

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCE PART A



THE SHEPHERD'S HUT

ADAPTED BY TIM MCGARRY
FROM THE NOVEL BY TIM WINTON
HEATH LEDGER THEATRE / 9 - 31 MAY



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



COMMISSIONING PATRON

A & M FINI FOUNDATION

PRINCIPAL PARTNER





HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

BLACK SWAN'S CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCES ARE ALIGNED WITH THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM FOR DRAMA, ENGLISH AND LITERATURE. THESE RESOURCES ARE OFFERED IN TWO PARTS, DESIGNED TO ENHANCE THE VIEWING EXPERIENCE AND TO SUPPORT FURTHER EXPLORATION POST-SHOW.

Part A is to assist your excursion to the theatre by providing background information about the play, pre-show activities and research opportunities.

Part B includes production images, behind-the-scenes footage, and post-show analysis activities.

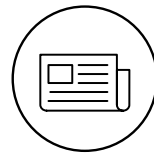
Icons to look out for within each pack include:



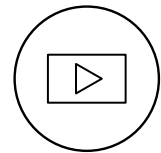
ACTIVITY



DISCUSSION



READING



VIDEO

Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA produced this Creative Learning Resource.

Compiled by Christie Sistrunk (Creative Learning Manager).

Design by Troy Barbitta.

Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA acknowledges the Whadjuk Nyoongar people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay respects to all Aboriginal Elders and people and stand united towards a shared future.



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CONTENT WARNINGS & CURRICULUM LINKS

Australian theatre, adaptation, character, perspective, and narrative.

LITERATURE

Unit 1: Intertextuality
Unit 3: Texts in Context
Unit 4: Interpreting Texts

DRAMA

Unit 3: Non-realism, Presentational Drama

CONTENT WARNINGS

Contains coarse language, adult themes, references to/simulated violence including family & domestic violence, and sexual references.

Detailed content warnings can be found here.

[CLICK HERE](#)

YOUTH HELPLINES

Reaching out is a vital step toward getting the help during challenging times. The following services are free, confidential, and available to teens in Australia:

- **Kids Helpline** – 24/7 support for young people aged 5–25
<https://kidshelpline.com.au>
- **Lifeline** – 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention
<https://www.lifeline.org.au>
- **Beyond Blue** – Support for anxiety, depression, and mental health
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au>
- **1800RESPECT** – Confidential support for people experiencing domestic, family, or sexual violence
<https://www.1800respect.org.au>
- **Headspace** – Youth mental health support and counselling services
<https://headspace.org.au> (phone and online chat options)



ABOUT BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA CREATES HIGH QUALITY THEATRICAL EXPERIENCES THAT CELEBRATE, CHALLENGE, AND INSPIRE OUR COLLECTIVE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

Founded in 1991, the Company has earned both critical and popular acclaim for its world premiere productions and highly distinctive reinterpretations of international theatre classics – all of which are infused with the unique culture of Western Australia. The Company is led by a Board of Directors, chaired by Francois Witbooi. Artistic Director is Kate Champion and Chief Executive Officer is Ian Booth.

State Theatre Centre Excursion Management Plan can be downloaded here.

[CLICK HERE](#)

OUR VISION

Connecting artists and audiences through the power of theatre to entertain, challenge and inspire.

OUR PURPOSE

To create exceptional, high-quality theatre that speaks to the world from our unique WA culture, landscape and moment in time.

OUR VALUES

Creativity. Creativity is essential to everything we do.

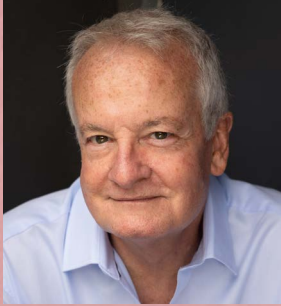
Connection. We collaborate to tell stories, nurture relationships and share knowledge, to maximise the impact and reach of our company.

Innovation. We are forward-thinking and responsive to the changing world around us, balancing responsibility with courage to make meaningful choices.

Quality. We engage a skilled and trusted team, prioritising diversity and respect, to deliver exceptional outcomes for our company and community.



ARTISTS



TIM MCGARRY
PLAYWRIGHT



TIM WINTON
WRITER



MATT EDGERTON
DIRECTOR



NAOMI PIGRAM-MITCHELL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



BRUCE MCKINVEN
SET & COSTUME
DESIGNER



LUCY BIRKINSHAW
LIGHTING DESIGNER



RACHAEL DEASE
COMPOSER



TIM COLLINS
SOUND DESIGNER



ROLY SKENDER
VIDEO DESIGNER



JACOB LEHRER
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR



ESTELLE GOMERSALL
STAGE MANAGER



KAYLA CAHILL
ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER



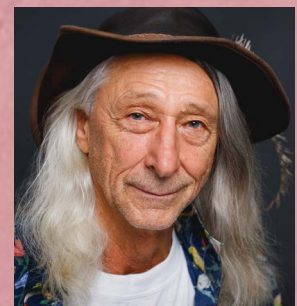
RYAN HODSON
JAXIE CLACKTON



BEN MORTLEY
CHORUS / THE HAT



ELLA PRINCE
CHORUS / THE HAIR



GEORGE SHEVTSOV
FINTAN MACGILLIS

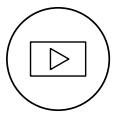


SYNOPSIS

THIS STAGE ADAPTATION OF TIM WINTON'S NOVEL *THE SHEPHERD'S HUT* FOCUSES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TROUBLED TEENAGER JAXIE CLACKTON, AND RECLUSIVE FORMER PRIEST FINTAN MACGILLIS; TWO OUTCASTS FROM DIFFERENT WORLDS, EACH CONFRONTING THEIR PAST.

Driven by a need to escape, and fear of being blamed for the death of his abusive father, Jaxie flees to the bush where he meets Fintan. Distrust slowly grows into a bond shaped by their unspoken histories.

As this trust deepens, a looming threat closes in, forcing Jaxie to confront a difficult moral choice in a dramatic conclusion to the play.



DIRECTOR MATT EDGERTON REFLECTS ON *THE SHEPHERD'S HUT*, CONCEPTS OF MASCULINITY, CONNECTION, AND THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE WITHIN SOCIETY.





THE ADAPTATION PROCESS

ADAPTING THE NOVEL FOR THE STAGE REQUIRED RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, AND CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING.

Several readings and creative developments with actors and the creative team took place, including visiting the town of Wubin in Western Australia's Wheatbelt.

Through ongoing discussion between the adaptor, director and literary director, the play's structure, narration, and staging were refined to best serve the story theatrically. For adaptor Tim McGarry this process included:

Research – Reading the novel multiple times and exploring reviews, interviews, podcasts, and articles to better understand the story, characters, and setting.

Analysis – Identifying the most dramatic moments, key actions, and central themes to adapt for the stage.

Planning – Developing a treatment and discussing challenges such as how to represent the Western Australian landscape, convey characters' inner thoughts and secrets, and handle violence in a sensitive way.

[CLICK HERE](#)





STYLE

PERFORMED BY FOUR ACTORS, THE PLAY IS NON-LINEAR AND USES A MINIMALIST, ENSEMBLE-BASED PERFORMANCE STYLE IN WHICH NARRATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN SHAPING THE STORY.

Two narrators describe the setting and action in a fluid, theatrical rhythm that allows the audience to engage imaginatively with the world of the play.

Projection, lighting, and sound enhance the storytelling by suggesting setting, memory, time, and place. These elements support the narrative while keeping the focus on performance and character.

The play opens near the novel's midpoint, with earlier events such as Jaxie's mother's death, his father's cruelty, and accidental death revealed through flashbacks.



Discuss the choice to begin midway through events and use narrators to recount the past, considering how this approach shapes audience engagement.





THEMES

IDENTITY

Jaxie's journey unfolds as a fractured rite of passage, shaped not by guidance or tradition, but by trauma, and the damaging influence of his father. Instead of being initiated into manhood through care, purpose, or community, Jaxie inherits a model of masculinity rooted in violence.

As Jaxie struggles to survive the harsh bush, his physical journey mirrors an inner transformation. Hope emerges through Fintan MacGillis, whose patience, compassion, and quiet humour offer Jaxie a rare sense of safety, and respect. Their bond becomes a surrogate rite of passage, grounded in trust and connection rather than dominance. Through this bond, Jaxie begins to understand that becoming a man is not about power or suppression, but about responsibility, empathy, and the courage to change.



Read and discuss the following article in which Tim Winton speaks about an Australian culture of toxic masculinity. Is this critique of Australian masculinity still valid, or is the culture moving beyond these stereotypes?



Discussion Carousel: Place questions around the room on masculinity and identity (e.g. external influences, toxic vs healthy traits). Groups rotate, discuss each prompt, and record ideas, followed by a class reflection.

SURVIVAL

Survival is a theme that operates on physical, emotional, and moral levels within *The Shepherd's Hut*:

- **Physical** – Jaxie must endure the harsh Australian outback, where food, water, and shelter are scarce. His ability to hunt, scavenge, and protect himself shows survival as a basic, instinctive struggle.
- **Emotional and psychological** – Jaxie is in crisis. His journey highlights that survival is not only about staying alive, but also about coping with guilt, fear, and trauma.
- **Moral** – The novel questions what it means to survive ethically. Violence becomes linked to survival, raising complex questions about right and wrong in extreme situations.

This theme is closely connected to motifs of the animal kingdom and violence. Animals are referenced to as a source of food and as a reminder of the harsh reality of survival, while the animal-like instincts in human behaviour reflect how survival strips life down to its most raw and instinctive form.



Moral Continuum: Place students on a continuum from “acceptable” to “unacceptable” survival actions and have them justify their reasoning.

- Taking food or supplies from someone else if it is the only way to survive.
- Killing an animal to eat when there is no other food available.
- Lying or hiding the truth to protect yourself or someone else.
- Showing mercy to someone who has the potential to harm you later.

REDEMPTION

Redemption is a powerful and recurring theme in Tim Winton’s writing. In *The Shepherd’s Hut*, it is presented as a difficult and ambiguous process shaped by suffering, self-reflection, and human connection.

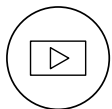
Having grown up in an abusive environment, Jaxie carries both visible and invisible scars. For him, redemption begins as a basic struggle

for survival but gradually develops into a more introspective journey, as he confronts his past and begins to question the person he is becoming.

Fintan, himself a deeply flawed and wounded character, becomes an unlikely moral guide with his redemption revealed through his relationship with Jaxie, suggesting individuals are capable of change, but that change is hard-won, incomplete, and often fragile.



Think-Pair-Share: Is redemption defined more by a character’s actions or by changes in their thoughts and feelings, and can you identify a character from a film, book, or play who seeks redemption and explain how they attempt to achieve it?



HEAR FROM DIRECTOR MATT EDGERTON, ADAPTOR TIM MCGARRY, AND THE CAST OF *THE SHEPHERD’S HUT* FROM INSIDE THE REHEARSAL ROOM AS THEY PREPARE TO BRING TIM WINTON’S WORK TO LIFE ON STAGE IN MAY.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE SHEPHERD'S HUT & BLACK SWAN'S CREATIVE LEARNING PROGRAM IS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PARTNER



MAJOR PARTNERS



INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE PARTNER



SEASON PARTNERS



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ACCESSIBILITY PARTNERS

BLACK SWAN FUTURE FUND

Supported by Minderoo Foundation, generous philanthropists, and legacy gifts, Black Swan's Future Fund was established in 2017 to build a strong financial foundation to support growth and sustainability. The investment fund enables the delivery of works of exceptional quality, scale, and ambition. We thank those who have supported the Future Fund, in particular, we acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of Nicola and Andrew Forrest, and look forward to creating many more opportunities for our artists and audiences.

FUTURE FUND FOUNDING PARTNER





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