

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCE

HOUSE

A PLAY BY DAN GIOVANNONI

A BARKING GECKO THEATRE &
PERTH FESTIVAL CO-PRODUCTION



PERTH
FESTIVAL

WELCOME



These notes are designed to help you develop a creative series of sessions/ lessons to explore *HOUSE*. You can use just a few or most of the suggested strategies and activities, adapting them to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the students in your class – or the after school context in which you're working.

The play is particularly written for students in Year 3+ but is also suitable for older students. It lends itself to rich integration across the primary curriculum. Activities have been suggested to set the scene for the performance both several weeks before and on the way as well as to further engage with and reflect on the performance afterwards.

This Creative Learning Resource Pack has been curated by Primary School Teacher and Drama Specialist, Anna Stanton. Her passion for the Arts drives her thirst for engaging students (and teachers) in a classroom environment that is rich in experiences, movement, communication and teamwork.

BARKING GECKO THEATRE

Established in 1989, Barking Gecko Theatre is Western Australia's longest running professional theatre company dedicated to inspiring audiences to imagine the world anew.

For over 30 years Barking Gecko Theatre has created exquisite, award-winning productions, with a history of innovation and excellence making it an indispensable asset to WA.

Barking Gecko Theatre has delivered over 100 original Western Australia productions, toured 12 counties and reached almost 1 million people. Alongside Barking Gecko's theatre productions is the company's deep commitment to creative learning and social outreach. At a grass roots level, Barking Gecko delivers drama programs for children ages 4 – 18 across Perth, regional and remote WA every year.



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SYNOPSIS

Cathelijn has been abandoned. By her family, her friends, the world.

Alone in the centre of a dark forest, Cathelijn wills herself to be strong, like a Viking. But all that comes is the dawning realisation that she is, in fact, Completely and Undeniably Alone. As if called up by her loneliness, a fierce storm rises, surrounding her in the forest. She lowers her eyelids, buries her hands in her pockets, and begins to turn away from the world.

And that's when she sees it. The house. A higgledy-piggledy jumble as tall as the trees, with bits sticking out everywhere. It's glowing. Warm. She's drawn toward it, up its rickety front steps, onto its puddle-soaked front mat and, finally, through its heavy old door.

Inside, she finds a leaky old mess of a place, with pots and pans collecting drips in every corner, as well as Piotr – a wooden-legged mountain boy who never stops talking – and Elka, a grey-haired explorer who insists they keep the curtains closed tight. Within minutes the house is soaring through the sky, trying to outrun the storm. Cathelijn learns that this is a Rescue House – the Rescue House. "We rescue the loneliest children in the world," says Elka. "That is to say, the Loneliest Child. And that's you. On this date and at this time you, Cathelijn, are the loneliest child in the world." Cathelijn is delighted – a jumble the house may be, but with fresh (ish) biscuits whenever she wants them, there's absolutely no reason for her to go back outside. Ever.

With room enough for one lonely child, Piotr is asked to leave the House for good. But, though he claims he's Absolutely and Undeniably Ready and Willing to head back out into the world, the truth is that he doesn't want to go just yet. So, stowing away on the morning of his parachute departure, he begs Cathelijn to help him stay. Hiding Piotr away, Cathelijn turns her eye to the increasingly mysterious Elka – who is she? How did she end up running the House? And why is she so intent on Cathelijn staying?

As they continue to race away from the storm, which always seems to be right on their tail, Cathelijn begins to discover the true meaning of their travels. So begins an extraordinary adventure that takes Cathelijn far across the world, and deep inside herself, on a journey of self-realisation and self-determination.

Part fable, part mad-cap adventure story, *HOUSE* looks at some of the more challenging aspects of growing up and living in the world – sadness, grief, loneliness – and the need to embrace these elements in order to be a whole person. It is a story that feels both familiar and new, a contemporary fairy tale that invites audiences into a magical world of charming characters and wild escapades. Whilst the tone of the work is buoyant and fun, at its core, *HOUSE* is a story that affirms to young audiences that big feelings are mentionable, and manageable, and no matter how small we might feel sometimes, we are big enough to handle them.



A NOTE FROM LUKE KERRIDGE

Almost five years ago now, back when Dan and I were housemates, during one of our many free-flowing conversations at the kitchen table, he began to tell me about a new play that was brewing in his mind – something about a living house and three beautiful misfits who had found their way into it. It has been a joy and a privilege to work alongside him ever since, carefully laying the foundations and building this house into something that lives and breathes.

I would never have dreamed back then that this show would become my first as Artistic Director of Barking Gecko Theatre and yet I cannot think of a better story to launch my time at the company. It contains all of the things I believe should be in a good story for young people (and the young at heart): a healthy dose of magic, a whole lot of heart and some big ideas about how we negotiate our inner world and make space for ourselves in a sometimes challenging outer world. Oh, and the occasional flying crumpet.

I hope you love the story of *HOUSE* as much as the team and I do, and like the characters in the play, carry it with you, forevermore.

Luke Kerridge, Artistic Director
Barking Gecko Theatre



A NOTE FROM DAN GIOVANNONI

The first ideas for *HOUSE* came to me a long time ago, when I was very far away from home. Alone on the other side of the world, I wrote a bunch of short stories inspired by some of the characters I had met – other travellers, mostly, who were like me wandering around looking for a place where they fit.

Fifteen years later, those stories are given life as characters in this play – not so much as honest depictions of the people who inspired them (whose faces I can't quite remember anyway) but instead memories of myself at that time, feeling a lot like Cathelijn, alone and lonely, dreaming of home and seeking the warm embrace of a friend.

It took a long time for this story to reach the stage, longer still because of the strange time we're all living through right now. Returning to this play after being locked in my house for the better part of a year, the story resonated in a different way – loneliness and isolation weren't things I was feeling because I was far away from home, they had become part of our everyday, and our homes had become quite literally safe houses, shielding us from the swirling storm outside. Moments of connection – of kindness and friendship – kept us afloat.

Starting rehearsals in December was like catching up with an old friend, and watching Luke and the team patiently build this flying house and launch it into the sky was the balm I needed after a long and lonely year. I hope watching it can be that for you too.

Dan Giovannoni

BARKING GECKO THEATRE'S

HOUSE

By Dan Giovannoni

CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM

Director | Luke Kerridge
Playwright | Dan Giovannoni
Set & Costume Designer | Charlotte Lane
Lighting Designer | Richard Vabre
Composer & Sound Designer | Rachael Dease
Contraption Designer | Philip Millar
Dramaturg | Jennifer Medway
Movement Consultant | Sam Chester

CAST

Cathelijn | Chanella Macri
Elka | Nicola Bartlett
Piotr | Isaac Diamond

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager | Michael Maclean
Stage Manager | Georgia Landre-Ord
System Designer | Tim Collins
Contraption Construction & Maintenance | Steve Berrick
Assistant Stage Manager | Madeline Young
Scenic Artist | Ruby Smedley
Set Builder (Onstage Arts Owner/Manager) | Rob Butler
Set Builders (Onstage Arts employees) | Michael Kombi Coleman, Matthew Power, Alex Fisher,
Ruby Smedley, Rohin Best, Kellie Staben
Costume Construction | Nicole Marrington
Set Electrics Construction | Chris Donnelly
WAAPA Lighting Secondment & Head Electrician | Matthew Erren
Props Runner | Etain Boscato
Tour Technician | James Savage

HOUSE KEY THEMES FOR EXPLORATION



- Isolation
- Loneliness

- Belonging
- Identity

- Relationships
- Resilience

- Determination/Grit
- Self Belief



SPARKING INTEREST

YES / NO / SOMETIMES

As an ensemble students move around the room to background music. Focusing solely on themselves and being completely quiet. The below statement will be called out and students move to either YES, NO or SOMETIMES which is taped on the floor.

TEACHER: When you land on YES NO SOMETIMES stay focused, quiet and still and make eye contact with somebody on another answer. It's important for students to not talk between answers and keep their thoughts to themselves. We suggest starting with some light and fun questions to begin with, then slowly dropping down into the more meditative and thoughtful phrases.

- *Biscuits should always have chocolate in them*
- *I love being a kid*
- *I like to read*
- *I have felt lonely*
- *I have bad hair days*
- *I feel like a belong*
- *I like to give everything 110%*
- *Winter is my favorite season*
- *I often miss my family*
- *Teachers always listen to me*



These statement are just a starting point for you, please feel free to adapt according.

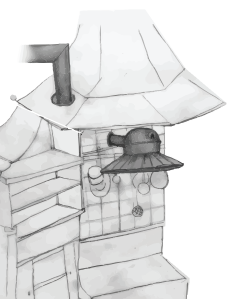
INQUISITIVE MINDS

PART 1: The first part of this activity is a warm up for students to start creating questions in their minds.

Students stand in a circle and make eye contact with a person from across the circle and pose a question to them, any question! Once the recipient of the question is posed to, they respond by posing another question to a different person across the circle.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- *Why is the sky blue?*
- *How do you dress so smartly everyday?*
- *What is the answer to 8x4?*
- *Why do you have to do that?*
- *Is the opposite to green, red?*
- *How long is a piece of string?*
- *Is a tonne of feathers heavier than a tonne of bricks?*



SPARKING INTEREST

INQUISITIVE MINDS CONT'D

PART 2: Using the poster image of *HOUSE* allow students to think about any questions they may have about the image. As a class have students pose their questions, beginning with I wonder..

I wonder how...
I wonder what...

I wonder where...
I wonder when...

I wonder why...



EXPLORING *HOUSE*!

Ask students to view the poster image of *HOUSE*. Pose questions to the class about any observations that may be of interest regarding the image.

Set a performance space and place a piece of furniture (chair, table, stool etc) in the centre of the room. Inform the students that this object is no longer what it is... It is of course the entrance to *HOUSE*!

The scene must start on one side of the playing area where the performers find House. Once they find House students should enter via the chair, or underneath the table (whatever object is used) to the other side where they find themselves inside house.

What do the performers find on the other side in house? Prompt students to think of possible characters, objects, rooms to explore etc.

NUMBERS

Students are to walk around the room using all of the space available. The teacher will call out a number from 1-10. Students will then arrange themselves into this group number i.e. 'Number 3 will consist of 3 students in a group.

The teacher will call out a theme word from *HOUSE*, students will then arrange themselves into a scene depicting this word. Students have one minute to think of an idea and arrange themselves into a postcard image with their bodies, then freeze.

The teacher may choose to walk around and tap a few students on the shoulder. Asking what their scene or character is. The teacher will then instruct the students to 'walk', and players continue to walk around the room until the next *number* is called.



KEY WORDS GIVEN MAY BE:



- *Isolation*
- *Loneliness*

- *Belonging*
- *Identity*

- *Relationships*
- *Resilience*

- *Determination/Grit*
- *Self Belief*



REFLECT

Discuss with the class the themes used during this exercise reflecting on the difference in power and status within these themes and how the students felt within the scene.

IGNITING THE KNOWLEDGE

BEST BISCUIT IN THE WORLD



The Welcome Biscuit was offered by Piotr as an initiation for Cathelijn when she enters HOUSE. It is a delicious biscuit that makes her feel warm, safe and at home. Anyone who eats a biscuit such as these 'welcome biscuits' in our story House immediately has these feelings too.

Invite the class to sit down at your tea party in a circle. Explain to the students that there is only one packet of biscuits left on this earth and they will be the last people to ever taste one.

Offer each student 'biscuit' from the tin. All of the biscuits are now used up, except for one solitary biscuit (teacher to use an object that symbolizes the last biscuit). Everyone wants that biscuit. The trick to this improvisation game is to come up with the zaniest and most outrageous reason as to why the chosen student should be given the biscuit to eat.

Each student will be given time to go around the circle and plead their case. At the end of going around the circle, the teacher narrows down the top three responses. Students are to then conduct a blind vote, whereby they close their eyes and only put their hand up to vote for the one they think was the most imaginative and creative response.

HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHS

In small groups, students will be given a poignant part of the story to create a series of frozen images (beginning, middle and end).

In groups of 4/5 students create a scene from the list below. One person will be nominated as the leader to read their scene/quote out at the beginning of showcasing their groups freeze frame.



HOUSE QUOTES / THEMES

1

“Stay quiet. Don’t make trouble. Keep your hands to yourself.
And DON’T ask too many questions”.

2

“I wait...Practice being smaller and quieter and asking less questions”.

3

Leaking, dripping, house repairs.

4

When you lose one thing, you gain something else.

5

Our lives are at stake!

6

“Nothing big ever came from being small”

7

“If you stay inside forever, then you stay inside forever. You’ll never
find anything with the curtains closed tight”.

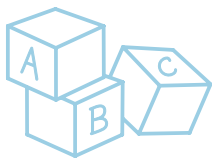
8

The loneliest child in the world.



Students are given five minutes to decide who will play a character or object in the scene relating to the theme. Each person must have a word or phrase that relates to the given scene.

ALPHABET RECOUNT



In partners, small groups (or whole class depending on age range) the story of *HOUSE* is to be retold using the alphabet.

The teacher may start the lesson by giving the following prompts emphasizing the beginning letters of each sentence and writing them on the board:

Abandoned in a field sits a scared, young girl
Before she came to this field her family left her to go on holidays
Catelijn is her name, and she is the loneliest child in the world”

THE *HOUSE* HOT SEAT



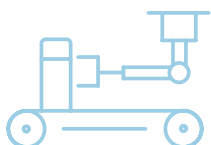
The idea of being in the 'hot seat' is that you are interviewed or questioned 'in role' as a character from the story. This may be done by using one student, or a few students on the stage/front of the room. Each student in a 'hot seat' must take on the character and answer as them accordingly.

The teacher is to instruct the students that if they are asked to take a seat, they will be given a role from the play *HOUSE* i.e. Caitljin, Poitr Elka, Caitiljin's – Mother, Father, Sister, Brother or Aunt... Even as abstract as *HOUSE* itself.

The interviewers (audience) are to now devise open-ended questions for the characters in the seats that they must answer 'in role'. Each character will take it in turns to answer a question that is posed to their character.

Note – This activity is particularly useful in developing inferential comprehension, communication and reflecting quickly on prior knowledge from the play and the characters within the story.

HOUSE MACHINES



Dividing the class into six or more allocate each team an emotion or key theme from *HOUSE*. Everyone from the group must choose an action and a sound or phrase to accompany it. To become their machine, each students action and sound/phrase needs to add to the building of their machine one at a time, as if they are an important cog to keep things moving.

Emphasize to students the use of levels on the stage. Each person that joins must have an action and sound/phrase in order for the next person to join. Eventually, they will become a well oiled, working machine.

HOUSE – MEETING

The *HOUSE* - Meeting invites all students to step into role and explore multiple perspectives in a community that is preparing to make a decision about a problem or a proposed change.

Similar to the meeting that happens in our play between Piotr, Elka and Cathelijjn, the class as an ensemble holds a town meeting.

Agenda – Should Elka, Piotr and Cathelijjn land the house and continue to push through the storm?

1. Brainstorm a list of people at the town meeting
2. Ask students to select a character to play;
3. Leader of the town hall introduces the issue at hand
4. After presenting the issue, ask for opinions from individual towns people.

* If it seems the group is leaning strongly in one direction, work to introduce new information that might complicate the issue further and keep multiple sides of the debate alive.

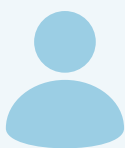


HOUSE LONELY CHILD PROFILE

Imagine there are five lonely children around the world, waiting to be picked up by *HOUSE*. On a map, mark out five countries where the lonely children come from. You may choose any countries you like!

Each child will need a “Lonely Child” profile. Their details will need to be researched relating to the country they come from.

YOU WILL NEED TO INCLUDE:



Name

Country

Culture (religion or cultural traits).

Food (typical food of the country or region)

Housing (what does their homes look like? Mud hut, igloo, tent etc.)

FIND YOUR 'GREATNESS'



Catelijn never believed she had 'greatness' or any positive traits to offer a friend or family member.

Watch the Nike's Advertising Campaign on 'Finding your Greatness'. Take note of the many different things that can make a person 'great'. It doesn't have to be sport. It could be a character trait or something else that is unique to that person.

Watch [here](#)

In groups of two or three, discuss the character traits, talents and positive things that add to our own 'greatness'. Each person is to develop a 'Greatness' mind map, that links all of the wonderful and unique traits that make us 'great'.

MENU OF COMFORT FOOD

Cathelijan is offered a 'welcome biscuit' and any food she wants when she enters *HOUSE*.

Your Task: To create a 'Comfort Food' Menu. If someone was to order food from your menu, how would they feel when they eat this item.

Your menu must consist of:

- *Appetiser*
- *Entrée*
- *Mains*
- *Desserts*
- *Drinks*



Be as creative as you like by naming your food items by adding in descriptive language and emotions to your food items on offer. For example:

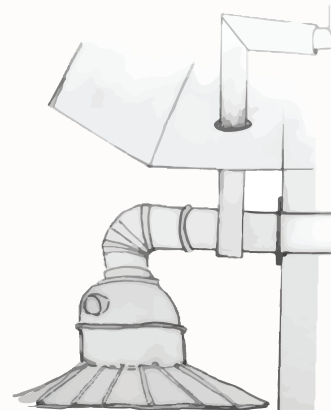
APPETISER - Warm fuzzy brownie bite with gooey caramel friendship sauce.

ENTRÉE - Safe and snuggly soufflé with a garnish of gratitude.

MAINS - Cheeky laughing Lasagna with a stupendously inviting salad

DESSERT - Pretty perfect Pavlova with hugs of friendly fruit and a confident cherry twist.

DRINK - Beautiful Berry Smoothie with a smiling kiwi twirl.



SUPPLEMENTARY PICTURE BOOKS AND NOVELS



The Little Crooked House by Margaret Wild and Jonathan Bentley

– belonging, friendship, teamwork

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires

– perseverance, being misunderstood, self doubt

After the Fall by Dan Santat (how Humpty Dumpty got back up again)

– resilience, perseverance, being brave, overcoming fear

The Red Tree by Shaun Tan

– isolation, loneliness

The Lost Thing by Shaun Tan

– loneliness, finding your way, isolation, belonging

Nobody Hugs a Cactus by Carter Goodrich

– loneliness, isolating oneself, kindness

El Deafo by Cece Bell

– rising against adversity, isolation, friendship, magical powers

Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

– loneliness, succeeding against adversity, belonging, fixing/repairing, using creativity

Matilda by Roald Dahl

– rising against adversity, loneliness, finding friendship, believing in oneself

CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA: MAKING

Improvisation skills (working with complications) to develop drama	(ACADRM032)
Dramatic structures to sequence how a story is opened, how events are presented (mood and tension elements) and key details to help the audience understand dramatic meaning	(ACADRM035)
Improvisation skills (creating climax and drama dénouement) to enhance drama	(ACADRM036)
Improvised and devised drama based on narrative structures in familiar drama styles	(ACADRM031)
Preparation techniques for voice and movement for selected drama forms and styles	(ACADRM043)
Performance skills and audience awareness (where the performers control the focus) to convey meaning to the audience	(ACADRM037)
Mime techniques (creating objects using shape and weight) in drama	(ACADRM043)
Effective group work processes (problem-solving, listening skills) in drama	(ACADRM042)

DRAMA: RESPONDING

Ideas in drama from different cultures and personal experiences. Exploring key themes and responding	(ACADRM034)
Considered responses to, and respect for, the drama of others as performers and audience members	(ACADRM034)
Responses that involve identifying and reflecting on the meaning and purpose of their own and others' drama , using drama terminology	(ACADRM034)
Script interpretation, based on a reading of the complete text, of an extended scene or section to manipulate mood and interpret themes for audience	(ACADRM047)

ENGLISH

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations incorporating learned content and taking into account the particular purposes and audiences	(ACELY1689)
Interpret ideas and information in spoken texts and listen for key points in order to carry out tasks and use information to share and extend ideas and information	(ACELY1687)
Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view	(ACELT1603)
Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view	(ACELT1620)
Understand the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and know that words can have different meanings in different contexts	(ACELA1512)
Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalinguage , and reflecting on the viewpoints of others	(ACELT1609)
Use interaction skills when discussing and presenting ideas and information, selecting body language , voice qualities and other elements, (for example music and sound) to add interest and meaning	(ACELY1804)
Read and write a large core of high frequency words including homophones, synonyms, descriptive language and know how to use context to identify correct spelling	(ACELA1780)

HASS – GEOGRAPHY

The main characteristics of the continents of Africa and South America and the location of their major countries in relation to Australia	(ACHASSK087)
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HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Explore how success, challenge and failure strengthen identities.	(ACPPS033)
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