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Drama Improvisation Workshop by

Impro Melbourne

Teacher Resources 2023

Ideal for Year 5 - VCE



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Education and Training



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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created to provide teachers with curriculum links to the Victorian Curriculum, and includes some preliminary and post show ideas and activities as to how to extend their experience of **Drama Improvisation.** The activities are designed to be open-ended and multi-ability. They may need differentiation for your specific cohort.

The performances and workshops included in the Arts & Education program are designed to offer students engaging arts experiences with strong links to the Victorian Curriculum and VCE subjects where appropriate. Each Arts & Education program varies in its purpose and content and as a result the scope for integration across the curriculum varies.

If you have any questions about this resource, its content or its implementation within your classroom please do not hesitate to contact the Arts & Education team at <u>education@rav.net.au</u>

ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

Regional Arts Victoria inspires art across the state. Through creative facilitation, touring, education, specialised resources, artistic projects and advocacy, we develop and sustain creative communities and artistic practice all over Victoria.

Regional Arts Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation working in longterm partnerships with every level of government, fostering contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice across five decades. We advise and impact on decision-making across multiple portfolios and levels of government.

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations, and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria.

PARTNERSHIPS	PROGRAMMING	PROJECTS
Regional Arts Victoria facilitates the partnerships, the organisations and the practices that create new work.	Regional Arts Victoria nurtures the experts who foster local artistic experiences and stimulate young minds.	Regional Arts Victoria presents major artistic projects that build local artistic leadership and legacy.
 Regional Cultural Partnerships Creative Arts Facilitators Membership program Devolved grants programs Resources, workshops and events Sector advocacy and leadership development 	 Arts & Education Program Connecting Places Touring programs Education resources Industry development resources and events Sector advocacy and leadership development 	 State-wide projects including Creative Workers in Schools, Small Town Transformations and Artlands Victoria Internal Creative Professional Development programs Sector advocacy and leadership development

ARTS & EDUCATION

For over 50 years, Regional Arts Victoria has been the leader in providing educational arts experiences for children and young people across Victoria. Each year we offer a range of performances and workshop programs to schools throughout regional and metropolitan Victoria, with COVID-Safe planning in place across our entire program.

The Arts & Education program aims to encourage young people to develop their creativity_and enhance awareness and participation in the arts through accessible arts learning opportunities. Our program is designed to engage, educate, challenge and delight students from foundation through to VCE using a range of creative approaches. With a selection of high quality, immersive arts experiences, we pride ourselves on providing relevant and exciting activities for children and young people that are complementary to the Victorian Curriculum. To support educator learning we offer professional development opportunities to complement our programs.

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Improvisation is a great way to develop selfconfidence and explore the imagination. It is valuable in any rehearsal process. These Workshops encourage creative play, active participation and lots of laughter. Students are introduced to the principles of spontaneous improvisation, including teamwork, cooperation, trust, respect for others' ideas, and dealing light-heartedly with failure.

DRAMA IMPROVISATION WORKSHOP involves one of our teachers directly introducing students to the core principles of great spontaneous improvisation. Contrary to popular opinion that impro is all about individual sharp wit, the art of impro truthfully relies on teamwork, cooperation, trust, respect for others ideas and reacting positively to failure. These are important lessons not only for building successful stories on stage, but also for life. Students will be explained these concepts one by one by the improvisor, using a few student volunteers to try different games used to strengthen these skills. These games can then be played online or in-person, and inside or outside the classroom. This workshop suits smaller groups so students have ample space and time to ask questions.

With clear curriculum links, these workshops directly address areas in Creative Thinking, Drama and English with interpersonal development and personal learning including sharing of ideas, teamwork, creative thinking, sharing ideas, responding and communicating. The skills learned can also lead to creative writing and scripted performance making.

Impro Melbourne's teachers are passionate, highly experienced professional actors who love inspiring creativity in students. Their instructors teach at various arts institutions, including the Victorian College of the Arts, St Martin's Youth Theatre, Melbourne Polytechnic, NICA and Malthouse Theatre, and they have toured internationally.

ABOUT IMPRO MELBOURNE

Impro Melbourne is the longest-running improvisational theatre company in Melbourne, whose purpose is to boldly expand the use of improvisation in theatre and education.

Since 1996 Impro Melbourne has produced all forms of improvised theatre from short game/scene style formats through to full length 50 minute to two hour fully improvised shows, exploring genres like Shakespeare, musicals, film noir, murder mystery and nonnaturalism. They currently produce the global impro format Theatresports[™], as well as Keith Johnstone's two other competition formats Maestro[™] and Gorilla Theatre[™]. These formats are licensed through the International Theatresports™ Institute and Impro Melbourne is the Victorian license holder. Impro Melbourne has also produced shows for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for the past two decades.



In 2004 they developed a schools' program which has now become a highly acclaimed series of demonstration shows and workshops for primary and secondary students managed by Regional Arts Victoria. This includes IMPROVAGANZA, show and workshops, for Years 5-12 and FAIRYTALE COOKBOOK, show and workshops, for Foundation to Year 6 to develop creative thinking and storytelling. They also offer a series of workshop for students enrolled in VCE Drama.

Impro Melbourne's reputation continues to grow as they travel across Australia and overseas. The company has performed and taught in Asia, Europe and North America. In 2005 they ran the first International Improvisation Festival in Australia, bringing in players from North America, Europe, Scandinavia and Japan. They continue to share our innovative techniques with the impro world and will never stop searching the globe for inspiration.

THE PERFORMERS:

Key performers in the company have been working as actors and improvisors in Melbourne, Sydney and overseas for over 15 years, on the stage and in TV and film.

The Schools Players: There are currently 12 performers who deliver the schools program. All of our schools performance ensemble are regular cast members of our productions of *Theatresports™*, *Maestro™*, *Gorilla Theatre™*, and perform and create new improvisation formats. All performers attend regular training and seek to constantly improve the standard and quality of our work. Our schools cast is committed to promoting a passion for improvisation, performing and theatre among students.

TERMINOLOGY

The following are terms used in teaching improvisation which may be useful to you and your students. They can then give you a methodology to use in communicating, discussing and reflecting on your work in the classroom.

1. Offer

Something new added to the scene can be verbal, physical, character, emotion or environment.

Example: A – I'm bored B – Let's play hide and seek. Offers: emotion - bored / verbal - hide and seek.

A – Look at that statue
Offer: environment – statue
B – It's my father (burst into tears)
Offer: verbal – father / emotional – tears

2. Blocking

Refusing to accept an offer, which prevents the story from moving forward.

Example:

A – Hi Sue, Happy Birthday!
B – My name isn't Sue it isn't my birthday.
The offers of Sue and Birthday were completely blocked by B.

Sometimes Blocking gets confused by defining Blocking as simply saying the word No. This isn't necessarily correct.

Example:

A - (A monster walking towards player B) You are going to tell me where your boyfriend is hiding, aren't you? B - No.

'No' in this situation actually raises the stakes of the scene and puts B in trouble.

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3. Acceptance

Acknowledging, and using the offer to advance the story.

Example:

A - Is that the phone ringing?

B - Yup, I'll get it, it's the President?!

This accepts the phone ringing, advances by answering, and further advances by saying who it is.

4. Wimping

A form of blocking, one may be saying yes as if accepting but not really contributing or accepting fully. It allows improviser to not be responsible for anything in the scene.

Example:

- A Would you like to go to the zoo?
- B OK.
- A Do you like animals?
- B Some.
- A Can you see any?
- B Isn't there one there?
- A Look, it's attacking you!
- B Oh....ouch....

5. Hogging

A player takes over the scene and makes it all about them, ignoring other players and offers.

Examples:

Talking all the time, ordering people about, taking over the scene.

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ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

Improvisation is a scary prospect. Students will often experience some uneasiness when faced with the prospect of performing without a script. Some of the most common concerns include:

- What if I make a fool of myself?
- What if I am not funny?

Warm up exercises are a great way to start the impro ball rolling and begin to create the environment needed for improvisation to thrive. As an instructor you are aiming to remove fear and judgment, create trust, develop co-operation, focus on listening, focus on stories and to make your partner look good.

<u> 1. Yes Let's</u>

Works on: Group co-operation and instant positive acceptance Online - This game can be played online and in person

Explanation:

1 person yells out an activity (e.g.' let's jump up and down') the rest of the group yells "YES LET'S" loud and positively and then everyone does the suggested activity until the next suggestion is yelled out.

Tips:

• Any "No Go" zones should be stated before the game is played. For example: leaving the room, fighting, Yes *Let*'s needs the sense of freedom so it is best to playfully establish ground rules ahead of time so you do not need to shut down activity. However, the unexpected may happen so in that case you can quickly yell out "Let's stop" or "Let's not".

• Remind class that the Yes Let's must be positive and enthusiastic regardless of the suggestion; for example: "Let's pick our nose" = "YES LET'S!" Teachers can yell out suggestions to open areas of thought. E.g. "let's be Superheroes", will make the class think movie themes or characters. "Let's be famous Hollywood stars", "Let's be mountains", "Let's be DNA cells". You can help guide by being playful and inspiring them with new strands of exploration.

ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

2. Applause for Nothing

Works on: Breaking the fear of being in front of the class performing and supporting each other.

Explanation:

The whole class sits as audience, one student stands to the side of the stage area. When they walk on stage the class must clap and yell loudly. The student stops and faces forward, the audience goes silent, the student performs a very, very simple non-original action, the class goes wild with applause, the student leaves the stage. Next student goes.

Tips:

- The simple "non original" action is something like: winks, touches their nose, stands on one leg, tilts head to one side.
- In a large class this can be exhausting to yell loudly for so long. You can line 5 students up and have rapid succession, then switch to a different 5.
- Teachers should be ready to boost levels of applause and enthusiasm when it dips from fatigue or class dynamics. Do not leave any student with small applause.

*Online - This activity can be played online with students waving hands and smiling instead of clapping.

3. Using an object for what it is not

Works on: Idea generation, acceptance and justification, not being precious about ideas.

Explanation: Take an object and use it for what it is not. For example: A Frisbee could be a contact lens, dish, hat, pimple, bar of soap, tub, alien vessel etc. Variations:

You can play this in many ways:

- 1. Have the whole class stand in a circle. Behind you have a table or basket of props. Pick out an object, use it and then pass it to the person on your right. This then begins its way around the circle. Each person receiving the object, using it and passing it to his or her right. Once that prop has gone by 3 or 4 people take out another prop, use it and pass it on. The benefit of it going round the circle is no one is actually watching anyone so it allows shy students or students who doubt their creativity a chance to do. It is good to watch these students and remember something they have done.
- 2. In groups or as a class put an object on the floor and encourage students to jump in and use their idea to make the object what it is not. They can work in twos or groups if they wish.
- 3. Team on Team: who has the most uses for. Issue the challenge and then place the prop and both teams compete. Or give one object to one team and watch, give another object to the other team and watch. Count ideas team with the most ideas wins five points. (losing team will always complain their object was not good).

Tips:

Look for props that are simple and have interesting shape. If the prop itself is too odd then it is difficult to use. Simple common props provide the most potential. Frisbee, skipping rope, feather duster, book, cricket or baseball bat etc.

ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

4. What are you doing?

Works on:

Trusting the imagination, not thinking, being in the moment, playfulness.

Explanation:

1st person begins an action (reading a book, making a sandwich, skating)

2nd person asks 'what are you doing?'

 1^{st} person keeps doing their action but replies by saying an action they are NOT doing 2^{nd} person begins doing what 1 has just offered

Example:

- A (action) playing violin
- B (says) what are you doing
- A (says while still playing violin) I am making a sandwich

B (action) making a sandwich

A (says) What are you doing?

- B (says while still making a sandwich) I am horse riding
- A (action) horse riding

Tips:

- Begin this activity slow and let students get used to the rhythm. Then encourage them to go faster, then faster. If they mess up the routine, if they do and say the same thing, if they make any mistake get them to yell "AGAIN" and they stop and start a new one.
- Nice to have groups of two all over the room doing this and then yell freeze!
- Switch partners! (let them run around finding a new partner) Go even faster!!!
- This exercise builds energy and releases nervous energy. It is safe for people to play with people they don't know so well.

Note:

You may see students suggest things like pick your nose, go to the toilet, or sexual references. Improvisation does release what is considered forbidden like going to the toilet in public. The game goes quite quickly and often making a big deal or preventing such actions will make them more attractive and students will find a more secretive way of putting their partner on the spot. After it is suggested a few times with no response it is usually let go of.

ACTIVITIES: SCENES AND GAMES

Each game creates a scene. The term 'game' came into being because it is playful and has a sporting reference that makes sense in a competitive show structure. We find it helpful in teaching to remind yourself that each 'game' is a way of developing a skill and that improvisers are storytellers first and foremost. All scenes, however short, should have a story.

In our performance we cover:

1. One Word at a Time

Description: Improvisers create a story each alternating speaking one word at a time.

This game is a fantastic training and performance game. It works on removing control and forcing improvisers to be in the present moment as they only have the word their partner says to go on. Neither can control, neither can tag along.

This game can also be a good tool to teach happy failure which builds resilience. Ask Students to go fast and as soon as the story doesn't make sense, or they are thinking too much, ask them to throw their arms in the air and yell 'Again'. Then start a brand new story. As you walk around the room, praise people for saying 'Again'.

Tips:

The improvisers must remember they are the same person telling a story about them, right now. Dialogue such as hi/how/are/you/I/Am/fine is not the aim here.

They are creating a story, by playing a scene, and sharing this with us One Word At A Time.

Example:

- A Walking
- B Down
- A The
- B Street
- A I
- B Saw
- A A
- B Dog
- A With
- B A
- A Present
 - Play the game in twos and have them act it out as they do it, it is much more fun.
 - Remind players to get into trouble, to interact with whatever they bring into their story, to watch each other and to keep the pace moving along. Don't let them slip into taking lots of time thinking. It's impro, no thinking allowed.
 - Interacting with what they introduce is important, if they find a beetle, have a duel, meet.

Online - This game works well online if you can do break out rooms. If not, you can get small groups (up to 15) to organise a group order beforehand and then do 'One word at a time' sayings for example never eat soggy weetbix. When the group thinks the saying is at the end everyone claps and say yes. Then the person next in the order starts the next one.

2. Space Jump

Description:

An evolution of Freeze Tag using physical offers. New scenes are created using freeze positions with players being added and then removed.

One player begins a scene, creating and using their environment. Teacher or offstage player claps/blows whistle and announces "Space Jump". Player One freezes and Player Two enters and uses the frozen physical position of Player One as the offer to start an entirely new scene, justifying the frozen image. Both players continue the scene until "Space Jump" is called again. Player Three enters and uses frozen tableau created by the two players as an offer for new scene. Player four would do the same with the tableau created by the three players currently on stage. Then the scenes begin to reverse with players leaving in the same order they entered. Each time "Space Jump" is called a player leaves, the remaining players must use their physical positions to justify what is now happening in that story/scene since we last saw it.

Online - This game can be played with cameras turning on and off. Online students need to be reminded to give space to each other to talk and to hold their physical pose.

Tips:

- Encourage players to keep active in their scenes so that their physical positions change. New players will tend to use offers like gym class, playing some sort of ball game, etc which is just jumping around and not story or character creation.
- Encourage them to stop playing the game and start talking to each other so we get relationships.
- As the number of players onstage grows the scenes can become quite 'talky'. Encourage players to be active but silent in scenes, "you don't all need to talk in the scene". Or endow players as objects, animals, and architecture
- Encourage use of physical positions being used not ignored.
- Encourage player coming in to make the new offer.

3. Arms expert (Expert Double Figure)

Description:

One player stands in front of the other and places her/his arms behind their back. The player standing behind puts their arms through the hole between arm and torso of the person in front, giving the appearance of being their arms.

Tips:

- The arms and body need to relate and work together. Hands should do hand like things, fix clothes hair etc. The person in the front should find helpful offers for the hands 'when I was only this tall' and the hands should have fun offering for the person in front i.e. suddenly pointing at someone and shaking their fist.
- Although often demonstrated as an interview scene with people sitting. Arms can be played in scene form in a job interview, first date, and family scene. Once comfortable with creating the arms character any scene can be created.
- Respect and trust should be nurtured in the group before playing this game so there is no difficulty with boundaries. Fighting is to be avoided all together (and this will be an appealing idea to some age groups).

ACTIVITIES: SCENES AND GAMES

4. Moving Bodies (Puppets / Puppet Manipulation)

Original name:

Moving Bodies other variations Puppets or Puppet Manipulation.

Description:

One improviser can talk but cannot move, another player moves them as if they were a life size puppet. Guide students on how to move their puppet with care and give each other space to make physical and verbal offers.

Online: 3.6 Movie Dubbing.

Have two students act out a scene with cameras on and two other students play their voices with cameras off.

Tips:

- The 'mover' and the 'puppet' both need to be working together to create the scene. The mover can do small gestures like a smile, they can also pose the 'puppet' and leave them for a second to justify why they are in that position. Walking is accomplished with a gentle tap on the back of the leg you wish to move. Please avoid kicking.
- It is good to remind movers of the delicate nature of how people move and that heads don't spin around and establish the rule that you cannot use one 'doll' to hit the other. The doll tries to play the scene while justifying why they do what they do, however the mover needs to listen for offers like 'I'll get the book from the table over there'. Offers, and acceptance happen both ways. Watch for over talking by the puppets. Encourage players to slow down, watch, listen, react, and play the scene.



FURTHER READING

WEBSITES

Regional Arts Victoria <u>www.rav.net.au</u>

Impro Melbourne

www.impromelbourne.com.au Theatresports™ plus other improvisation based shows and public workshops

Drama Victoria <u>www.dramavictoria.vic.edu.au</u> For teaching support and resources

International Theatresports Institute <u>www.theatresports.org</u> Information on International Theatresports

BATS

www.improv.org/school/resources/books.htm Bay Area Theatresports Recommended book list

The Spolin Centre www.spolin.com About Viola Spolin and her work

PRINT

Impro; Improvisation and Theatre by Keith Johnstone Published by Methuen (paperback) or Faber and Faber (hardcover) Improvisation for Storytellers by Keith Johnstone Published by Faber and Faber Impro Wisdom by Patricia Ryan Published by Bell Tower Acting on Impulse by Carol Hazenfield Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin Northwestern University Press Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin Northwestern University Press Improvisation by Lyn Pierse Improcorp Australia Theatresports™ In Schools Manual: apply to schools@impromelbourne.com.au

Learning Areas	Capabilities
The Arts- Drama	Personal and Social Capability
Strand: Explore and Express Ideas Improvise with the elements of drama and narrative structure to develop ideas, and explore subtext	Strand: Self- Awareness and Management Evaluate emotional responses and the management of emotions in a range of contexts
to shape devised and scripted drama Manipulate combinations of the elements of drama to develop and convey the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions in dramatic forms and performance styles	Develop criteria to appraise personal qualities and use these to design strategies to plan for the future or address a challenge
	Evaluate behaviours and protective factors that contribute to the development of confidence, adaptability and self-reflection
Strand: Drama Practices	Strand: Social- Awareness and Management
Practise and refine the expressive capacity of voice and movement to communicate ideas and dramatic action in a range of forms, styles and performances spaces	Investigate personal, social and cultural factors that influence the ability to experience positive and respectful relationships and explore the rights and responsibilities of individuals in
Structure drama to engage an [•]	relationships
audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles and by using design elements	Strand: Collaboration Develop specific skills and a variety of strategies to prevent or resolve conflict, and explore the nature of conflict
Strand: Present and Perform	resolution in a range of contexts
Perform devised and scripted drama making deliberate artistic choices and shaping design elements to unify dramatic meaning for an audience Strand: Respond and Interpret Evaluate how the elements of	Achievement Standard By the end of Level 10, students reflect critically of their emotional responses to challenging situation in a wide range of contexts. They demonstrate persistence, motivation, initiative and decision- making through completion of challenging tasks. They evaluate personal characteristics, strategies and sources of support used to cope with stressfu situations/life challenges.
drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama to convey meaning and aesthetic effect	Students analyse the effects of actions that repress human rights and limit the expression of diverse views. They analyse factors that influence different types of relationships. They critique their
Achievement Standard By the end of Level 10, students develop and sustain different roles and characters to realise dramatic intentions and engage	ability to devise and enact strategies for working in diverse teams, drawing on the skills and contributions of team members to complete complex tasks. They develop and apply criteria to

scr per pro The nai act per dra Stu for me dev exp diff	diences. They perform devised and ripted drama in different forms, styles and rformance spaces. They plan, direct, oduce, rehearse and refine performances. ey select and use the elements of drama, rrative and structure in directing and ting and apply stagecraft. They use rformance and expressive skills to convey amatic action and meaning. udents analyse the elements of drama, ms and performance styles and evaluate eaning and aesthetic effect in drama they vise, interpret, perform and view. They use periences of drama practices from ferent cultures, places and times to aluate drama.	evaluate the outcomes of group tasks and make recommendations for improvements. They generate, apply and evaluate strategies to prevent and resolve conflicts in a range of contexts.
Eng	glish	Critical and Creative Thinking
	Strand: Reading and Viewing Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts Identify, explain and discuss how	Strand: Questions and Possibilities Suspend judgements to allow new possibilities to emerge and investigate how this can broaden ideas and solutions
	narrative viewpoint, structure, characterisation and devices including analogy and satire shape different interpretations and responses to a text	Challenge previously held assumptions and create new links, proposals and artefacts by investigating ideas that provoke shifts in perspectives and cross boundaries to generate ideas and solutions
	Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences	Strand: Reasoning Investigate use of additional or refined criteria when application of original criteria does not produce a clear conclusion
	Strand: Writing Refine vocabulary choices to discriminate between shades of meaning, with deliberate attention to	Strand: Meta-Cognition Critically examine their own and others thinking processes and discuss factors that influence thinking, including cognitive biases
	the effect on audiences Strand: Speaking and Listening Understand that Standard Australian English in its spoken and written forms has a history of evolution and	Investigate the kind of criteria that can be used to rationally evaluate the quality of ideas and proposals, including the qualiti of viability and workability
	change and continues to evolve Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people	Achievement Standard By the end of Level 10, students construct and evaluate questions, including their own, for their effectiveness. They demonstrate a willingness to shift their perspective when generating ideas, resulting in new ways of perceiving solutions.

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Identify and explore the purposes and effects of different text structures and language features of spoken texts, and use this knowledge to create purposeful texts that inform, persuade and engage audiences, using organisation patterns, voice and language conventions to present a coherent point of view on a subject	Students structure complex valid arguments. They explain and apply a range of techniques to test validity within and between arguments. Students identify, articulate, analyse and reflect on their own and others thinking processes. They use, monitor, evaluate and redirect as necessary a range of learning strategies. Students develop, justify and refine criteria to evaluate the quality of ideas, proposals and thinking processes.
Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements to influence a course of action, speaking clearly and using logic, imagery and rhetorical devices in order to engage audiences	
Achievement Standard By the end of Level 10, students explain how the choice of language features, images and vocabulary contributes to the development.	
Students show how the selection of language features can achieve precision and stylistic effect. They explain different viewpoints, attitudes and perspectives through the development of cohesive and logical arguments. They develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images.	
Students listen for ways features within texts can be manipulated to achieve particular effects. They show how the selection of language features can achieve precision and stylistic effect. They explain different viewpoints, attitudes and perspectives through the development of cohesive and logical arguments. They develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images. They create a wide range of texts to articulate complex ideas. They make presentations and contribute actively to class and group discussions building on others' ideas, solving problems, justifying opinions and developing and expanding arguments	

Contact the Arts & Education team at <u>education@rav.net.au</u> with further questions or, even better, examples of your work!

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