



BIG Y!KES

BY MADELEINE BORDER

EDUCATION NOTES



Big Yikes!
by Madeleine Border

Education Notes
by Lucy Harkin



A Playlab Theatre Publication

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General Editor: Phoebe Leighton

Copy Editor: Madeleine Border & Kathryn Marquet

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These materials have been compiled by Playlab Theatre in conjunction with the premier production of *Big Yikes!* by Madeleine Border.



About the Show

Big Yikes! by Madeleine Border

Big Dreams. Bigger Doubts. Big Yikes!

Meet ~~Lorrie~~. Sorry... Loxie. Loxie is cooler. She's rebranding so as not to be mistaken with a load-bearing truck. She wouldn't want you to know that - she doesn't like being 'perceived'.

Loxie is leaving school, starting her first job, moving out of home, and waiting for Uni offers. She's entering her adulting era. 'Finding yourself' is hard when you're searching in a rundown share house, the situationship you THINK you have with your coworker, and under the constant nagging of your divorced parents.

Big Yikes! is a coming-of-age story that explores boundaries, decision making and autonomy while asking the big questions like "what is my purpose?", "what should I do with my life?" and "why does my housemate leave lentils in the fridge to rot?"

Estimated Running Time 90 minutes

Suitability Grades 10 – 12

Warnings Performance contains some mild-course language and mild adult themes.

Themes School-leaving, Autonomy, Identity, Relationships, Expectaion vs Reality, Change, Life Transitions.



Curriculum Links

Dramatic Form and Style

Contemporary Australian Theatre
Realism
Theatre for Social Comment
Linear Narrative
Contemporary Performance

Dramatic Conventions

3-Dimensional and Believable Characters
Minimalist set
Multiple role
Fluidity of place and time
Subtext and the Inner-Life
Multi-narrative structure
Montage
Juxtaposition

Cast and Creatives

PLAYWRIGHT

Madeleine Border

DIRECTOR/DRAMATURG

Ian Lawson

DESIGNER

Peter Keavy

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Geoff Squires

SOUND DESIGNER

Brady Watkins

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Nicole Jones

STAGE MANAGER

Mikayla Hosking

CAST

Juliette Milne

Billy Fogarty

Tenielle Plunket

Christopher Paton



Curriculum Connections

The curriculum connections are provided based on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) General Drama Senior Syllabus Drama (2019 v1.1).

General Senior Syllabus

Unit 1 — Share

Students explore the importance of drama as a means to tell stories and share understandings of the human experience in a range of cultures, including those of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and/or those from the Asia-Pacific region. Students study this unit with the purposes of celebrating, documenting, empowering and informing audiences through storytelling as a dramatic form. In this unit, students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to make and respond to dramatic works that use a wide range of dramatic conventions to tell stories in linear and non-linear forms. (*Australian Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2019, p.26*)

Inquiry questions

Unit 1:

- How does drama promote shared understandings of the human experience?
- How can we use drama to celebrate, document, empower and share understandings of the human experience?
- How can we recreate people's stories in dramatic linear and non-linear forms?
- How can people's stories be shared through making and responding to drama as ensemble and audience?

Unit 2 — Reflect

Students explore the power of drama to reflect lived experience. The unit introduces students to the dominant paradigm of drama that embraces notions of truth and authenticity in performance. Over the course of the unit, students explore the representational dramatic traditions of Realism, then investigate more contemporary dramatic styles associated with the realist style, such as Magical Realism, including Australian Gothic Theatre. The unit engages with the purposes of informing and challenging audiences, understanding and empathising with the truth of others' experiences, and chronicling/documenting and celebrating what it is to be human.



In this unit, students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to make and respond to dramatic works that aspire to be authentic and truthful reflections of the human condition.

Inquiry questions

Unit 2:

- How can we use representational dramatic traditions to inform, empathise, chronicle and document lived experiences?
- How can we manage dramatic languages to reflect the human condition?
- How can we reflect contemporary and inherited styles of Realism through making and responding?

Taken from QCAA Drama 2019 v1.1 — General Senior Syllabus

ACARA

Year 9 and 10 Band Descriptors

- **Students analyse how and why the elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions are manipulated in drama to create, perform and/or experience.**
 - Investigate the use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts.
 - Reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of the elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action.
- **They evaluate how drama in a range of styles and/or from a range of contexts communicates ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.**
 - Investigate the elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts.
 - Reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action.



- **Students work individually and/or collaboratively to shape and manipulate use of the elements of drama, conventions and/or dramatic structures to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning**
 - Reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action.
 - Improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.
 - Rehearse and refine drama making deliberate aesthetic choices to unify dramatic meaning.
 - Perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions to shape the drama.

- **They use performance skills relevant to style and/or form to sustain belief, roles and characters in performances of improvised, devised and/or scripted drama for audiences.**
 - Improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.
 - Perform improvised, devised and/or scripted drama to audiences, using performance skills and conventions to shape the drama.

Taken from Australian Curriculum 2024 v.9 - Drama



Style and Form

Key theatrical styles, forms and their associated conventions which are evident throughout the play:

Realism

Realism drama draws on real life or life-like motivations (*Australian Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2019, p.74*). Realism uses the fourth wall, believable and emotionally driven narratives with a central protagonist to 'replicate life' onstage. Realistic representations also include authentic costumes, sets and props.

Magical Realism

A hybrid genre or style incorporating fantastic or imaginary elements and often unsettling images or events depicted in a sharply detailed, realistic manner. (*Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2019*)

Fragmented Mood

Mood is the overall feeling created in a dramatic performance. Fragmented mood changes this overall feeling by fragmenting the story, creating switches between different moods throughout the text. Switching scenes where there is a turning point or moment of heightened mood is often used to keep focus on the themes or social comment being conveyed.

Fluidity of Place and Time

Telling a story in multiple times and places requires fluid transitions between each time and place. This is often achieved through changing design elements such as set, lighting, sound, costume, as well as performance elements such as changing character or movement sequences.

Montage

A series of short self-contained scenes grouped immediately after each other. The purpose of a montage could be to build tension, manipulate time/narrative or use contrast to highlight the specific action.



Intertextuality

Interdependence or relationship that exists between a present text and the reference and quotations from other previous texts to communicate ideas and meaning for an audience.

Juxtaposition

An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast. Juxtaposition can be created on stage using a contrast in performance skills or a contrast in dramatic action and the technology used to complement the scene.

Subtext and Inner- life

Subtext is the actual meaning and motivation behind the language that is spoken by the characters. The inner-life (the character's thoughts/feelings/beliefs) can often be the reason for a character to act in a certain way. These actions may not always reflect the reality of the situation the character is in.

Multiple Characters

Actors can play more than one role in a production, often marked by symbolic costume and/or prop changes, as well as deliberate changes in their voice, gesture, stance, and facial expressions to allow the audience to distinguish between roles. This can be done as a symbol, conveying that the actor is telling the story of multiple characters who the same event or issue has had an impact on, serving to alienate the audience and have them focus on the message or statement being made, or simply from a practical point of view.



Classroom Links

Style and Form

- Identify examples of conventions used in *Big Yikes!*
- How does the use of these conventions better convey the production's dramatic meaning?
- Consider a convention that you think has an unexpected use in the production. How was it used effectively? What impact did it have on your understanding of the meaning?
- What conventions stood out to you as an audience member? What impact did this convention have on your understanding of the characters?
- If you were directing the performance what other conventions could be included? How would this contribute to the dramatic meaning?



Pre-Show Activities

Initial Questions

- What does the title of the play make you think of?
- What excites you about seeing this production?
- Why is it important to share Australian stories and experiences through new theatre?
- Why is it important to create theatre that educates, challenges, and empowers the audience?
- Are you defined by the choices made in your youth?
- Are there significant benefits and/or consequences to not having a concrete post-school plan?
- Can you successfully reinvent yourself?
- Do we have a life's purpose?
- How do the people around us affect our choices ? Our self-perception?

Background

Big Yikes! is centred around school leaving and students' post-school transitions. Engage students about their feelings, experiences and knowledge on the topic:

- What current pathways are available to school leavers? What pathways have you explored? What are their intrigues/drawbacks?
- What are common challenges/joys experienced by school leavers during their post-school transition?
- What are you most excited/nervous to experience?
- Where might school leavers find resources/support related to their post-school transition?
- What was school leaving like 50/100 years ago? Has the transition into adulthood eased ? What are the similarities and differences ?
- What might school-leaving look like in the future? How could it be improved?



Read and Research

- Choosing Your Path <https://www.smh.com.au/national/the-five-questions-to-help-you-decide-what-to-do-after-year-12-20231030-p5eg3s.html>
- Explore the Experiences of Others <https://www.smh.com.au/education/have-i-made-a-terrible-mistake-well-known-aussies-on-life-after-year-12-20231019-p5edl8.html>
- Gap Years <https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/why-a-gap-year-is-the-thing-many-school-leavers-need/10824950>
- Setting Yourself up for Success <https://theconversation.com/an-educational-psychologist-explains-how-to-think-about-your-atar-and-set-post-school-goals-219711>
- School Leavers' Data <https://alt-qed.qed.qld.gov.au/publications/reports/statistics/schooling/learning-outcomes/next-step/year-12-completers>
- Factors for Success <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/-/media/files/research/pet/pet-report-final---lr.pdf>
- Longitudinal Study Report 2010-2018 <https://qed.qld.gov.au/our-publications/reports/statistics/Documents/nextsteplongitudinalpostetrf2018.pdf>
- Metro/Rural Locale Effects <https://www.education.gov.au/school-work-transitions/resources/post-school-education-aspirations-and-outcomes>
- A History of School Leaving <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/how-raising-the-school-leaver-s-age-transformed-nsw-schools-20200901-p55r9u.html>



Sharing Aspirations

Big Yikes! follows Loxie's journey as she navigates the struggles of entering adulthood. The world Loxie felt comfortable in is now unknown, as their parents have separated, high school is over and the 'real world' is waiting. Using *Big Yikes!* as a springboard for creating engaging and meaningful learning:

- Have students reflect on their career aspirations from childhood. Ask them to consider the people in their lives, where they lived, interests, friends, culture and influential media that may have shaped their aspirations.
- Then have students reflect on their current career aspirations. Ask them to consider the changes, what influences might have led to this change, or if it has remained the same - why do they think that is?
- Ask them to express both reflections into a visual response - use freeze-frame, dance, stylised movement, storyboard etc.. to compare and contrast them.
- Option to perform them in front of the class or for another classmate. Reflect on the contrast and/or similarities between both visuals.

OR

- Ask students to write an anonymous short paragraph detailing their dreams and/or fears for life after school. It can be as serious or lighthearted as desired.
- Swap these around the class. Have students read other's responses.
- Ask students to retell these reflections as a short scene. Remind them that they are using someone else's story, but they are now making it their own. Aim to convey the core message of the reflection but make it an interesting story for your audience. Perform some of these for the class.
- Evaluate how successful you were in transforming the reflection into a narrative? Were there any issues? Discuss.
- How did you feel performing in this story?
- How did you feel as an audience member watching the performance?
- What do you think the source of inspiration was for this narrative?

Use this activity as a base to discuss the importance of sharing and empowering other's and our own feelings/experiences.



Extension: Take a key moment that impacted you from one of these responses and use it as inspiration for a new performance.

Use the key ideas to consider a new piece of theatre that:

- Creates a shared understanding of the human experience and/or
- Educates, challenges or empowers us to question contemporary society.

Consider how you may explore this issue in a new context:

- An outline of the theme/issue to explore.
- Brainstorm dramatic conventions you could use.
- The dramatic meaning you want to convey to your audience.

Workshop these.

You may then want to:

- Write key dialogue that represents your idea.
- Create a storyboard with moments of key action.
- Continue to workshop these in the class to create a short presentation.

What Happens Next?

In groups, ask students to devise a ‘new beginning’ after the end of a story. Provide each group with a different fairy tale (eg; Goldilocks and The Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Bean Stalk, Hansel and Gretel), and ask them to note down the key turning points in the linear narrative. Using only one character from the original story, ask students to then devise a moment of dramatic action that occurs after the ‘happily ever after’ of the original story. Devise, rehearse and present to class.

Discuss as a group what transitions the characters experienced from the end of the original story into the new story. Ask students to reflect on any times of transition that they have experienced or that they will experience.



Character Work

Read the two script excerpts. Read this twice. In pairs or small groups, have students perform one of the scenes. Once read, ask students to work together to write in beats where they see the characters motivation shift and to write subtext for at least 3 moments of language spoken for each character.

Recommended Excerpts

- Scene 4 - Pairs
- Scene 5 - Group of 3
- Scene 9 - Group of 3 or Pair with Doubling
- Scene 15 - Group of 5 or 3 with Doubling
- Scene 32 - Pairs

Encourage students to use movement and pause to extend on the action, adding their own take on the scene. Ask students to consider what the text tells them about the characters, their status compared to each other, their motivation, and their experiences in life and relationships.

Show some to the class. What similarities or differences were present? What did some pairs focus on or bring to life?

Afterwards have students write down answers to the following:

- What does the set look like?
- What do each of the characters look like?
- What do you notice about the dialogue used by each character? What does this convey to you about each character?
- Write down 5 words that you associate with each character.
- What do you think the relationships between characters are like?
- How do you think the scenes fit together?

Extension: Acting as one of the characters write a monologue, diary entry or phone conversation reflecting on the event that just took place in the excerpt. The response should extend on what the audience has already seen and knows about the character.

Reflect on this activity after seeing *Big Yikes!* Discuss any similarities or differences between the initial interpretations of the show and the changed perspectives after seeing the production.



Directing

Have students use this to create a directorial vision for *Big Yikes!* using one of the script excerpts.

Recommended Excerpts

- Scene 1
- Scene 7
- Scene 10
- Scene 18
- Scene 21

Ask students to include:

- The conventions they would manipulate.
- What message/idea you want to convey to the audience and how you will achieve this.
- Block your scene with other students, however, experiment with objectives, motivations and subtext for the characters. Which one more closely matches your initial vision and interpretation, and why?
- Have students pitch their directorial visions to the class.
- Then in groups have them realise one of these moments onstage.

Present these to the class:

- What similarities or differences did you notice?
- How did each group create time, place and mood?
- What conventions did they manipulate to achieve their intended purpose?

Extension: Take on the role of designer and explore what characters might look like - their costumes, hair, makeup, set design and technical elements such as lighting and sound. Create a design proposal to pitch to producers.



Devising

Examine the opening montage of *Big Yikes!*

1 – BIRTHDAYS MEAN YOU ARE ONE STEP CLOSER TO DEATH

Montage. LOXIE's is standing still, the world morph throughs time around her. She's graduates highschool, her school uniform is ripped off her, she's turning 18 and does her first shot, she's moving out of home and has boxes piled up and staggers under the weight until she drops them. She pulls out sheets of paper – resumes, and begins passing these out to people walking past. Steph walks past and grabs one, reads it, steps forward and shakes her hand - Loxie has just got her first job.

As a class, brainstorm what this montage may look like, what images does this provoke? For example: what does graduating look like in your context? What does a stereotyped graduation look like? What movements/language/symbols would we expect in this situation?

Using this brainstorm, ask students to work in groups of 4 – 5 to create the opening montage of *Big Yikes!* Provide students with access to multimedia and direct students to use projected images and music to manipulate mood. Ask students to create 3 contrasting moods throughout the montage to reflect Loxie's emotions and feelings towards this time of transition.

3-2-1 Bridge

Ask students to reflect on their understanding on finishing school individually by asking them to write three words that they associate with finishing school. These could be emotions, adjectives or verbs. Explain to students that they do not need to be connected to each other but rather to the concept of leaving school. After students have written their 3 words, ask students two questions that you could ask about finishing school – these could be questions for themselves or things they would ask someone else. Lastly, ask students to create one metaphor or simile for finishing school. Provide students with starting language of 'Finishing school is...' or 'finishing high school is like...' Have students record their thoughts on a piece of paper. Collect pieces of paper and display them around the space. As a Gallery Walk, ask students to move around the space and read each other's reflection.

**This activity was devised from a thinking routine developed as part of the Cultures of Thinking project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.*



Extension: This activity is designed to be repeated at the end of a unit of study. Collect first responses and ask students to complete the activity again after seeing the performance of *Big Yikes!*

A Whole Life in 2 Minutes

Introduce the convention of montage to students, explain how these conventions can be used to manipulate time, tension, and situation in a performance. In small groups, give students 5 minutes to brainstorm all the 'key moments' in life without teacher guidance. Then ask students to create a montage of a 'life' in 2 minutes. Devise and present. After sharing montages, discuss what key moments were similar across the different group performances.

Ask students to reflect on:

- Why do you think these moments were repeated across the groups?
- What makes us understand these moments to be significant when we think about 'key moments' in life?
- How do you think you would feel if you did experience a moment like this?
- Do you think there is pressure for you to 'achieve' these key moments in life? Who/what do you feel this pressure from?

Extension: Ask students to recreate their montage including a specific social pressure. Ask students to personify their chosen pressure onstage and have the pressure character act as a narrator of the montage, directing the life moments. Present to class and discuss how this changed the performance.



Multiple Role & Juxtaposition

Ask students to brainstorm as a class what a post-school world looks like to them – these can be feelings, experiences, or jobs. Record on whiteboard or somewhere central for the activity.

Ask students in pairs. Ask one student to be A and one student to be B. Student A will have high status to B in the situations. Student B will always be the same character, whereas A will change using multiple roles. Ask students to improvise a short 1 minute conversation about leaving school with the following roles and relationships in their pairs. Let all students improvise at the same time and monitor time.

- Student A is a Year 12 student about to finish school speaking to B, who is in Year 11.
- Student A is a parent talking to their child Student B about leaving school.
- Student A is a Careers' Counsellor discussing Student B options after receiving disappointing grades.
- Student A is future employer interviewing Student B for a job.

Discuss with students how status in these relationships influenced the mood of the dramatic moment. What stood out to you? Were there any differences/similarities between the moments?

Ask the pairs to create a group of 4 with another pair. In this group, ask to read/watch the following resources:

- “Inadequate school career education leaving students ‘lost’, ‘directionless’” by Nicole Preceel <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/inadequate-school-career-education-leaving-students-lost-directionless-20230322-p5cubb.html>
- Daisy Osberg’s Youth TED Talk on graduation https://www.ted.com/talks/daisy_osberg_it_s_okay_not_knowing_what_s_after_graduation?language=en
- Headspace’s Tips for a Healthy Headspace: Leaving School Factsheet <https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/leaving-secondary-school/>



Using these texts as stimulus, ask students to create an advertisement for a parent audience to help 'educate' parents/caregivers that it is okay for students to be unsure about the future. Encourage students to use juxtaposition by creating an upbeat humorous mood. Direct students to show the reality of this transition rather than 'expectation'. Direct students to use the brainstorm from the beginning of the lesson to help prompt. To scaffold further, provide students with specific conventions to manipulate, such as direct address, freeze frame, multiple role. Devise and present to class.

Ask students to identify moments of action in each other's devised work that they connected with. Encourage students to discuss why a moment of action impacted them by using conventions and elements to unpack. Ask students why the parent audience of these advertisement would be impacted differently than high school students?

Extension:

Show students BCITO Te Pūkenga advertisement called a tricky chat <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9YdpqYhRe8>.

Ask students what you think the purpose of this advertisement is? Who is the target audience? Ask students to identify examples of juxtaposition in the advertisement.

Consider:

- How does this juxtaposition impact mood?
- How does this use of mood engage the audience?

**BCITO is a New Zealand Trade based company, which provides apprenticeships and construction training.*



Post-Show Activities

Discussion Questions

- What do you think about the name of the play now?
- What do you believe was the key message of the play?
- Who do you think the target audience of the play is?
- What do you believe is the best aspect of *Big Yikes!*?
- How does the staging contribute to the production? Discuss the use of props, set and costumes.
- Consider the fact that this is a new work that Playlab Theatre has created. Why do you think this is the case? Why is this an important story to tell?
- How does *Big Yikes!* inform, empathise, chronicle and document lived experiences?
- Did you connect with any characters in *Big Yikes!*? What about those characters made you feel a connection?
- Think about the ‘unseen’ characters in the play, such as Loxie’s mum and dad – why do you think the playwright made the choice for these characters to remain unseen in the play? How does this contribute to the meaning of the play?
- The play explores a very real experience and the big feelings that come with a significant period of transition. How do you think Madeleine’s use of light-hearted and humorous moments to change the mood helped the audience connect?
- What do you think Loxie/Lorrie will do after her year off? Will they go to university?
- Why do you think Loxie changes her name back (we assume) to Lorrie at the end of the performance?
- What did you learn about school-leaving that you didn’t know before?



Silent Conversation

Using a Silent Conversation to explore the questions that students have after seeing a production is a great way to build an understanding of what the students are thinking in a safe space. It allows them to ask questions anonymously but also provides an opportunity to contribute by working together to answer other's questions.

- After using the post-show discussion questions and talking to the students about the production, what they connected with, what they enjoyed etc. Have students write down the questions they still have on A4 paper and put these up around the classroom.
- Students are to walk around the class in a gallery walk and choose questions to contribute to, and view questions they want to know the answer to.
- Option to come back together as a class to engage in a larger dissection of remaining questions and contributions made.

Recall & Recap

In small groups ask students to brainstorm all the key moments in *Big Yikes!* Ask students to work in groups of 4 – 5 and select 5 key moments from the class brainstorm. In groups ask students to create one freeze frame for each moment. Then progressively ask students to

1. Add in one movement for each freeze frame
2. Add one piece of dialogue for each freeze frame
3. Add a moment of repetition
4. Add a moment of unison
5. Add a transition between each freeze frame
6. Add music

Present to the class. Discuss the real life moments that occurred for Loxie, how does the use of realism impact us as an audience? Do we connect and even empathise with Loxie's experience?



Loxie's Many Yikes!

As a playwright, Madeleine Border makes many choices to manipulate time and place in *Big Yikes!* As a result, action occurs that the audience does not see. These unseen moments influence the characters' motivation and purpose. Considering the key moments from the previous activity ask the class to brainstorm moments of action that were not included in the play but contribute to Loxie's character.

Ask students to consider the given circumstances of *Big Yikes!* Direct students to consider how they can use Realism conventions such as objectives and motivation to help build the dramatic action of the moment.

Recommended Inserts:

- Loxie at high school
- Loxie's first meeting with Taylor
- Darcy and Loxie getting ready for the party
- Loxie deletes the university offering text message

Ask students to individually devise a short moment of action for one unseen moment. In groups of 4-5, ask students to share their moments with each other and decide on a single moment to devise together. Ask students to consider the set design of *Big Yikes!* and use space in a similar way.

Juxtaposition through Context

Throughout *Big Yikes!* Loxie listens to a crime podcast that often dramatically juxtaposes the action in her real life. In pairs, students are to create two lists comparing Grace to Loxie. Have students consider the whole play, and record all aspects of Loxie's life, her parents, friends in the list.

Recommended Excerpts:

- Scene 3
- Scene 10
- Scene 14
- Scene 20
- Scene 28
- Scene 33



As a class discuss why Madeleine has chosen to juxtapose Loxie's and Grace's lives? How does this create mood? What can we as an audience learn about Loxie and her experience from this juxtaposition? How did the use of these podcasts help create meaning for the audience?

Playwriting

Madeleine Border explains that in *Big Yikes!* “Students can see their fears represented on stage in a way that’s relevant to them. It’s a meaningful show because it’s what’s happening in young people’s lives right now”. Ask the students to create a piece of theatre that is meaningful for young people and can also educate other generations on a contemporary young person’s experience.

Ask students to individually brainstorm answers to the following questions:

- What is the most important thing to you?
- What do you feel like you are in control of in your life?
- Is there anything you feel you are not in control of in your life?
- Who are the people you go to for help in your life?
- What is one thing in the world that you feel upset about right now? If you were in a position to, how would you go about changing these things?
- What are 3 things you think about a lot?

Ask students to share one response to a question on the white board to create a class reflection to act as further stimulus. Ask students to reflect on their own brainstorm to see if they can create any connections or see a theme emerging.

Ask students to select a theme that is relevant to young people. Ask students to consider how you may explore this issue in a new context:

- An outline of the theme/issue to explore.
- The dramatic meaning you want to convey to your audience.
- How will you manipulate dramatic elements on stage to engage your young audience?
- What dramatic conventions could you manipulate to create meaning for an audience?



Ask students to individually create a moment of action. Students may:

- Write key dialogue that represents your idea.
- Create a storyboard.
- Use multimedia to include sound and projection.

Ask students to work in groups of 3 – 4 to workshop their moments of action into short scenes and present for the class.

Key Themes

Engage students in a discussion about the key themes and concepts explored throughout the production. Ask students which themes were most obvious and what their interpretation of them was. Link this to the manipulation of the dramatic elements and the dramatic meaning.

Life Transitions

Transitions are moments in life that involve moving from one stage to another – they might include leaving school; starting new relationships; or moving out of home. One major transition that most young people experience relates to what happens after leaving secondary school, and this can bring significant changes and challenges (*Headspace, 2022*).

Consider:

- How do you feel about change?
- Do you enjoy the challenge that comes from change? Or does it make you feel uncomfortable?
- Life transitions are not limited to leaving high school. Who are other characters in *Big Yikes!* who are experiencing transition? How does that position the audience?



Expectation V Reality

Throughout *Big Yikes!* Loxie struggles to navigate their way through what they perceive as the expectation of leaving high school and the reality of this experience.

- Define what an expectation is and explore who sets expectations for us.
- Identify moments within the production that Loxie is met with expectations in which they feel pressure.
- How does it feel when we do not meet someone's expectations? What consequences does that have?
- Do the expectations of your life match your real-life experience?
- Do you think we discuss real life experiences as much as we do expectations of life?

Identity

In *Big Yikes!*, we meet Loxie at the beginning of the play but meet Lorrie at the end of the play. Loxie struggles with their anxiety on how to answer the question 'what are you doing with your life?' and becomes unsure of who they are in the process.

Ask students to consider:

- Who they are? What do they like? What do they dislike? What brings them joy? What makes them worried?
- How they would describe themselves to a stranger?
- How would their family/best friend/teacher describe them? Why?
- Who do you think influences the way you see yourself?



Meet the Writer

Interview with Madeleine Border

Why did you want to tell this story?

I wanted to tell this story because I felt like there was a lack of ‘coming-of-age’ stories that depict the anxiety of choice. We see a lot of stories that focus on ‘want’ - I want to be popular, I want to make people proud of me, I want to excel - not many talk about the importance of letting the ‘wants’ go. This story is about the freedom in not deciding, the freedom in allowing your coming-of-age story to be uniquely yours.

Can you explain the importance of the title?

Big Yikes! is the sound you might make when confronted with something awkward or uncomfortable. It’s the involuntary face that you make when you get second hand cringe from watching someone else do something awkward or uncomfortable. For me, the title reflects my own reaction to looking back at the cringeworthy things I did while becoming an adult. It’s not judgmental or accusatory, it’s an empathetic response.

What do you see is at the heart of *Big Yikes!*?

The heart of *Big Yikes!* is the anxiety of having to choose what “to do with your life” after finishing high school (or throughout your life). High school leavers have a huge amount of pressure put on them from teachers, unis and parents to know what they want. In my experience, the pressure to get it right, makes it harder to figure out. My mum wanted me to be a lawyer, my dad wanted me to be an engineer, my high school wanted me to go into marketing and my sisters both went into childcare. I had no idea where I fitted.

Theatre of Social Comment challenges our understanding of humanity and expresses views about society. How does *Big Yikes!* educate audiences on important social messages, while ensuring that students still feel that they are engaging meaningfully and not being ‘preached’ to?

Big Yikes! is not a show that tries to tell you what you should do. It doesn’t feel preachy because, just simply, it’s not. I don’t offer any answers, I don’t offer you a straight path forward. *Big Yikes!* talks about real experiences, however messy and uncomfortable. Students can see their fears represented on stage in a way that’s relevant to them. It’s a meaningful show because it’s what’s happening in young people’s lives right now.



How does *Big Yikes!* empower audiences through storytelling and provide students a unique artistic voice?

It's empowering for young people to see characters on stage experiencing, feeling and expressing the same things as them. Students should develop an artistic voice in a space that gives them permission to be honest. Art is an avenue to accept that life can be hard and explore the ways in which you can be knocked down. It's also an avenue to accept that life being hard doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong, and that there is joy to be found in the struggle.

What are your 'go to' methods or techniques for creating a believable, three-dimensional character?

The first thing I do is shamelessly steal personality traits, interests, and quirks from the people around me (including myself). I never base a character off a person in my real life, but I definitely use them as inspiration. I like to start from the ground and build up. Before I write the play, I write a character list with descriptions. This list can have anything from 'brushes their teeth with fluoride free toothpaste' to 'whistles when they think' or 'doesn't like fish but really likes fish oil tablets'. Nothing is ever too boring or too surreal for me to include. Every detail is important and builds a character into a real person. A person with detailed, conflicting and honest characteristics.

For young people wanting to create theatre or start writing scripts what advice would you give them?

As much as I've learnt that planning is important... I love a free writing session! I let myself do 'stream of consciousness' writing. Sometimes I'll use prompts, images from a photography magazine, sitting at a cafe listening to the conversations around me, writing my feelings down similar to a journal entry. It keeps writing fun and mysterious. It never feels like a chore, because each time I sit down, I'm not sure what I'll discover next.

Do you have your own thoughts or opinion of what happens next for Loxie and the gang?

I think the point of the play is that there is no defined 'what happens next' for Loxie or any of the characters. If she's anything like me, she's still figuring out what she wants. And she's bloody loving it.

Madeleine Border
Playwright
January 2024



Elements of Drama

ROLE RELATIONSHIP CHARACTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?• How would you describe each character? How are their characters portrayed through the voice and movement of the actors?• How does Loxie's relationship with Darcy change over the course of the play?• How does Loxie view her co-workers differently at the end of the play vs the start?• Do you think Loxie and her parents' relationship changes over the course of the play? How and why?• How did the use of multiple narratives impact your understanding of Loxie, her internal world and their relationships?• What are the characters key motivations?• How were the relationships shown through body language and movement?
TENSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were some of the key examples of tension during the production?• How did the tension engage you?• What were you invested in?• How did the changes in time and place impact the development of tension?• Consider the use of heightened emotions and performance. How did this create or break the tension?• Tension of relationship is present throughout the play. What are the most obvious examples of this? Why does the tension develop?



FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think about the moments onstage where dramatic focus shifted. What happened onstage to facilitate this change?• How were the design elements used to shift the dramatic focus?
TIME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When is the play set?• How is time manipulated throughout the production? Why does time jump forward?• Could this play have been set 5/25/50 years ago? Why/Why Not?• Consider the intertextual references, how is time relevant in relation to these?
PLACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The play is set in multiple locations. How was this communicated onstage by the actors?• How were design elements manipulated to communicate the different places?• How was the setting of Brisbane significant? How did this impact your viewing of the production?
SPACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse the different ways that the stage was to manipulate place.• How did the use of space help to communicate the internal thoughts of the characters?• How did the lighting enhance the different use of the space?
MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider how relationships in the play are communicated through body language and movement. Consider how you can show a relationship without “explaining” it.• Was the movement symbolic in anyway?



LANGUAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the subtext behind some of the memorable lines?• How was language used to shape character? Consider the different ways each character speaks / uses language.• How were projections used to develop your understanding of the dramatic meaning?
CONTRAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe two contrasting moments in <i>Big Yikes!</i> How were these moments created through sound, lighting, voice and movement?• Analyse the ways in which contrast is used throughout the play in relation to the range of moods.• Loxie and Darcy are starkly different people. Examine how this is communicated and how it impacts their relationship.• What other elements of contrast did you see throughout the production?• Contrast the characters at the start of the play to end. How have their lives and relationships changed?
MOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the impact of the sound design and music used to create specific moods. Use specific moments of dramatic action from the show and discuss how they made the audience feel.• Consider how they would've been different if different artistic choices were made, such as alternative lighting or sound.• Consider the mood at the start of the play. How does this contrast with the end of the play?• How did the use of the projection shape mood?• Consider a moment of intense mood. What performance techniques and skills of the actors were utilised to make you feel this way?



SYMBOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the impact of the podcasts. How did this impact your understanding of the production and the narrative?• Consider the costume and props associated with each character. How are these symbolic? What do they say about each of the characters?• Consider the title of the play. What do you think it means and how does it change your understanding of the play?• How were the projections use symbolically?
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Assessment Ideas

Extended Written Response

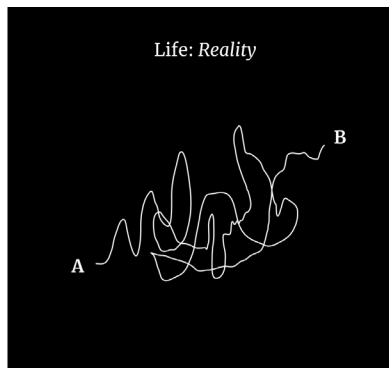
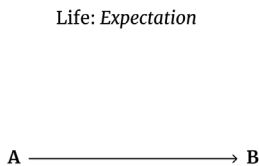
Task 1

Kylie Murphy, a senior lecturer in education at La Trobe University, says it is common for students to have mixed feelings on finishing year 12.

“It’s a significant milestone for students – and their parents,” she says. “Life will be very different from now on, often with less certainty than you had, going to school every day ... be gentle with yourself as you make the transition.” (Murphy in Cassidy, 2023)

After viewing *Big Yikes!* evaluate how effectively the production explored the concept of life transitions by analysing the on-stage dramatic action and how the use of the dramatic languages created dramatic meaning. In your response consider how the production used multiple role and fluidity of time and place as conventions to facilitate Loxie’s journey.

Task 2



How effectively does the dramatic action in *Big Yikes!* communicate the concept ‘expectation versus reality’ as shown in the images above? Argue a position by evaluating how the use of the dramatic elements of relationships and mood were manipulated within the production to create dramatic meaning for the audience.



Extended Response - Devising a Dramatic Concept:

Context

Throughout Unit 1, you have explored how drama can be used to celebrate, document, empower and share understandings of the human experience. You have been exposed to the potential of drama to share people's stories. As an artist, it is crucial to find your own voice to communicate your values and world view.

You have been approached by Playlab Theatre to devise a new original work for their new season. You have been asked to create a hybrid performance that explores stories that impact young people in Australia currently.

Task

Working as a theatre-maker, you will view Playlab Theatre's production of Madeline Border's *Big Yikes!*. Using this production as stimulus, you must identify one key convention of linear or non-linear story telling used in this production and devise an original dramatic concept that explores stories that impact young people in Australia currently. The purpose of your performance should be to engage and entertain audiences.

Your dramatic concept must organise information under the following headings:

Analysis and Evaluation (400 words)

- How was the convention manipulated to contribute to the communication of a human experience?

My Concept (800 words & 10–12 images of Dramatic Action)

- Identify a chosen purpose and context in an introductory paragraph
- Make specific reference to the original chosen convention of contemporary performance and other relevant Conventions
- Argue how the dramatic languages have been used to communicate dramatic action and meaning
- Develop a storyboard with explanatory paragraphs and annotations that document your dramatic ideas.



Script Excerpt 1

Character Work -

4 – APPARENTLY HOME IS WHERE IS THE HEART IS

LOXIE is at home unpacking boxes in her new sharehouse. It's a typical sharehouse, slightly dirty, mouldy walls, stained carpet. She is pulling two of everything out of the boxes - two picture frames, two bears, two shirts that are exactly the same. You can hear TAYLOR playing video games in the background. LOXIE is talking to DARCY on speaker phone.

DARCY i've been doing this new trick where the first thing I do when I wake up is make my bed. It's about accomplishing goals. Once you've started with something simple, everything else throughout the day is supposed to get easier.

LOXIE Do you think it's working?

DARCY I mean. I don't really have particularly difficult things to accomplish in my day, so it's hard to tell. [Beat] Oh my god! I totally forgot! How was today?

LOXIE It was okay, I learnt how to use the counter and they taught me how to lie about what kind of plant milks we have.

DARCY I'm still confused why you decided to get this job in the first place.

LOXIE I need to pay rent.

DARCY Which is another thing I'm confused about. Your Dad's place is so cool. There's a huge pool. He has accounts for like every streaming service. And! He's never there!

LOXIE The pool is full of toads.

DARCY Okay. Well you're Mum's place is also cool. It's close to that sushi place we love. There are wind chimes everywhere. And! She has a spa!



- LOXIE She's already turned my room into a meditation zendo something space. Plus, it's exhausting moving between two places.
- DARCY You could have just chosen one? Choose the spa!
- LOXIE That would be a declaration of war. Both would assume I was "choosing" sides. Plus, I'm sick of them nagging me about my uni offers.
- DARCY That's psychotic. That's absurd. That's ludicrous.
- LOXIE Good word.
- DARCY Thank you. It was in my "daily word" app this morning.
- LOXIE Plus, there are some cool people there. Charlie is cool.
- DARCY Ohhh who is Charlie?
- LOXIE Someone I work with. Someone who trained me today.
- DARCY Are they hot?
- LOXIE What?
- DARCY Are they attractive? Like are they interesting... physically?
- LOXIE I have no idea what you are asking.
- DARCY Do they make you think "wow, you are so cool and attractive I think I would drink cow's milk for you"?
- LOXIE That didn't make it any clearer.
- DARCY Whatever. They must be hot. Unless they are just interesting in a brain way?
- LOXIE What is being hot in a brain way?
- DARCY Then they must be smart.



LOXIE Can't they be smart and hot?

DARCY You're attracted to either incredibly attractive dumb people or incredibly nerdy smart people. Don't ask me to explain it, it's your thing.

LOXIE Charlie is smart. And hot. Unfortunately, the manager is kind of scary.

DARCY What do you mean? Scary? Like Mrs Ellery scary or like Mr Spike scary?

LOXIE Spike.

DARCY Oh god. Really scary then.

TAYLOR laughs loudly in the background.

 What was that?

LOXIE What?

DARCY That laugh.

LOXIE I didn't laugh.

DARCY I didn't mean you, obviously.

LOXIE My housemate?

DARCY Must be.

LOXIE I think they're playing some kind of game? Or they have someone over. As far as I can tell, it sounds the same either way.

DARCY That's kind of hot.

LOXIE You are ludicrous.

DARCY Nice word.

LOXIE Thanks.



LOXIE's Mum starts calling.

LOXIE Oh god. Mum's calling. Gotta get this. I'll call back in 5. Max. Min... 2.

LOXIE picks up the other line.

Hi Mum. *[Listening]* Yeah I'm fine. *[Listening]* I know you weren't forcing me to go. *[Listening]* I know that. But I really like it here. *[Listening]* No I'm not going to be coming begging for money every week. Because. I got a job. *[Listening]* Today was my first day. And it was... really good. *[Listening]* No! I love it. Really. Everyone is great. Really *[Listening]* Love the supervisor. Super Nice. Just a really great atmosphere. Everyone is very... adult. *[Listening]* I'm just unpacking now. *[Listening]* Yes I'll wash the new sheets before I use them. *[Listening]* Yes. No. I know how to do my own laundry. *[Listening]* No, I haven't decided where I'll be at Christmas yet. Mum, Darcy is on the other line. *[Listening]* Yes, I'll say hi. *[Listening]* No I'm not saying that. *[Listening]* Because we aren't 12 Mum. *[Listening]* Okay yeah. Gotta go. Bye.

Calls DARCY back.

DARCY While you were gone, I realised that my left hand is slightly bigger than my right hand.

TAYLOR *[Off]* Rent is due tomorrow! You can just slide it under my door. I prefer \$50 notes!

DARCY Was that them?

LOXIE Yeah. Sorry about that, I didn't know-

DARCY They have a hot voice.

LOXIE What?

DARCY Sometimes you can just tell how hot someone will be purely based on their voice. Name?



LOXIE Taylor.

DARCY You can tell alot about a person by their name. Let me check something, hold on. *[Beat]* Okay, so Urban Dictionary says that Taylors are cute, smart and funny. It says that if you get to know a Taylor, don't let them go.

LOXIE I don't think that's true.

DARCY Of course it's true. Hold on. *[Beat]* It says that Darcy's are "mystical imaginary QUEENS".

LOXIE Anyone can write anything on that site. It is not peer reviewed.

DARCY It also says that Loxie's are "popular, brave and strong."

LOXIE It's gaining legitimacy.

DARCY And that they are "afraid of strangers and sharks".

LOXIE Oh my god. I'm scared of both.

DARCY Told you. Describe Taylor for me.

LOXIE Uhmmm... Dark eyes? And hair. And they have like maybe slightly longer earlobes than normal? I mean. I don't really know what "normal" is. Normal isn't politically correct is it? I meant average. Yeah average. Taylor has longer than average earlobes.

DARCY And their 'vibe'?

LOXIE Taylor is okay. Nice enough. Eats a lot of uber eats. As far as I can tell, uses shampoo as body wash.

TAYLOR laughs obnoxiously from the other room and both LOXIE and DARCY go quiet. They are scared TAYLOR might have heard them.

Also, who knew rent was so expensive. It's like half my weekly pay.



DARCY

I can think of at least 5 better things to spend your money on.

Script Excerpt 2

Directing -

7 – IF YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO YOU’LL NEVER WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE

Montage. LOXIE is at the café, working, interacting with customers. Her phone is constantly ringing, but she lets it ring through in her apron pocket. Customers interrupt her movement to make complaints.

CUSTOMER 1 My coffee is lukewarm. I ordered a long black, extra hot. So that means I want it hotter than hot. Like, very hot. And this? This is lukewarm. If I’m not getting ulcers in my mouth from each sip... It’s not hot enough.

CUSTOMER 2 Hi, sorry, excuse me. I actually ordered poached eggs, not scrambled. I really dislike scrambled things. Avocado. Potato. Tofu. All foods only good in solid form. Could you get this remade?

CUSTOMER 3 I’d really like to speak to someone in charge. This has almonds in it and my son is deathly allergic. You really need to put things like that on the menu. How should we know that an eggs benedict is going to come out with almonds? My son could have died. I’m actually a lawyer.

LOXIE panics and runs away from the customers.



Script Excerpt 3

Juxtaposition through Context -

10 – THE LITTLE ONE SAID, MOVE OVER

LOXIE is on the train, sitting down with her backpack on the seat next to her and her headphones in. She is listening to her podcast.

PODCAST Grace's parents said that when Grace was a little girl, all she wanted to do was chase rainbows. When you think about that little girl's dream now, where chasing rainbows might have led her, it takes on a much more sinister hue. Grace Roxanne's deep purple leather bound diary and her prized rock collection were found in the home of a bower bird. Which is odd because bower birds normally only scavenge blue things. What did the bird see in these items? Almost as if the bird was trained to know what these items meant. Almost as if the bird was trained to scavenge precious things.

LOXIE is so caught up in the podcast, she doesn't notice that the train has filled up. The only seat left is the one next to her, with her bag on it. People around her start to notice she is hogging the only free seat. They start to stare, point, and whisper. Eventually someone says something loud enough for her to hear and she looks up. Panicked, embarrassed and in a scramble, she pulls her bag off the chair and tries to offer it to the person who'd spoken to her. Before they can sit down, another passenger swoops in and steals the seat. All is fair in love and war and the seat game.