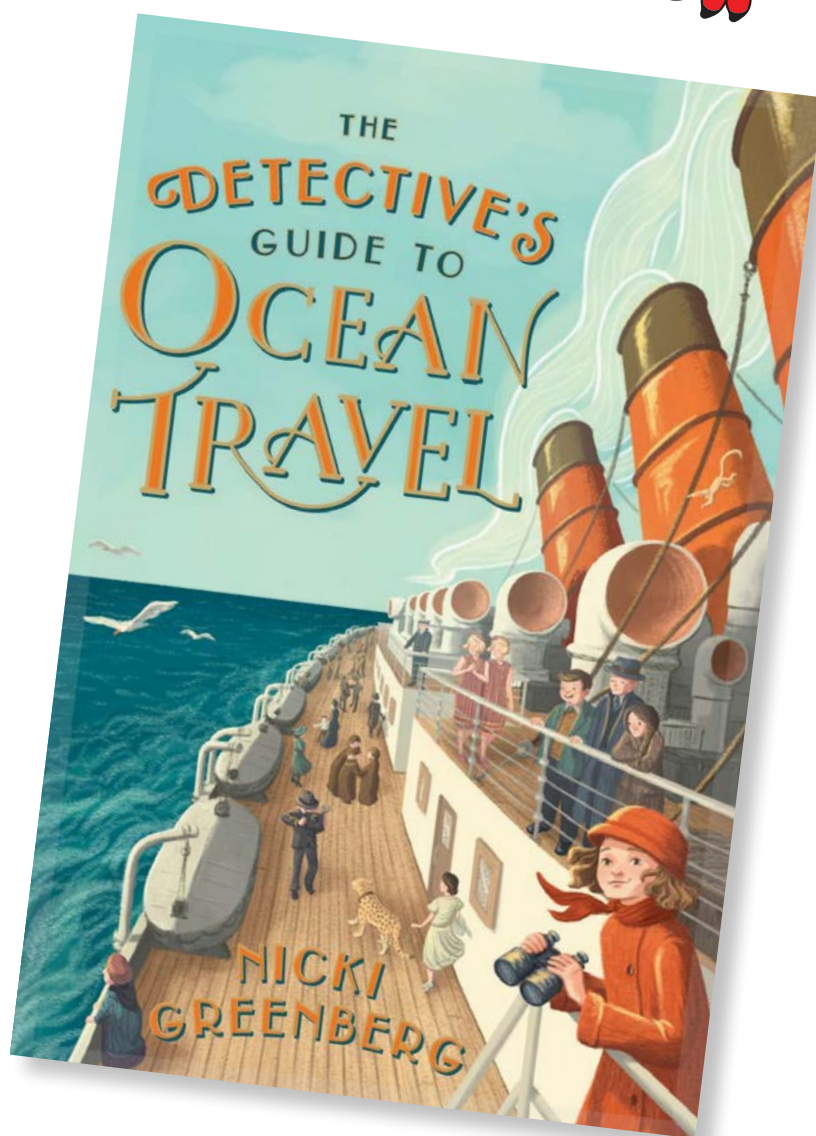


Meerkat
Productions



TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH STUDENTS
IN GRADES 3 – 8

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS RESOURCE PACK

This resource pack is designed to deepen your students' engagement with both the book and the theatre experience before and after our visit. It includes photographs of the creative process, context for the play and in-depth classroom activities.

For teachers, this pack will:

- provide material to guide discussion about the book
- give you strategies to explore the learning potential offered by a theatre visit and how to develop children's responses
- enable you to use drama to develop literacy, particularly with reluctant writers
- increase your confidence in using drama in the classroom

The classroom activities have been designed to support and extend your students' experience of the performance and offer teachers ways to pick up on and explore the themes in the play, before and after our visit.

We use drama and storytelling as ways of exploring ideas that are relevant to the play. We employ characteristics such as **playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically** to enable effective learning. There are also links to key areas of learning:

- **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT;**
- **COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE;**
- **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT;**
- **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN, AND**
- **UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD**

While the activities will not take an objective led approach, teachers will be able to establish links to the relevant curriculum objectives for their particular year group and can adapt them for their particular educational setting. Our teacher resources always put drama at the centre of our activities. Working through drama allows children to explore subjects that matter to them within a fictional context, draw on their prior knowledge and apply it to new situations, develop language as they give expression to new understandings and develop emotional intelligence and critical thinking as they see things from different perspectives. It will also allow the students to take responsibility, make decisions, solve problems and explore possibilities from within the drama.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES RATIONALE

AIM

To allow the students to engage with the themes of the book and the play by exploring their own understanding and experience of feelings.

TEACHER ROLE

Many of the activities are teacher led and will require the teacher to go into role. This is not about performance, or being an actor, more about speaking from a different perspective to enable the students to enter the fictional world.

Facilitating whilst in role encourages students to explore the themes more deeply and extends the impact of the theatrical experience back to the classroom and long beyond the end of the show.



ABOUT THE DETECTIVE'S GUIDE TO OCEAN TRAVEL

SYNOPSIS

For as long as she can remember, Pepper Stark has wanted one thing: to join her father, the Captain, aboard the magnificent RMS Aquitania on a voyage to New York. She has never been allowed to set foot on her father's ship – until now.

From the decadent food to the star-studded passenger list, travelling First Class on Aquitania is every bit as glamorous as Pepper had imagined. And most dazzling of all is American stage sensation Perdita West, wearing the world-famous Saffron Diamond around her neck. When the priceless jewel disappears mid-voyage, Pepper unexpectedly finds herself entangled in the crime.

With the Captain's reputation at stake, Pepper and her new friends set out to solve the mystery. But finding a missing diamond isn't so easy on Aquitania, where everyone has something to hide...

A thrilling adventure from award-winning author Nicki Greenberg, *The Detective's Guide to Ocean Travel* is perfect for fans of *Murder Most Unladylike* and *The Good Thieves*

THE SHOW

The following themes from the book are reflected in our adaptation: **Developing new friendships, Problem solving, Empathy, Dreams and Aspirations.**

As the book is over 65,000 words long we have to choose which parts of the story we can include in our 40 minute stage play; otherwise you'd be us watching all day!

The show is performed by two actors. Both performers play multiple roles using a variety of drama techniques such as: naturalistic acting, direct audience address, audience interaction, puppetry, mime and movement, plus original songs, music and sound effects to support the story, create place and clearly demonstrate what is happening.



BEFORE OUR VISIT

THESE ACTIVITIES ARE DESIGNED TO EXPLORE THE STORY AND THE THEMES IN THE BOOK. THEY WILL HELP STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH THE PLAY.

Based on feedback, teachers see a huge increase in student engagement in the performance when students are familiar with the story. Therefore, we strongly recommend you spend some time reading the book before our visit.

BEFORE READING

ACTIVITY 1: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS

Looking at the front cover, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think this book might be about?
2. Do you think this is a fiction book (a story) or a non-fiction book (facts)?
3. Is this a book you want to read? Why/why not?
4. What do you think about the illustrations on the front cover?
5. What period of history do you think this book is set in?



Short on time before our visit?

Ask each student to read a specific section of the book and summarise it for the rest of the class. This way all students will have an overview of the story before we perform the adaptation.

AFTER READING

ACTIVITY 2: RECALL THE STORY

With the whole class, go around in a circle with each child taking it in turns to recap a part of the story. By the time everyone has spoken the entire story must have been retold. Each child may say as much as they can remember. Try and piece the story together in chronological order.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

1. Did you enjoy this story? Why/why not?
2. What did you like about the style of writing?
3. Who would you recommend this book to?
4. Which parts made you smile?

ACTIVITY 3: REFLECTION

The Captain and Pepper have a distant relationship. Pepper's father has been distant from her for much of her life, and she is desperate for his affection and approval, while also feeling sad that he doesn't share his memories of Pepper's mother.

Imagine that Pepper and her father talk about this. What sort of questions do you think Pepper would want to ask about her mother? What sort of things would the Captain share?

In pairs, improvise this conversation, with the Captain answering all of Pepper's questions. Include at least two of the Captains favourite memories he has of Pepper's mother.

Share some of these short scenes with the class.

ACTIVITY 4: ROLE - PLAY

Split students into pairs. One of them is to play the role of Pepper and the other the role of Sol. Role-play the scene where Pepper and Sol first meet in the restaurant on board.

- Are they nervous when they first meet?
- What do they talk about?
- Do they find out they have anything in common?

Give the students time to discuss, rehearse and prepare their scenes then present them to the class.

ACTIVITY 5: ANALYSING THE BOOK

Affirm Press have put together a fabulous resource to support analysis of the book. You can find a guide here: https://affirmpress.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Detectives-Guide_Teachers-Notes.pdf

PREPARING FOR THE PLAY

ACTIVITY 1: WRITING THE SCRIPT

The original book is over 65,000 words long. To be a 40-minute play, the adaptation can only be about 6,000 words long; therefore, we can only include certain storylines.

1. Which parts of the story do you think we will include? Why?
2. Which parts of the story do you think we will exclude? Why?

ACTIVITY 2: THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

1. Which characters from the book are you hoping to see in the play?
2. Why?



AFTER OUR VISIT

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ARE TO PROVIDE FOLLOW UP SUGGESTIONS USING DRAMA ACTIVITIES.

ACTIVITY 1: REVIEW THE PERFORMANCE

Using **Resource A** ask students to review the production. Ask them to explain the reasons for their opinions.

1. What were your favourite parts of the play? Why?
2. Was there anything surprising in the play or the way the play was presented?

We'd love to read your reviews! Send them to us at admin@meerkatproductions.com.au

ACTIVITY 2: SETTING THE SCENE

CAPTAIN'S COMING

Begin with a game of Captain's Coming as a way of bringing life to what it might be like on board a ship.

First find out what experience children have had of going on a ship or a boat, or if they have seen any films or television programmes about life on the seas.

Ask the children to find a space in the room and explain the rules. When you call out certain instructions, the children should respond as quickly as possible with the actions described below:

- Bow: all move to the front, or bow, of the ship
- Stern: move to the back of the ship
- Port: move to the left side (facing the bow)
- Starboard: move to the right side
- Climb the rigging: mime climbing the rigging to the top of the mast
- Raise the main sail: in trios, mime pulling the ropes which raise the sails
- Land ahoy: show a person in the crow's nest with a telescope seeing land in the distance
- Scrub the deck: on hands and knees mime scrubbing the deck
- Lifeboat: in groups of five or six, show rowing a lifeboat (and imagine the ship sinking as they get away)
- Captain's coming: stand to attention, saluting. When the captain says 'at ease' they can relax
- Practicing knots: sit down and mime practicing tying rope knots

ACTIVITY 3: EXPERIENCING NEW THINGS

DISCUSS

Which of the characters in the play experience new things? E.g. Pepper on board a ship, and Sol meeting his favourite chef.

In pairs or small groups, ask the students to discuss how it feels to try something new for the first time.

- can they remember what it was like to try a particular food for the first time?
- or go to a new place that was very different from home?

Ask them to describe the experience to each other in as much details as possible: what they saw in a new landscape, what the weather was like, different sounds they heard, or how they experienced new tastes and smells.

- Did they enjoy their new experiences?
- How did they compare to the food and places they are familiar with?

IMPROVISATION

People who travelled on the RMS Aquitania were going to be meeting people from all different walks of life, people they may not otherwise have encountered.

Many were also going to be visiting America or England for the very first time in their lives. This story took place before people had televisions and the internet hadn't been invented.

Ask the students to think about things and places they know about because of television, film and photography, but which they have not seen or experienced themselves. It could be Uluru, Venice, Paris. Can you imagine a time before technology showed us these places and what it might be like to only have them described to you, or to maybe only see a drawing or painting of these places?

Move class into pairs. Person A is going to be from America and describe to person B what America is like to someone who knows nothing about it. What sights they might see? What will they look like? The food they might eat and what the people will be like? B can react as they hear this new information being described to them.

Swap characters and person B is going to be from England and describe to person A what England is like. They will describe what sights they might see, what the sights will look like, the food they might eat and what the people will be like. Person A can react as they hear this new information being described to them.

ACTIVITY 4: LEAVING

The Captain is often away from home on long trips. Imagine that you are going on a long trip by yourself. Find your own space in the room and imagine that you are packing your bag for the long boat journey. You can only take one bag with space for a few things; a change of clothes, something to remind you of home, something that might keep you going on the long weeks on board ship. Remember that this was a time before there was modern technology so there would be no tablets or phones.

Like the Captain was often leaving Pepper, imagine that there is someone who you are leaving behind. It could be a friend, a sibling or a relative. On a piece of paper write a note to the person that you will not see for a long time.

Ask each student to choose one sentence they have written that they would be happy to read out and go around the class hearing something from everyone.

ACTIVITY 5: CHARACTER PROFILES

Working in groups, students should choose one character from the production to focus on.

PART A: Group Activity – Role on the wall: Perdita West

1. Using Resource B, in groups, ask students to draw a simple outline of the character on a large sheet of paper. Within the outline, write adjectives that describe the internal qualities of the character, those that they might feel about themselves. Outside the outline, list how other people perceive them. Individually students should use these sheets to help write a character description about Perdita.

PART B: Considering the following questions, students should look at the characters of Perdita and Chef Robard to write a profile on.

1. What are the internal qualities of each character which makes them likeable or not?
2. How do other people see them?
3. What does the character say that makes them suspicious?
4. What does the character do that makes them suspicious?

ACTIVITY 6: BIG DREAMS

Sol dreams of becoming a chef. In pairs discuss with a partner what your dream job would be. What steps would you need to take to achieve it?

Share your partner conversations with your class.

ACTIVITY 7: CONSCIENCE ALLEY

A useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. Each line plays one side of a character's conscious and decides on a line or word to repeat over and over again as the 'character' walks through the alley. For example, you might choose Pepper when she is choosing between disobeying her father (The Captain) and helping to solve the mystery. How will The Captain react if he finds out? If she chooses to solve the mystery, how will she feel keeping it secret from her father? The teacher takes the role of the character (Pepper) and walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. Students can take it in turns to play the character, to know what it feels like to be in their shoes.

ACTIVITY 8: THOUGHT TAPPING

Get the students into groups. Ask them to create an image of First-Class passengers. Think about what they would be wearing and what kind of people they are. How do they perceive the other passengers and staff on board?

Then create an image of Third Class passengers. Repeat the exercise.

Students should try to imagine how each of the characters was feeling and try to show that on their face. Teacher to say 3, 2, 1 freeze and students are to hold their frozen image.

Whilst they are holding their frozen image, the teacher will tap a student on the shoulder one by one. The student will say out loud what their character is thinking or feeling at that moment in time.

ACTIVITY 9: FRIENDSHIP

PART 1

One of the main themes in both the book and the play was friendship. Discussion points in pairs or small groups:

- **What is a friend? Friends are people ...**

...we feel close to. Friends are people who have similar interests, people who care about us, and people we can trust. Friends offer support and understanding when we really need it.

- **What friendships were there in the play or the book?**

Pepper is friends with Sol, Toby, and Norah; The Captain and Lyons; Perdita West and Chef Robard, the Three Old Furs.

- **What kind of things can we do to begin and keep friendships?**

Join a club or a team. Meet a neighbour. Seek out a friend at school. Make contact with the person you would like to know better. Find ways to spend time with them. Talk about yourself, sharing more information as time goes by. Talk on the phone, write text and/or instant message, become pen pals or e-mail pals.

- **How do you think self-esteem or feeling good about ourselves is related to friendships?**

When we feel good about ourselves, we are more likely to choose friends that are good for us. There is a saying “we teach people how to treat us”. In other words, how we behave toward ourselves and other people gives them clues as to how they should behave towards us. If we feel good about ourselves and respect ourselves, and treat others with respect, we are showing people how we would like to be treated.

- **Why is it important to have good friends?**

True friendship is important. Friends support one another, listen to each other and give advice. When you and your friend share personal information about yourselves, you can learn from each other and explore what you have in common and what makes you different. Friends can teach us many things like how to play a game or how to make a craft. Friends can introduce us to exciting things like delicious new foods and interesting customs or celebrations. You can also learn about acceptance by appreciating the different qualities that make us unique individuals. When you accept people for who they are, you are being a respectful friend.

- **What kinds of things do you like doing with your friends?**

Ideas might include: playing games (video) and sports, hanging out, having lunch together, attending Girl Guides, Boy Scouts or other community groups, going to classes together (e.g. dance, martial arts, music lessons), watching television/movies, using the computer, working on projects and/or doing homework together.

- **How can we be good friends?**

- Share our interests and activities
- Trust each other and be honest
- Share our thoughts and feelings
- Respect each other’s opinions and beliefs
- Try to relate to how the other person feels
- Be sincere with each other
- Accept each other for who we are
- Encourage and support each other
- Commit to the friendship

PART 2

Ball game

This activity helps students explore the qualities of friendships. Get the students to stand in a circle. Throw the ball to someone in the group, and ask them to call out a word that represents qualities of a healthy relationship (for example; trust, supportive, kind, fun...). Ask that person to then toss the ball to someone else. Each time a new student catches the ball, ask them to share a new quality... and so on.

PART 3

An infomercial advertising for a great friend

In pairs, student A is going to advertise all the great qualities you would benefit from if you were to get student B as your friend. They should really 'sell' the amazing benefits of Student B. They should focus on how they will make their partner stand out from all the other pairs. The infomercial should be 1 minute long.

Show the class

Students swap, Student B is going to advertise all the great qualities about student A.

Share with the class " with "Students then swap. Student B is going to advertise all the great qualities about student A and share with the class.



ABOUT MEERKAT PRODUCTIONS

At Meerkat Productions our goal is to provide a theatrical experience that makes students and teachers alike lean forward and engage rather than sit back and watch passively. We want the memory of our performance to be long lasting; we want the work we do to be inspirational and we want you to be counting down the days until our next visit!

Our Book Week shows aim to support Literacy in the classroom, and we have found during our 20 year history that most Primary school teachers identify an impact, particularly in engaging lower ability children as well as increasing enthusiasm for and motivation to write.

OTHER SHOWS

DID YOU KNOW MEERKAT PRODUCTIONS ALSO OFFERS OTHER IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCES?



BOOK WEEK: PICTURE BOOK ADAPTATION



ANTI-BULLYING: BULLY BULL RING



**STORYTELLING & PUPPETRY:
GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES & FRACTURED FAIRYTALES**



MINDFULNESS, MANAGING ANXIETY, RESILIENCE: MR HUFF



CHRISTMAS SHOW: RUDOLPH'S RECRUITS

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE
MEERKATPRODUCTIONS.COM.AU
OR GIVE US A CALL ON 1300 308 311**

RESOURCE A

Here are some phrases that people might use to describe the experience of watching a piece of theatre. For each pair, please mark a point on the scale towards whichever is closest to your experience of watching the performance today.

My concentration was wandering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I was completely absorbed by what was happening
I didn't feel like I was learning anything	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	My eyes were opened to some new ideas
It didn't really get me going	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I was gripped by the sights and sounds of the performance
There wasn't much sense of atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I noticed a real buzz in the audience
I didn't feel much connection with the characters/story	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I felt I could really identify with the characters/story
It felt like time was passing slowly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I hardly noticed the time passing
I was mostly in my 'comfort zone'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I felt challenged and provoked
I felt tired and uninterested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I felt lively and enthusiastic
I didn't feel much connection with other audience members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It felt good to be sharing the experience with other people
There wasn't really much that touched me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I found aspects of the performance very moving
The performance didn't really hold my attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I was often on the edge of my seat
There was nothing much new for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It got me thinking about things differently
I felt flat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I felt tense and excited
I don't feel much urge to discuss the performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I will be talking about the experience for some time to come
It didn't say much about my life or experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Some aspects of the performance seemed relevant to my own life

RESOURCE B

ROLE ON THE WALL

