

Sydney Theatre Company presents

**Storm Boy**

Adapted to the stage by Tom Holloway from the novel by Colin Thiele



**PRE-PRODUCTION RESOURCES**

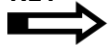
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Education Resource written and compiled by Kerreen Ely-Harper

**KEY**



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

**STORM-BOY**

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## ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

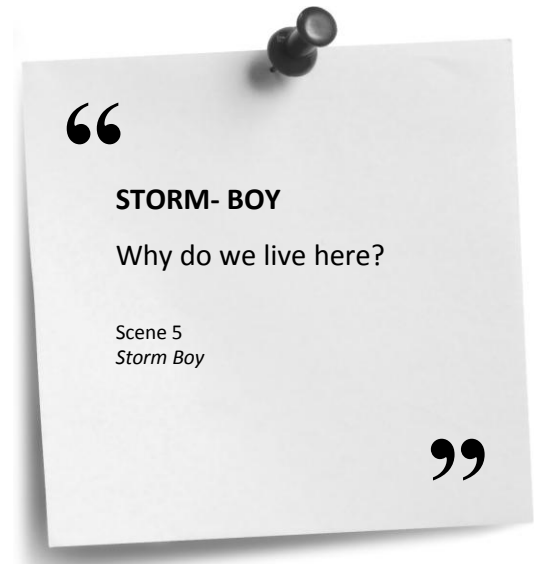
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## ABOUT STCED

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## CREATIVE TEAM

<b>Director</b>	John Sheedy
<b>Designer</b>	Michael Scott-Mitchell
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Damien Cooper
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Kingsley Reeve
<b>Visual Designer</b>	Mic Gruchy
<b>Puppet Director</b>	Peter Wilson
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Scarlet McGlynn



## CAST

<b>Storm Boy</b>	TBC
<b>Hideaway Tom</b>	Peter O'Brien
<b>Fingerbone Bill</b>	Trevor Jamieson
<b>Mr Ponder/Mr Pride/Mr Percival</b>	TBC

## THEMES

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Belonging & Identity

Family & Relationships

The Environment & Living Things

Indigenous Culture

Grief & Loss

## STORM-BOY

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Somewhere along the Coorong coastline. It is night. We hear a great storm.

The storm subsides. It is a warm, late summer's morning.

From a ramshackle shack, emerges HIDEAWAY TOM followed by his son, STORM BOY. Together they clean up the mess caused by the storm.

Storm Boy is keen to get away for a day of adventuring, but his father insists he have his breakfast first. Hideaway agrees to let Storm Boy go out for the day as long as he promises not to talk to anyone.

Storm Boy checks on MRS FAIRY PENGUIN and her eggs. He's thrilled to find they have survived the storm.

FINGERBONE BILL, an aboriginal Ngarrindjeri man, appears through the sand dunes. He introduces himself to Storm Boy, who is cautious, telling him he's not allowed to talk to anyone.

When he returns home, Hideaway Tom is cranky with him for being late. When he learns he has met Fingerbone Bill, he warns him against meddling "do-gooders" finding out about them living in the sanctuary.

Fingerbone Bill confides in Storm Boy that he doesn't want anyone finding about him living here as well. They strike up a friendship and Fingerbone Bill introduces him to his special places and animals. When he shoots a tiger snake that threatens Storm Boy, Hideaway Tom comes running to see what is going on. He confronts Fingerbone Bill, accusing him of raising a gun at his son. Storm Boy tries to defend Fingerbone Bill, but Hideaway Tom is not convinced.

Time passes. Storm Boy begins to question his father why they live on the beach away from other people and where nothing ever changes. His parents separated when he was very young and he has trouble remembering what his mother looked like.

**STORM-BOY**

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Fingerbone Bill shows up offering two crayfish to share with them. Hideaway Tom, reluctantly takes them. Fingerbone Bill asks if he can take Storm Boy into the Sanctuary to see the pelicans feed their chicks. At first Hideaway refuses, but soon finds himself agreeing to let him go. He invites Fingerbone Bill to join them for dinner that night.

Fingerbone Bill introduces Storm Boy to the wonders of the Sanctuary pelicans. He tells him that the duck shooters have been in the area this morning and shot and killed some pelicans for “a bit of fun”.

Storm Boy finds three sickly looking chicks whose mother pelican has been killed by the hunters. He wants to take them back home and nurse them back to health. Fingerbone Bill warns him it is nature doing its work. But Storm Boy is determined to save the chicks. Despite his father’s remonstrations, he argues his case that the chicks are “three little boys that have lost their mum”. Hideaway gives in and allows him to keep them until they are grown up enough to look after themselves.

Storm Boy names them MR PROUD, MR PONDER and MR PERCIVAL. Fingerbone Bill tells him that in order to look after the birds properly he is going to need to learn and understand them as a “part of you”. Storm-Boy’s first lesson is to learn to recognize that “everything is connected” and that “there’s no difference between you and me and the sand and the babies and the mutton grass”.

Time passes and the birds are now fully grown pelicans. They have been up to their usual morning mischief, leaving the nets and fishing equipment strewn all over the sand. Hideaway Tom complains that he is sick of having to clean up their daily mess. He warns the seasonal storms are on their way and it will be impossible to manage both the birds and the storms. He asks Fingerbone Bill to “sweet-talk” Storm Boy into returning the birds to the wild. Fingerbone Bill reluctantly agrees.

He tells Storm Boy he’s done a wonderful job looking after the birds but that they “belong out

there on the ocean” and the time has come to let them go. Storm Boy says they are not ready to go and he is not ready to let them go either. He’s afraid of losing their friendship and fears they won’t remember him. Fingerbone Bill tries to reassure him and even though Storm Boy does not want to say goodbye, he knows he must. They take a boat out and release the birds and to Storm Boy’s dismay they all fly off without hesitation.

The pelicans gone, Fingerbone Bill empathizes with Storm Boy’s feelings of loneliness and tells him he once had a family, “ a wife ...kids” who he is now separated from. Storm Boy wishes he could fly off too like his pelican friends.

Next morning, Storm Boy looks up to see that Mr Percival has returned. He dances for joy as Mr Percival clicks and clacks. He flies down to Storm Boy who gives him a big hug.

Hideaway Tom hears on the radio that a big storm is coming and they need to prepared. Fingerbone Bill also reports some nasty hunters have been in the area complaining of being attacked by a large pelican. They all know it must have been Mr Percival. Fingerbone Bill warns Storm Boy to tell Mr Percival he had better be careful, unless he wants to get shot. Stories about seeing the pair play fetch with a cricket ball on the beach have people in town talking.

The big storm comes. Storm Boy is asleep in their shack until his father and Fingerbone Bill call him to wake up. A boat is in distress with people on board that need rescuing. Hideaway Tom says they want him to get Mr Percival to pick up a rope like he does a cricket ball and take it out to the boat.

Storm Boy throws him the rope. Mr Percival is flapping and clicking about in the wild weather. Eventually he takes the rope from Storm Boy’s hand. He takes off and flies toward the boat. The storm keeps battering down. Mr Percival fails to reach the boat on his first attempt. He tries again but suddenly there is a giant strike of lightning.

A day later, Storm Boy awakes from a long sleep. Hideaway is pleased to see he is OK and tells

him he and Mr Percival did a good job in rescuing the sailors. The sailors are so grateful that if anything should happen to Mr Percival they want to pay for him to be stuffed and put in a museum. Storm Boy is not keen on the idea and says Mr Percival would hate the idea of being put in a glass box.

They all celebrate with a big meal of cakes, which includes fish cakes for Mr Percival. They are momentarily disturbed by the sound of a hunter's gunshot in the distance. Hideaway Tom then tells him that the sailors have also offered to pay for Storm Boy to go to boarding school. Storm Boy says he doesn't want to move away from either him or Fingerbone Bill. He becomes angry and hurt thinking they want to get rid of him. He runs off, looking for Mr Percival. But he's gone.

Running along the beach. There's no sign of Mr Percival anywhere. There are gunshots in the distance. Storm Boy looks towards them. Another gunshot. He sees something falling in the sky. He runs after Mr Percival.

Storm Boy returns to camp with the wounded and bloody Mr Percival in his arms. He struggles under the weight and then drops the bird at their feet. Fingerbone Bill and Hideaway Tom do their best to comfort him and attend to his wound. Mr Percival's breathing gets heavier and heavier.

Time passes.

Mr Percival dies.

Hideaway Tom and Fingerbone Bill hug Storm Boy.

It's sunset and cold. They have dug a grave for Mr Percival. Wrapping him in a cloth, he is placed in the grave.

Hideaway Tom asks Fingerbone Bill to make them a cup of tea, so he can speak to Storm Boy alone. Hideaway Tom tells Storm Boy when he brought him here he was running away from his past. He says he's sorry for making so many mistakes and they both reminisce about Storm Boy's mother. The topic of going away to school in the city comes up and they agree to talk about it again soon. Fingerbone Bill returns with cups of hot sweet tea. They go inside the shack to get warm and talk about what a golden bird Mr Percival was. Fingerbone Bill reminds Storm Boy that friends like Mr Percival never really die.

### **Consider**

Nothing remains the same forever.

The Ngarrindjeri word for pelican is NGORI.

Parents and children can learn from each other.

## HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

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### *The Coorong & The Ngarrindjeri Nation*

Fingerbone Bill is a member of the Ngarrindjeri nation. The Ngarrindjeri people are the custodians of the Lower River Murray, Lakes and Coorong. The Ngarrindjeri speak the Ngarrindjeri language. Despite an agreement with the British colonialists in the *Letters Patent of 1836* stating that European settlers had to negotiate with the Ngarrindjeri for the use, purchase, and occupation of lands and waters, there have been on going disputes between the Ngarrindjeri, and the South Australian State and Federal Governments over the ownership and management of their traditional lands.

The Ngarrindjeri believe in their spiritual and physical connectedness to the land and all living things that inhabit the land. Belonging to the land and place are intrinsic to a sense of cultural identity. Ngarrindjeri elder, educator, musician and writer, Dorothy Leila Rankine (1932-1993) wrote many poems and songs about the significance of the Coorong to her people:

#### The Coorong

By Dorothy Leila Rankine

Land of my father's people,  
Place of my ancestors' past,  
Never will I forget you,  
For you are dear to my heart.

I've climbed your golden sand-dunes,  
And walked through your native scrub,  
Swum in your sea-green waters,  
Watched the birds, in their evening flight.

Oh how my heart is longing  
To hear the song of the surf  
From the mighty Southern Ocean  
Whose shores I often trod.



The many lovely wild flowers  
Whose seeds are scattered by the winds  
Like a cloak of many colours  
Grow there, within your fields.

The midden heaps around me,  
The bleached bones on the shore  
are fragments of a lifetime  
which I yearn to know once more.

Through the wind and sand around me  
At night by camp fire bright,  
Midst the blue smoke wafting upwards,  
I recall my ancestors' life.

Oh the spirit of the long ago  
And guardian of the past  
As I stand beside your waters  
My soul knows peace at last.

*Colin Thiele – the boy, the teacher and the writer.*

Describing himself as a “country boy at heart”, Colin Thiele grew up in the north of the Barossa Valley in South Australia in the Great Depression. The son of German migrants he spoke German before he could speak English. He lived on a farm in the Flinders Ranges near a town called Endunda. As a young boy he loved the ability to go out into the hills on his own. He said he never felt alone because he was always surrounded by nature. He believed throughout his life that solitude benefited the human spirit as time to reflect.

The first story Colin Thiele ever wrote was a pirate story. He went to a small country school in Julia Creek, South Australia. On wet days many of the children would not come to school. His teacher would abandon formal lessons and read stories to the children instead. *The Arabian Nights* was a favourite. These early experiences sparked a great interest in storytelling and story as a way of educating children rather than the “didactic statement”. Experiencing a lot of freedom in his childhood Colin Thiele developed a great love of nature and natural things. He says that although many of the people he grew up with including family members had little

education they had a lot of wisdom about the natural world, for example reading the weather signs.

With the depression and no prospect of work, he stayed on at school and then went onto Adelaide University “for want of anything better to do”. At university he discovered Joseph Conrad and T. S Eliot. A peer of poet and critic Max Harris he became a contributor to the Angry Penguins literary group. He joined the education department to become a teacher. He says “a good teacher cannot but be influenced by the children”. Teaching in rural areas he often went fishing with his students and he says they were “great teachers” in how to fish. He aimed to be as good at teaching as they were in teaching him how to fish.

At University Thiele read a lot of Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens and the Russian novelists such as Tolstoy who dealt with peasant life. His first stories were about farmers, and farming life and affinity with a country identity. Also influenced by Henry Lawson’s writing, *When the Billy Boils* he says evoked his own childhood experiences of the realities of Australian farming life.

He served in the Second World War in both the Army and the RAAF. During the war and post war years there was generally a lack of good writing for children, prompting him to write books for children. On a ship journey to America he wrote his first book, *The Sun On The Stubble*, based on his own boyhood.

Colin Thiele believed in the power of the story, because it can “move people, it can reveal things”. In his lifetime he advocated strongly against the destruction of the natural environment in the Coorong, the loss of “the vegetation and the sand hills by trail bikes” and the shooting of the wild life, particularly “the beautiful water birds”. He felt these were tragic occurrences and believed in our collective responsibility to preserve the Coorong’s natural heritage for future generations. He loved the region and visited it many times as a child. He wrote the story of the Coorong through *Storm Boy* in the hope that if you can explore things through the reality of experience rather than a didactic message you are more likely to have readers experience the tragic consequences of their actions as in real life.

*References:*

*Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan: Caring For Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture*,  
Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee, Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management  
Committee, 2006.

ABC Radio National

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/verbatim/colin-thiele/3112904>

## Additional Resources

### Storm Boy Book & Film



Storm Boy, film, 1976

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7bkqGvpb4A>



Mr Pelican

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-09-03/storm-boy-pelican-dies/1416234>

*Storm-Boy*, book by Colin Thiele, 1964.

Teacher's Notes *Storymakers*, 1988, DVD featuring *Storm Boy* from National Sound & Film Archive

[http://nfsa.gov.au/collection/film-australia-collection/program/sales/programs/teachers\\_notes/2827.pdf](http://nfsa.gov.au/collection/film-australia-collection/program/sales/programs/teachers_notes/2827.pdf)

*The Fiction Gateway: Enriching the Curriculum with Children's Literature*  
Suzanne G Eberle, Noelle S Williamson, 2009

### Colin Thiele

*Can I Call You Colin?* Biography, Stephany Steggall, 2004

<http://www.thebigbookclub.com.au/page.php?section=197&mld=323>

Interview excerpts, Mp3 download available

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/verbatim/colin-thiele/3112904>

Interview, Mp3 download available, 37mins into program

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/2006-09-06/3345218>

### Ngarrindjeri People & Culture

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

<http://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/content.php?pid=300440&sid=2462641>

<http://www.murrayriver.com.au/about-the-murray/ponde-dreamtime/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngarrindjeri>

<http://www.coorongwildernesslodge.com/ngarrindjeri.htm>



<http://ngarrindjeri.iay019.com/site/>

<https://open.abc.net.au/posts/corroboree-at-the-murray-mouth-43eg0du/in/tags/ngarrindjeri+stories>

*Ngarrindjeri Dreaming Stories*, Jacob Stengle and Henry Rankine, 2011

*Nukkan Kungun Yunnan*, Documentary, Hero Project

Excerpts

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGIsv-dSs40>



### The Coorong

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/once-a-dead-sea-the-coorong-thrives--for-now-20110520-1ewus.html>

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/pelican-hitch-storm-brews-over-plans-to-save-the-coorong-20091030-hprm.html>

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/the-coorong-is-dead-but-can-be-revived-20090722-dtl3.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-10-04/pelicans-watch-the-sun-rise-at-coorong-national/4294892>

<http://www.thecoorong.com/>

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find a Park/Browse by region/Limestone Coast/Coorong National Park>

<http://www.pleasetakemeto.com/australia/coorong-national-park/information>

### Pelicans

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Australian-Pelican>

<http://www.abc.net.au/schoolstv/animals/PELICANS.htm>

### Comparative Texts

*The Life of Pi*, book (2001) and film (2012)

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## STORM TALK

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**AIM:** To experience and understand the physical, sensory and imaginative landscape of the play.

### Listening, Looking & Feeling



**Close** your eyes.

**Imagine** you are walking alone on the beach.

**Listen.** What can you hear?

**Look.** What do you see?

**Smell.** What can you smell?

**Taste.** What can you taste?

**Feel.** How do you feel?

**Write** down all the things you heard, saw and felt being at the beach.

**Draw/Paint** a picture of yourself walking alone along the beach, include all the things (images and words) you discovered in your journey.



Extension:

You see some footprints in the sand.

Are they human or animal footprints?

**Follow** the footprints.

Where will they lead? What will you discover? Who do they belong to?

**Write** down the story of what happened when you followed the footprints.

### Storm Sound Circle

**Form** a standing circle.



**Brainstorm** the elements that come together for a big storm.

Have you experienced a bad storm?

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What sounds did you hear? What did you see?

**Invite** student suggestions – strong wind, rain, hail, thunder, sleet, snow, lightening, dust storm, sand storm, wildfires.



**Make** a group storm sound wave that begins as a small storm and ends as a big storm. The first player passes a soft low volume storm sound to the next player, who repeats the same sound but increases the volume, the sound travels from player to player, getting progressively louder.

**Repeat & Reverse** the sequence, beginning with a big storm, going from loud to soft volume and ending with a gentle breeze.

### **Explore Variations**

- each player chooses to be different element to create a cacophony of sound effects.
- **divide** into element groups, beginning with wind and rain, that builds into a big storm with a lightening and thunder climax.

**Make** a progressive collective group painting depicting a storm on a beach.

**Divide class** into groups of 3-5.

You will need large sheets of paper ( or mural sized canvas ) and art materials that can be shared and rotated between different groups.

**Nominate** specific responsibilities to each group. For example, the first group might work on painting the landscape features (sea, shore, sky, fauna). The second group, the animals living in the landscape (birds, fish, shells, lizards, snakes). The third group, the people that inhabit or are visiting the area (sailors, fisherman, swimmers, Ngarrindjeri people, local residents). The fourth group, the storm weather elements.

When the first group finishes painting the landscape they pass the work over to the second and so on.

**Display** the work in your classroom, library or school reception area.

Note: This activity can be conducted in small groups working on a single piece of paper that is rotated amongst the individual members of the group. While it may be important to the process that students negotiate their contributions with each other, encourage students to accept the offers made by previous contributors.



Extension:

**Add** words or quotes from the play (film or novel) to the picture.

Performance Viewing Task:

What is the biggest storm scene in the play?

What happens to Storm-Boy in this scene?

### Storm Talk

**Imagine** the wind can talk.

What does the wind say?

**Write** down the words of the wind.

**Drawing** on your imaginative beach walk journey

**Continue** exploring the idea of the elements having a speaking voice.

What if the wave could talk? The grass on the shore?



Extension:

A storm is coming. What does the storm say?

**Write** down the words of the storm.

What does the rain say? Thunder? Hail? Lightening?



**Write** a story, poem or song based on the words of the wind, waves and storm.

Performance Viewing Task:

At the end of the play what does Fingerbone Bill mean when he says to Storm-Boy, “wherever you go in the world, forever in your heart you’ll hear the wind-talk and the wave-talk and you’ll see the scribblings in the sand and have the salt smell of the beach wafting in your nose”?

What lessons has Storm-Boy learnt from Fingerbone Bill about his relationship to nature through his relationship with Mr Percival?





“ **FINGERBONE BILL**

Hey, what did the pirate  
say when his wooden leg  
got caught in a freezer?

Shiver me timbers!

Scene 2  
*Storm-Boy*

”



**AIM: To understand and examine the significance of home in creating a sense of identity and belonging.**

Your Home

Where do you live? Where do you call home?

**Describe** your home.

**Draw a picture/Take a photograph** of your favourite place at home.

Why is it your favourite place?

Who do you live with?

What is your understanding of the phrase 'Home is where the heart is'.



**Write** a poem, short story or song that includes the line 'home is where the heart is'.

**List** all the different kinds of homes people live in.

**Include** people from different countries and cultures.

Would you like to live somewhere else? Where? Why?

**Discuss** when home is not a positive experience.

When is it time to leave home?

Performance Viewing Task:

Would you like to live where Storm-Boy lives? If, yes, why? If no, why not?

Do you think Storm-Boy should stay with his father or go away to school?

**Give** 3 reasons for your response.

## An Ancient & Fragile Place



**Research** the Coorong.

**Collect** pictures of the Coorong.

**Give** 3 reasons why the Coorong has been under environmental threat in recent years.

The Coorong is home to many native plants and animal species.

**List** the plants and animals that live in the Coorong.

**Draw** a map of the Coorong.

**Mark** on the map where you think Storm Boy, Hideaway Tom and Mr Percival live and where we might find Fingerbone Bill's humpy.

**Make** a diorama (individual or class ) that gives a 3D picture of the world of the Coorong.

**Drawing** on your research, include things that are specific to the Coorong.

**Include** all the living things you will find there.

**Display** the diorama/s in the library, or office reception area.



Extension:

**Add** Storm Boy and Hideaway Tom's beach shack and Fingerbone Bill's humpy.

**Add** Mr Percival and other members of his pelican family.

**Add** other story elements, such as the hunters, sailors, and hospital.

**Make** a shoebox diorama of your favourite scene from the play.

Performance Viewing Task:

Drawing on your study of the Ngarrindjeri people, why does Fingerbone Bill describe the Coorong as a fragile and ancient place?

## Fingerbone Bill's "a special spot"

Have you ever come across a pile of shells in a bush scrub area far away from the beach shoreline? Chances are you've found an aboriginal midden.

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A midden is an archaeological term that refers to a mound or deposit of shells, animal bones, sharpened stones and other refuse that indicate human beings have lived in this place.

FINGERBONE: It was made by my people. This is a very special spot for my people.

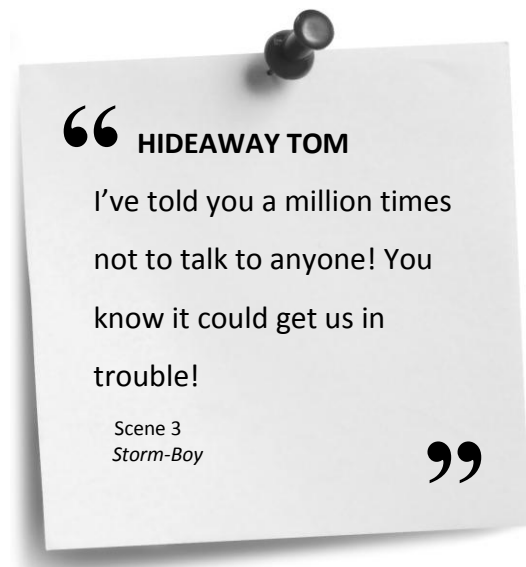
You see we've been coming here as long as the pelican have. Coming here and eating cockles, like I am right now.

**Google** images of an aboriginal shell midden.

**Add** a shell midden into your diorama.

OR

**Draw** a picture of Fingerbone eating cockles on a shell midden. Have Storm Boy and Mr Percival join him.



## NGARRINDJERI – a living people

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**AIM:** To introduce and understand the indigenous themes represented in the play.

The land and waters is a living body. We the  
Ngarrindjeri people are a part of its existence.

Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee

**Listen** how to pronounce Ngarrindjeri

[http://www.pronouncehow.com/english/ngarrindjeri\\_pronunciation](http://www.pronouncehow.com/english/ngarrindjeri_pronunciation)

**See** where the Ngarrindjeri live

<http://ngarrindjeri.jay019.com/land/>

**Research & Draw/Paint** a picture of the Ngarrindjeri flag.

<http://www.ngarrindjeri.org.au/about-us/ngarrindjeri-flag/>

<http://ngarrindjeri.jay019.com/culture/flag.php>

**Find out** what do the 18 dots represent?

The 2 spears?

The boomerang?

The sun?

What does the colour blue represent? The red ochre?

**Research & Read** the Ngarrindjeri dreaming stories.

<http://www.murrayriver.com.au/about-the-murray/ponde-dreamtime/>

<http://ngarrindjeri.jay019.com/culture/ngurunderi.php>

**Draw** a picture of your favourite part of the story.

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Extension:

**Listen** to Ruby Hunter sing *Ngarrindjeri Woman*

<http://www.myspace.com/music/player?sid=36982257&ac=now>



Ruby Hunter is a member of the Stolen Generations. Aboriginal children taken from their families are known as the Stolen Generations. Between 1915 and 1940 the Aborigines Protection Board could legally remove Aboriginal children into its control without the consent of parents and without any court hearings. Many of the problems faced by Aboriginal people have been identified as a direct reflection of past removal policies

**Read & Discuss** Ruby Hunter's lyrics:

Ngarrindjeri Woman

I am Ngarrindjeri Woman  
And I'm proud of who I am  
Ngarrindjeri Woman native to this traditional land  
In our mother's land  
Our mother's land

And when they took us all away  
Prayed for us not to stray  
Prayed upon our mother's land  
While we were locked away  
In our mother's land  
Our mother's land

I am Ngarrindjeri Woman  
And I stand so proud and tall  
I remember stories when I was a little girl  
In our mother's land  
Our mother's land

I am Ngarrindjeri Woman  
And I'm still here today  
To carry on our culture  
In the Ngarrindjeri Woman business ways  
In our mother's land  
Our mother's land

How does Ruby feel about being a Ngarrindjeri woman?

What does she mean by “our mother’s land” ?

What stories does Ruby remember being told as a little girl?



**Compare & Contrast** Ruby Hunter’s song with Fingerbone Bill’s story about how British colonization changed life for the Ngarrindjeri people and the birds living in the Coorong.

FINGERBONE BILL: It’s ancient, this place. Since the sun first came up there’s been a beach here and since the first morning, the waves have crashed in to it and since the first day pelicans and ibis and ducks have nested here and ever since my people have been coming , and through all that time...Through all those days ... More than you cold ever count ...Just about nothing has ever changed. Well, you fellas arrived, but that’s about it.

What was life like in the Coorong before European settlement?

How does Fingerbone Bill feel about what has happened to his people?

### *References*

Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan: Caring For Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture

Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee, Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management Committee, 2006

“

**STORM-BOY**

Dad, why is it that the fish  
are in the water and the  
birds are in the sky?

Scene 5  
*Storm Boy*

”



**AIM:** To explore the relationships between the human and animal characters represented in the play.

Pet-Talk

**Do** you have a family pet?

**Describe** your pet – what kind of animal is he/she, age, physical characteristics, personality, special qualities, funny stories?

**Imagine** your pet can talk, what does your pet say?

**Write** down the words of your pet.

**Write** a conversation between yourself and your pet.

OR

**Do** you have a favourite animal?

**Research & Describe** the species, physical characteristics, habitat, personality, special qualities.

**Imagine** your animal can talk, what does he/she say?

**Write** a dialogue scene between yourself and the animal.

Animals do not speak words but they can and do communicate with each other (and some with humans) in diverse and complex ways many humans do not understand.

How does your pet communicate with you? How do you communicate with them?

**Give** an example when you know your pet is communicating with you? Consider, their need for food, play and interaction, protection or comfort.

**Give** an example of when you have not understood your pet's behavior.

When has your pet not understood you?

**Discuss & List** the ways you could become better educated about your pet and their species behaviours.





Reflection:

Why do humans often fail to understand the behavior of animals?

+

Extension:

**Research** friendships between humans and animals.

<http://www.globalanimal.org/tag/animal-human-friendship/>

<http://amazing-creature.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/friendship-between-animal-and-human.html#.UP3LpLYQtdo>



**Look up** the meaning of the word ‘anthropomorphic’ in the dictionary.

**Discuss** how anthropomorphism can assist us in developing empathy toward animals as fellow living creatures.

**Debate** how anthropomorphism can lead us to inappropriately attribute human behavior to our pets and other animals.

Performance Viewing Task:

Mr Percival does not speak in the play. Why not?

If he did speak what would he say?

If he did speak how would it change the story?

How is Mr Percival’s silence important to the drama of the story?

+

Extension:

In *The Life of Pi*, the tiger also does not talk. Why do some writers choose not to have their animal characters talk in words?

Pelecanus Conspicillatus

**Research** the Australian pelican family.

**Draw/Paint** a picture of an Australian pelican.

**Write** down 5 facts about the Australian pelican.



## Watch on Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PlixHb3P-A>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65RgDwVaZiQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gxW7g-OOVA>

**Study** the movements of a pelican.

**Devise** 3 actions and gestures that capture the way a pelican moves.

**Listen** to the sounds a pelican makes.

**Make** the sounds of a pelican.

**Form** small groups of 3-5.

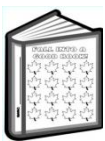


**Devise & Present** a short performance based on your study of the pelican movement and sounds.

Performance Viewing Task:

Are Mr Percival and his brothers, Mr Proud, Mr Ponder typical of Australian pelicans in their appearance and behaviour? How are they the same? How are they different?

## Fingerbone Bill's Penguin Dance Lesson



**Find** a comfortable position to sit or lie down on the floor.

**Close** your eyes.

Note: If your students are not used to closing eyes for an extended period suggest they cover their eyes with their hands. This exercise can also be done in desks. Invite students to fold their arms and rest their heads on their arms.

**Teacher/Guide reads** excerpt taken from play in the scene where Fingerbone Bill gives Storm-Boy his first lesson in the Pelican dance:

Listen to the waves and the breeze and the sand and the grass. Don't think about the ocean being in front of you and the sand being under your feet and the grass growing in the dunes behind us. See it all together. See the sand being washed around in the waves. See the water seeping in to the beach. See the grass growing all over the place. See how everything is connected. Taste the salt on your lips. Feel the grains of sand under your fingernails. Feel the breeze in your hair and on your skin. The sand, the sky, the sea, the air and us... all the same.

**Open** your eyes.



**Discuss** the story being told and the meaning of the text.

**Note** the phrases "See it all together" and "See how everything is connected".

What is Fingerbone Bill trying to teach Storm-Boy about his relationship to nature?

**Re-Read** the excerpt and include Fingerbone Bill's last three sentences.

And our birds. Stop thinking about them as three little babies all on their own and see their place in the world. See what makes us all the same.

**List** all the things that make us the same as animals.

**List** all the things that make us different from animals.

What makes us the same as a pelican? Different?



**Devise & Perform** a movement/dance sequence based on the selected text.

**Select** favourite words and phrases.

**Form** small groups of 3-5.

**Nominate** selected texts to different groups OR create 'listening', 'seeing' and 'feeling' groups that work on text relevant to their action of listening, seeing or feeling.

**STORM-BOY**

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Each group devises 3 physical actions or gestures that represent key images/words.

**Add** accompanying sounds and spoken words.

**Add** the pelican movements and sounds developed in the previous research task.

Performance Viewing Task:

**Describe & Copy** the movements of the pelican dance in the performance.

Why does Fingerbone Bill teach this dance to Storm-Boy?

Why does Storm-Boy want to learn to do the pelican dance?

