

Arts Centre Melbourne presents Barking Gecko Theatre Company's

Bambert's Book of Lost Stories



Resources prepared by Barking Gecko Theatre Company
Years 3 - 6

BARKING GECKO THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

BAMBERT'S BOOK OF LOST STORIES

*Adapted for the stage by Dan Giovannoni & Luke Kerridge
from Bamberts Buch der verschollenen Geschichten by Reinhardt Jung*

TEACHER'S KIT



Barking Gecko Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges our wonderful cast of supporters

DEVELOPMENT PARTNER



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE KIT

These teaching notes have been created especially for you to use in your classroom with students pre and post show. Please treat this as a guide for you to use. You are more than welcome to replace elements of the classes with your own activities or to adjust activities to suit the temperament and skill set of your students.

We hope you enjoy exploring the exercises below as much as we enjoyed putting them together.

Included are insights into the adaptation process, behind the scenes images and designs, interviews with key creatives, thematic questions, exploratory exercises, and reflective activities, with curriculum links for English, Health, Society and Environment, The Arts.

The activities are most suitable for students in primary and junior school.

Activities included at the end of this kit were first developed in 2015/2016 by Matt Edgerton, with input from Christie Sistrunk, with guidance from Barking Gecko's Honorary Academic Professor Robyn Ewing.

This resource has been updated slightly by Katy Warner, Arts Centre Melbourne's Creative Producer for Schools Engagement to reflect not only the Victorian curriculum but also the 2020 online streaming of the performance *and* the current remote learning situation Victorian schools find themselves in. In 2015-16 we never would have predicted COVID-19 and the disruption this pandemic has caused.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Presents wonderful opportunities for quality reflection and discussion, which can be explored verbally or through writing, drawing and through drama.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Learning Areas: The Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, The Humanities
Capabilities: Critical and Creative Thinking, Social and Personal

KEY THEMES / IDEAS

Addresses important themes about:

- Being different
- Physical obstacles
- Power of the imagination
- Importance of storytelling
- Friendship

ABOUT US!

Barking Gecko Theatre Company is Western Australia's leading professional theatre company for young people and their families. Since 1991, Barking Gecko has earned an international reputation for excellence and innovation, and has delighted audiences throughout Australia, Canada, Korea, Mexico, Singapore and USA.

Our vision is to inspire audiences of all ages to embrace a creative life full of curiosity, empathy and play. We do this through productions of the highest quality and opportunities for curriculum focused learning experiences through our Teacher's Kits and workshops.



POP QUESTION!

Q: Do you know why we are called Barking Gecko Theatre Company?

A: Apart from being a fun and memorable name, this small Australian reptile is a perfect fit for who we are. Although small, the Barking Gecko has a loud voice. It can run up a wall or over a ceiling and look at things from a totally new perspective.

Barking Geckos or *Underwoodisaurus milii* are found on rocky outcrops, mostly in southern Australia.

ACTIVITY: PRESHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Have you been to the theatre before? Maybe you visited Arts Centre Melbourne last year with your class to see a show? Maybe you and your family have been to theatre together? Discuss as a class or in smaller (break out) groups what it felt like to go the theatre? What did they hear? See? Feel?
- What is special or unique about theatre? How is it different to, say, going to the movies or watching television? How are you expected to behave inside a theatre? Why?
- A lot of things have changed because of COVID-19 including how we can get together to watch a piece of theatre. Today, you will be watching THEATRE on a SCREEN. This is not the way the show is supposed to be watched ... you are meant to be in the same room as the actors, the lighting, the puppets, props, stage, each other. But right now, that's not possible so this is the next best thing!
- Remember, this show was created to be experienced live and not on a screen so you may find some of the recording a little dark. As you watch, think about how different this would look / feel / sound if you were in the theatre!
- Why do you think theatre companies record their plays? This was recorded long before we even knew about COVID-19 and restrictions. Why do you think these recordings exist?
- Pros and Cons: what are some positive things about watching theatre on our TVs or Computers? What are some things we are missing out on? Create a list as a group.
- Going to the theatre (at home): How are we going to share the experience as a class? What are some things we can do together to make up for the fact we can't be in the same room or go to Arts Centre Melbourne right now? Do we ... press PLAY at the exact same time? Watch through Zoom or another video conferencing platform (share screen option)? Get online as soon as we finish watching to share our thoughts? Are you going to invite your family to watch the show with you? Will you have snacks?

BAMBERT'S BOOK OF LOST STORIES

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*Creative Development 2015, Bambert and puppeteer Tim Watts.
Image: Jon Green Photography*

Creative Team

Adapter – Dan Giovannoni

Adapter & Director – Luke Kerridge

Set and Costume Designer – Jonathon Oxlade

Lighting Designer – Chris Donnelly

Sound Designer – Ian Moorhead

Dramaturg – Matt Edgerton

Performers

Mr Bloom – Igor Sas

Puppeteers and story characters –

Tim Watts, Nick Maclaine, Amanda McGregor, Jo Morris

THE STORY (Synopsis)

This is the story of Bambert – an impossibly small man with an enormous love for writing. Bambert born with a growth condition requiring many painful and unsuccessful operations, leaving him feeling “a shipwrecked mariner cast up on hostile shores on the far side of a dream”. Life is spent indoors, with just his imagination for company and a very friendly neighbour who lives beneath Bambert, and helps deliver him supplies.

Tucked away in his quiet attic, his only companions are the characters he has created in his stories, which he writes in a book he calls his Book of Wishes. Over time, The Book of Wishes gradually fills up and, when there are only enough blank pages for one more story, Bambert decides to take action and set his stories free, sending them out into the world on little balloons, in the hope that they will find a home. The stories contain instructions: whoever finds them is to return them to Bambert with a stamp from wherever they landed, so he knows where they should be set. But as each day passes, and no stories return, Bambert’s hope begins to fade. Will his stories ever find a home?

One by one, the stories come back to Bambert and he’s slowly able to fill his ‘Book of Wishes with tales from all over the world. All except the final blank story. How will the elusive eleventh tale return?

Bambert’s Book of Lost Stories brings together Australia’s most extraordinary creative minds to realise this exquisite production. At times amusing, other times melancholy, this new production reminds us how stories connect us to the world and ultimately, the power of kindness.

ADAPTATION – from the page to the stage!

Firstly, you may have noticed that the published English version of the story uses the word “Missing” in its title, but our play uses the word “Lost”.

Why?

Barking Gecko Theatre Company worked with a delightful German translator, who adapted Jung’s original novel (written in German) into English for us. Her translation was slightly different from the book and so we decided we preferred this version.



Discuss / research roles of the creative team

- As you can see from the list above there are many creatives who worked together to bring this story to the stage.

- What do you think a Dramaturg could be? Why was it important to have one working on this project?

Role of a Dramaturg.

A dramaturg is most frequently used on pre-existing scripts with historical or real life events and characters as well as translated texts and adaptations, as is the case with Bamber's Book of Lost Stories, which was originally a novel written in German.

It is the job of the Dramaturg to know as much about the play, its language and the context surrounding its creation as the original playwright did.

After exhaustive research, and having undertaken a full literary breakdown of the text, the Dramaturg provides the production team with expert feedback on the creation and "world" of the play script; a valuable resource from which they can draw as much or as little as they like. And rather than simply presenting their research in a large book the Dramaturg is present from inception right through to the end of rehearsals, becoming a truly collaborative part of the team.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT



Creative Development 2015. Image by Jon Green

Discuss

- Above is a photograph taken in our creative development in 2015.
- What is a creative development?
- Compare the process of writing (drafting process) to working it on the floor with actors.

In order to adapt a text from the page to the stage, a playwright must first write a script.

A professional writer may draft many copies before it reaches the stage.

In theatre we take this one step further and have table readings of the script with the writer, director and actors. At this stage of development the text is discussed and tweaked before the creatives are invited to physically explore / rehearse the play (or scenes from the play) on the floor. *We call this a creative development.* We do this because theatre is an “active” medium unlike a book, which is “passive” (usually done alone and silently – unless of course you have to read aloud in class, which is a great thing to do!)

Not all of the stories in the book are in the stage production. These are the stories Barking Gecko Theatre Company, the director and adaptors have chosen to use.

- The Princess of Cordoba
- The Waxworks Museum
- The Wandering Light
- The Strange Game
- Frozen In Time

Discuss

- Why do you think this might be? Discuss how you think they will be staged? What do you like about the stories selected?

SET & COSTUME DESIGN



COSTUME DESIGN by Jonathon Oxlade

What does a designer do?

A bit like a detective, a designer will read the book and play script to find important details to help create a physical world for the characters to live in. His / her designs also contain important clues for the audience.

Discuss

- What types of things does the set / costume / lighting / sound design tell us about the play, characters, themes of the play.
- Discuss how you think they will be staged? What do you like about the stories selected?

Discuss / Research / Present

- Study the costume design on the previous page. Who do you think it might belong to? What tells you this?
- In small groups research one of the following creative roles and present your findings to the class.
 - Adapter
 - Director
 - Lighting Designer
 - Sound Designer
 - Dramaturg



INTERVIEW with Anna Kosky Production Manager

Q: What was the first theatre production you ever saw. What impact did this have on you?

It was called *Two Weeks with the Queen* at the old Playhouse Theatre. I think I was about 8. From that moment on I wanted to know what secrets happened behind the curtain, I wanted to be part of the magic.

Q: What does a Production Manager do?

A Production Manager works with the Director to realise their vision in a very practical way --- organising the sets to be built, working with the lighting and sound designers and organise all the different elements of the show.

Q: How did you become a Production Manager?

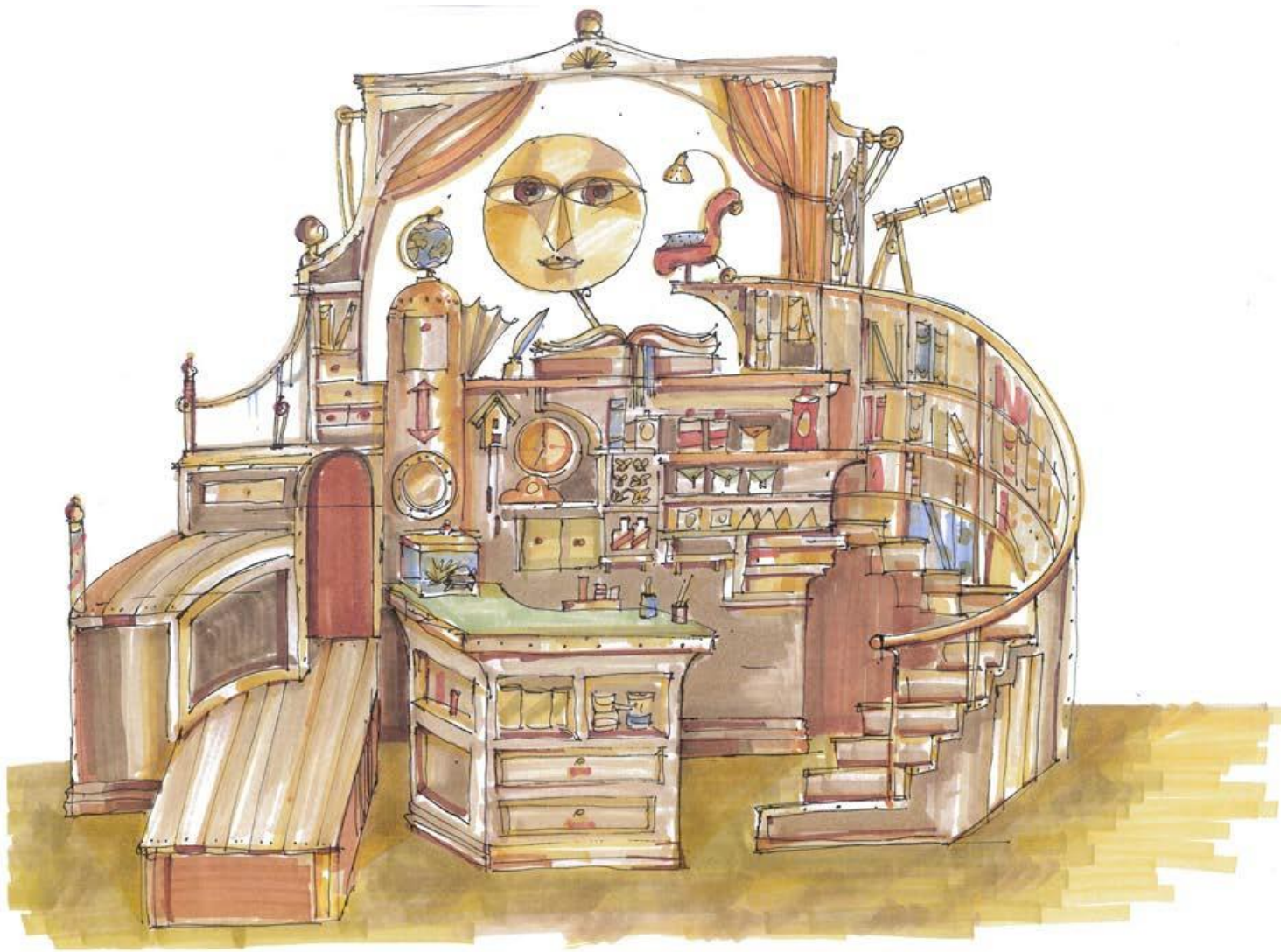
I studied at NIDA in Technical Production and worked as a Stage Manager for about 10 years and then moved into production management and producing.

Q: What do you enjoy most about working on this production?

Getting to work with such great artists, from the gentle guiding hand of Luke (Director) and the beautiful artistry of Jonathan (Designer) and such a great cast.

Discuss

- Anna mentioned she worked for many years as a Stage Manager. What do you think a Stage Manager does?
- Share your first live theatre experiences as a class.



SET DESIGN by Jonathon Oxlade



SET MODEL by Jonathon Oxlade

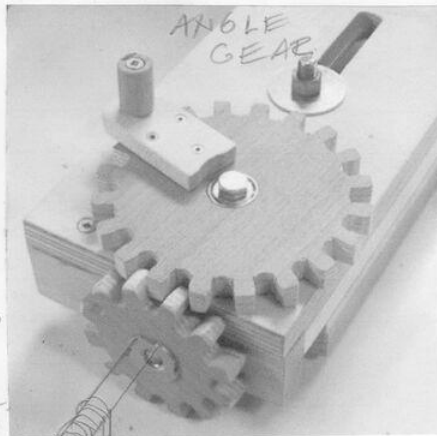
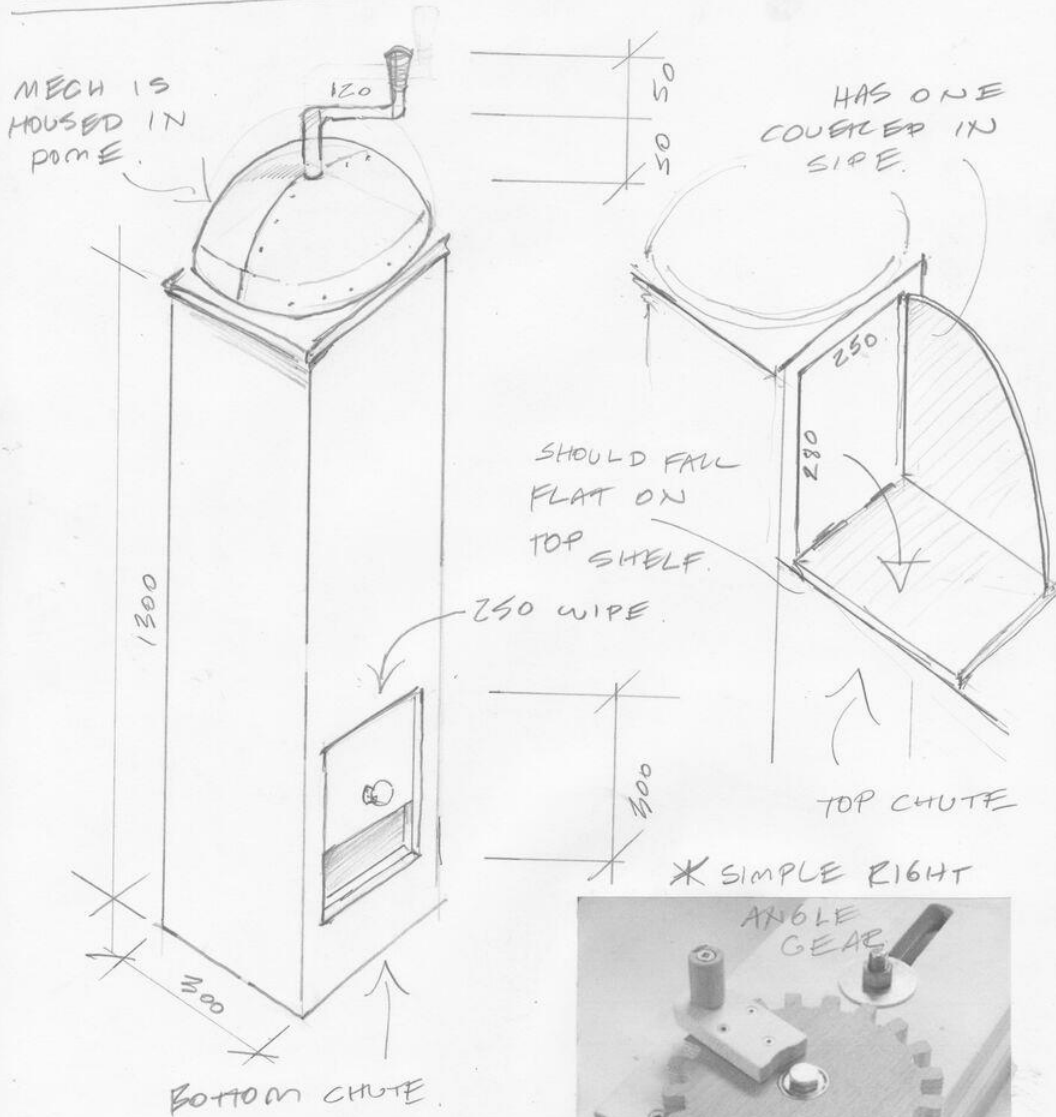
Discuss the design on the previous pages. You can also access the images as separate files to share with your students (via SCREEN SHARE in video conferencing) [through this link.](#)

- What details capture your attention?
- Why are they there?
- What do they tell the audience about Bambert's world?
- What character(s) do you think the female figure could represent?
- Study the following design. What do you think it will be used for?

Design Activity

- In the book, when Bambert's parents died he converted the attic to become his home, and rented out the bottom of the apartment to Mr Bloom, the grocer, who delivers all of his supplies. Study one of Jonathon Oxlade's design on the next page, and discuss what function it could serve in making Bambert's life easier.
- If you were an inventor what would you design to make Bambert's life easier (eg. an expandable book claw so he can get books from the top shelf)?
- Draw your design and sell the idea to your class by explaining how it works and how it will improve Bambert's life.

LIFT- AND MECHANISM



* WINDS UP ROPE THAT LIFTS LIFT



JONATHON OXLADE

INTERVIEW with director and co-adaptor Luke Kerridge.

There have been several creative developments on *Bambert's Book of Lost Stories* over a number of years. Let's hear from Luke how this came about.



Director Luke Kerridge with BGTC Ensemble students. Image: Christie Sistrunk
Creative development 2015,

Q: How did you get the idea to create this work for the stage?

I first discovered *Bambert's Book of Missing Stories* about 10 years ago. I was living in London at the time and found it in a dusty shop in south London. I'm a collector of unique and unusual children's books, and I remember what really struck me when I read the book was the character of Bambert, and how much you care about him and how quickly you become attached to him as a reader.

What appealed to me about adapting this story for the stage was how beautiful his project was, sending his beloved stories out into the world to find their own setting via envelopes attached to balloons. Bambert finds the world outside too overwhelming, too noisy and too fast so he has had to create his own world, surrounding himself with words and books. The world of his imagination and creativity has a heartbeat. Bambert's stories literally burst into life and in some ways are more real or rich than reality. This work is about how rich the world of imagination and creativity is.

I was also drawn to the image of Bambert, a man so impossibly small he literally doesn't fit into the world. Recreating this character onstage was an exciting idea for me.



Luke Kerridge with BGTC Ensemble students. Image: Christie Sistrunk
Creative Development 2015

Q: You have had several creative developments with actors but also with students, why?

At the centre of each story is a child who can push back and give their point of view on the world, however I am aware how sophisticated the story is, so was particularly interested in including the perspective of children in this work and did this first with upper primary school students at a school in Sydney over a term for once a week.

The book spoke to them in incredible ways and their responses were very moving. I would read the book and then they would give me their opinions. We did a range of activities each lesson such as writing, drawing & design which all influenced my creative processes.

I also talked to teachers about different things they could do during the week. This was a rewarding process for children and teachers who tied the book across the curriculum as Bamber's stories reach out to all corners of the world, cultures and history of the world.

Working with the young people has guided my artistic process. We can't include everything from the book so I really look to their opinions and the parts they liked the best, the parts they found the most challenging and considered this in the construction of the adaptation so it is a rewarding and emotional journey for the audience.

I think young people have such an incredible perspective on the world, so I was interested in developing parts of Bamber's life not in the book.

I worked with a selection of Barking Gecko Theatre Company Ensemble students, in 2015 aged 9 -12 to explore aspects of his life not expressed in the book, including how he might set up his world to make it easier to function in the attic. Students had fun designing inventions to help him access things in the world and physical exploration of what it is like to be very old and small in a busy, fast world.

Each student also wrote a wish for the world, which we attached to envelopes and released into the sky.



Luke Kerridge with BGTC Ensemble students. Image: Christie Sistrunk Creative Development 2015

PRESHOW ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION: Big Questions for the class

- What makes you feel like you belong?
- Can you remember a time when you didn't fit in?
- Explore tableaux – belonging, exclusion, and friendship.

ACTIVITY: Tableau Work

A still image that can be used in pairs / groups in order to portray a given subject matter. When creating a tableau the participants need to focus on their physical positioning, body language and facial expression to create a visual story or image. Remind them that they are putting themselves into a scene as characters with thoughts and feelings.

Ask students to ask themselves:

- Where shall I stand in relation to others in the group (encourage each to take a different position / stance / level)?
- How can I communicate this with my body language, gesture, facial expression?
- What do I want the audience to think?



REMOTE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Obviously, students cannot do this as a group activity however you could ask them to create tableaux using toys or everyday objects. This could be photographed with an iPad or phone and shared with the class.

Alternatively, students could use set up tableaux to share with through their camera during video conferencing.

ACTIVITY: Guided Journey

- Line up in height order without talking. Should height matter?
- How is being small difficult in the world? (Write down a list of these: being noticed at a shop counter, seeing over people's heads at the football, getting berries from the mulberry tree etc.)
- How is being small easier? (Getting tennis balls from under cars, hiding when you're in trouble, finding money on the ground etc.)
- Now have participants walk around them room. Get them to imagine and enact each of the challenges and benefits of being small in the world, as you side-coach.



REMOTE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

So, lining up in height order is going to be an issue in the remote learning environment.

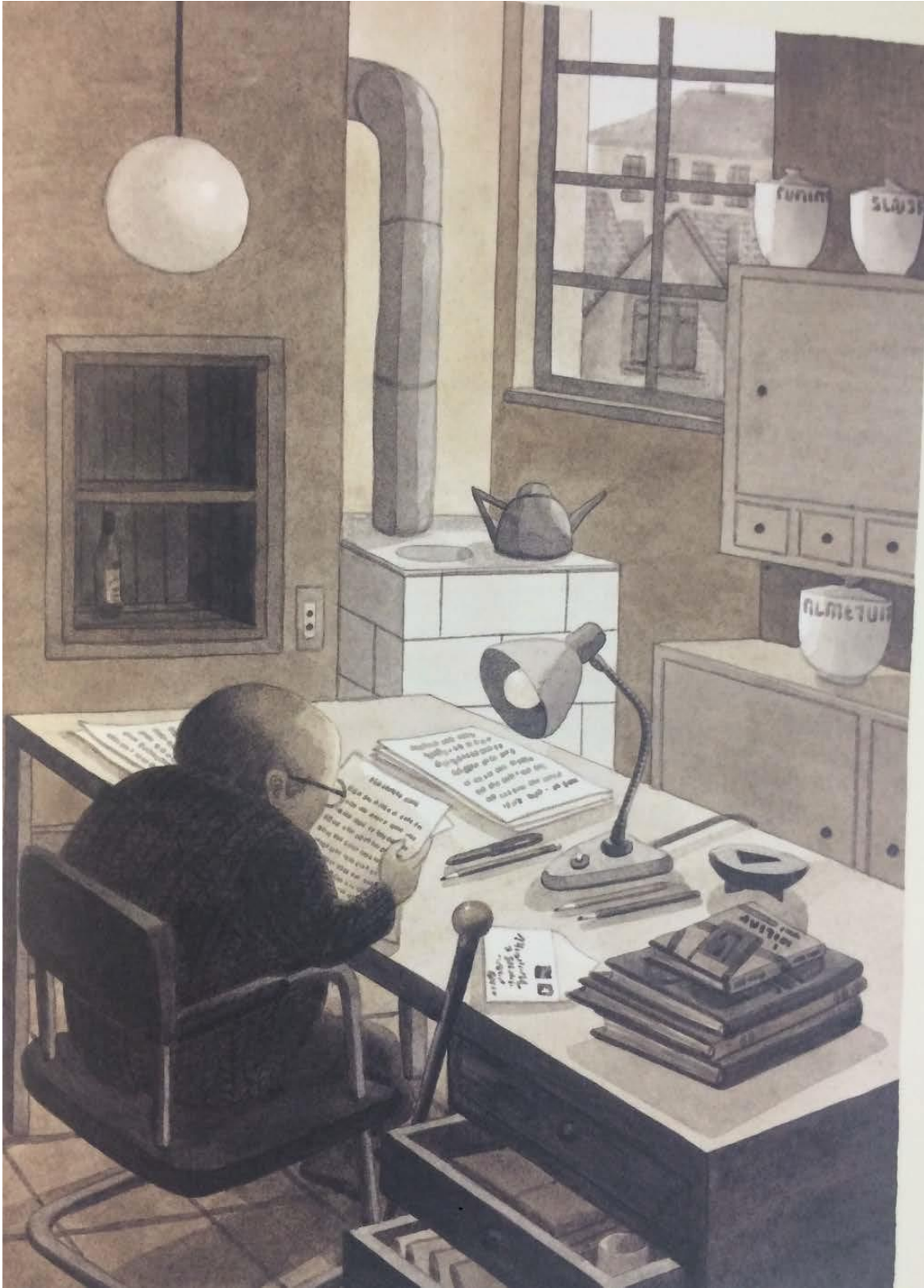
Add a little maths to the mix and ask students to measure themselves – and line up ‘virtually’ in their height order! Maybe they can collect everyone’s measurements and use class photos to create a line ... or draw it ... or make a simple table.

The guided journey part of this can be done with cameras and mics – or you can turn it into a creative writing task.

ACTIVITY: Visual Imagery

- Study the following images from the Emma Chichester Edition, of *Bambert’s Book of Missing Stories* – (NB These images are also in [this Dropbox folder – available via this link](#))





Discuss

- What do you notice about Bambert?
- Where do you think he is?
- What do you think Bambert does?
- Why are stories important to Bambert?
- What do you think are on the balloons?
- Do you think Bambert is lonely?
- There is a permanent ban on selling or using these kinds of 'sky lanterns' in Australia. Can you guess why? (Bushfires)

Reflective Activity

- Draw (or pre-draw) an outline of Bambert on Butchers Paper on the wall. Have the participants make suggestions about Bambert's inner and outer qualities, which you can then write on the picture.
- Inside the Bambert outline write everything we know about Bambert's inner world (alone but not lonely, knew he was a great writer etc.)
- Outside the outline write everything we know about the world outside Bambert (Bloom lives downstairs, surrounded by books etc.)

ACTIVITY: Puppet Play

- Brainstorm how you would tell this story with only toys or objects.
- Think about three key images: what is the beginning, middle and end of the story.
- What sound effects would you need?
- What lines of dialogue if any?
- What are the different voices of the different characters?
- How did you feel watching Bambert alone in his attic?
- How were objects / props used by the characters to tell some of the stories.

POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

Reflective activities

- Compare the stage production with the stories studied in class. How did it differ from the book or how you imagined the characters? Were there any surprises for you?
- What was your favourite moment, why?
- Why do you think they chose to use a puppet to play Bambert? How effective was this?
- Why did they use actors, who play characters in the story, to operate Bambert? (e.g. his characters take care of Bambert and are his friends/ family)
- How did the stories come to life onstage?
- Write a letter to the director Luke Kerridge and tell him what you liked most about the production. Share a drawing or work you have been doing in class (he would love that!)

BARKING GECKO THEATRE CO
PO BOX 23
Northbridge WA 6003

Write a letter to a friend

Bambert's tale reminds us of the power of writing to connect us to other another. During this time of isolation, why not share stories with your friends and loved ones with a handwritten letter. You can download / print some Bambert-inspired letter writing paper from Arts Centre Melbourne's website.

Make your own Wish Balloon

Bambert writes his stories into a book called his "Book of Wishes." In this activity you can colour in a drawing of the balloon from the show and add in your very own wish for the world. All you need is a printer and some coloured pencils!

You can find both these activities here:

<https://www.artscentremelbourne.com.au/community/content-hub/together-with-you/videos/bamberts-book-of-lost-stories>

Drama / Discussion / Writing Activities

- Explore stories not presented onstage.
- There is a KINDLE edition of the book – Bambert’s Book of Missing Stories – available on Amazon if you’d like to read and share the original story with your students:
<https://www.amazon.com/Bamberts-Book-Missing-Stories-Reinhardt/dp/1405254351>

The Moving Light

Set in Russia.

Some key themes – the artist as outsider persecuted by the state; the resourcefulness of a child; the power of stories; Poetic truth and real truth: the poetic vs the pragmatic escape stories.

Bambert is inspired by his own story – that he can do great things despite his physical limitations.

- Read and reflect.
- Divide the class into small groups. Have each group re-tell the story of *the Moving Light* using three tableaux. (Non verbal, frozen images).
- In between each tableau have the audience close their eyes as if plunged back into darkness. Watch each group’s work back.

The Silken Scarf

Set in Paris.

Some key themes – Fate and determinism, ‘even the wisest of soothsayers cannot escape his own future’; the lack of justice – the ‘good’ boy who saves people from a collapsing building and distributes money to beggars is imprisoned and killed; the unseen god-like author with unknowable motives.

Bloom asks himself why he didn’t save the boy from his fate, since he is the author – a glimpse into the mind of the ‘god’ of this story, deciding the boy’s fate.

Bambert’s discovery that the letter has time travelled. The Paris stamps were from 1851 – so Bambert guesses that the story sought out not only the place but the *time* of its setting! But here we also get our first strong hint of where the stamps and addresses may be from: Bambert says twice he’ll have to save stamps and discuss this with Mr Bloom. Sharp readers/audience may intuit Bloom may be sending these letters...

- Read and reflect.
- What is the story about?
- Could the boy have changed his fate?
- Do you believe in fate? (Horoscopes, predictions etc). Do you think the future is already decided?
- Bambert discovers that the postmark on the letter is from 1851. What do you think happened to it?
- What do we learn about Bambert (Add any discoveries to your Bambert picture, from the reflective activity on the previous page).

Conscience Alley

- Brainstorm the two sides of this argument
- Have participants line up on each side of the room, as one person playing “the boy” walks down the middle.
- One side thinks the boy should take the gold and give it to the poor “you can’t escape your fate” and “this is what you were destined for.
- The other side thinks he should run and do something different to write his own destiny.
- Reflect on this activity – what is it like when no one believes you?

Role-play

- In small groups, improvise brief conversations between the police and the boy.

- The police interrogate the boy about where a poor cobbler's apprentice got all this gold.
- The boy explains what happened to him to escape punishment.
- How do you show status in the scene?
- What tactics can the boy use to convince them?

Frozen In Time

Set in Venice.

Major themes are inner and outer beauty; the curse of the parent visited on the child; the danger of secrets and lies; natural curiosity and the dangerous label of 'sin'.

Bambert identifies with inner beauty. He thinks he allowed the girl to hurt herself in his story because such a beautiful girl could never love him – a very dark idea, part of Bambert's 'shadow' side.

Bloom's motives are revealed to the reader / audience. We learn he is sending the letters! We also discover Bloom has stayed in business to mix with other people and can do so because of Bambert's cheap rent. He and Bambert are friends – this is explicitly stated for the first time. That they are friends with their own rituals, and a 'live and let live' philosophy. He is there because he's promised Bambert's parents to keep an eye on him, and has grown to like and admire him.

- Read and reflect.
- What do we discover about Bloom?
- Why do we think Bloom is putting the stamps on?
- What do we think about Bloom not telling Bambert he is putting the stamps on?
- What do we learn about Bambert? (Add any discoveries to your Bambert picture)
- Do you ever have to keep secrets?
- Have you ever lied to your friends? How did it feel?

Creative Response Activities

Choose one of the following suggested activities:

- A) Give each group copies of a story to re-tell for the class, using tableau and narration.
In small groups, discuss, write and perform a moment referred to but not shown in the story. e.g. Bambert's life as a child, painful operations, growing up yet not fitting into the world.
- B) Write / perform an alternative ending for the story. Be as inventive as you like, you may want to share it as a radio play, silent scenes with narration or using puppetry.



Write a review of the show. You can find templates to assist with this on Arts Centre Melbourne's Resource Library. Students can write their reviews and then present them back to the group.

<https://www.artscentremelbourne.com.au/learn/resource-library/drama>

Try the online FREE video tutorial to make your own Bunraku Puppet with puppeteer Iris Radovic. In this video, Iris will teach you how to make your own puppet with materials you can find at home, and then guide you in bringing it to life. With Iris' help, create a personality and story for your puppet, and then perform!

Students can follow this video in their own time and then share their puppets with each other during a video conferencing chat.

<https://www.artscentremelbourne.com.au/learn/resource-library/the-channel-home-studio/puppetry-workshop>

An alternative to the group drama activity (using narration and tableau to explore the show), students could instead use comic book / graphic novel techniques or still photography using toys / everyday objects. Give students a limited number of cells in which to draw or photos to create the story.

You can access the images used in these resources through [this Drop Box link](#) - this should assist students using screens to see the detail and respond accordingly. Jonathon Oxlade's website also includes some wonderful images of his design include costume designs for the characters. You might like to use those, too. [You can find those images here.](#)



THANK YOU for taking the time to explore this resource with your class. We look forward to hearing your responses to the show and activities!

