THESE EDUCATION RESOURCES

These education notes are designed to introduce students and teachers to KAGE’s production of Sundowner. You may be seeing the production as a student of Drama, Theatre, Dance, English, Social Studies, Citizenship or for some other reason. You may be required to analyse the production and make connections with your own art making. These education notes provide you with information as background to the production and present a series of discussion points and activities to play out on the floor, muse on and consider. Beyond the necessity of analysing and writing a response, KAGE hopes that you also enjoy the production, the story it tells and themes it explores. You may know someone like Peggy, or you may, one day.

SUNDOWNER – CREATIVE TEAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Kate Denborough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>David Denborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performers</td>
<td>Helen Morse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jackie Rees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerard Van Dyck/Timothy Ohl</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Michelle Heaven/Gabrielle Nankivell</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stuart Christie/Craig Bary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With the Tivoli Lovelies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set Concept</td>
<td>Dan Potra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set Realisation</td>
<td>Julie Renton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting Designer</td>
<td>Damien Cooper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
<td>Paula Levis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Kelly Ryall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional music by Paul Kelly and Megan Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Manager</td>
<td>Mark Middleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Manager</td>
<td>Jessica Ross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAGE General Manager</td>
<td>Simone Schinkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toured by</td>
<td>Performing Lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created in partnership with</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s Australia</td>
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A collaboration between KAGE and Alzheimer’s Australia, sponsored by Domain Principal Group. Toured by Performing Lines for Road Work, with the support of the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and the national performing arts touring program and Playing Australia.
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*Resource pack photography by Jeff Busby*
**CURRICULUM LINKS**

The following curriculum links may be considered appropriate or relevant to particular State syllabi

**VICTORIA: Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) – Level 6**

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**VICTORIA: Victorian Certificate of Education - Drama**

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<th>Outcome</th>
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**NEW SOUTH WALES**

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<td>Self and relationships, individual and community health, problem solving, decision-making</td>
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**QUEENSLAND - Drama**

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<th>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the dramatic languages and dramatic perspectives to communicate a position about dramatic meaning and action</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyse, synthesise, evaluate and reflect on dramatic action to interpret dramatic meaning.</td>
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<td>Reflect on the use of the dramatic languages in heritage and contemporary perspectives</td>
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<td>Discuss and analyse ways in which dramatic languages are used in a professional production</td>
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### SOUTH AUSTRALIA – Arts: Drama and Dance

| Analysis & Response | Extending their experiences as audiences/viewers/users to a further understanding that selection of a subject for arts works in each of the arts forms conveys meaning powerfully, and can make an impact on people, places, cultures and beliefs within local and global communities. Setting out formal responses in written reviews, critical essays and extended discussions, using specialised arts language and keeping process journals. They describe how an arts work was made, and analyse and appraise the techniques, processes and technologies used, and influences involved. Considering their future roles as consumers and producers of arts by recognising the way different arts forms are combined, examining how this is achieved, and evaluating the effectiveness of these arts forms. |

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA - Drama

| Outcome 3 | Respond to drama using processes of engagement and inquiry. Reflect on the process of producing and performing drama. Evaluate drama using critical frameworks and cultural perspectives. |

### NORTHERN TERRITORY – The Arts

| STRAND | Arts Response and Analysis Drama & Dance | Using arts language, knowledge, skills and aesthetic understanding to respond to, reflect on and evaluate the arts including the diverse social, cultural and historical settings of artworks. |

### THE FUTURE – Aligning with the Australian Curriculum – The Arts & General Capabilities

| GENERAL CAPABILITIES | Literacy (LIT) Critical and creative thinking (CCT) Personal and social capability (PSC) |
| DANCE | Band: Years 9-10 | 10.8 Evaluate a choreographer’s use of the elements of dance and production elements to communicate intent using style-specific terminology. |
| DRAMA | Band: Years 9-10 | 10.9 Identify and analyse how meaning is created through dramatic action and conventions in different forms and styles. 10.10 Connect conventions of forms and styles with their contemporary drama practices and social, historical and cultural contexts. |
ABOUT KAGE

KAGE is a performing arts company who create original performance works for presentation. The work is defined by the Company’s innovative melding of dance, theatre and design, and appeals to a variety of demographic groups within the wider community, depending on each show created. Past shows have been targeted to different audience demographics including children and young adults as well as a general public audience. In over 15 years of creative endeavour, KAGE has confidently maintained the highest standard of artistic practice and is now recognised as a significant force in Australia’s contemporary performance landscape. KAGE has earned a national reputation for producing inventive, high-calibre dance-theatre and is developing a reputation as one of Australia’s most exciting physical performance companies.

ABOUT SUNDOWNER

Sundowner is a performance work traversing the great mysteries of memory. Featuring Helen Morse, Sundowner is a breathtaking new Australian work by KAGE in partnership with Alzheimer’s Australia. Through the eyes of three generations, Sundowner tells the story of so many Australian families and the frustrations they face dealing with early onset dementia. Ultimately though, it is a story of love: love of family, love of history and love of life. The realm of memory remains a great mystery and Sundowner’s Syndrome remains one of the largest unanswered questions. Why is it that just as the sun goes down, so many of those with Alzheimer's become particularly disorientated and confused? Sundowner expertly challenges boundaries between dance and drama, perfectly complimented by original music composition by Paul Kelly, Megan Washington and Kelly Ryall. Also featuring a special performance by the Tivoli Lovelies – original dancers from the Tivoli Theatre.

KAGE’S work continues to cross boundaries of theatre and dance, and the choreography adds beauty and a deep sensuality to the work. Through small moments like dancing in the living room to reflecting on memories from younger days, the physicality of Sundowner brings communication through the body to the fore. Sundowner also features the Tivoli Lovelies, original dancers from the Tivoli Theatre. The warmth and tenderness of these women provides consolation and compassion and an affirmation of life and all its cycles.

WHAT’S THE PRODUCTION ABOUT?

Sundowner is based around writer Peggy (Helen Morse) who, in her late 50s, has younger onset Alzheimer’s. Seen through the eyes of three generations Sundowner tells the story of the mysteries of Alzheimer’s and Sundowner Syndrome – the inexplicable phenomenon where many with Alzheimer’s become particularly disorientated and confused when the sun goes down. Since 2009 KAGE has been involved in a number of focus groups with carers and people with younger onset dementia. In partnership with Alzheimer’s Australia KAGE listened to real life stories and offerings about life with Alzheimer’s. KAGE wishes to confront the stigma attached to the disease and to reveal the life affirming moments in these experiences.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

What is dementia?
Dementia is the term used to describe the symptoms of a large group of illnesses that cause a progressive decline in a person’s functioning. It is a broad term used to describe a loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and physical functioning. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for between 50 – 70% of all dementia cases. Dementia can happen to anybody, but it is more common after the age of 65. However, people in their 30s, 40s and 50s can also have dementia. Alzheimer’s Australia is the peak body for people with dementia and their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information.

Younger onset dementia
The term “younger onset dementia” is usually used to describe any form of dementia diagnosed in people under the age of 65.

Summary of dementia statistics in Australia - National Facts and Figures 2011
• An estimated 269,000 Australians currently live with dementia
• Without a significant medical breakthrough, that is expected to soar to about 981,000 by 2050
• Each week, there are 1500 new cases of dementia in Australia. That is expected to grow to 7,400 new diagnoses each week by 2050
• Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia, after heart disease and stroke
• One in four people over the age of 85 have dementia
• Dementia is fatal and, as yet, there is no cure
• Dementia is not a normal part of ageing
• Dementia has an impact on every part of the health and care system
• The total estimated worldwide costs of dementia were US$604 billion in 2010
• These costs account for about 1% of the world’s gross domestic product
• If dementia were a country, it would be the world’s 18th largest economy
• If it were a company, it would be the world’s largest, exceeding Wal-Mart (US$414 billion) and Exxon Mobil (US$311 billion)
• Australia faces a shortage of more than 150,000 paid and unpaid carers for people with dementia by 2029
• The cost of replacing all family carers with paid carers is estimated at $5.5 billion per annum
• Dementia will become the third greatest source of health and residential aged care spending within two decades. These costs alone will be around 1% of GDP
• By 2060, spending on dementia is set to outstrip that of any other health condition
• It is projected to be $83 billion (in 2006-07 dollars), and will represent around 11% of the entire health and residential aged care sector spending
• Dementia is already the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians (aged 65 years or older)

THE PROCESS OF MAKING SUNDOWNER

“On first hearing the diagnosis, a common reaction is to realise that you will lose a friend (in my case a wife of 49 years). So at first I did panic a bit to tap her memory for stories of her childhood, to take overseas trips to say goodbye to relatives and friends etc. But then the situation seemed to change only slowly. So it’s like a farewell, but one that stretches on and on and on ... the longest farewell of all.”

The stories of people with dementia hold a disturbingly childlike and fantastical reality. Once one’s ‘useful’ life is over, a new challenge lies ahead in facing a period of time where one becomes inevitably invisible, almost insubstantial. Through Sundowner KAGE is exploring the issue of dementia without trivialisation or sentimentality, allowing the provocative and surprising nature of this particular condition to be acknowledged.

KAGE’s work is always driven by a strong central idea which stimulates emotions and reactions in the viewer. For this work, the personal experience and engagement of the artists with the community with whom the work was made is backed up by a desire to bring a challenging issue into focus for a wider public. The complex alternation between hope and sadness experienced by those who suffer younger onset dementia and their carers is the material from which KAGE shaped this ambitious work.

Sundowner was created in partnership with Alzheimer’s Australia Vic. Between 2009-2011, a series of community forums brought together people with onset dementia, carers of those with dementia, and the creative team involved in the development of the show. The discussions within these forums were instrumental in creating Sundowner. Participants with insider-knowledge about dementia and Alzheimer’s provided vital ideas, feedback and stories that subsequently shaped the philosophy and direction of the show. Participants were particularly keen to emphasise that dementia is not all doom and gloom and that there are still wonderful times. Humour, although dark, is a significant part of the disease. Some of the scenes within Sundowner have been directly crafted from stories shared within these community forums, and the characters and their relationships have also been highly influenced by these shared conversations.

“I wish to congratulate you, thank you, and to also tell you how much I admire the way you have respected our collective input to create this wonderful piece. So many things these days are commenced and even finished before anyone asks for comment. When we first began I wondered how the heck you would achieve Sundowner – I discovered why I do what I do and you and your brother and other directors do what they do. Kate, I look forward to hearing about Sundowner and hope it travels to audiences far and wide.” Pamela Hore – Alzheimer’s Australia Community Advisor
MEMORY PLAY – ABC ARTSCAPE DOCUMENTARY

About The Program
Helen Morse takes the lead in Sundowner, a play about a mother coping with Alzheimer's disease. Morse's own mother suffered from Alzheimer's and rehearsing this play proves both traumatic and cathartic as it examines the importance of family and memory in how we live and how we define ourselves.

Artscape follows the creation of Sundowner and Morse's personal journey of discovery through rehearsals right up to opening night. The documentary reveals the trials and tribulations of putting on a production about a difficult subject and how the cast and crew struggle to make the show informative and entertaining.

The play is guided by young director Kate Denborough. Her brother David, a social worker, has written the play. Throughout the process they liaise closely with 'Alzheimer's Australia' to maintain integrity in the script and the performance.

The play takes its name from the so-called Sundowner Syndrome - a heightened anxiety experienced by Alzheimer sufferers at dusk.

Morse, the cast and crew are acutely aware that their subject matter is potentially grim and depressing so they are at pains to maintain some humour in the show. They also hope that by addressing much of the subject matter with a 'physical theatre' approach, the play will be lively and lyrical, as well as informative and entertaining.

The entire documentary can be found at http://www.kage.com.au/project/sundowner/media-response courtesy of ABC TV - Artscape

Questions:
Discuss the background information provided above that presents facts and statistics about Alzheimer’s Disease
• What do these facts and statistics mean to you?
• What insights do they give you about what Peggy’s family may be experiencing?
• How do you imagine these ‘facts’ may be represented in the performance?

“He told me that he loved me for the first time...He told me that he trusted me...
What’s more, in his last years, touch became so much more significant between us...”
– Reflections on Alzheimers, Sundowner DVD/CD
Excerpts from Artscape: Memory Play

Helen Morse, ‘Peggy’
The following are excerpts of Helen Morse speaking about the production of Sundowner, her personal experiences with Alzheimer’s Disease and on creating the role of Peggy.

Individual memories are really essential. Memory is at the very core of existence, of human existence. We have consciousness and therefore memory. Alzheimer’s is a condition but within that the person is still trying to live. Having had my own particular personal experience I came to the project with a lot of knowledge. The acting challenge for me is to keep on finding what it is within this disintegration and fragmentation, that’s what keeps it dynamic. The piece itself is very much concerned with the impact on a family of someone who is suffering this disease. I felt I might have something to contribute.

My mother loved music and singing...her chords became heart strings...she had a great sense of humour and we loved her for that. What was really good was that we were able to care for her. Not everyone can. I needed to be there and I’m glad I was.

The story telling is not linear just as memory isn’t and the core of it is the impact on the family. [In rehearsal] We are just beginning to explore a scenario where Peggy is waiting for a bus. There is a memory of her waiting for a bus with her children at the same time. So there is a cross current of life memory where, in the past they were actually waiting for a bus at the bus stop, but Peggy is now waiting for a bus in her living room. It appears like a reality for Peggy in her confused state of mind.

There was one exercise that we explored that came out of a meeting with a group of carers of Alzheimer’s suffers. The story was that the father, while shaving in the mirror, didn’t know who the person was looking back at him. He felt he was 35 and the person in the mirror was 75 so he had a conversation with the person in the mirror.

I remember working with a voice teacher who said that the courage of the actor is to be private in public! I think in a rehearsal process that is particularly true and that is not just to do with ‘self’ it is to do with working out what you understand. Each role demands different things of you and there is years of work and experience that inform what you do. You can’t go into the rehearsal process with preconceived ideas and say, ‘I’m going to do this now, and when they say that, I’m going to do that’. You have to be ‘in the moment’ to use that old truism and go wherever it takes you.

Right up and into opening night there will be changes. You just go deeper. I think everyone is feeling a sort of joy in the work and looking forward to it opening.

Certainly for this project, for me it was all there...just below the surface. And curiously I think it has helped me. You travel on and they, those with Alzheimer’s, travel with you...they’re not lost...really...

Kate Denborough, Director
‘Sundowner’ came to me as an idea about three years ago. I had an initial discussion with my brother, David, who is a writer and social worker. I think he is a good reality check because he comes to the work from such a different angle. I really want to make a fantastic show that is about humour, darkness but is also about love and family, connection and living in the moment. It has been a real privilege to watch Helen Morse access those personal aspects of her life. We didn’t want the show to be about Helen’s journey so I have been conscious to watch out for those moments, where we may need to slow down and alter the path. Helen’s performance is so powerful and she takes you on this incredible and devastating ride. It isn’t a happy ending but there is a sense of completion for Peggy and an incredible sense of achievement for Helen – Kate Denborough, director
A VISUAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PERFORMANCE

By way of visual introduction to the production you can find short clips of the production at the following sites:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lMSwxcQHtPw
http://vimeo.com/29412704
RESPONSES TO THE PERFORMANCE

Sundowner By Kate Boston Smith artsHub | Friday, May 11, 2012

The fragility of life, with all the unexpected twists and turns that potentially could become our fate, are explored in KAGE Physical Theatre’s current work, Sundowner. In a wonderfully rich combination of spoken word, physical theatre and dance, the work dissects lived experience of Alzheimer’s from the perspectives of sufferer and carer alike. A young, lisping and faceless voice opens the play with innocent narration. The speaker’s understanding of his grandmother’s difference when compared to his friends’ grandmothers is precise and loving.

Helen Morse play a mother and author suffering from dementia who attempts to beat the illness at its own game by writing her children a letter about her life, her loss and her love. As the narrative unravels it emphasizes the polarities of frustration and sadness for her and her children who are caring for her now, while also touching on the joy and simplicity as the protector becomes the protected. Performers Gerard Van Dyck, Michelle Heaven and Stuart Christie create a series of danced vignettes that interplay with Morse’s dialogue. Their movements are both beautiful and strong, recreating memories of the mother’s carefree youth, teenage love, and younger family times.

Composer Kelly Ryall has created a superb soundtrack for the piece which places us firmly inside the mother’s mind. At one moment canoodled in the warm timbre of an old song, we are slowly haunted by the confusion of scattered thoughts from a mind that has nothing solid to grip onto.

A definite highlight of the show was when the silver-haired beauties, The Tivoli Lovelies, stepped onstage. A genuine excited gasp echoed through the audience. The juxtaposition of their ability compared to the mother’s inability was poignant and the randomness of the illness felt real, making one ponder why Alzheimer’s happens to some people and not others.

This story is ultimately about the cycle of life that we are all part of. KAGE have created a visually poetic work that is real and sympathetic to those who are affected by Alzheimer’s. It is a wonderful way to gain a further insight into the sufferer’s mental departure and the slow farewell of those who love them.

Rating: 4 stars out of 5

ENGLISH:
Discuss how language is used in the above review:
• What language is descriptive and narrative in nature?
• How is language used to evaluate and critique the production eg ‘superb’ ‘highlight’ ‘beautiful’?
• What do you learn about the production from reading this review?

DRAMA:
Discuss how this review provides insight into:
• The theatrical styles of Sundowner
• The plot and story
• The production values
• The themes of the production
Responses to the work – Forum participants

Pamela Hore – Alzheimer’s Australia Community Advisor (available as spokesperson)
“I wish to congratulate you, thank you, and to also tell you how much I admire the way you have respected our collective input to create this wonderful piece. So many things these days are commenced and even finished before anyone asks for comment. When we first began I wondered how the heck you would achieve Sundowner – I discovered why I do what I do and you and your brother and other directors do what they do. Kate, I look forward to hearing about Sundowner and hope it travels to audiences far and wide.”

Other Forum participant responses:
“I have Alzheimer’s. I’ve had it for ten years now. I know it from head to toe. I was a teacher and within a day I was not a teacher and it was a terrible blow for me because I loved my work. In Sundowner I saw the other side of it, that it’s not only the person who has it... I thought that some of the dance that described in a sense what the other family members were feeling and how it so desperately affected their lives was quite powerful.”

“I recognised parts of our family’s story in some of the scenes ... I thought – that’s our scene!”

“I saw it all out there today in the show ... everything we have lived with as a family.”

“There were moments I asked myself ... maybe that’s what my mum sees ... maybe that is what happens in her mind.”

“There were times of laughter and also times when wind screen wipers were needed for the tears that were flowing!”

“Something about the combination between the physical movement, the script and the music all comes together to convey what is so difficult to say in words.”

“I can’t stop thinking about the whole experience ... and how uplifted I feel. It puts a light in my heart to know that this message will make it to the general public.”

“Thanks again for the opportunity of this experience that I know I will cherish forever.”
SCENE BREAKDOWN

Order of Scenes
Because *Sundowner* is not a published play, you may find the following order of scenes useful.

Scene 1 – MEET MY GRAN
Scene 2 – PUTTING ON THE RITZ
Scene 3 - MIRROR
Scene 4 – MAKING TEA
Scene 5 – LOVE(DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW)
Scene 6 – LETTER ATTEMPT ONE
Scene 7 – YOUNG CHILDREN
Scene 8 – LETTER ATTEMPT TWO
Scene 9 – BUS STOP
Scene 10 – ARGUMENT
Scene 11 – CUP OF TEA
Scene 12 - BOOKCLUB
Scene 13 – I CAN’T
Scene 14 - LOSS
Scene 15 – SUPPORT
Scene 16 – LETTER
Scene 17 – BEACH
Scene 18 – LETTER READING

QUESTIONS
• What do the above scene titles provoke in your mind?
• What do they tell you about the story?

ACTIVITY – Drama / Movement
• Divide the scenes up giving four or five to each ensemble group
• Create a tableau / image to represent each scene title
• Present your scenes using the Epic Theatre convention of NARRATION or PLACARDS/SIGNS
Scene Extracts
The following are short extracts of some of the spoken text of Sundowner provided as a reference for students studying the production.

Scene 1: MEET MY GRAN
Voice over by SPIKE:

Hello.

You’re about to meet my Gran. I’m sure you’ll like her. She’s funny and she’s kind. We have fun together ... when she remembers who I am.

You see my Gran’s different. It’s a bit hard to understand at first, but my mum explained it to me.

There are just some things we need to do differently with Gran.

Like, please don’t ask her any questions cause questions make her confused. I know you don’t want to upset her, so, if you need to know anything just ask me. And I’ll tell you.

And if Gran starts repeating things, like over and over and over and over again, don’t tell her that she’s doing this. She won’t understand and she’ll get sad. So if she tells the same joke over again, just laugh. Some of her jokes are pretty funny.

And if Gran tells you something that didn’t really happen, it doesn’t really matter. Sometimes it’s like Gran is living in another time, like an imaginary world. Like when I’m in an imaginary world, like when I’m being ten, my mum sometimes joins in. This is what we have to do with Gran too.

You see, my Gran is different.

But there are things she loves. Gran was a writer. She’s always loved books and the theatre and music. And if you talk with her about these things you will come to love her too. Most of all Gran likes cups of tea. She taught me how to make a good of tea but my mum has to help.

I love my Gran. I’m glad you are going to meet her. You’ll meet my mum, my dad and my uncle too.
Bye. I’ll see you later.

QUESTIONS
• How does the voice over by Spike introduce some of the ideas in the play?
• Where else do you hear ‘voice over’ as a convention – Film? Television? Radio?
• What is happening in the performance space while Spike’s voice is heard?
• What impact does the voice of a young child have on you as an audience?
• Consider the term ‘pathos’. What does it mean in this scene?
“In my childhood, my mother looked after me in every way. Now things have turned around completely...There is a symmetry about this. A poetry almost...”
– Reflections on Alzheimers, Sundowner DVD/CD

**ENGLISH / LITERATURE: Poetry**
Here are two stanzas from the poem *In Memoriam A.H.H* by Lord Alfred Tennyson

```
I hold it true, whate’er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
’Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all. (canto 27)

So runs my dream, but what am I?
An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry(Canto 54)
```

Discuss each stanza and how the ideas, images and metaphors contained within them may relate or have parallels with the themes in Sundowner

Find the poem at: [http://www.online-literature.com/donne/718/](http://www.online-literature.com/donne/718/)

**SCENE 2: PUTTING ON THE RITZ**
(Peggy is doing a crossword.)

PEGGY: Upwardly mobile amphibian?...Leapfrog...Wearing a hotel?...Putting on the Ritz!

![Image of performers in a scene from Sundowner]
SCENE 3: MIRROR
(Peggy pauses between each line ... sometimes extended pauses ... as if someone is responding)

PEGGY: Good morning! (Addressing the mirror)

That’s a very nice robe you’re wearing.

Yes it was a wonderful evening last night wasn’t it.

I thought they did so well. Magnificent set, costumes, the music... and the music.
And you know the leading man, well, he reminded me of James.

You thought so too?

Oh, I’m sorry. That must be difficult. I remember him well. His hands in particular. Their warmth.
(puts her hands to her face)

No. No he can’t be with me now. Well he cannot. But he would if he could. Yes, he would if he could.

Writing? What do you mean? (as if this word took her by surprise)

Yes, of course (having regained equilibrium) I am still writing. My editor is wanting changes. She
wants me to push the characters where they do not belong.

Let me explain. It’s like a dance somehow. You must get the rhythm right. You must wait for the
characters to tell you where they want to go.

Yes, that’s right. But my editor, she wants me to lead them and then there would be no steps. There
would be nothing unexpected. There would be no life.

But yes, I write everyday ... always have.

What about your children? Your daughter?

QUESTIONS
Dance
• How would you describe the dance styles used in this scene?
• Discuss how the image above captures a sense of movement and dynamic

Production Values
• Comment on the production values in this scene – set, costume, lighting, music etc
• How do these production values contribute to the theatrical style of the scene?

Themes
• Is this scene real or is it imagined by Peggy?
• How does this scene represent some of the main ideas in Sundowner?
Really! She is pregnant! Congratulations. You will be a wonderful grandmother. I can imagine you with a grandchild. That child will be very lucky. Have they considered a name?

Oh dear. Oh no. I agree. That’s a terrible name.

How could a parent give a child such a name?

Did you say feral? But she does visit? She is kind?

She will come this afternoon? Okay that is good (closing this conversation). What about your son?

Really?

Where does he get that from?

Ahhh your husband’s side. I look forward to meeting them. Perhaps James and I could have you all over to dinner one day soon.

I would like that. It gets a bit lonely around here.

That is a very nice robe. I’ve seen it somewhere before. I just can’t... where did you get it?

Ah...Well. See you tomorrow

QUESTIONS:
• What is happening in this scene? Again, is this scene real or imagined for Peggy?
• What do you remember about how the scene was performed?
• What is ‘the wonderful evening’ that Peggy is talking about?
• What do you imagine the lines in between may be, the lines that Peggy is responding to?
• How does this scene contribute to your understanding of the themes and concepts in the production?

“So it’s like a farewell, but one that stretches on and on and on...the longest farewell of all...” - From reflections on Alzheimers, Sundowner DVD/CD
SCENE 11: CUP OF TEA
Daughter hands Peggy a cup of tea.

PEGGY: Thank you. Thank you ... but what do I do with this? (Ever so slowly separates the tea cup from the saucer .... Holds the cup in her right hand ... holds the saucer in her left and raises it up to the light .... Moves it around as if it is moving slowly through the sky)

DAUGHTER: What’s that?

PEGGY: What do you think it is?

DAUGHTER: I have no idea.

PEGGY: A flying saucer of course! (Then she gently ‘lands’ the saucer on top of the cup)

DAUGHTER: That’s a terrible joke mum.

(She moves the saucer back under the cup and sips at the tea)

PEGGY: Have I always liked tea?

DAUGHTER: Yes. You’ve always had it exactly the same way. White, two sugars. Well, for as long as I can remember anyway ...

PEGGY: How long can you remember? What’s your first memory?

DAUGHTER: Well, I can remember you singing me to sleep. I must have been four or five years old.
PEGGY: And what did I sing to you? (She is asking a bit like an investigative journalist)

DAUGHTER: What do you think?

PEGGY: I’m asking the questions [quite firm]

DAUGHTER: No I can’t remember the song.

PEGGY: Was it... [She searches her memory ... then starts to sing ‘whatever Helen’s mother’s favourite song was? ... needs to be an inappropriate song .. NOT a lullaby]’

DAUGHTER: No that wasn’t it.

PEGGY: Was it.... (then starts singing another inappropriate song, loudly)

DAUGHTER: No (she says quickly trying to shut her up)

PEGGY: Was it... (goes back to the first one)

DAUGHTER: Yes, that’s the one (in order to shut her up)

PEGGY: (looks quizzical, suspicious). Darling, look at this... (ever so slowly separates the tea cup from the saucer .... Holds the cup in her right hand ... holds the saucer in her left and raises it up to the light .... Moves it around as if it is moving slowly through the sky)

PEGGY: What do you think it is?

DAUGHTER: I have no idea

PEGGY: A flying saucer of course! (This time though Peggy throws the saucer hard .. doesn’t miss her daughter by much)

Daughter is upset ... but Peggy does not notice and goes back to sipping the tea.

PEGGY: You make things nice...

DAUGHTER: What, a cup of tea?

PEGGY: No, life. You make life nice.

“While short term memories may disappear, longer-term memories can become all the more vivid. I remember when my mother suddenly started to tell me things that I had never known” – From reflections on Alzheimers, Sundowner DVD/CD
QUESTIONS:

• What is happening in this scene?
• What type of relationship does Peggy have with her daughter?
• What does this scene say about caring for someone with Alzheimer’s Disease?
• What is poignant about Peggy asking her daughter, ‘How long can you remember? What’s your first memory?’
• What does Peggy mean ‘You make life nice’?

QUESTIONS
This image is taken from the scene called Loss where we witness Peggy experiencing a Sundowner episode. She becomes confused and anxious then the mood and feeling shifts and she becomes calmer

Discuss the image of Peggy and the two dancers above

• Who are the figures in the background? What do or might they mean to Peggy?
• How is lighting being used to create mood and dramatic tension?
• How did this scene make you feel?
• How does this image reflect the themes of the production?
SCENE19: My Gran’s Different

Included in the production is an excerpt from the children’s book ‘My Gran’s Different’ by Sue Lawson and Caroline Magerl

Sophie's Nanna bakes sponge cakes as high as my school bag and fills them with shiny strawberries and clouds of whipped cream ... but my Gran's different.

Michael's Grandma wears lipstick as bright as a clown's nose and leaves big smudges on his cheek when she kisses him... but my Gran’s different

Jonty's Granny catches the train to the footy every week. She wears a black and white beanie and screams at the umpires ... but my Grans different

Dimitri's Grandmother died before he was born, but he has a photo of her in his bedroom

My Gran's not dead, but she is different

My Gran stares out the window and rocks in time with the breeze

Sometimes she can't remember who she is

But that's alright, because I remember who she is.

QUESTIONS: Analysis

• This excerpt accompanies the final part of the performance.
• As you listen to the child’s voice, consider how the stagecraft is constructing a very strong visual picture of Peggy, her grandchild and the ‘making of memories’ that Peggy talks about in her letter
• Consider – costume, set, lighting, music, voice over, use of space
PEGGY’S LETTER

_Sundowner_ revolves around a letter that Peggy is writing to her children. It is used throughout the show in sections (as she is writing it). It is used at the end of the show in its full version as provided below.

My dear ones,

It’s the strangest thing. No longer being able to tell what is the past and what is the present. It seems that events that took place only minutes ago are now being erased while memories I have been able to hold at bay for decades suddenly come rushing towards me.

No doubt it is only going to get worse. At times now, I am no longer able to tell what is familiar and what is foreign. And that is why I am writing to you today. When it comes to pass that I can no longer hold the memory of who I used to be, will you hold it for me?

I don’t want this to be a burden, but if you could remember me perhaps just once a day in the evening light ... that’s always been my favourite time. Hold my memory in the evening light my darlings. I don’t mean any old, dusty memory of me. I don’t mean a time when I was crabby or tired - let others remember those times, or better yet, let them slide into oblivion. No, I’d like you to remember something particular, something luminous.

I guess you should have some say in it, but if I get to choose, how about you remember that day we spent at Rosebud? It was hot that day. Our feet had to skip across the sand to avoid being scorched. And we plunged into the sea together. The others were laughing at us, with us. I recall. We’d all been through so much that summer and somehow we’d found our way through together. Yes, remember me then, if you would.

I wish I could promise to always remember you, but that’s a promise I can no longer make. I have loved you the very best that I could for all the years that have been.

Your devoted mother

PS. There is just one more thing, while I remember! When you are with child, please treasure the memories you make together... that child of yours will live with those memories for a lifetime.

PPS. Why is there always a PPS from me? Why do I always have one more thing to say? I’m starting to come round to the name Spike
QUESTIONS
• How do you respond to the letter?
• How does it make you feel?
• How does it make you think?

WRITE
• Choose a favourite holiday or event (birthday etc) that you have a really lovely memory of, something where you really enjoyed yourself – like Peggy’s memory of their day at the beach at Rosebud in Melbourne, Victoria
• Write a paragraph that describes that moment trying to capture the fun, enjoyment etc
• Share your memory with a partner

PERFORM
• In groups of 3 or 4 create a short drama performance of one of the group’s favourite memory
• You could use some of the letter to create dialogue or narration and also characters
• You could present it as images / tableaux / freeze frames
  • You could include a soundscape
  • Try to capture the enjoyment and fun that the original memory held
QUESTIONS:

• Look carefully at the image above of the characters of Peggy and her Son-in-Law
• What type of relationship is expressed here? How does it relate to the title of the scene?
• Does this performer also play the ‘memory’ of her husband? When
• Discuss the use of the performers’ expressive/acting skills in this image – focus, facial expression, gesture
• How does this image convey some of the deeper themes of Sundowner?
SONG LYRICS

IT WASN'T NIGHT OR DAY
Performed by Megan Washington and Paul Kelly

It wasn't night or day
I know it's strange to say, but you were not a stranger
Although you hadn't said a word
Your heart was singing
And my heart heard
So close, so far away
It wasn't night or day

It wasn't day or night
I've heard some people say that love can be a danger
But when you held me in your arms
I knew that I had
Come home at last
And all the world was right
It wasn't day or night

And the sun turned away
And the moon hid her face
And the stars wouldn't shine for shame
How else could it be
That when you looked at me
It wasn't night
It wasn't day
It wasn't night or day

PERFORMANCE:
The above song is performed in the final scene of Sundowner
• Create ensemble groups of between 3 and 5 and select one of the following performance tasks:
• Take one verse of the above song and create a short non-naturalistic/non-realistic performance piece that draws on the lyrics as the main dialogue or impetus to create images
• Using the theme of ‘love’ develop three frozen images/tableaux that explore your group’s
• Interpretation of this concept.
A THEATRICAL ANALYSIS OF SUNDOWNER

This section of the education resources asks for a deeper analysis of the production aimed at writing a detailed review and provoking a rich discussion about contemporary theatre practice.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

The world of the play is the location, period, time and context in which the action plays out

• Where does this story take place?
• Is it a contemporary story?
• What aspects of the set, props, and costume contribute to establishing the world of the play?
• Consider the language being used. Is it contemporary? What is the accent being used?

STRUCTURE OF THE PRODUCTION

Sundowner combines dialogue, dance, music and physical theatre in order to tell Peggy’s story

The production is presented in a series of scenes

• In what way does the production use the Brechtian convention of episodes?
• In what way does the structure of Sundowner appear fragmented and disjointed?
• Do the themes of the production support this structure?
• Carefully notate examples from the production that help you clarify your understanding

CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Below is an overview of how you might consider contemporary dance...

The name contemporary dance describes a range of techniques and styles used in classes, workshops and dance choreography. Contemporary dance was developed in the early 20th century as a reaction against the rigid techniques of ballet. Pioneers such as Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham searched for ease of movement using the body’s natural lines and energy, allowing a greater range and fluidity of movement than conventional dance techniques. Contemporary dance is characterised by its versatility: contemporary can be dance to almost any style of music or united with other dance forms to create new styles of movement. Contemporary seeks to work with the natural alignment of the body, and is therefore safe and accessible for beginners. At the same time, the ease of movement promoted by contemporary dance technique allows experienced dancers to push new boundaries of body movement.

Contemporary dance can be danced to almost any style of music, or united with other dance forms to create new styles of movement. It can include site-specific works and the movements are often visually arresting. The dance addresses current contemporary cultural themes, often in a global context, and is deliberately open to audience interpretation and interaction. It often references other cultural forms, especially with visual and contemporary arts, theatre, film, music and lighting.

‘Contemporary dance’ has different meanings in different places. Different terms are used: modern dance, post-modern dance, ‘new’ dance, experimental dance, dance improvisation and contact improvisation as well as other terms in different languages.

Discuss the dance styles in the production of *Sundowner*:

- What is contemporary about some of the styles of dance?
- What is perhaps more traditional about other styles of dance eg The Tivoli Lovelies
- Why do you think that dance has been incorporated in this production?
- Have you ever seen this type of dance before?
- How do the dance elements help tell Peggy’s story?

**THEATRICAL STYLES**

*Sundowner* incorporates a range of theatrical styles including:

- Naturalism/realism,
- Non-realism,
- Abstraction,
- Physical theatre, and
- Dance.

In your discussion and analysis of the show find examples of each of these theatrical styles.

**CHARACTERS & CHARACTERISATION**

The central character in *Sundowner* is Peggy. Discuss how the actor, Helen Morse, conveyed the character of Peggy:

- How did she express herself vocally?
- How did she express herself physically including facial expressions, gesture, vocally (speaking, singing)
- How did Peggy react and interact with the other characters? Her daughter? Her son? Her son-in-law?
- In particular how did the character of Peggy interact with the Tivoli Lovelies, the tap dancers who appear in three scenes throughout the performance?
- How did Peggy interact with the set items and the props? Were there specific props or set items that were important to her world? What were these?

Other characters:

The daughter, son, son-in-law, and grandson are all part of Peggy’s world. Select two of these characters:

- Create a list of how the each of the actors used expressive/acting skills to create their character – voice, movement, gesture, facial expression, stillness, dance, physical theatre.
- Discuss how each of the characters you have selected relates to Peggy – vocally, physically, as memories

*The Tivoli Lovelies* fulfil quite a specific role in this production:

- What do you think that role is in the *Putting on the Ritz* scene?
- What role do they perform when they return to dance with Peggy later in the production?
- At the very end of the production they return again as Peggy dons a gown the same as them?
- Do they symbolise or represent a desire or memory of Peggy’s?
STAGECRAFT

SET & PERFORMANCE SPACE
The internal design of Peggy’s house consists of a box set, a room with wallpaper, a desk, couch, bookshelves, pictures, a mirror, a television and a large window at the rear of the room.
• How does the set design contribute to the establishment of Peggy’s world?
• Would you describe the set in terms of its era? Is it modern? Is it old fashioned? How does it reflect the main themes of the production?
• How do you respond to the final REVEAL of the set at the end of the play?
• What does this set reveal? How does it contribute to Peggy’s story? To the themes?

The performance space has three areas; the main room of the house that Peggy lives in, the elevated space behind the curtains, the garden space that is revealed in the final scene.
• Discuss three specific scenes in the performance that utilize these three spaces
• For example: Scene 2 – the main space, Scene 12 – the couch and Scene 17 – the elevated space (see scene breakdown above for more details)
• Discuss how each of these scenes specifically used the performance space to tell the story of the play
LIGHTING

Damian Cooper – Lighting Designer

The lighting in *Sundowner* has been designed to create a number of locations, times, memories and emotional states. Lighting is also used in a very practical way within the performance
- As a class select two specific scenes from the production eg Putting on the Ritz, Letter, Bus Stop
- Discuss how the stagecraft element of lighting was used in these scenes
- Was lighting used to create a realistic setting? Eg lamps, interior light
- Was lighting used to represent the theme of memories?
- How did the lighting in this scene make you feel?

SOUND/MUSIC

Kelly Ryall – Sound designer

There is a very complex sound and music design in *Sundowner* created by Kelly Ryall. The opening scene uses an aria from the opera *Madam Butterfly*. There are other specifically selected pieces of music and songs including the song printed in these notes. Consider also the soundscapes that accompany some of the scenes, the voice overs and the exchange that Peggy has with the television (Jennifer Byrne from the ABC’s The Book Club).
- What do you think the aria from Madame Butterfly means to Peggy?
- How does the sound that accompanies Peggy’s episode of Sundowner Syndrome impact on the scene?
- How does the voice over by Spike at the beginning and end of the production act as both sound and narrative?

The song *Night and Day* by Megan Washington and Paul Kelly (published above), how does this function in the production?
- How does it help narrate the story? How did this song make you feel?
- Is sound important in this production? Why?
- As you discuss the sound design and the inclusion of music, share what you remember.
- What did you notice that others didn’t and vice versa? Why? Is this an indication of a good sound design? Should the sound design sometimes not be noticeable or evident?
PROPS
Some of the properties used in this production include: books, newspapers, very large cups of tea, lamps, pencils, cushions, a bottle, envelopes, a mirror.
• Which props in Sundowner are merely practical and functional?
• Which props are more symbolic? Why are they symbolic?
• How do the props help to illustrate the theatrical styles in this production?

COSTUME
Paula Levis – Costume Designer

The costume designer, Paula Levis, has made quite specific choices for this production.
• Discuss the costume that Peggy wears – dress, petticoat, coat, hat...then dressing gown
  slippers...finally her showgirl dress
• How does the costume design help to create the character?
• At one point Peggy is unable to remember what her shoelaces are for and she cuts them off. How does the use of costume in this instance reference the main themes of the production?
• Discuss the costumes of Peggy’s children – for example when they are very young, on the couch, at the beach
• How do the costumes represent the characters in these scenes? How do they represent age?
• The Tivoli Lovelies have very particular costumes – discuss their design and aesthetic. How do they contrast with the rest of the production? What do you think their costumes may represent for Peggy?
THEME EXPLORATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Theme Exploration

MAKING MEMORIES
A key theme in sundowner is memory and its importance in our lives. The play explores this theme in a very poignant and deeply touching way.

In this activity each member of the class brings an item from home that has a particular significance for them:
- eg. Photo, toy, jewellery, book, card, letter, item of clothing
- Put the objects in a tub or box and have everyone select someone else’s object
- Using the unfamiliar object create a memory story for that object, why it is important, who gave it to you, what it represents
- Discuss the memory stories – how difficult is it to construct a memory around an object that is unfamiliar?
- How does this exercise relate to Peggy’s story?
- How is the theme of memory explored more broadly in Sundowner?

LOVE, GRIEF, COMPASSION, LOSS
How are these themes explored in the production?
- Whose love? Whose grief? Whose loss?
- How is compassion expressed and explored in this play?
- How does the use of PHYSICAL THEATRE and MOVEMENT specifically explore these themes?

DANCE – in pairs create a short movement piece that represents ONE of the key theme ideas above
- Consider how the themes suggest particular dynamics – lyrical, percussive, closed, open, soft, sharp
- Consider how you can use levels and space to represent the theme you have selected
- Consider how you can use symmetry and asymmetry, mirroring and other choreographic devices

FAMILY STORIES
As a response to the play this activity asks you to interview a grandparent or older relation/family friend
The aim is to discover some of their key memories. After they have agreed to be interviewed consider the following questions as a guide:
- What is a really important/key memory you have about growing up?
- You could prompt with ideas around Christmas, holidays, schools, family events.
- Record the interview with your smart phone or iPad or other device

STORY / MONOLOGUE
- Use the memories you have been told to develop a creative piece of writing about the family member/friend OR
- Use the memories you have been told to create a monologue performance where you create the character and tell their story to an audience such as your class
Further Research

Research one or all of the following:
• Young Onset Dementia
• Sundowners Syndrome
• The role of carers in contemporary society
• Body Language

Prepare a report and present it to the class using a Power Point, a Prezi or other digital format

NOW THAT THE PLAY IS OVER...
How did you respond to the play overall?
What were and are your thoughts and feelings?
What do you know now that you didn’t before about Alzheimer’s Disease?
What are you still curious about?

More Resources
You can find more resources at:

KAGE
Studio C1.05,
Convent Building
Abbotsford Convent,
1 St Heliers St,
ABBOTSFORD VIC 3067
Phone: (03) 9417 6700
Email: Simone@KAGE.com.au
Web: www.KAGE.com.au

Performing Lines
T 612 9319 0066 | F 612 9318 2186
5/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern
NSW 2016 Australia

Resources created by Meg Upton
Arts-in-Sync
megup@optusnet.com.au
0411 692 424