

**SPARE
PARTS**
puppet theatre



HOMETOWN

CREATIVE LEARNING PACK

While Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has been sharing stories for over 40 years, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation have been sharing stories for over 60,000 years. We respectfully acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the traditional custodians of the land where we create our work. This Boodjar always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

As we tour our work across these vast lands, we pay our respect to all First Nations elders, past and present. We celebrate their continuing connection and contribution to culture, country and community, and thank all First Nations peoples for their wisdom in caring for the land, the sky, the rivers and the sea.

ATTENDING LIVE THEATRE

Before seeing *Hometown* we kindly ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Please make sure students visit the toilet before the show starts, as leaving during the performance can be disruptive.

THINGS WE WANT TO HEAR

Live performances thrive on positive audience reactions. Encourage students to laugh when something is funny, feel emotions when it's moving, and applaud and cheer at the end to show their appreciation.

THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR

Avoid eating during the performance, as food wrappers and plastic packets can be noisy. Remind students not to chat or whisper during the show, as it disturbs other audience members and takes away from the experience for everyone.

**FOR MORE ABOUT THEATRE ETIQUETTE
SEE PAGE 9.**

Hometown is a production by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

08 9335 5044

To enquire about future productions, incursions and excursions email learning@sppt.asn.au

Cover Image: Shaun Tan

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Creative Learning Pack created and designed by Jess Gatt with contribution from Naomi Corteen for Spare Parts Puppet Theatre.

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**SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE
WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR
SUPPORTING PARTNERS WHO HELPED
TO MAKE HOMETOWN POSSIBLE**



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and Cultural Industries



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A PUPPET**



RASWA
CLAREMONT
SHOWGROUND

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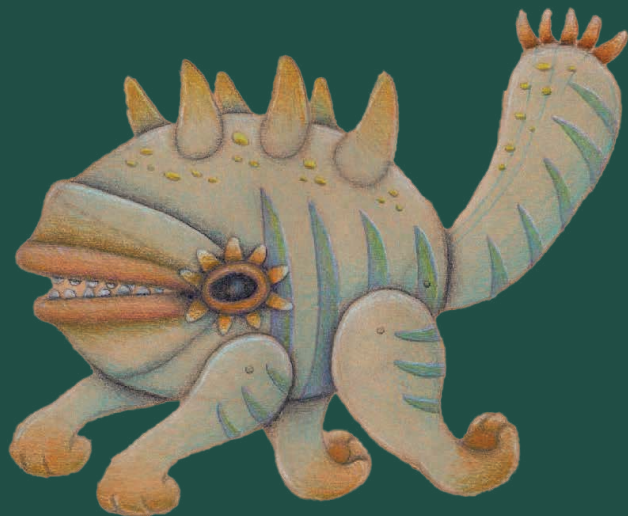
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PART A:

INTRODUCTION

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SPARE PARTS puppet theatre

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre is Australia's most respected puppetry company dedicated to the creation of puppetry and the artists who we create with. Through puppetry we tell stories that go to the heart of what it is to be human while connecting audiences across generations.

For over 40 years we have entertained and enriched the lives of millions of audience members both in Australia and abroad.

IMAGINATION

We create adventurous and enriching theatre that expands the way audiences see, feel and experience the world. We are courageous. We experiment with new ideas and push the boundaries of the art form. Our artistic offerings heighten the imagination. We create contemporary puppetry works, fusing puppetry, digital arts, dance, visual arts, music, theatre and storytelling.

JOY

We are an energetic, fun-loving and playful company. We bring joy to our audiences offering insight and perspectives into our lives.

INCLUSION

Our work reflects the diversity of the communities we live and present our work to. We strive to remove barriers to our work and seek opportunities to increase accessibility across performances, physical venue, employment and participation.

CELEBRATING

Through puppetry we engage with timeless and universal themes, exploring and celebrating what it is to be human. Reflecting diversity, connection, emotional literacy, our identity as Western Australians and connection to place.

EXCELLENCE

We strive for personal and professional excellence in everything we do. We treasure our audiences with an uncompromising commitment to quality. Our puppets are beautifully and superbly hand-crafted. We are leaders in the art form and artist development for puppetry.

USING THIS RESOURCE

This Creative Learning pack has been developed for use by teachers to enhance students' engagement with *Hometown*. The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as a starting point for teachers in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. We understand that you as teachers have greater knowledge of your students and therefore encourage you to adapt activities accordingly.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The activities have been designed to offer students an opportunity to analyse, evaluate, describe and discuss the play. It is important to note the activities are only a framework and should be adapted to meet the needs and interests of the learners. By modifying the activities, teachers may be able to address additional learning area outcomes; or they may be able to adapt them for use by students at an earlier or later phase of development.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Curriculum Links have been made using the Western Australian Curriculum to address learning outcomes in the areas of English, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), the Arts and Science. **See Page 8.**



CURRICULUM LINKS

ENGLISH

- **Literature: Responding to Literature (ACELT1596, ACELT1599, ACELT1603)** Discuss themes of belonging, identity, and the complexity of choices in the play. Students can write reflective pieces or engage in debates that explore different perspectives presented in the story.
- **Language: Expressing and Developing Ideas (ACELA1496, ACELA1498)** Use the imaginative and descriptive language of the play to explore how stories are constructed. Have students create their own narratives or poems inspired by the themes of *Hometown*.
- **Literacy: Interacting with Others (ACELY1676, ACELY1687)** Encourage students to participate in discussions, presentations, and performances related to the play. Activities such as creating shadow puppets or performing monologues help develop communication skills.

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- **History: Community and Remembrance (ACHASSK062, ACHASSK063)** Explore the theme of heritage and family depicted in the play. Students can create projects that reflect their understanding of family traditions and connections to community.
- **Geography: Places and their Significance (ACHASSK067)** Use the play's setting as a basis to discuss the significance of places in shaping identity and belonging. Students can map their own hometowns or create imagined worlds, reflecting the importance of environment in storytelling.

THE ARTS

- **Drama: Creating and Responding (ACADRM031, ACADRM033)** Engage students in creating their own performances based on the play's themes. Activities such as shadow puppetry and role-playing help students understand dramatic storytelling and character development.
- **Visual Arts: Exploring and Representing Ideas (ACAVAM107, ACAVAM108)** Students can design creatures or masks inspired by the fantastical beings in *Hometown*. These art activities link creativity with expression and help students connect emotionally with the play's themes.

SCIENCE

- **Biological Sciences: Living Things and their Environments (ACSSU044, ACSSU072)** Link the play's fantastical creatures to real-life animals and habitats. Students can compare adaptations of their created creatures to those found in nature, fostering an understanding of biology and ecosystems.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

- **Personal and Social Capability: Self-Awareness and Self-Management** Activities around themes of identity and belonging help students reflect on their own emotions and relationships. Discussions on feeling "lost" and making choices encourage resilience and emotional growth.

WATCHING A LIVE - PERFORMANCE

Hometown may be the first 'live theatre' experience for some students and therefore it may be relevant to discuss what to expect and how to behave during the performance.

Questions & Activities

LOWER PRIMARY

Questions:

- Why do we need to arrive on time for a show? How would you feel if you missed the beginning?
- What do you think could happen if we moved around a lot during a show? How would it make others feel?
- How do we listen carefully? What can happen if we talk during a performance?
- What can we do to make sure we're ready to enjoy the show?

Activities:

1. **Quiet Game:** Practice staying still and quiet by playing a game where the students must remain as quiet as possible while a story is being read aloud.
2. **Applause Practice:** Discuss when it's appropriate to clap and then have students practice clapping at the end of a pretend performance.

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

Theatre Etiquette

- **Arrive on time** to avoid missing parts of the show or disturbing others.
- **Stay seated and still** so everyone around you can enjoy the performance.
- **Listen carefully** as it's live, and there's no rewinding missed moments.
- **Stay quiet** unless audience participation is encouraged.
- **Use the restroom beforehand** to avoid disrupting the actors or audience.
- **Eat and drink before the show** to maintain focus and avoid distractions.
- **No cameras or recording devices**, as they distract and are often prohibited.
- **Participate responsibly** when invited to join. (calling out is OK but screaming is not)
- **React to what you see.** Laugh when something is funny and feel emotions when it is moving.
- **Applaud at the end** to show appreciation for the cast and crew.
- **Enjoy yourself**—listen, watch, laugh, and immerse yourself in the journey!

WATCHING A LIVE - PERFORMANCE

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

Questions & Activities

MIDDLE PRIMARY

Questions:

- Why is it important to stay seated and still during a performance? How does it affect the audience and the actors?
- What are some things you can do to prepare before going to the theatre (e.g. eating, using the restroom)?
- How is watching a live show different from watching TV or a movie?
- Why is it important to participate responsibly in audience participation moments?
- How do you show respect to the performers at the end of the show?

Activities:

1. **Etiquette Poster:** Have students create a poster showing the “Dos and Don’ts” of theatre etiquette.
2. **Discussion Circle:** Have a class discussion on how different types of distractions (phones, talking, moving) could affect performers and other audience members.

UPPER PRIMARY

Questions:

- Why is theatre etiquette important, and how does it help create a better experience for everyone?
- What can you do if you really need to move or speak during a performance?
- How does clapping at the end of a performance show appreciation? Can you think of other ways to show respect for the performers?
- How does live performance create a different experience compared to watching something on a screen? Why does that require different behavior?

Activities:

1. **Etiquette Presentation:** Students can prepare short presentations or slideshows explaining each rule of theatre etiquette, why it’s important, and what could happen if the rule isn’t followed.
2. **Creative Writing:** Ask students to write a reflection or short story from the perspective of either an audience member or a performer about a performance that went wrong due to poor audience behavior.

HOMETOWN - SYNOPSIS

Enter a world of imagination and pure joy with *Hometown*, a new puppet musical that whisks you away to a magical, dreamlike world inspired by Shaun Tan. Hometown is full of extraordinary creatures and awe-inspiring landscapes.

Embark on an epic journey through the eyes of a young girl, faced with a heart-wrenching dilemma: stay with the family who has nurtured her with love, belonging, and a strong sense of identity, or set out on an adventure to discover a new world and a family she's yet to meet.

Brought to life by an award-winning creative team in a masterful collaboration with one of Australia's most successful graphic novelists, *Hometown* weaves a visually stunning tale about connection, belonging, and the power of love to conquer fear and break down prejudices.



CREDITS

Adapting Writers

Amberly Cull & Nick Pages Oliver

Director

Philip Mitchell

Composer

Melanie Robinson

Designer

Leon Hendroff

Sound Designer

Lee Buddle

Lighting Designer

Megan Fitzgerald

Performers

Bec Bradley

Nick Pages-Oliver

Amberly Cull

DID YOU KNOW... *Hometown* is adapted from a work by renowned author and illustrator Shaun Tan. Known for his distinctive storytelling style, Tan's original vision for *Hometown* was developed as a comic. This adaptation brings his imaginative world and complex characters to life, exploring themes like identity, belonging, and transformation through a blend of science fiction and fantasy.

LEARNING

OPPORTUNITIES

Hometown offers rich learning opportunities for primary students, allowing them to explore important themes like identity, belonging, imagination, and decision-making. Through its imaginative setting and complex characters, students can engage in discussions and activities that promote creativity, critical thinking, and empathy. The play's exploration of personal growth, relationships, and the complexities of choices provides an engaging way for teachers to connect these themes to students' own lives and experiences.

Identity and Self-Discovery

Encourage students to explore how the characters in *Hometown* discover who they are through their experiences and choices.

Belonging and Home

Discuss with students what makes a place feel like home and how belonging can shape a person's identity.

Different Perspectives

Facilitate activities where students explore how different viewpoints can affect relationships and understanding.

Power of Imagination

Use creative writing or art to help students imagine their own fantastical worlds like *Hometown*.

The Complexity of Choices

Engage students in discussions or role-play about making difficult decisions and the consequences of their choices.

Love and Connection

Discuss how the relationships in the play reflect the importance of love and connection in finding one's place in the world.

Curiosity and Exploration

Encourage inquiry-based learning, where students ask questions and explore new ideas, inspired by the curiosity-driven themes of the play.

Family and Heritage

Explore family dynamics and heritage, encouraging students to reflect on their own family and cultural backgrounds.

Lostness

Explore how the characters deal with feeling "lost" and relate it to students' own experiences of navigating uncertainty, promoting discussions on resilience and growth.

FOR A DEEPER EXPLORATION OF THE THEMES SEE PAGE 25.

MEET THE TEAM



AMBERLEY CULL
Adapting Writer & Performer



NICK PAGES OLIVER
Adapting Writer & Performer



BEC BRADLEY
Performer



PHILIP MITCHELL
Director



LEON HENDROFF
Designer



LEE BUDDLE
Sound Designer



MELANIE ROBINSON
Composer



MEGAN FITZGERALD
Lighting Designer

MEET THE TEAM

AMBERLEY CULL

Adapting Writer & Performer

Amberly Cull is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, earning her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music Theatre. She has performed in *Avenue Q* and on ABC comedy *DAFUQ*, which earned her a Best Actress nomination at Revelation Film Festival's Next Gen Webfest. A regular performer with Erth visual theatre, Amberly co-wrote and performed in SPPT's award-winning musical *The One Who Planted Trees*.

NICK PAGES OLIVER

Adapting Writer & Performer

Nick is an award winning theatre maker who writes, directs, produces and performs. Carving out a niche in the form of Puppet Musicals, Nick toured Amberly Cull's *The Three Deaths of Ebony Black* to Edinburgh Fringe, where it received 5 Star reviews. He also co-wrote and performed in Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's debut musical, *The One Who Planted Trees*, which was awarded Outstanding New Work (PAWAs 2022). Nick is currently developing two new puppet musicals for adults, with support from DLGSC and Creative Victoria. Nick has performed onstage for Cut Snake Comedy, Perth Festival, Shakespeare WA, Renegade Productions, Western Sky Productions and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. Nick also works in Web3, as a Digital Producer and Marketing Coordinator for The Doge NFT (@ownthedoge). In this role, Nick collaborated with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to produce a collection of Puppet NFTs, as well as a Doge Puppet (@thedogepuppet on TikTok), making SPPT the first Australian arts org to explore NFTs as a revenue stream.

BEC BRADLEY

Performer

Bec is an award winning performance maker with over 20 years of professional experience in puppetry, physical theatre, clown, directing and music composition.

Bec has worked with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre since 2005 as a key creative, performer/puppeteer, deviser and director and has performed in numerous productions. Most recently she directed *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, was co-deviser and performer for *The One Who Planted Trees*, *The Farmer's Daughter*, *Rules of Summer*, and *On Our Beach*.

Rebecca is a senior artist, director and musician for Sensorium Theatre, Touring extensively with sensory theatre shows for children living with disability. In 2017 she directed 12 Strings for Curtin University, an experimental work using "Leor" a 4.5 metre illuminated puppet.

MEET THE TEAM

PHILIP MITCHELL

Director

WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP ON PAGE 19.

Philip Mitchell is an award-winning director and puppeteer with three decades experience working in puppetry in Australia. He has been Artistic Director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre for 20 years. As an Artistic Director Philip's passion is to create and commission contemporary puppetry works that explore the boundaries of the art form. Emotional literacy is at the heart of all the work Philip creates believing it is essential for the development of a healthy community. Large scale works, interactive and experiential puppetry and the tension between the performer and the puppet drives his exploration in puppetry.

For SPPT he has directed award winning shows including *The Arrival*, winner of the WA Equity Guild Awards Best Production. *Farm* nominated for six PAWA Awards, *On Our Beach* an interactive immersive work Best Production in the 2020 PAWA Awards. *The One Who Planted Trees*, 2022 PAWA award for best Mainstage production, *Beanstalk*, 2022 PAWA award for best New Work.

Prior to his move to Western Australia, Philip trained as a teacher, at the University of New England, and has facilitated literally thousands of workshops and artist in residencies for young people over his 30 year career. He also studied with Josef Krofta and Petr Matasek in the Czech Republic and attended the Prague School of Alternative Theatre and Puppetry at DAMU. He worked for more than 10 years as a puppeteer, teaching artist, performer, director, and co-devisor in Tasmania.

LEON HENDROFF

Designer

Leon is a designer and illustrator with a specialty in puppets. He was awarded a Union Internationale De La Marionette (Australia) scholarship to study with Noriko Nishimoto in 2009. Since 2005 Leon has been designing and making puppets for performance, retail, display and festivals, including Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's *The One Who Planted Trees*, *Rules of Summer*, *The Twits*, *Carnival of the Animals*, *Fox*, *String Symphony*, *The Hive* and *The Last Numbat*.

In 2001 Leon graduated from Curtin University, Western Australia, with a degree in design, winning several awards for his work including the inaugural Australian Graphic Design Association Scholarship award.

Leon is a key artist in Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's training program facilitating both design and making as well as marionette performance masterclasses. Leon is one of Australia's most experienced marionette puppetry artists.

MEET THE TEAM

LEE BUDDLE

Sound Designer

Lee Buddle has composed and performed music with Spare Parts for over 20 years on many successful productions including, *Cat Balloon*, *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*, *Bugalugs Bum Thief*, *The Deep*, *Hare Brain*, *Spellbound*, *H2O*, *Aquasapiens*, *Tales From Outer Suburbia*, *The Farmer's Daughter*, *Rules of Summer*, *The Twits*, *Hachiko*, *The Little Prince* and *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

MELANIE ROBINSON

Composer

Award-winning musician Melanie Robinson is a cellist, singer, composer and arranger. A graduate of the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (Bachelor of Music), Melanie has recently returned to Western Australia after 12 years based in Melbourne, from where she toured, co-wrote and collaborated with some of Australia's finest performers. These include: Tim Rogers, You Am I, Megan Washington, William Barton, The Black Arm Band, Jimmy Barnes, Tilman Robinson and Xani Kolac. Theatre scores include: *MEDEA* (Black Swan State Theatre Company 2019), *Ghost Child* (Steamworks 2012), *Cinderella Dressed In Yella*, *Colourwheel and RabbiT* (Buzz Dance Theatre). Instrumental credits include: ArtsWA Young Artists Creative Fellowship, two-time WAMI Best Female Instrumentalist.

Melanie is also known for her solo performances, and has released two albums of her own music, together with percussionist/producer Steve Richter: *After The Storm* and *Empty Places*.

MEGAN FITZGERALD

Lighting Designer

Megan works in producing, lighting design, production, stage and tour management. Megan graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2010 with a Bachelor of Production.

Credits include work with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Perth Festival, Fremantle Theatre Company, Force Majeure, Merrigong Theatre Company, Polyglot, Belvoir, MKA, Chunky Move/Malthouse and Melbourne Theatre Company. Megan has also worked on many large-scale events including Red Earth Arts festival, Sydney Festival, The Domain Concert Series, Soundwave Festival, Melbourne Festival, Melbourne NYE, U2's 360 Tour, Yours and Owls Festival, Psyfari Festival and Moomba Festival. Megan was lecturer in Stage Management at the University of Wollongong for several years.

ABOUT

SHAUN TAN

SHAUN TAN

Shaun Tan is an award-winning Australian author, illustrator, and artist renowned for his ability to create imaginative and emotionally rich stories that speak to both children and adults. His work often explores complex themes such as identity, belonging, and the human experience, using surreal and fantastical settings to engage audiences on multiple levels. Tan's distinctive style blends elements of science fiction and fantasy with emotional storytelling, creating worlds that blur the line between reality and imagination.

One of Tan's most well-known works, *The Arrival*, is a wordless graphic novel that tells the story of migration and displacement through powerful, emotive imagery. *The Arrival* has become a classic in contemporary literature, earning worldwide recognition for its portrayal of the challenges faced by those entering new, unfamiliar environments. Tan's ability to communicate deep emotional experiences without the use of words is a testament to his skill as a visual storyteller.

Tan's collaboration with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre began with the adaptation of *The Arrival*, which was transformed into a visually stunning stage production. The puppet theatre's unique style and Tan's imaginative storytelling created an immersive experience that brought new life to the narrative. This collaboration exemplifies Tan's commitment to expanding the reach of his work beyond the page and into the theatrical realm, engaging audiences in fresh, innovative ways.

His work with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre continues with *Hometown*, another example of Tan's gift for exploring themes of identity, belonging, and transformation. Much like his other works, *Hometown* invites audiences to reflect on what it means to find and create a sense of home, while confronting the complexities of growing up and navigating a world that can feel both familiar and alien.

FOR TEACHERS

Shaun Tan's works, including his collaborations with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, provide a rich foundation for exploring important themes with students. His stories encourage discussions about empathy, diversity, and the universal experiences of feeling "lost" or out of place, making them ideal tools for fostering emotional intelligence and creative thinking in the classroom. Tan's use of metaphor, visual storytelling, and non-traditional narrative structures offers teachers the opportunity to introduce students to new ways of thinking about and interpreting stories, while also helping them reflect on their own experiences of identity, belonging, and connection.

PART B:

EXPLORING THE SHOW

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ABOUT

HOMETOWN

WHAT'S THE PLAY ABOUT?

Hometown is a visually rich and imaginative play that follows the journey of a young girl living in a strange, alien world filled with fantastical creatures and environments. The story begins with the girl navigating her peculiar yet beloved hometown, surrounded by her family and friends, all of whom are uniquely adapted to this bizarre world.

The arrival of a boy from another place—a place seemingly more familiar to us—disrupts her world. He believes she is lost and needs to be taken back to a more “normal” world, which he perceives as her true home. As the boy tries to convince her to leave with him, the girl grapples with her sense of identity, belonging, and the meaning of home.

Throughout the play, themes of identity, belonging, and the clash of different perspectives are explored. The girl is torn between the world she knows and loves and the possibility of another life elsewhere. In the end, she realizes that home is not just a place but a feeling rooted in the connections and love she has with those around her.

The play combines elements of science fiction and fantasy, creating a dreamlike, metaphorical world where the line between reality and imagination blurs. Through its rich visuals and emotional depth, *Hometown* invites audiences to reflect on what it means to belong and how our environments shape who we are.

WATCH THE VIDEO WITH DIRECTOR PHILIP MITCHELL TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SHOW!



ABOUT

HOMETOWN

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Questions & Activities

LOWER PRIMARY

Questions:

- What do you think makes the girl's home town special?
- Why does the boy want the girl to leave her home town? How do you think the girl feels about this?
- What are some of the creatures you saw in the girl's world? How do they help make her home unique?
- What does "home" mean to you? Is it a place or a feeling?
- Do you think the girl should stay in her hometown or go with the boy? Why?

Activities:

1. **Create a Creature:** Draw your own fantastical creature that could live in the girl's home town. Give it special abilities and explain how it interacts with the girl.
2. **Hometown Collage:** Make a collage using different materials to show what the girl's hometown looks like. Include her family, friends, and the creatures that live there.
3. **Role-Playing Home:** Have students role-play as the girl, boy, and creatures, acting out scenes where the girl is deciding whether to stay or leave.

MIDDLE PRIMARY

Questions:

- Why do you think the boy believes the girl is lost? What makes him think she belongs somewhere else?
- The girl loves her hometown, even though it seems strange. What are some reasons she might want to stay?
- How do the characters in the play show different ideas of what "home" means? What makes a place feel like home to you?
- How do the fantastical creatures and environments reflect the girl's emotions and experiences?
- What would you do if you were the girl? Stay or go with the boy?

Activities:

1. **Design a New World:** Have students design their own fantastical home towns. They can draw or describe the environment, creatures, and what makes it special.
2. **Writing a Letter Home:** Students write a letter from the girl to her family explaining why she is thinking of leaving or staying. This helps explore her emotions and decision-making process.
3. **Perspective Swap:** Pair students and have one role-play as the boy and the other as the girl, debating whether she should stay or leave. They can discuss their different perspectives and understandings of home.

ABOUT

HOMETOWN

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Questions & Activities

UPPER PRIMARY

Questions:

- The boy sees the girl as lost and believes she needs to return to a “normal” world. Why do you think he feels that way? How does the girl’s perspective differ?
- The play blends fantasy and reality. How does this help tell the story of identity and belonging? Can you think of examples where the setting symbolises something more?
- The girl’s journey is about finding where she belongs. How does this theme of self-discovery relate to your own experiences of growing up and finding your place?
- How do you think the play explores the idea that home is more than just a place, but a feeling?
- Why is it important to listen to other people’s perspectives, even when they are different from your own?

Activities:

1. **Character Monologue:** Have students write and perform a monologue from the girl’s or boy’s point of view, expressing their thoughts about home and identity.
2. **Map the Journey:** Students create a map of the girl’s emotional journey in the play, showing key moments where she feels torn between staying and leaving, and what influences her decisions.
3. **Debate on Belonging:** Organise a debate on the question, “Is home a place or a feeling?” Students can take sides and use examples from the play and their own experiences to argue their points.

Questions & Activities

MEET THE CHARACTERS



The Girl

The central character of the story, navigating her world and questioning her sense of belonging, identity, and connection to her fantastical hometown.



The Boy

A character from another world or dimension who believes the girl is lost and tries to convince her to leave with him, setting up a conflict around perspectives and belonging.



The Girl's Family

A loving, fantastical group, including her Mum, Dad, and Brothers, who have special abilities and represent safety, support, and the complexity of family relationships in this surreal world.

The Girl's Friends

Various fantastical beings such as hermit crab-like creatures, a Rock-Monster, and a Cat-Monster that are part of the girl's hometown, adding to the magical and whimsical nature of the environment.



THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

The world of *Hometown* is a vibrant and imaginative setting that plays a crucial role in the story and offers many opportunities for exploration and discussion with primary students. **Here are the key aspects that define this unique world:**

● **Fantastical Creatures and Beings**

The play features strange and imaginative creatures, like hermit crabs, a rock-monster, and a cat-monster, who interact with the main characters, making the world feel whimsical and at times dangerous. The girl's family also has fantastical abilities—her Mum's hair picks flowers and protects them, while her Dad invents unusual devices. **These elements can help students think about how family dynamics and relationships can be depicted in different and creative ways.**

● **Alien and Surreal Environment**

The setting of *Hometown* is an imaginative, otherworldly place where everyday rules don't apply—rocks turn into monsters, and the environment responds to the characters. **This encourages students to explore how settings in stories can influence the plot and emotions, and inspires them to think creatively about how environments are depicted in storytelling.**

● **Blurring of Reality and Metaphor**

The world of *Hometown* works on both a literal and symbolic level. It's a physical place with creatures and landscapes, but it also represents the girl's inner world—her thoughts, feelings, and identity. **This opens up discussions on how stories use metaphor and symbolism to explore complex ideas, helping students think about how the girl's world reflects her emotions and deeper meanings within the setting.**

● **Cultural and Familial Structure**

The girl's family and community are central to *Hometown*. Despite the fantastical setting, her relationships are filled with love, humor, and support, giving her a strong sense of belonging. **This aspect of the play is a great way to discuss the importance of family and community with students, helping them reflect on how their own relationships shape their sense of identity and belonging.**

● **Visual and Theatrical Design**

The visual and theatrical design of *Hometown* is crucial to bringing its world to life. Through puppetry, creative sets, and special effects, the play creates a world that feels both real and magical. **This can inspire discussions on how visual elements contribute to storytelling, encouraging students to think about how the design helps tell the story and sets the mood and atmosphere.**

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Questions & Activities

LOWER PRIMARY

Questions:

- What did you find the most interesting about the world where the girl lives?
- Can you describe the different creatures that live in the girl's home town? Which one would you like to meet?
- How is the girl's hometown similar to our world, and how is it different?
- If you could create your own world like the girl's home town, what would it look like?
- How do you think the girl feels about living in her home town? Do you think she likes it there? Why?

Activities:

1. **Story Setting Exploration:** Using art materials, students can create a collage or diorama of a scene from *Hometown*. They can depict the surreal landscapes, such as rocks turning into monsters or the vibrant world where the girl lives. This helps them understand how the setting influences the story.
2. **Family and Friends Portraits:** Students can draw a picture of their own family, but with a twist—they imagine their family members as fantastical beings like those in *Hometown*. They can add special abilities or features that represent their family members' personalities.

MIDDLE - UPPER PRIMARY

Questions:

- What do you think the girl's home town looks like? How is it different from your own town or city?
- How does the play show the girl feels safe and happy in her strange hometown?
- If you could visit the girl's world, what would you explore first, and why?

Activities:

1. **Design a Hometown Map:** Students can draw a map of the girl's hometown, including key locations and fantastical elements from the play. They can label different areas and explain how these places might be important to the story or the characters.
2. **Metaphor and Meaning Discussion:** Introduce the concept of metaphor to the students and have them identify elements in the play that could have deeper meanings. They can then create their own simple stories that include a setting or character that symbolises something more.
3. **Family and Community Reflection:** Students can write a short paragraph or draw a picture reflecting on their own family or community. They should consider what makes their family special and how their relationships shape who they are, just like in the world of *Hometown*.

THEMES IN HOMETOWN

Hometown is a richly thematic play that uses its fantastical setting and compelling characters to explore profound questions about identity, belonging, and the human experience. Through its blend of science fiction, fantasy, and emotional storytelling, it invites audiences to reflect on what it means to find and create a home in the world.

Identity and Self-Discovery

A key theme in *Hometown* is the girl's journey of self-discovery. Living in a world that is both strange and familiar, she questions who she is and where she belongs. The arrival of the boy, who believes she comes from another place, forces her to confront her identity and reflect on what defines her. The play explores how identity is shaped by relationships, experiences, and choices, highlighting that home is more about feeling loved and accepted than a specific location.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Teachers can encourage students to explore their own identity by creating “identity maps,” where students draw or write about the people, places, and experiences that shape who they are. Discussions can focus on how relationships and environments that influence our sense of self.

Belonging and Home

Hometown explores the idea of belonging. Although the girl's world is unusual and sometimes dangerous, it is her home—a place filled with love, family, and friends. The boy's belief that she belongs elsewhere challenges her understanding of what home truly means. The play shows that belonging is rooted in emotional connections, safety, and familiarity, rather than just a physical space.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Have students create a “My Home” project, where they describe or draw the place they feel most at home, focusing on the people, feelings, and connections that make it special. This can be followed by a discussion on how home is more than just a place—it's where we feel safe and loved.

Different Perspectives

Hometown examines the conflict between different perspectives, as seen in the interactions between the girl and the boy. The boy believes his world is better for the girl, while she is deeply connected to her own, despite its oddities. This clash of views reflects real-world issues, where differing beliefs and experiences can lead to misunderstandings. The play encourages empathy, open-mindedness, and the idea that different perspectives can coexist.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Teachers can lead role-playing activities where students take on different perspectives, such as the girl and the boy, and discuss why they see things differently. This will help students develop empathy and an understanding that different perspectives can coexist without one being right or wrong.

THEMES IN HOMETOWN

The Power of Imagination

The fantastical creatures and surreal landscapes in *Hometown* highlight the theme of imagination. The girl's world reflects her inner life, blending reality and fantasy. This imaginative setting allows the play to explore deeper emotional and philosophical questions. The fantasy elements act as metaphors for the girl's inner struggles, showing how imagination shapes our understanding of reality.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Encourage students to use their imagination by creating their own fantastical world through writing or drawing. They can explore how their imaginary world might reflect their own feelings, dreams, and challenges, helping them understand how imagination can be a way to process emotions.

The Complexity of Choices

Hometown highlights the difficulty of making choices when faced with conflicting desires and responsibilities. The girl is torn between staying in her beloved hometown or venturing into the unknown with the boy. This theme explores the complexity of decision-making, fear of loss, and the uncertainty of the future, showing that choices often come with both gains and sacrifices.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Engage students in a decision-making exercise. Present them with a scenario where they must choose between two options, each with its own pros and cons. Students can then discuss how they made their decision and how they felt about the sacrifices or risks involved.

Love and Connection

At its core, *Hometown* is about love and connection. The girl's relationships with her family, friends, and even the boy underscore the importance of love in shaping our lives. Love is portrayed as a guiding force that helps the girl navigate her emotions and decide where she belongs. The play suggests that love transcends physical places and is central to our sense of identity and belonging.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Facilitate a "Connections Web" activity where students map out the people and relationships that are most important to them. This can lead to discussions on how love and connection give us strength and help us feel secure, just as they do for the girl in *Hometown*.

Curiosity and Exploration

Hometown delves into the natural curiosity of the characters, especially the girl, who constantly wonders about the world beyond her hometown. This theme is highlighted in her interactions with the boy, who introduces her to the possibility of life elsewhere. The play explores how curiosity drives the characters to question their environment, seek new experiences, and ultimately make decisions about their futures.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Foster curiosity by encouraging students to ask open-ended questions about the play or about their own lives. Set up an "exploration station" where students can investigate new ideas through books, objects, or creative projects. Students could also create maps of imaginary worlds, just like the girl's hometown, and share what makes their world unique.

THEMES IN HOMETOWN

Family and Heritage

The relationship between the girl and her family is central to *Hometown*. The girl's connection to her mother, father, and grandparents is depicted as a source of strength and identity. The play explores how family shapes who we are, providing love, guidance, and a sense of belonging, even in the face of outside influences.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: Invite students to reflect on their own family traditions and heritage by creating a "family tree" or "heritage map." Students can share stories, customs, or symbols that are important to their families and discuss how these connections help shape their sense of self. A group discussion on how the girl's family influences her decisions and feelings of belonging in the play can help students appreciate the role of family and culture in shaping identity.

Lostness as a universal experience

Hometown explores the idea of feeling lost, both physically and emotionally. The girl struggles with uncertainty as she navigates conflicting ideas of where she belongs. This theme reflects the universal experience of feeling unsure or out of place, a feeling that many students can relate to.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: create a reflective writing activity where students describe a time they felt "lost" or unsure, either literally or figuratively. Students can then discuss how they overcame that feeling or found their way, linking it back to the girl's journey in *Hometown*. Group discussions on how moments of being lost can lead to growth and self-discovery will help students connect their personal experiences to the play.

DEFINING LOSTNESS & THE COMPLEXITY OF RESCUE

The Authority to Define Lostness

In *Hometown*, the boy's mission to "rescue" the girl raises important questions about who gets to decide what it means to be lost. The boy assumes that the girl is lost and needs saving based on his own judgment of her situation. He believes that taking her back to what he sees as her true home is the right thing to do. However, this belief is based on his perspective, without fully understanding or considering the girl's own experiences, feelings, and connection to her world.

This scenario in the play mirrors real-life situations where individuals or groups impose their ideas of what is best for others, often based on cultural, religious, or ideological beliefs. The boy's actions can be seen as a metaphor for how dominant cultures or belief systems sometimes try to "rescue" or change those they see as different, often without recognising or valuing the unique aspects of those other ways of life.

For primary students, this theme can be explored by discussing the importance of empathy, listening, and understanding other people's perspectives before making judgments. The tension in the play between the boy's mission and the girl's sense of belonging illustrates the potential harm that can come from imposing one's own views on others. It highlights the need for students to appreciate diverse perspectives and to understand that what might seem "lost" or "wrong" to one person may actually be deeply meaningful and right to another.

The Complexity of "Rescue"

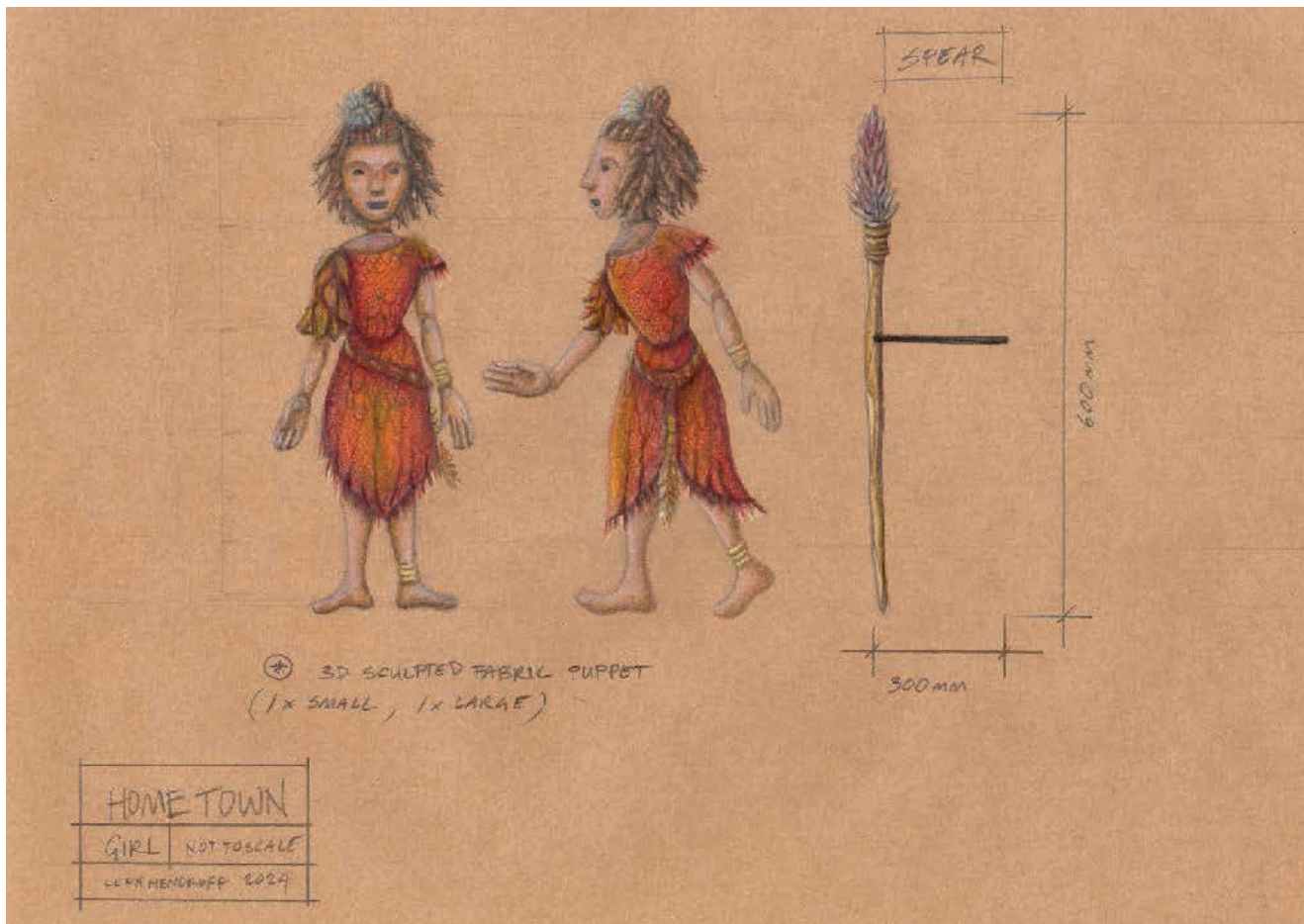
The play also challenges the idea of what it means to "rescue" someone. While the boy genuinely believes he is offering the girl a better life, her reluctance to leave her world suggests that what he sees as a rescue might actually cause her harm or loss. This aspect of the story can help students understand that helping others is not always straightforward. Good intentions can sometimes lead to unintended consequences, especially if we don't fully understand the needs and desires of the person we're trying to help.

For primary students, this theme can be discussed by exploring the concept of "rescue" and what it really means to support someone. The play encourages students to think about the importance of respecting others' choices and understanding that sometimes the best way to help is to listen and support rather than impose our own solutions. The girl's decision about whether to stay in her world or leave with the boy ultimately reflects her own agency, emphasising that true help involves empowering others to make their own choices.

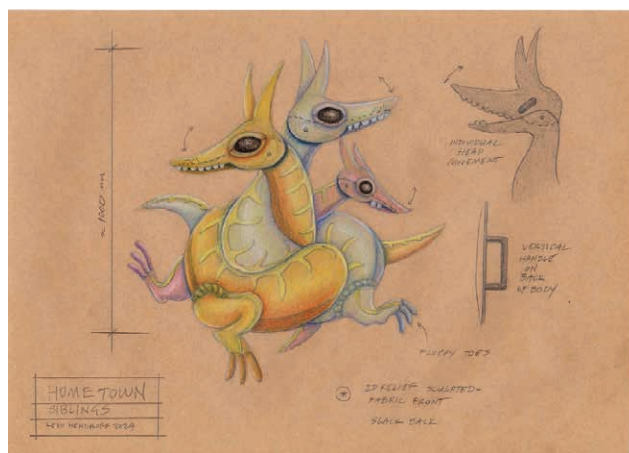
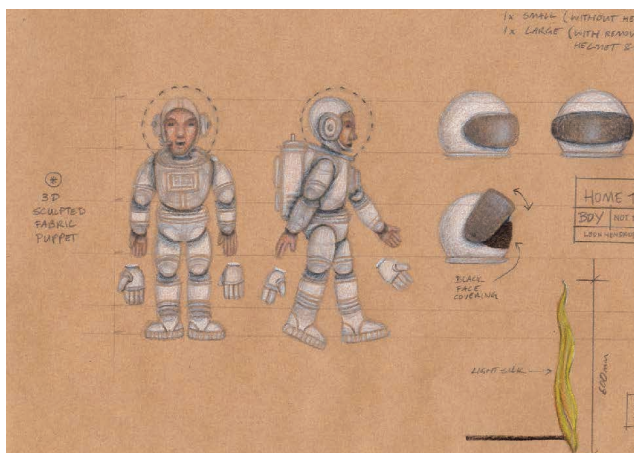
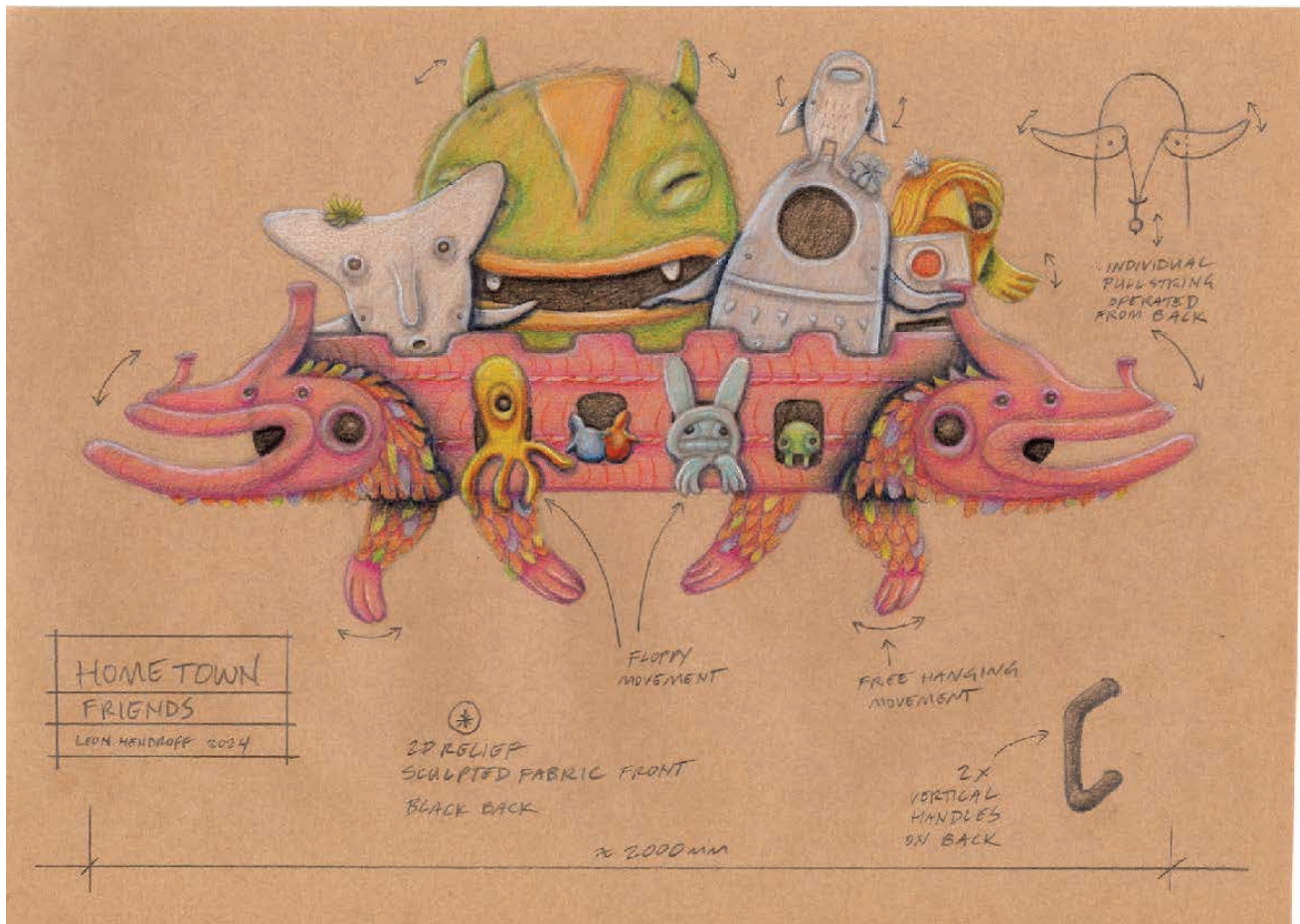
DESIGNS

Leon Hendroff is the talented designer behind the visual world of *Hometown*. His creative work with set design, puppetry, and special effects plays a key role in bringing the fantastical setting to life. Hendriff's designs help create the magical, dreamlike atmosphere that draws audiences into the story. His thoughtful design choices not only make the play visually captivating but also support the play's themes of identity, belonging, and finding home. Hendriff's work offers primary teachers a great opportunity to explore with students how design elements in theatre can enhance storytelling and deepen the emotional impact of a play.

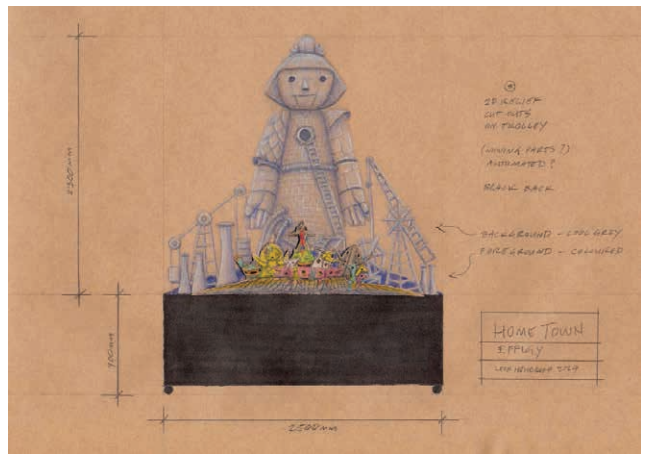
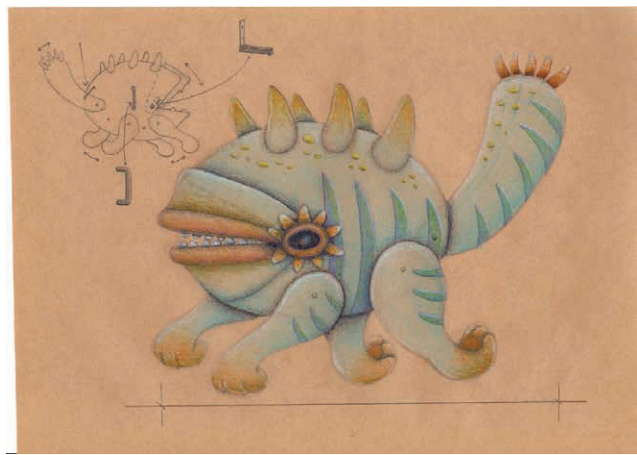
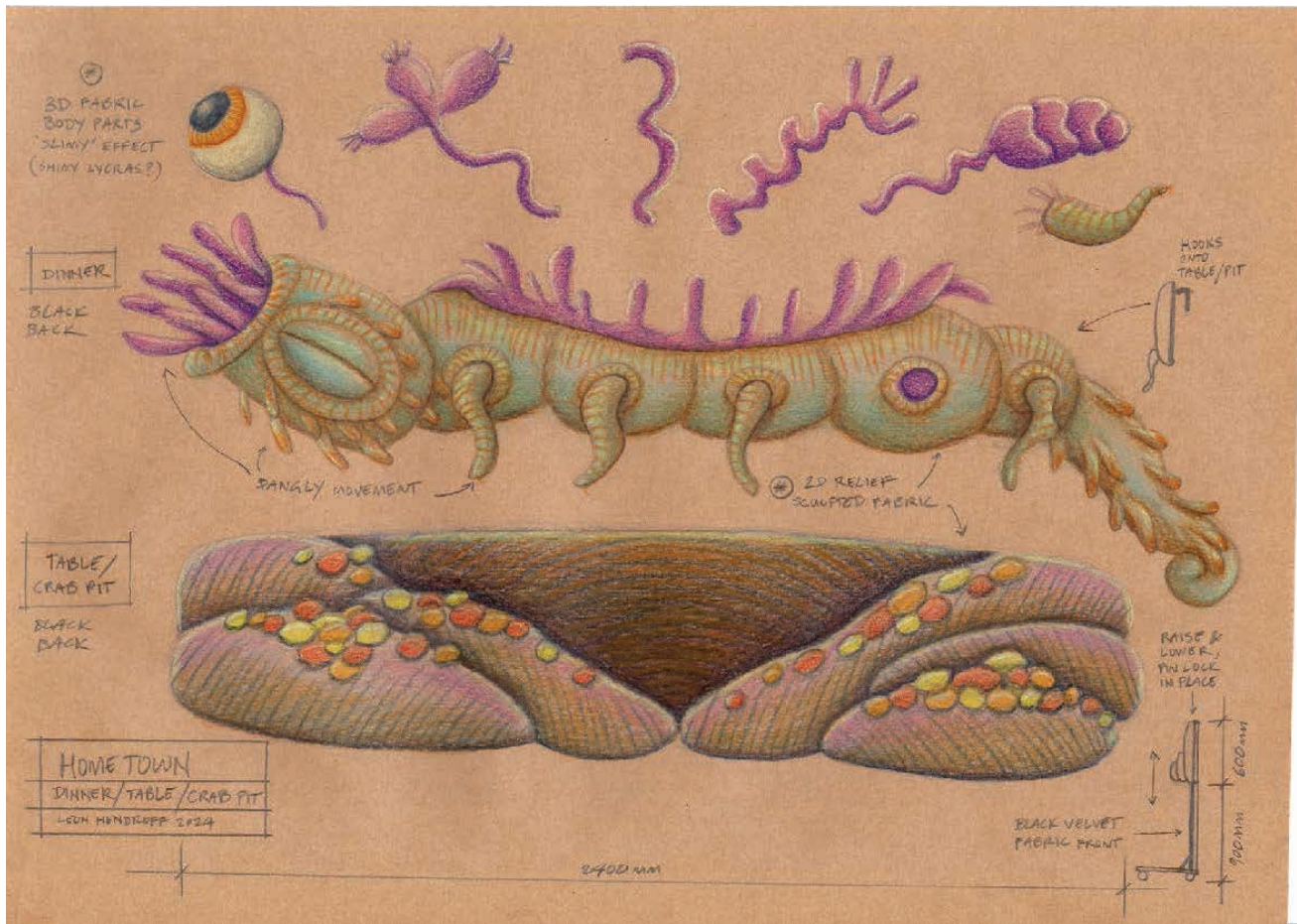
Take a look at Leon's design drawings on the following pages. Can you spot things that changed when turning these designs into our final production?



DESIGNS



DESIGNS



PART C:

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

IN THIS SECTION:

| | |
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| Shaun Tan-imals | 33 |
| Creature Mask Making | 41 |
| Create Your Own Shadow Puppet | 42 |



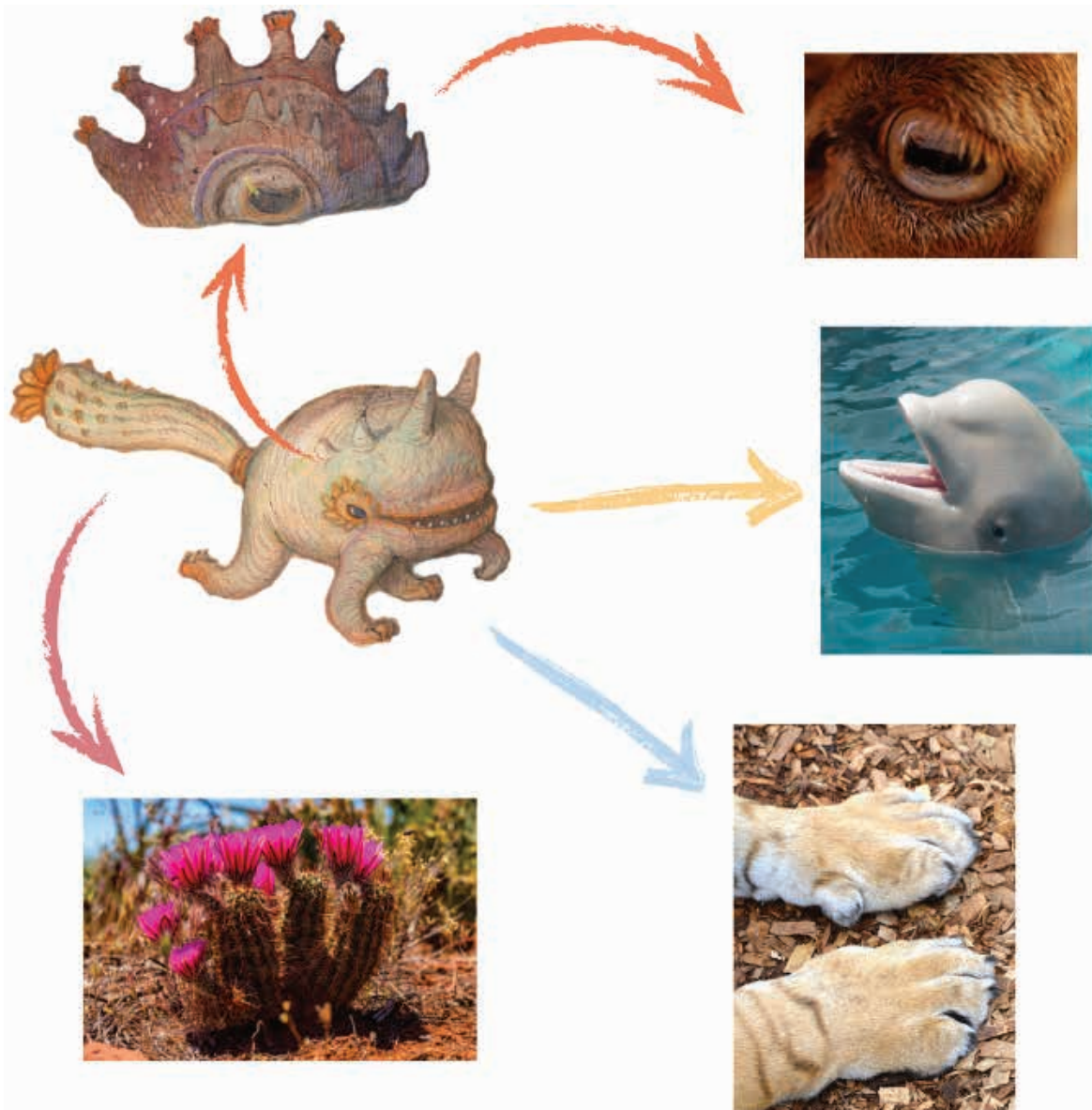
ACTIVITY

SHAUN TAN-IMALS

Shaun Tan draws amazing made-up creatures in his stories.

What animals and objects do you think inspired the different parts of his below illustrations? Did we miss any?

[Click here](#) to see more of Shaun Tan's creatures, including one of his earliest drawings of three dinosaurs, and borrow some of his books from the Library to see more of his creature designs.



ACTIVITY

SHAUN TAN-IMALS

Choose a **face, ears, arms, legs and tail** from the collection of objects on the following pages and cut them out. **Tear a body shape with a piece of paper** - it could be round like the beluga-cat on the previous page, or any shape you choose! Now arrange and glue your creature features onto the body. **(See example below)**

Save the creature features you are not using and put them in a big pile at the front of the class so that other students can use these if they need more than one or two of something.

Extension: After gluing your monster pieces together, take a new piece of paper and draw your creature using your collage as a guide. This will add your own personal style to your creature!

What words can you combine to name your creature? The one below is called **Pupp-it-pebble Shellfern.**



ACTIVITY

SHAUN TAN-IMALS

Extension Activities for Middle and Upper Primary Students

Character Story Creation:

After creating their unique creature, students can write a short story about their creature's life. Where does it live? What are its special abilities? How does it interact with other creatures? This will encourage creative thinking, character development, and narrative writing skills.

Creature Habitat Design:

Students can design a habitat or environment where their creature would live. Using drawing materials or a diorama, they can include important features like food sources, shelter, and other creatures it interacts with. This can link to geography and science by exploring how environments shape the creatures that live there.

Creature Trading Cards:

Have students create "creature trading cards" with their creature's image on one side and key stats on the other (such as strength, speed, abilities, and fun facts). Students can trade and compare their creatures, practicing descriptive writing and comparison skills.

Creature Collaboration Project:

Pair students or put them in small groups where they combine their creatures into a "team" of creatures. They must create a backstory on how the creatures work together, solving a problem or going on an adventure. This promotes teamwork, creative problem-solving, and communication skills.

Creature Role-Play:

Students can act out scenes featuring their creatures in an imaginative role-play session. Each student can introduce their creature, sharing its abilities and personality, and engage in group role-play scenarios where their creatures must work together to overcome a challenge.

Science Connections:

Have students research real-life animals that have similar features to their created creature. For example, if their creature has large ears, they could explore animals with large ears, such as elephants or foxes, and discuss why certain adaptations exist in nature. This builds connections to biology and adaptations.











ACTIVITY

CREATURE MASK MAKING

Materials:

- Paper plates or cardstock
- Scissors
- Paint, markers, or crayons
- Glue
- Yarn or elastic string
- Staples or Sicky tape
- Materials for decoration (feathers, fabric scraps, sequins, etc.)

Instructions:

Design the Mask:

Have students first sketch out the face of their creature from the previous activity. They should think about its unique features—large ears, horns, interesting eyes—and how to best incorporate those into the mask design.

Shape the Mask:

Using a paper plate or cardstock, students will cut out the basic shape of their creature's face. They can add extra features like ears, horns, or snouts by cutting additional pieces and gluing them onto the mask.

Decorate the Mask:

Students will use paint, markers, and other decorative materials to color and add details to their mask, matching the unique characteristics of their creature.

Add Fasteners:

Once the mask is decorated and dried, students will attach yarn or elastic string with either staples or tape to each side of the mask so it can be worn over their face.

Creature Parade:

After completing their masks, students can wear them and participate in a “Creature Parade” around the classroom or school. Encourage students to introduce their creature and share some fun facts or stories about it.

Extension Activities for Middle and Upper Primary Students

Combine the mask-making activity with a storytelling session where students act as their creature, sharing its origin, traits, and adventures. This engages their imagination and enhances their public speaking skills.



ACTIVITY

CREATE YOUR OWN SHADOW PUPPET

Materials:

- Black cardstock or thick paper
- Scissors
- Wooden sticks or straws (for handles)
- Glue or tape
- Hole punch & Brads (for movable joints)
- A light source (lamp or flashlight)
- White wall or sheet (for the shadow screen)

Instructions:

Design the Puppets:

Invite students to create their own puppet shapes on black cardstock. These can be people, animals, or fantastical creatures like the ones from *Hometown*.

Cut and Assemble:

Once the puppet shapes are drawn, students cut them out and attach movable parts (like arms or legs) using a hole punch and brads to make joints. They can then attach the wooden sticks or straws to the back of the puppet using glue or tape to control the movement.

Create the Shadow Theatre:

Set up a simple “shadow theatre” by using a light source behind a white wall or sheet. The puppets will be placed between the light and the screen to create shadows.

Perform a Short Story:

In groups, students can write a short story or scene using their shadow puppets as characters. They then perform their scenes for the class using the shadow theatre setup. Encourage students to think about how to move their puppets and use light to create atmosphere and tell their story.

Extension

Exploring Light and Shadow: Teachers can integrate a science lesson by discussing how shadows are formed and how the distance from the light source affects the size and clarity of the shadow.





Hometown is a production by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Fremantle (Walyalup), WA

08 9335 5044

To enquire about future productions, incursions and excursions email learning@sppt.asn.au