



VICTORIA MIDWINTER PITT
I'M WITH HER
TEACHING NOTES BY VANA WATKINS

TO PURCHASE THE BOOK:

<https://www.currency.com.au/books/drama/im-with-her/>

<https://books.apple.com/au/book/im-with-her/id6443399816>

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The playscript **I'M WITH HER** is a response to the #MeToo movement and tracks the experiences of eight very different Australian women. The play takes its audience into too rarely told territory in the #MeToo conversation, with real life accounts of not just abuse or exclusion or injustice, but the collective strength apparent in how these women have resisted and triumphed over that treatment.

The play offers a diversity of intersectional experiences that are as unique as they are universal, harnessing the power of bearing witness and enabling change. In moments, the play is simultaneously uplifting, confronting, funny, emboldening, and reassuring.

I'M WITH HER is Victoria Midwinter Pitt's most recent work of theatre, composed as a synthesis of a series of interviews with 8 Australian women: bartender Nikki Keating; sex worker Julie Bates; Catholic nun, Patricia Madigan; champion surfer Pam Burridge; former PM Julia Gillard; anthropologist and indigenous leader Marcia Langton; botanist Marion Blackwell and counter-terrorism expert and Federal Minister Anne Aly

Designed to layer these voices as a conversation, which invite the energy of the audience into the work, **I'M WITH HER** vibrates with its own momentum in performance. The play has found positive reception both in intimate staged readings and more expansive settings with audiences who have described it as energizing and hopeful.

These notes are aimed at assisting teachers who wish to bring this playscript into the classroom, while recognising the inherently challenging nature of its content, and equipping teachers with structures and strategies to support its exploration.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Victoria Midwinter Pitt is a film and theatre-maker whose body of work is concerned with exploring the contemporary milieu through “the power and revelation of first-hand storytelling.”

Working in the documentary film format, with works including *Frontier*, *Rampant – How a City Stopped a Plague*, *Surviving Mumbai*, *Leaky Boat* and *Afghanistan - Inside Australia's War*, she has received recognition and awards including Walkley and AACTA awards and has been nominated for Emmy Awards.

Her work has screened within Australia and globally at major film festivals.



CONTENT NOTES: SENSITIVITY AND SAFELY IN PROTOCOLS

I'M WITH HER is an unapologetically provocative and confronting text. The potential rewards of teaching and learning centred around the play are many, given the direct relevance that the play has to many students' lives. The Teaching Notes are an offer to equip teachers with practical strategies in approaching the text with confidence and assurance.

The challenging and sensitive content in this text must be carefully framed and unpacked within the classroom setting. Teachers are often apprehensive about utilising texts which are “dark”, “triggering” or “contentious”. Media commentary, parental scrutiny and political campaigns such as those squared at initiatives like the Safe Schools curriculum or teaching of consent, serve to magnify this concern.

Yet, young people exist in a contemporary world suffused with this complexity, encountered in their own interactions, along with campaigns and protests presented through the mediums of traditional and social media. Trending content on streaming and social media platforms provides evidence that young people are regularly engaging with complex and difficult material. As such, critical examination of works like **I'M WITH HER**, in structured, supported classroom environments, mediated by teachers with professional expertise, represents an opportunity to make sense of this complexity.

The play's ultimately hopeful and empowering focus offers a rare opportunity to reframe this sensitive conversation around the treatment of women and girls in a way that can inspire confidence and respect in young people.

Teachers should also be mindful toward their own self-care. In determining the most appropriate way to work with the play in the classroom, teachers should proceed informed by their knowledge and consideration of the individual experiences of students in their care.

The strategies for approaching sensitive content in the classroom embedded in these Teaching Notes call on my experience working with students over many years. I present a collection of strategies that have emerged and evolved in my own practice. These strategies are informed by collaboration with other teachers in a range of professional settings, through conference presentations and professional learning workshops, along with developing units of learning for the Reading Australia project about sensitive texts such as *The Drover's Wife*, *The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling*, and *Mahtab's Story*.

Particular attribution must be given to the generous partnership and professional insight of Emma Jenkins, Education Officer with the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, whose work along with that of Reading Australia Fellow, Alex Wharton and Wiradjuri/Welsh woman and secondary educator Cara Shipp, has collectively articulated many of the strategies outlined here.

To learn more about approaches to selecting and implementing sensitive texts, the VATE Village podcast episode '*Teaching sensitive texts*', featuring an interview between Emma Jenkins and Vana Watkins, author of these Teaching Notes, is an excellent starting point, along with many of the resources outlined in the 'Resources and further reading' section of these Teaching Notes.

Approaches to the text should include:

- A clear **rationale** for including the text in the curriculum, in alignment with the school or system's text selection policy, as relevant.
 - **I'M WITH HER** presents a unique opportunity to engage students' own experience and understanding of the challenges people identifying as female live with, along with other marginalised groups.
 - Studying the play enables students to engage with a multiplicity of Australian voices with relatable identities and aspirations.
 - **I'M WITH HER** invites the students to develop and reframe their own thinking around the #MeToo conversation, by considering the strengths women bring to surviving and overcoming abuse and discrimination.
 - The play holds up the real potential for change.
- **Pedagogical aims**, which may include:
 - developing empathy
 - facilitating discussion, presentation skills and stimulating student voice
 - developing critical and creative thinking skills
- **Protocols** for bringing students **safely in** to the text, and **safely out** of the text
- Drawing on **multiple sources** when examining the context of specific stories presented in the text, including the use of websites, interviews, own-voice accounts, photographs and artworks
- A **scaffolded** and **supported** understanding of relevant concepts and context, including:
 - explicit teaching of relevant vocabulary
 - feminist movements and campaigns for equality
 - the origins and progression of the #MeToo Movement
 - the continuing culture, diversity and practices of First Nations peoples, the impacts of invasion and the reassertion of rights to cultural identity

CONTENT NOTES

SPECIFIC CONTENT NOTES SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR:

- degradation of women
- sexual and physical assault and homicide
- violence
- suicide
- racism

SAFELY-IN AND SAFELY-OUT PROTOCOLS

These protocols should be used at the commencement and conclusion of studying the text, as well as to conclude individual lessons in which confronting content has been encountered.

To bring students **safely in** to the text:

- facilitate a space that is culturally, emotionally and physically **safe** for students
- emphasise that **opinions can be shared** without concern about silencing or judgement
- develop personal cultural competency and awareness of trauma-informed practices
- be aware of and acknowledge students' **comfort levels** and/or discomfort and unease
- **establish processes** for students to inform the teacher if they are uncomfortable or **to withdraw** themselves from the discussion
- enable **referral pathways** for students experiencing distress
- **recognise students' acts** towards embracing resistance, resilience, healing, hope and intercultural understanding.

To bring students **safely out** of the text:

- **debrief** with students, allowing time for discussion and for activities such as private journaling, exit cards and thinking routines (e.g. 'Connect-Extend-Challenge' and 'I used to think, now I think...')
- **respond to questions** thoughtfully and with accuracy
- model an appropriate **emotional response**
- address problematic attitudes with **curiosity** rather than **criticism**
- **avoid** asking students to 'put themselves in the shoes' of someone who does not share their lived experience
- provide opportunities for **action, student voice** and **agency**.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES: WAYS INTO THE TEXT

Once a safe environment and protocols for approaching the text have been established, initial learning activities may include the following:

Activity: A photo of the 6-year old you

In this activity, students are requested to engage with the motif of 'photographs of the younger self' used throughout **I'M WITH HER**.

Students are instructed to source and bring a photograph of themselves at the age of six to class. The activity invites vulnerability and playfulness and should be framed in such a way.

There are several options for using these photographs as part of the classroom debrief:

- a 'gallery walk' in which the photos are displayed in the classroom; students often enjoying matching the photo with the owner
- a 'show and tell', in which the students are asked to share their career aspirations, interests, joys and obsessions at that age
- The photos could even be assembled in a collage, coupled with words and imagery relating to the aspirations, interests, joys and obsessions of the students at 6, constituting a co-constructed "sea of six-year old girls [and boys]" as described on pp. 60–61

Activity: Context research – group poster presentation

Prior to in-depth exploration of the text, understanding of some of the contextual elements referred to by the characters will be a valuable support for student understanding. The poster presentation offers an opportunity for students to work collaboratively and to produce a resource designed to build their peers' understanding of key contextual references.

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Your task will be to **research, collate and present** an analysis of one of the contextual elements embedded in and surrounding the play, drawing from **at least three different sources** that must be appropriately referenced.

You'll produce a **poster for display**, intended to be read by anyone who is engaging with the play, with the intention of gaining further understanding themselves. Imagine that these posters are part of a display in a venue or theatre foyer.

Your group will be assigned one of the following **six areas** to focus on, although if you'd like to choose a topic not on the list, you should feel free (check with a teacher first!):

- The #MeToo movement
- Laws pertaining to sex-work
- World Surfing championships and women
- Campaigns for reform in the Catholic Church (liturgical inclusivity)
- Family violence in Indigenous communities
- September 11 Terrorist Attacks

RESISTANCE

Given the content of the play and the developmental stage of students, it could be tempting to fixate on the negative elements of the women's experiences. Framing the play as a testament to resistance rather than a catalogue of abuse and discrimination has powerful transformative potential. The thematic and energetic core of the play is that women "always push back against that stuff"

Activities:

1. The Prologue

Five million women in a day said – #MeToo, which prompts these questions:

- How could this have gone on so long?
- Why didn't someone say something?
- Why didn't someone do something?
- Is this just the way things are?
- Do we accept this? Do we?

What assumptions is the play setting up that it is going to challenge by asking these questions?

2. Character arc

Pick a character. What did she want to be when she was six? What obstacles were put in her way, because of her gender? By the end of her monologue, what do we know about what she achieved or became? What does that tell you about the degree to which she accepted the abuse or discrimination she experienced?

This character arc might be set out as a listing of responses to the questions above. It could also be made into a template for students to use.

3. Resistance Map.

Using the character from the activity above, list all the ways, big and small, in thoughts, words and actions she expresses her resistance to these obstacles.

E.g. When one of the ways Marion Blackwell expresses resistance is in silence. When is told she can't be a vet because she can't "throw an elephant", the dialogue proceeds:

WOMAN 2: What did you say?
MARION BLACKWELL: Nothing. Wasn't allowed to speak
WOMAN 2: What did you do?
MARION BLACKWELL: I just looked at him
WOMAN 2: What did you think? Do you remember?
MARION BLACKWELL: Yes.
I thought: "Are you an idiot"?

In spite of not being able to speak up or do anything, Blackwell finds truth and strength in the thought she has in response to the Dean.

When students have listed these examples, lay these out for the whole cast.

Ask students:

What patterns can you see in

- The kinds of obstacles women face
- The resistance and opposition these women describe.
- What is surprising about those patterns?

4. That's just the way it is.

Throughout the play, a motif is the phrase "that's just the way it is".

Challenge students to find as many of these instances as they can.

Discuss:

- Do you agree that "that is just the way it is" ?
- How does the play resolve or provide an answer to that question?

Activity: Enriching contextual understanding

A helpful resource for enriching contextual understanding is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation series, You Can't Ask That. This series centres lived experiences of diverse and intersectional individuals and works to demystify and challenge stereotypes. Episodes of relevance to I'm With Her include:

- S01 E04 – Muslims
- S01 E08 – Indigenous
- S01 E09 – Sex workers
- S03 E01 – Sexual assault survivors
- S04 E01 – Domestic and family violence

Activity: Julia Gillard's 'Misogyny Speech' (That Speech): October 9 2012

Julia Gillard's monologue (performed by Woman 5) extensively references the speech which later became referred to as the "Misogyny Speech" (and described by Gillard in I'm With Her as "That Speech"). Background knowledge of the speech is desirable for students studying the play. The speech may be viewed on YouTube and the transcript is available via Hansard.

The 10-year anniversary of the delivery of the speech occurred on October 9 2022, prompting renewed commentary on its impact and legacy. Students may be invited to investigate and read some of these articles, summarising their sentiments in a table like that set out below:

I'M WITH HER

Article Title	Source	What opinion does the article provide about the speech?	What legacy does the article suggest the speech has?
The lasting impact of Julia Gillard's misogyny speech	The Saturday Paper		
Australia's road to gender equality: 10 years on from Julia Gillard's viral 'misogyny speech'	Global Citizen		
The reckoning of Julia Gillard's misogyny speech	Pursuit – Melbourne University		
'This is not OK from our first female PM': Gillard's legacy under the spotlight	Sydney Morning Herald		
Young Aus Women Are Jaded By Politics — Growing Up In The Gillard Era May Have Played A Part	Pedestrian		

Activity: Exploring verbatim theatre

Discussion:

What difference does it make to the play's impact that it is based on real life experience, told directly by these eight women?

See the Writer's Notes (pp. xi-x) for Victoria Midwinter Pitt's account of how she gathered these stories and built them into a script.

To introduce the concept of verbatim theatre, share this video from National Theatre:
<https://youtu.be/ui3k1wT2yeM>

Students might use a note taking template. In discussion after viewing, students should be able to identify some of the features and characteristics of verbatim theatre, including:

- Makes use of the meticulously recorded 'words' of the interviewee/subject/community
- Arises from the traditions of documentary theatre and community theatre
- May make use of secondary material such as letters, newspaper reports and other transcripts (e.g. Hansard reports)
- Invites consideration of staging and use of elements of drama to bring words to the stage

Students may then investigate examples of verbatim theatre productions, for example:

- Are you now or have you ever been: Investigations of show-business by the Un-American Activities Committee by Eric Bentley
- *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project
- *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* by Anna Deavere Smith
- *My Name is Rachel Corrie* by Alan Rickman and Katharine Viner
- *Aftershocks* by Paul Brown
- *Run Rabbit Run! And Letters to Lindy* by Alana Valentine
- *Embers* by Champion Decent
- *Come From Away* by Irene Sankoff and David Hein
- *Riot Road* videos on YouTube: *Worst Mistake of My Life*, *Cis-terhood* and *Sweaty Little Slut*

Collating their findings into a table like the one below might be a helpful whole-class activity (adapted from Burton and Ford, 2018):

Text	Elements of verbatim theatre in this play	Identify the community being represented	Explain the story being told
E.g. Letters to Lindy by Alana Valentine			

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Activity: Comparing conventions

This activity asks students to summarise their understanding of familiar and new textual forms, connecting prior knowledge with new.

Feature	Novel	Drama / Theatre	Verbatim Theatre
Title of the person who created the text			
How is the text structured?			
Name of the people text is written for			
How do we get to know the characters?			
How is the setting made apparent? (time and place)			
How is action shown?			
How is meaning created?			

LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES (SUBJECT-ORIENTED)

ENGLISH

Activity: Vocabulary

Given the conceptual complexity and contextual depth of **I'M WITH HER**, study of the text is recommended to be supported by explicit teaching of key vocabulary, as summarised below. Some explicit vocabulary instruction strategies, derived from Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2013), are set out below:

Examples and non-examples

This strategy may take a range of forms, including providing students with a list of examples and non-examples, and asking them to identify which is which. This works best with adjectives:

e.g. Word: formidable

'If I say something that sounds *formidable*, say "formidable", if not, don't say anything'

- An athlete's winning performance
- A suckling lamb
- The tallest building in a city

(Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013, pp. 185-6)

Other explicit vocabulary instruction methods include:

- Identifying word types
- Identifying morphemes
- Investigating etymology
- Categorisation into tiers
- Utilising Frayer model and other graphic organisers
- Generating situations, contexts and examples
- Word associations, relationships and semantic webs
- Returning to the story context
- Writing
- Puzzles

Vocabulary used in *I'm With Her*

Anecdote	Anthropologist	Burqa	Carbon Tax
Catalyst	Colonisation	Commiserate	Concubines
Decriminalise	Democracy	Denigration	Dictatorship
Dramaturg	Empathy	Entourage	Equity
Family Violence	Federation	Femicide	First Nations
Formidable	Gidget	Harassment	HIV/AIDS
Homicide	Impediment	Impromptu	Incarceration
Indigenous	Larrikin	Matriarchy	Misogyny
Monologue	Mycologist	Ochre	Oligarchy
Ordain	Parliamentarian	Patriarchy	Photosynthesize
Question Time	Reckoning	Resistance	Self-deprecation
Self-determination	Sex worker	Shearer	Smoko
Solidarity	Stolen Generations	Superlative	Surveying
Systemic	Theology	Trauma	Unmitigated
Verbatim	Wireless (radio)		

ACTIVITY: CHARACTER EXPLORATION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ACT ONE: The Elephant in the Room

Nikki Keating

1. What is Keating's occupation?
2. What was her career aspiration as a child?
3. What was important to Keating?
4. What do you think Keating means by the line "Something beautiful. Something wrong"?
5. How does the act of switching tense affect the delivery of Keating's anecdotes?
6. What does Keating say is the "last thing she wanted"?
7. What 'uniform' does Keating wear to work? What uniform do males wear in her workplace? What kind of meanings or politics are expressed in the difference between those two dress codes? There are dress codes (formal and informal) in all sorts of situations, where people who identify as female and male dress very differently – think of some of those contexts. What do those differences mean?
8. Early in her career, Keating is on the receiving end of what her customers seem to regard as 'jokes'. Are these jokes? What are the dynamics at work in these scenarios?
9. What was the turning point for Keating in rejecting this treatment?
10. What was the impact on her fellow bar workers?

Julie Bates

1. What is Bates' occupation?
2. What does Bates say she and her colleagues are the "queens of"?
3. What did Bates' grandmother, grandfather and uncle each teach her?
4. How did the city regard Bates and her colleagues back when she started her career?
5. What effect does the use of truncated sentences in Bates' monologue create?
6. What was the turning point for Bates in seeing herself differently?
7. How did the HIV/AIDS crisis change Bates' work and life?
8. What was Julie Bates' Order of Australia medal awarded for?
9. What does Bates say continues to be her work?

Patricia Madigan

1. What is Madigan's occupation?
2. Madigan describes growing up in a "parallel universe" run by women. What was that world? Are there other environments like this elsewhere in society? What, if any, differences are there in worlds run by men and women?
3. How does Madigan link the issues of imbalance of power and sexual abuse?
4. What is Madigan's main criticism of the Catholic Church?
5. What roles did Madigan play in her work with the Church and what roles did she observe other women playing?
6. How were their professional opportunities different because they were women?
7. What did Madigan discover when she spoke with women in her interfaith role? What did that tell her about the official reasons for limiting the roles women take?
8. Why didn't Madigan follow her friends' advice and just leave the Church?
9. What was Madigan's PhD topic?

Pam Burridge

1. The three women whose monologue come in the Second Act of the play, speak in chorus at the beginning of Burridge's monologue. What purpose do you think this serves?
2. What is Burridge's occupation?
3. What does Burridge tell the audience about the early place of men and women in surfing, from the ancient Hawaiian traditions?
4. How old was Burridge when she competed in her first competition?
5. How old was Burridge when she won her first Australian title?
6. Comment on the use of projections in Pam Burridge's monologue. What effect do you think they are intended to have?
7. Once she was on the professional surf tour, what differences did Burridge encounter in the treatment of male and female surfers?
8. Why do the chorus of women speak again later, in the most difficult moment in Pam Burridge's monologue? What effect do you think this is intended to have?
9. How do you think the treatment of female surfers and Burridge's crisis of confidence are connected?
10. What do you think was the most important change Burridge made, to enable her to return to surfing and compete for the World Championship?
11. What impact do you think her success had on other Australian female surfers?

Julia Gillard

1. What does the idiom 'elephant in the room' refer to?
2. Where was Julia Gillard born?
3. What meaning can you infer from the projected phrases:
 - a. Ditch the Witch
 - b. Bob Brown's Bitch
 - c. Deliberately Barren
 - d. RED Hot!
 - e. Realisation of the Great Feminist Dream
 - f. Is This How You Smash A Glass Ceiling?
 - g. It's a GIRL
4. What did "the story" of Gillard's Prime Ministership end up becoming?
5. Why is that story "the elephant in the room" for women who want to tell their daughters they can become anything? What effect does it have on young women who might consider a career in politics?
6. Gillard states that when the abuse hit a crescendo, "there are two ways of understanding what happened next". What is the difference between the two reasons she gives for the eruption of "That Speech"?
7. Why do you think the excerpts from "That Speech" are delivered by a chorus of the other characters? What effect does this have on the audience?
8. What does Gillard say is the real story of her Prime Ministership? What achievements does she outline from her Prime Ministership? How could her Prime Ministership be told differently, and what difference would that make to young women who might consider a career in politics?
9. This monologue is essentially in two halves
 - a. How would you describe the focus of each half of the monologue?
 - b. What is the effect of this structure on the audience?

ACT TWO: Throwing the Elephant

Marcia Langton

1. What is Langton's occupation?
2. Who does she say initiated the #MeToo movement?
3. Why do you think Langton expresses distrust or disdain for the movement?
4. Why do you think that Langton then chooses to continue to join the conversation of this play? What does this tell you about Langton and her relationship with the audience?
5. Look at the footnote at the bottom of page 39. Why do you think this footnote has been included? What do you think Langton means by "bring them with you"?
6. Note down the statistics shared by Langton about the probability of family violence directed toward Indigenous women
7. What was the significance of Langton going to university?
8. What dilemma did Langton find herself in, in her field work in Alice Springs?
9. How do you interpret the quote that Langton shares: "to world is run by people who show up"? How does her story relate to this quote?
10. What challenge does Langton lay down to the audience at the end of her monologue?
11. Comment on the effectiveness of the 'sounds of the bush' between the end of Langton's monologue and the beginning of Marion Blackwell's. What purpose do these sounds serve?

Marion Blackwell

1. What is Blackwell's occupation?
2. How did Blackwell receive her early education?
3. What discoveries did Blackwell make as a child?
4. What did Blackwell receive for her seventh birthday? What memories does she have around that gift, and what impact did it have on her?
5. What role did First Nations people play in Blackwell's young life? What was her relationship with them?
6. What happened when Blackwell and her father came to enrol her in Veterinary Science?
7. What does it mean to "throw an elephant"?
8. What did Blackwell do when she was blocked from her first choice of study?
9. Blackwell describes plants in Western Australia that "photosynthesize in the dark". What is the symbolism of this?
10. What is the place where the 'honey pot mountains' are found called?
11. How old is Marion Blackwell? What similarities are there with life of the youngest woman in the play, Nikki Keating?
12. Near the end of her monologue, Blackwell explains the conditions for 'growth' to occur. What are these? What is the underlying message here?

Anne Aly

1. What is Aly's occupation?
2. What does Aly say she wanted to be when she grew up?
3. What meaning do you infer from the Arabic phrase shared by Aly: *dul el ragal wala dul el heit*: 'The shade of a man is like the shade of a wall'?
4. To what extent did Aly accept and/or reject that idea?
5. What did Anne Aly reveal for the first time in her Aly her International Women's Day speech?
6. What is the effect of the staccato delivery of the lines on pp. 54-55?
7. Why did so many other women get in contact with Aly after she made her that speech?
8. What is the effect of the non-diegetic sound used in Anne Aly's monologue?
9. Why do all the other women join in during Aly's monologue?
10. Aly says she entered Parliament with high hopes about what she was going to achieve. What was her experience like? What choice did that confront her with?
11. What collective energies does Aly release at the end of her piece? How does this resolve the questions of the play?

Epilogue

The fiery ending of Anne Aly's piece feels like it might be the ending of the play, but it's not. Throughout the play we've heard about what these women dreamt when they were six years old, that they would grow up to be. Why does the play end with these grown women turning the clock in reverse and dreaming of their six-year-old selves?

What effect is achieved by the final story telling of the epilogue?

Activity: Connections

In this activity, students are invited to make connections based on their reading and understanding of the text. The format of this activity sits with the teacher's discretion; it may be appropriate that these are recorded in a private journal, or it may be suitable to conduct this as a whole-class activity in a hands-on fashion, with students writing and posting their connections on post-it notes in the classroom. It could also be conducted virtually, enabling parallel conversation using a digital tool like Padlet.

Students are invited to make connections in four different categories:

Text-to-world (T-W) – connections between the text and the wider world, e.g. *In 2022 there are 27 countries with a female leader*

Text-to-text – connections between the text and other texts that they have encountered, e.g. *Pam Burrige's story reminds me of another book I have read, the biography of Bethany Hamilton, called Soul Surfer*

Text-to-self (T-S) – connections between the text and their own lived experience, e.g. *Marion Blackwell loves nature and so do I.*

Note that text-to-self connections have potential to cause distress for some students and/or lead to disclosures, so need to be treated with caution.

Text-within-text (T-W-T) – connections within the stories presented in the text, e.g. *Anne Aly's story relates to Marcia Langton's because they are both part of racial minorities in Australia.*

Activity: Human graphs and character sorting

These activities utilise embodied pedagogies to enable students to engage with the content of the play formulate judgements, connecting with their own experiences, views and values:

Human graphs:

Designed to engage with the social, political, cultural and personal issues encountered in the play, students are invited to place themselves on a continuum in relation to a set of statements.

It can be useful to place these statements on slides to be projected in the classroom as this activity is undertaken. The classroom should be arranged to enable students to align themselves with a continuum. This could be a lateral continuum from 1-10, in which 1 represents 'strongly disagree' and 10 represents 'strongly agree', or alternatively the 4 corners of the room can be used to denote "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree" and "strongly disagree".

Sample statements:

- Hospitality is a dangerous profession
- As we grow up, we have more reasons to be cynical
- Quotas should be used in Parliament and Cabinet
- Sex work should not be a crime
- Equal pay should be offered to male and female athletes competing in the same sport
- The #MeToo movement has caused more harm than good
- Too many women just put up with abuse
- No woman ever just puts up with abuse
- There is hope to be found in resistance
- Feminist movements often lack intersectionality

Character sorting/superlatives

In this activity, students reflect on the 'characters' presented in the play. To set this up, print the names of each woman on a large A3 sheet of paper, and lay them out in a line across the floor or across desks. Then, present students with a series of prompts and explain that they need to collectively rearrange the names on a continuum where 1 represents 'least' and 10 represents 'most'.

Sample statements:

- Most outspoken
- Most interesting guest at a party
- Most vulnerable
- Most intelligent
- Most wise
- Most angry
- Most insightful

When conducting this activity, the discussions that emerge while students are arranging names along the continuum and the debriefing and justification of opinions after is often rich and perceptive.

Activity: Intertextuality

Ask students to reflect on this Martin Niemoller quote:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

Students should be able to make connections between the quote and the sentiments represented in the epilogue of I'm With Her.

As a follow up activity, ask students to find quotes that they can connect with other key themes and ideas presented in the play.

DRAMA

The clearest opportunity for utilising **I'M WITH HER** in the Drama classroom is for the purpose of developing a staged reading or production. It is worth noting that **I'M WITH HER** is specifically designed to succeed as both a fully realised stage production, and also as a staged reading, where actors read the play with script in hand. Staged readings maintain the sense that the performer is channelling another voice and another experience, and the energy lies in where character and performer meet.

The play's website, www.imwithhertheplay.com, offers valuable resources for staged readings including director's notes. Students and schools can also make use of the digital design elements from the play's professional stagings: the projections including sound and music are available to download via the play's website.

Many senior secondary curricula require students to collaboratively plan and stage a production as part of their coursework, for example, VCE Theatre Studies in Victoria, WACE ATAR Drama in Western Australia and QCE Drama in Queensland.

Many of the activities formulated for the English classroom above are also amply adaptable to drama classrooms. Students may additionally be provided with opportunities to pursue their own projects in verbatim theatre, including the two assessment opportunities outlined below.

WELLBEING, HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Australian schools are well-resourced yet under-serviced or unevenly represented when it comes to quality education in respectful relationships, consent education and sexuality.

Studying **I'M WITH HER** presents opportunities for transdisciplinary learning and meaningful curriculum connections. These topics are most commonly taught within the Health and Physical Education domain, though some schools employ a wellbeing or pastorally focused timetable class to deliver this content.

Summarised below are links to activities drawn from various providers which connect well to the ideas and experiences presented in **I'M WITH HER**. Further links to state-based resources in this area are included in the Resources and further reading section.

Activity: Brainswarm – exploring identity (ReachOut Schools)

This activity may be well placed at the beginning of studying the play. It is designed for younger students, yet will activate conversations around diversity, inclusivity and respectful relationships, by articulating 'all the ways people can be different'.

<https://schools.au.reachout.com/respectful-relationships/exploring-identity-and-inclusivity>

Activity: Placemat activity – safe, secure and supported

Another learning activity suitable for the beginning of the unit, this activity involves generating points in answer to the prompt: 'These things make me feel safe, secure and supported. Using a large sheet of paper divided into 4 quadrants, with another square at the centre, students write silently in their own quadrant for 5-10 minutes, based on the prompt. They are then invited to share what they have written, and to synthesise this into a group definition in the centre square. Further synthesis can take place by combining each group's definition for a whole-class agreed definition.

Activity: Building respectful relationships and circle chat (ReachOut Schools)

This activity enables students to develop a shared definition of inclusivity, before collaboratively articulating the behaviours that characterise respectful family relationships, friendships and intimate partnerships.

<https://schools.au.reachout.com/respectful-relationships/building-respect-in-relationships>

EVALUATION

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Recording verbatim responses: podcast project

To complete this assessment task, students are invited to compose an interview to record an account of the experiences of an elder in their lives. Students are then required to transform this into a podcast script, which they record and edit, splicing together their own narration and their interviewee's words.

Classroom instruction and preparation should centre around some of the following aspects:

- Deciding on a subject and focus/inquiry question
- Developing open-ended questions for interviews
- Crafting a podcast script
- Technical aspects of sound recording and production (including making and editing recordings, adding sound effects and soundtracks)

This assessment task presents an opportunity to engage students in rich social and emotional learning, though it is to be approached with care. Students should not be placed in a position where they might trigger traumatic memories for an interviewee or be privy to disclosures.

Some suitable prompts for this project include:

- Interview an elder about a significant historical event they have lived through
- Interview an elder about the first thing they ever wanted to be and what happened next
- Interview an elder about what they have lived through in their working lives, and what they did next.

Crafting an additional scene or monologue

To complete this assessment task, students are invited to compose and craft an additional scene or monologue for I'm With Her. In preparation for this task, the class might brainstorm possible perspectives or subjects for an additional scene or moment. There are a range of creative avenues for exploration, such as:

- Researching an additional subject and 'stitching together' a monologue, based on verbatim records of the subject's words that exist in the public domain (interviews and writing)
- Interviewing a person in their lives in relation to the topics encountered in **I'M WITH HER**, then constructing this into a similar structure to the monologues in the play
- Composing a monologue from their own perspective, in the style of the monologues in the play.

Note that the safely-in and safely-out protocols suggest that activities that ask students to 'put themselves in the shoes' of another, particularly someone who has endured adverse experiences or trauma, is not deemed to be psychologically safe.

REVISITING SAFELY-OUT PROTOCOLS

At the conclusion of any teaching and learning sequence using I'm With Her, teachers are advised to revisit the safely-out protocols set out earlier in these Teaching Notes.

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

SUBSCRIBER RESOURCES:

- AustLit – **I'M WITH HER**
- AustLit – Victoria Midwinter-Pitt

Please note that AustLit is a rich resource for any study of Australian literature or Australian writers. To access this online resource, you need to do so via your school library or through your own personal membership of your state or Territory library service. Talk to your school or local librarian for more information.

ABOUT THE BOOK AND AUTHOR:

- Currency Press – **I'M WITH HER**
- Fremantle Press – Author Page
- IMDB page (director/writer) – Victoria Midwinter-Pitt
- LinkedIn Profile – Victoria Midwinter-Pitt
- Screen Australia Guide – Victoria Midwinter-Pitt

REVIEWS:

- Artshub
- Audrey Journal
- Australian Stage
- Canberra Critics Circle
- City Hub Sydney
- On the Town
- Seesaw WA
- Stage Whispers
- Suzy Goes See
- Sydney Morning Herald
- Theatre Travels

DISCUSSIONS, NEWS AND INTERVIEWS:

- Full Interview with Director and Lead Writer, Victoria Midwinter Pitt: Darlinghurst Theatre Co
- Interview: Victoria Midwinter Pitt (**I'M WITH HER**) – Theatre Travels
- I'm With Her comes to Subiaco Arts Centre Next Month – Broadway World Perth
- Performance Details: Half the Sky, Subiaco Arts Centre
- We will not sit down or stand to the side – June Oscar: Australian Human Rights Commission

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS TEACHING RESOURCES: RESOURCES FROM STATES AND TERRITORIES

- PDHPE Teacher Toolkit: Prevention of Domestic Violence – New South Wales
- Respectful relationships education program - Queensland
- Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum – South Australia
- Respectful Relationships Teaching and Learning package – Tasmania
- Resilience, rights and respectful relationships – Victoria
- Building Respectful Relationships - Victoria
- Growing and developing healthy relationships – Western Australia
- ReachOut Respectful Relationships classroom exercises

PUBLICATIONS DEALING WITH SIMILAR CONTENT:

- Abdel-Magied, Y. (2017). *Yassmin's Story: Who Do You Think I Am?* Melbourne: Vintage Australia
- Aly, A. (2018). *Finding My Place: from Cairo to Canberra – the irresistible story of an irrepressible woman.* Sydney: Harper Collins
- Byrski, L (ed.) (2021). *Women of a Certain Rage.* Fremantle: Fremantle Press
- Gillard, J. and Okonjo-Iweala, N. (2021). *Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons.* Melbourne: Penguin.
- Gillard, J. (2022). *Not Now, Not Ever: Ten years on from the misogyny speech.* Melbourne: Vintage Australia
- McCabe, H. and Rizvi, J. (eds.) (2020). *Untold Resilience.* Melbourne: Penguin.

RESOURCES RELATING TO THE SUBJECTS OF EACH MONOLOGUE:

Nikki Keating

ABC Interview: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-05/sexual-harassment-survey-to-examine-workplaces/9119062>

Julie Bates AO

Sydney Morning Herald article: <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/you-have-to-be-brave-sex-worker-advocate-julie-bates-recognised-20180608-p4zkft.html>

Kirby Institute interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Y-gkBhLdY8>

Patricia Madigan

ABC Television: The Moral Compass – “Does Christianity really offer women a place at the table?”- Geraldine Doogue with Kristina Keneally, Julia Baird, Trish Madigan OP and John Dickson, ABC television. Sunday 3 May 2015.:

<https://www.abc.net.au/sundaynights/stories/s4211057.htm>

Pam Burridge

Girls Can't Surf - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9005244/>

Pam Burridge biography by Marion Skell: <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/731693>

Julia Gillard

See above

Marcia Langton

ABC Interview: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/marcia-langton-and-indigenous-storytelling/13090676>

National Press Club Speech: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/national-press-club/2016-11-17/national-press-club:-ending-the-violence-in/8034682>

Marion Blackwell

ABC Interview: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/wisdom-interviews-marion-blackwell/3540102>

ABC Profile: <https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/how-to/marions-sanctum/11379324>

Anne Aly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvNnIfc72Kw>

REFERENCES

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction. New York: Guilford.

Burton, B and Ford, R. ‘Verbatim Theatre – an extract from ‘Living Drama 5e’ in MUSE Sheet, Drama Queensland, Term 1, 2018, accessed 10th November 2022 at <https://www.dramaqueensland.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DQMUSETerm12018.pdf>