

## DRAMA

**Explain why the excerpt you have chosen to perform is unique to Contemporary Australian Theatre.**

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“Stolen”, written by Jane Harrison, is a play which causes its audience to reflect on the experiences of those of the Stolen Generation. Themes such as a loss of identity and culture, lack of knowledge about one’s past and own family, abuse and racism are presented in the play, both through individual characters and as an ensemble. Through the use of Contemporary Australian Theatre Practices such as chorus work and rituals, symbolism, character transformations, soundscape and the close actor-audience relationship, we can see that “Stolen” is unique to Contemporary Australian Theatre.

An aspect of Contemporary Australian Theatre which made my group’s piece unique to this style was that my group used chorus work in the ‘Unspoken Abuse’ scenes in which the ensemble ritualistically chanted “Can you keep a secret and promise not to tell?” as well as played the ‘patty cake’ clapping game. We also established the ritualistic nature of Ruby’s returns from her weekend visits in that each time she returned, she would be carrying her doll by the arm and constantly be fixing her doll’s dress, ensuring that her doll was completely covered up. As a result, the audience were able to see the way in which Ruby’s treatment of her doll was symbolic of the way she had been treated.

The Contemporary Australian Theatre technique of character transformations was also used in my group’s performance. For example, in the ‘Your Mum’s Dead’ scene, members of my group became other characters in order to enact the scene. We used an authoritarian voice and used three mothers to represent Jimmy’s mother, instead of just having one mother. Through using character transformations to create a stronger scene, we also conveyed how our “Stolen” excerpt is characteristic of Contemporary Australian Theatre.

Another technique that we employed in our performance was soundscape in Shirley’s monologue ‘It Rained the Day’. To create the sound of rain as the background for this scene we used percussion instruments such as a snare drum, bongos and a rattle. By lightly tapping/ shaking these instruments we were able to create an effective soundscape within the scene. The use of soundscape is another aspect that contributed towards our piece’s typifying to Contemporary Australian Theatre.

Finally, throughout our piece we maintained a close actor-audience relationship in order to ensure the key themes of our play were having an effect on our audience. For example, in Sandy’s ‘Can of Peas’ monologue, we staged the scene so that the character Sandy was positioned downstage centre, close to the audience. As a result of the proximity to the audience, the story and message embedded in the monologue were conveyed to the audience and a greater emotional impact on the audience resulted. It was this close actor-audience relationship which also identified our “Stolen” excerpt as being an example of Contemporary Australian Theatre.

In conclusion, my group’s “Stolen” excerpt is unique to Contemporary Australian Theatre because of the techniques such as chorus work, symbolism, character transformations, soundscape and the close actor-audience relationship we employed within our piece. These elements not only categorised our piece as being unique to this theatre style but also enabled us to create an impact on the audience and allowed them to empathise with the experiences of the children of the Stolen Generation.