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**ADELAIDE  
FESTIVAL**

## EDUCATION RESOURCE

Resource developed by  
Deanne Bullen 2021

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# The Plastic Bag Store

by Robin Frohardt



# The Plastic Bag Store

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# Rundown on the show

Brooklyn-based artist and filmmaker Robin Frohardt has created an installation that is as funny as it is horrific. This ingenious work was premiered in Manhattan's Times Square.

Art, craft, film and puppetry converge in this unique installation. A glance at the hilarious trailer will have your students longing to get amongst the lovingly hand-made goodies, created from thousands of upcycled plastic bags and plastic rubbish, "locally sourced and harvested from the streets and bins of New York City."

Items resemble everyday products (from tubs of ice cream and whole rotisserie chickens to deli items, mixed salads, fruit, veg, and cleaning supplies) while others entice you to sample new lines, such as Bagarino pizza ("Hot melty bags in your mouth in minutes"), or juice-like cartons of Orange Plastic Bags.

## Themes

- The ubiquitous nature of plastic
- The long life of plastic – there's no 'away' when you throw it away
- The throw away culture of our society
- The environment

## Production

### Style and Conventions

- Multimedia
- Visual art and craft
- Puppetry
- Film

### Set Design

- A Supermarket

Artist Robin Frohardt created *The Plastic Bag Store* as a part of her Andrew W. Mellon DisTIL Fellowship through Carolina Performing Arts. The art exhibit and puppet performances, housed within a space Frohardt outfitted to look like a real grocery store, feature everyday household and food items with a plastic-themed twist to call attention to the environmental and health issues that arise from plastic waste.

[About The Plastic Bag Store](#)

[The Plastic Bag Store Trailer](#)

Image: Maria Baranova for Times Square Arts



**Don't Eat the Breakfast Cereal. It's Made of Plastic.**

New York Times  
Article - by Laura Collins-Hughes

1 November 2020

[Don't Eat the Breakfast Cereal. It's Made of Plastic.](#)

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## Curriculum links

This education resource has been developed with links to the Australian Curriculum. Activities have been created to reflect each of the achievement standards, depending on the year level, including content descriptions within each learning area and the general capabilities. The resource aims to provide teachers with information to help prepare students before attending the performance, as well as structured learning activities for the classroom after viewing the performance.

**General Capabilities – specific learning activities are linked with the following icons:**



Literacy



Critical and  
creative thinking



Ethical understanding



Numeracy



Personal and  
social capability

### The Arts—Drama

#### Year 3 and 4 Band Description

.... involves students making and responding to artworks independently and collaboratively with their classmates and teachers.

.... students draw on artworks from a range of cultures, times and locations.

#### Year 5 and 6 Band Description

While the arts in the local community should be the initial focus for learning, students are also aware of and interested in the arts from more distant locations and the curriculum provides opportunities to build on this curiosity.

#### Year 7 and 8 Band Description

Students:

- shape drama for audiences using narrative and non-narrative dramatic forms and production elements
- explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements including voice, movement, situation, space and time, and tension as they make and respond to drama
- consider social, cultural and historical influences of drama
- build on their understanding from previous bands of the roles of artists and audiences as they engage with more diverse performances

#### Content Description

##### Year 3 and 4

Explore ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama. ACADRM031

#### Achievement Standards

Students collaborate to plan and make artworks that communicate ideas.

#### Content Description

##### Year 5 and 6

Develop skills and techniques of voice and movement to create character, mood and atmosphere and focus dramatic action. ACADRM036

#### Achievement Standards

Students structure elements and processes of arts subjects to make artworks that communicate meaning. They work collaboratively to share artworks for audiences, demonstrating skills and techniques.

#### Content Description

##### Year 7 and 8

Plan, structure and rehearse drama, exploring ways to communicate and refine dramatic meaning for theatrical effect. ACADRM042

#### Achievement Standards

Students collaborate to devise, interpret and perform drama. They manipulate the elements of drama, narrative and structure to control and communicate meaning. They use performance skills and design elements to shape and focus theatrical effect for an audience.



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## Year 9 and 10 Band Description

Drama students:

- maintain focus and manipulate space and time, language, ideas and dramatic action
- draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience drama
- explore meaning and interpretation, forms and elements, and social, cultural and historical influences of drama as they make and respond to drama

## SACE Stage 1 and 2

SACE Stage 1 and 2 – the resources are created with links and in relation to the subject outlines.

**SUSTAINABILITY** - The Australian Curriculum places emphasis on Sustainability as a priority for study that connects and relates relevant aspects of content across learning areas and subjects.

Code	Organising Idea
<b>Systems</b>	
OI.1	The biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life on Earth.
OI.2	All life forms, including human life, are connected through ecosystems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival.
OI.3	Sustainable patterns of living rely on the interdependence of healthy social, economic and ecological systems.
<b>World Views</b>	
OI.4	World views that recognise the dependence of living things on healthy ecosystems, and value diversity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability.
OI.5	World views are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and are linked to individual and community actions for sustainability
<b>Futures</b>	
OI.6	The sustainability of ecological, social and economic systems is achieved through informed individual and community action that values local and global equity and fairness across generations into the future.
OI.7	Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.
OI.8	Designing action for sustainability requires an evaluation of past practices, the assessment of scientific and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected future economic, social and environmental impacts.
OI.9	Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.

### Year 9 and 10 Content Description

Perform devised and scripted drama making deliberate artistic choices and shaping design elements to unify dramatic meaning for an audience.  
ACADRM051

### Achievement Standard

They collaborate with others to plan, direct, produce, rehearse and refine performances. They select and use the elements of drama, narrative and structure in directing and acting to engage audiences. They refine performance and expressive skills in voice and movement to convey dramatic action.



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## Visual art

Visual art knowledge, understanding and skills ensure that, individually and collaboratively students develop:

- Critical and creative thinking, using visual arts language, theories and practices to apply aesthetic judgment draw on drama from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience drama.
- Conceptual and perceptual ideas and representations through design and inquiry processes.
- A personal aesthetic through engagement with visual art making and ways of representing and communicating.

The arts provide engaging and thought-provoking contexts in which to explore the nature of art making and responding. It enables the exploration of the arts in maintaining and transforming cultural practices, social systems and relationships of people with their environment. Through making and responding in the arts, students can consider issues of sustainability in relation to resource use and opportunities to express and explore world views and appreciate the need for collaboration within and between communities to implement more sustainable patterns of life. Through visual art students use the exploratory and creative platform to advocate effective action for sustainability.

### Content Description

#### F-Year 2

Create and display artworks to communicate ideas to an audience. ACAVAM107

### Achievement Standard

F- Year 2: Students describe artworks they make and those to which they respond. They consider where and why people make artworks.

### Content Description

#### Year 3 & 4

Present artworks and describe how they have used visual conventions to represent their idea. ACAVAM112

### Achievement Standard

Year 3 - 4: Students collaborate to plan and make artworks that are inspired by artworks they experience. They use visual conventions, techniques and processes to communicate ideas.

### Content Description

#### Year 5 & 6

Plan the display of artworks to enhance their meaning for an audience; explain how visual art conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts. ACAVAM116 & 117

### Achievement Standard

Year 5- 6: Students explain how ideas are communicated in artworks they make and to which they respond. They describe characteristics of artworks from different social, historical and cultural contexts that influence their art making.

### Content Description

#### Year 7 & 8

Analyse how artists use visual conventions in artworks; Present artwork demonstrating consideration of how the artwork is displayed to enhance the artist's intention to an audience. ACAVAM 122 & 123

### Achievement Standard

Students plan their artmaking in response to exploration of techniques and processes used in their own and others' artworks. They demonstrate use of visual conventions, techniques and processes to communicate meaning in artworks.

### Content Description

#### Year 9 & 10

Present ideas for displaying artworks and evaluate displays of artworks, Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intention in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making. ACAVAB 128 & 131

### Achievement Standard

Years 9 -10: Students analyse connections between visual conventions, techniques and viewpoints that represent their own and others' ideas. They identify influences of other artists on their own artworks.



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# Going to an Exhibition

## Whole class discussion:

Why does it matter?

- Talk about sharing the space and respecting other people viewing the work.
- Discuss the shared role of viewer and art maker, each is dependent on the other to read the narrative.
- As a class exercise compile a list of all the roles and tasks it takes to create an artwork and present an exhibition.

## What makes going to an exhibition different to going to the theatre?

In the theatre, the audience operates as a collective, all viewing the action on stage. At an exhibition it is a singular relationship between the viewer and the artwork.

## When you enter the art installation:

- Artwork is to be viewed and except in very rare occasions not to be touched.
- Move slowly through the exhibition so you can enjoy each piece of artwork.
- It is okay to talk to a friend about what you are viewing but many people like to view work in silence so no loud conversation.

## Photographing and filming is not permitted because:

- Intellectual property is paramount. The installation is the intellectual property of the artist and unless indicated photography is not allowed.
- You will be missing out on the detail you can't see through the viewfinder.

Image: Maria Baranova for Times Square Arts



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### Five broad groups of children whose responses as audience are characterised as:

#### Technicians

Children who are more interested in the technology than the performance, deconstructing the performance techniques employed in the show.

#### Narrators

Children who talk through the performance, asking questions, commenting on actions.

#### Dramatists

Children who immediately imitate what they see, participating through their own actions.

#### Mystics

Children who are completely engrossed in the sensory aspects of the experience.

#### Spectators

Children who hover around the edges, playing with whatever they can find, apparently not engaged, but often able afterwards to recall what they saw.

### How many of your students fit into these categories?

*Weddell, C (2003) The child audience. In S. Wright (Ed.) Children, meaning making and the arts. Australia: Pearson*

### Extension Activity

Individually or in small groups, students construct a book to tell a story about going to the installation.

### City of Adelaide Public Art Action Plan 2019-22

- Public Art is for everyone
- Public Art shapes the experience of our city – where curiosity and culture collide
- Public Art tells the story of Adelaide – it reflects our creativity and cultural richness
- Public art makes us stop, open our eyes, feel and imagine
- Public Art connects people with places and spaces
- Public Art can be many things - playful, reflective, unexpected, whimsical, challenging and fun
- Public art enables us to see the world a little differently
- Public libraries nurture culture and creativity
- Public libraries build healthy and sustainable communities

The Plastic Bag Store is delivered in partnership with the City of Adelaide.

Following the Plastic Bag Store experience, value add the time in Adelaide with a tour of the [City of Adelaide public art trail](#) – choose either the Adelaide Street Art Trail or Bike Art Trail. Or visit The City Library located on level 3 of Rundle Place as a resource for life-long learning.



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## Visual Literacy

Visual literacy is the ability to make meaning from the information presented in the form of still or moving image texts. This is based on the idea that images can be “read” and through this process of reading that meaning can be made.

Text types can include:

- Paintings and drawings
- Art installations and sculptures
- Posters
- Film
- Picture books
- Graphic novels (for example comics)
- Animations
- Web pages

Students can be supported to build knowledge and understanding around visual literacy by being asked to:

- Explain why they have responded to an image.
- Give evidence from the image to justify their reason.

The following questions will assist in developing their visual literacy vocabulary in relation to images, films or installations.

- How does it make you feel and why?
- What is it about?
- Who is it for?
- What is the purpose?
- What does it make you wonder?
- How was it made – where did it come from – does it stand alone – is it part of a sequence?
- Have you seen anything like it before? (making connections)
- Would you add anything else to tell the story?
- How do you think the artist wanted the audience to see the image/s?
- Why do you think the artist made the image/s? What are they trying to say?

John Debes, founder of the International Visual Literacy Association coined the term ‘Visual Literacy’ in 1969.

*Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.*

By engaging in conversation and discussions different interpretations of the image/s may emerge. These discussions can form the basis for different and alternative interpretations for students.



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# Building the BIG picture

## Plastic bags were made to save the trees

61 years ago a Swedish man, Sten Gustaf Thulin created the plastic bag to save the planet. Trees were being chopped down at an alarming rate to make paper bags. Problem is the inventor never imagined that they would become a single use item littering the planet. According to an interview with his son Raoul Thulin, his father always carried a plastic bag – ready to use and re-use over and over again – that was the whole idea.



Image credits: jericlat - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/79761301@N00/2136344888>

## How many plastic bags are used each year?

According to, The World Counts we use 5 trillion plastic bags per year – that is around 160 000 per second. That is roughly around 700 a year for every single person on the planet.

[theworldcounts.com](http://theworldcounts.com)

## Why are plastic bags such a big problem for the environment?

Whether you live in a suburban, rural or coastal setting seeing a plastic bag being blowing around on the wind, being caught in a tree or fence, or floating down a river is something that is quite common. The big concern with the plastic bag is that it is non-biodegradable and does not mix with the soil which causes land pollution as well as water pollution.

## Australia – Plastic Bags – Fast Facts

- In 2003 South Australia was the first state in Australia to ban lightweight plastic bags. The ban started on 4 May 2009. It is estimated to have saved 400 million bags annually. In 2020 South Australia is again leading nationally with its phase out of single-use plastic products, starting with drinking straws, beverage stirrers and cutlery from March 1, 2021.
- A total of 1.5 billion single-use plastic carry bags have been eliminated in Australia since major supermarkets implemented their self-imposed bans in July 2018.
- In 2007 Australians used 3.92 billion plastic bags each year – average of 184 bags per person.
- 8.7 plastic bags contain enough petroleum energy to drive a car 1 kilometre.
- Only 3% of plastic bags used in Australia are recycled.
- According to the United Nations, at least 800 species worldwide are affected by marine debris, 80% of that litter is plastic.
- 80% of marine plastic pollution originates from land based sources.
- Plastic bags are used for an average of 12 minutes.
- Over 200 000 plastic checkout bags are dumped in landfills every hour.
- Plastic bags cannot be placed in council kerbside recycling bins.
- Clean-up volunteers report that 12.6% of plastics they remove from streets, parks, beaches, bushland and waterways are plastic bags (41.3% being single use).



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## Are all bags created equal?



**Common disposable plastic bag**  
Made almost entirely of polyethylene plastic – a fossil oil derivative. Takes between 400 and 500 years to completely decay.



**Organic cotton, hemp or flax bags**  
Can be used and should be used multiple times. However, the manufacture of these bags require an intensive level of minerals and energy. The cultivation of the plants also requires a lot of water and land like biofuels.



**Bio-degradable plastic bag**  
Contains 70% crude oil and 30% biofuel. Can only be recycled a few times. Biofuel is very costly.



**Polypropylene, polyester or polyterephthalate bags**  
A sturdy and reusable bag that is more environmentally friendly than a disposable bag made of polyethylene. Has a longer life.



**Recycled plastic bags**  
Contain 70% recycled polyethylene. Their life cycle assessment is better than other bags, i.e. the number of times these bags can be recycled is higher than others.



**Polyester bag**  
An eco-friendly reusable bag. Fold up into a small pack – lighter than many disposable plastic bag and can carry up to 4 kilograms.



**Paper Bags**  
These bags are not necessarily environmentally better than plastic bags because of the chemicals required to produce a bag that has long and tear-resistant fibres. Recycled paper is an improvement.



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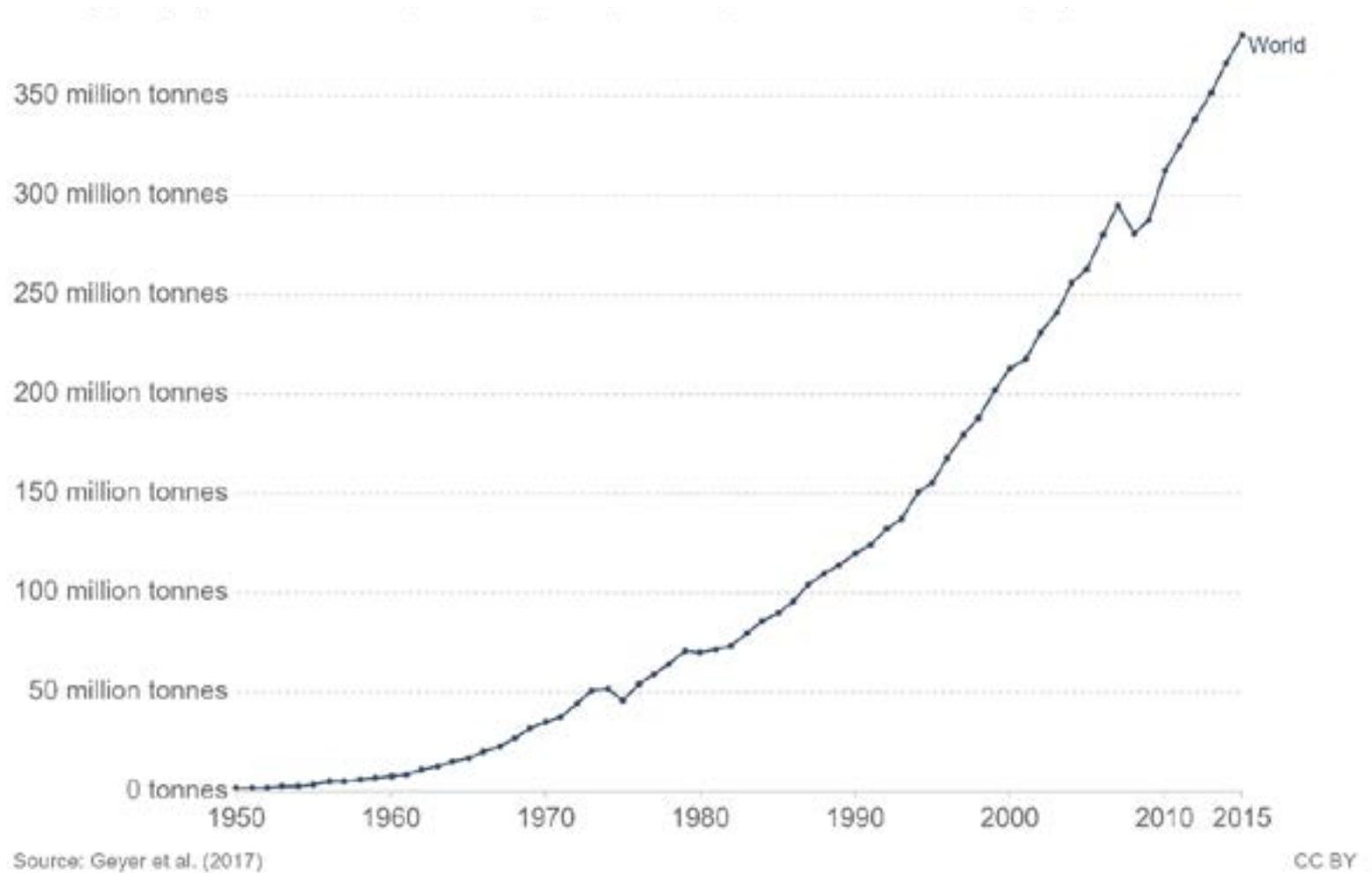
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## Global plastics production, 1950 to 2015

Annual global polymer resin and fiber production (plastic production), measured in metric tonnes per year



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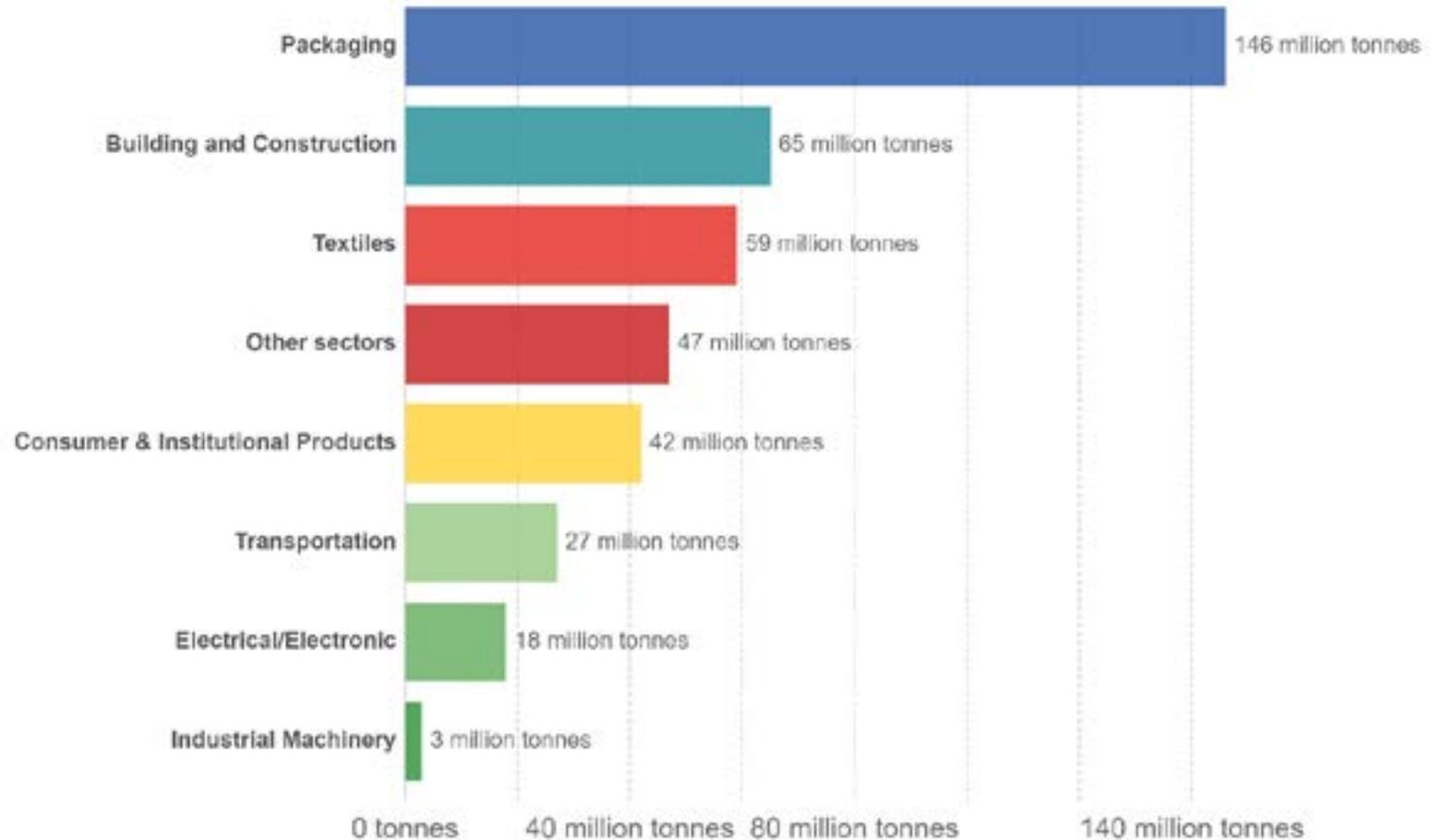
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## Primary plastic production by industrial sector, 2015

Primary global plastic production by industrial sector allocation, measured in tonnes per year



Source: Geyer et al. (2017)

CC BY



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## What do you know?

### In small groups

Students watch a selection of the available videos from Wipe out Waste, CoolAustralia.org, War on Waste and the others suggested on this page.

The Wipe Out Waste website has a large selection of videos for teachers to show students – suitable for a broad range of students.

CoolAustralia.org has a broad range of resources and activities and resources for students from Reception to Year 12.

Use the following keywords to find a range of resources to use with students: recycling, plastic pollution, plastic, plastic bags, pollution and waste management. (There are over 59 different resources when you enter the keyword 'plastic')

### How plastic bags were supposed to help the planet

[BBC News, 20 October 2019](#)

- What should we be using?
- Is paper or cotton better?

### Plastic Statistics

Estimated – **5.25 trillion** pieces of plastic debris in the ocean

Shoppers worldwide – use approximately **500 billion** single-use plastic bags per year

**100 000** Marine creatures/year die from plastic entanglement

**1 million** sea birds die from plastic

**13 000 to 15 000** pieces of plastic are dumped into the ocean every day

**Wipe Out Waste (WOW)** – a South Australian initiative, funded by Green Industries SA and delivered by KESAB – encourages whole school community approach to waste reduction.

Resources for teachers include:

- WOW learning activities
- WOW printable resources
- Australian Curriculum links
- movies and video clips related to waste reduction

<http://www.kesab.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/WOW-Teacher-Guide-Feb2020.pdf>

### War on Waste

- [Waste Audit](#)
- [Replas Recycled Plastic](#)
- [Ban the Bag](#)
- [Plastic Meat Trays](#)
- [Plastic Bag Myths](#)



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### In the same small groups:

After watching the selection of videos students should discuss:

- what they found interesting
- what they questioned, wondered or wanted to know more about after watching the videos.

In preparation for the next activity each student should receive a copy of the two Know, Want, How, Learned, Action, and Questions (KWHLAQ) charts - one chart has a range of questions for students to consider, the other chart has space for students to record their questions.

### Individually:

Students complete their KWHLAQ chart.

### In small groups:

In the original groups students share their completed KWHLAQ chart and:

- compare and contrast responses
- look at intersection of ideas
- consider what they have in common



The points in common will be used as the starting point for the next suggested activities when they explore satire and comedy to:

- make a mockumentary
- make a puppet show

### Bag It – trailer

A trailer of a movie made by Jeb Berrier. A regular American man makes a pledge to stop using plastic bags at the grocery store and has his life completely changed

### How worms could help solve plastic pollution

We invented plastic to replace and repel bugs, now we are turning to bugs to get rid of plastic. Author & Video Editor: Christian Caurla

### The story of plastic bags: The plastic bag diet

It's not that plastic waste in our world is mismanaged: it's that there is so much plastic being produced that it's unmanageable.

### Satire

Oxford Language - definition

*noun*

'The use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticise people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.'



<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>
<b>KNOW</b>	<b>WHAT</b>	<b>HOW</b>	<b>LEARNED</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>
What do I know?	What do I want to know?	How will I find out?	What have I learned?	What action will I take? What will the challenge be?	What further questions do I have?

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>
<b>KNOW</b>	<b>WHAT</b>	<b>HOW</b>	<b>LEARNED</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>
<b>What do I know?</b>	<b>What do I want to know?</b>	<b>How will I find out?</b>	<b>What have I learned?</b>	<b>What action will I take? What will the challenge be?</b>	<b>What further questions do I have?</b>
<p>Look back at previous learning?</p> <p>List facts</p> <p>Make connections</p> <p>What perspective do I have or misinformation?</p>	<p>Looking ahead</p> <p>How do I get pass the idea that I don't know what I don't know?</p> <p>Where might my research lead me to?</p>	<p>What planning will I need to do?</p> <p>How will I know if I'm finding information I can trust?</p>	<p>Look back at the steps in the learning</p> <p>What is the new knowledge that has been formed?</p> <p>How am I going to talk about my learning?</p>	<p>Who will be my audience?</p> <p>How will I present my learning?</p> <p>What impact will my actions have in the community, local and/or global?</p> <p>What knowledge or understanding led me to take action?</p>	<p>What impact did the actions have?</p> <p>How did the actions influence the learning?</p> <p>What reflection and wondering came from the learning?</p>

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## Laughter and learning

**Knock! Knock!**

**Who's there?**

**A broken pencil.**

**A broken pencil who?**

**Never mind, it's pointless.**

### Humour and Satire

Humour is a fairly simple idea; it's, well... when someone makes you laugh. They usually do it to make a point or to entertain. Having said that, nothing is ever simple because culture and context will always influence what is interpreted as humorous.

Satire can be humorous but some satire isn't supposed to be humorous. Often it is used in political theatre for social commentary on current social, historical or political events.

There are three types of satire:

**Horatian satire**, most gentle and sympathetic to its subject. Horatian satirists address issues that they view more as follies, rather than evil. Aims to promote morals and teach lessons. Examples include, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Dr. Strangelove*.

**Juvenalian satire**, which is dark, rather than comedic. Juvenalian satire is meant to speak truth to power. George Orwell's famous 1945 novel *Animal Farm* is a good example. The novel seems to support a certain idea on the surface, but uses irony to actually convey a deeper meaning.

**Menippean satire** targets mental attitudes and viewpoints, rather than specific people, this can be attitudes such as racism, or sexism. Examples include, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

### Humour

Oxford Lexico – definition

*noun*

The quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech.

### Satire and *The Simpsons*

The following snippet from an episode of *The Simpsons* – [Standardized Testing](#) – will provide a familiar text for students to explore.

#### read/write/think

A [range of activities](#) to explore the satire in *The Simpsons*.

### Comedy is all about the context

*The Plastic Bag Store* uses satire and humour to examine our culture of consumption and convenience, and the enduring effects of single-use plastics.

It encourages a different way of thinking about the foreverness of plastic, the permanence of the disposable, and that there is no 'away' when we throw something out.

*"It is my attempt to make something authentic and human from that which is mass-produced. There is great humour to be found in the pitfalls of capitalism and I find that humour and satire can be powerful tools for social criticism especially with issues that feel too sad and overwhelming to confront directly."*

Robin Frohardt

### Tips for writing satire

Remind students that their satire needs to be driving and sharp – they need to be clear about what their message is.

Don't be afraid to – *Exaggerate*

Exaggerating a situation or a person's features or traits provides an opportunity to represent something beyond its normal boundaries to expose its faults, to make it look ridiculous.

Ask wondering questions – I wonder what would happen if plastic bags became extinct or disappeared or only one person had a memory of them?



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By distorting how something is depicted the reader/viewer is able to see the grotesqueness or irrationality easily.

**Incongruity (*in-con-GREW-i-tee*)** is a state of two or more things lacking harmony, being incompatible, inconsistent, absurdly combined.

Think about inserting things that are out of place in a way that make them appear absurd or tests the viewer's idea of plausibility.

- what if plastic bags had feelings?

## lasreveR

When reversal is used in satire it often presents things to the viewer in the opposite of normalcy. An example of this can be seen when the oppressed is depicted as the oppressor exposing the flaws of discrimination.

- what if plastic bags came from a family?

## Parody

The final of these tips for writing satire is parody. Parody relies upon the art of imitating the work of another maker's style – lampooning aspects of an existing story or hand picking particular aspects.

The best satire:

- seems light and airy but packs a real punch underneath
- let's their viewer feel comfortable enough to agree with their message, but not so comfortable that they can ignore it
- is based on topics well known to the audience and is more relevant to their lived experience

## Using humour and satire to make a comment

[When you don't want to buy a plastic bag](#)

[When you refuse to pay 5p for a bag](#) – Williams & Friend:  
Miranda Richardson

## Parody

[Plastic State of Mind](#)

Jay-Z feat. Alicia Keys - Empire State of Mind Parody

Image courtesy Robin Frohardt



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### Mockumentaries

What is a mockumentary?

- A fictional text which adopts the style of a particular documentary genre or other reality based media:
  - documentary types include; nature, drama, situation
- Use the same way of presenting information as a documentary:
  - trustworthy sounding voice overs (think David Attenborough)
  - apparently 'real' footage of events
  - interviews with what seems to be 'experts' and 'eyewitnesses'
  - archival footage or photographs

#### As a whole class:

Watch the videos:

- *The Majestic Plastic Bag*
- *Spaghetti Tree*

#### In small groups:

Discuss and record their responses to the following questions:

- How could you tell you were watching a mockumentary?
- Why do you think the maker used the style of a mockumentary to tell their story?
- Do different audiences read a mockumentary in different ways? How? Why?



#### [The Majestic Plastic Bag](#)

#### [The Life of a Plastic Bag](#)

A live puppet that tells the story of how mean, disruptive and aggressive a plastic bag can be. All done with no dialogue

### Embedded Elements of Drama

- Role and character
- Situation
- Language
- Movement
- Dramatic meaning
- Audience engagement

### A classic old mockumentary

1 April 1957 – BBC mockumentary – The three minute hoax was titled *Spaghetti Tree*.

### Tips for making a mockumentary:

1. Aim for something absurd – out of the ordinary.
2. It is best to only use one camera with a limited number of angles.
3. The camera should follow the main character.
4. Use natural or minimal lighting.
5. Don't be afraid to improvise.
6. Interview real people.
7. Have simple sets.
8. Shoot on location.



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## Puppetry and *The Plastic Bag Store*

Robin Frohardt is an artist, puppet designer and a director. She is known for her highly detailed construction and rich aesthetics. The puppets that she creates exist in the realm between body and thought. For this reason, they serve as powerful metaphors for storytelling.

The 3 Act Play, written by Frohardt for the *The Plastic Bag Store* was created to be performed live. However, because of COVID it has been filmed for viewing by audiences.

### The three acts:

**The Ancient Past** – presented in the style of black figure Greek pottery (uses shadow puppetry)

**Present Day** – here you meet the character Helen, an admirer of Greek pottery who romanticises about the past (uses Bunraku puppetry)

**The far off Future** – meet the jellyfish fisherman and his discovery of plastic artefacts from the past (uses Bunraku puppetry and cardboard puppetry)

Having an understanding of the history of the puppets used in *The Plastic Bag Store* provides a context for students to gain an insight into why the artist has made the choices she has.

**Shadow Puppetry** theatre is thought to have originated in Central Asia-China or in India in the 1st millennium BCE.

There is a story that is told that over 2000 years ago whereby a favourite concubine of the Wu Emperor of the Han Dynasty died. He missed her so much that he lost his desire to reign. One day one of his ministers had an idea after watching some children playing and noticing the shadow their toys cast on the ground. Inspired by this sight the minister made a cotton puppet of the concubine. The minister invited the emperor to watch a rear-illuminated puppet show behind a curtain as night fell. This is believed to be the origin of shadow puppetry.

During his reign China roughly doubled its size – the borders spanned from modern Kyrgyzstan in the west, to northern Korea in the northeast, and to northern Vietnam in the south. His empire surpassed the size of the Roman Empire.

### Materials to make shadow puppets

- Black card stock 120 gsm
- Bamboo skewers or similar for puppet sticks
- Craft knives and or scissors
- Cutting mat
- A light source with a clear bulb
- A performance screen
- Painted scenery

### Cutting Tools

- Standard scissors for cutting out general shapes and straight lines
- Precision scissors for cutting out tiny details
- Craft knife for cutting out inner design, like folds in clothes and windows in buildings



Emperor Wu of Han

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## Two-ways to perform shadow theatre

1. The traditional way – puppets are held up against the performance screen. The light source is about 30cm away from the screen.
2. The modern projected way – shadows are cast utilising the space between the light source and the screen. The light source is about 1 metre to 6 metres away from the screen.

## Making the puppet

- Looking at the design of shadow puppets of cultures that have been using them for centuries and contemporary makers will support students when they come to design their own. Students will notice that one common feature in all shadow puppets is the use of negative space, which is used when designing and cutting out.
- Attaching sticks or rods to the puppets will allow the puppeteer control over the puppet.

## Bunraku puppetry

Bunraku, is a form of Japanese traditional puppetry founded in Osaka in the beginning of the 17th Century.

The puppets are half-life-size dolls and are usually operated by three performers: a principal operator and two assistants. Strings are not used, but rather the puppeteers co-operate to manoeuvre the limbs, eyelids, eyeballs, eyebrows and mouths of the puppets, producing life-like actions and facial expressions. The puppeteers are in full view of the audience, but are dressed in black to symbolize that they are to be taken as 'invisible'.

## Materials and Construction

Bunraku puppets feature a head and a torso with feet and hands attached by string.

### [Asia Education Foundation](#)

The link provides access to a learning sequence; students will learn about the traditions and cultural history of Japanese Bunraku puppetry, create a puppet and practice movements to use in a performance.

Traditional 'Bunraku' puppets for children help Japanese master endure coronavirus shutdown.

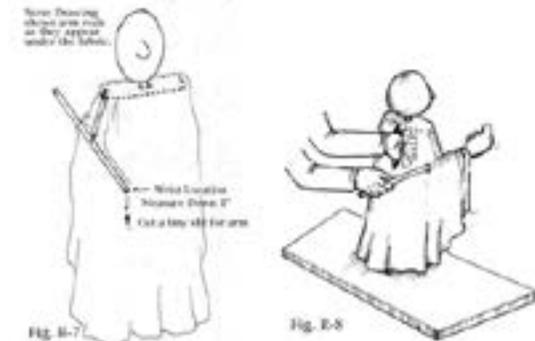
[Business World](#) – 10 September 2020

This article describes the role and tasks of the puppeteers.



Image by Ivan Fourie / CC BY-SA 2.0

## The World of Puppetry: A look through theatre history



[theworldofpuppetry.weebly.com](http://theworldofpuppetry.weebly.com)

[Performance](#) of Bunraku puppet theatre



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## Cardboard puppetry

Robin Frohardt creates her worlds with her cardboard puppetry. Intricate handmade sets and lo-fi special effects come together to weave an ode to the forever-ness of plastic.

Image: Maria Baranova for Times Square Arts



[redcycle.net.au](http://redcycle.net.au)



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## Makers - Get - Making

In the next activity students will start to work on their scripts to communicate their message with the knowledge and understanding from:

- Their completed research on plastic bags.
- Group decisions about what they want to communicate.
- A knowledge and understanding of the modes they are going to use to communicate their message, i.e. mockumentary, puppet show or a combination of the two.

### Creative thinking warm-up activity

Working in small groups:

#### 1. Rapidly empty your mind

- Students list all the ways they can think of, as quickly as they can to use a plastic bag.

*e.g. Carry shopping, put wet clothes in, pick up dog poo, to crochet a bath mat*

#### 2. Group the items into common theme

- If several ideas fall into a category think of what other things can be done with the plastic bag in that category.

*e.g. a number of the ideas fell into 'carrying things'. Next need to focus on what other things plastic bags can carry. Another category was 'making' – what else can be made from them?*

#### 3. Consider the common attributes

- List all of the attributes of a plastic bag.

*e.g. List of attributes of a plastic bag – scrunchable, makes a noise, light, floaty*

#### 4. Force connections

- Have a random word list – close eyes point to a word. List the things you associate with that word and then the 'connection' between that and a plastic bag.

*e.g. 'random words' – connection to plastic bag. Pet – fish – put water in bag to carry fish*

### Working in their small groups

Students will have:

- developed an understanding of the history and the impact of plastic and plastic bags on the environment
- viewed and discussed examples of how others have used humour and satire in regards to communicating an idea about plastic bags.

In small groups students will:

- Write a satirical piece that raises the issue of the problem with the use of plastic bags. They will select either mockumentary or puppet performance to communicate their piece.



To make a decision about the focus of their satirical piece students need to:

- Use the reflection they have undertaken on their KWHLAQ chart.
- Identify the research they will undertake.
- Identify the mode they will deliver their piece in, i.e. mockumentary or puppet performance. (It could also be a combination of the two).



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### Working in their small groups

The next step for the group is to:

- decide on the narrative of the story they want to communicate about plastic bags
- create a script even if they are not going to use any dialogue
- create a storyboard
- share their script and storyboard with another group for feedback
- decide on the mode of presentation
  - mockumentary
  - a puppet show that is performed live or filmed

The whole class views each other's documentaries and provide feedback:

- Does it look and sound like a documentary?
- Could an audience mistake it for a fictional text?
- Are there any aspects of the mockumentary that are real – how can you tell?

What genre of documentary does your mockumentary use? How many of the following does it fake:

- on-screen presenter or voice-over narrator
- archival documents or photographs
- 'fly-on-the-wall' footage
- interviews with eyewitnesses
- interviews with experts
- video diary
- other codes and conventions

### Feedback Loop

The feedback loop is to support students to adjust their actions or thinking about the piece they are devising.

The feedback should provide an opportunity for the performers and viewers to enter into a conversation after they have viewed each other's work. This should include:

- The viewers providing statements about what stood out for them and what they found interesting, meaningful or exciting.
- The performers can ask the viewers questions about their work.
- The viewer can ask the performers questions about the intent of movements. For example, what was your thought behind the use of the lower level movements at the end? (Note: The question or comment should be neutral and not suggest an opinion.)

Students should consider the feedback they have received and integrate and refine their mockumentary/puppet performance.

#### STAGE 2 – Drama

##### Knowledge and Understanding

**KU2 – Understanding and evaluation of the artistic and cultural value of local, global, contemporary, and/or historical drama.**

##### Critical and Creative Thinking

**CCT1 – Creative thinking and experimentation in the development of dramatic ideas.**

**CCT2 – Analysis and evaluation of the student's own drama-making and others' dramatic works, styles, and/or events.**

##### Creative Application

**CA1 - Application of dramatic processes, individually and in collaboration with others.**

**CA2 – Application of dramatic skills.**

**CA3 – Integration of theory and practice to make meaningful dramatic outcomes.**



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## After the visit

Individually students write responses to the following questions:

- How did they feel at the end of viewing the installation and watching the film?
- What had the most impact on them and why?
- How does the installation and film explore the impact of plastic bags on the world?
- What were the connections between the modes of communication?



## Reviewing the show

### Writing a critical response to the performance

Performing arts is a dynamic practice and responding to live theatrical experiences supports students to become better artists. Links are provided to a number of resources to support students to write a review and response to *The Plastic Bag Store*. A framework to support students to plan and develop their critical responses is provided.

The questions and reflections students have undertaken prior to writing their review will support them to use the framework.



## Refining, rehearsing and performing/screening devised mockumentary or puppet show

Students should return to their initial groups to discuss their devised mockumentary/puppet show that they are using to communicate their message. They should discuss:

- What could they change?
- What could they keep the same?
- What could they add?
- What could they remove?

Based on their discussion they should refine and rehearse their performance/filming in preparation for a performance or screening.

## Take the Pledge to #UnplasticthePlanet

### National Carbon Offset Standard

The Adelaide Festival is proud to have become the first arts festival in Australia to be certified carbon neutral.

This was achieved by consistently measuring and reducing our impacts on the environment, while offsetting the remaining carbon emissions involved in presenting a festival.

Some of the things we are doing to offset our carbon footprint:

- Provide a three bin system in our venues.
- Divert from landfill all waste from outdoor sites.
- Where possible reuse, re-purpose or recycle festival materials.
- Minimise use of plastic products.



View two short videos:

[A Festival for the Future](#) - Adelaide Festival to see how the Festival achieved this status and what it means for the Festival and all those who work there.



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## Meet the company

Created, written, designed and directed by **Robin Frohardt\***

In collaboration with the Puppetry ensemble:

**Nick Lehane, Admiral Grey\*, Rowan Magee, Andy Manjuck, Emma Wiseman**

Original music by **Freddi Price**

Sound Designer **Chad Raines**

Technical Director **Jeremy Lydic**

Co-Produced by

**Robin Frohardt** and **Pomegranate Arts**

### Pomegranate Arts

Executive Producer **Linda Brumbach**

Associate Producer **Alisa E. Regas**

General Manager **Rachel Katwan**

Filmed Elements:

Director of Photography **Rob Kolodny**

Producer **Caitlin Mae Burke**

**Robin Frohardt** is an award-winning artist, puppet designer, and director living in Brooklyn, NY. Frohardt's performance and puppetry-based work has been presented at St. Ann's Warehouse and HERE in New York City, as well as national venues including the Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts and the NEXTNOW Festival in Maryland. Her films have been screened at the Telluride Film Festival, Maritime Film Festival, and the Parish Museum. Her original play *The Pigeoning*, which debuted in 2013 and was hailed by the New York Times as "a tender, fantastical symphony of the imagination," continues to tour in the US and abroad, and has been translated into German, Greek, Arabic and Turkish. She has received a Creative Capital Award and a DisTil Fellowship from Carolina Performing Arts for *The Plastic Bag Store*; has been the recipient of Made In NY Woman's Fund Grant Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and MacDowell Colony Fellowship; and was the first artist in Residence at Olson Kundig, a renowned design and architecture firm in Seattle. In addition to directing her own work, Frohardt's puppetry and props have also appeared in TV shows such as *Orange is the New Black* and *30 Rock* as well as *Radio City Music Hall's Spring Spectacular*.



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# Additional Resources

[The Plastic Bag Store](#)

[Sources, distribution and fate of marine pollution](#)  
CSIRO

[Sustainable Futures](#)

The Sustainable Futures program is designed to support primary and secondary teachers working with students in Years 3 to 10. Teachers who register with the program receive free access to digital teaching resources which includes a variety of ideas and activities to support the teaching of sustainability and the environment in Australian schools.

[Plastics, the environment and human health: current consensus and future trends](#)

Richard C. Thompson,1,\* Charles J. Moore,2 Frederick S. vom Saal,3 and Shanna H. Swan4

[Humour and satire](#)

[Using satire in writing](#)

[How does context shape comedy](#)

[Resource from Education NSW](#)

[Replace the Waste Campaign](#)

South Australia's Single-use and Other Plastic Products (Waste Avoidance) Act 2020 is the first legislation of its kind in Australia. It is a positive step towards avoiding waste and reducing harm caused to our wildlife, including marine life, through litter and pollution.

South Australians are committed to protecting the environment. We will lead the rest of the country by avoiding and replacing waste with reusable or recyclable alternatives to ensure the best environment outcome for our 'clean and green' state.

[The City of Adelaide Public Art Plan](#)

[The City of Adelaide Public Library](#)



# Guide for Writing a Critical Response

## Opening Paragraph

When	
What	
Where	
Plot	

Write an overview of the installation - what is the narrative, the story it tells. Include an overview of the film that accompanies the installation. What story does it tell? How do the film and the installation support each other to tell the story?

### Language Features:

- Usually in past tense
- Uses subject-specific language
- Descriptive language
- Third person voice
- Analytical language
- Modality (how certain we are about something)
- Cast and crew referred to by their full names or last name
- In text references (quotes or specific moments)

## 1st Paragraph - Who

How does the artist – Robin Frohardt – tell her story.	
Key roles	
Character they played	
Discuss how she engages the audience.	
Give examples	

## 2nd Paragraph - What else

Describe a key moment from the installation or movie.	
How were the elements combined to communicate meaning to the audience?	

## 3rd Paragraph - Technical aspects

What technical aspects were used for the installation - that either enhanced or distracted from the viewing.	
How were sets, lights, props and costumes used to communicate meaning to the audience?	

## Concluding Paragraph - Summarises the viewers opinion

Your overall thoughts about the installation and the film. <b>Note:</b> This is not a rating of the production.	
What made it stand out?	
What did it make you think?	