

## **SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL**

**BY ANDREA JAMES**

(Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai)

### **Education Resource**

*Over the doorway before you enter Centre Court is a poem:  
‘If you can meet with triumph and disaster,  
And treat those two imposters just the same.’*

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Tuuli Narkle and ensemble, Sydney Festival production 2021

*Sunshine Super Girl is not a documentary, but rather a dramatization for stage that relives the moments that we remember and know about. Ours is a legendary tale about a legend and national icon, Evonne Goolagong-Cawley*  
 Andrea James (Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai), playwright and director

## INTRODUCTION

The Honourable, Linda Burney (Wiradjuri) Federal MP, is the first Aboriginal person to serve in the NSW Parliament in 2003 and the first Aboriginal woman elected to the Federal House of Representatives in 2016. She was asked to write an introduction for the published script of *Sunshine Super Girl*. As an introduction to this resource and to the production, here is an extract from what she wrote:

*Evonne Goolagong is Wiradjuri, a strong woman, a champion tennis player, a wonderful human, and my cousin. In 1971, I was at Leeton High School, being made to feel embarrassed and ashamed of my Aboriginality, while Evonne was heading for great success, winning tournaments and representing Australia at the highest of levels. She won the first of her two Wimbledon titles in 1971 and went on to win her second title in 1980, a remarkable nine years after her first title win, beating four top-10 players and defeating two Grand Slam finalists in earlier rounds along the way. Her 1980 win made her the first mother to win Wimbledon since Dorothea Chambers in 1914. That same year I was in my first year of teaching at Lethbridge Park Primary School.*

*Evonne’s career was so amazing to watch for many Australians—this young Indigenous girl from the bush, Wiradjuri country, born in Griffith, and grown up in Barellan, a town that had a population of 538 on the night of the 2016 census. Who would have thought that this young girl from Barellan would go on to win 82 singles titles, 53 doubles titles and six mixed doubles titles? (Sunshine Super Girl, Currency Press, 2021).*

Taking inspiration from Linda Burney’s words, this resource has been prepared to introduce teachers and students to Evonne Goolagong-Cawley (if they aren’t familiar already) and to the production of *Sunshine Super Girl* that was created from her life and career.

### **MORE ABOUT THIS RESOURCE**

This resource has been produced to accompany a national tour of Performing Lines’ production of *Sunshine Super Girl*. In contextualising the production and its artistic, historical and political contexts, the words and voices of the creative team and Indigenous writers and scholars are incorporated as much as possible.

The production is suitable for students and young people in Years 7 to 12. Included in this resource is a wide range of activities that explore the production through the learning areas of Drama, Theatre studies, Dance, English, History, Civics and Citizenship, the General Capabilities of Critical Thinking, Intercultural Understanding, Ethical Understanding and Social and Personal learning, and an emphasis on the Cross Curriculum Priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture.

More detailed references to the Australian Curriculum can be found in the table located at the end of the resource. The activities and tasks have been designed to be adapted for different ages and skill levels, to challenge, to provoke, and to enrich students’ and teachers’ experience of seeing the production. Further, senior secondary students of Drama, Theatre, Dance, Australian History and Indigenous Studies will find there are many activities that will relate to their studies, particularly those studying Years 10 and 11.

### **TEACHING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURE**

In the document titled, *Teaching First Nations Content and Concepts*, you will find helpful advice in relation to teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture, and how to be a positive presence in the cultural interface. The document identifies that a question often asked by teachers and students is, ‘What themes and concepts should students explore?’ The answer is, ‘Any. What is important is that the exploration emphasises the complexity and diversity of people’s experiences, including those of your students’ (Ilbijerri, Drama Victoria, Monash University, 2019, p. 29), and to explore them respectfully.

Another key question is which terms are appropriate to use when considering First Nations content and the cross-curriculum priority.

‘As teachers, you are probably familiar with the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since it is the one used by ACARA, VCAA and AITSL. Given this, it is understandable that you might be feeling confused by our use of the term ‘First Nations’ instead. Deciding which terms to use in this resource was a learning experience for us and we were surprised to realise that there were different norms operating in our various work contexts’. (Ilbijerri et al, p. 11).

To find out more please see the resource: [Teaching First Nations Content and Concepts](#)

### WHAT DOES THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM SAY?

The Australian Curriculum (2021) identifies two distinct needs in education in relation to teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures:

- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem.
- that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures.

The Australian Curriculum states the aim of the cross-curriculum priority is for students to ‘understand that Identities and Cultures have been, and are, a source of strength and resilience for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples against the historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation’ (ACARA, 2021).

The curriculum also speaks to the role of interconnection between Country/Place, Culture and People stating, ‘These relationships are linked to the deep knowledge traditions and holistic world views of Aboriginal communities and/or Torres Strait Islander communities’ (ACARA, 2021).

This education resource for *Sunshine Super Girl* aims to respectfully address the cross-curriculum priority with relevant links throughout, including activities and discussion to build engagement in and understanding of Australia’s First Nations people.

### First Languages Map

At the following links teachers and students will find an interactive languages map and further advice in relation to language in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture.

Students can locate where they live on the map and then find the language group and peoples who are the traditional owners of the lands on which they live and learn.

<https://gambay.com.au/> AND <https://gambay.com.au/teachers>

## PREPARING TO SEE *SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL* BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### *SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL IS THEATRE*

Have you been to the theatre? Perhaps seen a musical or a play? You may have performed in a musical or a play or worked back-stage. What have been your experiences? What types of theatre spaces have you been in? Large, grand theatres with tiers of seating? Small intimate spaces where you are sitting very close to the performers? If *Sunshine Super Girl* is your first-time seeing theatre, then you are in for a great experience.

In the theatre you are part of a live audience watching live performers in real time. Both audience and performers can see and hear each other, the story can only go forward, not backwards, nor paused, nor repeated. In a way you are held captive. Theatre is unique in this regard. The liveness makes it unique and can make it a far more powerful (and risky) experience than other media. You may have felt this yourself if you have acted in plays or musicals. This risk and liveness are often why writers choose theatre as a medium through which to explore their ideas.

The term ‘theatre’ has its origins in the ancient Greek for “the seeing place” or “to behold” (theasthai). In Classical and Western cultures, it was the place where people came together to see the truth about life and society. American theatre actor, Willem Dafoe, stated that “Great theatre is about challenging how we think and encouraging us to fantasize about a world we aspire to”.

Writing about the purpose of art and theatre, First Nations playwright and performer Nakkiah Lui writes;

‘This is what [theatre] does, it creates a process, an experience, in which we challenge and understand how our identity is constructed. Whether that be from the intimate relationships in a slice of life drama, to a new take on a Greek classic. Each play is a study of the process of how we are becoming. For theatre to be relevant today and in the future it needs to create work that contributes to the process of what Australia is becoming’. (Lui in *The Guardian*, June 12, 2014 [Is Australian theatre racist?](#))

**DISCUSS** these quotes from performer Willem Dafoe and Nakkiah Lui.

- Do you also think it is theatre’s role to challenge and aspire to?
- Should theatre also entertain? Should it make you laugh?

- What else should or could theatre do?

### THEATRE IS POLITICAL

What is political theatre? ‘Political theatre is a term that has been used to refer to different forms, theatrical styles or performances that comments on political/social/cultural issues, political action or protest that has a theatrical quality to it’ ([Political Theatre - NSW Curriculum](#)). Many of you may be aware of theatre practitioners such as Bertolt Brecht who, together with his company and creative peers, generated a form of theatre known as Epic.

You might want to take a look at this article. The writer discusses contemporary political theatre and comments on how Australian theatre may have lots its ‘politic’. Aboriginal artists may offer a very different view to this writer.

[Political Theatre - Victoria Pengilly - ABC Radio](#)

### SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL AND POLITICAL THEATRE

*Who is Andrea James? A Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai woman with mad Polish roots and very big hair. Fiercely loyal and **always politically motivated**, I invade contemporary art spaces to uphold rich and ever-evolving cultural traditions – Andrea James, Playwright, Director, Theatre Maker*

The playwright and director of *Sunshine Super Girl*, Andrea James, clearly states her work is **politically motivated**. What do you think she means?

As a production, *Sunshine Super Girl* also tells the story of an Aboriginal woman and is directed and performed by Aboriginal artists. Academic Liza-Mare Syron (Biripi) from the University of New South Wales who reviewed the production, comments on the importance of this aspect of the production:

*Having creative control over how an Indigenous story is developed and presented is a key feature of what makes a work Indigenous. The theatrical framework in which we work is mostly determined by Western and European understandings of theatre narrative structures, plot, characters, stage elements and language. In this, the role of the Indigenous director or playwright is often to provide and support a way of working that embeds Indigenous ways of knowing, seeing, and doing in performance. Liza-Mare Syron, Moogahlin Performing Arts/Indigenous Scientia Senior Lecturer UNSW [The Conversation - Sydney Festival Review](#)*

**DISCUSS** this comment by Liza Mare Syron

- How does the author of the article make a comparison between Western and Indigenous theatre making?
- Why would these distinctions in relation to theatre making be important?

- How might the process of making theatre be a political act in the context of Australian society?

In the production you will see some scenes set in Sydney, NSW. In these scenes we hear about the Freedom Rides and the National Tent Embassy of 1972, two key political moments in the ongoing journey of rights and reconciliation for Aboriginal people in Australia. Note this extract from the play between Evonne and her activist friend, Bob.

EVONNE: I'm not as political as you!  
BOB: You're a blackfella living in Australia. That's political!

**NOW READ** the following extract from a review of the production by Indigenous artist Bryan Andy (Yorta Yorta)

*This play explores Australian racism with profundity and insight. It doesn't shy away from the dark undercurrents that exist in our country, whether the constructs of whiteness care to admit it or not. Links are made to South Africa's Apartheid regime, subtly highlighting parallels between South Africa's and Australia's historical systems of racial segregation.*

*Big issues like the Stolen Generations and Australian racism are blended in with tact. The wholesome fun of a family trip to the local cinema is nibbed short when you realise the Aboriginal family is "roped off" down the front of the theatre – Bryan Andy (Yorta Yorta) Witness Performance, October, 2020 [Hitting a winner - review of Sunshine Super Girl, Witness Performance](#)*

**DISCUSS** some of the key ideas that Bryan Andy raises in this extract – Apartheid, Stolen Generations, the rights of Aboriginal Australians in the 1960s and 1970s (when the play is set).

- What do you know about these issues and policies?
- How can you find out more?
- Now refer back to the small extract from the play "You're a blackfella living in Australia. That's political" – what does Bob mean?

## THE NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE IN AUSTRALIA

*Many had not realised the political force that the theatre represented. In 1972 the first formal theatre production of the National Black Theatre was performed at Sydney's Nimrod Theatre in Kings Cross. An opening night review of The National Black Theatre's 'Basically Black' in the Sydney Morning Herald recognised the performance as a historical event, with critic Margaret Jones writing, "Black political theatre in Australia had its first serious airing this week when Aboriginal actors presented a savagely satirical revue to a packed and partisan Nimrod Street audience.*



### LEARN MORE ABOUT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

You can learn more about the National Black Theatre, including interviews and video clips, at this link: [Basically Black Legacy - National Black Theatre](#)

Further information can be found here including history, influences, and how performances were created in response to the politics of the time including the Tent Embassy and land rights. [Black\\_Theatre - Sydney](#)

An historic clip from the ABC Four Corners from 1972 that describes the new theatre using terms that are challenging and very colonial in their tone. It is worth a discussion!

[ABC Four Corners - Black Theatre report 1972](#)

### DISCUSS

Having read, researched and discussed the stimulus and prompt material in this section about politics and theatre:

- What is your understanding of political and social theatre?
- What may be inherently political about Indigenous theatre?
- What do you anticipate *Sunshine Super Girl* will offer in terms of political and social issues?



Tuuli Narkle and Kyle Shilling as Roger, Sydney Festival production 2021

## TENNIS

The Medieval form of tennis is termed as real tennis, a game that evolved over three centuries, from an earlier ball game played around the 12th century in France which involved hitting a ball with a bare hand and later with a glove. By the 16th century, the glove had become a racket, the game had moved to an enclosed playing area, and the rules had stabilized. Real tennis spread in popularity throughout royalty in Europe, reaching its peak in the 16th century. Source: [History of Tennis](#)

### RESEARCH:

Work in pairs and research one of the following tournaments or tennis players

Tournaments mentioned in the play:

- Wimbledon, US Open, Federation Cup, Virginia Slims, Australian Open, French Open, South African Open

Famous tennis players mentioned:

- Margaret Smith-Court, John Newcombe, Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert, Rod Laver, Billie Jean King, Arthur Ashe, Jane 'Peaches' Bartkowicz.

Tennis Australia's page offers helpful information if you are not really familiar with tennis as a game, its rules and regulations: [What is tennis?](#) AND [How to play tennis](#)

**WATCH** Evonne Goolagong playing Margaret Court in the Australian Open 1971. Note the playing strokes and movement around the court, the tennis wear, the commentary and scoring. [Australian Women's Open Tennis final 1971](#)

The movements of tennis feature consistently throughout the production as the image below demonstrates. The play features highly choreographed movements, synchronised, in canon and as solo moments.



Jax Compton, Katina Olsen and Kyle Shilling in the Griffith Regional Theatre Production, 2020

*In order to anticipate how and where to move the feet and whether to take the racquet back on the forehand or backhand side, the brain must calculate within a fraction of a second the moment the ball leaves the server's racquet, approximately where it is going to land, and where the racquet will intercept it. Into this calculation must be computed the initial velocity of the ball, combined with an input for the progressive decrease in velocity and the effect of wind and of spin, to say nothing of the complicated trajectories involved - W. Timothy Gallwey (sports psychologist), The Inner Game of Tennis, 1974*

The extract above from The Inner Game of Tennis is included in the production as voice over. It opens Act 3 – On the Circuit as a choreographed sequence of movement and dance to reflect the intensity and repetition of Evonne's training, both physical and mental.

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION ITSELF**

Who is Evonne Goolagong-Cawley? Tennis champion Evonne Goolagong was the first Indigenous Australian woman to achieve international sporting fame. A member of the Wiradjuri people, she grew up in the small town of Barellan, New South Wales. She was encouraged to play tennis by a local resident and in 1961 was spotted by tennis coach Vic Edwards, who was impressed with her natural grace and timing. In 1971 Goolagong

took the tennis world by storm, winning both the French Open and Wimbledon singles titles.

**WATCH:** Evonne Goolagong Cawley interview: *Women of Influence* [Women of Influence series](#)

**READ:** Evonne Goolagong blazed trails in tennis and beyond [Evonne Goolagong - trailblazer](#)

This next section of the resource provides information about the story of the play, the characters, setting, and structure. Let's set the scene again with some quotations from the creative team and an extract from a review.

*It is one of the greatest privileges I have had so far. The thing Andrea James the writer wanted to communicate the most was Evonne's joy about tennis. As an Indigenous person I always knew who she was. I don't even remember when I learnt her name. So, getting to delve into her life, her struggles as well as her triumphs and to then just become this legend. I had an incredible cast around me...it's been so much fun - Tuuli Narkle (Yued/Wilman Noongar), the character of Evonne in the Sydney Festival season.*

*Because Evonne was a young Aboriginal woman she was competing against white Australia in a way and in a sport that is quite privileged so it is completely fascinating that someone could come up at that time [1960s and 1970s] and become a world champion. It is the most ambitious work I have done to date. Evonne is an elite sportswoman, and we have to get it right...Evonne and Roger have been incredibly generous with their time - Andrea James, (Yorta Yorta) writer/director.*

Source: Channel 7 News report: [Channel 7 News - interview with creatives of Sunshine Super Girl](#)

*In light of the recent resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement, and systemic change in tackling racism within sporting codes, the production offers a timely look at the Wiradjuri sporting hero who wasn't always comfortable discussing race and politics, but whose story is ultimately tied to both. "I think it was a travesty that we had so few, great, vital and successful Aboriginal faces on the screen at that time, because there were plenty of people to celebrate," says Andrea James. "You just hardly ever saw Aboriginal women on television at all, but you couldn't ignore Evonne Goolagong, because she had made it onto the world stage in an elite and privileged sport. Looking back, it had a massive impact for me as a young Aboriginal kid growing up in country Victoria.*

(Emily Nicol, 4 January, 2021 [Time Out Review of Sunshine Super Girl](#))

## WHAT IS THE PLAY ABOUT?

*Sunshine Super Girl* is a celebration of tennis legend and Wiradjuri woman Evonne Goolagong's inspiring life story, told with signature dry Australian wit. From whacking a ball against a tin wall in the small country town of Barellan, to winning 14 Grand Slam titles and becoming a household name, Goolagong's story is a tale of triumph and an homage to hope for the future.

A pioneering legend of Australian sport, Goolagong was the first Indigenous woman to win a Grand Slam; the first mum in 66 years to win at Wimbledon; a player whose speed and power saw her overcome top-seeded players like Margaret Court, Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova. *Sunshine Super Girl* is a remarkable life story told with humour and humility by creator and director Andrea James, that asks us to consider Australia's future, the injustices of the past, and the part we can all play for the next 'Goolagong' waiting in the wings.

Link to introductory trailer: [Performing Lines - trailer and interview](#)

## DISCUSS

- What does this synopsis, the trailer and the interview with the director suggest about the production?
- What themes are emerging?

## CHARACTERS IN *SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL*

The cast consists of five performers with roles distributed as follows:

Actor One EVONNE

Actor Two DAD KENNY, MR KURTZMAN (Evonne's first coach), MR DUNLOP, BOB MORGAN, ROGER CAWLEY (Evonne's husband), ITALIAN MEN, UMPIRE, REPORTER, PRESS 3, WIMBLEDON OFFICIAL

Actor Three LARRY (Evonne's brother), MR EDWARDS (Evonne's international coach), TED TINLING, LADY PLAYER 2, ITALIAN MEN, SOUTH AFRICAN SERVANT, UMPIRE, PRESS 2

Dancer One MUM LINDA, PATRICIA EDWARDS, ITALIAN MEN, SOUTH AFRICAN MAID, MARTINA NAVRATILOVA, JANE 'PEACHES' BARTKOWICZ, JOHN NEWCOMBE

Dancer Two BARBARA (Evonne's sister), MRS MARTIN, LADY PLAYER 1, ISABEL (Evonne's best friend), PRESS 1, ITALIAN MEN, TENNIS ANGEL / MARGARET COURT, OFFICIAL, CECIL

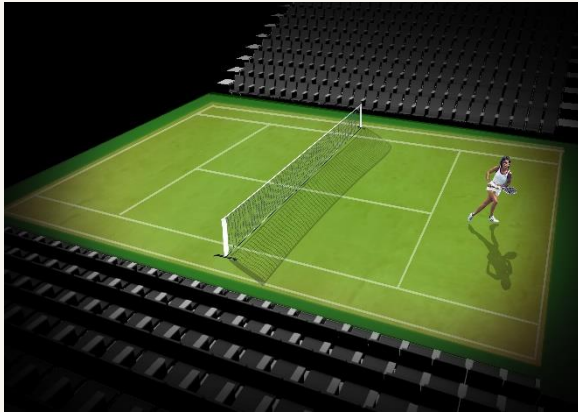
REPORTER and OFFICIALS are played interchangeably by ensemble members.

Approximately 40 characters in total

## THE SETTING AND WORLD OF THE PLAY

'The set is a tennis court, orange clay, and a high-rise umpire's chair. Some fruit boxes standing on end make do for the players' seating. There is a crude string net with an

emu feather woven into it here and there. Two clothes lines either end. One line with a big, white bed sheet and the other with a few tiny 1970s tennis dresses and frilly undies fluttering in the air. The audience is seated along two sides in a traverse arrangement’ (from SSG script, 2021).



In the Sydney Festival performance of *Sunshine Super Girl*, the staging involved benches and an umpire’s high chair as well as a tennis court net that could be rotated. All these objects and set pieces enabled the world of the play and the locations to be created. The image shared here gives you some idea of how the space was designed and how projection was used to create, in this case, Wimbledon Centre Court in the UK.

A key location in the play is Wiradjuri Country. The play opens on Country with Evonne fishing in her mother’s favourite fishing place. “Wiradjuri Country is the largest Aboriginal nation in NSW and one of the largest in Australia. The land occupies the plains running north and south-west of the Blue Mountains. The area was known as ‘the land of the three rivers’—the Wambool, later known as the Macquarie, the Kalare, later known as the Lachlan, and the Murrumbidgee” (Linda Burney, Introduction to the script, 2021).

You can learn more about the **Wiradjuri Nation** at these links:

- Wiradjuri Nation [Wiradjuri-nation](http://Wiradjuri-nation)
- Wiradjuri Cultural Festival 2020 [YarruwalaFestival.com](http://YarruwalaFestival.com)
- Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation [Wiradjuricc - about-us](http://Wiradjuricc-about-us)

Other locations in the production include the NSW township of Barellan, various locations in Sydney, London, Paris, South Africa, Italy, and the US. As an audience we witness Evonne’s early years in Barellan with her family, in Sydney with her coach Mr Edwards, becoming politically aware, her travels around the world tennis circuit, socialising, training and meeting her future husband, Roger Cawley.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

*Sunshine Super Girl* is a scripted play in four acts with multiple locations and short episodes. This enables the epic proportions of the story to unfold. It spans the years 1954-1983 when Evonne returns to Country. The scenes are listed below for reference:

### ACT ONE: 1954-1965

- On Country – prologue (flashback)
- Mangy Ball

- Ball on Tin
- Barellan
- Evonne's Wall
- Princess
- My own little tournament
- Mr Kurtzman and meeting Margaret (Court)
- That's my girl!
- Barellan suitcase
- Head in the Clouds

#### **ACT TWO: 1965-1970**

- Living white
- In training
- White City (Sydney)
- The 'Foundy' (Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs)

#### **ACT THREE: 1970-1971 – On the Circuit**

- The inner game of tennis
- The Holy Court (Wimbledon)
- Not such a little girl now
- 'Chocolato'
- Vic Edwards' wrath
- The French Open and the Billabong Dress
- Winning Wimbledon
- Honorary white
- Walkabout with string
- Losing Kenny (Dad) and winning Virginia Slims (tournament)

#### **ACT FOUR: 1972-1983**

- Hell schedule
- Mr Edwards insults Evonne at the bar
- Marriage and divorce
- Roger and me and baby makes three
- Wimbledon comeback

#### **DISCUSS** (The Arts-Drama, Critical and Creative Thinking, Literacy)

In pairs or small groups discuss this structure and the titles of the scenes

- What do the scene titles suggest?
- How might each title signpost for the actors when using the script?
- Which titles stand out for you? Why?
- What are you curious about?
- How could these titles be used/indicated in the theatre?
- **TIME** – 30 years in 90 minutes suggests time is compressed – what theatrical devices can be used to indicate the passing of time eg through writing, direction, stagecraft?

### CREATE (The Arts – Drama, Critical and Creative Thinking, Literacy)

- In pairs or small groups select three of the scene titles and discuss what they suggest and the story they could be telling
- In your group use shape, level, tension, direction, focus, and other expressive skills to create a physical freeze frame or tableau that presents an interpretation of each selected scene title – think about the key ideas (remember you are representing real people’s lives)
- Create a transition between each tableau – movement/sound/level/a word
- Present your tableaux to the class and discuss interpretation and composition.

### STYLE

Story telling is the key form used in *Sunshine Super Girl*. The ‘telling’ of the story is constructed through:

- Narration and dialogue
- Dance, movement and mime
- Projection, music/sound and lighting

Aspects of the story telling are dramatic, comedic and often highly non-naturalistic/realistic. The performers move all set pieces and transform the space as required. Projection is used powerfully and symbolically. The image below of the woven string is an example with an extract from the script (Act 3). It occurs just after Evonne learns of her father’s death at the Virginia Slims tournament

EVONNE: String.

*[She checks the tautness of the strings on her racquet].*

It’s a powerful force. String. It holds and binds us together.

*[The PLAYERS enter the court and perform a ‘women’s stringmaking dance’. EVONNE joins in].*

Stringy bark, animal fur, human hair, grass.

It holds and binds us together.

Twine these strands together.

Roll ’em on your legs.

Up and down.

Yarning circle.

The aunties.

The sisters.

Legs red raw.





Kyle, Shilling, Katina Olsen and Jax Compton in the Sydney Festival production 2021

## CONTEXTS IN THE PLAY – 1954-1983

While the production is primarily the story of Evonne Goolagong, throughout the play key Aboriginal civil rights actions in Australia and South Africa are spoken of. Here is a brief overview of the key issues with links to sources providing historical, social and political context to the events. The material contains historic images and words that are powerful and may be challenging, but they are part of our history. They also contain images of Aboriginal people who may have passed on.

**READ, RESEARCH AND DISCUSS** (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, History, Critical Thinking, Intercultural Understanding)

As an activity:

- Pairs or small groups each take a topic to explore and find out more about
- Research and bring back a digital, spoken or performed presentation to the class – spoken word poetry, performed reading, ppt or prezi or other ICT
- **Reflect** – what new understandings do you have about Australia and South Africa’s history? What has changed? What do you feel still needs to change?

## AUSTRALIAN FREEDOM RIDES

Living Black NITV on SBS April 24 – 2015 - Revisit the journey made 50 years ago by a group of university students led by Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins, who set off on a bus ride around regional NSW to expose racism and prejudice. The video includes interviews with the original Freedom Riders, images and visions from the original ride

including incidents that occurred in the inner West of New South Wales - Living Black - Freedom Rides SBS and NITV (26 mins) [Living Black S2015 Ep2 - Freedom Rides](#)

The Koorie History website: [1965 The Freedom Rides](#)

VAEI *About the Freedom Rides* [The 1965 Freedom Rides](#)

### THE 1962 AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL ACT

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962 received assent on 21 May 1962. This Act granted all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the option to enrol and vote in federal elections.

Enrolment was not compulsory for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, unlike other Australians. Once enrolled, however, voting was compulsory.

Note that each State and Territory did not necessarily do the same. Western Australia and the Northern Territory granted the same rights in 1962. Other States slowly followed. It was not until 1984 that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gained voting equality with other electors. The 1983 Act made enrolling to vote at Federal elections compulsory for all Aboriginal people as it is for all other citizens.

Source: [Defining moments - Indigenous-Australians-right-to-vote](#)

### THE 1967 REFERENDUM

**WATCH:** *Yes: The ongoing story of the 1967 Referendum*

This film features Indigenous actor Hunter Page-Lochard, who puts the 1967 referendum in its historical context and talks about why it is still important today. [Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum](#)

On 27 May 1967, the Australian Government held a referendum. This was a significant turning point in Australian history. The 1967 referendum altered the Australian Constitution. More than 90 per cent of Australian voters chose 'Yes' to count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the census and give the Australian Government the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as it did for other Australian citizens.

Source: [About Parliament - the 1967 Referendum](#)

### THE POLICY OF FORCED REMOVAL OF CHILDREN

In the production an early scene in Act 1 reminds the audience of the policy of forced removal of Aboriginal children by welfare agencies throughout Australia.

*A car approaches.*

LINDA: Kids, get inside. Get inside the hut. Get inside now!

*The KIDS rush into the shack. LINDA keeps watch for the car.*

EVONNE: They were happy times at Tharbogan. But all us kids knew to look out for the black car. We had it drummed into us. The black car ... It scared us to death!

At the following two links you can learn about the policy of forced removal and its intergenerational impact Aboriginal people.

AIATSIS: [Explore - Stolen Generations](#)

Creative Spirits: [The Stolen Generations](#)

### ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY 1972

On the eve of Australia Day 1972, the McMahon government announced the implementation of a new system that rejected granting independent ownership of traditional land to Indigenous people in favour of 50-year general purpose leases for Indigenous communities, provided they could demonstrate a social and economic use for the land and excluding any mineral and forest rights. After the ongoing disappointments of the land rights struggle, this announcement sparked action among many Indigenous groups and directly contributed to the founding of the Tent Embassy.

Labelled the 'Aboriginal Embassy', the sit-in protest was symbolic of the fact that the government's statement had made Indigenous Australians in the words of activist Gary Foley (Gumbainggir), 'aliens in our own land, so like other aliens, we needed an embassy'.

Source: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aboriginal-tent-embassy>

**WATCH:** ABC Television 1972 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOlvHEotJAK>

Filmed in 1972, an ABC news story of the tent embassy being dismantled amid protest. A very young Gary Foley who founded an Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern, NSW.

### APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

Apartheid called for the separate development of the different racial groups in South Africa. On paper it appeared to call for equal development and freedom of cultural expression, but the way it was implemented made this impossible. Apartheid laws forced the different racial groups to live separately and develop separately, and grossly unequally too. It tried to stop all inter-marriage and social integration between racial groups. During apartheid, to have a friendship with someone of a different race generally brought suspicion upon you, or worse. More than this, apartheid was a social system which severely disadvantaged the majority of the population, simply because they did not share the skin colour of the rulers. Many were kept just above destitution because they were 'non-white'.

[History of Apartheid in South Africa](#)

Between 1987 and 1993, the National Party (the governing party of South Africa) entered into bilateral negotiations with the African National Congress (ANC), the leading anti-apartheid political movement, for ending segregation and introducing majority rule. In

1990, prominent ANC figures such as Nelson Mandela were released from prison and Apartheid legislation was repealed on 17 June 1991 pending multiracial elections held under a universal suffrage set for April 1994.

**WATCH:** Apartheid – 46 years in 90 seconds: [APARTHEID 46 YEARS IN 90 SECONDS - BBC NEWS](#)

In order for Evonne to play in the South African Open she was made an ‘honorary white’ by the South African government. Despite feeling conflicted she played in the tournament. The following extract from the script highlights her feelings.

EVONNE (at the South African Open in 1972)

And there they are. The ‘whites only’ seats. And way over there up the back in the corner, the ‘black’ seats. And here I am. This novelty. This apparition. This ‘Honorary White’!

And every time I win a point the biggest noise comes from way over there up in the back in the corner. The ‘black’ seats.

Every bone in their bodies wants me to win. The white fellas want me to win too. They can feel a change coming. I’ve never wanted to win so bad.

I only made it to the quarter finals that year. But when I came back the following year

...

[She slams an ace down the line].

I beat them. I won that South African tournament. The first ever ‘black’ woman to do so.

## SEGREGATION IN AUSTRALIA

Next day, Dad drove us to the Condobolin Cinemas for a treat.

[EVONNE, LARRY and BARBARA sit in the front row of the cinema].

We had to sit all the way up the front with the other black kids.

[They strain their necks to see the screen].

We watched Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in DeLuxe Color!

In her interview with Lisa Wilkinson (see above), Evonne talks about this incident and the ‘coloured rope’ that separated Aboriginal people from whites in the cinema.

A calendar of key dates in the calendar year and the historical events that occurred for Aboriginal people [VAEAI - Koorie Education Calendar 2020](#)

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

*Sunshine Super Girl* also makes mention of the following significant Aboriginal people. You may have heard of some but not others. Take some time to learn more about their remarkable achievements:

Lynch Cooper (Yorta Yorta) – Stawell Gift winner [ANU - Biography - Cooper Lynch](#)  
 Lionel Rose (Kurnai - Gunditjmara) – Boxing [ANU - Biography - Lionel Rose](#)  
 Jimmy Little (Yorta Yorta) – Singer and musician [Podcast - The life of Jimmy Little](#)  
 Bob Morgan (Gumilaroi) [Changing Systems - Bob Morgan](#)  
 Charles Perkins (Arrernte/Kalkadoon) – Activist and politician [The Conversation - Charles Perkins - his fight for justice continues today](#)

To find out where each of these significant people came from and the language groups, you can revisit

- First Languages map <https://gambay.com.au/> AND
- Also take a look at the AIATSIS **Indigenous Map of Australia** constructed from information prior to 1997 [AIATSIS map-indigenous-Australia](#)
- Do you notice differences? How can you account for this?

**NOTE:** Within most of the sites in the **CONTEXT** section are further links. Critically consider:

- When were they published? Who wrote them?
- Why does who writes the content matter?

### OTHER CONTEXTUAL MATERIAL – ‘Girls’ magazines of the 1960s and 1970s

PRINCESS MAGAZINE: *Princess* was a girls’ comic published by Fleetway, later IPC, beginning on 30 January 1960. It absorbed *Girl* on 3 October 1964. On 16 September 1967 it merged with *Tina* to become *Princess Tina*, which lasted until 1973. In *Sunshine Super Girl*, Evonne is inspired by a copy of the magazine which is from the UK and features the lives of young white girls.



EVONNE: She turns the pages and pictures of white girls holding puppies, white girls holding bouquets, white girls sewing and white girls  
 Page one. Macramé.  
 Page two. Ponies.  
 Page three. Darning.  
 Page four. Ponies.  
 Page five. Enid Blyton. Who?  
 Page six. More ponies.  
 Page seven. The Princess Club.  
 A tennis racquet!  
 Tennis!

**DISCUSS** the following (Critical Thinking, Personal and Social Learning)

- What messages do you feel Evonne was being presented with in *Princess* magazine?
- What are your thoughts about magazines ‘just for girls’ and ‘just for boys’?

- *Kookie*, *Teen Breathe* and *IT GiRL* are contemporary girls ones – what else can you find?
- What social commentary do historic and contemporary magazines offer about gender?
- Also check out *Eagle* which was a comic book for boys in the 1960s featuring the character *Dan Dare* [British Comics - Eagle](#)
- Do you read magazines? Do you follow certain Instagram pages or other online ‘influencers’?
- What social commentary might such mags and sites be offering about gender, race, and other social issues?



Katina Olsen, Luke Carroll and Tuuli Narkle in the Sydney Festival production 2021

## AFTER SEEING THE PRODUCTION

Use the following questions as prompts to explore the play in performance. Find a way to record responses through writing or online or other digital mode.

As you work through the questions keep considering – what makes you think or say that – in order to provoke reasons for your response.

- What do you remember about the theatre that you saw the play in?
- Discuss how different theatres and where you sit in a theatre might give you a different experience.

- What type of world did the characters in the play inhabit – how would you describe it?
- What did you know about the history of the characters and events before you saw the show?
- In pairs make some dot points about the main story or stories in the play – where did it begin and where did it end? Was it chronological?
- How did the performers create their main characters of Evonne, Mum, Dad, Larry, Barbara, Mr Edwards, Roger?
- How did you feel about the characters? Which ones did you respond to most strongly?
- Did they wear particular costumes? Make-up? Use particular acting/expressive skills?
- Did the types of costumes worn impact on your understanding of what was happening?
- How many different *places* did the stories include? What do you recall?
- Were these places created on stage?
- Did you feel you were asked to take sides in this play? If so, which side did you take?
- Why do you think the performance used dance and movement?
- How important was the audience to the performance? Did you feel you had a role to play?
- Why do you think the stagecraft – set, props, lighting, sound, costume - was quite minimal?
- How was projection used? What did it create?
- What was your overall feeling and opinion of the production?
- If you could ask a question of the creative team what would it be?
- How would you describe the play to a friend, a parent, a stranger?
- How did the form of tennis inform the action of the play?

## ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION (The Arts – Drama, Theatre Studies, Literacy)

### Acting and Characters

Thinking about the characters in the play, let's do a deeper analysis.

- Choose **two** characters in the play
- Create a character profile for each character that includes name, age, gender, job, social status, education, special characteristics, relationships to other characters in the play
- Use dot points to write up each character's journey in the story of the play; where are they at the beginning of the play? Where do they end up? What happens to them along the way?
- What particular stagecraft elements did you associate with each character?
- How did the actors use MIME to suggest aspects of their character?
- How did the actors use movement and dance to create aspects of their character?

- Using another column in your character profile begin to link the characteristics of each character to the acting and expressive skills used by the actor
- How did the actor use voice, language, physical movements, stillness, gesture, facial expressions, the space?

You could record your responses in a table such as the one below.

CHARACTER	PROFILE	JOURNEY	STAGECRAFT	EXPRESSIVE SKILLS
Evonne				
Dad/Kenny				
Mum/Linda				
Roger				
Mr Edwards				
Mr Kurtzman				
Larry				
Barbara				
Mr Dunlop				
Patricia				
John Newcombe				

### Direction

Focus on how the play was directed, how the performers moved around the space, the rhythm of each scene, the energy. Now consider:

- How did the set design affect the direction and blocking?
- What challenges and opportunities does such a space offer?
- Recall where you were sitting – how did the traverse staging impact your experience of the show?

### Stagecraft – Set

Focus on the set design and the main set pieces – the net, the benches, the umpire’s chair

- How did the set design impact the way the performers moved in the space?
- How did the set design allow the characters to move through time and location?
- Discuss how certain set pieces could be considered symbolic

### Stagecraft – Props

Focus on the different props used in the production – tennis rackets, tennis balls, suitcases, wooden rackets, magazines, trophies, hairdryer

- How were these and other props used by the performers?
- How did they indicate context, time, location, meaning?
- Discuss how certain props could be considered symbolic

### Stagecraft – Music and sound

- How did the music and sound design contribute to the production?



- Did particular characters have particular music?
- How did the music and sound design generate different moods? What did you feel?
- What particular scenes can you recall where the sound design was effective?

### Stagecraft – Costumes

- Analyse and evaluate how the costume designs created and enhanced the world of the play: 1960s-1980s Australia and the tennis circuit.
- Discuss how Evonne’s tennis dresses contributed to the creation of her character – for example the scene with Cecil and the ‘Billabong Dress’.
- Use the design image below to assist you in your analysis.



### Styles – comedy and drama

There are some very funny moments in Sunshine Super Girl – the broken down car, the three kids wrestling with the blankets, the scene in the laundry

- Select a scene and discuss how comedy worked within it
- Consider verbal and physical comedy
- How did the comic moments contrast with the more dramatic moments?

There are also some dramatic and tension filled moments in the play – Evonne leaving home, Mr Edwards trying it on with Evonne, Evonne learning about Kenny’s death

- Select a scene and discuss how dramatic tension worked within it

- Consider pause, silence, focus, space, staging, dialogue, movement
- Also consider the stagecraft elements such as sound and lighting
- How did these moments contrast with the more comedic moments?

## POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

### Dance (The Arts-Dance)

Dance provides an inherent connection to Country for Aboriginal people. Dancers and choreographers, Katina Olsen (Wakka Wakka Kombumerri) and Vicki Van Hout (Wiradjuri) have created the movement for *Sunshine Super Girl*.

Dance and movement are used throughout the production to physicalise the tennis, competition, and to express key ideas such as Evonne's memory of Country (the string dance). The dancers/performers often work in unison, at other times solo, and at other times as an ensemble eg how to play tennis. There is a repeating motif in the play around tennis.

In this activity you can work in small groups of 3 to 4

- As a group decide on a movement for each of **a serve, a forehand and a backhand**
- Rehearse and practice these until you all feel comfortable the movement vocabulary is in your body
- Try them in real time, and in slow motion – changing the dynamic
- Try them facing different directions
- Try them in unison (all together)
- Try them in canon (1 after the other)
- Now choreograph a movement piece using the following moves
  - Serve
  - Backhand
  - Forehand
  - Forehand
  - Backhand
  - Forehand
  - Forehand
  - Backhand
- Consider where your audience is, how you can combine aspects of real time and slow motion, how you can work with 'canon' and how you can work in unison
- Refine your choreography to showing or performance level
- Present your work to the class
- Reflect on yours and others' work and how the elements of dance were applied to the motif
- Does this activity give you new understanding of how dance was used in *Sunshine Super Girl*? Why?

**Ensemble** (The Arts – Drama, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Intercultural Understanding, History)

In this activity work as an ensemble, research stimulus material and create a performed response. Remember to be aware you are researching real events and real people and consider how you can respectfully represent that. Conventions of Epic Theatre and Verbatim, as well as movement are good styles to consider as they focus on the ideas and issues. As a group use the following stimulus material as a basis for creating an ensemble. There are four potential scenes suggested:

- Consider the elements of drama role, character, voice, movement, language, ideas and dramatic action, audience
- Consider symbol, space, tension, sound, music
- Consider how you could use the actual text below and incorporate it into your ensemble or the diaries at the link provided
- Consider how you can use tableaux
- Consider the actor-audience relationship

*Teaching First Nations Content and Concepts* has some advice for creating and making work that includes First Nations concepts, content and Aboriginal characters. [Teaching First Nations Content and Concepts](#) (see page 27).

### **The 1965 Freedom Rides**

**Scene:** A group of students from the University of Sydney, inspired by the United States 1961 Freedom Rides, got on a bus on 12 February, 1965 and toured through regional towns such as Walgett, Gulargambone, Kempsey, Bowraville and Moree to show wider Australia the experience of Aboriginal Australians. These students - who were known as the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) and led by Arrernte man Charles Perkins from Alice Springs - recorded acts of racism against Aboriginal people and broadcast them to media around the country.

**Scene:** Walgett RSL Club

The Freedom Riders protested outside the Walgett RSL Club on 15 February 1965 because they had been told the club was not permitting entry for Indigenous ex-servicemen. They held signs that read: "Good enough for Tobruk - why not Walgett RSL?" and protested a womenswear store forbidding Indigenous women from trying on dresses. Their presence was felt by the community and attempts were made to run the bus off the road as they left Walgett.

**Scene:** Moree Baths

The students travelled to Moree, NSW, and marched to Moree swimming pool to picket prohibiting Indigenous people from swimming in the pool. The student action group protested outside the Moree Council Chambers before taking a group of Aboriginal children into the baths to break the racist practice.

**Scene:** Bowraville Picture Theatre

The group stopped off at Bowraville, in the mid north coast hinterland, because they wanted to draw attention to segregation practiced by management at the Bowraville Picture Theatre. They picketed the theatre for demanding that Indigenous people buy their tickets separately from non-Indigenous people, enter the theatre through a side entrance after a show had begun, and sit in secondary seating.

**Further research:** Ann Curthoys' diaries have become an essential piece of historical material that tells the story of the 1965 Freedom Ride. Members of the Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) organisation also produced many useful items that provide insight into this watershed moment in Australian history. Ann's diaries offer her observations and experiences from a white perspective on this critical event in Australia's history.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that the Freedom Ride documents include names and images of deceased people in photographs and in print.

[AIATSIS - Ann Curthoy's Diaries](#)

**Script** (The Arts – Drama, Literacy, Intercultural Understanding)

The following script excerpts are offered for exploration. You could choose one to deliver as a monologue or to work with as an ensemble. Each is spoken by Evonne so reflect on your knowledge of the person and the character, age, qualities, motivations. Think about context including location and time, what has gone before. As a process consider

- Brainstorming to establish context and meaning
- Marking up the script
- Rehearsing with a critical friend (if it is a monologue)
- Speaking and non-speaking roles (if it is an ensemble)

**Excerpt 1:**

EVONNE and ENSEMBLE – age 5

A spring.

A daddy-long-legs spider.

A coin.

A matchbox.

A newspaper.

Some fluff.

And then ...

[DANCER puts a grimy old tennis ball into EVONNE's hand. She lifts it high into the air].

My little treasure.

Round and small.

Abandoned from previous owners.

Kinda brown and bald.

I hold that ball and squeeze it tight.

**Excerpt 2:**

EVONNE: (Act 1 – Head in the Clouds) – age 15

I look down and all the trees and the cows and the houses and dams are like tiny dots. And I can see our river!

The sun hits the water and it sparkles and shines like a jewel.

Like a diamond tiara stretched right across the land. My childhood playground.

There’s Griffith and the fringe camp at Tharbogan.

To the left I spot Barellan and there’s the tiny, tiny, tiny tennis courts and our house!

And then there’s Moombooldool and looking right back I can see the big lake up the top of Darlington Point—Mum’s favourite fishing spot.

And we’re going up and up and up and then we’re in the clouds and

I can’t see nothing anymore. That’s it. Giant cotton ball clouds, so close I can touch them.

So white, they’re making my eyes hurt.

I didn’t know it then, but coming out of Sydney is a bus ...

It’s got ‘Student Action for Aborigines’ written on the side.

On its way to Walgett and Kempsey, Bowraville and Moree.

And we’re going up and up and up ...

On the tail of the plane is a painted boomerang.

Will I be coming back?

**Excerpt 3**

EVONNE – (Act IV, Wimbledon 1980) – age 29

Change of ends. Towel. Drink. Settle. Break her serve. Break it. Push her to a tie-break.

Please don’t let this be a three-setter.

With every ounce of will in my body,

I channel the spirit of god knows what and I break Chris’s serve.

This match will be decided by a tie-breaker.

There’s not a peep in the house. You could hear a pin drop.

It’s my serve—a quick rally and Chris hits it out. Unforced. And I’m serving in the tie-break, five-three.

Chris attempts a tricky drop shot and it blows a raspberry in her face—dropping shy of the net and taking the Centre Court crowd into contortions.

Chris to serve. I crouch. Prepare. I’ve got three Championship points.

The Centre Court crowd smell victory. They want a third set!

But I’ve got other plans.

Chris serves and I hit it back too hard, it goes out.

Damn ...

Roger bows his head. Has he actually stopped breathing?

I’ve got two Championship points. Mine for the taking.



Tuuli Narkle, Luke Carroll, Jax Compton, Katina Olsen and Kyle Shilling, Sydney Festival 2021

**Review** (The Arts – Drama, Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking)

In many Drama and Theatre courses students are required to write a review or analysis of a production they see. Theatre is also reviewed in the media and online. Here are four reviews of *Sunshine Super Girl* at the Sydney Festival. Read one or more and take note of the language, tone, content and structure:

- Limelight Magazine: [Sunshine Super Girl - Performing Lines](#) (Jo Litson 10 January, 2021)
- The Conversation: [The Conversation - Sydney Festival - Sunshine Super Girl](#) (Liza-Mare Syron, Biripi, 13 January, 2021)
- Sydney Morning Herald: [Portrait of an icon writ large](#) (Cassie Tongue, 10 January, 2021)
- Witness Performance: [Hitting a Winner](#) (Bryan Andy, Yorta Yorta, January 2021)

**DISCUSS:**

- What does each review highlight?
- Does one or more of the reviews equate with your own experience?
- Who gets to review theatre?
- Two of the reviewers are First Nations – Liza-Mare Syron and Bryan Andy – why is this important?

**Your turn!** Write a review of *Sunshine Super Girl*. You may like to use the following as a guide for structuring it.

- **Introduction** – title of the play, playwright and where you saw it performed
- **Plot** – what happened, a brief description
- **Themes and issues** – what is the play saying, what are the playwright’s intentions, how did the direction communicate the themes and issues
- **Analysis and evaluation of characters** – select two or three characters, include the performers’ names, what were their motivations and function in the play, how well did the performers portray them?
- **Elements of the production (stagecraft)** – set, lighting, sound, costume etc – what stood out and how well did these create the world of the play?
- **Evaluate and conclude** – overall would you recommend this play?
- In your review, if you are a non-Indigenous person, speak from your experience, perspective and truth about the themes in the work that resonated for you.

**THEMES** (Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Learning)

The background material in this resource, seeing the production and working through a range of activities will have tuned you in to some of the key themes in the play. The following themes are offered using script excerpts and quotations for you to reflect upon and discuss further. There may well be other themes and ideas that you and your class identify.

**Identity**

What do the following two scenes from the play suggest about what it meant for Evonne to be growing up as an Aboriginal in Australia in the 1960s? What other moments can you recall?

TED: The Evonne Goolagong Billabong Dress!  
 EVONNE: Oh. Gee. Um ...  
 TED: Tall Trees. Still Waters! The media are going to go nuts for this dress! Thank you for inspiring me.  
 EVONNE: I think it’s a bit fancy.  
 TED: Fancy?!  
 EVONNE: How about that scalloped one over there with the bolero top?  
 TED: Evonne! This is your natural habitat.  
 EVONNE: Ted!  
 TED: I’ll have you know that I have designed for every Wimbledon Champion since 1949. And, Evonne my dear, this year is your year.  
 EVONNE: Well, thanks for your confidence, Ted, but I don’t think the world is ready for the Evonne Goolagong Billabong Dress.

PRESS 1,2 and 3: Miss Goolagong! Miss Goolagong!  
 PRESS 1: Miss Goolagong! Can you throw a boomerang?  
 EVONNE: What?  
 PRESS 3: Miss Goolagong. Do you feel proud to be the first Aborigine to play Wimbledon?  
 EVONNE: Well ...  
 PRESS 1: Can you speak Aboriginal?  
 EVONNE: I ...  
 PRESS 2: What do you think of apartheid?  
 PRESS 3: Will you be playing Arthur Ashe in the doubles?  
 PRESS 1: Come on, Evonne, one or two words in Aboriginal.  
 PRESS 1, 2 and 3: Miss Goolagong! Miss Goolagong!

### Country

The prologue and the final scene depict Evonne on Wiradjuri Country.

- How has your research and experience of seeing the production of *Sunshine Super Girl* developed your understanding of the significance of Country for Aboriginal people?
- How does the following script excerpt enhance your understanding?

EVONNE  
 [String]  
 Bound with love. Connecting me to you.  
 Connecting me to Country. Of Country.  
 This string. I know about you.  
 This racquet. That net.  
 These strings. This ball.

### Family

Family is very important to Evonne and the early scenes establish her connection and closeness with her family.

- As she leaves for the airport at 12 years of age to move to Sydney, what does the following script excerpt suggest about family connection for her?

LINDA: Did you bring a fresh hankie?  
 EVONNE: Yes, Mum.  
 LINDA: Make sure you write.  
 EVONNE: I will. Let me know when the new baby comes.  
 LINDA: We will.  
 EVONNE: I hope it's a girl.  
 LINDA: It will be what it will be. You be good now.  
 EVONNE: I'm gonna get better.  
 LINDA: We know you will, love.



- And in a phone call home after winning Wimbledon?

KENNY: We're proud of ya, love!  
 EVONNE: How's that old car of yours going?  
 KENNY: Ah, she's alright. She's up on the stumps at the moment.  
 EVONNE: Maybe I can buy you a new car.  
 KENNY: Ahh. You don't have to do that.  
 EVONNE: With my winnings! I gotta go! I'm running out of coins! Tell everyone I'll be home soon. Love you!  
 KENNY: You're a champion, my girl!

### Determination

*Because Evonne was a young Aboriginal woman she was competing against white Australia in a way and in a sport that is quite privileged so it is completely fascinating that someone could come up at that time [1960s and 1970s] and become a world champion – Andrea James (Yorta Yorta) Director and Playwright.*

- What does this comment from the playwright reveal?
- What does the extract below offer in terms of Evonne's determination and resilience?
- What other moments can you recall?

[After hurting her calf muscle]  
 ROGER: Evonne, you can't.  
 EVONNE: They've come to watch me play.  
 ROGER: It's not worth it!  
 EVONNE: I can do it!

### Grief

Evonne's father, Kenny, is tragically killed in an accident in 1974 aged only 44 years of age. On the other side of the world Evonne hears the news from her coach Mr Edwards.

- What does the following extract reveal about grief and loss?
- How does losing her father impact Evonne? Her relationship with her mum?

*EVONNE hangs up the phone, picks up a trophy and holds it sadly into the air.*  
 EVONNE:  
 And so I beat Chris Evert in the final and won the Virginia Slims Championship.  
 We won that trophy for Kenny Goolagong.  
*BARBARA takes the trophy and puts in on the shelf in the family living room.*  
 EVONNE:  
 I miss his warm brown skin.  
 The way his hat always tilts to the side.

Car rides on the dusty roads.  
 Laughter and hugs.  
 Always warm.  
 Always.

### Love

Several reviews of *Sunshine Super Girl* state that the play is a love story – Evonne and Roger’s love story.

- How does the following script excerpt illustrate their love story?
- What other moments can you recall in the play?
- What other aspects of love are explored in the production?

[In the laundromat, picnicking on coffee and sandwiches]  
 EVONNE: Wo!  
 ROGER: That’ll keep you up all night.  
 EVONNE: I’m already awake all night!  
 ROGER: Me too.  
 EVONNE: I can’t stop thinking about you, Mr Roger Cawley.  
 ROGER: I’ve never met anyone like you, Miss Evonne Goolagong.

*Sunshine Super Girl* is a celebration of tennis legend and Wiradjuri woman Evonne Goolagong’s inspiring life story, told with signature dry Australian wit. From whacking a ball against a tin wall in the small country town of Barellan, to winning 14 Grand Slam titles and becoming a household name, Goolagong’s story is a tale of triumph and an homage to hope for the future. It is also a play that explores large and significant themes about Australia’s history and its First Nations people.

### FURTHER THINKING (Critical and Creative Thinking)

You may still have things to think and say about *Sunshine Super Girl*.

- What questions do you still have?
- If you could meet the makers of the performance, what would you ask them?
- What aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait histories and culture have you learned about? What would you like to know more about?
- Why is it important that a play like this is produced and then studied as part of the Australian Curriculum?
- Who would you recommend this play to? Why?



Tuuli Narkle, Jax Compton, Kyle Shilling and Katina Olsen, Sydney Festival 2021



General Capability	Organising Elements
Intercultural Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising culture and developing respect</li> <li>• Interacting and empathizing with others</li> <li>• Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility</li> </ul>
Ethical Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding ethical concepts and issues</li> <li>• Reasoning in decision making and actions</li> <li>• Exploring values, rights and responsibilities</li> </ul>
Critical and Creating Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiring – identifying, exploring and organising information and ideas</li> <li>• Generating ideas, possibilities and actions</li> <li>• Reflecting on thinking and processes</li> <li>• Analysing, synthesizing and evaluating reasoning and procedures</li> </ul>
	the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

#### ABOUT THE WRITER:

Dr Meg Upton is an arts educator, arts researcher, lecturer and writer. She teaches drama and theatre education, pedagogy and curriculum at Deakin University and she has won several School of Education Teaching Excellence Awards. Since 2000 she has worked as education manager and long-term teaching artist with Malthouse Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company. Other companies Meg has worked with include Arena Theatre Company, KAGE, Polyplot, Arts Centre Melbourne, Theatre Works, Platform Youth Arts, Ilbjerri Theatre Company, Victorian Opera, and Australian Plays. She has a PHD from the University of Melbourne that explores pedagogies of teaching theatre performance analysis in senior drama. Meg has created over one hundred education resources for theatre and dance companies, touring companies, playwrights, ABC Splash, Education Services Australia and recently for the Australian Federal Police and Attorney General’s Department, and has received five Drama Victoria Awards for her work. In the past years she has presented her research and practice at conferences in Paris, Singapore, New Zealand, New York, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart. Meg has been a board member of Drama Australia, Drama Victoria, Young People and the Arts Australia, and Green Room Awards Association. She is currently a board member of RAWCUS (a theatre company for people with and without disabilities) and on the board of University of Melbourne Student Union Theatre.

#### CONSULTANT – First Nations content - KAMARRA BELL-WYKES (Yagera/Butchulla)

Kamarra is a playwright, director, dramaturge, deviser, facilitator, performer, creative producer, program curator, community developer and education consultant. Kamarra’s transformative First Nation’s practice is highly sought after across the performing arts, community, health, education and justice sectors. She served as ILBIJERRI’s Education and Learning Manager and later Creative Director from 2014-2018 before following her own freelance practice. Throughout 2020/21 Kamarra is working in a range of roles with Malthouse, ILBIJERRI, ACM, Melbourne Fringe, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Hot House and STCSA. Past and upcoming works include CHASE (Malthouse/Hothouse) Warrior ‘R Oussss!!!

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(Hothouse/Fringe) and Whose Gonna Love 'Em? (FCAC/ILBIJERRI) Dear Australia (PWA), Tiny Plays for Australia (ACM) The Score, Scar Trees, Viral, North West of Nowhere, Body Armour, Chopped Liver, Shrunken Iris (ILBIJERRI), Crying Shame (Next Wave), Mother's Tongue (Yirra Yaakin). Kamarra has received awards in recognition of her theatre practice from Hepatitis Victoria, Drama Australia, ACCELERATE and The Greenroom Awards. In 2012 Kamarra graduated with honours with a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (BIITE/CDU) and has conducted various research publications into theatre, education and community practice. Kamarra's work is all based in trauma-informed, strengths-based practice.