# Identity and storytelling

## Through the window

### Background

This unit of work asks students to focus on the use of ‘identity’ to tell a story. They discuss the importance of identity in developing a character in performance, as well as the use of identity in a selection of picture books. Students spend time analysing the Jeannie Baker book ‘Window’, and how it portrays a changing identity outside of Sam’s bedroom window. Students work in groups to devise their own wordless picture story, exploring the idea of changing identity. They create a series still images which are turned into a short film, to be shared and analysed by the class.

Please note that the recommended reading list is a suggestion only and implies no endorsement, by the New South Wales Department of Education, of any author, publisher or book title.

### Unit outline

Module one - Identity in drama

Module two - Identity in picture books

Module three - Through her window

Module four - Through our window

Module five - Through their window

### Cross curriculum content and key competencies

| Cross curriculum content | Key competencies |
| --- | --- |
| Information & Communication Technologies  Difference & Diversity  Environment | Literacy |

#### Outcomes covered

##### Objective – Making (Drama)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.1.1 – A student manipulates the elements of drama to create belief, clarity and tension in character, role, situation and action. | To – recognise, create and develop elements of drama to produce dramatic action and meaning  To – develop a range of created and imagined situations which explore the familiar and unfamiliar  To - explore role and character through script, dramatic forms, performance styles and playbuilding  About – using elements of drama to enhance a range of created and imagined situations  About - exploring roles/characters using realistic, surreal and abstract narratives |
| 5.1.2 – A student contributes, selects, develops and structures ideas in improvisation and playbuilding. | To – playbuild using a variety of stimuli  To – link playbuilding scenes  To – create narrative structures to convey dramatic meaning  About – the process of using an active, collaborative process to create group or self-devised works  About – a variety of ways to approach playbuilding including setting, theme, narrative, character, issues and personal experiences |
| 5.1.3 ­– A student devises, interprets and enacts drama using scripted and unscripted material or text. | To – identify and respond to the use of stage space and stage geography within their script and text work  To – use drama elements when creating or enacting scripts or texts  To – contribute ideas, collaborate and support the collective process to create effective drama  About - the application of elements of drama such as focus, tension, time, space, rhythm, atmosphere and symbol to dramatic works |
| 5.1.4 – A student explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies. | To – develop linear scene and plot structures to communicate dramatic ideas  To – refine work in collaboration with others  About – the presentation of dramatic material in a variety of ways using techniques such as chorus, mask, narrator, tableau/still image and flashback |

##### Performing (Drama)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.2.1 – A student applies acting and performance techniques expressively and collaboratively to communicate dramatic meaning. | To – use body language and physicalisation to help an audience to read performance  To – create and maintain clarity of focus in dramatic action  To – create a basic actor/audience relationship in a variety of performance situations  About – aspects of body language and physicalisation such as posture, gesture and facial expression  About – maintaining clarity of focus as action advances, using props, gestures, eye contact, language and voice |

##### Appreciating (Drama)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.3.1 – A student responds to, reflects on and evaluates elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques and theatrical conventions. | To – respond appropriately to their work and the dramatic work of others  To – describe and respond to the conventions, dramatic techniques and technologies used in different performances.  About – the role of the performer and audience, and ways to read and reflect on performance. |
| 5.3.2 – A student analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama. | To – value and use information and communication technologies in drama and theatre to help reflect on aspects of human experience.  About – the use of a range of computer-based technologies, such as databases, multimedia, graphics programs and electronic communication, to enhance dramatic meaning in their playbuilding, scripts, texts, and performances. |
| 5.3.2 – A student analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama. | To – use appropriate language individually and within the group when devising, enacting, discussing, debating or writing about drama  To – reflect on their own work and the work of others  To – value the collaborative nature of drama work  About - the importance of accepting positive, constructive feedback, evaluation and analysis of group or individual works  About – acknowledging the attitudes and views of others through working collaboratively in the development of dramatic meaning |

[Drama 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/drama-7-10-syllabus) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003.

##### A (English)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| EN5-1A – responds to and composes increasingly sophisticated and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure | appreciate, explain and respond to the aesthetic qualities and the power of language in an increasingly sophisticated range of texts  analyse and explain the ways language forms and features, ideas, perspectives and originality are used to shape meaning  analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning  explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts  evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images  create sustained texts, including texts that combine specific digital or media content, for imaginative, informative, or persuasive purposes that reflect upon challenging and complex issues |

##### B (English)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| EN5-3B - selects and uses language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts, describing and explaining their effects on meaning | evaluate techniques (for example; contrast, exaggeration, juxtaposition or changing chronological order) used in spoken, written and visual texts to, for example, construct plot and create emotional responses  create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience |

##### D (English)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| EN5-7D – understands and evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds | evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts  analyse the ways in which creative and imaginative texts can explore human experience, universal themes and social contexts  respond to and compose sustained imaginative, creative and critical texts that represent aspects of their expanding personal and public worlds, for a wide range of purposes, including for enjoyment and pleasure |

##### E (English)

| Outcomes | Indicators/content |
| --- | --- |
| EN5-9E – purposefully reflects on, assesses and adapts their individual and collaborative skills with increasing independence and effectiveness | articulate and discuss the pleasures and difficulties, successes and challenges experienced in investigation, problem-solving and independent and collaborative work, and establish improved practices  purposefully reflect on and value the learning strengths and learning needs of themselves and others |

[English K-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/english-year-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012.

## Module one

### Identity in drama

In this module, students explore the importance of ‘identity’ in drama. They learn techniques for developing an identity in a given character and explore features of their own identity. Students work in pairs to explore a character’s inner ‘identity’ and the outside perception of it. Students also experiment with improvisation techniques where different identities meet each other.

| Outcome | Content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.1.1 | explore role and character through script, dramatic forms, performance styles and playbuilding |
| 5.1.2 | a variety of ways to approach playbuilding including setting, theme, narrative, character, issues and personal experiences |
| 5.1.3 | use drama elements when creating or enacting scripts or texts |
| 5.2.1 | use body language and physicalisation to help an audience to read performance |
| EN5-7D | respond to and compose sustained imaginative, creative and critical texts that represent aspects of their expanding personal and public worlds, for a wide range of purposes, including for enjoyment and pleasure |

| Drama objective | Suggested activities | Assessment | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| - | Write the following question on the board before the students come in to class: “Is identity how we define ourselves, our how others define us?” Ask students to talk in pairs or small groups, discussing this question. Each student writes their own definition of identity in their logbook. Come back together as a class and discuss the fact that identity is how we see ourselves. | Observation  Definitions  Discussion | Logbooks |
| - | In their logbooks, students draw a circle in the middle of a page. They then write Me inside the circle. All around the circle, they write words that describe their identity (for example; loyal, musician, quiet). Split the students into small groups. In their groups, they discuss the following questions:  What three words describe your identity most accurately?  Why are they the most accurate words?  What three words would you like to describe you in 10 years’ time?  How does our race, religion and gender all influence our identity?  What are three different words that your family or friends would use to describe you?  How accurate are the words of others?  Why is there a difference? | Observation  Logbooks | Logbooks |
| Making  Performing  Appreciating | Working in their pairs, students rehearse and then perform the following scenario for the class. The two students represent one person. The task is to walk into the classroom/on stage, side by side, with one student representing how the character defines or sees themselves, and the other representing how others define or see them. They are to create some sort of juxtaposition in this scene. As a class, discuss the differences between the two representations. Discuss ways to use both of these aspects of identity in playbuilding. | Observation  Performances  Discussion | - |
| Making  Appreciating | Discuss the fact that actors can give their characters more depth, if they can imagine what it would be like to be them. It is important to get to know your character and give them an identity. Give each student an Identity card. They are to read their card, which gives a brief description of who their character is. In their logbooks, students are flesh out their character’s identity, by answering the following questions:  What makes your character most happy?  What is your character afraid of?  What is your character’s darkest secret?  What is your character’s most treasured possession?  If your character had a whole day to themselves, what would they do? | Logbooks  Observation | Logbooks  Identity Cards |
| Making | Give the students some time to practice ‘being’ their character. How would they walk? How would they talk? Do they have a limp? Do they avoid eye contact? How would they sit down? | Observation | - |
| Performing | Play a game of Park Bench, with students taking on the characters that they have just created. Have one student sit on the ‘bench’ in front of the class, acting as though they are there along in the park. At appropriate intervals, add another character, who comes to sit on or near the bench. The new character/s must interact with those already in the scene, staying true to their ‘identity’. Add more characters as required. Do not have more than four characters at a time. Repeat with more students. | Performances | A ‘bench’ |

## Module two

### Identity in picture books

In this module, students explore the use of identity in a range of picture books and discuss the ways in which authors and illustrators reveal identity through language choices and visual imagery. Students take part in improvisation activities and also analyse the message or moral in picture books.

| Outcome | Content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.1.1 | using elements of drama to enhance a range of created and imagined situations |
| 5.1.4 | the presentation of dramatic material in a variety of ways using techniques such as chorus, mask, narrator, tableau/still image and flashback |
| 5.3.3 | acknowledging the attitudes and views of others through working collaboratively in the development of dramatic meaning |
| EN5-1A | appreciate, explain and respond to the aesthetic qualities and the power of language in an increasingly sophisticated range of texts |
|  | analyse and explain the ways language forms and features, ideas, perspectives and originality are used to shape meaning |
|  | explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts |
| EN5-7D | evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts |
|  | analyse the ways in which creative and imaginative texts can explore human experience, universal themes and social contexts |

| Drama objective | Suggested activities | Assessment | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| - | Before this lesson, collect a selection of picture books with examples of interesting characters with strong identities. You should have one picture book for every student. Your school librarian would be an excellent source of books, but you could also choose any appropriate books from the [Premier’s Reading Challenge list](https://online.det.nsw.edu.au/prc/booklist/listBooksByGenre.html?genreId=14&levelId=4) or from the [English Syllabus suggested text list](https://syllabus.nesa.nsw.edu.au/assets/global/files/english-k10-suggested-texts.pdf)- | - | - |
|  | Have the picture books spread around the floor of the classroom, with tables and chairs moved out of the way. Let students walk in and explore the books. After a few minutes, ask students to pick one of the picture books and sit down and read it to themselves. Once the students have had time to read the book, ask them to give you one word that describes the main character in their book. Choose a few of the responses and ask them to explain how they came to that conclusion. What in the book told them that? Discuss the fact that there are lots of clues throughout picture books about the characters and their identities. They might find clues in the words or in the pictures. They might be in the interactions between characters or body language. Have students fill out the Identity in Picture Books worksheet and stick into their logbooks. | Discussion  Worksheet | Identity in Picture Books Worksheet  Logbooks  Collection of picture books |
| Making | Students are to find a partner with a book character very different from their own. Have students discuss in pairs their book, character and answers. They then discuss what makes their characters’ identities different. The students work together to build a short scene, in which their two characters meet, highlighting the differences between them. | Discussions  Observations | - |
| Performing  Appreciating | The short scenes are performed for the class. After each scene, the audience comes up with at least 5 adjectives to describe the identity of each character. These are written either on the board or on large blank paper. The actors can identify whether those adjectives accurately reflected the character in their picture book. | Performances  Discussions | - |
| - | Students are paired with a different person, and this time they discuss their picture book as a whole. What message is the author trying to convey in this book? Is there a moral for the audience? After allowing time for discussion, students write the name of their picture book in their logbooks. They then write one paragraph summarising the plot of their story. They write one paragraph summarising their main character and their identity. The students then write one sentence explaining the moral or message of the book. | Discussions  Logbooks | Logbooks |
| Making  Performing | Possible extension activity – organise a visit to a local primary school or early childhood centre, where students can read their picture book to a younger child. Practice reading the books during drama lessons, emphasising the use of voice to highlight the identity of the main character. Alternatively, students could video each other reading the stories, and upload to YouTube or as podcasts as ‘read alouds’. | Observations | Connection with another school  Recording devices |

## Module three

### Through her window

This module is a close examination of the book ‘Window’ by Jeannie Baker. Students explore the messages in Baker’s book, and the way in which it shows a changing identity throughout time. Students investigate the use of the window in the story, as a recurring theme and take on the identity of characters in the book during an improvisation game.

| **Outcome** | **Content** |
| --- | --- |
| 5.1.1 | exploring roles/characters using realistic, surreal and abstract narratives |
|  | develop a range of created and imagined situations which explore the familiar and unfamiliar |
| EN5-1A | appreciate, explain and respond to the aesthetic qualities and the power of language in an increasingly sophisticated range of texts |
|  | analyse and explain the ways language forms and features, ideas, perspectives and originality are used to shape meaning |
|  | analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning |
|  | evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images |
| EN5-3B | evaluate techniques (for example; contrast, exaggeration, juxtaposition or changing chronological order) used in spoken, written and visual texts to, for example, construct plot and create emotional responses |
|  | analyse the ways in which creative and imaginative texts can explore human experience, universal themes and social contexts |

| Drama objective | Suggested activities | Assessment | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| - | Once the students are seated, explain that you are going to show them a different kind of picture book – a wordless picture book. Because there are no words, the class can decide what each page is saying. Show them Window, by Jeannie Baker. If you can get a copy in a ‘big book’, that would be better, or else you could look at it online or on the floor in a small group. As you read the book, allow discussion about each page and what students see. Once you have finished reading the book, discuss what it was all about. | Discussion | ‘Window’ by Jeannie Baker |
|  | Explain that this story is told, looking out of Sam’s bedroom window. Read the story again, but this time have a different student voice a thought from Sam, as he looks out of the window or plays in the picture, on each page. As an example, as you look at the first page, say, “Oh what adventures I am going to have in this beautiful place,” or something similar. After reading again, discuss with the class how Sam’s identity changed throughout the book. What else changed? Can the identity of a place change? A family? | Discussion | ‘Window’ by Jeannie Baker |
| - | Students complete the Super Six – Window worksheet, either working individually or in pairs. If you can get multiple copies of Window, this would be helpful. | Worksheet | Super Six – Window worksheet  Logbooks  Multiple copies of book |
| - | This book is told by looking outside from Sam’s window. How would it be different, looking in at different stages. Have the students draw some images in their logbooks, showing what it might have looked at different points throughout the book. How would the identity of the room have changed? | Drawings | Logbooks |
| - | Have students work in pairs. They are to discuss the use of the window in the book. What function did it serve? Why would Jeannie Baker have used it like that? How could they use something similar in their own dramatic works? Share these thoughts with the class. | Discussion  Observation | - |
| Making | Play a game of Hot Seat, where one student takes on the role of interviewer, and the other takes on the role of a character from the book. The interviewer asks questions of the character, about their perspective and experiences (for example; “Sam, how did it feel to see your neighbourhood change so much over the years?” Or “Sam’s Mum, did you ever think the neighbourhood would look like this when you first had Sam as a baby?”) | Observation | Seats |

## Module four

### Through our window

During this module, students work in small groups to create their own still image story, illustrating changing identity. Students experiment with tableaux and the use of a window prop. The groups use photography to capture their images and then computer programs to turn their still images into a short film. All groups take part in rehearsal and review techniques throughout this module.

| Outcome | Content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.1.1 | recognise, create and develop elements of drama to produce dramatic action and meaning |
|  | develop a range of created and imagined situations which explore the familiar and unfamiliar |
|  | explore role and character through script, dramatic forms, performance styles and playbuilding |
|  | exploring roles/characters using realistic, surreal and abstract narratives |
| 5.1.2 | playbuild using a variety of stimuli |
|  | link playbuilding scenes |
|  | create narrative structures to convey dramatic meaning |
|  | the process of using an active, collaborative process to create group or self-devised works |
| 5.1.3 | identify and respond to the use of stage space and stage geography within their script and text work |
|  | use drama elements when creating or enacting scripts or texts |
|  | contribute ideas, collaborate and support the collective process to create effective drama |
|  | the application of elements of drama such as focus, tension, time, space, rhythm, atmosphere and symbol to dramatic works |
| 5.1.4 | develop linear scene and plot structures to communicate dramatic ideas |
|  | refine work in collaboration with others |
| 5.2.1 | create and maintain clarity of focus in dramatic action |
|  | use body language and physicalisation to help an audience to read performance |
|  | create a basic actor/audience relationship in a variety of performance situations |
|  | maintaining clarity of focus as action advances, using props, gestures, eye contact, language and voice |
| 5.3.2 | value and use information and communication technologies in drama and theatre to help reflect on aspects of human experience |
|  | the use of a range of computer-based technologies, such as databases, multimedia, graphics programs and electronic communication, to enhance dramatic meaning in their playbuilding, scripts, texts, and performances |
| 5.3.3 | use appropriate language individually and within the group when devising, enacting, discussing, debating or writing about drama |
|  | the importance of accepting positive, constructive feedback, evaluation and analysis of group or individual works |
|  | reflect on their own work and the work of others |
| EN5-1A | create sustained texts, including texts that combine specific digital or media content, for imaginative, informative, or persuasive purposes that reflect upon challenging and complex issues |
| EN5-3B | create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience |

| Drama objective | Suggested activities | Assessment | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Making | Remind the students of the book that you read during the last module – Window by Jeannie Baker. Perhaps read the book again. Explain the playbuilding task. Students are going to work in small groups to create their own wordless story about changing identities. They could make their story about one person’s changing identity over time, or about the identity of a family changing. They could make a story about the cultural identity of a family changing throughout the generations. Brainstorm some ideas about concepts as a class. | Discussion | - |
| - | Explain that each group is going to create their story in a similar way to the book ‘Window’. They are going to create a large window, using cardboard. The story will need to be told through 10 still images or tableaux that is seen through the window. The audience could be looking in through the window, or out. A photograph will be taken of each of the 10 still images. These photographs will be used to create a video or slideshow, telling the story. | - | - |
| Making  Appreciating | Students break off into their groups to start brainstorming their story ideas. These are built into storyboards of the 10 images. Each group has a conference with the teacher to discuss their progress, particularly focused on their portrayal of changing identity. | Observation  Conferences  Storyboards | Logbooks |
| Making | Students create their ‘window’ using cardboard. They can decorate their window in an appropriate way for their play. Students experiment with ways that they can use their window to enhance the meaning of their play. Groups might also like to consider props or costumes that would aid in telling their story about changing identity. | Observation | Logbooks  Cardboard  Sticky Tape  Craft Materials |
| Making  Appreciating | Students rehearse their still images and take photographs of each one. As a group, they analyse the photographs for their effectiveness and make refinements. | Still Images  Observation | Cameras |
| Making  Performing | Once students are happy with the 10 still images that they have planned, the groups create their final tableaux and photograph them. Photographs are edited to ensure that anything external to the image is cropped. Groups may choose to use effects or filters on their photographs to enhance their images. | Photographs  Observations | Cameras |
| Making | Once the group has their final 10 images finished, they use a computer program such as Powerpoint or MovieMaker to turn the images into a short film. Each group experiments with title screens, transitions and credits in their film. Groups may choose to create a soundscape to accompany their short film. | Finished Short Films | Computers  Audio Recording Equipment |

## Module five

### Through their window

This module is the culmination of the unit, with each group showing their short film to the class. Each student spends time analysing the effectiveness of their group and themselves and discussing ways to improve their processes. Students evaluate the work of their classmates and enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

| Outcome | Content |
| --- | --- |
| 5.3.1 | respond appropriately to their work and the dramatic work of others |
|  | describe and respond to the conventions, dramatic techniques and technologies used in different performances |
|  | the role of the performer and audience, and ways to read and reflect on performance |
| 5.3.3 | reflect on their own work and the work of others |
|  | value the collaborative nature of drama work |
| EN5-1A | analyse and explain the ways language forms and features, ideas, perspectives and originality are used to shape meaning |
|  | evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images |
| EN5-3B | evaluate techniques (eg contrast, exaggeration, juxtaposition or changing chronological order) used in spoken, written and visual texts to, for example, construct plot and create emotional responses |
| EN5-9E | articulate and discuss the pleasures and difficulties, successes and challenges experienced in investigation, problem-solving and independent and collaborative work, and establish improved practices |
|  | purposefully reflect on and value the learning strengths and learning needs of themselves and others |

| Drama objective | Suggested activities | Assessment | Resources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Appreciating | Have a class discussion out the process that was involved in this unit. What aspects did they enjoy, which ones were difficult? Students write a paragraph in their logbooks, detailing how their group worked together. What were the group’s strengths, what were their weaknesses? Students also write three things that they did well themselves and three things that they could improve on next time. | Logbooks | Logbooks |
| Appreciating | Each student pairs up with a student from a different group. They share their responses and then discuss what they could have done to improve the group dynamics in their performance group. | Observations | - |
| Appreciating | As a class, watch each of the short films. Perhaps you could have lollies or popcorn. For each film, every student makes comments in their logbook. They write the name of the short film, followed by 3 stars (positive comments) and a question. These could be collated to be shared with the group later or you could ask some students to share their thoughts after each film. | Short Films  Logbooks | Logbooks  Short Films |