



EDUCATION RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

A SPARK arts education resource

“Someone In The Dark”

An interactive play about the journey of a malleefowl chick from inside his safe secure egg to the Big Outside World!

Written by Wotjobaluk women Tracey Rigney and Produced by Nancy Black from Black Hole Theatre

SPARK Resource 2025- HRAG
“Someone In The Dark”

Teacher Notes for Yr 1-6: (Tracey Rigney writer / film maker for SITD)

Watch these short videos about the malleefowl species –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s50ewhYoXOQ>

<https://youtu.be/ihRKue1MINk>

*Read to the students about Tracey's relationship to Country and the malleefowl species.

"The Wimmera Mallee region of Victoria lies on the ancestral lands of my mother's people – the Wotjobaluk. This vast expanse of country is mainly flat, with some spectacular exceptions like the mountains of Dyurrite (Mount Arapiles) and Gariwerd (Grampians). The winding Barrangi Gadyin (Wimmera river) flows through this semi-arid landscape in a rather unique way. It flows inland, not to the sea, and it connects to the two intermittent terminal lakes of Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh) and Ngalpaketia (Lake Albacutya) along Kromeluk (Outlet Creek). It's the only river system in the state of Victoria to do this.

When I think of this part of the world, I think of the uniqueness it exhibits, not just from what grows from the terrain but also, the animals that inhabit it. One such unique animal that I have had a fascination with since childhood is the "malleefowl" (correct spelling). This bird is a ground dwelling bird. When it finds a mate, this is a mate for life. Prominent characteristics of the bird are that they are shy and solitary. A malleefowl pair live in the same territory but roost and feed separately.

The males build nest mounds for the female to lay eggs in, depending on factors like temperature and rainfall. When the eggs are laid, the males' job is to ensure they are looked after and he either removes parts of the mound or adds to it, so the eggs can incubate in the right conditions to hatch. Once hatched, the tiny hatchling has to dig their way out of the mound. This can take anywhere from 2 to 15 hours and once out, they have no contact with the adult birds and must fend for themselves. A challenging entrance to a tough environment where any predators like feral cats, foxes or snakes could be sitting in wait for them as they burst up through the earthen mound. Some malleefowl eggs don't hatch, and some hatchlings don't even make it to the surface.

Right from the get go, these birds have only themselves to rely on and survival is key. Getting to know this bird through this play *Someone In the Dark*, has only made me love, respect and admire the malleefowl more. I believe they deserve to be in the spotlight, as their habitat is also disappearing due to a number of external influences like fire, weather and humans, thus rendering the malleefowl as either vulnerable, threatened and endangered on a number of different species lists".

By Tracey Rigney

Some questions to write about / share::

1. What are some of the important facts you have learnt about the malleefowl?
2. What are some of the Aboriginal place names in this area that Tracey refers to?
3. What conditions make the malleefowl chick an endangered species?

Please read this* to the students as background information for **HOW** the play was written and produced. (Yr 3-6)

***There are so many questions you must ask yourself when you're writing a play, or a piece for theatre. These writers started by asking - how will this play be different to watching TV? A TV audience only watches, they don't go inside the TV. The work might be funny or sad or scary, and it might even be wonderful, but the watcher has no impact or control over what happens.**

Write a response or Whole Class Discussion:

Question-Do you think this is true?

Do you ever feel like you want to jump inside a TV and be part of the action you are watching?

Do you want to control / change what is happening in the TV show?

***The writers wanted to explore “Fear”.**

Abstract Fear - example: losing something, feeling scared, loneliness.....

Objective Fear – example: spiders, bugs, tall buildings, an accident.....

Write a response or Whole Class Discussion:

Question-Do you think adults FEAR the same things as children?

Are some fears worse than others?

Can a person get over their fear?

***In the Play, the writers explore the experience of a young malleefowl chick incubating safely inside an egg and the fear of having to break out of the egg into the Big Wide World!**

Inside the egg is safe, but.....when the egg cracks open and the chick is confronted by a dark sinister outside world, with scary animals, bugs and crawling insects, what does the malleefowl chick do?

Write a response or Whole Class Discussion:

How does the malleefowl chick overcome his fear of scary things?

Who is your favourite character in the play?

***Finally, a new day begins and the darkness changes to a beautiful Wimmera sunrise.**

Write a response or Whole Class Discussion:

What does the malleefowl chick see in the daylight?

What is he feeling about the Big Wide World now that he is outside the egg?

***Drama Activity.**

Students are to get into their own space.

They can crouch down imagining they are inside an egg.

Resting easy. A bit scrunched up but warm and happy inside their egg.

Slowly and gently the egg starts to crack.

This little creature that has been resting inside the egg starts to move and finds their way out of the egg. Body part by body part

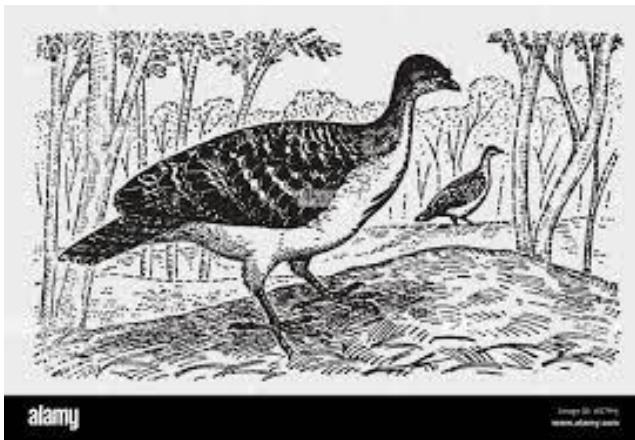
Students can then move slowly around the room experimenting with the things they see or encounter.

Some things they find are fun and exciting, some are interesting to explore and some are scary.

This is like the Mallee Fowl chick that emerges from the egg and finds all the bush creatures-worms, spiders and lizards and then the sun, moon and the stars.

End the exercise when the students move to standing in two feet and enjoy the warmth of the sun.

***Art Activity: Create a painting/drawing, sculpture, diorama or puppet to reflect your experience after watching SITD.**



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