

# THE TWINS

TRUER THAN FICTION



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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**STUDY  
GUIDE**



# Synopsis

*The Twins* sees two old school friends, Greg and Ian, re-uniting 40 years after playing the twins in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, to rework it as a two-hander. A heart breaking and hilarious play about trust; remembering and forgetting to remember; loss; regret; love; pain and glory.

Although Greg and Ian's lives took different paths; they are now reunited, but who is playing who? Are they who they say they are and should any of that matter? And once you've let go of your dreams, is there ever really any way back? It's a play about fathers and the shadows they leave, the labels we give to others and ourselves and the burden and guilt these two friends carry as a result. An achingly honest account that sees privilege and heroin joined at the hip.

Greg Fleet is an internationally renowned actor, comedian, playwright and author. Ian Darling is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, who returns to the stage for the first time in 40 years. His director credits include the acclaimed documentaries *The Final Quarter* and *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me*. Written by Sarah Butler, Ian Darling and Greg Fleet and directed by Terry Serio and Sarah Butler, *The Twins* is produced by Shark Island Institute and The Arts Lab Kangaroo Valley. *The Twins* was one of only a handful of interstate productions crossing the border to take part in the 2021 Adelaide Fringe.

*The Twins* is a two-handed devised work that explores themes including friendship, memory, regret, privilege, expectation and identity. This play offers much for students to observe, reflect on, and therefore learn about in regard to acting/performance, playbuilding, elements of production (staging and the use of music particularly), narrative structure, the use of flashbacks, balancing tragedy and comedy, and biography in drama. This play also offers an opportunity for students to approach and consider dramaturgy with a contemporary text. There are Shakespearian and numerous cultural references (Australian music and references, the



Marlboro Man, Peter Brookes, and *The Removalists* to name a few).

In regards to critically studying and/or appreciating Drama, the filmed version of *The Twins* could be of use to regional and remote students who do not have the opportunity to attend live theatre during the course of their studies.

## CONTENT HYPERLINKS

# Curriculum Links

**NB. *The Twins* contains occasional coarse language and references to drug use. Teacher discretion is advised.**

*The Twins* can be linked to the following subject areas within the Australian Curriculum:

- **Years 9 and 10 Drama**
- **Year 10 English**
- **Year 10 Health and Physical Education**
- **Year 10 Media Arts**

*The Twins* may also be used as a supplementary text for relevant senior school subject areas, including:

- **Drama**
- **English**
- **Health and Human Development**
- **Media Arts**
- **Psychology**
- **Theatre Studies**

## Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 10 Drama:

Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect (ACADRR052)

Analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their drama making, starting with drama from Australia and including drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider drama in international contexts (ACADRR053)

Structure drama to engage an audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles and by using design elements (ACADRM050)

## Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 10 English:

Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)

Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication (ACELA1565)

Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812)

## Relevant Content Descriptions for Year 10 Media Arts:

Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences (ACAMAR078)

Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks (ACAMAR079)

Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences (ACAMAR078)

## Relevant Content Descriptions

Evaluate factors that shape identities and critically analyse how individuals impact the identities of others (ACPPS089)

Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS096)

Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence health and wellbeing of diverse communities (ACPPS098)

The learning activities in *The Twins* study guide provide opportunities for students to:

- develop an appreciation for theatre as an art form;
- discuss their relationship with theatre as a maker and performer;
- respond to the theatre created and performed;
- identify key features of the production of *The Twins* and comment on the ways it represents an interpretation of ideas and experiences;
- discuss the historical, social and cultural values embodied in *The Twins*;
- recognise ways in which *The Twins* can influence and inform their own performance making;
- create their own written and spoken texts and performance works.

**The learning activities do not have to be undertaken in the sequence in which they appear in the guide and students do not have to complete all of the activities to appreciate *The Twins*.**



## Pre-Viewing Activities

- What theatre performances have you seen? What do you think are the benefits of watching live theatre? Have you ever participated in a theatre performance as a member of the cast or crew? What did you gain from your participation? Have you ever considered a career in the performing arts? Share your experiences of theatre with the class.
- Did you enjoy *The Twins*? Was it what you expected? Did the performance endorse your views and values? Did the performance challenge your views and values? Would you recommend *The Twins* to others?
- What questions do you have about *The Twins*?
- Would you have liked to attend a live performance of *The Twins*? Why or why not?
- What did you observe as you watched the performance of *The Twins*? Share your observations with the class.
- Working in pairs/small groups, students are to conduct research into Greg Fleet and Ian Darling. Consider the productions they've been involved in, the people they've collaborated with, awards/achievements, career highlights and any challenges they've encountered. Share and discuss findings as a class.

Suggested sites to begin research:

<<https://gregfleet.com/>>

<<https://artslab.com.au/about/the-artslab-people/ian-darling/>>





# Viewing Activities

Students are to use their viewing notes to assist with the following activities:

- Consider the opening and closing lines of the play:

Opening Scene	Closing Scene
IAN: I am a rich white man	GREG: You are a philanthropist, with the soul of an artist.
GREG: I am a writer.	IAN: You are a comedian, with the heart of a writer.
IAN: I am a film maker.	GREG: I am an actor.
GREG: I am a man.	IAN: I am an actor.
IAN: I am a man.	GREG: I am...
	IAN: I am...



Why do you think they chose to open the play with these lines? What does it suggest the play is going to be about in a thematic sense?

How do the variations of the lines by the play's end capture each character's narrative arc during the play? Why do you think each character ends with the vague statement of 'I am...' rather than a definitive statement of identity? Share and discuss as a class.

## FOCUS ON

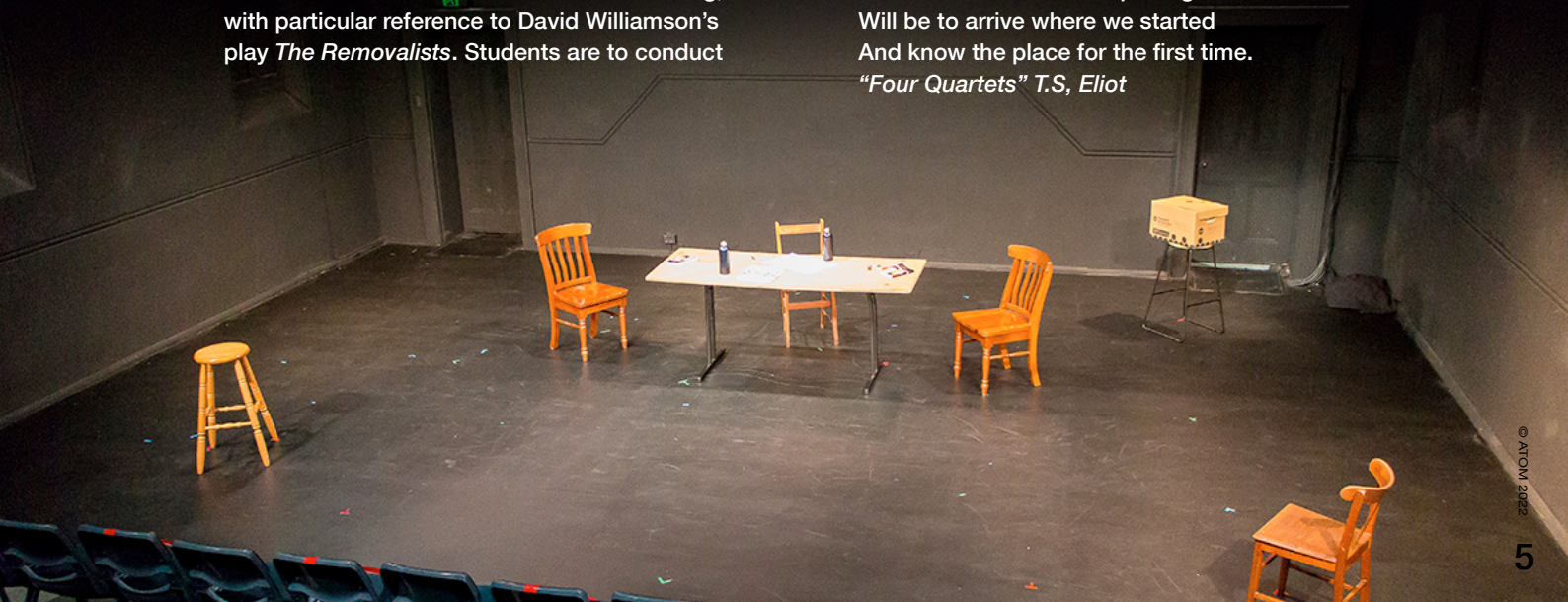
# Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning through another text, either via deliberate compositional strategies or by interconnections between similar works. *The Twins* is set in a big tin shed that is serving as a rehearsal room as Ian and Greg rehearse a two-hander version of Shakespeare's play *The Comedy of Errors*.

- Students are to research *The Comedy of Errors* with specific reference to the ways its themes and characters might relate directly to Ian and Greg and the themes they are exploring in their own play. Share and discuss findings as a class.
- Ian and Greg refer to the impact their high-school drama class had on their love of acting, with particular reference to David Williamson's play *The Removalists*. Students are to conduct

research into this play, with specific reference to the ways its themes, characters and language might relate directly to Ian and Greg and what they are exploring in their own play. Share and discuss findings as a class. Students should read the following essay to assist them with this task: <https://readingaustralia.com.au/essays/the-removalists/>

- Consider the following lines from a poem by T.S. Eliot with direct reference to Ian and Greg's individual and shared journeys. Discuss reflections as a class.  
We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
"Four Quartets" T.S. Eliot





## FOCUS ON

# Ian's Journey

- What do we learn about Ian's childhood and the role that his family expectations (particularly his father's) had on his life?
- How did he perceive Greg when they bumped into each other on Collins Street after years apart? How had their lives diverged over the years?
- What are Ian's most pressing regrets when he looks back over his life?
- 'He was a beautiful artist. But I don't think he really knew how to value that or to even honour that.' Consider Ian's father's own relationship with art and his love of photography. As a class, discuss the concept of what it means to 'be an artist'; what does this title mean? How is a person able to 'be an artist'?
- Later in the play, Ian refers to a lyric from Paul Kelly's song, "Going About My Father's Business" – 'What's done to me I'll do to mine.' In small groups, discuss what these lyrics mean with specific relation to Ian's own life (and Greg's). Do you agree that generations can repeat patterns of behaviour within families? Share responses as a class.



## FOCUS ON

# Greg's Journey

- What do we learn about Greg's childhood and the impact of his father's choices/behaviour in particular in terms of Greg's own life?
- How did he perceive Ian when they bumped into each other on Collins Street after years apart? How had their lives diverged over the years?
- Greg discusses the impact of his drug addiction on his life, his relationships and his friendship with Ian. Write a reflection that considers the various impacts of his addiction over the years.
- What are Greg's most pressing regrets when he looks back over his life?



## ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON

# Themes in the Play

Working in pairs, students are to complete the table on the following page.

▶ "Jump to the table on page 7"



**YOUR  
NAME**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition of this theme in relation to <i>The Twins</i></b>	<b>Key scenes and dialogue that relate to this theme in <i>The Twins</i></b>
<b>Self-Identity</b>		
<b>Regret</b>		
<b>Trust</b>		
<b>Parental Expectation</b>		
<b>Self-acceptance</b>		
<b>Friendship and loyalty</b>		



# ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON Identity

Throughout *The Twins* we see Greg and Ian struggle with their identity.

Identity is who or what a person is. Your identity defines who you are. It is a self-representation of your interests, relationships, social activity and much more. Our sense of identity and belonging is impacted by various factors, including our experiences, relationships, and our environment. The journey to find identity and belonging can often be a struggle, since we ask ourselves, 'Who am I?' versus 'Who do others want me to be?' and 'Where do I belong? Where do I fit in?'

As a class, brainstorm and define the term 'identity' and the factors that can help and hinder a person's sense of self.

Have students define their own identity according to the following categories:

- 1. Family Identity
- 2. Skills Identity
- 3. School Identity
- 4. Social Identity
- 5. Cultural Identity

Share their responses in small groups and discuss the fact that we have multiple identities, depending on who we are with and the different times in our lives.



Students are to write a personal reflection on their own sense of identity. They are to consider the major factors that have contributed to their understanding of who they are, events or people that have challenged their sense of self, and events or people that have affirmed who they are.

Throughout *The Twins* we witness both Greg and Ian face some of their insecurities and failures and possibly develop a stronger sense of self by the play's end. Mental Health advocacy group Beyond Blue has identified the following 'six senses' that help a person feel a sense of belonging and connection:

- 1. Sense of self-worth
- 2. Sense of control
- 3. Sense of belonging
- 4. Sense of purpose
- 5. Sense of future
- 6. Sense of humour

Working in small groups, students are to discuss and define each of the above 'six senses'.

Identify moments in the play for Greg and Ian that relate directly to them using one of the six senses in terms of developing a stronger sense of self. Share and discuss as a class.







## Writing Activities

Use one of the following prompts to write an expository essay about Greg and Ian and their respective journeys and sense of who they are in the world. Ensure your response draws directly on events and reflections from the play.

- **It is only when we understand our own identity that we can have a sense of belonging**
- **To be truly happy and to find our place in the world we must be aware of our own identity**
- **It is difficult to possess a sense of identity when we live our lives trying to please others**

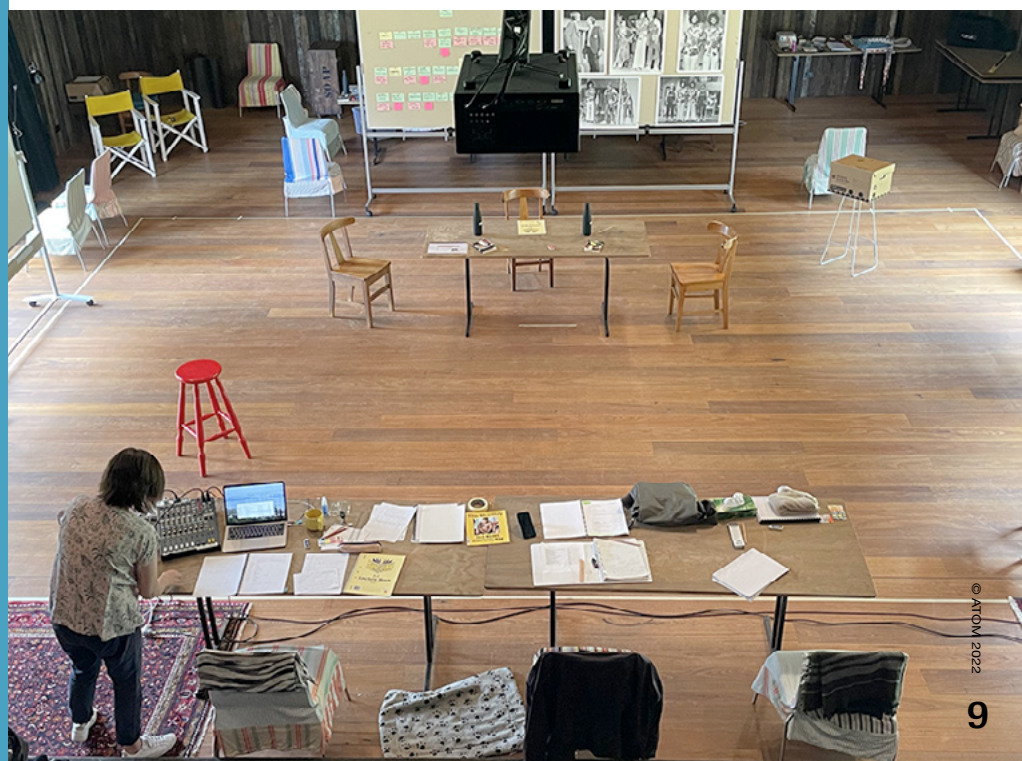
Students are to select one of the following essay topics in relation to *The Twins*. Following the TEEL structure, students are to plan and write a text response of 600 – 800 words. Essays must include quotes and evidence from the play, as well as reference to staging and theatrical techniques.

- How do Greg and Ian's journeys throughout *The Twins* help them come to terms with who they are?
- 'Ian learns as much from Greg as Greg does from him.' Do you agree?
- *The Twins* shows us that the struggle with finding one's place in the world transcends privilege and wealth.' Discuss.
- What lessons do we learn about connection, self-acceptance and friendship from *The Twins*?

### ACTIVITY:

## Focus on Stagecraft

- The play can be considered 'documentary theatre'. Define this term and discuss how *The Twins* adheres to the conventions of this genre. What are other examples of documentary theatre plays?
- Identify two – three moments in the play where we see examples of the following theatrical elements: naturalism/ realism, breaking the fourth wall and internal dialogue. Consider how your selected elements work in terms of furthering the action or providing insight into a character/theme.
- In Scene 2, Ian admits that he feels nervous about acting again. When he ponders whether he may have forgotten how to act, Greg replies, 'You can't forget how to act. You just dress up in other people's clothes and tell lies.'  
Do you agree with Greg? Why? If not, what do you think acting is?
- Why do you think the writers decided to set the action against the backdrop of an impending bushfire?
- How would you describe the use of lighting? How does lighting work to further the audience's understanding of the play?
- Music is important to the story told by *The Twins* and deepens the audience's understanding of the characters, their relationship and the times of their lives. Write a commentary about one of the songs used in the production.
- Using all of the information you have about *The Twins*, write an extended analysis of the production.  
Your analysis should identify and explain how acting techniques, theatrical styles and the use of production areas contribute to how the audience construct meaning from the production. What personal meaning is intended? What broader statement is making about human experience? Your analysis should identify and explain how *The Twins* relates to the social context in which it was created and what historical influences have impacted the production.



## ACTIVITY:

# Reviews of *The Twins*

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oPnE9hRQclwI6gNSzN3g9kfO7x8MrmiePTss\\_A\\_I14/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oPnE9hRQclwI6gNSzN3g9kfO7x8MrmiePTss_A_I14/edit)

Use the following link to access reviews of *The Twins* - <https://thetwinsplay.com.au/reviews>

Working in small groups, highlight 3 – 5 statements from the reviews that your group most agrees with; share and discuss as a class. Are there any statements/reviews that your group does not share the views of?

Students are to write a 500-word review of *The Twins*. Reviews should include:

- Title of the play and the key people involved in the production
- Where and when the play was developed and staged
- A brief synopsis and intention of the play
- A description of the genre and/or style of the work.
- A statement about the message of the work that



identifies the themes and/or issues raised by the work.

- An evaluation of the performance of key cast members.
- Most memorable lines of dialogue, as well as most memorable scenes/sequences
- Describe the play's use of staging, lighting, props and music. What sort of mood and atmosphere do these production elements combine to create?
- Audience to whom you would most recommend this play
- A conclusion that offers a summative comment about the overall success of the work.



## ACTIVITY:

# Making Drama

- Watch Scene 1 and Scene 22. Working with a peer, create your own 'I am' scene. Use an excerpt from an appropriate song to end the scene.
- In Scene 2, Ian and Greg remember the day they first met. How do their memories of this encounter differ?  
Working with a peer, create your own 'the day we first met' scene.
- In Scene 9, Ian recalls the letter he wanted to send to his father about his ambition to become an actor. Write and perform a letter to a parent or guardian about your desire to follow a dream.
- In *The Twins*, Greg and Ian perform their NIDA audition piece. What if you were asked to audition? Prepare and perform a two-minute audition piece that showcases your skills.

- In Scene 10, Ian and Greg share the measures they took to fit in. Review this scene. Working with a partner, create and perform a short scene about the lengths that both of you have gone to in order to avoid being judged by your peers.
- In Scenes 11 and 15, Greg searches through a box of Ian's 'stuff'. Make your own box of 'stuff'. Devise and perform a short scene in which you open the box and rummage through the 'stuff' that labels who you are.
- In Scene 20, Ian and Greg discuss a publication titled *100 Exceptional Geelong Grammarians* and the entries about their achievements. Working with a peer, create and perform your own scene about a school publication that offers a profile of your future achievements.





## ACTIVITY:

# A Devised Performance

A devised performance is an original performance that is not an interpretation of a pre-existing playscript. You will need to collaborate with your peers to create the script, rehearse, design, direct and refine the performance to be presented to an audience. Collaboration requires all group members to take an active role in all stages of creating and presenting the performance.

Create a devised performance inspired by *The Twins*.

Suggested focus: Two long-term friends engage with the passage of time and the ways their lives have been impacted by a particular event. Your performance should be ten minutes in length.

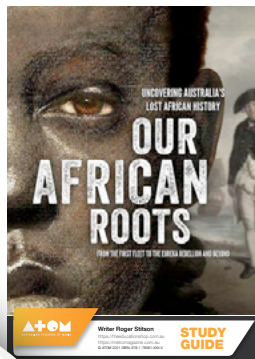
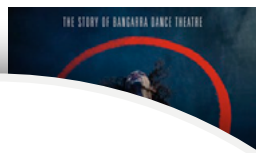
You will need to collaborate with your partner to create the script, rehearse, design, direct and refine the performance to be presented to an audience. Collaboration requires all group members to take an active role in all stages of creating and presenting the performance.

- Submit a working script.
- Submit a written report describing and analysing the processes of creating and presenting the performance. Your report should include information about your subject matter, plot, characters and setting. Your report should also discuss your performance focus, performance style, use of theatrical conventions, use of dramatic elements and use of the areas of stagecraft.



## References

- The ArtsLab, <<https://artslab.com.au/about/the-artslab-people/ian-darling/>>, accessed March 27<sup>th</sup> 2022.
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