



# DAKOTA OF THE WHITE FLATS

By Red Leap Theatre

## LEARNING RESOURCE

Presented by QPAC

Part of QPAC's Creative Learning program

## Introduction

This resource is designed as a supplementary guide to be used alongside the [Red Leap Theatre Education resource](#), which includes a full recording of the show, interviews with the cast and creatives, and in-depth guides to Red Leap's creation process.

This Learning Resource supports Years 7–12 students engaging with the live performance *Dakota of the White Flats*, a contemporary New Zealand work that explores resilience, friendship, ethical decision-making, and environmental responsibility. Designed to extend the experience and provide learning experiences that align with the Australian Curriculum: English v9.0 and Senior Secondary English syllabuses, and The Arts v9.0 enabling teachers to embed the performance meaningfully within existing units of work.

Students are encouraged to view the performance as both a literary and dramatic text, analysing how narrative, character, language, and performance conventions shape meaning and position audiences and how to further explore the themes and questions of the performance.

This resource is designed for flexible use across Years 7–12 and may be adapted to suit specific school contexts, assessment requirements, and curriculum priorities.

## Creatives and Company

**Molly Macalister** as Dakota Pink

**Celine Dam** as Treacle Duck

**Justice Kalolo** as Henry Twig

**Tess Sullivan** as Lucy Pink / Medusa

**Tim Earl** as Lassiter Peach

**Director** Ella Becroft

**Lighting Design** Rachel Marlow

**Set Design** John Verryt

**Sound Design/Composition** Eden Mulholland

**Costume Design** Ana Van Shie De Pont

**Puppet Design** Jon Coddington

**Choreographic Advisor** Sarah Foster-Sproull

**Dramaturg** Tom Eason

**Producing Company** Red Leap Theatre

# Creative Context

## Key Themes:

- Resilience in the face of adversity
- Friendship, loyalty and trust
- Ethical decision-making and responsibility
- Environmental sustainability and human impact
- Identity, place and belonging

## Key Questions:

The following questions could be used as discussion topics or written responses.

- Identify a character in the performance of *Dakota of the White Flats* who has demonstrated character growth. How has this character growth developed throughout the production? What evidence is there of this?
- How do the characters demonstrate resilience throughout the performance?
- Throughout the performance of *Dakota of the White Flats*, in what ways does friendship influence decision-making for the main characters?
- What topical or contemporary issues are explored through the presentation of *Dakota of the White Flats*?
- What ethical dilemmas are presented, and how are they resolved?
- How does the work encourage audiences to reflect on their relationship with the environment and the impact of environmental decay on a community?
- What multimodal elements are used to enhance the text and performance - sound, music, lighting?

## General Capabilities

- **Critical and Creative Thinking:** interpreting symbolism, themes, and viewpoints
- **Ethical Understanding:** exploring moral choices and consequences
- **Personal and Social Capability:** empathy, resilience, and collaboration
- **Literacy:** analytical writing, discussion, and oral presentation



## Cross-Curriculum Priorities

**Sustainability:** human impact on the natural environment and responsibility to place

## Curriculum Connections

### Australian Curriculum: English v9.0 (Years 7–10)

This performance supports learning across Language, Literature, and Literacy strands.

#### Relevant Content Focus (examples):

- Analysing how authors and performers represent ideas, values, and perspectives
- Examining ethical positions and moral dilemmas in narrative texts
- Interpreting and evaluating contemporary Australian texts
- Creating persuasive, analytical, and reflective responses

### Senior Secondary English (Years 11–12)

Aligned learning areas include:

- Textual analysis and interpretation
- Representations of human experience
- Evaluation of perspectives, values, and assumptions
- Creation of extended analytical and imaginative responses

The performance may be used as a related text, stimulus text, or comparative text within Senior English units.



## Overview and Plot

*Dakota of the White Flats* is an adaptation of the novel by award-winning author Philip Ridley. A high-action pulpy punk noir with snappy dialogue that snatches the classic coming-of-age adventure story out of the hands of a gang of boys, and passes it to two loud, unapologetic, brave young women.

Dakota Pink is 13-years-old and afraid of nothing. She lives in a bleak housing complex on the edge of a polluted canal. Abandoned supermarket trolleys litter the streets and the oil slick water is filled with monstrous mutant eels. Dakota and her best friend Treacle discover a secret that propels them across the water to the Broken Glass Fortress on Dog Island.

Delivered in electronica inflected neon and grime, *Dakota of the White Flats* is a finely crafted narrative shot through with comedy, horror, immersive soundscape and live music. Directed by Ella Becroft, with set design by John Verryt, lighting by Rachel Marlow and composition by Eden Mulholland, this fast-paced and electrifying show celebrates the resilience, bravery and hope of young people in a changing world.



# Specific Links to English and Suggested Learning Activities

## English - Year 7 - Persuasive Speaking and Writing

**Focus:** Issue exploration – create arguments that express a point of view and persuade an audience.

**Objective:** To build critical thinking and research skills so students can create persuasive arguments grounded in evidence.

**Link to Standards:** Express and expand ideas with evidence; view and comprehend texts created to inform, influence and/or engage audiences; identify how ideas are portrayed and how texts are influenced by contexts.

### Task overview:

- **Choose a topical issue** (social, environmental, cultural, or personal).
- **Investigate multiple perspectives** on that issue.
- **Gather evidence** (facts, statistics, quotes, examples) to support their viewpoint.
- **Evaluate sources** for credibility and relevance.

*Dakota of the White Flats* explores **themes** such as:

- Friendship and loyalty/coming of age story
- Urban decay and environmental neglect/degradation
- Social isolation and belonging/Loss
- Courage and resilience

These themes can inspire students to explore issues. For example:

### Possible Issues from the performance

#### 1. Environmental Neglect in Urban Areas

- The White Flats setting reflects pollution and decay.
- Students can research real-world examples of urban neglect and its impact on communities.

#### 2. Youth Advocacy for Change

- Dakota and Treacle show resilience and resourcefulness. Explain how.
- Are there any real-life examples of teenagers showing resilience and resourcefulness - youth-led movements? (Youth activism projects such as climate strikes, anti-bullying campaigns).

## Activity Steps:

### 1. Text Connection:

- What problems are highlighted in the production of *Dakota of the White Flats* relating to the setting and characters (e.g., the polluted canal, abandoned flats).
- Discuss: *What problems do Dakota and Treacle face? How do these reflect real-world issues?*

### 2. Brainstorm Issues:

- In groups, students list issues inspired by the text.
- Rank them by relevance and interest.

### 3. Research:

- Use credible sources (articles, reports, videos).
- Collect facts, statistics, and expert quotes.
- Record findings in a graphic organizer (Issue → Evidence → Source).

### 4. Share & Reflect:

- Groups present their issue and evidence.
- Class discussion: *How does this issue connect to the themes in the performance? Why does it matter to young Australians?*

## Focus: Resilience and friendship

**Activity:** Students deliver a persuasive speech advocating a decision made by a character, using evidence from the performance to justify their viewpoint.

## English - Year 8 – Ethical Issues and Viewpoints

**Focus:** Explore ethical dilemmas and create responses.

**Objective:** Identify ethical dilemmas in the performance and connect them to contemporary ethical issues.

**Link to Standards:** Explain how ideas are represented and how texts reflect contexts; elaborate ideas with evidence

### Task overview:

Consider and review issues raised in the production of *Dakota of the White Flats*, such as urban decay, poverty, and community neglect.

## Issue 1: Environmental Neglect in Urban Areas

**Connections to the text:** The White Flats is polluted, abandoned, and unsafe – symbolic of how society allows certain places and people to fall through the cracks.

### Discuss:

- What ethical issues are implied?
- Who is responsible for the state of the White Flats?
- Who is responsible for maintaining healthy urban environments?
- Why are some neighbourhoods/communities neglected more than others?
- How does environment affect a community's sense of identity and pride?
- What are the long-term consequences when we fail to maintain safe, healthy environments?

### Steps:

- Guide students to connect the above discussion points and how they align with contemporary concerns.
- Students list issues such as environmental justice, pollution, unequal resource distribution, social inequality, youth safety, government and community responsibility.
- Discuss which issues would have more impact than others and why.
- Students choose an issue inspired by the text (e.g., urban pollution, youth homelessness).
- Research facts, statistics, and expert opinions.
- Create a graphic organizer: Issue / Evidence / Why it matters to youth.

## Issue 2: How do relationships and sense of community impact us?

### Task overview:

- Discuss contemporary ethical issues and group in categories such as:
  - **Friendship, loyalty, coming of age:** moral decision-making; loyalty vs. doing what's right; how young people develop personal values
  - **Social isolation, belonging, loss:** ethical responsibilities toward vulnerable individuals; the right to community and support; the psychological effects of social neglect; modern concerns about youth mental health
  - **Courage and resilience:** when individuals must step up to fix systemic issues; resilience in the face of injustice; youth agency and moral responsibility
- Consider how the characters:
  - navigate dangerous, neglected spaces with courage
  - create their own support system outside of adults
  - take initiative to solve problems rather than waiting for help
  - show moral bravery when confronting the truth about their environment
- Students choose an issue inspired by the text.
- Research facts, statistics, and expert opinions.
- Create a graphic organiser to record notes.



## English - Year 9 – Environmental Concerns

**Focus:** Youth Advocacy for Change

**Objective:** Explore multiple viewpoints on an ethical issue.

**Link to Standards:** Discuss and elaborate on ideas with evidence.

### Steps:

- Connect character traits demonstrated in the performance of *Dakota of the White Flats* with real-world youth activism.
- Investigate real-life examples of teenagers showing resilience, resourcefulness and moral courage.

### Discuss:

#### 1. Climate Strike Movement (Fridays for Future)

- Initiated by Greta Thunberg but now includes millions of teenagers globally.
- Students organise marches, petitions, school-based events, and environmental advocacy.

#### 2. Anti-bullying and Inclusion Movements

- Student-led “Kindness Campaigns”
- Peer-support programs
- School activism for safer, more inclusive environments
- Many of these are founded and organised by teenagers themselves.

#### 3. March For Our Lives (US)

- Founded by high school students after the Parkland school shooting.
- Focuses on safety, youth rights, and political engagement.

#### 4. Indigenous Youth Climate and Land Rights Activism

Teens in countries like Australia, Canada, and the US are leading campaigns on:

- Land stewardship
- Cultural preservation
- Environmental protection (e.g. Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network in Australia).

#### 5. Local youth actions

## **Additional Task Ideas (Suitable for Year 7-9):**

### **1. Character Perspectives Debate**

**Objective:** Explore multiple viewpoints on an ethical issue.

**Link to Standards:** Discuss and elaborate on ideas with evidence.

**Steps:**

- Assign roles (Dakota, Treacle, adults, council members).
- Debate: *Should the community take action to clean up the canal? Who should lead?*
- Students use evidence from the performance to support arguments.
- Students respond in character, giving their perspective on the issue.
- This process can be repeated for a variety of topics with students taking on different roles.

### **2. Create a Campaign inspired by Dakota**

**Objective:** Deliver a persuasive presentation that expresses a point of view on an issue, using evidence to convince a youth audience appealing for future actions.

**Links to standards:** Create spoken and multi-modal texts, express and elaborate on ideas with evidence.

**Steps:**

- Students script and record a short spoken video presentation for *The Conversation – Youth Activism Section*.
- Issue: *What action should be taken to prevent urban decay and support youth?*
- Use persuasive techniques, evidence, and a strong call to action.

## **Year 10 – Analytical and Comparative Study**

**Focus:** Values and representations

**Objective:** Understand how language can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people.

**Link to Standards:** With a range of purposes and for audiences, they discuss ideas and responses to representations, making connections and providing substantiation.

**Task overview:** Compare the representation of resilience or environment in *Dakota of the White Flats* with another text studied.

## Years 11–12 – Senior English Extension

**Focus:** Representations of human experience

**Objective:** To respond and explore the themes of the play.

**Link to Assessment Objectives:** Create perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and/or places.

**Task overview:** Extended analytical response evaluating how the text positions audiences to consider ethical responsibility and environmental stewardship.

### 1. Character Values Mapping

**Purpose:** Analyse how characters represent ethical decision-making and resilience.

**Task overview:** Students create a character values map, identifying key moments where characters reveal their beliefs.

#### Steps:

- In groups, assign each group a character:
  - Dakota
  - Close friend / ally
  - Adult/community figures
- Students identify:
  - A key moment where the character makes a decision.
  - What motivates them.
  - The consequences of their actions.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What pressures influence the character's decision?
- Does the character act ethically? Why or why not?
- How does the character change throughout the narrative?

**Extension:** Students write a **short analytical paragraph** responding to:

*How does the text represent the development of ethical responsibility in young people?*

## 2. Ethical Dilemma Debate

**Purpose:** Explore how friendship and community shape moral choices.

**Task overview:** Students examine a key conflict from the performance.

### Steps:

- Present the class with a scenario from the play (e.g. protecting the environment vs loyalty to friends/community pressures).
- Divide the class into perspectives:
  - Dakota's viewpoint
  - Friend's viewpoint
  - Community viewpoint
  - Environmental perspective
- Students debate the decision using evidence from the performance.

### Discussion Questions:

- What responsibilities do young people have to protect place?
- Does loyalty to friends ever justify harmful actions?
- How does the play encourage audiences to evaluate these choices?

**Extension:** Students respond to: *In what ways does friendship shape ethical decision-making in the performance?*

## 3. Performance Elements Analysis

**Purpose:** Understand how theatrical techniques communicate themes.

**Task overview:** Staging Investigation - Students analyse how performance elements shape meaning.

### Steps:

- Create four stations:

Station	Focus
Lighting	Emotional tone, environmental shifts
Sound	Atmosphere, connection to place
Space / staging	Relationship between characters and environment
Movement	Emotional and psychological states

- Students rotate between stations and complete the following prompts:
  - What did you notice about this element?
  - What mood or meaning did it create?
  - How did it shape the environmental message?

**Extension:** Students write a paragraph answering: *Analyse how performance elements contribute to the text's environmental message.*

#### 4. Symbolism Investigation

**Purpose:** Analyse symbolism and thematic representation.

**Task overview: Symbol Tracker** - Students track recurring **symbols** and **motifs**.

Examples might include:

Symbol	Possible Meaning
Landscape / White Flats	Fragility of environment
Repeated gestures/actions	Choice and responsibility
Personal objects	Identity and hope

#### Discussion Questions:

- Why does the playwright return to these symbols?
- How do they influence audience interpretation?

**Extension:** *How does symbolism reinforce the themes of resilience and environmental stewardship?*

#### 5. Audience Response Reflection

**Purpose:** Connect emotional engagement to analytical interpretation.

**Task overview: Emotional Response Timeline** - Students map their emotional journey during the performance.

Moment	Audience Reaction	Performance Element
Opening scene	Curiosity / concern	Sound and lighting
Key conflict	Tension	Dialogue and staging
Resolution	Reflection / hope	Symbolic imagery

#### Discussion Questions:

- Which moment most strongly shaped your understanding of the characters?
- How did the performance position you to care about the environment?

**Extension:** Students write a reflection responding to: *How did the performance position you emotionally as an audience member?*

## 6. Analytical Essay Planning

**Purpose:** Prepare students for the extended analytical response.

**Task overview: Essay Scaffold** - Students develop a structured essay plan.

### Example Essay Question:

*To what extent does Dakota of the White Flats challenge audiences to reconsider their responsibilities to place and community?*

### Essay Structure:

#### Introduction

- Introduce the play
- Identify key themes
- Present argument

#### Body Paragraphs

1. Representation of resilience in young people
2. Ethical choices shaped by friendship
3. Use of theatrical elements to highlight environmental responsibility

#### Conclusion

- Evaluate the impact on audiences

### Suggested Analytical Writing Topics and Questions

- How does *Dakota of the White Flats* represent resilience in young people?
- In what ways does friendship shape ethical decision-making in the performance?
- Analyse how performance elements contribute to the text's environmental message.
- To what extent does the work challenge audiences to reconsider their responsibilities to place and community?

**Task overview:** Students write a potential interview between a journalist and one of the characters in the performance. What can we learn about the reasons and motivations of the characters.

## Drama Responding – Suggested Worksheet

Students **respond** using dramatic terminology:

- Identify one key moment and explain its significance.
- Describe how voice, movement, space, and design conveyed meaning.

### Key Questions (Viewing Focus)

- Which moments most clearly reveal the characters' values?
- How does staging reinforce the themes of resilience and environment?
- How did the performance make you feel as an audience member, and why?

### Characters:

- Dakota: motivations, strengths, and growth
- Supporting characters: their role in shaping conflict and resolution

### Symbolism:

- Natural elements and settings as symbols of vulnerability and strength
- Objects or repeated actions that represent choice, responsibility, or hope
- Use of lighting, sound, or space to suggest emotional and environmental shifts.

**This Guide was created by QPAC's Creative Learning team and the team at The Events Centre Caloundra.**

