

The Green Children

A drama about community fear of the unknown

Level 4 Lesson Plan



BACKGROUND PLANNING AND REQUIREMENTS

Purpose and Learning

This drama is designed to stimulate critical thinking about culture, multi-culturalism, assimilation, religion, and racism, but it is also useful for considering how communities respond in a crisis or when something strange and unusual happens to disrupt day to day life. It uses an old tale about two green children who turn up unexpectedly and mysteriously. The children have different religious practices, beliefs, language, and even tastes in food, all of which make the people in the town fearful of them. The drama opens up possibilities to discuss these sometimes-complex issues from a “safe distance”. This safety is created through the use of the greenness metaphor.

Pre-text

The pre-text for this unit is an abbreviated version of an old tale about two Green Children who suddenly appear within a rural community (original source unknown).



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Focus Question

What happens to a community when outsiders are perceived as a threat because of their difference?

The Five Ws

What's happening: Two green children have been found dazed and afraid at the mouth of a cave.

Who's it happening to: The children, Old Woman Jackson, and the community where they live.

Where is it happening: A small rural community anywhere in the world.

When is it happening: Now.

What's at stake: The cohesiveness of the community and the children's future.

The Hook

In this drama the students are intrigued by the mystery surrounding the children, including the fact that they are green in colour.

The teacher-in-role

The teacher takes on two roles:

- * The local doctor who is kind and compassionate.
- * Old Woman Jackson, a mysterious loner who takes the children into her home as soon as they are found.

Resources

- * A printable version of the tale of [The Green Children](#).
- * Teacher-in-role props: For the doctor – a medical kit or stethoscope; for Old Woman Jackson – an apron or shawl and/or walking stick.



This is a long and complex drama, taking a number of hours and lessons to complete. If your time is more limited, you can easily cut the drama down and just do some of the steps, still making sense and useful learning, though of course it will lose the richness of the whole experience. You could usefully just do **Steps 1 to 9, 11 and 13** in a few lessons.



UNIT PLAN

Step One - Introducing the pretext tale (I wonder)

* Ask the students to find a partner. Provide each pair with a copy of the abbreviated version of the tale. Read it to the students as they follow along with the text. It reads:

They were a boy and girl like ordinary people in size and shape except that they were light green all over. Some country people found them lying dazed and frightened at the mouth of a cave. They talked in a strange language and did not seem to understand anything that was said to them. They seemed very hungry, but they would not touch bread or meat, only cried bitterly.

The boy was sad and weak, and soon pined away, but the girl learned to eat the food and to speak the language, and in time she lost her green colour and looked like everyone else.

* Invite the students to work with their partner to ponder on about the story...to set their minds wondering about this situation and to think of any questions they might have after hearing this story fragment. The idea here is not for them to try to think up answers to their questions, or logical reasons for who the children might be or how they came to be there, but rather, just to wonder about aspects of the story, finding questions like: Where did they come from? Are there more green children? Where are the adults? Why are they green?

* Ask the pairs to join up with another pair to form a group of four. In these groups share and discuss their wonderings. After a useful amount of time, ask the groups to try to prioritise their wonderings. What are their 'hottest' questions - what do they most want to find out about?

* As a whole class, share some of these and discuss. Explain to the students that within the drama work that will follow, we will be exploring these questions, but may not find answers to them.

Step Two - Adding information (teacher as storyteller)

* Explain to the students that for the purposes of this drama some additional information has been added to the traditional tale. This information is shared via teacher narration. It relates to the first hour after the children were found.

* Tell the class that the children were found by a local woman called Mrs Jackson (known to the local community as Old Woman Jackson) and her two farm hands (Tom and Mia). The old woman lives alone in a farmhouse that is quite close to the cave where the children were found. Explain that apart from these three people, no-one else in the community has seen the children, but all have heard snippets about them from Tom and Mia who returned to the town to share the news.

Step Three - Building roles (creating family trees)

* Organise the students into groups of four or five (in a mixed gender class try to ensure that the groups include boys and girls). Explain to the children that within this drama they are going to become families who live in the community where the Green Children were found. Each family must include three generations.

* Ask them to give their family a name and then to consider their relationship to one another. Explain that the family member they choose to play must be above the age of 14 and may be as old as 60 or 70. They may not be younger or older. They must not switch genders and they may include in their family children or babies who also live in their household (these will not appear live in the drama, but might have to be taken into consideration).



* On a large sheet of paper, create a family tree that shows the relationships between the family members and their ages. Once this is done, encourage the groups to discuss their character and the family in general. For example, does the family own a farm and work on it? Is the farm out near the cave and old woman Jackson's place or on the other side of town? What do they grow or farm there? Do they live in the town itself? If so, what do they all do for a living? Who is considered to be the head of the family?

* If you have time, you might want also to complete a mapping exercise. For this drama, the map would need to include important landmarks such as the town centre, the cave, the school and Old Woman Jackson's farm. Discussion about the source of water for the town would also be useful (e.g. a dam, river, water reservoir etc.). Contemporary features like airports and supermarkets are also fine. The families would then also mark on the map the location of the homes and possibly even work places.



In addition, if the children are averse to being 'married', they may choose to be a single parent family with one grandparent living with them or adult brothers and sisters who share the family home now that their parents are deceased or have moved away.

Step Four: Introducing the families (freeze frames and tap & talk)

- * So that everybody knows about who is in this community, tell the students that soon each family will introduce themselves to the rest of the class. They must prepare for this introduction by creating a formal family photograph (freeze frame) taken BEFORE the Green Children were found. Ask the students to consider if the photograph is formal or informal. For example, it may have been taken at Christmas and show everyone gathered around the Christmas tree opening presents, or it may have been taken at a picnic. Alternatively, it may be a formal studio photograph. In deciding what they will be doing in these photos, remind the students that they will have to stay frozen in this position for some time, so choose a comfortable position. Also remind each group to take the task seriously – not to create a photo that is intentionally silly.
- * Now ask each family to background themselves thoroughly: age; relationship to each other (e.g. son, daughter, brother, uncle, grandson etc.); occupation (they may be still at school and if so, what grade they are in); what the family likes to do together etc. Check that they all know about their family members. Be sure to give enough time for this. Tell them that after this activity the head of the family will be asked to introduce each family member and may be asked some questions about them.
- * Arrange the families around the room. Count down 3, 2, 1 and then say 'Freeze!' This will give you the chance to check that all groups are ready with a photograph.
- * Now ask one group to return to their freeze and the rest to sit down and watch. Invite the head of that family to step out of the image to introduce his/her family, providing the family name and introducing (by pointing to) each family member. Once this is done, ask or invite the students watching to ask the head of the family some general questions about where they live and if there are people not in the photo (e.g. young children, a new baby etc.).
- * Alternatively, move around the group tapping each of the family members on the shoulder and asking a couple of questions. One of these might be about how long they have lived in the town, or if they have neighbours, or if they all get along well as a family etc. Do NOT mention the Green Children or Old Woman Jackson. These are role-building questions and should not be used to drive the action forward.
- * Once this family has been questioned, invite the next group to step forward and repeat until all families have been introduced.
- * Instigate a discussion about what we now know about the people in this town. What do they seem like? What interests do they have?
- * Ask the children to decide on a name for the town. Make sure this is a neutral name – not something outrageous or funny, but ordinary.

Step Five - Gossiping about the Green Children (gossip mill)

- * Ask the students to consider the first responses of the townspeople to the news that two children whose skin is green have been found near their town and are now at Old Woman Jackson's farm. What would they think? What theories would they have about where the



children have come from, who left them there, why they are green, indeed if that is true or simply a story invented by Tom and Mia to entertain themselves. Then, in the family groups but out of role, discuss how their character might react/what gossip they might have to share.

* Ask the students to take role as their townspeople. They have come into town to do some shopping and have heard Mia and Tom telling others in the shopping district about how they found the Children. Explain that you will now be using the gossip mill strategy. This strategy begins with the children being paired up and sharing gossip with just one other person. Then explain that, on a designated signal like a drum beat, they will move around the room until a signal is given again. Upon the second signal, each child needs to find a new person to share their gossip with. This process then repeats several times. The children may begin the conversation with, 'I've heard that the Green Children came from....' or 'I've heard they eat...' etc. Encourage the students to use their imaginations in creating these rumours. However, try to ensure that the gossips do not slip into theories about the children being aliens from outer space! It is important for the drama that these children are viewed throughout as human. Should some groups or individuals want to head in this direction, gently remind them that the Green Children were found near a cave and that there were no nearby sightings of UFOs!

* Allow the gossiping to go on as long as the students are engaged. Just as interest is starting to ebb, suggest that during the next round of gossiping, you (the teacher) will join them in role as Old Woman Jackson. Show them the prop (apron, shawl or stick) you will use to signal this role. Recommence the gossiping.

Step Six - Old Woman Jackson arrives (whole group role play with teacher-in-role)

* In a loud and challenging voice (as Old Woman Jackson) *demand that they stop this gossiping immediately. Ask them why they are being so ridiculous with all their silly ideas and tell them to leave the children alone. They are just two children who are very afraid and in need of understanding. Plead with the townspeople to be more tolerant and patient.*

* If they ask questions, answer them with the information below. However, if they do not respond by asking questions, tell them that you are happy to give them more information...all they had to do was ask. Calm down and become less aggressive. *Ask them if it is okay if you sit down...you are feeling tired by all of the excitement of the day and only came into town to get some different kinds of food to tempt the children as they do not seem to be interested in the food you usually eat.* The information provided to the townspeople should also include the following ideas:

The boy and girl appear to be brother and sister, with the girl being older than the boy; they do not speak English but you are unsure what language they are speaking...it is very strange with no familiar words; the boy is particularly scared; the Children won't eat or drink anything you have tried so far, except water; they seem very tired and are asleep right now, with your friend the local doctor looking after them and checking on their health. Most importantly, refuse any suggestions that they be brought into town by arguing that they are far too frightened and it would really upset them. They need to be settled down before they can be seen.



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The students, in their roles as townspeople, will be very insistent that the children are brought into town. Your response to this insistence needs to be clear...it is just not safe for the two Green Children. If the townspeople continue to insist, leave and then immediately cut the drama.

Step Seven – A letter is written (writing in role)

* Cut the drama and immediately ask the students to write a letter in role as the townspeople to a friend or family member from the town who is currently on holidays or working in another place. The letter should share the news about the arrival of the Green Children and include responses to the information provided by Old Woman Jackson.

* Out of role now, ask the students to look carefully at their letters to find words, phrases and even whole sentences that express particularly strong responses to the situation (these may be highly positive and supportive of the Children or extremely negative). Share the letters and the selected words with others in your family group. Do your characters share similar views?



Step Eight - First responses (soundscape)

* Mix up the families now to create new groups of about five or six. Working in these groups, create a soundscape of voices that reveals the many thoughts of the townspeople about the arrival of the Green Children. The soundscape might include thoughts about: how the community is feeling about the arrival of the children; things they are afraid of; consequences of welcoming them or sending them away; and so on.



In preparing these soundscapes, remind the students that to be effective, a soundscape must include repetition of key words, contrasts in volume and tone, and careful language selection.

- * Give the students time to prepare and rehearse their soundscapes. Offer constructive feedback as they do this.
- * Present the soundscapes and discuss what was heard. What was the dominant view? What was the minority view? How were these in conflict with each other? Did the community seem to be in agreement about a solution?

Step Nine - Town meeting (postcard and whole group role play)

- * Ask the students to go back into role as the townspeople. Tell them that a week has passed and the only person who has seen the Children during that time is the local doctor who is refusing to say very much about them to anyone. Concerns are rising about many aspects of the situation. In preparing this information, use the ideas offered in the student emails and soundscapes as the basis of this. Feel free to develop the tension further by adding ideas - if no-one mentions fears that the children might contaminate the drinking water or indeed have a contagious illness, you might add these.
- * Explain to the students that all the families are about to attend a public meeting called by the doctor to discuss the Green Children and their future. Before the meeting starts, ask the students to decide how their character might be feeling now and think of a few words to express this feeling.
- * Tell the children that they are now going to create a postcard of the meeting. Use a chair to signal where the doctor might stand. One by one enter the town meeting space and briefly outline where they stand on this issue, choosing a physical stance and position in the space that reflects their feelings. Hold this stance and position until everyone has joined the postcard. When everyone is in, ask the students to relax and assume role normally.
- * In role as the doctor (who is Old Woman Jackson's friend), share the information that you have. The Children are fine and perfectly normal...you do not think they have any diseases as this stage but you are waiting for test results to come back.
- * As the doctor (who is not terribly thorough or particularly competent it seems), answer the townspeople's questions, but be vague and not too willing to go into detail. Explain that under Old Woman Jackson's care the girl is making particularly good progress, beginning to eat the food and speak a small bit of the language, while the boy's eating is still a difficult issue. Answer any questions the townspeople might have, but remind them that you have only been to the house once, so don't know everything about them.
- * Be sure to mention however that the girl and her brother have some very strange ways of praying and worshipping which are very physical with lots of loud cries. Also mention that the girl seems to be making special ceremonies while the boy is asleep and you wonder whether this might be to help heal her brother and make him eat. Try to calm their fears about these rituals...you are fairly confident they are simply praying.



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* As the doctor, ask the townspeople for their ideas about what should happen to the children now. Suggest that it might be time they went to the local school to be educated. Cut the drama at a strong moment.

* Return to family groups and, in role, discuss the events of the meeting. What does each family member think about the situation? Make sure that everyone has a chance to provide an opinion.

Step Ten - Responding to the role-play (out of role reflections)

* Out of role, ask the students to share with a partner (not from the same family group) their responses to the meeting. Was there anything said they really agreed or disagreed with? How did they feel about the information provided by the doctor? What do they think about whether or not the Children should come to town? Is that in their best interests? Would you bring them in if you were Old Woman Jackson? What would you do if YOU were the doctor?

Step Eleven - The children come to town (sequenced freeze frames)

* Following the meeting, tell the children that by the following week, Old Woman Jackson had agreed to allow the Children to come to school. In response to this new information, ask the children to think about what this first day might have been like for the children and the townspeople, and to work in groups of six or seven to create a set of sequenced freeze frames to show one of the events that took place when the Green Children came to town for the first time (to go to school). For example, when people first saw them, stared and pointed, etc.; when they first arrived at the school; when they were eating their lunch and the girl had to perform some kind of ceremony to get the boy to eat; when they were walking home in the town streets; when they suddenly began to worship in public? Each group has a different moment to share.

* Arrange these moments in narrative order and give the students time to plan and rehearse their images (with two of the group members taking on the roles of the two Green Children). Remind the students that whoever is playing the two Green Children will need to stay focused and aware of the situation the Children were in, including how afraid they would have been, especially the boy who was still not eating much at all. As for the townspeople, remind the students that their responses to the arrival of the Children should be in keeping with the character they have been developing across the drama so far.

* Move around the various groups as they practise, finding out exactly what it is they are hoping to convey through their choice of this moment. Then, use some of this information as explanation and continuity in your accompanying narration, as you freeze and then unfreeze the groups one by one to share these images.

* Return to family groups. In role as the members of these families, discuss what happened during this first visit to town by the Children. You may decide that your family are having dinner, or are watching a news report about these events.

* Following this activity, ask the students out of role to reflect upon the impact the events of the day had on the two Green Children's feelings and also the boy's physical health. Invite them to consider why the people may have reacted as they did? What might have motivated the various responses – pity, fear, hatred, concern (for themselves or for the Green Children), etc.?

Step Twelve - Trouble in town (small group role play)

* Use teacher narration to break the news that in the couple of days following the Green Children's visit, a number of children in the town have developed a rash all over their arms and legs. It is unknown what the cause of the rash is, but some parents are suggesting that it might have been caused by contact with the Green Children. A news crew has arrived in town and is interviewing families about this latest development.

* Ask the students to work in their family groups and to decide (out of role) what the reaction of each character in the family might be to this news - and indeed decide if any of their children have the rash. They should also consider some other possible causes for the rash (besides blaming the Green Children). Then, with one student switching role to become the news reporter, create a polished improvisation of this interview. The interview should cover more than just the rash issue, to encompass the family's feelings about the children in general and their future in the town. For example, some families may feel that the children should be shifted to the city so that they pose no further risk to this small community, while others might be keen for the children to remain so that they can be cared for etc.

* Once polished, the interviews should be shared with the whole class or possibly recorded using smart phones or tablets and then played back to the class via a data projector.

* Following the sharing, an out of role discussion should be held. This discussion needs to focus on the role of the media in our community, including the various types of media outlets and the way ideas are presented. Focus in particular on the way ideas have been presented in recent events in New Zealand. How did the various newspapers and television stations share news?

Step Thirteen - The boy 'fades away' (teacher narration and ritual development)

* Ask the students to sit or lie on the floor with their eyes closed. Share with them the news: *in the weeks since that horrible first day in town and with the ongoing stress of the new press coverage, the boy has become very ill, refusing food and drink completely. He is sad and lost, cowering under the bed at times and also sleeping most of the time. His sister is now spending all her time trying to heal him or pray for him using her traditional cultural approaches, but nothing seems to be working very well. He is refusing all medicine.*

* Out of role, ask the students to work in pairs to create the ritual the girl is performing over her brother (suggestions about the nature of this ritual may already have been depicted in the rolling freeze-frames in Step ten that they might wish to use as a basis, or they may prefer to invent it anew). While one student will be the Green Boy and the other the Green Girl, both will be involved in the design of the ritual, while its enactment will mostly involve the girl,

with the boy simply responding (or not). The ritual should make use of either non-verbal or invented language, and should be quite physical. Lengths of material and a carefully selected piece of music will support the children to create a ritual that is appropriate and in keeping with the solemn mood of the situation. Provide plenty of time for this activity, reminding the children that this ritual is some kind of healing prayer. Once most pairs look ready, organise a simultaneous rehearsal, followed by time for a brief replan if necessary.

* Share the rituals, with discussion following each one about what has been included and whether or not it is in keeping with their ideas about how people pray in various religions across the globe.



Step Fourteen - Tension over burial issues (small and whole group role play)

* Again, settle the students and announce: *several weeks have passed, and in spite of the girl's prayers and rituals, and some treatment he received in a local hospital, the boy has died.* Discuss this sad event and how the people who knew him might be feeling about what has happened.

* Get the students into groups of three, and give each group enough butcher's or A1 size cartridge paper and a green and a black felt pen to make an outline of the Boy. When this is ready, ask the students to consider the responses of the three people who cared for the boy: the Doctor (a little), Old Woman Jackson (more) and the Green Girl (deeply). Invite each of them to write with the black pen some words, or a couple of sentences, expressing how these characters might feel about the Boy and his death, which has come in spite of so much effort to save him.

* Using teacher narration, explain to the students that funeral arrangements must now be made. Tell them that not long after her brother died, the Girl told Old Woman Jackson and the Doctor that according to the Green People's traditions, a statue of the boy must be made by the townsfolk, carried at the funeral and placed in the centre of town for six months in memory of him, before being taken and placed over his grave. As this was a very different for the townspeople, the Doctor then explained how it is normally done here (suggesting much more modest ways of remembering someone who was, after all a stranger). Old Woman Jackson had some doubts, but wanted to support the Green Girl.

* In response to the girl's request, ask the students to work in pairs to create a conversation between Old Woman Jackson and the Doctor. Start the conversation with the student playing Old Woman Jackson proposing that 'We must talk about the funeral'... and finish it with

agreement, or partial agreement, that together they **will** try to find a way to persuade the Mayor to accept the Girl's proposal. Remember that this conversation is taking place just after the Boy has died, and so to strengthen their discussion, they may want to use some of the words previously written for him. Count them in. When the conversations are finishing, cut the drama and bring the students out of these roles, and collect the paper outlines (the students may wish to see what others wrote – if so, share them). Then put them aside in a pile. Bring the students back together and share some of what was discussed or negotiated.

* Narrate: *Perhaps surprisingly, the mayor agreed to this request and the statue was made and positioned. However, one night not long after it was erected, someone intentionally smashed it and scrawled graffiti all over its pedestal, including a warning for the Green Girl to leave town. The people of the town are worried about this new development in their usually peaceful town and fear that the statue has become a source of division.*

* Re-enrol the students in their family groups – this may take a few moments to adapt to the changed roles, so it may be helpful to set up the furniture to represent the family homes. The family discusses this news, with the members showing their diversity of attitudes. Then, using the eavesdropping strategy, 'drop in' on these discussions.



Eavesdropping is a process drama strategy where the class is split into pairs or small groups to enact, in role, incomplete and mixed-up snippets of private conversations – sometimes prepared and sometimes spontaneous – for the rest of the class. The teacher acts as the conductor, pointing to pairs randomly or in turn, so that the rest of the group, frozen, can hear a snippet of those conversations. This strategy invites the participants to make their own interpretations of what they hear and see.

* Rearrange the chairs for a town meeting, which the families will attend. Announce that the Mayor has called a meeting to discuss if the Green Girl should be asked to leave and the statue removed. Some people are feeling that this will be the only way divisions in the town can be resolved. They argue that there has never been this kind of division in the town before, or acts of vandalism. Would it be better if she moved to the city?

* At an appropriate moment, take role as Old Woman Jackson to offer the perspective of the girl: to argue that she is starting to fit in and already she appears to be losing her green colour. She is adapting very nicely...just give her some more time. Cut the drama at any appropriate point.

* Out of role (it is important that the students are not confused about that, or some still in-role), discuss these reactions and the ideas offered at the town meeting. In pairs wonder about what the Green Girl's response to this news might be. What will she do? How will she react? What would they do if they were her? What are her options?

Step Fifteen - The girl assimilates (conscience alley)

- * Remind the students about the original pretext...and the fact that it tells us that the Girl stays in the town, loses her green-ness and becomes like everyone else.
- * Invite the students, in role as townspeople, to jump forward two years in time to that point in the narrative: The Girl is no longer green; she goes to school with the other children; she has given up her worship rituals, and eats the same food as the others. She has apparently given up her culture completely.
- * Ask the students to create two lines facing each other to create a conscience alley.



This dramatic convention is a form of thought-tracking with very high tension. The participants form two lines facing each other and the character under scrutiny walks slowly between them – running the gauntlet of their comments as he or she moves level with each. The participants can be instructed to express their opinions in role or as themselves. Please note: this activity can be quite threatening for the subject of the comments.

- * Explain to the students that you are now going to be the Green Girl and walk between them. Invite them to offer comments to her...or to ask her questions about her feelings, about what she thinks of the town, their treatment of her brother and her, their fears, etc. Remind the students that these are the comments and questions of their characters, the townspeople. Do not respond to these, but simply walk past very slowly with your head down.
- * Everybody comes out of role. Tell the students that they will repeat this conscience alley activity, but this time out of role. Before setting it up, give the students time to talk to each other in small groups to discuss their personal feelings about the various aspects of the story, including especially how the girl and her brother were treated and why.
- * After the second conscience alley, discuss the differences between the students in-role and out-of-role responses.

Step Sixteen – Real-world parallels (reflective discussion)

- * Ask the participants to reflect on the drama and think about the fictional situation and its real-world parallels. Invite them to consider whether similar situations have ever occurred in their society or in other parts of the world - events when people have become fearful because of newcomers or a mysterious threat. Invite them to give examples.
- * Ask students to write a reflection on the Green Children and what happened to them. This reflection may take any number of forms. It might be: a letter from them out of role to the Green Girl, Green Boy or both; in-role, a letter from the Boy to the Girl responding to her change; a letter from the Girl to the people of the town (as an old woman or as a young one); a poem reflecting on why communities become fearful; etc.

- * Share some of these written reflections aloud and discuss the issues that emerged. This is a really important phase of the learning experience for it gives the teacher the opportunity to draw out all the key aspects of the analogy...providing time for the participants to reflect and compare the actions and opinions, fears and biases of the townspeople with actions, opinions, fears and biases seen within our society.

- * Invite participants to create a chart that compares the Green Children story with a real-life issue.

FURTHER STEPS: PLAYMAKING

- * You and the students now have all the raw materials you need to turn *The Green Children* into a powerful piece of theatre that they can perform to other classes, or to an audience of parents and outsiders. The following notes provide some ideas about how to transform a process drama experience into a student-devised performance.

Playmaking with Year 6 to 8 students

- * It is likely that this drama will have generated very strong spontaneous emotions, action and dialogue, and part of the challenge of performing for students of this age is to re-create that intensity; you can't re-create the spontaneity, but there are techniques you can use to assist your students to find authentic emotions and dramatic action, even as they know they are performing and being watched. It may be difficult then for some of them to act naturalistically for an audience, or have the presentational skills to know how to project their voice and body with timing and control over their verbal and body language. Some of them, however, will be starting to develop the skills to handle scripted drama with emotion. Those who are not good at hearing spoken language or comfortable natural readers, or who find memorising text difficult, can concentrate on theatrical moments that can be rehearsed and either left unscripted or just semi-scripted, where the students can practise focusing so that they can be seen and heard.

- * Simple naturalistic scenes are possible, and do not have to be scripted – or not fully. Wherever possible, let the students keep their same characters. Although the original role-plays cannot be reproduced with all their passion and spontaneity, the depth of characterisation, understanding of storyline and deep feeling that generated the passion can be harnessed. By Year 6, students have access to a significant control over language and range of vocabulary, and you may be surprised how powerfully and appropriately they can re-improvise, driven by the same emotions within the situation, though the words may be a little different each time.

- * The basic structure of a scene can be discussed and set down, with key moments, and maybe even some particularly important key phrases or movements plotted, that will need to be memorised. Apart from that, in these naturalistic scenes, the students will be better able to reprise in public their genuine emotions if they are not having to remember specific script and movement blocking, but can feel themselves back into the role and then let it come out naturally and a little differently, as we have described above, but they will be listening and responding to each other, not just reproducing action. This is a bit disconcerting and

unsettling for the director (you), but so long as you occasionally remind them that they have to be seen and heard by everybody watching, you can trust the students' deep understanding to get them through and bring the scene home with real energy. Empathising with a character so that you feel genuine emotions and getting that over to an audience, **while** also remembering set script and blocking, are a very hard combination of activities for anybody who has not received some formal training in the art of acting. Work with the students, and trust their dramatic instincts, to put the material together in the most powerful way.

Devising the performance

* Keeping the structure simple, get the students to help you put together a coherent version of the story, to form a narration that you and/or some of the more confident speakers or readers, taking turns, can use as continuity. It will be stronger if the narration can be given in the first person, perhaps as a neutral towns person, a composite figure standing for all of them. If the class wants to put a particular angle, then to tell the story as one of the main protagonists can be powerful, too – as Old Woman Jackson, or the Doctor, or even the (once) Green Girl.

* Next, work out with the students how you can use what you have created in the process drama as the basis for a performance. Think about it in a series of scenes, each of which will show the audience something about the story and the characters. These scenes might include:

~ *Our town was so peaceful*: cameos or a collage of images of the town before the Green Children arrived;

~ *Finding the Children*: dramatising the moment when Mia and Tom announce their weird find;

~ *Rumours and gossip*: depicting both the conflicting responses and the shifting opinions and loyalties;

~ *Working to save the Green Boy*: the rituals that the Green Girl uses, contrasted with Old Woman Jackson's and the Doctor's more pragmatic efforts;

~ *The discussion about the statue*, and even perhaps moments from the funeral;

~ *The statue's defacement* and how it was received;

~ *Snapshots of assimilation* showing the Green Girl becoming accepted as she becomes less different (coloured masks might be a very theatrical way of depicting the Green Children throughout, which could change as she assimilates).



* These students will be old enough to manage some degree of audience awareness. Most will develop basic skills of controlling and managing their voice, gesture and movement, and their understanding of staging dialogue with other people. The theatrical conventions suggested above, and other forms of stylised performance such as mime and dance, are still appropriate and able to provide the core of a play. The students already have a number of key advantages and resources:

~ strong characters, that the actors understand and empathise with;

~ a strong storyline, with plenty of tension for the audience;

~ several deeply felt role-played scenes.

* If you are turning the drama into a fully scripted play, if possible, stay with the same casting, but look carefully at the most active and visual way of depicting the action, and this involves thinking where an action might be better and more powerful than words.

* In terms of dialogue, you can't just recreate spoken language – unfortunately naturalistic and natural are not the same thing! Two opposing forces are at work: in real life, people talking leave out lots of background stuff that their respondents know, but the audience does not (some of which they will need to know). On the other hand, spoken dialogue needs to be as economical as possible. This sets up a really powerful tension, that is a good challenge for students to struggle with: on the one hand, the audience must be informed, both in terms of the necessary storyline, and also the emotional information. On the other, nothing is more boring or flat than having actors talking stuff that they would never bother to say in real life merely in order to fill the audience in.

* This is where you can start exploring sub-text – deciding what the audience does NOT need to be told but can gather by other means, such as what can be indirectly hinted at, or better still, what can be spelt out by a meaningful silence, or a physical action, or even just a look.

* Create a scenario of scenes or segments and their running order – whether or not these will be scripted. All these scenes need careful putting together, and rehearsal, and you will then have a play to perform. Work with the students, and trust their dramatic instincts, to put the material together in the most powerful way.

* When you are preparing the performance, we do not recommend too much formal blocking which can destroy the remains of the spontaneity, as the students try desperately both to remember their lines and exactly where they have to stand. Block the vital moments, by all means, which will help to demonstrate to the students how important it is to focus the action for the audience. Besides that, just remind them that it is each actor's responsibility to ensure that anything they have to say can be seen and heard, and everybody else's responsibility at that moment to ensure that this is all that is seen and heard.

* It may be useful to introduce the students to the notion that 'acting is reacting': that when somebody is speaking or doing in focus, everybody else does not stop - they are engaged in that moment too, even if they are doing something on the other side of the stage.



* You may like to bring in lights and sound and scenery, if you have the facilities, and carefully used, they can all be effective. However, NONE is essential, and in these technical effects, as in dialogue, 'less is more'. It is quite easy to become beguiled by the possibilities of background sound or lighting effects, but they have three potential disadvantages:

~ firstly, they will be quite time-consuming, even if you have good equipment: making lighting and sound plots, plotting and patching or recording and timing – and then finding somebody willing and capable of operating the equipment accurately;

~ secondly, they are more likely to distract these beginning actors than help them, by giving them, even more things to worry about – finding their light, listening to the sound cue, navigating the set;

~ thirdly, they are also likely to distract the audience – unless they are operated at a professional standard: you have a very powerful and important human story that the students are telling, and what is important is that story, its messages about society and prejudice, and what the playwright/actors (your students) have discovered about human nature.

SAMPLE PLAYSCRIPT

Below we have included a copy of a playscript that was created following this drama by a group of year 6 and 7 children attending an Australian school (St Peter's School, Rochedale, Brisbane). This script was developed using the playmaking processes outlined above and was developed in collaboration with one of the authors. It is offered here to provide a practical example of the kind of script that can be co-created in response to a process drama.

Strange things are happening in the town of Clapton!

All students who are playing the role of town residents are dressed in plain black clothes. They walk onto stage in a neutral manner and turn their backs to the audience. When the audience is settled and quiet, each of the speakers turns, delivers the line and then turns back.

Resident 1: Strange things are happening in the town of Clapton.....

Resident 2: Strange things indeed...

Resident 3: It was once such a normal place...

Resident 4: Now all that has changed...

All the students playing townspeople form into a circle and begin a slow movement sequence. The chorus is repeated three times getting faster and faster. At the conclusion of the third offering, all students drop to the floor.



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All: Green children, green children, green children

 Strangers

 Green children, green children, green children

 Dangers

 Won't eat bread

 Won't eat meat

 Green children, green children,

 Not so sweet...

Slowly one student steps out from the pile of bodies and pulls a letter out of her pocket. She climbs up onto a rostra block (Stage R.) to read it.

Resident 1: Dear Friend,

 Strange things are happening in my town of Clapton. Life was once so ordinary here, but all that has changed since the arrival of the Green children. Some country people found them wandering dazed and frightened at the mouth of a cave not far from town and close to the property of Old Woman Thomas. Apparently, she has taken them in and is looking after them – supposedly to keep them safe, but I'm not sure!

 I haven't seen them myself, and so I'm not sure if I believe that they even exist. What I do know though is that there are some really frightening stories being spread about them and the risks they pose to our once quiet community. These stories are spreading like wildfire across the town, and while I don't believe most of them, I'm very afraid. What if the worst of the rumours are true? What if they infect us all? What if there are more of them and these are just the first? What if we can't drink the water anymore? Oh dear. I'm not even sure if I should risk going to the Post Office to send this letter to you my friend....

As she reads the letter, the old woman appears (Stage L.). She says nothing, turns away at the conclusion of the letter and moves off stage. At the same time, the other residents get to their feet and begin to gossip. They move and freeze as each piece of gossip is added.

Resident 5: I've heard they've come from Jupiter.

Resident 6: There are a lot more of them you know – these two are just the first to arrive.

Resident 7: They're afraid of the daylight because they were born in a cave.



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Resident 8: Not really human you know...they can't be...

Resident 9: Old woman Thomas has been hiding them for years.

Resident 10: Locked in her house – out by the cave.

Resident 11: They'll pollute the water if we let them drink from the well.

Resident 2: It's a sickness you know – a sickness that makes them green.

Resident 3: It's probably contagious, probably deadly....

Resident 4: We'll all be sorry if we let them stay

The gossiping continues and becomes quieter and quieter as one by one they all turn to see Old Woman Thomas standing amongst them. Her tone is angry and hurt.

Old Woman: They are ordinary children. They are ordinary children. A boy and girl in size and shape just like any others except they are light green all over. It is true that they do not speak our language or eat our foods, but they are human and they will stay in this town.

Resident 5: Who says?

Resident 2: Yeah, we want them out...we want them gone!

Resident 3: No green children in Clapton – that's what I say.

All: (Everyone cheers)

Resident 4: I don't even think they're real. If they were, she would show them to us, let us examine them.

Old Woman: Examine them! Like you would an animal or a specimen?

Resident 4: If they're green they are specimens and if they're not we need to know where they came from. Either way, you must bring them to us.

Old Woman: They are scared and alone. I cannot determine where they came from or how they arrived, but they are frightened I know that. They are safe in my home and I will not have them paraded before you for your entertainment. When they are ready, I will bring them to town – but not until I am sure ...

Resident 5: Sure of what? That they won't turn into broccoli or zucchini on the way?
Laughs loudly. Most of the townspeople join in.

Doctor: Oh, be quiet! Your foolishness does nothing to help us here. As the doctor in this town, I've heard enough! Mrs. Thomas, I would like to come with you now and meet the children. I promise to be gentle and patient with them.



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Someone from the town must be given the chance to meet with them – if only to allay the fears of fools like these. *Points to the jokers.*

Old Woman: Very well, but after you have seen them, I insist that they be left alone for two weeks. In that time, I can teach them a little of the language, help them overcome their fears, help them to fit in. Before then, they just won't be ready.

The Doctor leads the old woman away and the townspeople are silent...after they are off stage the gossiping continues...

Resident 5: Well, that's the last we'll see of him. Those green kids will probably capture him and take him back to Jupiter with them!

Resident 4: I wonder if their blood is green? I do hope doc takes some samples.

Resident 3: Oh dear, I hope he doesn't catch anything.

Resident 9: I bet she doesn't show up in two weeks' time. I reckon that was just a trick to keep us away while she finds a buyer for them. Wouldn't be surprised if she sells them to a circus or a zoo or something.

Resident 7: I still don't believe they're really green. I'm convinced it's just a sham – just old woman Thomas up to something. She's never been the same since her husband died.

Resident 6: Yeah, how did he die anyway?

Resident 4: Apparently, he caught some kind of illness and died out on the farm...I never really heard the details, but now this has happened it makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Resident 5: Probably fed him too much broccoli – green children broccoli!!!

Resident 1: Oh, be quiet! This is serious. When Doctor Robertson comes back we'll know more, but until then we'll just have to wait.

All freeze and turn their backs to the audience. Slowly the doctor walks onto the stage and sits down on the rostra block. On a screen to the side of the doctor we see a series of freeze frames which are presented as shadows/silhouettes of the children – with a green tinge. These change like slides.

Doctor: *(monologue to the audience)*

What do I tell these people? How do I explain what I have just seen and experienced? It is true – they are in every way just like any other children

except they are light green all over! They wouldn't allow me to come too close – they are terribly frightened. They seem to prefer the darkness of the house, avoiding the bright light coming in the window (Freeze 2). They speak a language I have never heard before and the girl spends much of her time doing what appears to be a strange form of praying (Freeze 3). I cannot understand a word of what she is saying, but it is clear she prays. The boy is not well – he is pining away. He has refused most foods and cries bitterly (Freeze 4). The girl however is eating well and she has made a real effort to learn some language. She is slowly getting used to the ways of the old woman (Freeze 5).

Residents all turn around and seeing the doctor rush forward with questions:

All: Are they real? Is their blood green? Did they try to kidnap you? Are they just fakes? Are they contagious? Do you feel okay? Where do they come from? Why is the old woman hiding them? Give us more information!

Doctor: Please....it is true. I have seen these children and they are green.

All: *The townspeople all recoil in shock!!!!*

Resident 3: Then I say get rid of them...they'll only bring us bad luck. And what if more of them come? I say we go now and break down Old Woman Thomas' door and demand she hands them over to us. I'll drive them out of town as far as they want to go – anything to get rid of them. I don't want my crops to fail or my cattle to die because of them...

Resident 2: Yeah, that's right! Old Woman Thomas uses the same well as me and my land shares a border with hers. I can't afford the risk to my family and livelihood. I don't care where they came from or what made them green, but they can just go back where they came from – we don't want green people in this town.

Residents: *(Some cheer and pat residents 3 and 4 on the back, congratulating them. Others move away...a little surprised/disagreeing, confused...)*

Doctor: They are not diseased...they are just strangers, lost and alone in a place that is foreign to them. Our food is different, our language is strange and they are very frightened. I don't know how they came to be here, but I think we should help them...let Mrs Thomas have her two weeks and then let's make a decision...

Resident 6: Yes, that can't hurt...



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- Resident 5: Can't hurt! And what happens when the rest of them arrive?
- Doctor: They are peaceful and quiet people, apparently strongly religious and gentle in their ways. They offer us no threat.
- Resident 6: Yes, let them stay...they are only children....
- Resident 3: Only children indeed – they're green children and that means they don't belong here. I say get rid of them now!
- Resident 4: Call in some experts, let them decide.
- Resident 7: Send them to the city people – to some laboratory for testing.
- Resident 8: Yeah, let the scientists decide....
- Resident 2: No, I say keep them here and use them as a tourist attraction. We could make a bucket-load of money as the town with the green children.
- Resident 3: Yeah, charge money to get into the cave....
- The excitement begins to build and there are mixed reactions as the townspeople argue about what should be done...the old woman reappears and she stands in silence amongst them for a very long time.*
- Old Woman: It is too late for your tourist attraction, too late for your experiments. After the doctor left the boy suddenly faded away...
- Doctor: You mean he is dead?
- Old Woman: Yes, it was so strange, he just seemed to fade away...
- Doctor: And the girl?
- Old Woman: In terms of her health, she appears to be fine, but she grieves for the boy, and prays over him using her own language and rituals. Come, doctor, and see for yourself...
- Townspeople freeze. The old woman and doctor exit stage left. The townspeople, slowly come out of their freeze. Some shake their heads and wander off mumbling to themselves about being all for the good, whilst others seem concerned and distressed.*
- Doctor: *The doctor re-enters, perhaps wearing a different jacket.*
- It has been twelve months now since the boy died. Nobody became ill in the town and all the rumours and gossip about contagion and infection proved to be unfounded. No more Green People arrived and the children posed no



threat to the community. Occasionally people asked after the girl, but most forgot about her and the boy.

I have however continued to visit the girl each week and am pleased to report that she can now speak our language, eat all of our foods and has even begun to worship with Old Woman Thomas at the local church. She is very quiet and no longer uses her own language or performs her own prayer rituals...

She appears to still have no memory at all of where she came from AND what is strangest of all is the fact that her green-ness has continued to fade since the day she arrived. The more time she spends with us, the more the greenness fades. She is becoming just like everyone else...how interesting!

At that moment a girl dressed like the remainder of the town enters. She stands Centre Stage with Old Woman Thomas at Stage R. Residents rise up and form two lines facing each other. The girl moves silently between the rows as the townspeople speak one by one in different tones of voice to reflect their new perspectives on her.

Townspeople:

Just like everyone else

Just like everyone else

Not unique

Not distinctive

Not special

Not distinguished

Just like everyone else

Just like everyone else

Not a green girl any more

Not a green girl any more

We're all the same

We're all the same

We're all the same

Green Girl:

Quietly as she reaches the end of line. What a shame!



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Townspeople:

All the townspeople look at the girl and then slowly to each other, and then together, say:

Yes, what a shame!