

# Drama Stage 5 (Year 9) – resource booklet

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## Nothing is neutral – designing for theatre

This document contains the script excerpts and teacher support that accompanies the Stage 5 (Year 9) unit, 'Nothing is neutral – designing for theatre'.

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## Resource overview

This teacher resource booklet is not a standalone resource. It has been designed for use by teachers in connection to Year 9 resources designed by the Creative arts curriculum team for the [Drama 7–10 Syllabus \(2023\)](#). These include the Stage 5 scope and sequence, Year 9 ‘Nothing is neutral – designing for theatre’ unit and sample assessment task. All documents associated with this resource can be found on the [Planning, programming and assessing drama 7–10 \(2023\)](#) webpage.

Each script excerpt in this booklet has been formatted to preserve the formatting conventions and language choices made in the original publication, wherever possible. This demonstrates a range of script conventions and preserves the author’s intentions and choices for each script.

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## Sunshine Super Girl by Andrea James

*Sunshine Super Girl* by Andrea James (2021) is published by [Currency Press Sydney](#).

### PROLOGUE–CENTRE COURT FISHING

*Darkness. We hear the sound of a tennis match and commentary. It's the closing stages of a tie-breaker between Evonne Cawley and Chris Evert-Lloyd. We hear the 'toc, toc, toc' of the tennis ball and the classic 1980s TV tennis commentary.*

*Lights very, very slowly illuminate a brilliant tennis court. Luminescent green. A holy grail. The sounds of the tennis game and commentary become louder and louder. The audience cheers.*

*EVONNE GOOLAGONG CAWLEY enters with a suitcase and wicker fishing basket. Returning to Country, she looks around, puts down the suitcase, ascends the umpire's chair and throws a hand line into the court.*

*Silence.*

EVONNE: This is a good spot here. This is mum's spot.

That current there? Swirling around and around? That's the backwater. Leaves and twigs and bugs. That's what the fish are after and that's what I'm after.

The fish.

## *Honey Spot* by Jack Davis

*Honey Spot* by Jack Davis (1987) is published by [Currency Press Sydney](#).

### Prologue

Music plays. People appear one by one, going about their daily business.

Mother, an Aboriginal woman in her mid thirties, walks past carrying a shopping bag. The Forest Ranger watches her go, then finds a limb of a tree lying on the ground. He picks it up and examines it, noticing that it has been cut cleanly through with an axe.

William, a young Aboriginal man, comes along. He is holding an axe. He hides behind the log when he sees the Ranger, then runs off as the Ranger returns to his house.

Tim, an Aboriginal boy of thirteen, runs along bouncing a basketball. He wears school uniform. He stops when he sees Peggy, a twelve-year-old white girl, also in school uniform, practising ballet steps as she walks along. The two look at each other for a moment, then Peggy runs off.

William comes back, and he and Tim throw the basketball between them a couple of times, then leave. Mother returns, her shopping bag now full. She stops to rest for a moment, then moves quickly on when she sees the Ranger watching her.

The mood is one of suspicion between white and black people.

# ONE

It is a hot afternoon in a state forest. Tim arrives, eating a piece of honeycomb which he is holding on a scrap of bark. A small tomahawk is stuck in the band of his school shorts. He sits on the log.

Peggy arrives, returning home after a ballet class, practising a step as she walks. She is carrying a school bag. When Tim sees her he hides behind the log, but she has heard a noise and comes back to see who is there. Tim tries to bury himself in the ground but she has seen him.

PEGGY

Hello?

TIM

Go away!

PEGGY

What for?

TIM

Go away!

PEGGY

Are you all right?

TIM

Yeah.

PEGGY

What's wrong with you?

TIM

Nothing. Mind your own business.

PEGGY

Are you hiding from someone?

[Tim springs to his feet, threatening her with his tomahawk.]

TIM

Clear out, will ya.

## Compass by Jessica Bellamy

*Compass* by Jessica Bellamy (2013) is published by [Playlab Theatre](#).

### Setting

A campsite in the Australian rainforest, in the present day.

This part of the world is green and lush. It tends to rain at night and the mud is squelchy underfoot afterwards. In the day it is humid and hot.

The wildness of the forest is pared back around a big circular space, used for hundreds and hundreds of school camps over the years. The grass in this area is dry and hacked up by old tent pegs. The remains of a fire are messily raked over in the centre of the circle.

Five tents are set up around the fireplace. They have not been constructed very well and sag in places. On the outskirts of the tent area is a large shovel propped into the ground.

### Characters

JASON	Alpha male.
DANE	Beta male.
JOEL	An unknown quantity, very smart and very intense.
GRACE	Honest and an idealist, unpopular.
AUDREY	Alpha female, a gentle leader.
HERMES	One of Audrey's lackeys, happy to be seen and not heard.
KIARA	Audrey's other lackey, a daydreamer, easily swayed by the tide.
SOPHIE	The New Girl at school, high achiever, bit of a mystery.
KATE	Desperate to be popular and not succeeding. She has been bullied before.
MR FINCHLEY	Their school teacher.

THE STRANGER

A rough, wild and desperate-looking person who sticks out like a sore thumb.

## SCENE ONE

*The middle of the rainforest. A rainstorm.*

*The sky is dark grey, with rain clouds making the middle of the day feel like it could be midnight. There are big booms of thunder and lighting flashes on the horizon. The rain is relentless and fierce.*

*In different spots of the rainforest, bolts of lightning illuminate separate groups of campers making their way to base camp through the storm.*

*GRACE has found a big palm leaf to shelter her from the rain. KATE attempts to shelter under this leaf too, even though it's really only big enough for one person. The rain comes down harder, and KATE pulls more of the leaf for herself. GRACE is left in the rain. She plods through it.*

*SOPHIE attempts to use her map and compass to navigate to the right spot, through the rain.*

*JASON and DANE stomp through the rain, splashing each other and having fun.*

*AUDREY uses her map to cover her hair from the rain, and squeals through each squelchy bit of mud, echoed by KIARA and HERMES.*

*JOEL battles through the rain like it's a war zone, jaw set, ready to attack. He slices through bits of branches and leaves with his arm, like an axe. One fern drops down and whacks him in the face. He pulls out a flick knife and slices the fern to pieces. He marches on.*



# Shack by George Kemp

*Shack* by George Kemp (2022) is published by [Playlab Theatre](#).

## SCENE ONE

*Antarctica. Maybe a few years in the future. A dimly lit shack with a wooden floor and wooden walls. There are shelves with mugs, plates, a couple of books, a torch, some old tins and a radio with dials and knobs to contact the outside world. On one of the walls hang tools (saws, axes, etc) and high above that is a small window covered with a tarp. On the ground sit some wooden crates filled with blankets and ropes. These crates can be used as moveable seating for the actors throughout the play.*

*Offstage, there is an annexe with bunk beds.*

*We hear a sound – it's a blizzard. High whistling wind. Large fans can be used to create actual wind during appropriate moments throughout the play.*

*The wind picks up to fever pitch. It should feel like the shack is shaking from its force. All of a sudden nine schoolkids, dressed in colourful parkas, burst into the space in a flurry of snow and terror. It's chaotic. Improvised, panicked dialogue soon gives way to the following:*

ERNIE	Quick! Everyone in here!
JASPER	Is everyone OK? Is everyone here?
MACK:	Cover your face! Cover your eyes!
LUKE	Where is everyone? I can't see!
SAMSON	Ow ow ow ow ow owwww!
SADIE	Where are the guides?
RUFUS	My face is freezing off! I'm too young to die!
ELLIOT	Jamie!
JAMIE	Elliot!

*They work together to shut the 'door' against the wind and snow.*

## SCENE THREE

*ERNIE reads the following extract from The Talking Book to the audience. Towards the end of the passage we hear the Wendigo again, building in intensity, followed by everyone running in from the bunk room in a panic.*

- ERNIE                    *“The ice was packed heavily and firmly around the ship. Huge ice sheets as big as window panes and about a quarter of an inch thick were being hurled about in the blizzard, making it as dangerous to walk about outside as if one were in an avalanche of splintered glass. There was nothing to be done till the conditions changed, and we waited through that day and the following days with increasing anxiety.”*
- ELLIOT                 The Wendigo!
- JAMIE:                 It’s happening again!
- RUFUS                 My dad’s probably fighting it off!
- JAMIE:                 I can’t belieeeeeve this.
- ERNIE                 They’ll come and rescue us, it’s like, our parents’ job to keep us safe.
- ELLIOT                 Well that hasn’t exactly worked out so far, Ernie, has it.
- SAMSON                Hey guys I kinda have to —
- JASPER                Do we try to go out and find them again?
- RUFUS                 *[Laughing]* What are you gonna do?
- SAMSON                Hey, everyone.
- RUFUS                 What?
- SAMSON                I really have to... pee. What are we gonna do about that?
- RUFUS                 Just hold it in.
- SAMSON                I can’t.

- ERNIE                    OK let's keep busy to get our minds off the situation. Drink bottles.
- They start to organise all their drink bottles in the corner so they can be easily rationed.*
- ERNIE                    Samson maybe grab one of those tins up there?
- SAMSON                Gross, Ernie no way! I'll just hold it in.
- SADIE                    What would they have done in the old days if they were in here?
- LUKE                    Go outside I guess.
- SAMSON                *[Hesitating]* Well... *[She can't think of another option, so she gets one of the tins.]* Where do I take it?
- ERNIE                    Into the bunk room.
- SAMSON                What if you all... hear it?
- RUFUS                    Gross.
- ERNIE                    We won't listen and we'll keep talking out here.
- SAMSON lingers, not sure what to do. MACK indicates The Talking Book in ERNIE'S hand.*
- MACK                    Is that The Talking Book?
- ERNIE                    Yeah. It's actually Shackleton's diary. The explorer.
- SAMSON                Who's that?
- MACK                    He was the guy who tried to be the first person to the South Pole but he was just beaten. So then he tried to be the first person to cross the whole of Antarctica but his ship, Endurance, got stuck in the ice. They were trapped for years and he kept everyone alive. They told us about him at school, Samson.
- SAMSON                I don't listen at school.

MACK                                Yes, you do. It's pretty amazing. Like his crew were walking on parts of the earth that nobody had ever set foot on. And just using the stars to know where to go.

SAMSON                              What, no GPS?

MACK:                                No.

LUKE                                 Do places like that even still exist? Like totally uncharted waters?

ERNIE                                 Dunno.

SAMSON                              And they were trapped for... years, you said?

*SAMSON looks down at the tin in her hands.*

MACK                                 Yeah.

ERNIE                                 [Weakly] But they all survived, at least?

*SAMSON        [Eye roll] Great. OK here I go. Keep talking and nobody listen. I can't believe I'm doing this.*

*SAMSON awkwardly heads out to the bunk room with the tin.*

RUFUS                                You said they'd be here in five minutes, Ernie. Well tick, tick, tick...

ERNIE                                 [She nervously looks to the door.] I know.

# *Where in the World is Frank Sparrow?* by Angela Betzien

*Where in the World is Frank Sparrow?* by Angela Betzien (2012) is published by [Playlab Theatre](#).

## SCENE

CHORUS

Now in Stab City

It's Autumn.

The leaves have fallen  
and the earth is dying  
again.

Trees curl up their roots  
like old people's toes  
in nursing homes.

All around is death  
the earth turning in its sick-bed.

And where in this world of shadows is Frank Sparrow?  
that sickly fellow  
who does not know  
yet  
that he could be ...  
possibly ...  
maybe our story's hero.

FRANK

Here I am.

CHORUS

Aged fourteen  
tall and lean.  
A face full of quirk

an arm that won't work.

Lungs that heave and wheeze

that even Ventolin won't ease.

The boy who medical experts gauge

won't make it to a ripe old age.

He's generally

wearing jeans and hoodie

but today he's dressed in suit and tie.

Why?

He's attending a court hearing.

The charge?

Break and entering.

Reckless behaviour endangering

life

causing

death.

Let's lend an ear to these proceedings.

# Staging Ideas – Set and costume design for theatre

## by Stephen Curtis

*Staging Ideas – Set and costume design for theatre* by Stephen Curtis (2014) is published by [Currency Press Sydney](#).

**Teacher note:** teachers may wish to make the excerpts from this text available to students or may refer to ideas contained in the text when adapting teaching and learning activities in the ‘Nothing is neutral – designing for theatre’ unit.

### Chapter 5: Communicating our ideas visually (excerpt)

#### Style choices

Let’s look at a few different ways of thinking and talking about visual style, and consider some art references that help us visualise these choices. Art movements that correlate to stylistic choices are shown in **bold**.

We can think of visual style in terms of being abstract or less abstract.

Figure 1 – more real to more abstract



Image sourced from *Staging Ideas – Set and costume design for theatre* by Stephen Curtis (2014) is published by [Currency Press Sydney](#).

Table 1 – more real to more abstract

<i>More real</i>		<i>More abstract</i>
<b>'Real'</b>	<b>Stylised/idealised</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
Photography	<b>Impressionism, Post- impressionism</b>	<b>Cubism</b>
Trompe l'oeil	<b>e.g., Fauvism, Expressionism, Pop Art</b>	<b>Abstract Expressionism</b> <b>Mondrian, Rothko</b>

Table 2 – more real to less real

<i>More real</i>		<i>Less Real</i>
<b>Realism</b>	<b>Heightened realism</b>	<b>Fantasy</b>
Documentary realism	Poetic realism	Dream
Slice-of-life	Hyper-reality	Caricature
Naturalism	Illusionism	<b>Symbolism</b>
<b>Photojournalism</b>	<b>Impressionism</b>	<b>Surrealism</b>
<b>Late 19th century Realism</b>	<b>Hyper-realism</b> <b>17th century genre/still life</b>	<b>Baroque religious art</b>

Or, we can think of realism as a 'neutral' central state, and the further away from the centre, the more stylised we become. At the extremes of stylisation we have fantasy. If we are led from the centre by our emotions we move towards romanticism, and if we are led in the opposite direction by our reason we move towards classicism:



Figure 2 – neutral central state

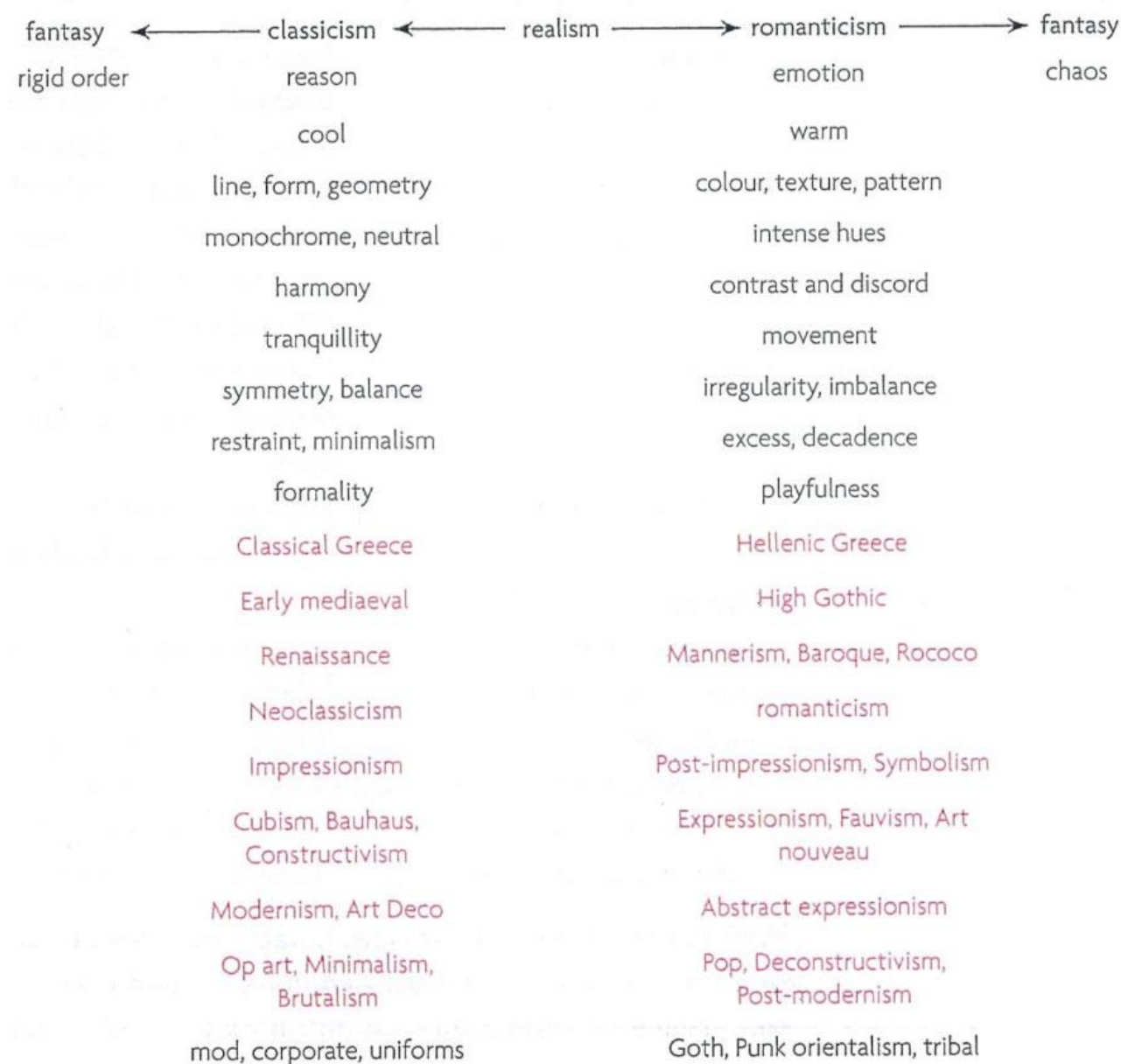


Image sourced from *Staging Ideas – Set and costume design for theatre* by Stephen Curtis (2014) is published by [Currency Press Sydney](http://www.currencypress.com.au).

Table 3 – neutral central state

Fantasy	Classicism	Realism	Romanticism	Fantasy
Rigid order	Reason Cool Line, form, geometry	Neutral central state	Emotion Warm Colour, texture, pattern	Chaos

Fantasy	Classicism	Realism	Romanticism	Fantasy
	Monochrome, neutral		Intense hues	
	Harmony		Contrast and discord	
	Tranquillity		Movement	
	Symmetry, balance		Irregularity, imbalance	
	Restraint, minimalism		Excess, decadence	
	Formality		Playfulness	
	<b>Classical Greece</b>		<b>Hellenic Greece</b>	
	<b>Early mediaeval</b>		<b>High Gothic</b>	
	<b>Renaissance</b>		<b>Mannerism, Baroque,</b>	
	<b>Neoclassicism</b>		<b>Rococo</b>	
	<b>Impressionism</b>		<b>Romanticism</b>	
	<b>Cubism, Bauhaus,</b>		<b>Post-impressionism,</b>	
	<b>Constructivism</b>		<b>Symbolism</b>	
	<b>Modernism, Art deco</b>		<b>Expressionism,</b>	
	<b>Op art, Minimalism,</b>		<b>Fauvism, Art nouveau</b>	
	<b>Brutalism</b>		<b>Abstract expressionism</b>	
	Mod, corporate, uniforms		<b>Pop, Deconstructivism,</b>	
			<b>Post-modernism</b>	
			Goth, Punk orientalism, tribal	

Typically culture develops from a relatively 'pure' aesthetic form and evolves to become more and more complex and ultimately 'decadent', only to be rejected and replaced by yet another simpler, pure form. The forces of political and social change are strongly linked to these cultural patterns. In revolutionary periods of radical change design forms tend to be stripped back to basics and have a

formal ('classical') rigour. Conversely periods of stability and growth are often characterised by a creative 'flowering' in which design forms become more complex and idiosyncratic ('romantic').

## Using visual style choices to design

We can use these stylistic patterns as designers by aligning the moods and themes of the project with corresponding movements in art and culture. This can help us identify architectural forms, period costume silhouettes, uses of colour or light, mood and many other visual qualities that in turn can help us shape our design.

To demonstrate how this can work let's investigate some of the (many possible) themes and moods of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and see how we might apply our understanding of visual style to give them shape.

Table 4 – themes and possible style references

Themes	Possible style references
Sensuality and passion	Baroque, Romanticist, Fauve artists e.g., Tiepolo, Rubens, Delacroix, Matisse
Romantic idealism	Symbolist and Romanticist fantasy artists e.g., Redon, Freidrich, Rousseau, Chagall
Repression	Look for extremes of order and structure e.g., Minimalism, Brutalism, Fascist classicism
Rebellion	Investigate periods where art violently rejected orthodoxy e.g., Neo-classicism, constructivism, punk
Collision of opposites	Work two opposite styles against each other e.g., corporate vs Goth, Bauhaus vs pop

Table 5 – moods and possible style references

Moods	Possible style references
Spiritual bliss	Early Mediaeval, early Renaissance, Islamic art, Klimt

Moods	Possible style references
(the lovers' first meeting)	
Anger, rage (the fight where Tybalt is killed)	Expressionists/Abstract Expressionists: Kandinsky/Pollock
Sombre beauty (the final death scene)	Morandi, Rothko, de Chirico  Minimalism, Classicism

## Chapter 6: Developing our design concept (excerpt)

### Conventions of engagement – Engaging the audience

**SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF** refers to the way an audience member is able to willingly suspend judgment of the plausibility of the events on stage – they effectively leave their world behind to imaginatively enter the world of the production.

**THE FOURTH WALL:** The realist theatre convention of the 'fourth wall' assumes that the actors perform as though the audience is not there, and that the audience has a privileged window into a framed slice of life through the invisible 'fourth wall'.

**IDENTIFICATION** is a psychological (Freudian) concept adapted by realist theatre-makers. It encourages the audience to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and to share their feelings (empathise) to such a degree that they experience what the characters experience.

**ALIENATION** is a Brechtian technique (*Verfremdungseffekt*) that works in the opposite way to identification. It aims to distance the audience so that they become consciously aware that they are watching, and will therefore make decisions about what they are watching. Through this active interpretation Brecht believed that the audience became 'performers' in the event.

**IMMERSION:** This is an approach that uses all aspects of the production to totally overwhelm the audience's senses, so they completely 'lose themselves' in the production.

'**THE HOOK**' is a way of thinking that many directors and designers use when thinking about how to grab the audience's attention and draw them into the production. We will often use tantalising

visual elements as 'bait' to initially excite the audience's attention and then devise a series of 'theatrical moments' that will keep them engaged (hooked).

## References

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