



Milk Crate Theatre presents

You Are Here



Education and Information Pack

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1. About these notes

These education notes are designed to enhance students understanding and analysis of Milk Crate Theatre's production of *You Are Here* through specific links with the NSW education curriculum in the areas of Drama, English, Society and Culture and Social Justice. We encourage students and teachers alike to analyse and interpret *You Are Here* as a piece of dramatic art created using community consultation, within a cultural development framework and to appreciate it for its theatricality, diversity and social justice relevance. This resource is a place to start when analysing and drawing meaning from the production. We encourage you to do your own research to compliment this resource.

WARNING: *You Are Here* addresses and examines adult themes, of which some could be confronting for young people. These include; youth homelessness, alcohol references, crime, anger management, sleeping rough, social isolation and disengagement.



2. About Milk Crate Theatre

Milk Crate Theatre works with an Ensemble of artists who have experienced homelessness or social marginalisation to create theatre that creates change. We provide a safe, creative space for the Ensemble to build confidence and make positive changes in their lives.

Our work embodies the experiences and artistry of the Ensemble to showcase their uniqueness as contemporary storytellers and to create authentic and transformative theatre that challenges audiences and brings communities together. These stories are brutal yet beautiful, savage yet seductive, tenacious yet tender but most of all they are real: born from the experiences of those who create it.

We believe that by bringing communities together and sharing the real stories of people who have experienced homelessness or social marginalisation, we can inspire action and work towards an inclusive future where everyone feels valued.

Our artistic program is driven by the creative aspirations of the Ensemble. It harnesses the strengths of our welfare, health and community partners to deliver a high quality, developmental approach to engaging with creative processes and performance. Our mission is to work with the Ensemble to create authentic, high quality theatre that is transformative for both those that create it and those that engage with it; provide experiential, creative, educational, employment and leadership opportunities; and be ambassadors for inclusive arts practice.

Milk Crate Theatre utilises the theatre-making process to promote and advocate for social inclusion and a better understanding of people experiencing social marginalisation. We aim to inspire action on complex social issues. A core element of the Community Shows is to generate work that challenge our audiences to become involved in a discourse around ideas, misconceptions or issues that people can hold around homelessness and the many complex factors that can exist alongside that as a lived experience. We define success in relation to transformation, be it incremental or substantial.

Since 2011, the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble has been generating the content of the Community Shows through dramaturgy, playwriting and story-telling. Through this, the Ensemble shape the creative process for the shows and take on roles as performers and writers enabling the whole creative process to be deeply affected and highly representative of the Ensemble's artistry and storytelling. The content generated is then fashioned into an interactive and thought-provoking theatrical piece by the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble, Associate Artists and staff. Through peer-to-peer mentoring we then perform these shows within various welfare services with a combination of Ensemble and Associate Artists. The rationale is to ensure the legitimacy and authenticity of our Community Shows, both in relevance and resonance.

3. About the production

You Are Here utilised Milk Crate Theatre's unique creative process of peer-to-peer mentoring between Associate Artists and the Ensemble to generate an authentic and innovative production. The content was developed with and from the Ensemble through consultation and creative development. Our work holds a clear ethical mandate to not expose individual's stories within the work itself. Through this process, characters were created and situations developed for those characters that relate to the lived experience of homelessness or social marginalization. Working with the Ensemble story-tellers, a script was developed that was interactive and approximately 50 – 60 minutes in length. The script was then rehearsed by Associate Artists and Ensemble Artists (different to the story-tellers) over a two week period and shaped and sculpted by the experiences of those who were involved in the process as actors. The performance was then toured to welfare services and performed for the community. In every step of the creative process different members of the Ensemble have been involved.



4. What's the production about?

When should you say something? How do you step in? During an open writing workshop with the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble, people were asked to reflect on situations that they'd heard of or witnessed when something happened that shouldn't have but nobody seemed to do or say anything about it.

From this workshop, the Ensemble told stories that resonated with them and discussed how this kind of large-scale blindness is able to exist in the world today. From muggings in Russia to the everyday phenomenon of blocking out the world by wearing headphones when walking down the street, *You Are Here* is a show about looking around, taking notice and recognising the potential in us all to change the world around us.

Drawing on characters with a lived experience of homelessness and social marginalisation, the play focuses on the issues of youth homelessness, crime, alcohol use, anger management, sleeping rough, social isolation and disengagement.

You Are Here offers a chance to interact, be moved, transformed, entertained and further inspired to take action on the complex issues surrounding homelessness, and in particular, youth homelessness. During the show, you hear about issues often dismissed by wider society and at the end of the show you can contribute your own thoughts, explanations and advice on ways to challenge societal dismissal and apathy. By thinking through and discussing ways to address these issues you will help make change.



		Critically Studying	<p>P2.2 understands the contributions to a production of the playwright, director, dramaturg, designers, front-of- house staff, technical staff and producers</p> <p>P2.6 appreciates the variety of styles, structures and techniques that can be used in making and shaping a performance</p> <p>P3.2 understands the variety of influences that have impacted upon drama and theatre performance styles, structures and techniques</p> <p>P3.3 analyses and synthesises research and experiences of dramatic and theatrical styles, traditions and movements</p>
Stage 6- HSC	<p>Topic: Studies in Drama and Theatre- Approaches to Acting (Augusto Boal)</p> <p>Dramatic Form: Forum Theatre/ Theatre of the Oppressed.</p>	<p>Making</p> <p>Performing</p> <p>Critically Studying</p>	<p>H1.3 uses knowledge and experience of dramatic and theatrical forms, styles and theories to inform and enhance individual and group devised works</p> <p>H2.2 uses dramatic and theatrical elements effectively to engage an audience</p> <p>H2.4 appreciates the dynamics of drama as a performing art</p> <p>H3.1 critically applies understanding of the cultural, historical and political contexts that have influenced specific drama and theatre practitioners, styles and movements</p> <p>H3.3 demonstrates understanding of the actor-audience relationship in various dramatic and theatrical styles and movements</p> <p>H3.5 appreciates the role of the audience in various dramatic and theatrical styles and movements</p>

PDHPE

Stage	Content	Objectives	Outcomes
Stage 5	<p>Self and Relationships</p> <p>Individual and</p>	<p>Enhance their sense of self, improve their capacity to manage challenging circumstances and develop caring and respectful relationships</p>	<p>5.1 analyses how they can support their own and others' sense of self</p> <p>5.2 evaluates their capacity to reflect on and respond positively to challenges</p> <p>5.3 analyses factors that contribute to positive, inclusive and satisfying relationships</p>

	Community Health Skill that enhance learning in PDHPE	Take actions to protect, promote and restore individual and community health Develop and apply the skills that enable them to adopt and promote healthy and active lifestyles: Communication Decision-Making Problem-Solving	5.6 analyses attitudes, behaviours and consequences related to health issues affecting young people 5.7 analyses influences on health decision making and develops strategies to promote health and safe behaviours 5.8 critically analyses health information, products and services to promote health 5.11 adapts and evaluates communication skills and strategies to justify opinions, ideas and feelings in increasingly complex situations 5.12 adapts and applies decision making processes and justifies their choices in increasingly demanding contexts 5.16 predicts potential problems and develops, justifies and evaluates solutions
Stage 6- Preliminary	Modules: Core 1- Better Health for Individuals	Knowledge and understanding of the factors that affect health A capacity to exercise influence over personal and community health outcomes An ability to apply the skills of critical thinking, research and analysis	P1 identifies and examines why individuals give different meanings to health P2 explains how a range of health behaviours affect an individual's health P4 evaluates aspects of health over which individuals can exert some control P6 proposes actions that can improve and maintain an individual's health P15 forms opinions about health-promoting actions based on a critical examination of relevant information
Stage 6- HSC	Modules: Core 1- Health Priorities in Australia; Option 1- The Health of Young People;	Knowledge and understanding of the factors that affect health A capacity to exercise	H2 analyses and explains the health status of Australians in terms of current trends and groups most at risk H3 analyses the determinants of health and health inequities H5 explains the different roles

	Option 5- Equity and Health	influence over personal and community health outcomes An ability to apply the skills of critical thinking, research and analysis	and responsibilities of individuals, communities and governments in addressing Australia's health priorities H14 argues the benefits of health-promoting actions and choices that promote social justice H15 critically analyses key issues affecting the health of Australians and proposes ways of working towards better health for all
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Society and Culture

Stage	Content	Objectives	Outcomes
Stage 6- Preliminary	Topics: The Social and Cultural World	Personal, social and cultural identity Interactions of persons, societies, cultures and environments across time The role of power, authority, gender and technology in societies and cultures	P1 describes the interaction between persons, societies, cultures and environments across time P4 explains continuity and change, and their implications for societies and cultures P5 investigates power, authority, gender and technology, and describes their influence on decision- making and participation in society
Stage 6- HSC	Topics: Equality and Difference	Personal, social and cultural identity Interactions of persons, societies, cultures and environments across time The role of power, authority, gender and technology in societies and cultures	H1 explains the interaction between persons, societies, cultures and environments across time H4 evaluates continuity and change, and assesses social futures and strategies for change and the implications for societies and cultures H5 evaluates the influence of power, authority, gender and technology on decision making and participation in society

6. Background information and statistics

There are currently 105,237 people who are homeless in Australia. (Source: 2011 Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics). On any given night 16,000 people are homeless in Sydney alone.

Homelessness can affect anyone at any time but is more prevalent in already marginalised communities including people who have a lived experience of mental illness, people with disabilities and Indigenous Australians.

Homelessness is more than simply 'houselessness'. Experiencing homelessness means not having stable, secure housing or a place to call home. It is comprised of people who are 'sleeping rough', couch-surfing, living with family and friends, residing at boarding houses, shelters and refuges. It can also mean the loss of support networks and a lack of a sense of security.



7. Directors Perspective – Sarah Emery

You Are Here is a play that asks an audience to reflect on their place within the fictional story as well as their place within the real lives of those around them. Utilising performance methods such as direct address to the audience and actors playing multiple roles we seek to highlight the notion that anybody within the audience or on stage could live the experiences that we are seeing within the narrative.

The audience plays a vital role within *You Are Here* as they become voyeurs to the story taking place. With the focus of the play being an exploration of inaction or large scale blindness in regards to social problems or conflict; the audience becomes complicit within this dilemma as they watch the story unfold but they themselves also do not intervene (even if this is due to our understanding of the nature of audience / stage relationships and etiquette). It is only later in the play, during the playbacks, that the audience is asked to reflect on their complicity and then become action takers as they, as a community, try to solve some of the problems within the story.

As an overarching directorial style, the play is stripped back and uncomplicated, with minimal sets, lighting and props, allowing for the story-telling and characters to take centre stage. This style also heightens the similarities between the audience and the performers, breaking down the fourth wall and positing the idea that it is shared story-telling and community engagement that ultimately allows for some of the social issues within the play to be addressed and possible solutions explored.

8. Playwrights Perspective - Maree Freeman

You Are Here was created during and following an open writing workshops that all within the Milk Crate Theatre Ensemble were invited to take part in. Seven Ensemble artists came to take part in this workshop that centered around the theme of: why do things happen in the world that we all collectively agree shouldn't happen?

We were particularly interested in why sometimes things happen that others witness but nobody seems takes any action to change what is occurring. Each of the artists involved in the development of the *You Are Here* told stories they had heard of or experienced themselves in response to these themes and these stories were woven into the work as verbatim pieces of text.

Further to this, these seven artists added character notes to some sketches of four characters that I had taken into the workshop, these characters notes find their way into the script directly as each of the characters are introduced to the audience.

Following this, I outlined a basic story to the group that centered around a young person having a difficult time; the group then discussed some ideas about how the other characters could have interactions with that young person without intervening to assist them. Following the workshop, I took these ideas into my next draft of the work, incorporating some and building on others.

9. Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal was born and grew up in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Boal was fascinated by theatre and spent time in the United States studying drama. Affected by the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s, he took *agitprop* (derived from agitation and propaganda and used to describe political theatre) shows into the countryside and pioneered a radical kind of 'living newspaper' in which the audience helped decide the subject of the play.

Evolving from *agitprop*, Boal developed the idea of the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. This involved asking audience members for ideas for alternative endings to plays about oppression. At one performance, an audience member was so dissatisfied with the way the actors played out her ideas that she came on stage and showed them what she meant. From this point on Boal developed shows with more audience participation.

In 1974, he published his first book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which argued that mainstream theatre was a tool of the ruling class used to control the masses. He also argued that theatre could be a powerful tool for the oppressed to appropriate in a revolutionary cause.

The central idea of *Theatre of the Oppressed* was the transformation of the spectator into an actor. Influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal's ideas aimed to wake up the passive spectator. By inviting members of the audience on to the stage to act out their real life problems, Boal turned them into what he called 'spect-actors', empowering them to tread the path towards personal and social change.



10. Welfare Services

You Are Here, like all Milk Crate Theatre Community shows, was first designed to be performed within welfare services working directly with people who have or are experiencing homelessness. Special Homelessness Services (SHS) exist to provide meals, accommodation, case management or support to people who choose to access their services. Milk Crate Theatre's first performance of *You Are Here* was performed at the Wayside Chapel, Parramatta Mission and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre as part of a three performance tour in May 2013. Recently, it has been reworked and performed in these venues again in 2014 before it's season at the Riverside Theatre.

As a community arts project, it is important to recognise the reason for *You Are Here* being performed within the welfare space. Milk Crate Theatre Community Shows are community problem solving spaces where audiences are asked to come together to tackle some of the complex issues surrounding homelessness and social marginalisation. To do this within a welfare space means that people who are directly living some of these experiences become a part of the conversation and lend their lived experience as expertise in brain storming how things can be improved and how communities can support further individuals. Further to this, for those in the audience who are visitors to the welfare space due to attending to see the show, barriers are broken down as visitors and service users alike take part in the conversation together.

Milk Crate Theatre has used many interactive techniques to facilitate community problem solving and the genesis of these ideas comes from the work of Augusto Boal. The notion of oppression and community discussion to combat it, is one that Milk Crate Theatre has been working with for the last 13 years. Role-plays in the form of play-backs are one of the vital forms that we use which stems from Boals work. This technique involves some scenes of the play being revisited and then audience

members (Boal's term Spect-actors) brainstorming and experimenting with alternate courses of action in an attempt to alter the outcome of a scene. Milk Crate Theatre practices it's own form of 'theatre of the oppressed', not always adhering strictly to the format Boal coined.

Other interactive techniques employed are community discussion, brainstorming, and future planning for characters. We recommend that teachers conduct the exercises outlined in this pack to prepare students to take part in the interactive elements of the performance of *You Are Here* as well as to gain an insight into the way Boal's work can be transcribed to their own theatre making.

11. Notes on the Set, Lighting and Sound

You Are Here has been created using a minimum of set, lighting and sound. This has been done deliberately to keep the focus of the work on the story telling and to also to ensure that the piece can exist in it's purest form – as a touring show designed to be compatible with non-theatre spaces such as welfare services and community halls. When examining the set, lighting and sound of *You Are Here*, it is important to remember that this performance was not originally intended to be performed in a theatre. Rather it is a site specific work designed to gain additional theatrical meaning from the changeable surrounds of welfare services where things such as kitchen noises and smells, people passing by and the backdrop of a welfare space value add to the stories being presented.



12. Characters

JOKER: The 'Joker' of the play (to reference the Augusto Boal method of forum theatre), a character who exists outside the world of the play who facilitates the community discussion and active involvement.

MON (Monologue) / **HOOD:** HOOD is a fourteen-year-old boy. MON is the age and sex of the actor playing HOOD and MON. The two characters are identified by a hood (on a hoodie) that is worn when playing HOOD and not worn when playing MON.

RED: A businessman in his early forties.

RUN: A woman experiencing homelessness in her mid forties. MAY's partner.
MAY: A woman experiencing homelessness in her late forties. RUN's partner.
SHOP: A man in his late thirties who owns a shop in Taylor Square.
GRACE: A singer.
MIKE: A guy in his late twenties who robs HOOD.
DAVE and JOHN: Two of RED's colleagues.
Everyone A character who could be any single person in the audience.



13. Cast, Creative Team, Production Credits

Angelee	Storyteller
Brendan	Storyteller
Bridget	Storyteller
Stephanie Brown	Mon
Carla	Run
Chris	Storyteller

Sarah Emery	Director
Maree Freeman	Playwright
Michael Godlee	Shop
Kate McBride	Producer
Graeme Rhodes	Red
Beck Ronkson	Joker
Michael S	Storyteller
Graham Stoney	Joker
Tim	Storyteller
Sarah Woods	May

14. ACTIVITIES: Before you see the show...

1. Research both of the following in small groups and create a short presentation that relates to your subject area (Drama / PDHPE / Society and Culture):
 - Causes of homelessness in your local area.
 - Support networks available for people experiencing homelessness (think welfare organisations, churches, community groups).
2. Make contact with a local welfare service in your area (Milk Crate Theatre works with Parramatta Mission in Parramatta) and ask if you can visit to meet some of the staff and those accessing the service.

3. DRAMA ACTIVITY - Create short scenes that explore issues relevant to the lived experiences of your students. These scenes should explore a scenario where one of the characters is being oppressed by other characters in the scene. Revisit these scenes using a Boal playback model within the drama classroom, exploring the reasons why oppression is happening and brainstorming alternatives for the protagonist where they make other choices. Invite students up to role-play being the protagonist and trying to make alternative choices. Create the scenes using an improvising / devising structure (try looking at issues that are relevant to your school / students: bullying, peer pressure, binge drinking, growing up, sexual health, relationships between students etc). To undertake this kind of activity you will need to be working with a group of students who have a solid understanding of the underpinning reasons behind the work of Boal.
4. Brief your students on the interactive nature of *You Are Here* so that they feel confident and comfortable to take part fully in this element of the show.

15. ACTIVITIES: After you see the show...

The following questions are designed to help you analyse the performance of *You Are Here* and think about the issues it raises. You may like to discuss these as a class, talk about them in small groups, or answer them individually, and then come together to share responses.

You may also like to use the attached newspaper articles to inform discussions around homelessness and the personal experiences of individuals.

- The world of play

- Where is the play set, specifically in regards to the location and time in history?
- What are the specific events in the play?
- Structure of the play
 - How did the creators of the play present the issues and the themes?
 - How did you respond to these issues and events?
 - How did the audience respond to the issues and events?
 - How does the set, props and stage work help to share the story and/or contribute to the visual communication of the issues within the play?
- Theatrical style
 - What were the theatrical styles used within the play?
 - Why has the creator chosen to use this style of theatre?
- The actor/audience relationship
 - What was the relationship between actor and audience?
- Characterisation and character creation
 - What were the characters lived experiences in the play?
 - Where would you go if you had a friend that came to you with any of the issues in this play? (go through each issue and how you could address and/seek support for this)
- Themes
 - What were the key themes addressed in the play?
 - How were each of these themes explored?

16. Articles, media releases and further reading

You Are Here 2013 season

Media coverage – http://www.milkcratetheatre.com/files/you_are_here_media_2013.pdf

Images - <http://www.milkcratetheatre.com/community-shows.html>

Documentary - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMFFWURp_EQ

17. Resources

Homelessness Australia- <http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/what-is-homelessness>

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs report: *Journeys Home*: Research Report No.2 February 2012-

http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/journeys_home/assets/pubs/2013/Chigavazira%20et%20al%20Journeys%20Home%20Research%20Report%20W2.pdf

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs report: *Which way Home? A new Approach to Homelessness*

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/publications-articles/homelessness-general/which-way-home-the-australian-government-green-paper-on-homelessness/which-way-home-a-new-approach-to-homelessness-full-report?HTML>

Housing NSW Going Home Staying Home overview

www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Help+with+Housing/Homelessness/Going+Home+Staying+Home.htm