



**Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's
The Night Zoo**

TEACHERS RESOURCE

A comprehensive set of classroom activities relating to the performance of The Night Zoo.

About the Night Zoo

Jamie, 7, lives in a concrete jungle – a fast paced, busy city. From her apartment, ten storeys up, the only natural things she can see are birds in the sky. She dreams of befriending animals but Mum and Dad are busy with a new baby and Jamie’s hope for a pet goes unfulfilled.

Late at night, as the city sleeps, Jamie begins to dream. Tonight she goes on a one-of-a-kind visit to the zoo where she sees meerkats, thorny devils, water birds, giraffe, penguin, orangutan and even a baby elephant. But as hard as she tries Jamie can’t get the animals to communicate with her.

Disappointed she returns to the apartment, and then something magical happens – the animals come to find her. Helped by the loveable orangutan, Jamie joins the zoo animals in the park for a night of dancing and friendship. When the sun comes up the next day and the dream has ended there is one more surprise in store...

The Creative team

<i>Director, Writer, Animator</i>	Michael Barlow
<i>Designer</i>	Iona McAuley
<i>Composer</i>	Lee Buddle
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Romi Poonoosamy
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Elliot Chambers
<i>Puppet Makers</i>	Jiri Zmitko & Sanjiva Margio
<i>Costuming & Fabric Construction</i>	Lyndell Darch
<i>Assistant Designer</i>	Matt McVeigh
<i>Performers</i>	Sarah Nelson & Ben Mortley

Writer’s note

THE NIGHT ZOO began as a simple idea: to express the joy that can come from making friends with animals. People of all ages get a great deal out of interacting with animals, from companionship and play to the care for others that we discover in ourselves through looking after a pet.

At this time, maybe more than ever, it’s good to remember that we aren’t separate from the natural world. Finding friendship with animals is possibly the most fun we can have reminding ourselves.

For some students, seeing *The Night Zoo* may be a first experience of live theatre. The following page can be used as a worksheet to promote discussion on what constitutes appropriate audience behaviour at a live performance.

Theatre Etiquette

What's different about watching a show on TV and watching a show at the theatre? When you go to the theatre you should follow the rules below.

Can you think of reasons why you should....

... visit the bathroom before the show begins

...because the soap smells really nice

...remain in your seat during the performance?

...because someone might take it

...not talk during the performance?

...so that you don't lose your voice

...clap at the end?

...so your hands don't get cold

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Mask Making – (Separate Attachment)

The Learning Areas, General capabilities and Cross-Curriculum priorities on each page have been highlighted to indicate the areas concerned for each activity.

Activity 1: Family Life

Introduction:

From her apartment window high above the city Jamie dreams of making friends with animals but her mum and dad won't let her have a pet in the apartment. They are busy with their new baby and don't realise that their lonely daughter needs a companion. The focus of the following activities is on family relationships and feeling lonely.

Brainstorm with students what defines a 'family'.

Who are the members of Jamie's family?

Encourage students to explore family roles and expectations, the different types of families in our community and around the world, and the role of the extended family, etc.

Written Activity:

Ask students to write down several things that they like about their own family. Encourage them to focus on the following questions:

- Why do people need a family
- What makes a good family?
- Why is your family important to you?

Creative Response:

Have students draw and decorate their own family tree.

Ask them to include personal information about the various members of their 'family'.

Encourage them to find information about their extended family by researching the history of their ancestors.

The completed family trees could be stuck up around the classroom.

ACARA Content descriptors

English

Foundation

ACELA 1426, 1428, 1651

Year 1

ACELA 1449, 1661, 1663, 1786, 1586,

Year 2

ACELA 1468, 1590, 1593

Year 3

ACELA 1596, 1682

Year 4

ACELA 1605, 1694, 1488

Year 5

ACELA 1704, 1609,

Year 6

ACELA 1711, 1618, 1800, 1613,

History

Foundation

ACHHK001 – 004

Year 1

ACHHK028 - 030

Visual Arts

F – 2

ACAVAM106 – 109

3 – 4

AVACAM 110 – 113

5 – 6

AVACAR117

Activity 2: Loneliness

Learning Areas	English	Mathematics	Science	Humanities & Social Sciences	The Arts	Technologies
General Capabilities	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Critical & creative Thinking	Personal and social capability	Ethical Understanding Intercultural Understanding
Cross-Curriculum Priorities	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders histories and cultures		Asia & Australia's engagement with Asia		Sustainability	

Discussion

Have students **discuss why they think Jamie might feel lonely**. What impact would having a new baby have on Jamie's relationship with her parents? Discuss with students what it feels like to be lonely. Is being lonely different to feeling alone? Ask students what do you do when you're lonely? Do you go somewhere special when when you feel lonely? What things make you feel lonely? What helps you stop feeling lonely?

Written Response

Play some music that evokes a feeling of quiet contemplation. Have **students write a letter from Jamie to her mum and dad about why she feels lonely**. Encourage them to explore what she thinks will help her stop feeling this way and why.

Practical Activity

Play some atmospheric music that evokes a feeling of loneliness. Have students lie on the floor, close their eyes and listen to the music. Afterwards have **a brief discussion with students about their responses to the music**, focusing on the mood and any imagery that it stimulated.

Dramatic Response

Organise students into groups of 4-5 and have them **create a dramatic response to the music based on the themes of loneliness**. Explain to students that the music will be played during their performance, so each group will have to prepare a mimed performance. In addition to mime, have students use slow motion, exaggerated movement, group synchronisation, and appropriate facial expressions, body language and gesture in their performance to communicate the mood. The intention of the performance is to evoke a feeling of pathos in the audience.

Performance Task

Have each group present their piece to the rest of the class. Encourage the audience to provide feedback about how the mood was effectively evoked. Discuss which techniques were used in each group's performance to communicate their ideas to the audience. How difficult/easy is it to communicate our ideas without using any words?

Activity 3: City life versus Country life

Learning Areas	English	Mathematics	Science	Humanities & Social Sciences	The Arts	Technologies	
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Introduction:

The story of THE NIGHT ZOO is set between three very distinct places. Firstly the audience is exposed to the hustle and bustle of city life where the two actors portray busy commuters bustling about on shoe skates and racing about pushing puppet cars around the stage, bumping into each other and getting frustrated. This is contrasted to the scenes of the peaceful park and the tranquil dreamscape of the zoo.

CITY LIFE

Discussion

Discuss with students the advantages and disadvantages of living in the city. Ask students what are some of the familiar noises that can be heard in the city? Eg. Cars honking, trams and trains travelling, pedestrian light crossings, sirens, people talking, etc.

Brainstorm a list of these.

Practical Activity

Working in groups of 4-5, **have students create a soundscape of the city. They can use body percussion and vocal sounds to create the environment.** Students can also add movement, costumes and props to enhance their performance. Encourage students to focus on creating a chaotic, frenetic mood and rhythm, and build the soundscape to a climax by using tension and timing.

Performance

Have each **group perform for the class and encourage questions and answers** after each performance.

COUNTRY LIFE

Soundscape

Next have students **create a soundscape of the country or the park. The emphasis should be on creating a contrast in the environment to the city soundscape.** Encourage students to focus on creating a relaxed, peaceful, tranquil mood, through their use of movement and sound.

Discussion

Discuss with **students how different city life is to country life.** In *The Night Zoo*, Jamie longs for the companionship of a pet but she is restricted by the rules of living in a city apartment. Discuss with students some of their own experiences of being in the city versus being in the country, a park or a farm.

Written Reflection

Have **students write a reflection about their own personal experience of being in the city or the country, a park or a farm.** This can be done as a poem or short personal reflective piece. Encourage students to focus on exploring how the experience impacted on their senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Invite some students to share their written reflections with the rest of the class.

Practical Activity

Working in groups of 3-4 have students **create a role play about how Jamie's family came to be living in the city.** Encourage students to include their soundscape work and the following dramatic techniques to elaborate on the ideas in their scenarios:

Disjointed time sequences – have the **scene jump backwards** to explore how the situation arose, then **jump the action forwards**, hours or days, to see what would happen if Jamie's family moved to the country ... or maybe years, to look at the long-term consequences.

Thought-tracking – have the characters freeze and directly address the audience to explain the thoughts that are going through their minds at that particular moment.

Discussion

After the performances, ask students to **reflect on how the characters felt.** Discuss how the techniques of disjointed time sequences and thought-tracking were used to explore the main ideas in the role plays.

Activity 4: Interacting with Animals.

Introduction

THE NIGHT ZOO encourages the audience to think about forming positive relationships with animals. Jamie's dream stimulates her enjoyment and empathy with the animals and changes her parents attitude towards her having a pet when they realise their lonely child needs a companion. The focus of the following activities is on interacting with pets and zoo animals.

Learning Areas	English	Mathematics	Science	Humanities & Social Sciences	The Arts	Technologies
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PETS

Discussion

Ask students why Jamie can't have a pet. **Have them identify the limitations of living in an apartment** and why it would be difficult for Jamie to keep a pet there.

Domesticated animals have come to play a very important role in our lives. They provide us with a source of love and comfort, as well as companionship. In most Australian households the pet has become an integral part of family life.

Survey

Conduct a survey with the students about the different types of pets they own. Answers could be displayed in a chart like this:

Student's Name	Pet - Y or N?	Details

Discussion

Have students **share some of their stories about their family pets with the rest of the class**. Encourage them to share their feelings about their pets and the roles that their pets play in their family household.

Creative Response

Have students **visualize their feelings and thoughts about having a pet and draw a picture as a response**. Encourage students to share their pictures with the rest of the class by discussing the meaning behind their artwork.

Discussion

Have students **discuss the types of animals that would make the best pets** for the following home environments – *an apartment, a family home with a garden or a farm.*

Explanation

Encourage students to **explain reasons for their choices.**

Discussion

Since humans do not have the ability to speak verbally with animals, **discuss the ways and techniques that people and animals use to communicate with each other.** Have students share the ways they interact and express affection with the animals in their lives.

Group Research Task

Have students work in small groups, to **research a different type of pet for the family home.** Areas to investigate could include, the animal's diet, type of shelter/bedding required, exercise needs, recommended play/toys, life expectancy, grooming/care requirements, etc.

The petnet (Promoting Socially Responsible Pet Ownership) website

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

<http://www.petnet.com.au/> is an **informative online guide** which provides research, information and education. It is a very useful resource for people thinking about purchasing their first pet for the family home, and offers specific advice to families for pet friendly living - including city living, pet friendly holidays, and pet friendly parks and beaches.

Oral Presentation with Visual Representation

Have each group present their findings back to the rest of the class as **an Oral Presentation with a poster displaying their research.** These posters can be displayed around the classroom.

ZOO ANIMALS

In the middle of the city, in the middle of the night, something magical is about to happen in Jamie's room. Whilst the rest of the city sleeps, Jamie gets a visit from ***The Night Zoo***. Meerkat and elephant, orangutan and penguin, thorny devil and giraffe ... it's a jungle up there!

The Education Department at The Perth Zoo has produced a very useful collection of teachers' resources that can be downloaded from their website -

<http://www.perthzoo.wa.gov.au/learn/classroom-resources/>

Research create Fact Sheet

Included in this pack are some fact sheets about the animals featured in ***The Night Zoo***. Using these fact sheets as a guide, **have students research and prepare a fact sheet** for one of the animals from ***The Night Zoo***.

<i>Name</i>	THORNY DEVIL
<i>Scientific Name</i>	
<i>Visual Description</i>	
<i>Diet</i>	
<i>Location</i>	
<i>Habitat</i>	
<i>Conservation Status</i>	
<i>Average Weight</i>	
<i>Average Height</i>	
<i>Average Lifespan</i>	
☺ <i>Fun Fact</i> ☺	If rain lands on the Thorny Devil's back, it runs down the creature finding its way to its mouth where it is quickly consumed! http://www.australianfauna.com/thornydevil.php

Extension Activity

Have students select their own zoo animal to research and **present their findings as a PowerPoint presentation** to the rest of the class.

ICT Activity

Organize students into small groups of 3-4. Have each group **create a Facebook page** for one of the characters from ***The Night Zoo*** Jamie, elephant, orangutan, penguin, dog, etc. Encourage students to be as imaginative as they can be by creating a detailed character profile and back story for their character. Ask them to include details about the characters

- Status
- Email address
- Relationship
- Interests
- Music
- Wall posts
- Status updates
- Family
- Likes/Dislikes
- Groups they belong to
- Photos, etc.

Discussion:

Have each group **share and discuss the Facebook page** they have created.

Activity 5: Puppetry, Animation & Transformation

Introduction

The storybook-like design and vast and impressive array of puppets make the performance of **The Night Zoo** very memorable. The following activities focus on different types of puppetry, animation and transformation.

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PUPPETRY

The two performers act in costumes as various zoo animals, such as the elephant and giraffe, and as puppeteers manipulating rod puppets, like Jamie and the dog at the park. Puppetry is a form of theatre that involves the animation or 'bringing to life' of inanimate objects.

Puppetry is an ancient and diverse art form that has been explored by different cultures throughout the history of civilization.

Research Task

Have students work in small groups of 4-5 to **research the following types of puppets** commonly used in theatre today.

- Hand or Glove Puppets
- Rod Puppets
- Marionettes or String Puppets
- Flat Figures
- Shadow Puppetry
- Bunraku Puppetry

PowerPoint/Poster Visual presentation

In their investigation, ask students to **create a definition for their specific puppetry style**. Have students **present their findings in a poster** format or as a **PowerPoint** presentation with visual aids.

Oral Presentation

Ask each group to present their findings orally to the rest of the class. Encourage further discussion through questions and answers. The posters can be displayed around the classroom.

SHADOW PUPPETRY

One of the easiest forms of puppetry to make if you are restricted by time, budgets and material is Shadow puppetry. Shadow puppetry action is very easy to create in any classroom with curtains, by simply hanging a large sheet from the roof to the floor and positioning a light source such as an overhead projector (OHP) or stage light directly behind it.

Investigating Light sources with Materials and Technology.

Prior to the class, set up the sheet and light source. Then invite students to take it in turns standing between the sheet and the OHP to **experiment with how their shadow shape appears**. Explore how one's shadow shape **shrinks or grows depending on how near or far to the light source** each student positions themselves.

Collaborative Groups and Peer Assessment.

Have students work in pairs or groups of three to experiment with creating different shapes from ***The Night Zoo*** such as the characters of elephant, meerkat, penguin, etc., and the scenes such as the park, Jamie's apartment, the zoo, etc.

See if the rest of the class recognizes the shadow shapes that are presented.

Encourage the class to direct one other in order to clarify the presentation of each image.

ANIMATION

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre employs all sorts of different puppetry styles in their work, including the contemporary art form of animation. The video projection onto the set design of the tree is used multiple times to show transitions in time and place, from the lively city to the peaceful park and the dreamscape of the zoo. This has the effect of layering the frames from 2 dimensional storybook format into 3 dimensional reality.

Explain to students that they are going to 'animate' some of the characters, places and themes from ***The Night Zoo*** through the creation of freeze frames.

Practical Activity:

Have students move around the room and on the teacher's command get them to freeze into images of –

- Jamie
- Happy Family
- Loneliness
- Companionship
- Meerkat
- Elephant
- Penguin
- Thorny Devil
- Giraffe
- Orangutan
- The busy city
- The peaceful park
- The dreamscape of ***The Night Zoo***

Discussion

Discuss with students the ideas they have explored through their freeze frames and other concepts from ***The Night Zoo*** they might like to examine. Discuss some other ways the elements of the story could be animated.

TRANSFORMATION

The Night Zoo is brought to magical life with puppetry, masks, dance and animation...and a light sprinkling of manure!

Together with students watch the following Video Grab for *The Night Zoo*

Video Clip – *The Night Zoo*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2p-fzZoR60>

Discussion

Discuss with students how the **lighting and animation** transport the action from the city to the park and the zoo. In addition the **atmospheric music** captures the different antics and personalities of the various animals who visit Jamie. From the dancing meerkats to the cheeky orangutan to the waddling penguin, their characteristics are all perfectly portrayed.

Tell students that they are going to experiment with how to bring to life some of the important moments from *The Night Zoo* and explore how to **make transitions between the scenes** they create. Their challenge will be to move effortlessly between their scenes without using lighting or movement. Instead they will **explore how to use acting techniques** such as freeze frames, stylised movement and sound effects, etc., and stagecraft, such as props and costume, to transform between different times and places.

Group Brainstorming Activity

After watching *The Night Zoo* have students work in small groups to **brainstorm 5 key moments in the story**. Using butcher's paper, ask each group to write down their 5 key moments. Give each moment a title and list 3-4 descriptive words that summarize the mood or feeling of each scene.

Drama Activity

Have each group **give their first key moment a title or caption to summarize what it is about**. Then ask students to **create a tableau** (frozen image) for this scene. Encourage them to bring the scene to life by incorporating sound effects (but minimal dialogue), slow motion and exaggerated movement to enhance the mood and feeling of the scene.

Ask students to **create their remaining 4 key moments in the same way**. Encourage each group to bring their scenes to life by adding dialogue and creating segues to link their scenes together. The emphasis should be on moving effortlessly (transitioning smoothly) between the 5 scenes. Have students incorporate the use of props and costume to further aid their transformation of time and place.

Performance Task:

Have each group perform for the class. Encourage questions and answers after each performance. **Discuss how smooth the transitions between the scenes were**. Which ones worked most effectively?

Creative Response

Have students consider their favourite scene from the performance of *The Night Zoo*. **In small groups they are to transform their selected scene into an artwork.** Encourage students to explore the use of different mediums, particularly recyclable objects such as bottle caps, straws, newspaper and magazines, and natural objects found outside such as leaves, twigs, grass, etc. Upon completion, students can present their work to the rest of the class and discuss the meaning of their artwork.

Alternative Written Activity:

Alternatively, students could complete the task as a written activity by writing and illustrating the story of *The Night Zoo* as a children's book. These could then be read as an oral presentation task to a younger year level.

Activity 6: Write A Review

Introduction

The focus of the following activities is on theatre review and appreciation and theatre style.

Learning Areas	English	Mathematics	Science	Humanities & Social Sciences	The Arts	Technologies
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THEATRE REVIEW

Discussion Prior to Written Review.

Have students discuss the following by way of reviewing *The Night Zoo*:

- How did watching *The Night Zoo* make you feel?
- Which part of *The Night Zoo* did you like best? Why?
- How long do you think it would have taken to prepare and rehearse the production of *The Night Zoo*?
- What do you think the writer and director, Michael Barlow, wanted to communicate to the audience about *The Night Zoo*?
- Comment on the skills of the performers in *The Night Zoo*.
- What were the major themes, issues and ideas in *The Night Zoo*?
- What did the lighting, music and set design add to the atmosphere of *The Night Zoo*? What would the show have been like without any of these things?
- The set of *The Night Zoo* employs the use of a revolve to change the scene to a different environment. Can you think of some examples of how it was used?
- Compare *The Night Zoo* with other live performances you may have seen.
- Rate *The Night Zoo* out of 10. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the production to justify your rating.

STYLE

In *The Night Zoo* the performers use stylized movement to portray the personalities and the antics of the zoo animals who visit Jamie.

Practical Activity

As a whole class, have students **move across the floor to explore a range of ways they can move as animals**. Slow trudging from side to side as elephants, quick waddling with small steps as penguins, long and languid strides as giraffes, bouncy and exaggerated movements as orangutans, etc. Encourage students to move precisely, concentrating on how their **body movement, gesture and facial expressions communicate the characteristics** of the animals they are portraying.

We would like to know what you and your students thought of the show.

You can send reviews to us at:

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, PO Box 897, Fremantle WA 6959; or admin@sppt.asn.au

Further Resources

More information on Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and ***The Night Zoo*** can be found at:

<http://www.sppt.asn.au>

<http://www.sppt.asn.au/programme/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2p-fzZoR60>

Children's books that feature a message about children and animals

Sendak, M. (2000) "*Where The Wild Things Are*" Max gets sent to bed without any supper after donning his wolf suit in search of some mischief. A forest grows in his room and his wild rumpus with the wild things begins.

White, E.B. (2001) "*Charlotte's Web*" This story teaches children to befriend everyone, regardless of their shape, colour or size. It also teaches children to stand up for what they believe in because even the smallest creature can make a difference.

King-Smith, D. (1983) "*Babe the sheep-pig*" Babe the pig must learn how to befriend all the other farm animals and become a useful member of the family. This story teaches children to be strong in the face of adversity.

"*Henny Penny*" This fable encourages children to be brave when they believe something is wrong. It heeds a warning to children to be wary of distractions from deceptive characters.

Sierra, J. (2004) "*Wild About Books*" A librarian accidentally drives her bookmobile into the zoo and the zoo animals become obsessed with reading and writing.

Ghent, N. (2004) "No Small Thing" When three siblings find an ad in the paper for a free pony they can hardly believe their luck. Their mother agrees they can keep it as long as they can afford to look after it.

Strauss, R. (2004) "*Tree of Life: The Incredible Biodiversity of Life on Earth*" A family tree for all living things. If every known species were a leaf on a tree, the tree would have 1,750,000 leaves. Humans count for just one leaf on the tree. An illustrated introduction to biodiversity and how each species is important to all the rest.

Munari, B. (2005) "*Bruno Munari's Zoo*" Illustrations and brief text introduce twenty different species of zoo animals including a zebra who is an animal in striped pajamas, a rhinoceros who is always ready to fight and a peacock who struts proudly because he is the peacock.

Korman, M. (2010) "*Zoobreak*" After a class trip to the zoo where the animals are mistreated some friends plan a rescue mission.

Flack, M & Wiese, K. (2000) "*The Story About Ping*" A story about an adventurous young duck who lives on a riverboat on the Yangtze River.