


Sydney Theatre Company presents Windmill Performing Arts and Brink productions'

# THE CLOCKWORK FOREST

BY DOUG  MacLEOD



Teachers' Notes written by Dr Robyn Ewing and Robyn Gibson, with reference to original notes written by Julie Orchard, Windmill Performing Arts.

## General Information

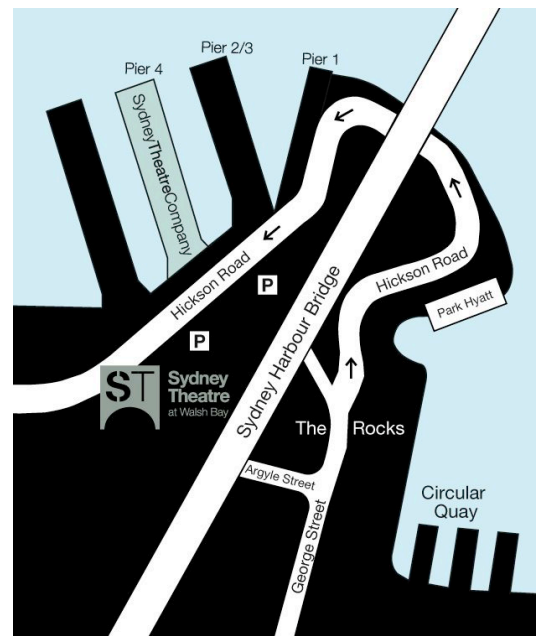
- Duration** 80 minutes (no interval)
- Running Late?** Please contact Sydney Theatre Company's main switch on 9250 1700 and a message will be passed to Front of House.
- Booking Queries** Please contact Barbara Vickery on 02 9250 1778 or [bvickery@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:bvickery@sydneytheatre.com.au)

### General Education Queries

Please contact Helen Hristofski, Education Manager, on 02 9250 1726 or [hristofski@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:hristofski@sydneytheatre.com.au)

**Address** Please note you are coming to **Sydney Theatre**, located on Hickson Road. Sydney Theatre is a short walk from Sydney Theatre Company.

**Buses** Buses can park on Hickson Road, opposite Pier 4



## Theatre Etiquette

When seeing a performance in the theatre, please ask your student to remember:

- Be in your seat five minutes before the show starts
- Food and drinks are not permitted in the theatre
- Be respectful to other audience members
- TURN OFF all electrical devices before entering the theatre
- Feel free to laugh, cry and applaud!!

# THE CLOCKWORK FOREST

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## Note about Suggestions for Learning and Teaching Activities

Most activities have been developed for Stage 3 (Yrs 5 & 6) primary students and Stage 4 (Yrs 7 & 8) secondary.

Not all tasks will be relevant for a particular year/stage group. Choose those suggestions that are most appropriate. Most can be adapted/extended – they are a jumping off point depending on how students engage with them and how they relate to the school and class program.

For further detail about drama strategies mentioned see Ewing, R. & Simons, J. (2004). *Beyond the Script: Take Two*. Sydney: Primary English Teaching Association.

## Synopsis

*The Clockwork Forest* has been described as 'a dark and twisted fable'. Written by Doug MacLeod it is produced through the collaborative efforts of Windmill Performing Arts and Blink Productions. Using the traditions of Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson the story suggests that nothing is as it seems or should be.

A young boy named Morton is the main character in the play. He lives a life of solitude on the edge of a dark forest. His only companions are four wind-up animals: a goat, a hen, a cat and a dog. When a fierce storm destroys Morton's home and scatters "his treasures," he sets out on a quest to locate them.

Along the way, Morton makes a friend named Hannah and encounters many strange and magical creatures including the *Skollet*, *Dogan* and *Atropa*.

## Possible Themes, Concepts, Values that could be explored

- Friendship
- Family
- Loyalty
- Memory
- Challenges
- Quest
- Courage

### Prior to Performance

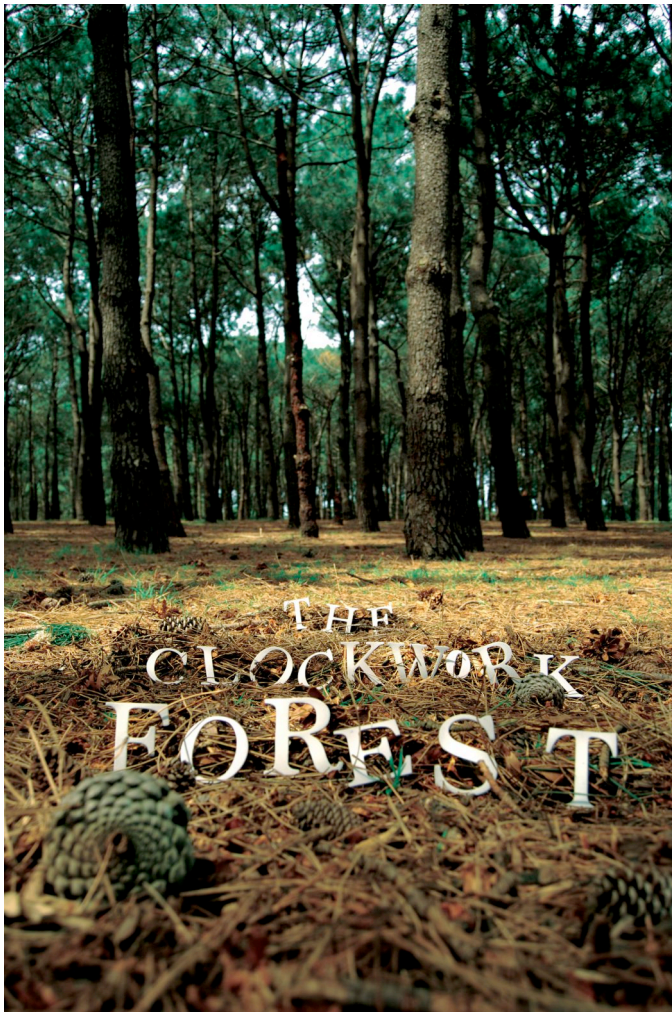
Warm up game: students take it in turns to turn a shawl into many different things.

Ask the students to draw a *mindmap* to represent what they understand by the terms 'friendship' and 'family.' In groups of 3-6 students discuss the mindmaps and then choose one to depict. Photograph these depictions and enlarge. Word banks can be build around these on a display board.

## English

Look at the visual image (below) but cover the title.

- Ask the students to predict what the play might be about.
- What might be the name of the play?
- What characters might live in the forest?
- How does a forest make you feel?
- What sounds might you hear in a forest?



Now, look at the second image (below).

**Potential discussion questions:**

- Who could the boy in the image be?
- What words/phrases could be used to describe him?
- What is he doing? Why?
- Describe the animals using ONLY adjectives ie wind-up, mechanical, etc.



Explore the concept and meaning of 'clockwork' – what does it imply. Students move as a clockwork animal. Students form groups of five. One 'becomes' the boy while the others take on the role of one of the animals. They then walk/move in role as these characters.

Play the machine game – one student begins with a mechanical action and in turn every student adds their own action to the composite building up a machine.

Write a joint class poem about the forest or one of the creatures that might live there. Students could then write their own poem. A particular form could be suggested. See Mandy Tunica's *For the Love of Poetry* for further ideas.

For example, an *acrostic* poem could be used.

Ferns litter the ground  
Owls' hoots echo  
Rustling sounds mingle  
Everywhere there is a dampness  
Shadows dance  
This is *The Clockwork Forest*.

## Visual Arts

In pairs or small groups create a 'dark forest'. Focus on using cool colours and utilise a range of materials including different papers, cardboard, twigs, dried leaves, etc

Sculpt and then create artworks based on the *verbal descriptions* of the following characters.

- **Morton** (p. 20) using a variety of collage materials is coloured paper, fabric, brown paper, etc.

*"Quite lean with a strong chin and shiny hair, wearing a woollen jacket, and a shirt made from burlap. He has brown eyes, and the left is slightly darker."*

- **Hannah** (p. 31) using oil pastels and edicol dye

*"There's a girl called Hannah and ... she has blonde hair with highlights of strawberry when the sun hits it, her eyes are an enchanting shade and she's horrible."*

- **Loki** (p. 18) using a variety of lead pencils and 'blue' feathers (Dyed in edicol dye and dried).

*"He is a little man in a rowboat and his name is Loki. He wears a many-feathered cap (the feathers are very clearly blue)."*

- **Felicia** (p. 25) using paint and strips of fabric

*"There is a woman sitting at the edge of the clearing, next to an easel with a stretched canvas on it. Her name is Felicia. Se is pompous, somewhat patronising and draped in many colourful scarves. Her hair has henna tips and sticks up in tufts."*

## Science & Technology

Using the internet, students research the different forests around the world. They create a poster/powerpoint and present this information to the class.

Look at the history of wind-up machines/toys/clocks. Design and make one of these.

## Dance/Movement

In small groups, the students are given a word (taken from the themes, ideas & values list)

- Friendship
- Family
- Loyalty
- Memory
- Challenges
- Quest
- Courage

Each student creates one movement to encapsulate this term. The group then works together to join their movements to create an interpretative dance piece. These can be videoed and critiqued by the group members as part of a reflective exercise.

## During the Performance

Some ideas to focus on as you view the play:

- Does Morton change as a result of his experiences? How?
- Consider how the *elements of the performance* such as the music, lighting, sets, etc evoke a particular mood, develop a theme.

Ask the students to consider:

- Which is your favourite scene in the play and why?
- If you could change something within the play, what would that be? Why?
- If you could play one character, which one would you choose and why?
- What do you think the play is trying to convey to the audience? How does the director construct this with the help of stage design, lighting....

## Post Performance

The following activities have been sequenced to correspond to their occurrence during the play.

### HSIE (Human Society and Its Environment)

Research various world religions with a particular emphasis on the colours worn by its religious members ie the monks in the play wear orange. Why?

### Visual Arts

In pairs, create a *diaroma* (using a shoe box) of the inside of Morton's house.

Read the description

“It hardly seems possible that a boy as large as Morton could live in such a tiny space. There is one chair, a table, some shelves, not much more.” (p. 3)

OR

Create a “box of treasures”. What would be inside? Students need to justify their choices to a partner.



## Drama

Consider the statement

“A voice can give such comfort.” (p. 4)

In small groups discuss a situation where this would/could apply. Present this scenario to the class. Encourage discussion/reflection.

## Visual Arts

Students close their eyes while teacher reads the following description of the storm.

“There had never been a storm like it, bursting from a small black cloud with eight threads reaching across a yellow sky.” (p. 12)

In small groups develop a movement sequence or soundscape to portray the coming of a storm.

Working on yellow paper (background) and charcoal, students recreate their own version of the storm that destroyed Morton’s home.

## English

In pairs, students **describe a storm** using only adjectives ie loud, deafening, dark, etc

OR

verbs ie thundering, rolling, raining, pelting, etc

Investigate the concept of a **‘quest’**

Look at other literary examples including *Don Quixote*, *Ulysses*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *the Key to Rondo*, *the Deltoria series* etc

Ask the students to think about **their own quest**.

Where would they go?

What would they be looking for?

Would they travel alone? etc

The play uses a number of *similes* i.e ‘miserable as a plucked parrot’ (p. 15) and “useless as a hammer made of cheese” (p. 42)

Ask the students to create their own personal examples.

Look at the difference between a simile and a *metaphor*.

*Cuthbert* enjoys playing with words. Those used within the play include:

Sesquipedalian  
Contagious  
Impertinent  
Sycophantic  
Naturalist  
Photosynthesis  
Subterfuge  
Oculism  
Mucilaginous  
Apothecary

Game: In small groups, students research the meaning of one word from the list. Once they have the true meaning, they 'invent' false meanings and attempt to 'convince' the rest of the class to an alternate meaning.

Hannah's description of Morton (p. 20) is very detailed. Examine it and underline the semantic words. Ask each student in the class to write a description of someone else in the class without using their name. Can the class guess who is being described?

## Music

Sing one's name up and down the music scale  
Whisper and yelling one's name.  
Use names to 'compose' a piece of music.

What does "a cross between a peacock's cry and the baying of a large dog" sound like? (p. 17) Students could combine the sounds of two distinct animals while the rest of the class could try to guess.

## Media

Read the scene which features the *Dukka* plant. "Suddenly the sharp leaves grab hold of her and she pulls back her hand with a yelp." (p. 29)  
Watch scene from 'Little Shop of Horrors' and 'Day of the Triffids'  
Discuss the similarities and differences between the plants featured.

## Visual Arts

Create a 3D model of a "terrifying mix of bird, reptile and ant-eater" (p. 37)  
OR  
Create a 'house' from bits and pieces as Hannah does ie a window frame, a door, a 'railway' sign, etc.

## Concluding Activities

Pose the following questions. In small, collaborative groups students could role play alternate endings.

- What would have happened if Hannah had stepped into Loki's boat? (p. 19)
- What might have happened if Hannah had stepped through Mara's door? (p. 35)
- What could have happened if Morton and Cuthbert had stepped through the trapdoor?
- Do you like the way the story ends? Why? Why not?

## Relevant Resources

*Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1605/1615)

*Ulysses* by Homer

*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (1900)

*The Deltoria series; Rowan of Rin; the Key to Rondo* by Emily Rodda.

### DVDs

*Little Shop of Horrors* (1986)

*Day of the Triffids* (1962)

### Websites

Clockwork toys

<http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/exhibitions/treasures/assets/hi/toys.htm>

## Set Images

Gabriela Tylesova – Designer ©

