of theatre terminology will support students and extend their vocabulary as they describe their theatre experience with authentic language.

Theatre Etiquette

The French word *l'etiquette*, meaning 'requirements for proper behaviour', was adopted by English speakers in the middle of the 18th century. This can sound a bit formal but understanding theatre etiquette helps an audience understand what to expect and how to get the most out of their theatre experience.

Depending on the age of an audience the expectations can vary. Theatre designed for very young audiences will have different expectations and will often invite and encourage participation. However, as the content becomes more complex and audiences mature, there is an expectation that students will have developed an understanding of the difference between enthusiastic participation and thoughtless disruption.

Group discussion: Why does it matter?

Students to talk about the theatre being a shared space and respecting other audience members attending the performance.

- Discuss the shared role of audience and performer, each is dependent on the other to ensure a great performance.
- Remind students that just as they can see the performers, the performers can see them!
- As a class exercise, compile a list of all the roles and tasks it takes to bring a live performance to the stage.

- What experiences have they had when their engagement with the performance was compromised by others in the audience?
- What is the role of the audience? What responsibility do they have to the performers on stage?

Theatre protocols to share with students

When in the foyer they should:

- Go to the toilet before going into the theatre.
- Follow the directions of the front of house staff.
- Turn off mobile phones.
- Wear a mask if required.

When the lights go down:

- This is a sign the performance is about to start. It is time to end chats and be quiet.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- No eating in the theatre. Only water bottles are allowed.

For senior students writing the review in the darkened auditorium can be disturbing for the performers, particularly if using a mobile phone as a torch. Plus, all the performers can see is the top of the student's head. *Why would this be disturbing for the performers?*

Photographing and filming is not permitted because:

- It can disturb the actors on the stage and break their concentration

- Intellectual property is paramount. The production on stage is the intellectual property of the theatre company therefore no photographs or filming is allowed.
- You will be missing the detail you cannot see through the viewfinder

Five broad groups of children whose responses as audience are characterised as:

- **Technicians** – children who are more interested in the technology than the performance, deconstructing the performance techniques employed in the show.
- **Narrators** – children who talk through the performance, asking questions, commenting on actions.
- **Dramatists** – children who immediately imitate what they see, participating through their own actions.
- **Mystics** – children who are completely engrossed in the sensory aspects of the experience.
- **Spectators** – children who hover around the edges, playing with whatever they can find, apparently not engaged, but often able afterwards to recall what they saw.

Ask your students which group they think they would be. Does their response match your observation?

Themes and Ideas

Identity and Politics

Citizenship, passports, language, the places we call 'home', and our connection to our families are important aspects of what makes up our identity, regardless of our race or culture. Identity is important to all of us.

The thinking in the 19th and 20th centuries was that Australia's First Peoples were a 'dying race' and 'protection' laws imposed by governments were designed with an aim of making children with mixed Aboriginal and white parentage in particular 'civilised.' This was called 'assimilation'. During this time, many First Nations Australians were forced from their Country and onto missions, reserves or stations.

In NSW, the Aborigines Protection Act 1909, in particular the amendments in 1915 which gave protection boards the right to remove Aboriginal children from their families at any time and for any reason saw thousands of First Nations children removed from their Country and their families and in most cases forced a rejection of their Aboriginal identity and culture. This was commonplace across Australia and created what we now refer to as the Stolen Generation.

These practices and policies directly impacted the connection of Aboriginal people to their land, family and established cultural practices.

Frank's family lived on a Reserve managed by Rhoda's grandfathers and uncles. They were politically engaged and fought to retain a degree of independence through protests and strategic political gameplaying to resist a Mission manager taking over their community. Rhoda's father was the regional representative for the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and fought to campaign for the 'Yes' vote in the Referendum of 1967.

It wasn't until the changes to the Constitution in the Referendum in 1967 that Australia's First People were given full recognition as citizens of Australia. Prior to this, Aboriginal people were controlled by laws and policies by their state or territory. Since he was not recognised as an Australian citizen, Frank could not obtain an Australian passport and had to travel to Tokyo with a British passport instead.

Frank was a celebrated Olympic champion for a country that didn't even recognise him as a citizen.

The Pursuit of Excellence in the Face of Adversity

As an Aboriginal man in the 1960s, Frank had known struggle his whole life. He also came from a long family lineage of talented boxers. They were known as 'The Fighting Family of Lismore'. It was Rhoda's uncle who saw that Frank's potential as an elite boxer and took him to Sydney to train with Alan Daly and sought opportunities that could not have been found in the Northern Rivers districts. Frank travelled to places like Melbourne and New Zealand to win boxing titles and in a short amount of time rose to success and scored Olympic selection as the first Aboriginal Olympic athlete.

Frank fought for excellence in the boxing ring despite not being recognised as a citizen, but also fought with his family for full legal recognition and improved rights and conditions for all First Nations Australian people.

Production

Set Design

The set design is consciously minimalistic with a reliance on symbols and documentary artefacts to enhance and further the storytelling. There are inspirations of Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre, Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre, Documentary Drama as well as the sharing and storytelling culture of First Nations People. A punching bag, a symbol associated with boxing, is most significant and through Rhoda's interaction with the boxing bag, she is able to transform the object into something more. The armchair she sits in creates an intimate atmosphere inviting us to sit with her and hear her tell her stories. The large upstage screen allows Rhoda to share photographs and artefacts from her family history. The effect is an uncomplicated set which allows the tradition of sharing and storytelling to occur in a theatrical context using authentic sources and images to reinforce the humanity of the story.

Dramatic Structure

Biographical Theatre and Memoir

In telling her cousin's story, Rhoda shares stories from her own memories and stories that have been shared with her, as well as stories generally of the experiences of First Nations People in Australia throughout history. The nature of memoir is that while it is based on memory it isn't always chronological with narratives

moving back and forth through time periods or linked by a thematic issue or idea. There is more a focus on capturing the essence of the memories and stories more than there is telling things as they happened in a chronological order. When memories and biographies are translated to the stage, artists often try to use theatrical devices to enhance the audience's understanding of the text as a collection of memories, so often lighting, sound and multimedia will support the shifts and fluidity in the narratives. In Kirk Page's direction, the symbolic set, projections and sparse set allow Rhoda to share stories in a way that builds a highly personal relationship between the performer and the audience who become participants in co-creating the theatrical experience together.

Dramatic Form/Convention

One-hander (solo show)

My Cousin Frank is performed by only one actor who has the challenge of presenting stories from her childhood, her memories of her cousin and the experiences of the fight for political recognition of her people and culture in a way that is engaging for a diverse audience.

In a solo performance, other elements of theatre such as set design, props, lighting, sound and multimedia often have symbolic significance which can help convey the idea or presence of other characters, to build connections

between ideas, and to create a sense of place and atmosphere. The boxing bag hangs omnipresent, a reflection of Frank himself, and the projections on the screen humanise Frank and other people and memories from their shared past.

Experimental Theatre

Experimental Theatre is an umbrella term for styles of theatre that seek to dismantle the traditional conventions of realism or theatre created solely for entertainment. Through unusual, symbolic or experimental manipulation of theatrical techniques, practitioners are concerned with communicating a distinct social or political point of view to provoke their audiences. Significant innovators in experimental theatre include German Expressionist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) who developed Epic Theatre, and Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) who developed Poor Theatre. Elements of Epic Theatre and Poor Theatre can be seen in *My Cousin Frank*.

Further reading on Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre [thedramateacher.com/brechts-epic-theatre-conventions-pt-2/](https://www.thedramateacher.com/brechts-epic-theatre-conventions-pt-2/)

Further reading on Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre [thedramateacher.com/poor-theatre-conventions/](https://www.thedramateacher.com/poor-theatre-conventions/)

Alienation and Breaking the Fourth Wall

Coming to prominence through Brecht's Epic Theatre, alienation techniques seek to detach audiences from deep emotional engagement with characters and story in order to redirect their attention to the political and social messages at the heart of the performance. This was Brecht's paramount intention in creating theatre and in doing so he saw the capacity for theatre to provoke thought, incite action, and advocate for change.

Breaking the fourth wall is one of the hallmark's of Brecht's theatre. The concept alludes to the imaginary wall between the actor and audience that exists in realistic theatre where the actors perform in a way that their characters are unaware of being seen by an audience.

By speaking directly to the audience, assuming different character perspectives in the story, and through symbolic minimal set pieces, props and projections, Rhoda is able to break the imaginary fourth wall between the audience and actor, and transform the space as required to recreate different memories.

Documentary Theatre and Verbatim Theatre

This form of theatre uses pre-existing documentary sources such as newspapers, memoirs, journals, reports, interviews and correspondence as material for stories about real people and events. Often, the texts will be unedited or altered in performance. Sometimes, they will be arranged or linked to create the performance or construct a narrative.

Verbatim Theatre uses a subject's own words from interviews, letters and writing or other sources, word for word and unchanged, as the text or script for the actor who seeks to replicate the words and feelings of the subject with authenticity.

Documentary theatre frequently seeks to portray real people and real events and portrayal and sharing of these stories comes with a high level of responsibility and ethical consideration of the performers as they depict real people, stories and sensitive subjects. These types of performances are created to inform, educate and provoke audiences to think about events and issues.

Further reading on Documentary Drama thedramateacher.com/documentary-drama-conventions/#elements-of-documentary-drama

First Nations Storytelling Tradition

Australia's First Nations People have a cultural tradition of sharing stories of their experience and people passed down through oral tradition. Where drawings, dance and painting might have been used more traditionally in the past to enhance the storytelling, Rhoda uses theatrical devices and in particular images and projections to enhance and support the storytelling and build an atmosphere of sharing that is congruous to the spirit of First Nations traditions of storytelling.

First Nations traditions in storytelling and art are generally concerned with exploring connections to Country (or land), family and culture. Rhoda's stories underpin these three connections as central not just to her experiences and memories of her cousin and family, but more broadly as the experience of First Nations people in Australia.



Suggested Tasks

BEFORE the show: Questions to put to your students

- What elements contribute to a sense of cultural identity?
- Why is cultural identity important?
- What makes a person Australian?
- What is the extent of your personal experience with First Nations People and culture?
- What do you think are the challenges of solo performer?
- What do you think are the additional challenges for a solo performer retelling truthful stories of their family members, their people and their culture?

Activity 1: Map Francis 'Frank' Roberts' Family Story

Divide the class into small groups of 3 - 5 students. Assign each group an equal time period between 1700 - 2025.

Give one group the task of researching Frank Roberts and his family's timeline documenting their involvement in not only boxing and sport but in social, cultural and political advocacy. This should include the work of Pastor Frank Roberts (her grandfather) and her father, Frank Roberts Jnr.

Together, they work to create a timeline that documents significant events in First Nations history in Australia and place the Roberts family in the broader experience of their people.

Task:

- Give each group a large piece of card or use a collaborative digital document like PowerPoint or Google Slides.
- Students work in groups to research significant historical, social, political or cultural events, incidents, initiatives or advancements relevant to the First Nations experience in Australia since British occupation.
- They document significant information and images on their part of the timeline
- The group researching the Roberts family should consult with each group and overlay their information on the relevant parts of the timeline

Have each group present their section of the timeline to the group supported, where relevant, by the Roberts family research group.

If you have chosen to do this activity on paper or card, construct the physical timeline by sticking these on the wall around the room.

This task has been designed to help students gain a sense of the broader experience of First Nations People, laws and governance, and their social and political experience in Australia. It should also serve to demonstrate the extraordinary success of her cousin in a time of great adversity.

YEAR 7 AND 8 DRAMA

AC9ADR8E01: investigate ways the elements of drama and/or conventions are used to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama created and/or performed across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR8E02: investigate the diversity of drama created and/or performed by First Nations Australians, considering culturally responsive approaches to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights

YEAR 9 AND 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10E02: investigate the ways that drama created and/or performed by First Nations Australians celebrates and challenges multiple perspectives of Australian identity

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Year 7

AC9HC7S02: locate, select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources

AC9HC7S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and explain differences in perspectives and potential challenges

AC9HC7S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that reference evidence

Year 8

AC9HC8K02: the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australian democracy, including elections and the formation of governments

AC9HC8K06: different experiences of, perspectives on and debates about Australia's national identity and citizenship, including the perspectives of First Nations Australians as owners of their respective nations, and of different migrant groups

AC9HC8S01: develop questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems, and contemporary civic issues

AC9HC8S02: locate, select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources

AC9HC8S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and explain differences in perspectives and potential challenges

AC9HC8S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that reference evidence

Year 9

AC9HC9K01: the role of the Australian Constitution in providing the basis for Australia's federal system of government and democratic processes, including institutions, and the process for constitutional change through a referendum

AC9HC9K05: how and why individuals and groups, including community, religious and cultural groups, participate in and contribute to civic life in Australia and to global citizenship

AC9HC9S02: locate, select and compare information, data and ideas from a range of sources

AC9HC9S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations

AC9HC9S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that incorporate evidence

Year 10

AC9HC10K02: the Australian Government's role and responsibilities at a regional and global level

AC9HC10K03: the role of the parliament and the High Court of Australia in protecting rights under the Constitution, common law, and through federal and state statute law

AC9HC10S01: develop and modify questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems, and contemporary civic issues

AC9HC10S02: locate, select and compare information, data and ideas from a range of sources

AC9HC10S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations

AC9HC10S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that incorporate evidence

-  **Critical and Creative Thinking**
-  **Personal and Social Capability**
-  **Intercultural Understanding**
-  **Ethical Understanding**
-  **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories**



AFTER the show: Questions to put to your students

- What makes good storytelling?
 - Why are personal stories important?
 - What did you find surprising about Frank's story?
 - How did this story challenge your preconceptions about cultural identity?
 - How did this story challenge your understanding of First Nations Peoples experiences in Australia?
 - Why is this an important story to be told?
 - What are some stories that have been passed down the generations in your family?
 - How do these stories represent or establish your family identity or important family values?
 - Which scenes or moments had the greatest impact for you? Why?
 - What symbols did you notice in the staging? How did Rhoda Roberts use these symbols in her storytelling?
 - First Nations storytelling demonstrates their people's connection to culture, to family and to the land. How were these three connections evident in Roberts' story about her cousin Frank?
- In addition to these questions, Activity 1 provides a structured activity based around provocations that guide students to consider the values, identities and actions relevant to the production.

Activity 1: Thinking Routine – Values, Identities, Actions (VIA)

This thinking routine asks provoking questions that unearth intercultural understanding, ethical reasoning and the potential for theatre to inspire change and action.

- Students understand values as principles, standards or things that hold great importance or worth.
- Students understand identities as the unique way in which a person or people define themselves.
- Students understand that actions may be tangible, practical and concrete (ie doing something or refraining from doing something), or they may be intangible, like committing to learn more about something, or regarding or treating people with more understanding.
- Students understand the distinction between 5 different types of action:
 1. Lifestyle Choices: We make informed changes in our lives based on our learning
 2. Social Justice: We act in a way that inspires positive change for human rights, equity and/or equality, and for inclusion
 3. Advocacy: We take action as individuals or as a group to publicly support change
 4. Participation: We actively contribute to our community as individuals and as part of a group
 5. Social Entrepreneurship: We recognise the need for social change in our local and broader communities. We respond to those needs by applying our knowledge, learning and skills to create positive, innovative, resourceful and sustainable solutions to those problems.

TASK: Students create a table with three columns labelled 'Values', 'Identities' and 'Actions'. Working individually or in pairs, they populate the columns with responses to the provocation questions for each heading listed below:

Values:

- What values does this work invite us to think about?
- Who's values are they? Ours? Others?
Does it affirm or raise questions about these values?
- How does the work create this impact?

Identities:

- Who is the work speaking about?
- Who is it trying to speak to?
- Is anyone left out of the story who should be in it?
- Where do I fit in the story?
- How does the work convey these ideas?

Actions

- What actions does the work encourage?
- Whose actions?
- How does the work encourage these actions?

Note to Stage 1 and 2 Drama Teachers: This task can help students to interrogate the dramatic meaning, purpose and impact of the work as part of a scaffold for an AT2 Responding task.

YEAR 7 AND 8 DRAMA

AC9ADR8E01: investigate ways the elements of drama and/or conventions are used to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama created and/or performed across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR8E02: investigate the diversity of drama created and/or performed by First Nations Australians, considering culturally responsive approaches to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights

YEAR 9 AND 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10E02: investigate the ways that drama created and/or performed by First Nations Australians celebrates and challenges multiple perspectives of Australian identity

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Year 7: AC9HC7K04: how Australia's secular democracy and pluralist, multi-faith society draws upon diverse cultural origins, including Christian and Western heritage, distinct First Nations Australian histories and cultures, and migrant communities

AC9HC7K05: how values based on freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity can support social cohesion and democracy within Australian society

AC9HC7S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and explain differences in perspectives and potential challenges

AC9HC7S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that reference evidence

Year 8: AC9HC8K05: how culture and religion may influence individuals' and groups' perceptions and expressions of citizenship and their actions as citizens

AC9HC8K06: different experiences of, perspectives on and debates about Australia's national identity and citizenship, including the perspectives of First

Nations Australians as owners of their respective nations, and of different migrant groups

AC9HC8S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and explain differences in perspectives and potential challenges

AC9HC8S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that reference evidence

Year 9: AC9HC9K01: the role of the Australian Constitution in providing the basis for Australia's federal system of government and democratic processes, including institutions, and the process for constitutional change through a referendum

AC9HC9K05: how and why individuals and groups, including community, religious and cultural groups, participate in and contribute to civic life in Australia and to global citizenship

AC9HC9S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations

AC9HC9S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts

and terms that incorporate evidence

Year 10: AC9HC10K04: how Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including those relating to First Nations Australians, and the issues related to the application of these obligations

AC9HC10K05: the challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and a cohesive society in Australia and/or in our region or globally

AC9HC10S03: analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations

AC9HC10S05: create descriptions, explanations and arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and terms that incorporate evidence



Critical and Creative Thinking



Personal and Social Capability



Intercultural Understanding



Ethical Understanding



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories

Activity 2: Exploring Your Connection to Country, Culture and Family

First Nations People have a cultural tradition of sharing stories through oral storytelling, through art, song and dance that expresses their connection to Country, culture and to family. These are often communicated with symbolic imagery. This is evident in a more contemporary context in *My Cousin Frank* where Rhoda speaks her stories to the audience with symbols such as the boxing bag and images projected on the screen behind her.

Students think of stories from their own family history and experience that connect them to their own Country (eg place of origin, where they live, their home), culture (eg values, beliefs, practices, traditions) and family (eg significant people, immediate family, extended family, close friendship groups or other groups they are a part of).

- Is there a story that connects them to all three at once?
- What significant people, places and events occur in these stories?
- How could these be represented by symbols or props?

TASK: Memoir in Minutes: Brainstorm a story or stories that show your connection to Country, culture and family and detail the facts.

- Give students 15 minutes in which to write a monologue that recounts the story.
- Memoir monologue writing should be in first person and recount the memories and feelings from the time. Encourage them to use symbols and evocative language in their writing.

YEAR 7 AND 8 DRAMA

AC9ADR8E01: investigate ways the elements of drama and/or conventions are used to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama created and/or performed across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR8C01: improvise and devise drama and/or interpret scripted drama, manipulating elements of drama and applying conventions relevant to the style/form

YEAR 9 AND 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D02: reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

AC9ADR10C01: improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning



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Activity 3: Exploring the Place, Symbols and Characters of the Story

Students take their memoir monologue writing from the previous activity to use as a text for this activity.

Using Experimental Theatre techniques, students design or source props, set pieces, projections or even sounds that could help tell the story in a stage performance.

Questions for them to consider

- How does this story help create an aspect/s of your identity and/or the identity of your family?
- What symbols are important or evident in your story?
- What symbols, props or technical elements would you use to represent important people, places or events in the story? Why?
- How would you, as the actor, interact with these symbolic items in your performance in order to convey a sense of your relationship to the character/s and/or create a sense of their presence on stage?

Explore some ways to differentiate between different characters in a retelling of this memory by experimenting with different vocal and physical techniques. Make choices about pitch, tone, pace, pauses, posture, stance and movement.

TASK: Applying techniques from Grotowski's Poor Theatre, design or choose some props or set pieces which could help to tell the story. Respond to the following question in a written, oral or multimodal response:

- How could some of the props or set pieces be transformed into something else during the storytelling

YEAR 7 AND 8 DRAMA

AC9ADR8E01: investigate ways the elements of drama and/or conventions are used to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama created and/or performed across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR8D02: reflect on their own and others' drama to inform choices when manipulating elements of drama and/or conventions to shape dramatic action

AC9ADR8D01: develop performance skills relevant to selected drama styles and/or forms

AC9ADR8C02: evaluate and refine use of elements of drama and/or conventions to shape and sustain dramatic action and/or communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

YEAR 9 AND 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10E01: investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times,

places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D01: develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions

AC9ADR10D02: reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

AC9ADR10C01: improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning



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Activity 4: Making Documentary and/or Verbatim Theatre

Inspired by the performance of *My Cousin Frank*, students are encouraged to consider their responses from Activity 2 and 3, or another personal piece of memoir writing, or interviews and documents from a family member/s as the basis of a oneperson storytelling performance.

They may approach this task as an actor, designer, director, playwright or theatremaker and should use Documentary/Verbatim Theatre and Experimental Theatre techniques to inform their response.

They research the stylistic conventions of Documentary Theatre (and/or Verbatim Theatre) to construct a script. In constructing their work, they might consider

- sourcing documents and found evidence
- interviewing people, family members, friends or members of the community
- using the words from these documents verbatim (unchanged) or as the basis for factual writing, or a combination of both

Students experiment with ways of staging, presenting or performing the work applying Documentary Theatre, Verbatim Theatre and/or Experimental Theatre techniques.

If approaching the task as an actor, they might

- prepare, rehearse and present a performance or sections of a performance as a theatrical monologue
- consider relevant stylistic acting techniques and processes in the development of the performance
- If approaching the task as a designer they might
- develop and present a concept for the staged performance (eg a model of the set, costume design, videos and projections etc)
- consider relevant stylistic staging and design conventions in the development of the concept and the combined impact of other dramatic elements on their design choices and vice versa
- If approaching the task as a director, they might
- develop and present a directorial concept for a staged performance of their writing or someone else’s writing as a theatrical monologue
- consider relevant stylistic literary, performance and technical elements of theatre to achieve their dramatic intentions

If approaching the task as a theatre maker, they might consider all aspects of writing, direction, staging, design and acting to present a staged theatrical monologue performance (or hypothetical performance) of the source material.

TASK: Create an oral or multimodal presentation that pitches your ideas for a hypothetical production based on this memory. If approaching this task as an actor, discuss how you would differentiate between different characters and roles within the performance, and how would you use symbols to enhance your storytelling.

If approaching the task as a designer or director, discuss how you enhance the performance of the actor and their storytelling by integrating stylistic design and technical elements in your staging,

YEAR 7 AND 8 DRAMA

AC9ADR8D01: develop performance skills relevant to selected drama styles and/or forms

AC9ADR8C01: improvise and devise drama and/or interpret scripted drama, manipulating elements of drama and applying conventions relevant to the style/form

AC9ADR8P01: rehearse and perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions relevant to style and/or form

YEAR 9 AND 10 DRAMA

AC9ADR10D01: develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions






AC9ADR10D02: reflect on their own and others’ drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama,

conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

AC9ADR10C01: improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

AC9ADR10C02: rehearse and refine drama making deliberate aesthetic choices to unify dramatic meaning

AC9ADR10P01: perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions to shape the drama.

-  **Critical and Creative Thinking**
-  **Personal and Social Capability**
-  **Intercultural Understanding**
-  **Ethical Understanding**
-  **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories**

A note on these tasks for Stage 1 and 2 Drama teachers:

- These tasks have been designed as a foundation for the AT2 Responding and Creating task (or part tasks) and have the potential to be shaped into an AT3 Creative Presentation task with a focus on Documentary Theatre, Verbatim Theatre or Experimental Theatre in Stage 2 Drama.
- Similarly, these tasks can be used to scaffold AT2 Responding to Drama and AT3 Creative Synthesis tasks in Stage 1 Drama.
- Furthermore, students could also view *Hewa Rwanda: Letter to the Absent* in the Adelaide Festival and compare and contrast theatrical techniques in storytelling and staging personal stories of cultural and historical significance. In doing so, students could respond to both productions to inspire their own hypothetical or realised theatrical products.
- NORPA is a company driven by the inspiration of making “theatre without walls.” They continue to find ways to drive NORPA, so we can continue making vital theatre for everyone.
- Innovations like more big site-specific shows, smaller productions in towns and villages, pop-up workshops, and touring works regionally and nationally. NORPA shares their journey of creating innovative theatre through partnering with local businesses, community organisations and government bodies,
- Based in Lismore, on the Northern Rivers of NSW, NORPA is a not-for-profit, led by a small team of theatre professionals, and supported by a generous group of volunteers.
- Building opportunities, and nurturing local artists, NORPA is proof that small towns have big creative potential.



Links

NORPA Northern Rivers Performing Arts website

norpa.org.au

AIATSIS Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Contains excellent resources and information about the history of First Nations People in Australia

aiatsis.gov.au

Arts Review, *My Cousin Frank*

artsreview.com.au/my-cousin-frank

Interview

Life Matters; Australia's First Aboriginal Olympian, Rhoda Roberts OA interviewed about *My Cousin Frank*

abc.net.au/listen/programs/lifematters/my-cousin-frank/104217498



Resource developed by Aldo Longobardi 2025

Images: Kate Holmes

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