



# We Come From Far, Far Away

**Creative Learning**  
2023 Teacher Resources





# Stories full of energy and hope for the future

Inside the theatre is a big tent.  
Inside the big tent is a smaller tent.  
Inside this smaller tent is a boy.

He is called Abdallah, and he comes from Syria. He wants to tell you some things, about life, boats, tents, trains and phones, McDonalds and about Death. He also has a secret about promises that have been made and broken.

From Norwegian/Czech/British company NIE (New International Encounter) comes a tale inspired by true stories. Performed in a traditional Mongolian Yurt, *We Come From Far, Far Away* uses storytelling, shadow puppetry, comedy, clowning and live music to tell a big story in an intimate way. It tells the true story of one boy and his friend, instilled with humour, energy and hope.



## How to use this resource

The following Creative Learning Notes contain song excerpts, key influences, links to downloadable playlists, and suggestions for conversations and activities in the classroom before and after a visit to the performance.

We recommend using this resource as a starting point, to adapt content in a way that suits the learning needs of your students.

*We Come From Far, Far Away* tells true stories of young people who have experienced displacement. Recommended for ages 12+.

Please assess the appropriateness of this content and how you might support conversations in the classroom with your students based on the NSW Department of Education Controversial Issues Policy.



### **What to expect during the performance**

The action of the play takes place in Syria and across European countries

The performance contains storytelling, live music, shadow puppets and puppetry

The following prompts may support the experience for students with additional learning, sensory, physical and mental health needs

#### *Seating*

The play is performed inside a Mongolian Yurt – an enclosed space where the audiences sit on carpets and rugs and are very close to the performers

#### *Music and Sound*

The production does not contain any loud noises, war sounds or depictions of bombs/gun fire.

#### *Performance*

- The story is about two young boys Omar and Abdallah, who are played by two adult female performers

#### *Adult themes*

- The play deals with the refugee experience and was created in collaboration with young people who have lived experiences of displacement
- [SPOILER] The main character's best friend Omar drowns in the story. This is depicted via a puppet and storytelling from the POV of the character

#### *Time for Q&A*

- Each performance will end with a Q&A with the company in which students are encouraged to ask questions
- A trauma counsellor from the refugee support organization, STARTTS, will be present during the Q&A session. They will be available to talk to students about the services that STARTTS offers and advise where students can receive further support if they have been triggered by the production

#### *Safe space*

There will be a 'safe space' available for any students who wish to leave the performance during the show or take more time after the performance to reflect on the shows themes and issues. This space will be staffed by a member of the STARTTS Refugee Support Services

Should a student wish to leave during the performance, they are welcome exit the yurt and head to the 'safe space' which is located across the foyer from the venue.

#### *Personal safety and wellbeing*

- In the hours, days and weeks following your students' viewing of the production, staff should remind students that difficult emotions and thoughts may surface several days or weeks after watching and that school staff are here for them to discuss how the production affected them and help them get further support if needed

These key organisations may be able to assist viewers who require further support, free of charge:

*Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800*

*Transcultural Multilingual Mental Health Line – 1800 648 911*

*Mental Health Line - 1800 011 511*

*Lifeline - 13 11 14*

*Parent Line NSW - 1300 1300 52*





## Activities and Conversation Starters

### DRAMA: LIFE BOATS

Life boats is not only a fun exercise but it can help organise students into group sizes, used especially in the 'Dual Adventure Stories' activity below.

1. Start by asking the students to walk around the space, changing directions whenever you clap your hands. You want them to be mixed up and moving about and not walking in the same direction.
2. Give the instruction that when you shout a number they have to get into a group - *a life boat*- of that number. If someone is left out then one group has to save them like they are overboard and they are hauling them in from the sea. Encourage playful acting of being in a boat and saving the person overboard.
3. Start with big number such as 7. Encourage the playfulness and the idea they are on a boat. To build up this playful imaginary world of life boats quickly ask some groups what type of boat they are on.
4. Then shout "break" out and everyone walks around again with you clapping hands to change directions. You could change this to swimming through water if you want.
5. Over 3-4 rounds, make the life boats sizes smaller by calling out smaller numbers each time until you shout 2. This is the group size you need for the next exercise.



## **LITERACY AND STORYTELLING: Dual Adventure Stories**

Re-tell the story of *We Come From Far, Far Away* (but in 2 minutes!). The trick here is they have to change one aspect of the story, or add one big new thing which changes the outcome. It's up to them, but students will learn to use the performance as a starting point to inspire their own version of the story.

### **Step 1 – Remembering**

1. Place students in pairs. Ask them to remember the show by describing to each other and writing or drawing all the key moments or story plot points. Students must try to remember what happened from beginning to end.
2. Keep this playful. Keep the energy from life boats flowing through this exercise. Tell students they only have 5 mins and to remember quickly. Capture the story through writing or drawing, but quickly!
3. Note: This is not about good grammar, picture quality or remembering the dramatic names of the story. Just get the story from beginning to end on the page, however students remember it. Let them know, no one will see this – it's just for them.

### **Step 2 – Sharing**

Ask students to stand up and tell this story to each other and with each other. Students must share presenting the story, swapping over as they bring to life each moment, dot point or picture from their drawing or written document.

Note: Sometimes knowing when to swap is hard so you could use a hand clap to signal everyone has to swap. If you use this convention, then be playful with it and clap at quickly one or twice so they get used to swapping.



They have to use their hands and bodies as much as possible to describe everything. If you think they might not do this very well, then set out some rules for the physical story telling:

- Rule 1 they have to jump twice throughout the story telling (at the right point in their story of course to illustrate something quick, dramatic or sudden)
- Rule 2 they have to get low to the ground at least once (crawl, play dead, act asleep)
- Rule 3 they have to laugh like someone in their story (or cry)
- Rule 4 they have to use finger puppets to describe part of the story (walking or running)

### **Step 3 – Change it up!**

After remembering the story, students must add one big narrative shifting change to their story. Students can change the ending or beginning or some aspect of the story that radically alters the outcome.

Pairs will reconnect and write down their change into their document.

- Note: It's crucial that these versions have a beginning, middle and end. Remember to keep this playful still, although the energy will be less after the Life Boat activity.
- Try to keep students on time and on task, not getting lost in too many crazy ideas. Keep this activity to 5 minutes. Remember, finding the balance between using the time pressure to get the creative juices flowing, but not stopping too soon if the ideas are really happening... Good luck!

### **Step 4 – Present**

Students will then physically present their new version of the story to the class as a performance. Given them time to rehearse, or quickly set up the classroom into a stage and audience area.

### **Step 5 – Reflect**

- What were the different stories that emerged?
- How similar or different were the stories?
- How differently did students remember the show?
- How much did students actually remember about the show?
- What is a lasting memory or thought or feeling from the show?
- Did those feelings have an effect on their imagination with their story?





## MAKING: Trash Puppets

This is a simple puppet making exercise inspired by the puppetry elements of the show.

### You will need:

- Clean recycled items (trash!). For example, drink bottles, cans, small cardboard boxes (like cereal boxes), newspaper, pegs, string, the list is endless
- Scissors, glue, tape
- Devices such as tablets or phones for taking photos

### Step 1: Make Eyes

1. Place all your recycled items on a table in the middle of the room on a table or the floor. If you have time, try and make it look appealing. Like a provocation or exhibition in the centre of the room. Gather the class around it but don't let them touch.
2. The objective of this step is for everybody to create, or find, eyes in the trash. Start by asking everyone to look at the pile of trash and see if someone can identify something that could be used as eyes for a puppet. Pick it out and talk about it. Ask if people can find others. Pick them out and show everyone. Then ask if you could combine any materials to make an eye.
3. After a good discussion get everyone to start making or finding eyes and putting them on another table in another part of the room. Use scissors or tapes/glues as required. Try not to use drawing materials like textas, as this will encourage a different imaginary process when sticking with 'unusual' objects.



### Step 2: Get a head

1. Follow step one, but find a head of the creature or person. This is where you introduce masking tape. How could they make a head from any of the materials on the table? After a good discussion or one modelled example, get them busy making heads.
2. Part of making the head is choosing eyes from the table of eyes! Get them to make the shape of the head first and then get them to choose eyes from the table.



3. **Note:** The only eyes students **can't** use are the ones they've made themselves! This will build interest in each other creations.

### Step 3: Bodies

1. Once students are making the heads ask if they want to also make a body.
2. If they haven't already started to do it get them to assemble the head and body and bring their puppet to life. Be generous with masking tape and string.

### Step 4: Photos

1. Take photos of the puppets using devices that are easy to share the images. Take photos from different angles with and without puppeteers.
2. The presence of the camera will instantly make the puppeteers activate their puppets and without ever saying performance you will have lots of performing!

### Optional extension

1. Digital stories: Ask students to find images of different landscapes (industrial, tropical, mountains, domestic, etc). If you're feeling confident and have apps like Canva or Scratch, ask students to upload their puppet image and place them into a landscape.
2. Memes: The students can add captions or text to the image to create playful memes or mini stories. Extend this as far as you like! You could create scenes and write the back story – or you could bring various characters together into one landscape and create a more complex narrative!





## Curriculum Links

### Key Themes

Exploring themes of migration and displacement, resilience, human experience and connection to place, multidisciplinary theatre and use of simple technologies, representations of diversity in English, Drama, Music, History and Geography

### Australian Curriculum: General capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities

- Literacy
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Intercultural Understanding
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia

### NSW Curriculum: Outcomes for Stage 3- Stage 4

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| English          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Stage 3:</b><br/><b>EN3-7C</b> thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and ideas and identifies connections between texts when responding to and composing texts<br/><b>EN3-8D</b> identifies and considers how different viewpoints of their world, including aspects of culture, are represented in texts</li><li>• <b>Stage 4:</b><br/><b>EN4-5C</b> thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information, ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts<br/><b>EN4-8D</b> identifies, considers and appreciates cultural expression in texts</li></ul>                |
| Elective History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Stage 4:</b><br/><b>HTE4-2</b> recognises the ways in which historical meanings can be constructed through a range of media<br/><b>HTE4-3</b> sequences people and events or heritage features, within specific periods of time<br/><b>HTE4-4</b> describes some of the main features of past societies or periods, including groups and personalities<br/><b>HTE4-5</b> describes the key features of cultural groups, sites and/or family in our shared heritage</li></ul>   |
| Geography        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Stage 3:</b><br/><b>GE3-1</b> describes the diverse features and characteristics of places and environments<br/><b>GE3-2</b> explains interactions and connections between people, places and environments</li><li>• <b>Stage 4:</b><br/><b>GE4-1</b> locates and describes the diverse features and characteristics of a range of places and environments<br/><b>GE4-3</b> explains how interactions and connections between people, places and environments result in change<br/><b>GE4-4</b> examines perspectives of people and organisations on a range of geographical issues<br/><b>GE4-6</b> explains differences in human wellbeing</li></ul> |
| Drama            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Stage 3:</b><br/><b>DRAS3.4</b> Responds critically to a range of drama works and performance styles</li><li>• <b>Stage 4:</b><br/><b>4.3.1</b> identifies and describes elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions in drama<br/><b>4.3.2</b> recognises the function of drama and theatre in reflecting social and</li></ul>   |



cultural aspects of human experience

**4.3.3** describes the contribution of individuals and groups in drama using relevant drama terminology.

## **Music**

- **Stage 3:**  
**MUS3.4** Identifies the use of musical concepts and symbols in a range of musical styles.
- **Stage 4:**  
**4.11** demonstrates an appreciation, tolerance and respect for the aesthetic value of music as an artform  
**4.12** demonstrates a developing confidence and willingness to engage in performing, composing and listening experiences

#### **Keep in touch**

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