

## 13.

# Stolen – Scene analysis (Group 3)

## Activity sheet

In this exercise, you have the opportunity to explore the issues raised in *Bringing them home* by performing excerpts from a 1998 play, *Stolen*. Working in groups, you will develop your own production of these pieces. The aim is not so much an accurate representation of the scenes, but to explore how performance can be used to understand a social issue.

Throughout this exercise, you are encouraged to draw on what you have learned about the removal of Indigenous children from the material in this unit and bring that to your discussions and performance.

### 1. Reading

Read the following scenes. The background gives you some information about how these scenes work within the rest of the play.

#### Scenes

- 'Cleaning Routine 2' – pages 17–19
- 'Ruby's Descent into Madness' – pages 24–25

#### Background

Ruby, who has been abused, is the main character in these scenes. She is described by the playwright as '*A very young child who feels abandoned. A used and abused young woman. A crazy beyond reach*'.

In the first scene, she asks sarcastically what the children think they are going to be when they grow up. Each career option, from nursing to farming, is rejected by an anonymous 'Authority Figure'. Finally, the domestic servant option is accepted. The children then dance and sing to the tune of 'We're happy little Vegemites!' The words they sing reflect the lack of options available to them.

The second scene shows Ruby being pushed around by many different authority figures. She is abused by people who have power over her life.

#### Characters

- All the children and an authority figure (6)
- Ruby, authority figures, lady, teenager, others (students can play several roles in this scene).

### 2. Discussing

In your groups, start discussing how you might perform these scenes. Consider the following production elements:

- Characterisation
- Staging (How would you use lighting? What props do you need?)
- Performance (What actions will reveal something about the issue?)
- Tone of voice

Here are some discussion questions to guide you.

#### Scene 1

- Why are the children not able to pursue careers other than being a domestic servant?
- Who do you think the 'Authority Figure' could be?
- The children sing together a different set of lyrics to the familiar tune of 'We're happy little Vegemites!'

- What effect does setting different words to this iconic tune produce?
- What impact does this parody have?
- What does this scene suggest about the education that children who are removed from their families receive?
- What are the conditions under which they are forced to perform menial labour?

## Scene 2

- Ruby gets abused in this scene by many people. What sorts of abuse does she suffer?
- Who are the different people who abuse her?
- How does she respond to the stream of abuse?
- What is the tone of this scene?
- Can you think of parallels between Ruby's story and other stories of children's experiences told to the Inquiry?

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## 3. Developing

Now you can develop some of the ideas that came out of your discussion and see how they will work in performance. Your group will present these scenes to the class, so the next stage is rehearsal.

- Amongst yourselves, decide who will play which part. If there are more people in your group than characters, you may want to rehearse it a couple of times with different people playing different characters. Alternatively, you may be able to think of other ways to incorporate the extra people into the scenes.
- Run through the script once by just reading lines.
- Start preparing the scenes as they will be performed. Use your discussion time to make decisions about movement, props etc.
- Obviously, you will not be introducing lighting or sound into your performance, but it is a good idea to think about how you would use these if you could.

## 4. Performing

- Each group will present their scenes to the class.
- Each performance will be followed by a discussion of the performance and what elements of the issue were brought out. Feedback on further work and development can also be provided.