



# DETENTION

Classroom Learning Pack

monkey  
baa

Monkey Baa respectfully acknowledges the Custodians of this nation and honours their continued cultural and spiritual connection to the lands, waters and seas.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, on whose land we work, live and share stories.

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# Hello!

This learning pack supports teachers and students engaging with *Detention*, a stage adaptation of Tristan Bancks' novel. Designed for Years 5–10, it offers curriculum-aligned activities across English, Drama and HASS (Civics & Citizenship/History), exploring themes of morality, identity, social justice, displacement, belonging and shared humanity.

The production invites young people to examine the clash between personal values and political systems, the role of empathy and critical thinking in decision-making and what it means to stand up for what you believe in. Developed in collaboration with Hazara artists and young people, it centres lived experience and encourages nuanced, respectful discussion.

Inside, you'll find pre- and post-show discussion prompts, classroom activities that unpack key moments and character decisions, insights into the adaptation process from page to stage, as well as opportunities to analyse theatrical elements and performance choices. Activities connect to the Australian Curriculum and build general capabilities in Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding.

This resource was created by Alexander Andrews, with Callan Purcell.

## About Monkey Baa

We're a national Australian theatre company creating extraordinary theatre for young people. For nearly three decades we've been making shows that spark imagination, creativity and a lifelong love of the arts.

Our productions go on big tours across Australia and beyond, reaching over 60 communities each year. We perform in major cities and visit regional and remote communities. We work closely with schools, local groups and charities so that every young person has the chance to experience the joy of theatre.

Whether it's coming to see a show, joining a workshop at school, doing work experience with us or being part of our Youth Advisory Council, there are so many ways for young people to connect with our work.

We respect young people as an audience of now, not just the future. We love working together to shape everything we do and some of our most creative moments have been co-created with them.



## About the show

# Detention

Detention tells the compelling tale of two young people from disparate worlds finding each other amidst a figurative minefield: Sima, a Hazara refugee fleeing a detention centre when her visa has been rejected, and Dan, a marginalised boy raised in a caravan park in regional Australia. Their shared quest for a sense of home and safety binds them together.

Based on the novel by Tristan Bancks, this production explores the refugee experience, centring on themes of displacement, belonging and shared humanity. Developed in collaboration with Hazara artists and young people, Detention seeks to ignite conversations, using theatre as a catalyst for truth-telling and change.

**A Monkey Baa Theatre Company production**

**Detention by Tristan Bancks**

**Adapted for the stage by Callan Purcell and Kobra Sayyadi**

Photos from the development room by Amber Melody



# Themes

## **Courage and moral choice**

The characters in Detention face tough decisions: follow the rules or follow their hearts. The play explores different kinds of bravery such as standing up to authority, helping someone in danger and making difficult choices for the right reasons.

## **Empathy and human connection**

Sima and Dan come from very different worlds yet they form a bond built on trust, kindness and care. Their story shows how listening and compassion can bridge even the widest divides.

## **Social justice and refugee rights**

The play challenges us to think deeply about fairness and the way Australia treats people seeking asylum. It encourages students to question systems and recognise the power of speaking out.

## **Coming of age and identity**

Both Dan and Sima are growing up in difficult circumstances. Their journeys shape who they are and how they see the world, offering students the chance to explore how identity is formed through challenge, change and resilience.

## **Truth and misinformation**

Detention invites audiences to question stereotypes, bias and the stories we are told. It shows how misunderstandings about refugees can cause harm and how important it is to ask questions and seek the truth.

## **Hope and resistance**

Even when the odds are stacked against them the characters find ways to keep going. The story is filled with moments of hope, kindness and quiet resistance that remind us that change is always possible.



**“Detention is a  
testament to the  
power of storytelling in  
theatre for young  
audiences...  
championing radical  
empathy, imagination  
and compassion.”**

— Callan Purcell



# Creatives

**Kobra Sayyadi**

Co-adaptor

**James Brown**

Composer Sound Designer

**Zeynab Noori**

Performer

**Angie Diaz**

Performer

**Callan Purcell**

Co-adaptor

**Keerthi Subramanyam**

Production Designer

**Matt Dorahy**

Performer

**Andrew Attieh**

Performer

**Randa Sayed**

Director

**Kate Baldwin**

Lighting Designer

**Challito Browne**

Performer



# Behind the Scenes

## The vision

We believe theatre can start important conversations and inspire young people to see the world in new ways.

Detention is based on the novel by Tristan Bancks. When theatre maker Callan Purcell first read the book, he saw the potential for a stage adaptation that could centre the voices of people with lived experience of seeking asylum. In 2022, Callan approached us with the idea and we commissioned him to adapt the novel into a play.

From the beginning, the project was grounded in truth-telling and community collaboration. Callan partnered with emerging Hazara artist and co-writer Kobra Sayyadi to ensure authenticity in portraying the story's Hazara protagonist, Sima. Together they developed the script in deep consultation with Hazara artists, young people and community members, weaving their insights, memories and cultural knowledge into the heart of the play.

Through a blend of text, movement, music and design, the creative team has built a visceral, physical production. The process has involved long-form improvisation, Lecoq-based physical theatre and exploration of traditional Afghan music and cultural imagery. The aim has been to create a theatrical language that speaks directly to young audiences while staying true to the novel's spirit of resilience and hope.

## Let's chat with Callan

### What is your role in Detention?

I'm one of the co-adaptors, working with Kobra to turn Tristan's book into something that lives and breathes onstage. We've taken moments from the book and found ways to make them land in the room, to make the audience feel them as they happen. My favourite part has been dreaming up the boldest, most theatrical ways to tell this story, while staying true to these young people, their worlds and their cultures and their perspectives.

### What drew you to Tristan Bancks' novel?

It was a chance to reframe the way Australia perceives those seeking asylum. Too often, stories get boiled down to the same stereotypes; "the victim," "the outsider," "the other." And too often, people give up on young people too soon because they're "too dumb", "too dangerous", "too lazy". This book was different. It centres two young people who are smart, resilient and innocent in their own way. Both refuse to disappear.

We wanted other young people to meet them. Together, their stories show two very different young people who are forced to change, fast and watching that asks the question of "Who decides what is good and bad?"

### Why did you want to adapt the novel into a play?

Theatre is a safe space to explore dangerous ideas. For a short time, audience and actors form a community, wrestling with urgent questions together. The story's risk and immediacy only come alive when someone is watching, their reactions completing the conversation. That's why we've leaned into what live performance does best: the craft and athleticism of performers, the thrill of unpredictability and the magic when all the elements collide. We want young people to cheer, gasp, laugh and hold their breath with these characters.





## The script

To develop the script, Callan, Kobra and the Monkey Baa team worked closely with the Hazara community to ensure the story reflected lived experiences with truth and care. The creative team explored the book's characters and events through improvisation, movement and design experiments, shaping the dialogue, action and theatrical elements. They tested how set pieces, music and lighting could bring Sima and Dan's worlds to life, while refining the structure to capture the urgency, humour and heart of the original novel.

## Let's chat with Kobra

### **How did your own experience shape the way you approached the characters in *Detention*?**

As a Hazara woman from Western Sydney, I drew on my lived experience of migration, stereotypes and resilience. That helped me approach the characters with authenticity and make sure the play reflected real voices like mine.

### **How did you and Callan work together to shape the story's structure and characters?**

Callan mentored me through the process, guiding structure and pacing while encouraging me to bring in my own perspective. Together we made sure the characters felt layered and engaging for young audiences.

### **Which parts of the script were the most challenging or rewarding to write?**

Writing scenes based on migrant experiences was both tough and rewarding. They were deeply personal but also powerful, knowing they could challenge stereotypes and spark empathy in audiences.



## The development

Detention was shaped over three major creative development periods between 2022 and 2024. Early workshops focused on connecting with the Hazara community, gathering stories and ensuring the adaptation honoured lived experiences. In December 2023, the team worked with actors, musicians and designers to test key scenes using improvisation, movement and traditional Afghan music. In March 2024, they built on this work under director Randa Sayed, experimenting with set pieces, costume ideas, sound and lighting to create the visual and emotional worlds.

## Let's chat with Randa

### What drew you to directing Detention?

Callan Purcell, who is both one of the playwrights and the artist at the heart of this project and invited the Hazara writer Kobra Sayyadi to co-write this adaptation. This hooked me in immediately. I very much loved Tristan Banks' book, but I feel the co-written aspect of this work really hooked me into wanting to be involved. The story of Detention is about two young kids from completely different worlds being challenged to find their courage. What better way to experience this story than to hear and feel those two very different perspectives?

## “A genuine love for the story itself.”

The story is gripping, exciting and relatable. Every time I hear it, I am surprised when it finishes and I am left wanting more. As an Arab Muslim woman and as an Australian, I relate to both the foreigners and the locals within this story. It is like seeing the world of Australia and the myriad parts of ourselves within a teacup.





### **How did you work with the cast to build the worlds of the play using movement and objects?**

Through experimentation. We started the process by throwing a lot of objects in the ring. We brought actual materials like smoke, scarves and 1m lengths of wood from Bunnings into the room. We played games and began to experiment with creating scenes with these objects. Also through fun. Quite simply, one of the biggest radars was the level of fun we had in creating the scenes with the objects.

With objects that gave a space for us and the audience to dream into. You will be surprised by this, but the 1.2m lengths of wood from Bunnings, with its rigid surface and sharp lines, helped us create many worlds: the classroom, Midgemba, a toilet cubicle and the detention centre. As a company, we found ourselves experimenting with this object more than others because it drew out elements within the story without being too literal. A scarf or fabric is very different to wood. They both give off a different feeling and essence. They also have different cultural references. So each object is important and a personal choice in a way.

### **What discoveries during the development workshops had the biggest impact on your direction?**

I have discovered through the workshops that we can always improve on a draft of a scene. What often happens in Australian theatre is that we settle on a scene that works and are afraid to experiment further. Sometimes trying something new makes it stronger.

In one development, we created the first scene with a focus on objects and used a live drummer in the space. Before the next development, one of the writers asked me to focus more on the rhythm of the writing in generating the scene, as though the writing were beat poetry. The team and I took up the challenge.

We started with fewer objects and refocused on the delivery of the writing as beat poetry, and another version emerged. The previous draft, with more objects, made us sit on the edge of our seats in anticipation, whereas the second version invited us to lean into the story, like a friend wanting to help another friend. Both worked, just in completely different ways.

Other things I have learned:

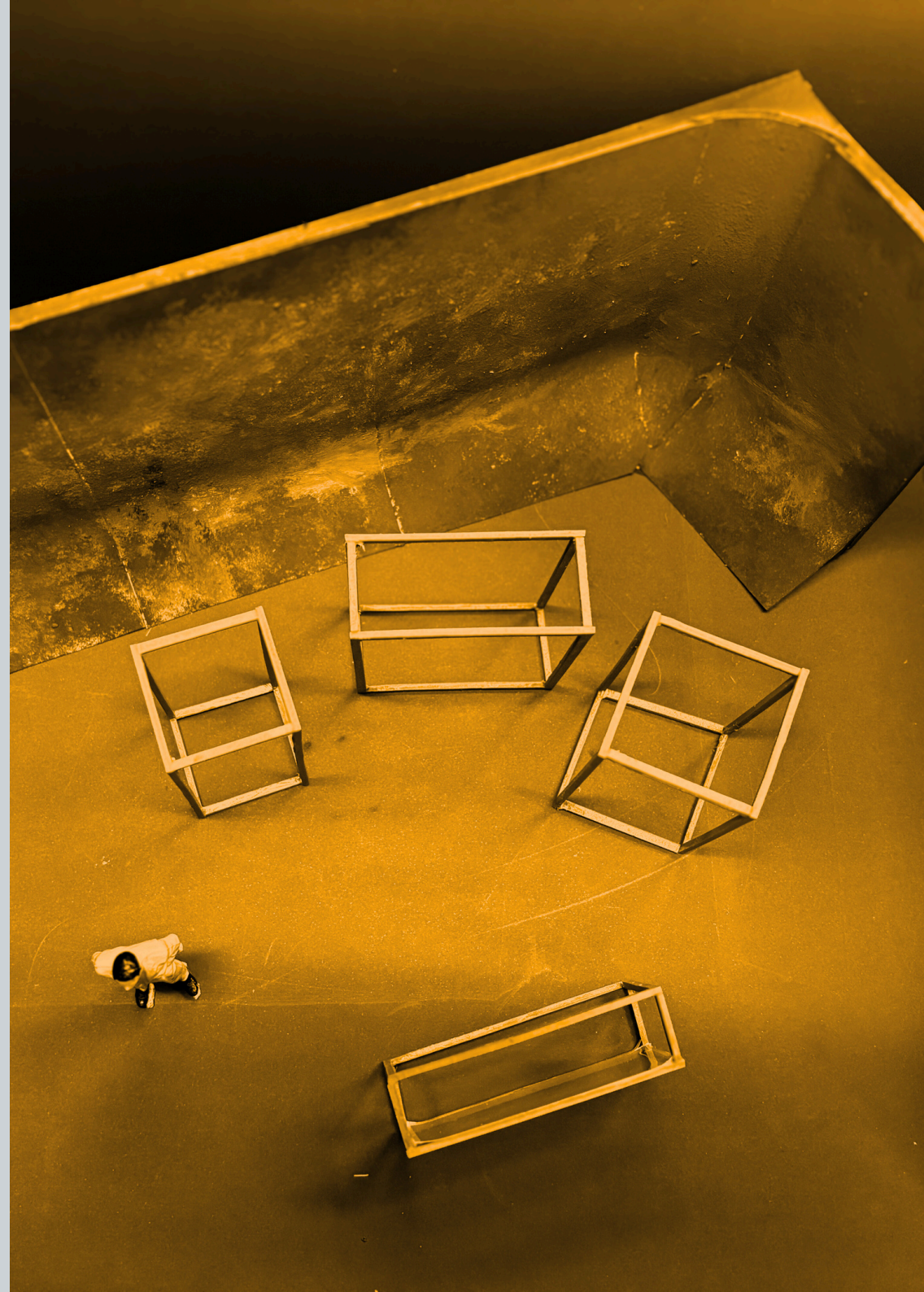
- I can plan as much as I want, but sometimes what we discover in collaboration in the room is far more interesting.
- Progress moves at the speed of trust.
- When it isn't fun, it shouldn't be done.

## The design

The design of Detention, led by Keerthi Subramanyam, brings Sima and Dan's contrasting worlds to life through set, lighting, costume and sound. The set transforms quickly between locations, using minimal but versatile elements to suggest the inside of a detention centre, the open spaces of regional Australia and the liminal spaces in between. Lighting shifts the mood from high-energy chases to quiet, reflective moments, while sound drives the tension and rhythm of the story. Costumes are grounded in realism, helping to anchor the characters in their social and personal contexts.

Keerthi's design draws on a visual language of chalk lines, scribbles and hand-drawn images, evoking a world that feels both childlike and raw. The mood board (next page) suggests a set that is minimal yet expressive, where walls can become sketchbooks and everyday spaces transform through imagination. There's a sense of play and impermanence; figures drawn and erased, boxes that confine or liberate, outlines that hint at a world just beyond reach.

This aesthetic gives the performers freedom to create and erase in real time and invites the audience to lean into a world that is immediate, fragile and full of possibility.





# Set design mood board



Images collected by Keerthi Subramanyam



## Let's chat with Zeynab

### **What was it like to be involved in Detention from the development stage through to the full production?**

Being part of Detention from the beginning was inspiring and eye-opening. I saw how ideas took shape through workshops, conversations and experimentation. The process was collaborative, with every artist contributing their voice. Watching it grow from drafts into a staged performance was challenging and deeply rewarding.

### **How did you prepare to play Sima and capture her journey on stage?**

I explored her emotional world, background and relationships, and the resilience that carries her forward. Rehearsals helped me embody her struggles physically and vocally, while my cultural experiences allowed me to connect with her in a genuine way.

### **What discoveries did you make about the character during the workshops?**

In the workshops I discovered that Sima's strength comes through her vulnerability. She is hopeful yet fearful, outspoken yet silenced. Each rehearsal revealed new depth in how she interacts with others and survives. These discoveries shaped my performance and gave her presence more authenticity.

## The performance

The performances in Detention grew out of an extensive development process that blended text, movement and improvisation. Director Randa Sayed worked closely with the cast to explore the physical and emotional worlds of the characters. Using live music, physical theatre techniques and object work, the ensemble built a shared language for the story. Each performer contributed to shaping the action, testing how movement, stillness and silence could carry as much weight as dialogue. By the end of development, the actors had created a detailed physical score for the play.



# Sima and Dan's journey



# From home to Australian shores

Excerpt from Detention by Tristan Bancks

## January 2012

- Sima is nine years old. She and her mother and father leave Jaghori, travel overland and across the border into Quetta, Pakistan.

## May 2012

- They leave Quetta and travel by plane to Indonesia. They stay in Cisarua.

## May 2013

- After waiting for a year in Cisarua for their application for asylum to be processed by Australian immigration, Sima's father becomes scared and impatient and pays a people smuggler. They travel by boat to Australia. The boat is intercepted by the Australian Navy. Everyone onboard is taken to Christmas Island.

## May 2013 – November 2014

- Sima and family are detained on Christmas Island.

## November 2014

- Due to complications with Sima's mother's pregnancy, the family is moved to a 'short-term' Immigration Transit Accommodation Centre on the mainland. They are told that they will soon be granted bridging visas and released into the community.

## February 2015

- The family is informed by their case worker that their application for refugee status has been rejected and they will be sent back to Afghanistan, along with many others whose applications have been rejected.

## March 2015

- There are protests outside the centre and a plan is formulated.

## 19 March 2015

- Australian protesters cut through fences and release people from the centre, including Sima's family (this is similar to something that happened at Woomera detention centre in 2002.)





## Escaping the detention centre

“Through the wire, to the trees, to the bus,  
then to Leeton.” — Ensemble

At the start of the play, Sima escapes from an immigration detention centre. She is forced to make a split-second decision, stay and face being sent back or risk everything for a chance at freedom. This moment sets the entire story in motion.

In Australia, people seeking asylum may be placed in detention while their claims are processed. These facilities are often secure and remote, with strict rules and limited contact with the outside world. For many detainees, the uncertainty of not knowing when they will be released can be as difficult as the physical restrictions.

Sima’s escape is both a physical and emotional leap, the start of a dangerous journey through unfamiliar territory. Her world shifts from the rigid confines of the detention centre to the unpredictability of the outside, where help and danger can come from unexpected places.

### Discussion question

What risks do you think Sima is taking by escaping and why might she decide it’s worth it?

## Hiding in the school

Early in her escape, Sima hides inside a local high school, searching for a safe place to rest and avoid capture. It's here she crosses paths with Dan, a student who is dealing with his own struggles. Their first encounter is tense and uncertain; neither fully trusts the other. But the choices they make in this moment will change both their lives.

Schools in Australia are usually safe spaces for young people, but for someone on the run, they can also be filled with risk. A stranger moving through the halls could draw unwanted attention and every sound or movement could reveal her hiding place.

This step of Sima's journey shifts the story from a solo escape to a shared path. It's the beginning of an uneasy alliance between two very different young people, showing how trust can start in the smallest of moments.

### Discussion question

If you were in Dan's position, how would you decide whether to help Sima or turn her in?

**“I can't breathe.  
My heart's too loud.”**

— Sima



## Travelling together

“You just need to get to Leeton, right?  
I can help with that.” — Dan

Once Sima and Dan decide to trust each other, they set off on the road toward Leeton. This part of the journey takes them across unfamiliar landscapes, dodging danger and making quick decisions to avoid being caught. Along the way, they face practical challenges like finding transport, avoiding attention and navigating without a clear plan, as well as emotional ones, learning to rely on each other.

Travel can be risky for anyone without money, documents or a safe place to stay. For Sima, every stop could mean discovery and arrest. For Dan, helping her means putting himself in danger too. Their shared journey becomes a test of courage, resourcefulness and loyalty.

This step moves the story into the heart of its action. Two young people from different worlds, united by a common goal, moving forward together despite the odds.

### Discussion question

What do you think Sima and Dan learn about each other during their journey that makes their trust stronger?



## Confrontation and choice

By the final part of their journey, Sima and Dan face the toughest obstacles yet. Their path to Leeton is blocked by people who might help them or might turn them in. Both must decide how far they are willing to go and what risks they are prepared to take, to see the journey through.

This moment brings the themes of courage and moral choice into sharp focus. For Sima, the choice is deeply personal, returning to detention could mean being sent back to a dangerous future. For Dan, helping her means stepping far outside his comfort zone and confronting his own fears.

The confrontation forces them to weigh personal safety against doing what they believe is right. The choices they make here will define the end of their journey and how they see themselves.

### Discussion question

When faced with a hard choice, is it more important to protect yourself or to help someone else and why?

**“If I stop now, it’s all  
been for nothing.”**

— Sima



## Resolution

“Maybe we’re both just looking for somewhere to belong.” — Dan

By the end of the play, Sima and Dan have been changed by their journey. They’ve faced challenges that tested their courage, trust and understanding of each other. The final scenes explore ideas of belonging, safety and hope, and leave the audience to imagine what might come next for the characters.

Rather than wrapping everything up neatly, the ending reflects how life can be unpredictable, especially for people navigating difficult systems. It asks us to think about what makes a place feel like home and how we find connection in unexpected places.

For young audiences, these questions are deeply relatable. Many are figuring out their own identity, where they fit in and how to navigate a world that can feel uncertain. The play encourages them to reflect on their own values and experiences and to imagine how empathy and understanding can shape the choices they make.

### Discussion question

What do you think might happen next for Sima and Dan?

# The bigger picture

## The Hazara community in Afghanistan and Australia

Hazaras are a distinct ethnic community with a long history, rich cultural traditions and a strong sense of identity. Many Hazaras are Shia Muslim and speak Hazaragi, a Persian dialect with its own sounds and expressions. Hazara culture includes poetry, storytelling and music such as the dambura. Families and community life are central, with a deep emphasis on education and mutual support.

Hazaras have also faced discrimination and targeted violence across different periods in Afghanistan. In recent years extremist groups and political instability have made life unsafe for many. Some have moved within the region, others have sought protection further away.

Hazara refugees have been arriving in Australia since the late 1990s. Today there are Hazara communities in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and a number of regional centres. People work in many fields, start small businesses and contribute to schools and local clubs while maintaining language and cultural practices. Many also navigate real challenges such as temporary visas, long processing times and the impacts of detention and uncertainty.

## Immigration detention in Australia

People who arrive to seek asylum without a valid visa may be detained while their claims are assessed.

Detention facilities have strict rules and limited contact with the outside world. Uncertainty and separation from family can affect health and wellbeing. Detention is one part of a wider policy landscape that people and organisations in Australia discuss and debate. The play invites students to think critically about these systems and their human impact.

## Why this context matters for young audiences

Understanding both Hazara culture and the realities people face helps students move beyond stereotypes. It shows that a community can hold joy, creativity and strength while also carrying stories of loss and displacement. Theatre can hold these truths side by side and invite compassion and action.

## Discussion question

How can we talk about detention and refugee policy with care for the people most affected?



A man with dark hair and a beard is crouching on a carpeted floor, holding a large, light-colored wooden board horizontally in front of his face. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and dark pants. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text "Before the show" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

**Before *the* show**

## Theatrical style

Detention uses a mix of realistic moments and theatrical techniques that make the story more visual and imaginative. Some of these include:

- Transformation – actors play more than one character and change quickly using their voice, body or small props.
- Direct address – sometimes the characters speak straight to the audience, sharing their thoughts or asking questions.
- Symbolism – objects like a scarf or a bus ticket can mean more than one thing, carrying a deeper message in the story.
- Physical theatre – using movement and body language to show action, mood or place.

## Audience connection

In Detention, the actors find ways to draw the audience into the story:

- Looking at the audience during quiet moments so you feel part of the scene.
- Moving closer or further away to change how “involved” you feel.
- Using sound and light to make you feel the tension or relief the characters feel.

## Spotting acting skills

When you watch Detention, notice the choices the actors make with:

- Voice – loud/soft, fast/slow, smooth/rough
- Movement – quick/slow, heavy/light, calm/nervous
- Facial expressions – happy, worried, angry, relieved
- Gesture – the way they use hands, arms and body
- Stillness – sometimes a pause can say a lot

## Elements of theatre

These are tools the theatre makers use to keep you interested and help you understand the story:

### Tool

Cohesion

Motion

Rhythm

Emphasis

Contrast

Variation

### What it means

Everything works together

How things move on stage

How fast or slow things happen

Making something stand out

Opposite ideas

Changing things up

### Discussion question

Which of these theatre composition tools do you think you might notice the most in Detention and why?

## First impressions

### Objective

Students will explore their initial ideas about Detention and begin making thematic connections before seeing the play.

### Materials

Large sheet of butcher's paper or whiteboard, markers.

### Instructions

Write the word Detention in the centre of the board or paper. Ask students to call out words, feelings and images that come to mind when they hear the title. Write all responses around the word. Group similar responses together (eg, school-related detention vs. immigration detention). Briefly introduce that the play's story is about immigration detention, without giving away key plot points. Discuss how the meaning of the title changes in different contexts.

### Discussion questions

How might the title connect to situations in the real world?

What might the play explore beyond the obvious meaning?

## In their shoes

### Objective

Students will use imagination and empathy to build a character's backstory from a single object.

### Materials

An object that could belong to a character in the play (backpack, scarf, bus ticket).

### Instructions

Hold up the object and tell students it belongs to someone who has just left home suddenly. In pairs, students imagine who the owner is, where they came from and why they left. Ask each pair to create a short spoken introduction for the character, using the object as a starting point. Share a few examples with the class.

### Discussion questions

How did the object influence the story you created about the character?

What details made your imagined character feel believable or real?

Did other pairs create very different stories from the same object? Why do you think that happened?



## Spotlight on the Hazara community

### Objective

Students will center Hazara voices and culture, build knowledge that goes beyond displacement and creates space for pride, complexity and lived experience.

### Materials

Fact sheet or slideshow on the Hazara community, poster paper, markers.

### Instructions

In groups, students research and note gathered information about Hazara life that is not about persecution. Each group creates a poster titled Hazara culture we notice with sections for Language, Arts, Family and Community. Encourage concrete details like words in Hazaragi, foods, instruments, sports clubs, festivals. Additional activity: on a shared map, students draw a simple journey line from a Hazara homeland region to an Australian city and add a note describing one strength individuals and groups bring to their new community. Students share one way their view shifted when researching Hazara culture.

### Discussion question

What did you notice about Hazara joy, creativity or daily life?

## Tableau: the moment of decision

### Objective

Students will explore physical storytelling by creating frozen images that capture high-stakes choices.

### Materials

Open space in the classroom.

### Instructions

Explain what a tableau is, a frozen image that tells a story without words. In small groups, students create a tableau showing a person making a difficult decision. Present each tableau to the class and have others guess the decision being made. Encourage groups to think about body language, facial expression and positioning to make the situation clear.

### Discussion questions

What clues in body language or positioning helped you understand the decision being shown?

How did facial expressions change the meaning of the tableau?

Did different groups interpret the same decision in different ways?

## Run, hide, stay

### Objective

Students will consider the risks and rewards of different choices in a high-pressure situation.

### Materials

Whiteboard or large paper for mapping ideas.

### Instructions

Explain to students that they are about to imagine themselves in a high-stakes situation where they have only seconds to decide what to do. Tell them “You are somewhere you are not supposed to be. You suddenly hear voices and footsteps approaching. You have to decide right now: run, hide or stay.” Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the three options (run, hide or stay). Groups brainstorm possible short-term and long-term outcomes of their choice. Encourage them to think about safety, family, the law and personal values. Groups present their mind maps and then physically as tableaux.

### Discussion questions

How did your group decide which outcomes were most likely for your choice?

Did thinking about safety, family, the law and personal values change the way you saw the decision?

## Performance vocabulary

### Objective

Students will learn key theatrical terms to help them watch and discuss the play critically.

### Materials

List of theatrical terms, paper for students to record their own definitions.

### Instructions

Provide students with a list of terms they will encounter when learning about or discussing Detention. In pairs, students write definitions in their own words and give an example of each term from a performance they’ve seen or read. Share definitions as a class to create a shared glossary.

### Theatrical terms

Ensemble	Props
Physical theatre	Costume design
Direct address	Stage directions
Tableau	Blocking
Symbolism	Pace
Soundscape	Monologue
Multirole performance	Freeze frame
Transitions	Proxemics
Set design	Cue
Lighting design	Underscoring



**After  
the show**



## Characters' reflections

### Objective

Students will reflect on the journeys of the main characters and how they changed over the course of the play.

### Materials

Paper, pens or pencils.

### Instructions

Ask students to choose either Sima or Dan. Have them write a short reflection in the character's voice, set after the events of the play. Encourage them to consider: What has the character learned? How do they feel about what happened? What are they hoping for next? Invite volunteers to share their reflections.

### Discussion questions

How did writing in the character's voice change the way you understood their journey?

What moments from the play do you think most shaped the character's future?

Did you imagine the character's feelings the same way as others in the class, why or why not?

## Moments that mattered

### Objective

Students will identify and analyse a key moment from the play and explain why it was impactful.

### Materials

Whiteboard, paper, pens.

### Instructions

As a class, brainstorm memorable moments from the production. Students choose one moment and write about why it stood out, considering acting, staging, sound, lighting or emotional impact. Share responses in pairs or small groups.

### Discussion questions

What specific elements (acting, staging, sound, lighting) made your chosen moment stand out?

How did that moment contribute to the overall story or themes of the play?

Did other people in your group notice the same moment, and if so, did they interpret it differently?

## Empathy map

### Objective

Students will practise empathy by imagining a character's inner world.

### Materials

Empathy map template, paper, markers.

### Instructions

Give each student or group an empathy map template divided into four sections: What they say, What they do, What they think, and What they feel. Allocate a character from Detention to each group. This could include Sima, Dan, a teacher or an ensemble character. Make sure a mix of perspectives is explored. Ask groups to work together to complete each section, using evidence from the performance. Encourage them to draw on both what they saw and what they gathered from body language, tone and staging. Post completed empathy maps around the classroom. Give students time to walk around, read other groups' maps and notice similarities or differences in interpretation.

### Discussion question

How does understanding what a character thinks and feels (beyond what they say) help us connect to them?

## Building the world

### Objective

Students will analyse how design choices shaped the world of the play.

### Materials

Paper, pens, images from the production found at [monkeybaa.com.au](http://monkeybaa.com.au).

### Instructions

Ask students to recall specific elements of the set and sound design from Detention. In small groups, list moments where the design helped tell the story or change the mood. For each moment, identify what happened visually or aurally, how it contributed to the storytelling and how it made them feel as an audience member. Share examples with the class and discuss how these design choices influenced their overall understanding of the story.

### Discussion question

If you were the designer, how would you design the set, costumes, lighting and sound for Detention? Why would you make these choices?

## Adapting a scene

### Objective

Students will explore adaptation by transforming a short passage into a performance.

### Materials

Empathy map template, paper, markers.

### Instructions

Give students a short excerpt from the novel *Detention*. In small groups, adapt the passage for performance by deciding on dialogue, movement and staging. Encourage students to think about how to make the moment engaging for a live audience. Present the adapted scenes to the class and compare the different creative choices each group made.

### Discussion questions

What changes did you make from the novel to make the scene work on stage and why?

How did movement and staging choices affect the meaning or emotion of the scene?

What did you notice about how different groups approached the same excerpt?

## Taking action

### Objective

Students will connect the themes of *Detention* to real-world social issues and consider how theatre can inspire social change.

### Materials

Paper, pens, internet access (optional).

### Instructions

As a class, brainstorm social issues raised by *Detention*, such as refugee rights, empathy and fairness. In small groups, research or design a small project that could raise awareness of these issues or support people affected by them. Present the projects to the class and discuss how stories like *Detention* can inspire action in the community.

### Discussion questions

How can storytelling in theatre make people care about social issues in a different way than news or social media?

Why is it important to listen to voices from the communities most affected by these issues?



## Book a workshop today

Our classroom workshops bring the magic of theatre making to thousands of students across Australia.

These dynamic sessions build courage through creativity, giving students practical skills across all areas of theatre. Our fun and flexible workshops can be tailored to suit your students' needs, abilities and areas of study.

### Show workshops

Immerse your students in the world of our shows. These engaging, interactive workshops unpack themes through drama games and activities, supporting classroom learning and helping students connect more deeply with the story and its characters.

### Theatre making workshops

Step behind the scenes and into the creative process. Our hands-on workshops build skills in acting, puppetry, playwriting, design and more. Each session is tailored to inspire students, giving them the tools to express themselves and tell their own stories.

To learn more or book a workshop, visit our website: [monkeybaa.com.au](http://monkeybaa.com.au)

# Curriculum links

The following pages outline the relevant Australian Curriculum outcomes that can be achieved through seeing the show, engaging in workshops and using the classroom learning materials for Detention.

## Subjects

English, Humanities & Social Sciences, Drama

## Cross-Curriculum Priorities

Intercultural Understanding and Australia's engagement with Asia

## English

- Language: How language reflects identity, relationships, and context; recognising bias; objective/subjective language; varying formality.
- Literature: Exploring historical/social/cultural contexts; comparing perspectives; identifying literary devices; forming and justifying opinions.
- Literacy: Analysing how text structures and language features shape meaning; comprehension strategies; using interaction skills to discuss and present ideas.

## Humanities & Social Sciences

- Year 5–6: Migration stories and motivations; significant groups who migrated; inquiry skills.
- Year 7–8 History: Causes/effects of migration and displacement; historical inquiry and argument building; continuity and change in social attitudes.
- Year 7–8 Civics & Citizenship: Australia's multicultural society; values of fairness, respect, equality; national identity; differing perspectives and debates about citizenship.

## Drama

- Years 5–6: Combining drama elements to communicate ideas; developing characters and situations; improvisation, devised and scripted drama.
- Years 7–8: Investigating how drama elements and conventions communicate meaning across cultures; reflecting on performances; improvising, devising, or interpreting scripts in relevant styles/forms.

## Opportunities in Detention

Students will analyse how language, design, acting and direction shape meaning, connect characters' experiences to historical and contemporary migration stories, explore intercultural perspectives and challenge stereotypes.

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