A Monkey Baa Theatre Company Production
Based on the book by Mem Fox and Julie Vivas
Adapted for the stage by Eva Di Cesare and Sandie Eldridge

Possum MCGIC

Ats Learning Pack

For students in Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2

Monkey Baa respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this nation and honours their continued cultural and spiritual connection to the lands, waters, and seas.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, on whose land we work, live, and share stories.

Always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

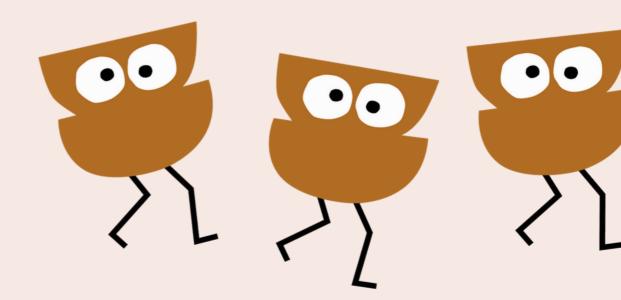
About this pack

This pack is designed to be used in your classroom and is perfect for students in Early Stage 1, Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Inside you will find fun Drama, Science and English activities, with a Dreamtime story by Michael J Connolly that directly link to the Australian Curriculum, plus information about how we adapted the book for the stage.

The activities in this learning pack meet the following General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum Priorities:

- Literacy Information and Communication Technology
- Creative and Critical Thinking
- Personal and Social Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures



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About Monkey Baa

Monkey Baa makes great theatre for young people and for over 25 years we have presented award-winning theatrical experiences that inspire and empower young people across Australia and internationally.

For the past decade, Monkey Baa has made its home at the ARA Darling Quarter Theatre in Sydney and on Gadigal land. This is where we work, play and produce theatre.

We are one of Australia's widest touring companies with 30 national tours to 130+ regional and remote communities, 5 international tours and over 3000 performances reaching over 1.5 million young people.

Nearly a quarter of a century of operation requires resilience and ingenuity. Much has changed since its inception in 1997 but Monkey Baa's appetite for development, transformation and renewal remains the same.



About Possum Magic

Grandma Poss loves making magic, she makes wombats blue and kookaburras pink. She makes dingoes smile and emus shrink. But one day, when danger arrives in the form of a snake, Grandma uses her most magical spell to make Hush invisible. Hush has many wonderful adventures. But being invisible isn't all it's cracked up to be, and Hush longs to see herself again. One problem. Grandma Poss can't find the spell to make Hush visible again. And then she remembers. This particular magic requires something more, something special, something to do with food... people food. Possum Magic takes us on a whimsical journey to cities around Australia to find the food that makes Hush visible again.

Director

Sandie Eldridge

Production Designer

Emma Vine

Composer & Sound Designer

Nate Edmondson

Lighting Designer

Matt Cox

Vision Animator

David Bergman

Magic & Illusion Designer

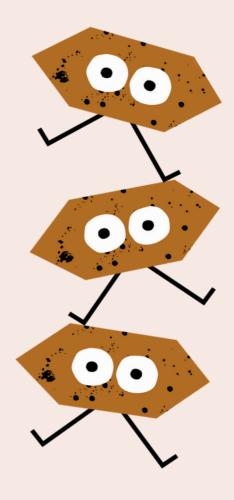
Adam Mada

Movement Director

Sam Chester

Puppetry Director

Alice Osborne





Meet the cast

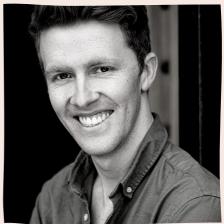
Gabriel Farcourt — Various Roles

Gabriel is a graduate of NIDA, and he has appeared in Henry V (Bell Shakespeare), The Hypochondriac (Darlinghurst Theatre Company), Cosi (Melbourne Theatre Company), K.I.J.E, Fallout and Babes in the Woods (Old Fitz Theatre) and A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night. The Tempest, A Comedy of Errors, Edward II, Measure for Measure, The Servant of Two Masters and River at The End of The Road (Sport for Jove Theatre Company), La Traviata (Opera Australia), Titus Andronicus (Cry Havoc), Punk Rock (ATYP), and This Is Not Mills and Boon (Old 505 Theatre).



Teale Howie — Various Roles

Teale is a Sydney-based actor, singer, and writer from Mackay, Queensland. A graduate of the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, his recent theatre credits include the original and return seasons of Anatomy of a Suicide (Sugary Rum, Redline, Seymour Centre) and his solo show Who's the Man (Sydney Fringe). He has spent most of his early career touring the country as Terry in CDP Theatre Producers' 13-, 78- and 91-Storey Treehouse productions. Film and television credits include the Prime original feature Five Blind Dates (Goalpost) and commercial campaigns for brands such as Mcdonald's, ALDI and Bundaberg Rum. Teale is a proud member of MEAA.



Ebony Tucker — Hush

Ebony Tucker is a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Australia. During her time at NIDA, she appeared in several productions, including Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play, Perfect Stranger, A View from the Bridge, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Cherry Orchard. In addition to her acting work, Ebony is also an accomplished voice-over artist, represented by Scout Management, and a member of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance. She has also appeared in productions such as Forgotten at Parramatta Riverside, Attempts on Her Life at Kings Cross Theatre, and The Comedy of Errors with the Australian Shakespeare Company.



Sarah Woods — Grandma Poss

Sarah is a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts with a career in film, theatre, and television. She has worked with numerous theatre companies, including Bell Shakespeare, Sydney Theatre Company, and Sport For Jove. Some of her notable roles include Olive in Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, and Lady Macbeth in Macbeth. Sarah has also appeared in a variety of film and television productions such as A Red Dog Story, The Kettering Incident, and Home and Away.





Making the play

The Vision

Theatre begins with an idea, a spark of imagination. This is what we call the vision.

At Monkey Baa, our ideas come from all around us. The world we live in and the people we share it with are our biggest sources of inspiration. A lot of our shows are inspired by picture books and novels by Aussie authors, as well as others from around the world. Our production of Possum Magic is based on a picture book by author Mem Fox and illustrator Julie Vivas. It was Eva Di Cesare and Sandie Eldridge who thought it would make a great show. Sandie brought together an amazing team of creatives and developed it into a a wonderful production for young people all over Australia to enjoy.



A chat with Eva Di Cesare

How did you create Possum Magic?

Throughout 2018, Sandie Eldridge (Director/Co-writer) and I facilitated creative workshops with Year 3-4 Bankstown West Public School students. These collaborative engagements with young people have become an integral part of Monkey Baa's adaptation process. Each year sees a different project that presents different challenges and offers greater expansion to the artistry and storytelling techniques, as we explore with young people how to make a great piece of theatre for them.

The students respond to the book and the script, and they offer their ideas about how they think the story should be told. Using Drama workshop techniques and activities, the students guide us with their responses by showing what they think is important, what works and doesn't work, and most importantly what they feel emotionally.



The Script

The vision is transformed into a script by a playwright.

Just like a poet writes poems, a playwright writes plays. They're specialists in spinning stories for the stage. Playwrights create characters, scenes and plots for a play, which is a unique form of writing with two main elements: dialogue and stage directions. Stories are powerful and magic, letting us delve into other worlds and grasp ideas and emotions. They can teach us to walk in someone else's shoes and take us on amazing adventures. Plays bring stories to life, breathing them into existence.





Once a script is developed, it is handed over to a director and rehearsals begin.

A rehearsal is a run-through of a play before it's shown to the audience. The rehearsal time is the lead-up to the big performance. During this time, actors learn their lines and how to move around the stage (that's called blocking), the stage designers come up with the look of the play's world, composers write the music, and playwrights polish their scripts. And It's all run by the boss of the show, the director.



A chat with Sandie Eldridge

What is your role as the director of Possum Magic?

As a director, I bring together the creative team, cast, and crew to theatrically tell the story of Possum Magic in a clear and entertaining way, capturing its magic and wonder. I have a strong vision informed by the adaptation process and research into the book's themes and setting. Working with students and the creative team, I aim to create a magical and theatrical experience, capturing the joy of the book.

What is your vision for bringing the show life on stage?

I have a strong vision for Possum Magic informed by research into the book's themes and setting, and collaborations with students and the creative team. I aim to capture the magic and joy of the book in a theatrical and magical experience, exploring the 1980's Australiana souvenir scene. With the help of a real magician on the team, I want to bring this beloved story to life on stage in a way that captivates and delights our audiences.

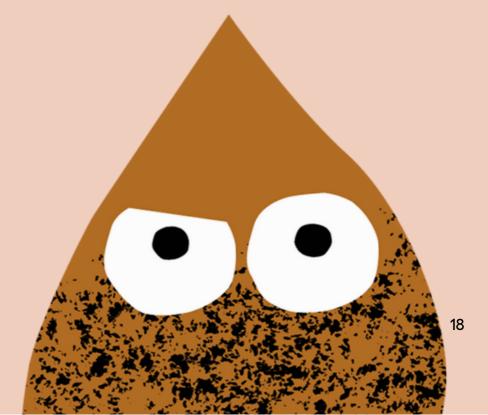
What do you do in the rehearsal room?

I mainly guide and try to have a space where all, actors, creatives, crew can feel supported and safe to create and offer ideas and choices. At the end of the day as director it's up to me what stays and goes (to keep the story clear) but I want everyone to feel free to chip in. It's an exciting and inspiring way to work, and for me the best way, creative collaboration. No idea is a bad idea as ideas beget ideas and that's how you get gold. And it's fun!

The Design

As the show takes shape in rehearsal, the designer begins to create the world of the play.

There are heaps of different types of stage designers, like costume designers, scenic designers, lighting designers, projection designers, and prop designers. Designers work with the rest of the creative team on a show, like the director, producer, and sometimes the playwright, to make the look and feel of the play's world. Sets (or scenery) are what create the world of the play. Costumes are the clothes actors wear that show who their characters are. Costumes help tell the story, give actors a foundation for their performance, and let the audience know who the characters are. Props are objects used on stage by actors during a play. For Possum Magic, the sets and costumes were designed by Emma Vine, who designs for theatre, opera, dance, musicals, TV and film.





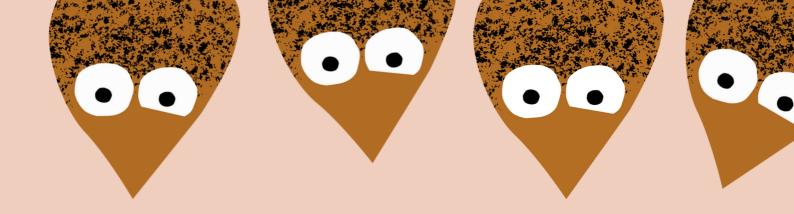
A chat with Emma Vine

How did you create the world of Possum Magic?

In Possum Magic we are seeing the world through the eyes of our Possums, Hush and Grandma Poss. We start in the Australian bush with sculpted trees, a big moon and a projected starscape for our nocturnal heroes. Our human world is set in 1983 when the book was published and it is mighty strange to the possums. The humans have big square shoulders and oddly manicured hair. What strange tall animals these humans are!

How did you create the costumes for Possum Magic?

The possum costumes play a big role in turning Hush invisible. We need to show a change so that the audience knows when she is invisible, but can still connect with the performer. Grandma Poss will wear her famous apron, Volleys and stripey socks!



The Performance

To bring it all together, actors create characters, tell the story and bring the play to life.

An actor is a special type of person who tells stories with their face, body and voice. They act like different characters in plays, movies and TV shows. Actors use their skills to make people laugh, cry, feel scared or happy. They practice to make their performances look and sound real. Sometimes actors have to learn new things, like speaking in a different language or doing special tricks. Actors can perform in front of a live crowd or on camera. Actors go to auditions, meet directors, attend workshops, rehearsals, and performances to improve their skills. They also participate in photoshoots and interviews to build their image and increase their chances of success.



A chat with Ebony Tucker

How did you become an actor?

When I was little, I loved stories. I loved imagining the characters in my head; I would imagine what they wore, how they spoke, what colour their eyes were, or their favourite snacks. I even made up my own characters or would pretend to be one that I already knew. I discovered that there was a very special job that meant I could always be a new character, and that was acting! I practiced my storytelling, and even got to go to acting school when I was older.

What are the best parts and challenges of being an actor?

The best part is all the amazing kinds of people (and animals!) I get to pretend to be, and the friends I make along the way. The most challenging thing about being an actor is staying focused and remembering the importance of being truthful when I tell my character's story, even if I'm tired or grumpy that day.

How did you create the character of Hush?

I began creating the character of Hush by watching videos of Australian possums in the wild and learning how those real possums move and sound. Then I moved on to practicing and collaborating with the Possum Magic cast and creative team, learning some magic, and of course, eating lots of Vegemite, lamingtons, and pavlova!



Classroom activities

The Rainbow Snake

A Dreamtime story by Michael J Connolly

Long long ago in the Dreamtime, a group of aboriginals were out hunting for kangaroos. It had been raining and the ground was soft making it difficult for the hunters to catch their prey. The hunters came to a clump of trees near the edge of a small plain and decided to rest in the shade. The hunters sat around resting, telling stories and warming their hands by the fire when on the horizon they saw a beautiful multi-coloured arch—a rainbow. It was the rainbow snake moving from his old waterhole to another. They were a little fearful as they did not want this huge brightly coloured serpent in a waterhole near their camp.

When the hunting party returned to their camp, the children ran out to greet them. Even though they caught only 2 kangaroos - not really enough to feed everyone - there would be singing and dancing - a big corroboree that night. During the corroboree, a young hunter went over to where the old men were sitting and asked them to tell him about the Rainbow Snake—if everyone was so fearful of him why could he not spear him then no one would fear this serpent anymore?

The old men were horrified and explained that the Rainbow Snake was one of the Dreamtime creatures who had shaped the earth. In the beginning, the earth was flat, a vast barren plain. As the Rainbow Snake wound his way across the land, the movement of his body heaped up the mountains and dug troughs for the rivers. With each new thrust of his huge multi-coloured body, a landform was created. He was the biggest of the Dreamtime Beings. At last, tired from the effort of shaping the earth, he crawled into a waterhole to be cooled and soothed and then sank out of sight. Each time the animals visited the waterhole they were careful not to disturb the Rainbow Snake, for although they could not see him, they knew he was there.

Then one day after a huge rainstorm his huge coloured body was arched up from the waterhole, over the tree-tops, up through the clouds and across the plain to another waterhole. To this day, aboriginals are careful not to disturb the Rainbow Snake as they see him going across the sky from one waterhole to another.

Dreamtime story activity

Description:

Students create a picture book based on the Dreamtime story

Resources:

Paper/workbooks, pens/pencils

How it works:

Students discuss the plot points of The Rainbow Snake, breaking the story up into four sections. Students then use 5 pages to create a picture book that tells the story of The Rainbow Snake through pictures.

Pages:

Title page with written title: The Rainbow Snake

- Paragraph 1 shown in pictures
- Paragraph 2 shown in pictures
- Paragraph 3 shown in pictures
- Paragraph 4 shown in pictures

Students share their picture books with their classmates.

For older students:

create a comic strip based on the Dreamtime story. A comic strip is a series of drawings that tell a story through images and captions.



Magical objects

Description:

Students make objects things they are not

Resources:

Large, open space

Skills required:

Imagination

How it works:

Players stand in a circle and put an everyday object in the middle (e.g. a hat, a ruler, a bucket). Go around the circle and step into the circle and pretend to use the object as something that it is not. For example, pick up the hat and pretend you are eating a bowl of cereal or you pretend that it is the steering wheel of a car.

Creeping Up on Grandma Poss

Description:

Students creep up on Grandma Hush without being seen moving

Resources:

Large, open space

Skills required:

Imagination

How it works:

Players stand against one end of the space, with one player as Grandma Poss at the other, when Grandma Poss has their back turned the players, the players creep forward towards her.

When Grandma Poss turns around, the players must freeze as a possum. if Grandma Poss sees them move, they must return to the end of the space. The first player to reach Grandma Poss without being seen moving becomes the new Grandma Poss.



Drama activity

Transformations

Description:

Students transform their bodies through movement

Resource:

Large, open space

Skills required:

Imagination

How it works:

Players spread out around the space and transform their bodies

by following these instructions:

- Make yourself small and then tall
- Have two legs and then four
- Explode into a million pieces
- Be your own shelter
- Be in two places at once
- Be invisible
- Hide behind yourself
- Levitate
- Be upright on one leg
- Be upside down with one foot still on the ground

Drama activity

Possum play

Description:

Players become possums

Resource:

Large, open space

Skills required:

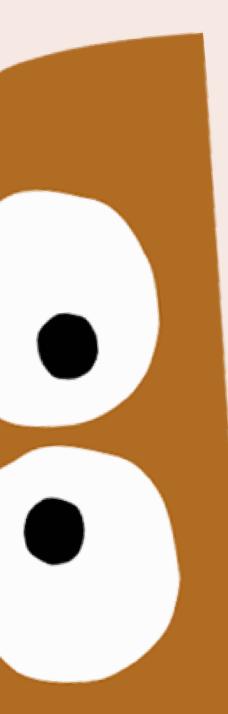
Imagination

How it works:

Players lie down and pretend that they are a possum curled up in the hollow of a tree. With ambient music playing, players slowly wake up as if they're little possums and gradually move around the space. Players take on these physical instructions:

- Stand with your hands behind your back
- · Move whilst pretending that you have a tail
- Climb up a tree with your arms and legs
- Look through your night-vision goggles
- · Balance on one leg
- Find and eat food
- · Avoid danger, with only one hand and one foot on the ground
- Become invisible
- Swing upside-down

Players find their way back to their little hollow in the tree and curl up ready to go back to sleep again.



Drama activity

Magic spells

Description:

Players create their own magic spells like Grandma Poss

Resource:

Large, open space

Skills required:

Imagination

How it works:

Players sit in a circle and answer the following questions:

- What sound does magic make?
- What does magic look like?
- What magic superpower do you wish you had and why?
- Have you ever experienced magic?
- What's the most magical thing that happened to you this week?

Players invent their own magic spell with words, sounds and actions, plus what the spell does. Take turns to physically demonstrate how their spell works in action, with other players responding physically to the power of the spell.

Science activity



Possum research

Description:

Students research and present information about possums

Resource:

Computers/student devices, projector, paper/workbooks, pens/pencils

Skills required:

Research, writing

How it works:

In pairs or small groups, students are given one of the following topics to research and gather information about:

- Diet: What do they eat and how do they gather it?
- Physical features: What do they look and feel like to touch?
- Communication: What do they sound like and how do they talk to each other?
- Habitat: Where do they live and what are their homes like?
- Breeds: How many types of them are there and what are the differences between them?
- Behaviour: How do they act in the wild and what do they get up to?
- Facts: What are some interesting and unknown facts about them?
 Students gather the information in their workbooks, writing the research in their own words. Then they create a presentation that includes a title page, and three pages with their topic question, information, and photos.

For older students:

Present the findings to the class, incorporating visual aids and multimedia elements to support the information presented. Reflect on the research process, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the research and presentation.



English activity

A letter to Grandma Poss

Description:

Students write a letter to Grandma Poss from Hush's perspective

Resources:

Paper/workbooks, pens/pencils

Skills required:

Imagination, writing

How it works:

Ask the students to write a letter from Hush's perspective, asking Grandma Poss if she can try and make her visible again.

- Familiarise yourself with the story and the character of Hush,
 focusing on their experiences as an invisible character.
- In the first person perspective, write a letter to Grandma Poss from Hush's perspective.
- Use descriptive language to describe the experience of being invisible and why Hush wants to be visible again.
- Pay attention to the format of a letter, including the heading, date,, body and closing.
- Revise and edit the letter to make sure that it is clear and wellwritten.

For older students:

Share the letter with a partner and receive feedback on the content and writing style. Incorporate any feedback into the final draft of the letter.

Note:

Encourage students to use their imagination and creative writing skills to craft a unique and engaging letter to Grandma Poss.

Consider allowing students to illustrate their letters to add another level of detail and creativity.



Curriculum links

Foundation

Learning area	Outcomes
	ACELA1434: Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning
	ACELA1786: Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts
	ACELT1577: Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators
	ACELT1578: Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text
English	ACELT1831: Innovate on familiar texts through play
211911011	ACELY1646: Listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations
	ACELY1650: Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, viewed or read independently
	ACELY1651: Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge
	ACELY1784: Use interaction skills including listening while others speak, using appropriate voice levels, articulation and body language, gestures and eye contact
Drama	ACADRM027: Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama
	ACADRM028: Use voice, facial expression, movement and space to imagine and establish role and situation
	ACADRM029: Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community, to an audience
	ACADRR030: Respond to drama and consider where and why people make drama, starting with Australian drama including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Science	ACSSU002: Living things have basic needs, including food and water
	ACSIS233: Engage in discussions about observations and represent ideas
	ACSIS012: Share observations and ideas

Learning area	Outcomes
English	ACELA1444: Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example facial expressions and gestures to interact with others
	ACELA1446: Understand that there are different ways of asking for information, making offers and giving commands
	ACELA1787: Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions
	ACELT1581: Discuss how authors create characters using language and images
	ACELT1582: Responding to literature Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences
	ACELT1584: Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts
	ACELT1586: Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication
	ACELT1832: Innovate on familiar texts by using similar characters, repetitive patterns or vocabulary
	ACELY1655: Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences
Drama	ACADRM027: Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama
	ACADRM028: Use voice, facial expression, movement and space to imagine and establish role and situation
	ACADRM029: Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community, to an audience
	ACADRR030: Respond to drama and consider where and why people make drama, starting with Australian drama including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Science	ACSSU017: Living things have a variety of external features
	ACSSU211: Elaborations Living things live in different places where their needs are met
	ACSIS213: Compare observations with those of others
	ACSIS029: Communicating Represent and communicate observations and ideas in a variety of ways

Learning area	Outcomes
English	ACELA1462: Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things
	ACELT1587: Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created
	ACELT1589: Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts
	ACELT1591: Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways
	ACELT1593: Create events and characters using different media that develop key events and characters from literary texts
	ACELY1667: Rehearse and deliver short presentations on familiar and new topics
Drama	ACADRM027: Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama
	ACADRM028: Use voice, facial expression, movement and space to imagine and establish role and situation
	ACADRM029: Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community, to an audience
	ACADRR030: Respond to drama and consider where and why people make drama, starting with Australian drama including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Science	ACSSU030: Living things grow, change and have offspring similar to themselves
	ACSSU032: Earth's resources are used in a variety of ways
	ACSIS041: Compare observations with those of others Elaborations Communicating
	ACSIS042: Represent and communicate observations and ideas in a variety of ways

Learning area	Outcomes
English	ACELA1463: Understand that different types of texts have identifiable text structures and language features that help the text serve its purpose ACELA1478: Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences) ACELT1594: Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons ACELT1596: Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others ACELT1599: Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative ACELT1605: Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension ACELT1601: Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle ACELY1677: Plan and deliver short presentations, providing some key details in logical sequence
Drama	ACADRM031: Explore ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama ACADRM032: Use voice, body, movement and language to sustain role and relationships and create dramatic action with a sense of time and place ACADRM033: Shape and perform dramatic action using narrative structures and tension in devised and scripted drama, including exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama ACADRR034: Identify intended purposes and meaning of drama, starting with Australian drama, including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, using the elements of drama to make comparisons
Science	ACSSU044: Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things ACSIS060: Represent and communicate observations, ideas and findings using formal and informal representations

Learning area	Outcomes
English	ACELA1477: Examine how evaluative language can be varied to be more or less forceful
	ACELA1490: Understand how texts vary in complexity and technicality depending on the approach to the topic, the purpose and the intended audience
	ACELT1602: Make connections between the ways different authors may represent similar storylines, ideas and relationships
	ACELT1603: Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view
	ACELT1607: Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining
	ACELY1697: Use a range of software including word processing programs to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements
Drama	ACADRM031: Explore ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama
	ACADRM032: Use voice, body, movement and language to sustain role and relationships and create dramatic action with a sense of time and place
	ACADRM033: Shape and perform dramatic action using narrative structures and tension in devised and scripted drama, including exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama
	ACADRR034: Identify intended purposes and meaning of drama, starting with Australian drama, including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, using the elements of drama to make comparisons
Science	ACSSU072: Living things have life cycles
	ACSSU073: Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive
	ACSIS071: Represent and communicate observations, ideas and findings using formal and informal representations

monkey theatre