The Arrival
Based on the book by Shaun Tan

TEACHER NOTES

The Arrival & the Curriculum Framework

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has created these teacher notes to assist teachers in preparing their class for their visit to a production.

All activities have been formulated with the show in mind and with our special knowledge of theatre and puppetry! Whilst some activities may seem to target certain age groups we encourage teachers to try all activities on a level that their students will be comfortable with.

These particular teacher notes have been created with reference to the Western Australian Curriculum Framework. We hope that you will find them relevant to the curriculum standard followed by your particular school. Considerable effort has been made to ensure that they remain of universal interest as well as of high educational value.

In this guide you will find a selection of activities related to following areas of learning:

The Arts
English
Languages other than English
Mathematics
Science
Society and Environment
Technology and Enterprise

You will find activities related to The Health and Physical Education Learning Area and Outcomes in the Kidsafe WA Teachers’ Notes pack.

About Shaun Tan
Discover more of Shaun Tan’s fascinating illustrations and stories in his previous books: The Lost Thing (1999) and The Red Tree (2001). You can also admire some of his work drawn in greater scale on the wall of the children library in the Subiaco, Perth WA.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre was established in 1981 as the result of an artist-in-residency program at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University). The Company’s founding artists were Artistic Director and Patron, Peter Wilson (director and puppeteer), Cathryn Robinson (writer), and Beverley Campbell Jackson (designer/puppet maker). Between 1997 and 2001 with Noriko Nishimoto as Artistic Director, the Company developed renowned works such as The Bugalugs Bum Thief, The Midnight Gang and The Deep.
The Company is unique in Western Australia, and a rarity in Australia, because of our specialist art form focus of puppetry. Essentially, the Company brings together traditional and contemporary international influences to develop a culture of puppetry with a distinctly Australian feel.

In 2002, Philip Mitchell was appointed Spare Parts Puppet Theatre’s new Artistic Director. He has continued to pursue Spare Parts’ ambition to inspire young people and their families through performance and the arts. He has successfully directed works such as *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *H2O* - the only puppet show in an Olympic size swimming pool!

Based in Fremantle Western Australia, the Company has its own theatre and puppetry exhibition/museum in its foyer. Each year it presents in-theatre productions, incursion programs and workshops for people of all ages in WA. The Company also conducts regular tours throughout Australia and abroad.

From the 2nd – 12th April 2008, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre will host the 20th UNIMA Congress and World Puppetry Festival. This once in a lifetime event features a program of over 35 theatre productions from around the world, major exhibitions, a free carnival day, and the Million Puppet Project – a world record attempt! For more information please refer to the following websites:

www.sppt.asn.au  
www.unima.2008.com  
www.millionpuppets.com

We are proudly supported by the State Government through ArtsWA, the Federal Government through the Australia Council and sponsored by Healthway to promote the Go for 2 & 5 Message.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

The Story

This adaptation of acclaimed illustrator/author Shaun Tan’s new story *The Arrival* promises to be a truly warm and magical experience for all. It is the merging of digital animation from Shaun Tan’s exquisite images, skilled performance and the excellence in puppetry that you have come to expect from Spare Parts Puppet Theatre.

The inspirational illustrations of Shaun Tan come to life in a world of animals and people living together harmoniously in a fantastical metropolis. This strange new place of floating ships, mysterious lights and symbols is the place our hero Aki makes his home.

*The Arrival* is a tale of the challenges, humour and adventure of arriving in a new place and its story resonates throughout common human experience, be it a new school, a new job, or a new town. The absence of words not only makes the story perfect for puppetry but also emphasizes the isolation that is often experienced by many people arriving somewhere new and unfamiliar.

Acting, Puppetry and Image Digital Animation

*The Arrival* features several different acting and animation techniques.

The three performers Giri Mazzella, Sanjiva Margio and Karen Hethey play the human
characters in the story and also operate a variety of different rod puppets.

The style of theatre used in The Arrival is known as physical theatre, where the actors use their bodies, puppets and elements of the set to tell the story rather than relying on dialogue.

At its core, puppetry aims to bring inanimate objects to life. Digital animation can therefore be considered a very contemporary incarnation of the artform. The Arrival is unique in that it contains traditional puppetry as well as 2D and 3D digital image animation.

Shaun Tan’s imagined universe has been brought to life by projecting images from his book The Arrival onto the set. The actors and puppets interact with this digital projection to create a unique and contemporary style of puppetry performance.

Music

The music assists in developing two central themes. The first accompanies the main character, Aki with warm, gentle and familiar guitar and vocal sounds while the second expresses foreign places and people with sounds of other cultures.

Some of the instruments used in the soundtrack are the Koto from Japan, Balalaika from Russia, Pan Flute from South America, Gamelan instruments from Indonesia, Wood Drums of New Guinea and the Kalimba from Africa. The soundtrack also features ambient sound effects to evoke the atmosphere implied by Shawn Tan’s artwork.

The Creative Team

The creative team is composed of various artists who work together to create and develop the performance.

The process of creating a show can take over a year and there are various stages of development, which are:

- Creative Development – where ideas for the show are workshopped
- Script development
- Design development
- Music composition
- Puppets and Set build
- Performers cast
- Rehearsal

The creative team for The Arrival is:

Original book by Shaun Tan

Director: Philip Mitchell
Adapting Writer: Michael Barlow
Composer: Lee Buddle
Designer: Jiri Zmitko
Animation Design: Michael Barlow
Lighting Design: Graham Walne
Production Manager and Technical Operator: Sharon Custers
Puppet Makers: Jiri Zmitko, Kipling Smith, Adam Ismail
Costume Maker: Cherie Hewson
Artistic Development: Sally Richardson
Performers: Giri Mazzella, Sanjiva Margio, Karen Hethey
PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

Puppets
- Have you seen a puppet show before? Where? When?
- What are some differences between a puppet show and another type of theatre production?
- Is a production just about having fun? Do you think you can learn anything from a performance?

New Kid on the Block
- How many new people have joined your class this year?
- How many people have been to a new school?
- Have you had a relief teacher this year that has been new to your class?
- How many situations can you think of where you might feel like ‘a new person’? Do you think you would feel comfortable with these situations?
- Do you think being new to something is exciting or scary? Or both?

Cultural Delights
- How many people in your class have been overseas?
- Does any one in the class speak a language other than English?
- What ethnic food dishes do you like?
- What dances do you know that originated in other counties?
- What cultural traditions do you or your family practise?

AFTER SHOW DISCUSSION

Back from the Theatre
- Did you enjoy the performance?
- What did you like about it?
- What was the performance about?
- What sort of puppets did you see?
- What was the lighting and sound like?
- What were the main parts of the set?
Characters and Plot

- Where do you think Aki came from? Why did he leave?
- Who did he leave behind?
- How did Aki come to own his pet?
- Who did Aki’s pet fight with?
- Did you like the landlady at the beginning of the show?
- Was the landlady mean or nice? Or both?
- How many jobs did Aki have throughout the show?
- How does Aki view the City?
- Why were the two pets important to their owners?
- Do you think the City was based on a real place?
- Why do you think there was no talking?

About the creative process

- In addition to puppetry and the set, what other technique was used to tell the story?
- What do you think the use of digital imagery brings to the story?
- How do you think the original illustrations by Shaun Tan have inspired the performance?

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Telling a story without words

*The Arrival* is based on the illustrated book by Shaun Tan. In the play, as in the book, the students will experience a textless narrative. Pre-show class activities can explore non verbal mediums of communication that allow for the transferral of messages and stories.

- **Brainstorming session:** Discuss ways of communicating other than through verbal language, such as:
  - Gestures, body language, facial expressions, attitudes
  - Script, signs, symbols, Auslan
  - Images, shapes, colours
  - Sounds other than speech: vocal or non vocal noise, onomatopoeia, composed music

- **Group work: Narrative construction**
  Form groups of students to discuss and choose
  A - A story or theme they want to tell the rest of the class about
  B - Ways and means they are going to use

While preparing their story, students will think of and choose ways of expressing ideas, impression, conveying feelings and impression to their audience and thus think over:
- Colours associations: warm, cold or neutral colours
- Noise: soft, loud, repetitive, sudden
- Gestures: slow, quick, ordered

- **Presentation to the class:** Within an established time, students present their narrative or theme to the class using the means they have agreed on

- **Feed-back:** After each group has presented its theme, the student give their feedback on the means used to convey the different messages (efficiency; understanding; ambiguity) and compare the different presentations in the way they told the stories

*You can make this activity as elaborate as you wish depending on the themes and ways of expression chosen. This can be an-hour activity or an extended series of workshops.*

**Activity 2: Searching through the classified ads**

In *The Arrival* Aki arrives in a new city with unfamiliar rules and language. Pre-show class activities could focus on developing the awareness of arriving in a somewhere new.

- **Review of foreign newspapers or websites:** Encourage students to explore the classified ad section of foreign newspapers / websites, in order to make them experience the target language’s vernacular language
  - develop strategies to collect information for a precise purpose

Example:
The students can picture themselves in the situation of having to move to a new place. Ask them to scan through the real estate ads to find a home or flat to live in that suits their family needs and purposes.

- **Group work:** Once they find a suitable advert, encourage the students think of and write down the type of questions they would ask to the person offering the flat/ home to buy/rent

- **Presentation to the class:** Each group present to the others the result of their search, explaining why they have made their choice.

- **Compare some Australian classified ads with the ones studied in the target language:** By comparing the classified ad sections in Australian and foreign newspapers, students can notice and analyse the differences or similarities in the language conventions and the types of abbreviations used

*You can base this activity by selected Classifieds section of any foreign newspapers or having the students look out on the Internet for foreign employment and housing.*

**Activity 3: Connecting with the rest of the world**

In *The Arrival*, Aki stays in contact with his family by corresponding with letter birds…

Pre-excursion activities can convey students a sense of multiculturalism by enhancing the numerous links Australians have with the rest of world through family history or contemporary immigration.
• **Drawing a ‘communication’ map:** Students can discuss the towns, states or other countries where they have some of their relatives, friends or pen pals living and draw on a world map the lines created by their communication within Australia and the rest of the world.

Encourage them to discuss the different realities experienced by these friends or relatives leaving elsewhere such as climate, city/country life (transport, food, language...)

• **Group Discussion:** Discuss how students keep in touch with their relatives and friends.
  - How do they communicate with them (phone, letters, email)?
  - How often they use the means of communication discussed?
  - Why do they choose one mean rather than another?

• **Building statistics:** Students can then create a graph or a pie chart that represents the part of each of these communication tools in the class. Get students to discuss the results. Point out to students that although this may appear like a maths exercise, it does help to understand how they communicate with their relatives.

• **Internet technology:** Discuss with students the impact they think that email correspondence has had on communication in general.

**Activity 4: Building an imaginary city**

*The Arrival* is about Aki trying to settle in a new city by finding a place to live, a job, friends and finally, reuniting with his family. In this activity students are asked to build an imaginary city. Resources are limited, therefore students are required to exchange, share and cooperate with each other in order to progress. This activity is to lead them to develop strategies to achieve their task or goal.

**Material needed:**
- Cardboard, glue, plastic cups, various small plastic or cardboard containers such as empty matchboxes, yogurt pots, plastic lids...these volumes will be used to create buildings.
- Coloured pieces of paper or fabric or paint

This material will be used as building resources. Though the students will help to collect them, the teacher should redistribute them.

• **Design a city:** Have the class create an imaginary city organised around functional areas or institutions. For example: parklands, schools, shops, town halls, houses, offices, and common areas.

The plan of the city is to be designed on a large sheet of cardboard. Students will choose basic shapes or symbols to represent each area or institution they wish to create. From here they will be able to turn the plan into a three-dimensional city by making the collected volumes adhere to the shapes drawn on the plan.

• **Allocation of the building resources:** The goal set for this game is to build the new city by matching the resources with the different parts on the map.
Each group is responsible for building one of the elements with limited number of resources.

- **Interaction and cooperation**: Students should be encouraged to exchange resources so that they are able to build their allocated element of the city.

**Feedback**: Discuss with students the different arrangements they made with each other in order to exchange resources. Discuss the efficiency of the deals made on an individual level (results for each group) and then on a global level (result for the city).

**Activity 5 - Pen Pals**

Students should reflect on the content of the show whilst also understanding the purpose of theatre and its ability to communicate messages. Theatre is very much about looking and listening but it is also important to discuss a show to better understand the themes that were presented.

Teachers are encouraged to do some ground work for this activity by looking for a suitable ‘sister school’.

- Students to write to students of the same age in another country, as pen pals. They should introduce who they are and tell their pen pal about their school and home environment. Students should tell their pen pal that they are going on an excursion to see a puppet show. They should explain as much as they can about it - it is based on a book by Shaun Tan; there will be different styles of puppets etc. They should also explain how they feel about going on excursion (are they excited, imaginative, unsure, or bored).
- Students may also like to include a photo or a drawing of something uniquely Australian. Let students discuss what this might mean.
- The teacher is to then send the letters and wait for a response.
- The children should then reply to their pen pals and tell them what the show was about, who the characters were, what the puppets looked like etc.
- Encourage students to think about characters feelings and emotions – what is it like to be ‘new’ (new child at school, new house, new suburb, new country etc). Encourage students to explain how they would make their pen pals feel comfortable and welcome if they were to visit their school.