

Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company
and Allen Arthur Robinson present

AUSTRALIA DAY

By Jonathan Biggins

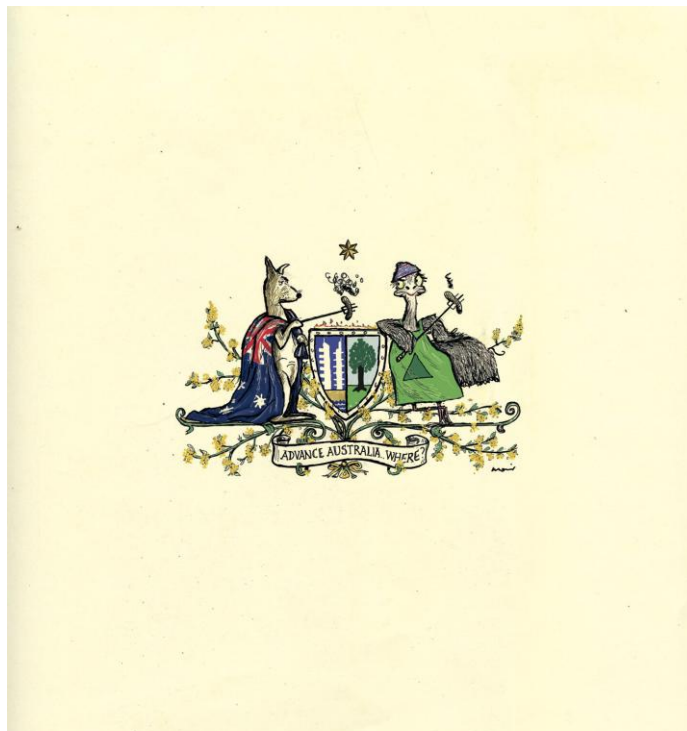


Image by Alan Moir

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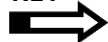
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Education Resource written by Kerreen Ely-Harper and compiled by Acting Education Coordinator Helen

Machalalias

KEY



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

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ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Richard Cottrell

Set Designer – Richard Roberts

Lighting Designer – Niklas Pajanti

Sound Designer – David Franzkie

CAST

Marie – Valerie Bader

Chester – Kaeng Chan

Robert – David James

Wally – Peter Kowitz

Brian – Geoff Morrell

Helen – Alison Whyte



THEMES

Australian Identity

Politics

Multiculturalism

Political Satire

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Act One

Coriole Public School, July

A meeting of the Australia Day organizing Committee is about to get underway as members slowly trickle in. The town's Liberal Mayor, Brian Harrigan, Chair of the Committee arrives to find his deputy Robert Wilson, distributing papers for the meeting. Wally Stewart, a builder and racist, soon joins them. Marie Bucknell apologises for being late and blames the traffic. She is President of the CWA (Country Women's Association). Robert is keen to make a start but Brian wants to wait for Greens Councillor Helen McInnes. Chester Lee, an Australian-born Vietnamese schoolteacher arrives. He is the Coriole school liaison for the Committee and new to the position. Helen enters apologetically. Her hybrid car wouldn't start. They all exchange pleasantries and polite jibes. There are obvious tensions between people. The meeting is declared open at 7.42pm.

September

Brian is chairing the meeting of members. As they work through the agenda the committee members political allegiances, different generational and social values come to the fore. Social networking, indigenous rights, the cultural diversity of a sausage sizzle all become points of contention in the debate of 'what kind of Australia we are celebrating.' Helen requests she be allowed to record the meetings. Although Brian is not keen, he is out voted by the others and Helen proceeds to record the session. When they take a tea break, Brian reveals to Robert his plan to block a Bunnings application to council to build a store in the town. Brian owns the only hardware store in Coriole and believes the Bunnings development will 'kill' him. He says he can't block the vote due to his position on council but says Robert can vote it down. When Robert protests Brian plays on their history and mateship. When the others return the meeting recommences with a discussion on who will be their Australia Day ambassador.

The meeting over, Helen, Robert and Brian drink wine in mugs. When Helen leaves Brian pressures Robert on whether he's made a decision to vote down the Bunnings proposal. But Robert remains undecided.

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Final meeting before Australia Day

The committee members read in the local paper that the former prime minister, John Howard is visiting the area on Australia Day. They are on edge and tempers become frayed when discussions turn to the citizenship ceremony. Helen and Wally become embroiled in a heated argument about whether a group of special needs kids should perform their dance routine. When Helen reveals one of the children is her son Jackson, Wally launches into a personal attack on her. He refuses to apologise and is asked to leave. Marie tells Helen the reason for Wally's behaviour is to do with the fact he also had a disabled son who was killed in a school fire. They go over last minute preparations and say goodnight for the evening. As she is about to leave, Helen's phone rings. She takes the call in private and as she hangs up, she accidentally hits the memo replay button and Brian and Robert's conversation can be heard.

Act Two

Australia Day. Early morning.

Interior of marque.

Brian and Robert are unpacking plants for Citizenship Day. It's expected to be a hot day with bushfires. Robert runs through the list of different nationalities that will be represented in the ceremony. Marie arrives early with the sausages but without ice. The VIP guest, Warren Coote's flight has been cancelled and they will now need to delay the ceremony. Wally arrives with the barbeques. Chester arrives with the ice but has forgotten the margarine. Helen arrives and apologises for being late. She hasn't had time to choose the colouring competition winner and has left the onions at home. She offers to go and get them as well as the Nutlex as they all agree one of the new citizens might be allergic to margarine. When Helen and Chester leave to pick up the forgotten items, Marie challenges Wally on his behaviour toward Helen. He responds with a rant about being a victim of political correctness. Robert hands out two-way radios so they can all communicate during the day. Marie starts up her radio and demands Wally apologise to Helen for his attack on her son. He begrudgingly agrees.

School Band plays the national anthem. An ambulance siren wails.

Brian checks off completed items on the whiteboard. The Aboriginal smoking ceremony has been banned due to a total fire ban. Helen tells Brian she wants to talk about the failed Bunnings proposal. She queries Robert's involvement. Brian denies putting pressure on him to

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vote it down. Although she says she has them on tape discussing the matter he doesn't take her seriously. When she threatens to play it over the PA he backs down and admits he thought it would ruin his business. Helen wants to be mayor in return for not going public. They are interrupted with Robert calls on the two-way radio asking where Brian is as the parade has already started. Brian wants to know why Helen has chosen Australia Day to 'dump' on him. She says she is doing it for her son and doesn't have time to be polite. He has till the end of the day to make a decision.

When Chester returns without Warren Cootes, Brian suggests Chester make the speech on Australian values to the new citizens. Chester refuses and Brian is forced to agree to do the speech himself.

Brian concocts a story that the Liberal Party head office called him about a preference deal with the Greens and that they could cause a swing away from Labour if they put Helen in as mayor. Robert is flabbergasted that the Liberal Party would want to do a deal with the Greens. Brian agrees and says the directive hasn't come from him but reiterates it has come from 'head office'.

Brian is called to make his Australia Day speech. Wally apologises to Helen. He tells her about his sense of failure in not being able to save his son and she sympathises with his feelings of inadequacy. Chester enters wearing a Peter Allen style Australian flag shirt much to Wally's disgust.

Helen is horrified when Marie arrives dressed in a wombat costume and regards it as highly inappropriate. Chester sides with Marie's attempt to celebrate Indigenous culture. Helen had hoped for more support from him on the matter. He feels she sees all migrants as victims.

Agitation grows between committee members as things progressively get out of their control with threatening storm weather and new citizens throwing up with suspected food poisoning from the sausages. Helen puts pressure on Brian for a response. The thunder and rain begin to fall as they argue each other's philosophical position. When Brian tells her he's managed to get Robert to agree to letting the mayorship go Helen promises to wipe the recording. Robert

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enters and reveals to them that Brian left his two-way radio on and he has heard their entire conversation and deal making. He tells them he doesn't want to be mayor and never has but he wants Brian to resign. Brian tries to apologize but its too late.

They all debate the merits of progress, globalization and the giant supermarket chains out doing small business. Robert leaves with his dignity in tact and Helen and Brian are left to reflect on the integrity of their behaviour. Chester returns in a shirt in which the colours have run in the rain. Brian declares despite food poisoning, severe weather, an ambassador no-show and losing his oldest friend this Australia Day has not been a complete disaster. Just at that moment the roof collapses and he is drenched with rain.

Consider:

- Party politics play a significant role in local councils.
- Australia Day is what you make it.
- How well you negotiate with your opposition will determine the outcome of the dispute.

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HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

The quest for the celebration of a united Australian Day and the parallel search for an 'Australian identity' and sense of spirit commenced within a few short years of the First Fleet landing of 1788 and subsequent white settlement on this island continent.

Australia Day History
www.australiaday.com.au

Australia Day explores through humour and satire the differing attitudes toward the concept of being Australian. Ambition, envy, betrayal, political and ethical rivalries are played out in its 'behind-the-scenes' dramatisation of the workings of a regional town council who are preparing for the annual Australia Day celebrations.

How and when Australia Day is celebrated continues to be a contested issue in Australia at both a legislative and community level. Australia Day is also referred to as Foundation Day, Anniversary Day, Survival Day, Invasion Day, and Day of Mourning. Australia Day has become a marker of Australian nationhood. All national memorials are controversial in their attempt to reach a consensus about how to represent the past for present and future generations.

Australia Day commemorates the landing of the First Fleet and the arrival of the first European settlers in Australia. First Fleet Marine Lieutenant Watkin Tench recorded in his diary:

From this time a succession of fair winds and pleasant weather corresponded to our eager desires and on the 7th of January 1788 the long wished-for shore of Van Diemen gratified our sight. We made the land at two o'clock in the afternoon ...

In running along shore we cast many an anxious eye towards the land on which so much of our future destiny depended. Our distance, joined to the haziness of the atmosphere, prevented us, however, from being able to discover much. With our best glasses we could see nothing but hills of a moderate height, clothed with trees, to which some little patches of white sandstone gave the appearance of being covered with snow. Many fires were observed on the hills in the evening.

The fires Tench refers to were undoubtedly the camp fires of the first Australians. Many

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Aboriginal people refer to the arrival of the European settlers as Invasion Day or Day of Mourning. The first Day of Mourning ceremony was held on 26th January, 1938 in protest against the treatment of Aboriginal people under European laws. The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association resolution read:

WE representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA assembled in Conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the whitemen's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian Nation today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

On every Australia Day since 1938 there is a Day Of Mourning ceremony held in every Australian capital city.

The first Australia Day is often cited as the 7th February 1788 with the unfurling of the British flag by Governor Arthur Phillip. Watkin Tench recorded in his diary:

On that day all the officers of guard took post in the marine battalion which was drawn up and marched off the parade, with music playing and colours flying, to an adjoining ground which had been cleared for the occasion, whereon the convicts were assembled to hear His Majesty's commission read, appointing His Excellency Arthur Phillip, Esq. governor and captain-general in and over the territory of New South Wales and its dependencies, together with the act of parliament for establishing trials by law within the same; and the patents under the Great Seal of Great Britain for holding the civil and criminal courts of Judicature, by which all cases of life and death, as well as matters of property, were to be decided.

Commemoration events continued formally and informally in the colony until 1804, when 26 January became the officially sanctioned date as the First Landing Day or Foundation Day. On the 150th anniversary of white settlement the Australian Natives' Association (Australian-born people of European heritage, not Aboriginal people) advocated the 26 January be celebrated as Australia Day every year.

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References:

Australia Day. K.S. Inglis Volume 13, Issue 49, p20- 41 1967, Historical Studies

Australia Day Council of NSW Student Resources website
<http://www.australiaday.com.au/studentresources/history.aspx>

Excerpts from Australia Day Speeches:

A majority of Australians can see why today cannot be a day of rejoicing for all, and that therefore there may be grounds for ultimately finding an Australia Day, a celebration of our community, with which we can all identify.

Thomas Keneally, 1997

Let us find a day on which we can all feel included, in which we can all participate equally, and can celebrate with pride our common Australian identity.

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, 2000

This is my Australia - warts and all.

Rick Farley, 2003

So we celebrate Australia Day not because we are special, or chosen, or green and gold, or even because we are diverse and multicultural.

What we celebrate, simply but profoundly, is that Australians have created a society in which each citizen can live a rich and meaningful life.

It sounds odd to suggest that Australia Day should be about celebrating a political settlement, but it remains our greatest achievement.

Glyn Davis, 2007

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As we prepare for Australia Day my message to you here and to Australians all, is simple.

Don't let go.

We will hang on to each other in the worst times and in the best.

We will hang on to our Aussie mateship and our Aussie fair go in the worst times and in the best.

Because we are Australian.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard, 2011

Additional Resources

Australia Day

History of Australia Day

http://www.dltk-kids.com/world/australia/australia_day.htm

Australia Day. K.S. Inglis, Volume 13, Issue 49, p20- 41, 1967, Historical Studies – gives detailed history of the origins of the first Australia Day Committees and Australian of the Year

Australia Day Council of NSW Student Resources website

<http://www.australiaday.com.au/studentresources/history.aspx>

Australia Day – ‘Celebrate What’s Great’ website (Education activities, events, flickr stream, blog)

<http://www.australiaday.org.au/>

Australia Day Speeches

Day Of Mourning, 1938, clip from ‘Lousy Little Sixpence’

<http://www.mabonativetitle.com/info/lousyLittleSixpence.htm>

Didj “u” know, ABC Message Club on 1938 protest

<http://www.abc.net.au/messageclub/duknow/stories/s888117.htm>

Australia Day is one of mourning, Tracker, 18 January, 2012

<http://tracker.org.au/2012/01/australia-day-is-one-of-mourning-tac/>



Green Councillor Irene Doutney, gives speech on Federal Government’s Intervention in Northern Territory, Redfern Community Centre, 26th January, 2011.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0jkCJiGAFO>

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Julia Gillard, Australia Day Speech, 26th January, 2011

Full Transcript available

<http://australianpolitics.com/2011/01/21/gillard-lauds-aussie-mateship-in-australia-day-speech.html>

Professor Marie Bashir's tribute to Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Australia Day Speech, 20th January, 2009

<http://www.australiaday.com.au/whatson/australiadayaddress2.aspx?AddressID=18>

Rick Farley, Address to Australia Day Council NSW, 2003

ABC Bush Telegraph, Download as mp3

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/speeches/farley2.htm>

Australian Political Satire

Rats In the Ranks 1996 - a 'behind-locked-doors' documentary on the election of Leichhardt's City Mayor which explores the numbers games and issues of loyalty and ambition in local government politics.

We Can Be Heroes

Chris Lilley's satire on finding the Australian of the Year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/heroes/>



Australiana Spoken Word Poem by Austin Tayshus, 1983

Word Play on Australian words, phrases, place names

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EUpg9JLzzE>

Jonathan Biggins



Biography

<http://jonathanbiggins.com.au/index.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2496359.htm>

ABC video clip 'Guilty Pleasures' – Jonathan confesses his love for 'The Carry On' films

<http://www.abc.net.au/arts/stories/s3033475.htm>

ABC Radio Interview about his book 'The 700 Habits of Highly Ineffective Parents' Mp3 download

<http://mp3bear.com/abc-radio-national-monday-0934-ineffective-parents-jonathan-biggins>

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AIM: To explore and examine the notion of an ‘Australian Identity’.

Being Australian



List five things that make you an Australian.

List three things that make you proud to be an Australian.

What is your understanding of the phrase ‘un-Australian’?

List five things you consider to be un-Australian.

Research & collect examples in the media where the term ‘un-Australian’ has been used by politicians, public figures, or media personalities.

Check out the ‘Un-Australian’ web site – www.its-unaustralian.com.au



Design & conduct a survey in your school, and/or local community around questions of what it means to be Australian.

Compare & contrast the views expressed in the survey.

Discuss your findings with the class.

Reflection:

What observations can you make about people’s attitude toward the concept of having an ‘Australian Identity’?

Drawing on your survey findings:

Design & Make a Poster/Collage on the theme of ‘Australian Identity’

Research television commercials that depict an Australian identity.



Watch the Paul Hogan, 1984 ‘Put another shrimp on the barbie’ campaign.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn_CPrCS8gs



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Checkout the Tourism Australia website
<http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/>

View Tourism Australia's promotional videos
<http://lensonaustralia.viotv.com/>

Register for their Image Gallery
<http://www.images.australia.com/>

Create an Image Gallery that represents your personal Australian Identity.

Australian National Symbols



Collect images of popular Australian symbols.
What do the symbols represent?

Write a short commentary or title caption to accompany your selected images.

Research the Australian and Aboriginal flags

Design a new flag.

Don't limit yourself to traditional flag design

Consider

Colour

Image

Style

Text – words, phrases, letters, numbers

Symbol

Languages - other than English

Write a brief description of your flag outlining the reasons for your design choice.

Have an exhibition in your school and/or community centre.

'Australiana' Trivia

Write a list of Australia Day Trivia Questions

Run an Australia Day trivia competition



Listen & Watch Austin Tayshus's spoken word poem 'Australiana' on Youtube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EUp9JLzzE>



Write & perform your own version of 'Australiana'

Make & upload your 'Australiana' film clip onto youtube, school website.

Performance Viewing Task:

List all the examples of Australiana that appear in the play.

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AIM: To discuss and explore the history and future significance of Australia Day.



Why is Australia Day important?

What does Australia Day mean to you?

- day off school?
- backyard barbeque?
- celebration of our national identity?

What other days do Australians mark as special?



Research the history of Australia Day

Draw a timeline tracing the chronological history of Australia Day from 1788

Add images

Add text – comments, quotes

Research & discuss the arguments for and against changing the date.

Nominate an alternative date for celebrating Australia Day.

Give three reasons why you want to change the date.

Design & produce



OR

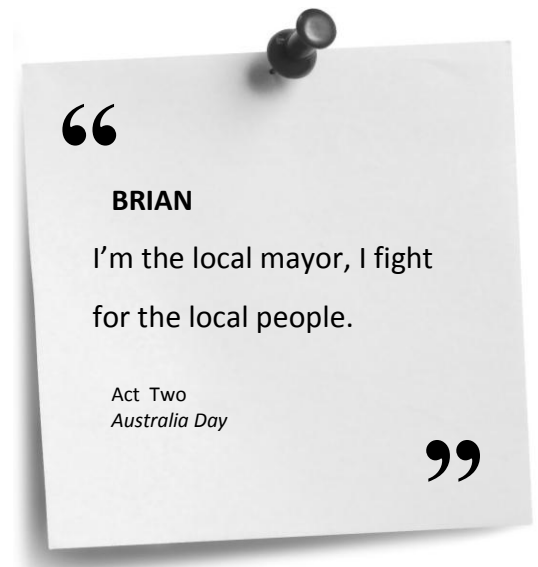
Devise & perform a television advertisement to promote Australia Day

Reflection:

What were some of the common themes in people's interpretation of Australia Day?

Community Participation & Consultation

The characters in *Australia Day* debate how they will celebrate this Australia Day in their community. Even the annual sausage sizzle comes under fire for not being culturally inclusive



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enough. One thing the characters do *not* do is consult with their communities directly, rather they fight amongst themselves about what they individually think should happen.



Form groups of three, four or five

You are organising the 2013 Australia Day celebration in your school and/or local community.

Create a web site calling for people to submit their suggestions for how to celebrate Australia Day.

Look at Australia Day Council of NSW website

<http://www.australiaday.com.au/corporatepartnership/opportunities.aspx>

Devise a voting system where people can vote for the best or most popular suggestions.

OR

Conduct a survey

OR

Make a suggestion box

Write & submit a proposal to the School Board (and/or Local Council) listing suggestions based on your research and community consultation process.

Reflection:

What is the value of community consultation and participation in making decisions?

What are the disadvantages?



Write and/or perform a short creative piece that gives a picture of how Australia Day will be celebrated in 2112.

Performance reflection:

What kind of Australian society does *Australia Day* present to the audience?

What attitudes are represented by the individual characters? Are they typically Australian? Or not?

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AIM: To understand and appreciate the role and responsibilities of an Australia Day Ambassador.

Ambassadorship



Jonathan Biggins's was inspired to write *Australia Day* when he served as an Australia Day Ambassador

Read his blog on the STC website:

<http://blog.sydneytheatre.com.au/season-2012-jonathan-biggins-on-the-origins-o>



Research the role of the Australia Day Ambassador on the Australia Day Council for NSW website.

Choose one of the current 2012 Ambassadors to research.

What do all the Ambassadors have in common?

You would like to serve as an Australia Day Ambassador

List three reasons why the Australia Day Council for NSW should consider you a suitable candidate.

Speech Writer



Research & study Australia Day Speeches

Look up the Australian of the Year website

www.australianoftheyear.org.au

Read an Australian Of The Year's speech to the nation.

Select three favourite lines of the speech.

Give your reasons for why you chose these lines. What do they mean to you?

You are the speech writer for the next Young Australian of the Year.

Choose who you would like to be the Young Australian of the Year 2013.

Write a three minute speech on their behalf.

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Include

- reflections and attitudes on the past
- comments and observations of Australian society today and significant recent events
- ideas and visions for the future
- message to the people (young and senior) of Australia

Extension:

Present the speech to the class for comment.

OR

Perform as a televised address to the nation, or live address to a community group.



Citizenship Ceremony

Jonathan Biggins' described the attending of a Citizenship Ceremony as the most memorable and moving moments of his Ambassadorship.

Have you ever attended a Citizenship Ceremony?

Describe the event – Who was there? What took place? What was your role and why were you there?

Write a list of what you consider to be Australian values.

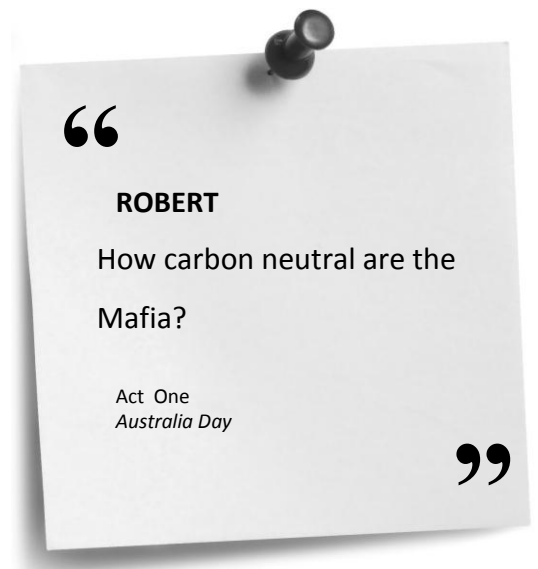
'Aussie values' are not innate. We learn them, along with multiplication tables and critical reasoning.'

Glyn Davis, 2007

Debate this extract from the speech 'A different Kind of Hero' given by Professor Glyn Davis at the Australia Day Address, 2007

OR

Write an essay discussing the question of whether values are innate or learnt.



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- ▶ **AIM:** To understand and critique the production elements employed in *Australia Day* and evaluate critical responses to the production.

The Design Approach

Read Q&A: Richard Roberts on the STC Back Stage Magazine

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2012/july/qa-richard-roberts.aspx



Discuss Richard Roberts's naturalistic approach to the production design.

Why is it important that the design be 'believable'?

Describe his research process.

Give an example of how this research can be seen to be evident in the set design.

List three elements in these production areas that support the naturalistic design:

- Lighting
- Music
- Sound Design
- Costume

Describe the costume of one or more of the characters. How do their clothes contribute to them being perceived as a 'real' person and not a caricature?

The Director's Vision

Read the interview with Richard Cottrell on the STC Back Stage Magazine

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2011/september/feature-richard-cottrell.aspx



Discuss Cottrell's decision to direct the play and his thoughts on political correctness in Australian theatre.

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Post-Performance Reflection:

Cottrell hopes *Australia Day* 'will offend quite a lot of people and make a lot of people laugh and the thing I hope most is that it will make people think and get people talking'.

- Does he succeed in his intentions?
- **Rate** his level of success out of ten.
- Is he more successful in one area more than another? For example, did you find some things funny but not necessarily offensive? Did you enjoy the production, but it didn't tell you anything new?
- How did you feel at the end of the performance? Why?
- What was the most memorable moment in the performance and why?
- How did the audience respond to the production?
- What were people saying at interval or after the show about the performance?
- What made you laugh?
- What made you uncomfortable?



Discuss & debate 'The director's role is always to entertain the audience'

Opinions



Compare & contrast three reviews of the production.

Choose from the list provided on the recent Melbourne Theatre Company production

OR

Find three reviews of the STC production.

Elly Varrenti in *The Age*:

www.theage.com.au/entertainment/theatre/australia-day-20120427-1xq48.html

Kate Herbert in *Herald Sun*:

www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/arts-books/laugh-out-loud-at-ourselves/story-fn7eul6a-1226343608935

Kim Edwards review in Theatre Press:

<http://theatrepress.com.au/2012/04/27/review-mtcs-australia-day/>

Nicole Eckersley on Arts Hub:

www.artshub.com.au/au/news-article/reviews/performing-arts/australia-day-189029

Anne-Maree blogger:

<http://sometimesmelbourne.blogspot.com.au/2012/05/review-australia-day.html>

Matthew Raggatt:

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/curtaincall/2012/05/03/review-australia-day-playhouse-melbourne/>



Write a 250 word review based on your own experience of the production.

Your personal response must be supported by specific examples from the performance.

Promotion & Publicity

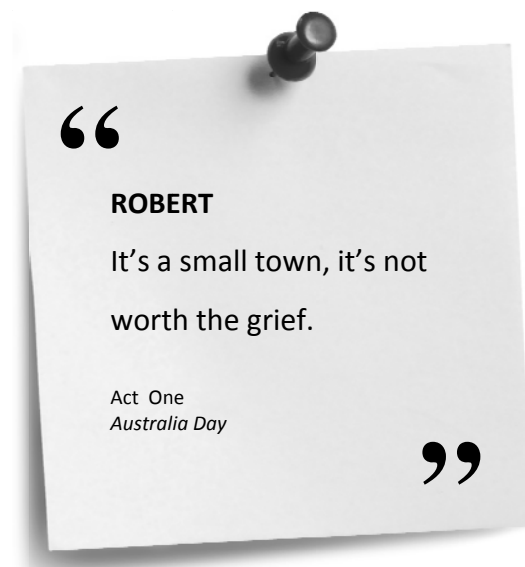


Watch the Melbourne Theatre Company teaser video

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/curtaincall/2012/05/03/review-australia-day-playhouse-melbourne/>

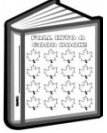
Form small groups

Make a 1 minute teaser video to promote Australia Day 2013 inspired by the *Australia Day* production or based on your devised scenes on themes explored in the pre-production activities.



- ▶ **AIM:** To examine notions of political correctness and character humour in *Australia Day*.

The 'PC' Debate



- **Discuss** your understanding of the term 'political correctness'.
- **Give** examples of politically incorrectness.
- **Find** examples of when public figures have been politically insensitive on issues such as race and ethnicity, sexuality, religion, national identity, human or animal rights.
- When have you been politically incorrect or insensitive?

Post-Performance Reflection:

- How is the concept of political correctness explored in *Australia Day*?
- Who is the most politically incorrect character in the play? Give an example of when you thought this character was being political incorrect. Did you laugh? Did the audience? What makes this character both funny and offensive?
- Who are the characters trying to be 'PC' in the play?



Devise & present a short scene where one character accuses another character of being politically incorrect.



Extension:

One character appears to be behaving 'PC' in public but not in private.



Discuss & debate

'Should Australian theatre be concerned with political correctness?'

The Australian Achievement

Listen to & read former Prime Minister John Howard's Australia Day Address to the National Press Club, January 25th, 2006

A sense of balance: The Australian Achievement in 2006

<http://australianpolitics.com/2006/01/25/john-howard-australia-day-address.html>

AUSTRALIA DAY

Sydney Theatre Company Education Resources 2012

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Write a short summary of the key points in the speech.

Discuss Howard's concept of Australia as a 'national family' and the significance of maintaining a 'sense of balance' for future prosperity and social harmony.



Write & present a response to John Howard's vision of what it is to be an Australian in 2012 from your point of view.

Consider:

- personal experiences, values and beliefs
- your understanding of why people want to become Australian citizens
- the value of teaching Australian history in schools
- current Australian social and political debates and concerns
- your vision for Australia in the future



Extension:

Write & perform the speech as a political satire aimed at exposing issues of political and/or social controversy.

The Australian Character



If Australia were an animal what animal would it be?

If Australia were a human character in a play, film or novel what would he or she be like?

List three positive qualities of Australia as a character.

List three negative qualities

Draw/Paint a picture of Australia as a human character based on these negative and positive traits.

How do these traits take form in a physical, tangible and visible way?



Form small body sculpture groups

Make the physical shape/frozen tableau of the positive and negative aspects of the Australia character.



Devise & perform a short scene with individual characters representing contrasting qualities of the national Australian character.

Post-Performance Reflection:

- How does *Australia Day* draw attention to issues of the national character through the play's individual characters?
- Which aspects of Australian culture are represented through the characters? For example, what kind of behaviour and attitude does Wally represent?

The Scorpion and the Frog



Wally: Believe me, Helen, I'm not enjoying this.

Brian: What difference does that make? Helen's still got the recording.

Robert: So what? She can't use it now without incriminating herself. It's the scorpion and the frog.

Wally: The what?

Robert: A frog gives a scorpion a ride across the river thinking the scorpion won't sting him because then they'd both drown.

Act Two
Australia Day

Jonathan Biggins describes the committee as 'a microcosm for the greater social environment ... everyone knows that just a few people are going to do most of the work anyway. The rest will just sit back and let them do it. That dynamic, those tensions, can be very amusing.'

Ref: <http://www.theatrepeople.com.au/whatson/australia-day>

Discuss the metaphor of the scorpion and the frog fable in the play with reference to Jonathan Biggins's comments on creating humour through tensions between the characters.

The *Australia Day* characters are from diverse backgrounds. They differ in professions, age, education level, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and political allegiances.



Role play an Australia Day committee meeting made up of representatives from the local council and community.

- Who are you?
- Which community group, business, or political party do you represent?
- What is your role and responsibilities as a member of the Committee?

One character wants to move a motion to have the Australia Day citizenship event date changed.

State your position on the motion – do you agree or disagree?

State your reasons for supporting or opposing the motion.

A secret ballot will be held to determine the outcome of the decision.

Does what you say publicly match how you will end up voting?

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WALLY

Chester- funny name for one of you lot. Never met an Asian called Chester.

Act One
Australia Day

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