

# Getting In

## Immigration Museum Workshop - Unit Outline - Years 11 & 12

*by Carla Pincombe*

### Aim:

- To explore the links between Drama and History using the Immigration Museum as stimulus.

### Task:

- To create a short performance aimed at bringing Drama into the History class, and;
- To create a short non-naturalistic performance aimed at using History as a stimulus in the Drama class

### Pretext:

- A visit to the Getting In Gallery at the Immigration Museum.

Students explore this gallery at their own speed with the opportunity to discuss and identify elements of the gallery which have the most dramatic potential. Discussions continue until the first workshop. Our class discussion generally focussed around the ideas of injustice and hopelessness. Two elements of the gallery should be chosen as focal points before the first workshop.

Our class found that the Dictation Test and the Interview Room had the most dramatic potential.



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## Workshop #1

### Aim:

- To take one focal point from the Immigration Museum experience and turn it into a short dramatic performance for further exploration.

**Objective:** Warm up and focus

**Activity:** Gentle stretching, then get students to walk around the room doing short repetitive movements such as drinking a cup of tea, running to a spot then stopping, checking their watch and looking increasingly concerned. Get students to do these actions in their own time, then all at the same time.

**Objective:** To recreate the Dictation Test as experienced at the Immigration Museum.

**Activity:** One person reads the Dictation script out loud, while the rest of the class try to complete the test in the allotted time.

**Discussion:** How did you feel? (rushed, rigid, overwhelmed, inflexible) How would you feel if you didn't speak English and were given the same test? (confused, scared, overwhelmed, stressed) What sort of voice would you expect from the 'Dictator'? (loud, monotone, mundane, boring, strong) Who else would be in the testing room? (the dictator, the people doing the test and an official to keep watch) Further discuss the ideas of injustice and hopelessness as mentioned previously.

**Activity:** Designate characters (dictator, official to roam the room and people sitting the test) and repeat the above activity exaggerating the things discussed (feeling rushed, overwhelmed and confused, official looking over shoulders, dictator loud and mundane etc.). Following the discussion about injustice, designate one student as an Englishman who finds the test just as difficult, but passes anyway.

**Discussion:** Did this convey the feeling you were after? How did the characters interact with each other? How could theatrical conventions and dramatic elements be used to further enhance the feelings that are being explored? (We used established patterns and repetitive movements which gradually sped up as the stress levels increased for the writers, and use of fact for the dictator.) How would the test end? (the dictator says stop, then the official looks over their papers and points to the door shaking his head and mouthing 'No', except for when the Englishman comes - he is sent in the opposite direction with a smile from the official).

**Homework:** Find information for the script (each student to contribute something - we used facts about the Dictation Test and the White Australia policy as the Dictator's script, so each student had to find 2 facts each relating to these).



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## Workshop #2

### Aim:

- To take a second focal point from the Immigration Museum experience and turn it into a short dramatic performance for further exploration.

**Objective:** Warm up and focus.

**Activity:** Vocal alphabet - students to stand in a circle. Going around the circle, each student says a letter of the alphabet one at a time until the end of the alphabet. Use a different emotion each time you go through the alphabet. Anger - everyone says their letter angrily, then Happy - everyone uses a happy tone, then Nasty - everyone 'spits out' their letter.

**Objective:** To finalise the dictator's script for Dictation

**Activity:** Students to collate the facts they gathered for homework to create the script for the dictation test. They need to decide which order to put them in (chronological worked best for us), and the teacher should type up the final script before workshop #3, making adjustments as necessary.

**Objective:** To recreate the Interview as experienced at the Immigration Museum

**Activity:** In pairs, one person reads the Interview script out loud, while the other person tries to answer the questions off the top of their head. Questions relate to general life history - dates, schooling, work, family etc.

**Discussion:** How did the interviewee feel? (rushed, overwhelmed, confused, unable to remember dates) How did the interviewer feel? (like they were bombarding the interviewee, powerful, condescending, trying to 'trip them up', interrogator rather than interviewer).

**Activity:** Choose one person to be the interviewer and one or two people to be the applicants. Focussing on feelings of bombardment, other students will become interrogators. They should choose one topic each (family, health, education, dates etc) and come up with three questions each to ask the applicants. Recreate the interview, but this time have the interrogators come in and talk over the interviewer, repeating their questions and getting louder and louder. Include a variety of theatrical conventions and dramatic elements, trying different ones until the desired effect is achieved (we focussed on climax, tension, heightened use of language and repetition).

**Discussion:** How did the applicants feel this time? (intimidated, more confused, panicky). What effect do the interrogators feel they have on the applicants? (overbearing, patronising, make them feel scared and overwhelmed, confusing them) How would the interview end? (the interrogators all stop at once and the interviewer uses the final line from the actual Interview, letting applicants know that they have failed).

**Homework:** After discussing costuming ideas for both pieces, students should find pieces of costume they need (we used a black base for both. For Dictation each applicant wore a piece of cloth or clothing associated with a non-English speaking country, except for the English person who wore the English flag, and for Interview the Interrogators and Interviewer stayed in all black and the Applicants had travelling gear with them - a bag and hats). All costumes should be brought to the next workshop.





Workshop performances from Swinburne Indigenous Performing Arts students

## Workshop #3

### Aim:

- To rehearse and refine the two dramatic performances

**Objective:** Warm up and focus.

**Activity:** Energy Circle - students to stand in a circle and focus on the floor in the centre of the circle. At any time, someone may jump forward and shout 'Rah!' Everyone must try to jump and shout at the same time. This will help students to focus.

**Objective:** To make final adjustments to the two performances and rehearse and refine them.

**Activity:** Once they have changed into their costumes for Dictation, they should run through the scene using the script created during workshop #2. The performance should be rehearsed until all students are satisfied that they know what they are doing.

**Discussion:** Are any other props required? Do the costumes work, or is there something missing? What else needs to be done before performance?

**Activity:** Students should prepare for Interview. They should rehearse the performance until all students are satisfied that they know what they are doing.

**Discussion:** Are any other props required? Do the costumes work, or is there something missing? What else needs to be done before performance?



## Extension Activities

Once the activity has been completed, any of the following extension activities could be used to further explore the topics.

- Re-do the scenes looking at more positive/negative experiences
- Extend the story further, looking at what the characters do next
- Extend the stories back in time to show the lives of the characters before the scene
- Use narration to allow the characters to explain how they feel
- Repeat the workshops looking at various other parts of the stimulus material
- Incorporate specific information from History or Drama CSF/Study Guides
- Show the same scenes from different points of view.

## Areas of Study

### **Drama Unit 2: Area 1: Creating dramatic performance**

- using stimulus material from a range of cultures
- using different techniques to develop stimulus material in performance
- development of role and character in a range of contexts
- using dramatic elements in a variety of ways

\*\*would also be helpful generally in giving students the experience of working collaboratively and with a purpose.

### **History Unit 1: Area 2: Social Life (Australian History)**

- patterns of social life and the role of class and gender in social experience
- factors influencing change in social life, including economic

\*\*would also be helpful generally in giving students an idea of the experiences of immigrants, particularly in response to each of the world and civil wars and the revolutions.





Jim Lawson from Drama Victoria illustrating some dramatic points to the students



## VCE Drama Unit 2

### Performances (from Workshops)

#### Dictation

##### Script for dictation test:

*Begin.*

*The Immigration Restriction Act, or White Australia Policy, came into effect in 1901.*

*Immigrants qualify according to preferences, often calculated on a points system.*

*Points are awarded for job skills, age, education, language ability, and personal factors.*

*The Act required potential immigrants to sit a dictation test to test their language ability.*

*This dictation test will be taken in a European language, usually English, regardless of the native language of the potential immigrant.*

*This condition will tend to restrict the entry of non-Europeans, without specifying that non-Europeans are not welcome.*

*The Immigration Restriction Act, which allows the use of the dictation test, will be amended in 1905 to replace the words 'European language' with 'Prescribed language' in order to avoid giving offence to non-English speakers*

*If an 'undesirable' manages to pass the test, they will be forced to re-sit it in other languages until they fail.*

*The dictation test will not be abolished by the federal government until 1958.*

*Pencils down.*

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/ImmigrationMuseum/education/>



## Action:

- Dictator and Immigration Official on stage
- Potential immigrants enter from SR and take a seat, immigrant 1 organises others.
- Official hands out paper to potential immigrants.
- Dictator reads through script at a fairly quick pace.
- Potential immigrants all write in time for five lines following immigrant 1.
- Immigrant 1 keeps pace, others become flustered, bending over their papers into their laps.
- Immigrant 2 (English) asks for assistance from the Official and is given it.
- Immigrant 3 (not English) asks for assistance and is bluntly refused.
- When Dictator announces end of test, all stop except immigrant 2.
- All line up to hand papers to Official.
- Immigrant 1 helps to organise others who are unsure what to do.
- Immigrant 1 is second from the end of the line feeling confident.
- Immigrant 2 is at the end of the line feeling very nervous.
- One by one potential immigrants hand papers to Official.
- Official looks at people, not paper, and points to the door on SR saying 'Application rejected'.
- Rejected immigrants move to SR, huddle together and sob gently.
- Immigrant 1 is rejected and tries to question it, immigrant 2 concerned that he will not pass as immigrant 1 didn't.
- Immigrant 2 is taken, Official saying 'Congratulations', 2 replies 'Ooh, smashing!', goes to SL with Official.

## Costume and Set

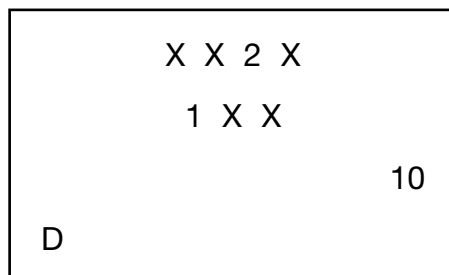
Dictator – black base clothing, suit jacket, eye-glass, notepad

Immigration Official – black base clothing, badge hanging over belt

Potential immigrants – black base clothing, piece of cloth representing different countries

Set:

SR



SL



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The power and emotion of dramatic interpretation



## Interview

### Script for Interview:

#### Interview Part 1

**Interviewer** *Welcome Mr. and Mrs. Pankiawicz (Pan-kee-a-vich). Now, do you have the letter we sent you regarding this interview? (Mr. and Mrs. Pankiawicz nod) Good, and I see you have brought all the documents we require – birth certificate, marriage certificate, qualifications. As I'm sure you can understand, the Australian government is very strict about the requirements. (Mr. and Mrs P nod) So, why do you want to come to Australia?*

*(As Mr. P leans forward to answer, interrogator 1 enters and talks over him.)*

#### Interview Part 2

This part of the interview between the interviewer and the couple is done in mime while the interrogators enter one at a time and talk over each other.

**Interrogator 1:** *questions about trouble with the law*

**Interrogator 2:** *questions about health*

**Interrogator 3:** *questions about education*

**Interrogator 4:** *questions about family*

**Interrogator 5:** *questions about history*

**Interrogator 6:** *questions about hobbies/interests*

#### Interview Part 3

**Interviewer** *(Signal to end interrogation.)  
There seem to be a few inconsistencies in your story.*

**Couple** *Is our application accepted?*

**All interrogators** *NO!!*



### *Action:*

- Interviewer leads Mr. and Mrs. Pankiawicz on to stage from SR and directs them to sit down.
- Interrogators wait side stage SR.
- Interviewer begins interview in stern but friendly tone.
- Mr. and Mrs. P look nervous, hold hands, try to be very cooperative with the interviewer.
- As Mr. P is about to answer first question, interrogator 1 enters and asks a question very loudly at the couple.
- The interrogators enter one at a time asking their questions over one another.
- The couple try to concentrate on the interviewer, but their focus is taken by the interrogators.
- The interrogators surround the couple, moving and increasing in volume each time they ask a question.
- A signal by the interviewer silences the interrogators who freeze where they are, part 3 of interview proceeds.
- Scene ends with interviewer sitting in their seat with arms crossed and couple in their seats looking upset

### *Costume and Set*

Interviewer – black base clothing, glasses, notepad or folder

Applicants – black base clothing, small travel bag, Mr. P - hat, Mrs. P - shawl

Interrogators – black base clothing

Set:

