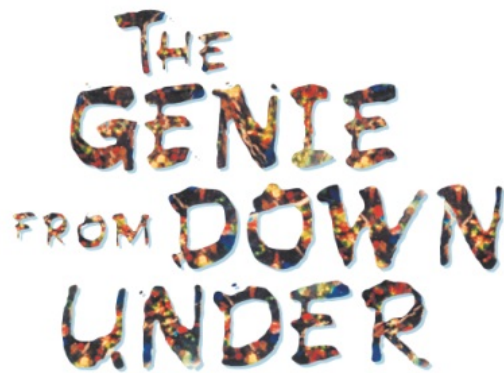




Genie From Down Under
Education Resources



19 Curriculum Activities

based on the

Genie from Down Under TV Series

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Summary of <i>Genie From Down Under</i> Curriculum Activities | 3 |
| A Tale of Two Cities | 9 |
| Comedy from Print to Screen | 11 |
| Customs | 15 |
| Good Cop, Bad Genie | 17 |
| It's My Opal | 19 |
| It's Still Magic | 21 |
| Larceny | 23 |
| Me, Myself and I | 25 |
| Nobody's Perfect | 35 |
| Opening Scenes | 37 |
| School Daze | 41 |
| The Eternal Quadrangle | 43 |
| The Triple Agent | 45 |
| Triple Treat | 47 |
| What's Mine Is Mine | 49 |
| What's the Attraction? | 59 |
| Where It's At | 69 |
| Wishing and Hoping | 71 |
| Would I Lie to You? | 73 |

Summary of *Genie from Down Under* Curriculum Activities

1. A Tale of Two Cities (P.9)

With these activities, students explore some of the techniques for creating mood and atmosphere in filmed narratives. They analyse the theme and the parallel plots running through the episode.

Resource Description

With these activities, students explore some of the techniques for creating mood and atmosphere in filmed narratives. They analyse the theme and the parallel plots running through the episode.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

2. Comedy from Print to Screen (P.11)

Students compare how a comedy scene is portrayed in a tv program with how it is written in the tie-in book then write their own book versions of a tv comedy scenes.

Resource Description

Students compare how a comedy scene is portrayed in a tv program with how it is written in the tie-in book then write their own book versions of a tv comedy scenes.

Year Level: [Middle Primary \(4-5\)](#), [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

3. Customs (P.15)

With these activities students explore the use of the pun and stereotypes in Australian television and examine some of the film techniques used in film.

Resource Description

With these activities students explore the use of the pun and stereotypes in Australian television and examine some of the film techniques used in film.

Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

4. Good Cop, Bad Genie (P.17)

Students explore the use of parody and caricature in comedy, the strategy of running parallel story lines in a narrative and the theme of freedom.

Resource Description

Students explore the use of parody and caricature in comedy, the strategy of running parallel story lines in a narrative and the theme of freedom.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

5. It's My Opal (P. 19)

Students explore the use of exposition and the role of a narrator. They analyse the motives behind some film techniques and explore the role of symbols and icons in filmed storytelling.

Resource Description

Students explore the use of exposition and the role of a narrator. They analyse the motives behind some film techniques and explore the role of symbols and icons in filmed storytelling.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

6. It's Still Magic (P.21)

Students viewing this last episode in the series discuss the concept of story resolution and the techniques used by filmmakers to build up to a climax in the story.

Resource Description

Students viewing this last episode in the series discuss the concept of story resolution and the techniques used by filmmakers to build up to a climax in the story.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

7. Larceny (P.23)

Students explore the comedy genre in TV programs. They discuss various forms of comedy, view the episode Larceny and discuss the use of slapstick. They compare comedy shows from three countries.

Resource Description

Students explore the comedy genre in TV programs. They discuss various forms of comedy, view the episode Larceny and discuss the use of slapstick. They compare comedy shows from three countries.

Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [genre](#)

8. **Me, Myself and I** (P.25)

Students explore the notion of identity and the discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how others see us.

Resource Description

Students explore the notion of identity and the discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how others see us.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#) Themes: [relationships](#), [self](#)

9. **Nobody's Perfect** (P.35)

This episode provides source material for exploring the notion of parody and the use of stereotypes in portraying young women, particularly English women.

Resource Description

This episode provides source material for exploring the notion of parody and the use of stereotypes in portraying young women, particularly English women.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

10. **Opening Scenes** (P.37)

This lesson introduces students to the different styles authors adopt when writing for television then writing the same story for print media.

Resource Description

This lesson introduces students to the different styles authors adopt when writing for television then writing the same story for print media.

Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#)

11. School Daze (P. 41)

Students discuss how the techniques of exposition, stereotyping, and idiomatic expressions help to tell a story. They write a script for a scene and write a character description.

Resource Description

Students discuss how the techniques of exposition, stereotyping, and idiomatic expressions help to tell a story. They write a script for a scene and write a character description.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

12. The Eternal Quadrangle (P. 43)

Students explore narrative devices of exposition and narrative knowledge and film techniques used to tell the story in romantic comedies. They discuss the concepts and write a parody of a romance.

Resource Description

Students explore narrative devices of exposition and narrative knowledge and film techniques used to tell the story in romantic comedies. They discuss the concepts and write a parody of a romance.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [genre](#)

13. The Triple Agent (P. 45)

After viewing the episode The Triple Agent and others, students discuss the use of the running gag and stereotypes in comedy. They write some dialogue for Penelope that defies the stereotype.

Resource Description

After viewing the episode The Triple Agent and others, students discuss the use of the running gag and stereotypes in comedy. They write some dialogue for Penelope that defies the stereotype.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

14. Triple Treat (P.47)

Students analyse narrative devices used to tell a story. They explore the concept of recurring themes, the convention of hiding information from all but one character, and use of binary oppositions.

Resource Description

Students analyse narrative devices used to tell a story. They explore the concept of recurring themes, the convention of hiding information from all but one character, and use of binary oppositions.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

15. What's Mine Is Mine (P. 49)

Students explore the concept of property ownership including landrights and examine some legal aspects of property. They consider some philosophical issues about property and the real sources of happiness.

Resource Description

Students explore the concept of property ownership including landrights and examine some legal aspects of property. They consider some philosophical issues about property and the real sources of happiness.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Civics and Citizenship](#), [English](#), [Ethical Understanding](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#) Themes: [culture and traditions](#), [justice](#), [values](#)

16. What's the Attraction? (P.59)

Many of the activities in this unit need to be managed with sensitivity by the teacher as they deal with issues are very 'close to home' for young people.

Resource Description

Many of the activities in this unit need to be managed with sensitivity by the teacher as they deal with issues are very 'close to home' for young people.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#) Themes: [relationships](#), [self](#)

17. Where It's At (P. 69)

With these activities, students discuss the use of parody in story-telling, the role of sub-plots in a series and the use of the device of narrative knowledge.

Resource Description

With these activities, students discuss the use of parody in story-telling, the role of sub-plots in a series and the use of the device of narrative knowledge.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [genre](#)

18. Wishing and Hoping (P.71)*Resource Description*

Students analyse the use of exposition, conflict and dialogue in storytelling. They write their observations of the characters and situation presented then analyse how they made these observations.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

19. Would I Lie to You? (P.73)

Students explore the nature of lies, do a PMI activity about what the world might be like using Lennon's Imagine as the stimulus; create a slogan about truth and explore the concept of truth in media.

Resource Description

Students explore the nature of lies, do a PMI activity about what the world might be like using Lennon's Imagine as the stimulus; create a slogan about truth and explore the concept of truth in media.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Ethical Understanding](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#) Themes: [justice](#), [relationships](#), [self](#), [values](#)

A Tale of Two Cities

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Film Language; Narrative Structure |
| Description: | With these activities, students explore some of the techniques for creating mood and atmosphere in filmed narratives. They analyse the theme and the parallel plots running through the episode. |
| Resources: | A Tale of Two Cities, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View A Tale of Two Cities

This episode provides a useful opportunity to study the creation of atmosphere. Teach the way in which atmosphere is created through the use of commonly recognised conventions.

Identify some conventions for creating atmosphere

Replay the scene where Diana and Bruce are watching the sunset and ask students to identify the conventions used to create an atmosphere of romance, such as the sunset, the music, soft voices, the physical proximity of characters.

Create a diagram to represent the plots

Like many other episodes this one uses parallel plots: the Bruce and Diana plot, the Conrad and Bazza plot and the Otto plot. Have students represent these plots diagrammatically showing how they develop separately and intersect at various points. (Overlapping Venn diagrams)

Discuss the theme

Like a number of modern narratives this one is based around the problems children have with situations involving parental romance. It can be argued that the frequency of such narratives in recent years reflects social changes whereby it is more likely for people with children to remarry. Discuss Penelope's responses to her mother's growing love for Bruce and her behaviour. Where do students' sympathies lie?

Analyse the camera techniques

Compare the shot types in those scenes which focus on actions and those scenes which focus on the characters' feelings. List the number of close-ups in each type of scene. Which scenes use the most close-ups? Suggest reasons for the use of close-ups in these scenes - faces are sites for emotional communication.

Analyse the body language

Look at the body language of Bruce and Diana. What do you learn about their feelings about each other from their body language?

Comedy from Screen to Print

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 4 to Year 8 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Film Language |
| Description: | Students compare how a comedy scene is portrayed in a tv program with how it is written in the tie-in book then write their own book versions of a tv comedy scenes. |
| Resources: | Larceny ep 6 vol 2 <i>The Genie From Down Under 1</i> Books: <i>The Genie From Down Under 1</i> , Amanda Midlam, (1996), Puffin Books, Australia. <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> , Amanda Midlam (1998), Angus&Robertson, Australia. Teacher Reference: <i>A Television Comedy Study Guide</i> (1996) ACTF. |

Lesson plan:

Background

Comedy in a print narrative relies totally on the author's skills to be witty on the page. It is a much more difficult and complex process to create television comedy. Comedy in television is incredibly varied. While much comedy works as well in print -for example, taboo, verbal humour, characterisation and black humour - some of the more visual humours are perfect for a visual medium like television. Visual humours with a long stage history include burlesque, farce, parody, practical jokes and slapstick. Technical aspects such as editing, music, sound effects, make-up, costume, camera work, lighting can work well together to increase the impact of comedy through tv. The Genie From Down Under series takes advantage of traditional slapstick humour. Two characters in particular, Otto and Conrad, are frequently the unfortunate recipients. For example in *Larceny ep. 6 vol. 2 from The Genie from Down Under* , Otto and Conrad are in a farcical slapstick chase scene around Townes Hall when Otto, lured by Diana's pie, slips and falls down the stairs on his backside. Caught up in the pace and flow of the sequence, and following the action intently, viewers roar with laughter as it finishes with Otto exclaiming: *I think I've broken my bottom!*

1. View the Genie from DownUnder.

Screen the scene: Chase scene inside Townes Hall (Approximately 16'13" into episode)

Begins with: Otto limping upstairs.

Ends as: Otto weeps, 'I think I've broken my bottom!'

Dur: 1'30"

2. Analyse the scene

Discuss with students how well the scene worked

- What was funny?
- Why was it funny?
- Could the scene have been funnier? How?
- What would the students change to make the scene funnier?

3. Read the tie-in book version

In the book version this scene does not translate with the same humour and the author has made the choice not to focus on the scene in the same way. It is still funny but it has very different timing and emphasis in the scene.

As Otto crept down the stairs, Diana, alerted by Penelope, pulled a wire. The rug under Otto's feet went flying and he tumbled down the stairs. 'They're trying to kill me,' he muttered to Conrad on his phone.

From Amanda Midlam. *The Genie from Down Under* .1996.Puffin Books. Australia. p.83.

4. Student investigation

Students can explore a range of comic scenes selected from a favourite episode of either of *The Genie From Down Under* series and compare the way they are interpreted in the written versions in the tie-in.

Director and script writer Esben Storm describes the elements necessary for creating a funny TV series: First of all we need to work with funny people...Comedy is a knack, a talent, a way of seeing things. ... The actor needs to be funny... an ordinary script in the hands of an hilarious performer has a fair chance of being funny, however an hilarious script in the hands of an ordinary actor has lower chance.

The director brings it all together on screen. The director needs to have a keen sense of what is funny and needs to know how to make it apparent on camera...know what sort of shot will serve the story and the comedy.

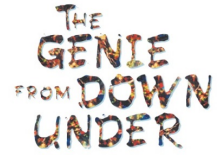
If it is a very physical comedy, then obviously we need to see the body language and close-ups of faces wouldn't convey the comedy... ..Writers, actors, directors and editors are all aware that timing and rhythm are crucial. A gag that doesn't work can sometimes be made to work by changing the rhythm of the edit, that is the way the shots are put together. Conversely a gag can be ruined by poor editing.

Esben Storm. *A Television Comedy Study Guide* .1996. ACTF.p.8-9

Related lessons:

Round the Twist - From TV to Book , years 5-8

Round the Twist - Opening scenes , years 3-8



Customs

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Stereotypes; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | With these activities students explore the use of the pun and stereotypes in Australian television and examine some of the film techniques used in film. |
| Resources: | Customs, <i>The Genie from Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View Customs and discuss the use of the pun

The title of this episode is a pun. A pun is a play on words. In this case the word 'customs' has two meanings and both meanings are invoked in this episode.

After viewing discuss the term **pun** and explore how the two meanings of the word 'customs' are used in this episode.

Discuss the Australian customs depicted in this episode (the football game, the CWA ladies' tea). Discuss with the students:

- what view of Australia is presented in these sequences?
- is the view of Australia presented an accurate one in their opinion?
- is the view a positive one?
- why might the filmmakers have chosen to exaggerate some aspects of Australian behaviour? (Possible considerations include humour, marketing of the series overseas and Australians' willingness to laugh at themselves)

Discuss stereotypes

The presentation of Australians, particularly men, as fat gutted, rowdy beer swilling larrikins has a tradition in literature and film. Otto fits this stereotype. Identify and discuss similar representations of the Australian male.

- Why are such representations popular?
- Whose interests are served by such representations?

- Who is disadvantaged by such representations?
- How do such stereotypes emerge?

This episode draws heavily on national stereotypes for its humour. Look at the scene in which the Japanese tourists see the magic carpet. What aspects of their behaviour draw on stereotyped images?

Discuss some of the film techniques

Discuss the function of the magic carpet ride sequence. How is this sequence linked to the marketing of the television series? What audiences would appreciate this sequence the most? The sequence gives an aerial view of some aspects of the Australian landscape (gorges, Great Barrier Reef, Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House). Discuss the criteria that the filmmaker might have used in the selection of these images.

Explore the theme

Thematically this episode explores the idea of actions and consequences. Bruce lectures Penelope on thinking about the consequences of her wishes but she refuses to do so and thus gets into difficulty. This is a common idea explored in many fairy tales, myths and literature (eg Midas and the Golden Touch, Great Expectations). Discuss the idea of consequences and ask students to give some examples from works they have read or other television programs.

Good Cop, Bad Genie

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | Students explore the use of parody and caricature in comedy, the strategy of running parallel story lines in a narrative and the theme of freedom. |
| Resources: | Good Cop, Bad Genie, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View Good Cop, Bad Genie then discuss the genre

Like many of the other episodes this one is a genre parody (see What it's at for a spoof on the spy genre). In this episode the genre of the murder investigation is parodied. Play the scene which introduces 'Inspector Grave from the Yard' Identify the visual and audio conventions of the murder mystery genre used in this episode. For example:

- appearance and gestures – deer stalker cap, tweed coat, waist coat
- actions – spotting the clue (Marcia's headband)
- gathering the suspects in the conservatory
- dialogue – questioning the suspect (interrogating)

Discuss the sources of humour in the parody (parody often works through over-exaggeration). Introduced the terms of caricature and satire and explain their meaning with examples from the episode.

Explore the use of caricature

Caricature is a form of over-exaggeration in which the qualities of a person or stock character are exaggerated for comic effect. Using cartoons from newspapers and magazines have them find other examples of the use of caricature.

Analyse the parallel story lines

This episode uses a parallel story structure. There is the story set in England (Penelope's jealousy of Marcia and the events it leads to) and the story set in Australia (von Meister tours as the subject of a fraud squad investigation). Ask the students to identify the two storylines

and discuss how they are established as parallel (contemporaneous in time) through the editing. Have students draw a graphic representation of the parallel story line. Mark on a time-line the major events, their location and points of intersection and crossover.

Discuss the theme

This episode develops the continuing narrative of Bruce's desire to be human and thus explores the theme of freedom. Discuss Bruce's definition of freedom and his rhetorical question '*Why do caged birds sing?*'

It's My Opal... (And I'll Cry If I Want To)

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Film Language; Symbolism and Icons |
| Description: | Students explore the use of exposition and the role of a narrator. They analyse the motives behind some film techniques and explore the role of symbols and icons in filmed storytelling. |
| Resources: | It's My Opal...(And I'll Cry If I Want To) <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

In this the second episode in the series the audience is given a shortened version of episode one, the expository episode.

Like many television programs **The Genie From Down Under** uses an opening title sequence which summarises the basic situation on which the show is based and provides flashes of previous episodes. The title sequence prepares the audience for the episode by reminding them of what the program is about and re-establishing appropriate expectations.

Play the opening sequence

Discuss how the sequence functions, both in terms of events and atmosphere, through visuals and music, to:

- remind the viewer of what has happened before
- prepare the viewer for what is to follow.

View the whole episode

The Genie From Down Under is unusual for a television series in using a narrator to open and close each episode. **Discuss:**

- who is the narrator?
- what is the function of the narrator?
- why do students think the producers of the program decided to use a narrator?

- do students think this an effective technique?
- does the fact that Penelope is the narrator position the viewer to respond more positively than he/she might otherwise?

Discuss the filmmakers' motives

This episode establishes the pattern of future episodes which are alternatively set in England and Australia. Identify the icons/symbols of Australia (the emu, the kangaroo, the sound of crows) which locate the setting for the audience. Discuss why the filmmakers chose to show these symbols of Australia rather than simply use a sub-title saying "Australia". What might be some of the broader economic motivations of drawing attention to the Australian setting by showing the more well-known symbols of Australia, given that this program was made to be marketed overseas?

The Australian segments of this program are set in the outback rather than, for example, the suburbs of a major city. Discuss the factors which might have influenced this production decision, such as the creation of a dramatic contrast with the English setting, the potential for storylines and the interest of overseas audiences in this aspect of Australia. What do students think of this choice of setting? Does it enhance their interest? How would it affect their response to the program if the setting was something very familiar to them (use a local suburb or town as an example).

Explore Australian symbols and icons

Ask students to sketch or list as many symbols of Australia as they can think of or find. To make the task easier they could be given categories such as animals, places, people, songs, instruments. Have students compare their lists and discuss:

- those symbols which they think would be internationally recognisable
- those symbols which would be familiar only to people living in Australia
- symbols of white Australia
- symbols of Aboriginal Australia.

Create a video cover

Ask students to design a videotape cover or DVD cover for The Genie From Down Under which indicates to an overseas audience that much of the series is set in Australia, using some of the symbols discussed above.

It's Still Magic

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Film Language |
| Description: | Students viewing this last episode in the series discuss the concept of story resolution and the techniques used by filmmakers to build up to a climax in the story. |
| Resources: | It's Still Magic, <i>The Genie from Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

This is the last episode in the series of *The Genie from Down Under* and provides the opportunity to discuss issues related to **resolution**. Unlike stand-alone texts, such as novels, short stories and films, television series do not always tie up all the ends neatly. They tend to have more open rather than closed endings. This has become a convention of television stemming partly from the fact that producers wish to allow the possibility of a continuation of the series.

Discuss the ending

Explain the concept of resolution - the way in which problems and conflicts in the narrative are solved at the end. Discuss the way in which each of the following narrative problems or issues are solved:

- Bruce's love for Lady Diana
- Lady Diana's financial problems
- Bubbles' desire to marry Diana
- Otto's desire to get the opal
- Penelope's desire to get things through wishing, rather than doing them herself
- Bruce's desire to be free.

The last of these is not actually resolved as Bruce decides to remain a genie so Lady Diana can be saved. Discuss the reasons for Bruce's decision. Do students find this a disappointing or a satisfying ending? How does Bruce's decision contrast with the behaviour of other characters throughout the series such as Penelope and Otto? How do students respond to the fact that Penelope accuses Bruce of selfishness at one point?

Analyse the film techniques

The audience is positioned to accept Bruce's decision as the right one through various techniques such as music and the reaction of other characters. Identify these. Ask students to identify the ways in which they are encouraged to see his decision as the right one.

This episode creates suspense about Bruce's decision by extending the time it takes him to decide. Drawing out the climax and resolution in this way is a common technique in many film and television texts. It creates a dramatic sense of the big moment. Replay the decision scene and ask students to identify how the scene is drawn out for dramatic impact. Their attention should be drawn especially to the use of cut-aways to other scenes and close-ups.

Larceny

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Genre; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | Students explore the comedy genre in TV programs. They discuss various forms of comedy, view the episode Larceny and discuss the use of slapstick. They compare comedy shows from three countries. |
| Resources: | Larceny, <i>The Genie from Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

This episode draws on traditions of comic farce and is useful for teaching aspects of genre, specifically the comic genre. Begin by asking students to think of as many different types of comedy as they are able and give examples of titles from books, television shows and films. Their list might include:

- slapstick/farce - crazy, exaggerated behaviours
- sophisticated - clever witty characters who make fun of social and dull people
- stand up - individual character who tells jokes and funny stories
- situation comedy - comic events and characters in a repeated situation
- parody - humour as a weapon of criticism
- musical comedy
- black comedy - takes what would normally be tragedy and makes cruel humour of it.

Television regularly uses three basic types of comedy - the sitcom, the sketch comedy and the variety show comedy. Use a television guide to identify examples for each of these types of comedy and calculate the percentage of air time given to comedy on television.

View Larceny

Discuss the types of comedy employed in *The Genie from Down Under*. Give students some background to the notion of slapstick comedy. Use these notes as a guide:

The term slapstick derives from the stick wielded by clowns in Punch and Judy puppet shows and denotes a boisterous, physical type of comedy. The slapstick comedy format was developed in the United States by Mack Sennett (1884-1960). It was Sennett who adapted the chase sequences from primitive cinema to the breakneck pace which is commonly seen today. Sennett's most well-known contribution to cinema history was the Keystone Cops (Keystone was the name of Sennett's studio.) Slapstick comedy relies on reducing the real world to a shambles and is marked by the use of crazy weapons such as custard pies, rolling pins and frying pans.

Replay the chase scene in Larceny and identify the use of slapstick routines and sight gags.

Students could listen to the podcast of Abbott and Coustell's "Who's on First" to help identify 'slapstick' or view early slapstick comedians such as Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy.

Compare comedy programs

Some people argue that American, British and Australian comedy are very different. Identify an example of a comedy program from each country and discuss the similarities and differences in the types of humour employed in each. Encourage students to voice their preferences along with their reasons for enjoying one form of comedy more than another.

Me, Myself and I

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 8 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English; Humanities and Social Sciences; The Arts; Health and Physical Education |
| Themes/Topics: | Self and Relationships; Growth and Development |
| Description: | Students explore the notion of identity and the discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how others see us. |
| Resources: | My Better Half ep 8 vol 5 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Other relevant segments: Peace In Our Time ep 5 vo. 4 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Lord Of The Nail Files ep 6 vol 5 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Stocks and Bondings ep 9 vol 5 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> The Opal is a Boomerang ep 10 vol 6 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> |

Summary:

With these activities, students explore the notion of identity and the discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how others see us. They: identify positive characteristics in their classmates; make an acrostic record of personalities; construct personality cubes; discuss prejudice; role-play the characteristics of some of the Genie characters; study identity development in literature.

Skills and processes fostered through the activities include

- reflecting
- creative thinking
- analysing
- co-operating
- expressing and justifying opinion
- accepting the views of other
- challenging questioning.

Lesson plan:

These activities prepare the students for viewing the key episode (or episode segment) related to the topic. Students: explore some of the main concepts involved in the episode; make predictions; reveal some of their prior knowledge; and raise questions for further exploration.

Someone else for a day

Gather students together and pose the question - if you had the opportunity to become someone else for a day - who would you like to be? Give students some thinking, writing and talking time before sharing their fantasies. Ask:

- Why would you like to be that person?
- In what ways are they different to you?
- In what ways are they the same?
- Why do we sometimes wish we were someone else?

The way I see myself

Model for students how to create a list of words that you think best describes your character. Make sure that you use positive terms as well as including things you are less pleased with about yourself! *'Think aloud'* as you write e.g. *'I'm writing the word "outgoing" because I don't see myself as a shy person and I like to meet and talk with new people. I'm writing the word "bossy" because, I think at times I do boss other people around too much when I am trying to organise something...'* etc. Give students some time to write their own list of words that describes the way they see themselves. Ask them to keep these lists personal for the moment.

The way others see me

Ask students to pin a sheet of paper to each other's backs. Their task is to move around the room writing words or phrases they would use to describe each other. These words and phrases must be thoughtfully written and focus on the positive! (You should be part of this exercise.) After a given time period, students can remove their sheet and compare what has been written to what they wrote about themselves. Bring students together as a group. Ask:

- How similar were the words used to describe you and the words you used to describe yourself?
- Did any words surprise you? Why?
- What words do you think your mum/dad/brother/sister would agree with? What words may they add?
- Why are there differences between the way we see ourselves compared with the way others see us?

How do we become the sort of people we are?

Make some notes on a sheet of butchers paper in response to the last question as this is essential to the activity sequence.

Becoming me

Ask students to bring in a photo of themselves and place it in the centre of a page or piece of card that acts like a frame. Around the frame, students can identify the following aspects that play a part in who they are:

- gender
- religion
- culture
- birthplace
- birthplace of parents
- role in family
- other such as experiences (war, fleeing a country, living in unusual circumstances etc)
- death/illness of a significant family member

Discuss the way these things around the frame help shape or make us the person we are.

Predictions

Explain to the class that they are about to watch an episode from the series ***The Genie From Down Under 2*** in which a girl named Penelope wishes to have a double.

Explain that Penelope's double is a much more 'agreeable' version of Penelope. In contrast to selfish Penelope, the double tries hard to please others and quickly becomes liked by friends and family.

Students can work in teams to predict what might happen in the story. Ask them: what might the script writers do with this plot device? These predictions can be reviewed after viewing.

Viewing

View **My Better Half**

Response

These activities help students process the ideas and issues raised in the episode they have viewed.

Return to predictions

Review the students' predictions about what could have happened in the episode. Ask students: did you see any of your ideas reflected in the story? What do you think was most

effective in this episode?

Visual effects

The visual device of having two Penelopes present on the screen at the same time engages the audience at several levels. It is entertaining and funny - but also technically intriguing. Students may wish to investigate how this effect is actually achieved. How can the actor be two characters seen in the same scene at the same time? Make some hypotheses about how it might be done.

Students can also look closely at the two 'Penelopes' to see how the differences in personality are communicated visually through acting, body language, costume, hair etc



The 'Penelope' double 'Pen Pen' gives Bubbles a present.



Penelope is astonished that 'Pen Pen' would think to give her mother flowers.

Acrostic personalities

The 'two Penelopes' have contrasting personalities. Students can record their descriptions of these personalities acrostically and test their vocabulary skills by thinking of descriptive words for each, beginning with the letters of her name, e.g.

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Pushy | Pleasant |
| Egotistical | Enthusiastic |
| Nasty | Nice |
| Envious | Enchanting |
| Lying | Likeable |
| Obstinate | Obedient |
| Posh | Positive |
| Explosive | Eager |

Work in groups and then share ideas as a class to come up with the most appropriate words.

After the activity, ask students: who is the more 'real' of the two 'Penelopes'? Which combination of character traits do you think would best represent a 'real' person?

An acrostic activity can be done for other characters in the episode or series - focussing initially on the character traits most often displayed. (Characters that could be used include: Otto, Baz, Bruce, Mossop, Diana, Bubbles, Darlene, etc.)

Becoming Penelope

Review the 'frames' made by students in **Becoming me**. Now that students are more familiar with Penelope's character, they can create a similar frame for her. Ask students: 'what influences may have helped shape the person Penelope is?' (Responses may include: female, English, only child, personality, owner of the opal, etc.) How might these things have influenced her behaviour?

Many faces of a personality

The identities of the characters in the series are designed to be deliberately stereotyped and predictable as a comic device. However, several characters appear in episodes where their identities change in some way. For example in **Peace in Our Time ep 5 The Genie From Down Under 2** Bubbles becomes the guru 'Baba Bubbles'.

Scene: Diana, Bubbles and Penelope are arguing over whether Penelope deserves the opal. Bubbles ends up with the opal.

Begins with: Diana saying 'You don't deserve such lovely jewellery, I'll take that.'

Ends with: Penelope telling Marcia that Baba is 'totally ga ga'.

In **Lord of the Nail Files** ep 6 **The Genie From Down Under 2**

The normally well-groomed, private school girls become wild and dishevelled.

Scene: In the scrub, at the campsite

Begins with: Penelope's voice over 'I can detect subtle changes within the group'.

Ends with: The girls mounting a frenzied attack on Miss Chatterly's wig 'Kill the wig, kill the wig'.

In **Stocks and Bondings** ep 9 **The Genie From Down Under 2**

Mossop becomes 'Mad Moss' - a leather-clad biker. (Several short scenes show Mossop as Mad Moss - any would be appropriate.)

Scene: Penelope and Monty are stranded in the outback, a motor bike comes towards them.

Begins with: Monty saying '*I think we're completely alone out here.*'

Ends with: Mossop saying: '*Actually, it's a Harley Davidson.*'

In **The Opal is a Boomerang** ep 10 **The Genie From Down Under 2** Diana becomes an independent, feminist activist.

Scene: Diana enters the courtroom wearing no make-up, her hair slicked back and wearing jeans and a singlet.

Begins with: Penelope saying '*Mummy, what's happened to you?*'

Ends with: Diana saying '*Whatever's left after today will be sold to raise money for third-world children.*'

Show excerpts from one or more of these episodes and discuss the ways in which aspects of the characters' identities change. Encourage students to look at appearance, body language and acting, dialogue and sound effects.

Just as the characters in **The Genie From Down Under 2** can be portrayed in different ways, we also have many dimensions to our personalities. These dimensions are often revealed in different contexts. Note the way Mossop discovers new things about herself when she becomes 'Mad Moss' in **episode 9, Stocks and Bondings**. Ask students to consider various dimensions of their personalities according to the different contexts in their lives, eg: me at school; me as a sibling; me as part of a sporting club; me as a friend; me as a son/daughter etc.

Students can represent their various 'selves' by constructing personality cubes. On each face of a cardboard cube they can draw and write about themselves in a different context.

Bringing out the best in ourselves

In **My Better Half** ep 8, Diana remarks to 'Pen Pen', that the wedding seems to have brought out a 'nicer side to your personality'. Ask students to consider the contexts which they think bring out the 'best' and 'worst' in them. Ask: why do we change according to the situation we are in? What can we do about the parts of our personalities that we don't really like?

Imagine ... two of me

Ask students to explore the idea of what they would do if there were two of them for a day. They can draw up a story board for what both of them would be doing at the same time (e.g. while one was at school, the other may be at home watching TV!)

Making a good impression

A sub-plot in **My Better Half** revolves around Otto's dodgy royal tour of England. The tourists, Denise and Derek are very impressed with the possibility that they might come into contact with royalty and they have expectations about what real royalty should be like. ('What breeding - did you hear that voice? That's real style. That's real aristocracy'). Revisit the following short segments from the episode **My Better Half**:

Scene: The 'unimog' appears in front of Townes Hall with tourists staring out the window in amazement.

Begins with: Derek the tourist saying '*So where are we now?*'

Ends with: Denise saying: '*I love the royal family.*'

Scene: Conrad and Otto are herding tourists onto the 'unimog'.

Begins with: Otto saying '*Now we're off on a special royal tour.*'

Ends with: Otto saying '*A royal wedding!!*'

Use these segments as an introduction to discussing the expectations we have of others - even those we have never met. Provide students with a range of pictures from magazines, including people they do know and other less well known figures. Ask them to describe what they think these people would be like if they met them.

Share ideas and ask

- How do we form our opinions of others?
- Is this fair?
- Why do they say that 'first impressions' are the most powerful?
- Have you ever changed your impression of someone as you got to know them better or found out more about them?

Explore 'Prejudice' further through viewing clips of documentaries such as SBS "Go Back" (2011)

Ask students whether they have ever felt unfairly judged by others. Can they think of people throughout history who were unfairly judged? What does the word 'prejudice' mean?

Not-so-nice Nigel

Using drawings, students can demonstrate this concept in relation to Nigel's transformation during **My Better Half**. On one side of a page, students can draw Nigel as Penelope and Diana see him. On the other side, ask them to draw and label Nigel as 'Pen Pen', Bruce, Baz and Bubbles come to see him.

Ask students: why did Penelope and Diana fail to see this side of Nigel that the others could see, until the end of the episode? How can we have different views about the same people?

Parody

Several people or situations are parodied in this episode. Explain parody and ask students to consider the way parody is used in relation to:

- royalty and royal enthusiasts (especially the 'royal wedding' paraphernalia)
- tourists
- the Mafia/Underbelly

Making connections

These activities draw the threads of the mini unit together; assess the degree to which students ideas have developed; and provide direction for possible further investigations.

Reports

Students can now apply some of the skills and vocabulary developed in previous activities to write a 'report' about any character in the series. The report can be presented rather like a school report and should provide:

- a description of the character
- some of the things they have achieved
- areas of personal development the character needs to work on.

Students can choose a character on whom they write a report but try to make a reasonable spread across the class to ensure all main characters are well represented.

Students can also write a similar report about themselves.

Opposing traits

Students can work in pairs. Each pair picks a characteristic or trait out of a hat. Their task is to mime that trait and its opposite at the same time e.g. one being 'enthusiastic' while the other is being 'apathetic'. They should first agree on a simple situation in which either trait could be demonstrated. The rest of the class must try to guess what is being mimed.

Brainstorm some words first, encouraging students to think about the characteristics of some of the characters in the series. Some suggestions include:

- generous (greedy)
- kind (unkind/mean)
- outgoing (withdrawn/shy)
- happy (sad)
- serious (light hearted/foolhardy)
- nervous (brave/fearless)
- neat (sloppy/messy)
- punctual (late)
- confident (uncertain/unsure)
- enthusiastic (apathetic).

Once students have role-played their opposing traits ask: '*can people really change the way they are?*' Are our identities fixed? What characteristics do we most value in our society? Do these values change according to the context? For example, aggression is not valued at school but can be valued on the sporting field.

Who am I?

Play a game of **Who am I?** using the characters best known to the students from ***The Genie From Down Under 2***. A panel of three students can sit facing the class. Each student is given a cardboard headband to wear with the name of one of the characters on it. They do not know which character is on their headband. They ask the rest of the class questions about their personality (yes/no answers only) until someone guesses their identity.

Going further

These activities provide extension and enrichment ideas for individuals, groups or the whole class.

Literature study

The search for and development of identity is a central theme in much of the literature written for young people. As an extension of the ideas explored in this mini unit, students can examine how such literature deals with the formation of identity.

A few of the many titles from which you could choose are:

Morgan, S. (1990) *My Place for Young Readers: Sally's story* Fremantle Arts Press Australia.

Klein, R. (1984) *Hating Alison Ashley*, Puffin, Australia.

Klein, R. (1985) *Good for Something*, Puffin, Australia.

Wrightson, P. (1971) *I Own the Racecourse*, Puffin, Australia.

Newton, Robert (2007) *The Runner*

Paterson, Katherine *Bridge to Terabithia*

Holm, Anne *I am David*

Other people's stories

Students can choose a particular individual who has a strong, public identity. They can prepare a character profile to share with the rest of the class. In their research, students should try to find out some of the major influences on that person or how their identity has been shaped at critical moments in their life.

These profiles may be presented in a range of ways: as a role-play (students are interviewed as their research subject); a time line, a written report or biography. Subjects may include: sporting celebrities, musicians, authors, politicians or activists. Students should be encouraged to select someone in whom they are particularly interested.

Related lesson ideas: What's the Attraction?

Teacher references

Cam, P. (1995) *Thinking together: philosophical inquiry for the classroom*, PETA and Hale and Iremonger, Sydney Australia.

Dalton, J. (1985) *Adventures In Thinking*, Nelson, Melbourne Australia.

Wing Jan, L. and Wilson, J. (1994) *Thinking for Themselves*, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

Wilks, S. (1995) *Critical and Creative Thinking*, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

Nobody's Perfect

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Stereotypes; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | This episode provides source material for exploring the notion of parody and the use of stereotypes in portraying young women, particularly English women. |
| Resources: | Nobody's Perfect, The Genie from Down Under |

Lesson plan:

View Nobody's Perfect and note the parody

This episode parodies the conventions of television journalism and in particular some current affairs programs and "real life" or tabloid television. Replay the scenes in which the camera crew came to Townes Hall. Identify the conventions of television journalism which are being parodied in this sequence (the smooth front man, the exploitative director, the crowds of crew and so on.) Pay special attention to the dialogue *"It's real. I like it. Let's do it."*

Compare this episode to any episode from the series **Frontline** which is also a parody of television news and current affairs. A videotape of Frontline episodes is available from **ABC** shops. Consider the definition of parody:

Parody - a parody searches out , by means of subversive mimicry, any weakness, pretension or lack of self-awareness in the original. Although it is often deflationary and comic its distinguishing characteristic is its analytic mimicry.

Have students list the conventions of television news reporting being parodied in **Frontline**. Have groups of students prepare a short parody on a familiar ritual or convention, eg. school assemblies, speech nights, weddings, family gatherings.

Analyse the stereotypes

This episode offers a commentary on the importance of looks in our society. Penelope wants to be beautiful but more importantly she wants her rival Marcia to be ugly. Discuss the value placed on physical appearance in our society. This episode assumes that females especially are obsessed with appearance but makes fun of this obsession. Discuss:

- Are females overly concerned with appearance?
- What practices in our society and the media especially encourage this concern?
- What sorts of organisations benefit from and therefore have a vested interest in encouraging a concern for physical appearances?
- What constitutes “perfect”? Build word lists of synonyms/antonyms: flawless/flawed

Look at specific elements of appearance: One aspect of Marcia's ugliness is supposedly her baldness. Who benefits from the inclusion of hair as a definition of beauty? Who benefits from the conception of beauty as including clear skin and straight noses?

The characterisation of Penelope draws heavily on the stereotype of the young upper class English female and this episode brings this characterisation into high relief. Ask students to identify the elements of this stereotype: bitchy, shallow, materialistic, self-centered, two-faced. As a way of exploring the social function and contested nature of stereotypes discuss:

- Who might find this stereotype amusing?
- Who might be offended by it?
- What social function does the stereotype serve?

Compare this with the competing stereotype of the young upper class English female as sophisticated, charming, attractive, well-mannered and possibly charitable. Visual representations of this stereotype may be found in expensive British women's magazines, especially the advertising, and in some forms of popular literature. Discuss the effect of target audience on the types of stereotypes circulated in a specific text.

Critical Literacy Extension

Use the Four Resources Model (Text User/Analyst/Code Breaker/Meaning Makers) to explore how texts in media ‘position’ viewers into being swayed, excluded, irked etc into buying products or ‘taken in’ by the portrayal of celebrities/beautiful people eg. ‘Who’ magazine, advertisements for celebrity watches, clothing. These can be readily found online, in daily newspapers, weekend magazines.

Opening Scenes

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 3 to Year 8 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English; The Arts |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Film Language |
| Description: | This lesson introduces students to the different styles authors adopt when writing for television then writing the same story for print media. |
| Resources: | I do. You do! Who do? ep1 vol. 4 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Book: <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> , Amanda Midlam, (1998) Angus&Robertson, Australia. |

Lesson plan:

1. Introduce the unit

Explain to students that an analysis of opening scenes between the original television version and the re-telling in the book is usually a good place to start comparing differences between the way information is presented in the TV program and in the book.

Explain to students that when beginning a new series important information needs to be passed onto the viewer/reader to quickly establish the characters and the context.

2. View the TV version

Screen the opening scene several times for students and discuss the characters, the story so far and any other information students observed. **Cue in the scene**

Begins with: Exterior of Townes Downes. Penelope is under a tree.

Ends as: Diana says, 'I wish you'd just leave the sunscreen to Bruce'. Bruce smiles and swats. Penelope fumes and gives the sunscreen to Bruce.

Dur: 3'55"

3. Students write responses

Students can make a list of the most significant pieces of information about the story, characters and the location which are communicated to the audience in this scene, and how this information is communicated to the audience - for example, by the setting, the costumes, body language, dialogue, and sound effects.

4. Read the book version

Read aloud or ask students to read the first two and a half pages of the tie-in book to see an interesting contrast in the way the information is presented between the two versions of the story.

For example in the TV episode, the setting is clearly established as Australian with gum trees, birds warbling, the brown grass, the sunlight and the Australian farmhouse in the background. Yet in the book the setting is not described at all and the reader does not get any clues to this until almost the end of the second page where Penelope says: 'Mummy, you must protect yourself from this savage, brutal, cunning Australian...' Penelope gave Bruce a filthy look, '...sun' she finished.

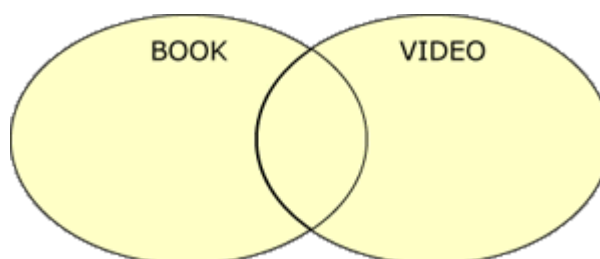
5. Class discussion

Discuss with students the similarities and differences between the TV program and the book.

Students can look at the different ways the background information is presented to the viewer and to the reader.

- What does the reader find out about what has happened before?
- What does the television viewer find out?
- What is the same?
- What is different?

This information could be collated on a Venn diagram with the common information recorded in the middle.



This involves drawing two interlocking circles and putting the features common to both texts in the shared middle space and the different features in the individual spaces for each text.

6. Analyse the differences

Students can discuss and analyse the collated information, looking at what information is different or missing between the two versions. They could make up a list of reasons why they think these changes were made in the book version and whether they make any significant differences to the story.

The ways of presenting the introductory and background information may be different but the story is essentially the same. In the TV version, Penelope speaks over images from the previous series to give a very quick overview of the back story whereas the book summarises the story in a few descriptive sentences.

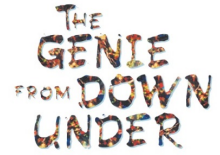
Students might consider questions such as:

- Do you think this makes a difference to the way the story unfolds?
- How do you relate to the characters?
- Which version do you prefer?
- Why?

Venn diagram based on activity developed by Jane O'Loughlin with her year 8 class in Travers, D and Hancock, J (eds) (1994) **Teaching Viewing - Twelve Units of Learning with Visual Texts**, South Australian English Teachers Association.)

Related lesson plans

[From TV to book, years 5-8](#)



School Daze

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Humour and Satire; Stereotypes |
| Description: | Students discuss how the techniques of exposition, stereotyping, and idiomatic expressions help to tell a story. They write a script for a scene and write a character description. |
| Resources: | School Daze, <i>The Genie from Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

Introduce the concept of exposition

In the opening of this episode the exposition is provided by Penelope's narration through her direct address to the camera. Teach the concept of exposition - the provision of information necessary which the audience needs to understand the subsequent events - and discuss the manner in which the exposition is provided in this episode.

This method of exposition is actually fairly rare in modern television where exposition is usually provided dramatically. Draw attention to it and discuss other ways in which the same information might have been revealed through dramatic means.

Students write a script

Have students write a script for an opening scene which acts as exposition but without the use of a narrator.

Discuss overcoming obstacles

This episode like many narratives is structured around one or more characters' desire to achieve a goal. These are established early in the episode: Penelope's desire to attend Marcia's party and Baz's desire for a birthday party. Interest in the narrative lies in seeing how the obstacles to these goals are overcome. Through discussion, have students identify the goals and the obstacles which are thrown up in the way of the achievement of these goals and how these obstacles are overcome.

Discuss the role of gaps in the narrative

This episode provides a useful opportunity to teach the way in which audiences fill in gaps in narratives. In the scene where Penelope is about to be expelled from Highdene, Bruce says, *"If I get you out of this, will you do something for me?"* At no point is the audience explicitly told what he wants Penelope to do for him (which is to return to Australia in time for Baz's party). Replay this scene and discuss what it is implied that he wants her to do. How does the audience know this? At what point do they know? Why does the writer use this technique?

Discuss the use of idiomatic expressions

This episode draws attention to the culturally specific nature of some Australian idiomatic expressions such as *"have a lend"*, *"pulling your leg"*, *"a few sheep short in the top paddock"*. Discuss the meaning of these expressions and ask students to suggest other idiomatic expressions. Ask students to consider how the use of these expressions might exclude some viewers. In a multicultural class, students could compile lists of these expressions from different cultures.

Discuss the use of stereotypes

The scenes of Conrad at the party draw their humour by juxtaposing stereotypical Australian behaviour with stereotypical upper class English behaviour. There is both a national and a class element to the contrasts created. Many narratives create humour by placing characters from different social backgrounds together and showing the misunderstandings and contrasts. On television for instance *The Nanny*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* and many other shows have used this technique as the basic situation. Usually the audience is placed on the side of the lower class characters who are used to point out the pretensions, or lack of common sense, of the upper class. Thus the technique is a way of poking fun at those who see themselves as better or more important. Discuss how the party scenes do this. Which characters do students mostly identify with in these scenes? Why? Explain the conventions described earlier and ask students to suggest current programs which use the same situation.

It could be argued that for the most part this episode gives a rather negative representation of teenage girls. Look at the representation of the girls at the party. What aspects of their behaviour is criticised in the episode? Discuss whether or not students feel this is a fair or accurate representation? Do they see it as a representation of girls in general, English girls or upper class English girls? Ask students to write a paragraph describing a teenage girl, or boy, character for a TV series.

References

Macquarie Dictionary
Idioms Dictionary (2006) Collins, University of Birmingham

The Eternal Quadrangle

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Genre; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | Students explore narrative devices of exposition and narrative knowledge and film techniques used to tell the story in romantic comedies. They discuss the concepts and write a parody of a romance. |
| Resources: | The Eternal Quadrangle, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View The Eternal Quadrangle

The episode opens, as do all the episodes, with Penelope directly addressing the camera and giving a brief exposition of the situation. Her address to the audience raises issues about narrative knowledge. As in many texts, especially comedies, the question of "Who knows what?" is an important plot device in this series, creating many opportunities for mistakes and misunderstandings.

Replay Penelope's address

Discuss the hierarchy of knowledge that emerges amongst the characters. Point out that the audience's knowledge is the greatest because they have access to information that is denied even to Penelope (e.g. Bruce's growing affection for Diana.) The students could map 'Who know what' and connect with arrows and symbols. Draw attention to other texts which use this device (e.g. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Twelfth Night*, *Bewitched*, *Mary Poppins*, *Ghost*). Ask students to suggest texts from their own experience which use this device.

Students write

Ask students to write a story or produce a play which uses the device of narrative knowledge for comic effect.

Discuss the conventions of romantic comedy

This episode plays with the conventions of romance. The conventions of romantic comedy are parodied through the 'romance' between Diana and Otto von Meister. Ask students to identify the conventions which are parodied in the episode (the use of parallel cutting in the scene in which the lovers run to meet each other, slow motion, music, soft focus, silhouettes, sunsets, champagne, poetry, exaggerated emotion, chocolates).

Read some extracts from heavily conventional romances such as Mills and Boon novels and discuss the conventions. What is the attraction of such heavily conventionalised representations of romance? Students could also write or perform their own parody of a romance.

The Triple Agent

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Stereotypes; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | After viewing the episode The Triple Agent and others, students discuss the use of the running gag and stereotypes in comedy. They write some dialogue for Penelope that defies the stereotype. |
| Resources: | The Triple Agent, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View The Triple Agent

This episode draws on a number of myths about ghosts and vampires. Identify the character actions which are based on these myths and discuss the significance of:

- mirrors
- garlic
- footprints.

Students could research the origins of some of these symbolic associations in literature.

Discuss the purpose of the running gag

If students have seen a number of episodes of *The Genie From Down Under*, this episode provides a useful opportunity for drawing attention to the way in which situation comedies provide pleasure by repeated use of particular tropes or running gags. These are incidents or characters which do not have much to do with the main storyline but provide the opportunity to introduce some humour. Viewers come to expect and find pleasure in these recurring gags. In the case of *The Genie From Down Under* one of the tropes is the arrival of a bus load of tourists with amusing characteristics. In this episode the tourists are members of a lonely hearts club. Explain the concept of a trope or running gag and ask students to come up with ways in which the tourist gag has been used in other episodes of *The Genie From Down Under*. Discuss the use of other non-essential recurring gags in other sit-coms.

Discuss the Penelope stereotype

This episode, like a number of episodes of *The Genie From Down Under*, draws on and makes fun of Penelope's "typically female" behaviour. Ask students to identify the way in which Penelope conforms to the helpless female stereotype in this episode. Examples include her coyness, giggling, leaving it to the male to make the first approach, going along with the male even though she knows his behaviour is stupid. Do students think we are meant to sympathise with or laugh at Penelope when she exhibits these forms of behaviour?

Students write the dialogue

Ask students to re-write a section of dialogue which shows Penelope not conforming to the stereotype.

Triple Treat

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure |
| Description: | Students analyse narrative devices used to tell a story. They explore the concept of recurring themes, the convention of hiding information from all but one character, and use of binary oppositions. |
| Resources: | Triple Treat, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View and analyse *Triple Treat*

One of the recurring themes of *The Genie From Down Under* is Penelope's dependence on making wishes, rather than doing things herself. This theme is highlighted in this, and the previous episode, where Bruce tries to teach Penelope the importance of not relying on wishes. Ask students to identify the way in which this episode illustrates this theme.

One of the internal narrative conventions of *The Genie From Down Under* is that no-one, apart from Penelope, notices the magic. Other people do not comment when they, other people or things magically appear or disappear. They look surprised briefly but then continue as if everything is normal. This convention is illustrated a number of times in this episode. Discuss the convention and ask students to identify examples. What do students think of the convention? Does it make the show less realistic or doesn't it matter? Why might the producers have chosen to employ the convention?

Like most narratives *The Genie From Down Under* is based around a series of "binary oppositions" or pairs of contrasts. Some of these are:

Australia ----- England

Sunshine ----- Rain

Bruce ----- Bubbles

Natural behaviour ---- Pompous behaviour

Binary oppositions are quite a useful tool of analysis. Interest and humor derive from these contrasts but they also reveal some of the ways of thinking which underpin the narrative. Teach the concept of binary oppositions or pairs of contrasts and give a few examples from the show as in the table above. Ask students to come up with other pairs of oppositions in the show.

Discuss which side the audience is encouraged to prefer in regard to the various pairs of oppositions and why. Discuss the vertical relationships established in the table. Why is Australia seen to be on the same side as "natural" and England as "pompous"?. What ways of thinking about certain topics are evident here?

What's Mine is.... Mine?

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 8 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English; Humanities and Social Sciences; The Arts |
| Themes/Topics: | Cultural Studies; Ethics, Values, Justice; Civics and Citizenship; Indigenous Issues |
| Description: | Students explore the concept of property ownership including landrights and examine some legal aspects of property. They consider some philosophical issues about property and the real sources of happiness. |
| Resources: | The Opal is a Boomerang ep 10 vol 6 <i>The Genie From Down Under 2</i> |

Summary:

Students explore the concept of property ownership including land rights and examine some legal aspects of property. They consider some philosophical issues about property and the real sources of happiness. Students discuss issues, analyse some relevant songs, hold a mock auction, write about how the court system works; compile a dictionary of legal terms; create some slogans; design a museum of the future; conduct a mock court, a debate and an audit of household items. They also explore the notion of caricature in films.

Skills and processes fostered through the activities include:

- discussing
- reasoning
- co-operating
- expressing and justifying opinions
- accepting the views of others
- challenging
- questioning

NB: Some of the activities (particularly in the 'Going Further' section) suggest investigation of local and national issues relating to Aboriginal land ownership. Teachers are encouraged to seek the advice of state Aboriginal education personnel and to use local resources in their development of these activities.

Lesson plan:

These activities prepare the students for viewing the key episode (or episode segment) related to the topic. Students: explore some of the main concepts involved in the episode;

make predictions; reveal some of their prior knowledge; and raise questions for further exploration.

Something to share

Ask students to bring in an item from home which is important to them and 'from their past'. It might be connected to their childhood or it might be linked to previous generations of their family (or you may ask students to find something from both categories). Bring some items for students who have forgotten.

Sharing an item of your own with students will help generate interest in this activity. Organise students into sharing circles where they individually present their object to others and explain its significance. Some key questions that may assist this process include:

- What is the object?
- What was it used for? Is it still used?
- Why is it important to you/your family? Do you feel connected to the object in some way? How?
- Who owns the item now? Who has owned it in the past?
- Has it changed over time? How?

If the items are not too precious, set up a classroom display which can be added to throughout the unit. Alternatively, photos of the items may be taken and made into a class book with the significance of each item explained.

Ask students to talk about the item and explain why it is valued by their family. To what extent do we value these items according to their monetary worth? What things have 'sentimental' or 'historical' value for us?

What's it worth?

Make a list of items that you are (fictitiously) selling for auction. These items may include such things as:

- a television
- a ticket to Lady Gaga concert
- a tattslotto ticket
- a lifetime supply of fresh air
- a magic opal
- a new car
- good health
- a forest of native timber
- a block of land by the sea
- a rare diamond
- an autographed football jumper from an AFL champion

'Give' each student a set amount of 'play money' to spend at the auction (e.g. \$100). This could be represented using tokens or counters, each worth \$10.

Hold a mock auction, selling the products to the highest bidder until all are sold.

Compare the selling price of the items. What is considered to be the most 'valuable' item? Why? What are the things we value the most?

True value

Ask students to make a list of or draw their ten most valued possessions. Share these in groups and discuss reasons for different items being valued in different ways. Would the list have been different five years ago? How? How might the list change in ten years' time?

Ask students to imagine they are stranded on a desert island. Thinking about the possessions they have listed, which would be helpful to them? Are there alternative items they would substitute for those on the list? Discuss the difference between needs and wants. Students can work in teams to attempt a definition of each.

Who owns what?

Discuss with students: how do we know when we own something? What does it mean? Have you ever lost something you owned that was really important to you? How did you feel? Share these stories and experiences before viewing **The Opal is a Boomerang**.

View The Opal is a Boomerang

Responding

These activities help students process the ideas and issues raised in the episode they have viewed.

Record of events

Individually or in small groups, students can develop a flow chart, comic strip or story board depicting the main characters, the sequence of events and the settings in this episode. Students may need to re-visit some sections of the video to clarify the sequence.

Message in the madness

After viewing the episode, highlight the way it refers to issues of cultural ownership and the law. The debate about indigenous land rights has become prominent in Australia through the Mabo and Wik cases.

There has been much recent focus on the 'stolen generation' and the need for reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Ask students:

- What issues might the script writers have had in mind when they wrote the script?
- What is this story about?
- What real-life issues does it remind you of?
- What messages do you think the script writers are communicating through this episode?

You can't keep that!

Some of the items in Penelope and Diana's home seem odd or inappropriate to own by today's standards such as the elephant leg as an umbrella stand. Ask students if they can think of other items that might once have been fashionable or acceptable but are now considered not to be. For example:

- Fur coats and other animal products especially if the animal is rare or endangered
- Art work that has been sold with permission from the artist (e.g. some Aboriginal art works and designs)
- Items taken from important natural settings such as rare rainforest woods, rare plants.

Find out about products that are banned by customs from entering Australia for cultural or ethical reasons. For example: ivory, rhinoceros tusk, timber products etc.

What do we know about the court system?

In the story, there were several parties who claimed to have true ownership of the opal. The dispute is taken to court. Discuss the issues raised by the conflict.

Brainstorm other kinds of disputes which are taken to court. Ask students: why do we have courts? What role do they play in society?

Students can draw and write about how the court system works. Compare this information with that portrayed in the episode. How much of the courtroom part of the story is true to life (though exaggerated and parodied)? List the questions students have about courts and the legal system. Look through a newspaper and list stories that involve the court system in some way.

Legal-speak

Early in the court hearing, Penelope says '*Objection, your honour*'. When asked 'To what?' she replies '*I don't know, I saw it on television!*' Review the episode and ask students to make a note of any of the common phrases used in court which they recognise from their television viewing. For example:

'Proceeding with the matter of the Nations of the world verses Penelope Townes...'
· *'Objection your honour.'*

- *'Contempt of court.'*
- *'Allegedly owned...'*
- *'Call your first witness.'*
- *'Do you swear to tell the truth...'*
- *'I ask that this testimony be struck from the records...'*
- *'I ask for a short recess.'*
- *'Silence in the court.'*
- *'Objection sustained.'*
- *'This is hearsay.'*
- *'The witness is under oath.'*
- *'I move for a mis-trial.'*

Once a list of words and phrases has been collated, students can add others they have heard (e.g. jury, defence, lawyer, solicitor, barrister, defendant, pleading guilty, conviction, sentence etc). Give each phrase to a pair or small group of students. Ask them to attempt to define it, or explain when it may be used. Begin compiling a class dictionary of legal terms.

Invite a speaker (perhaps parent/relative) who has a background in law and could answer questions.

Larger than life

The use of 'Legal-speak' in this episode is a technique used to create humour. The viewer recognises the language used by the characters but laughs at the way it is used or misused or misunderstood. The court scene is also made funny by the way the judge, Penelope and others become caricatures of the real life role.

Review the scene and ask students to note the way facial expressions, voices, costumes and other techniques are used to exaggerate these court characters. Remind them that this is a 'spoof' or 'parody' of a court hearing. Students may know of other films or television programs where the same technique has been used, such as the courtroom scene in Jim Carey's movie Liar Liar or in the movie Soul Man. Note other caricatures that are used in this episode, such as Diana who becomes the aggressive member of the M.A.N support group.

Developing our own caricatures

Students can now develop their own caricature of a particular person or role, e.g. of a teacher, a sports hero, a pop star, an environmentalist, a scientist etc. These caricatures can be drawn and labelled, or acted out. The students will be demonstrating their understanding of the way features (physical and other) are exaggerated for comic effect. Students can also examine the way cartoonists achieve the same effect in their work, e.g. looking at politicians or sporting heroes.

Making connections

These activities draw the threads of the mini unit together; assess the degree to which students ideas have developed; and provide direction for possible further investigations.

Laying it on the line

Mark out an 'imaginary line' at the front of the classroom. At one end, place a sign that says 'strongly agree' at the other end, place a sign that says 'strongly disagree'.

Choose a group of students (or the whole class if there is room) to position themselves along the line according to how they feel about the following phrases. Read them out one at a time and ask students to decide how they feel about the phrase - indicating their opinion by standing in the appropriate position along the line. Interview students along the line, asking them to justify their point of view.

For example:

- The world would be a better place if we shared more of our possessions.
- Everyone should be entitled to the same standard of living - regardless of their income.
- Money can't buy happiness.
- No one can really own the land.
- What belongs to the parents, belongs to their kids.
- You can't stop progress.
- We're not responsible for what has been done in the past.
- We have a responsibility to future generations.

Repeat the activity, asking students to imagine they are Penelope - where would she stand? Why?

As students: why do we respond to these statements in different ways?

What's in a saying?

Present students with all or some of these sayings:

- *'Finders keepers, losers weepers'.*
- *'If you love something, set it free. If it comes back it's yours, if it doesn't - it never was'.*
- *'All you need is love'.*
- *'What's mine is yours'.*

Students can:

- Discuss the meaning behind the saying with a partner
- Consider why the saying may be commonly used and in what contexts
- Write about the extent to which they agree/disagree with the saying.

Students can then create their own sayings or slogans about needs, wants, possessions or ownership.

You don't know what you've got till it's gone

Play students the Joni Mitchell song Big Yellow Taxi. Focus on the verse:

They took all the trees
and put them in a tree museum
They charged the people a dollar and a half
Just to see them
Don't it always seem to go
You don't know what you've got till it's gone

Ask students to consider what items we currently use or have, which may be regarded as precious or significant in some way in 100 years' time. What could a 'museum of the future' include? Students can then either collect and bring from home, paint or make models of items that they think may be on display in a museum of the future. Write captions for the paintings/models and display them around the room. Invite other classes to look at the exhibits. Take photos and place these on the display boards around the school or on the school's Intranet.

Order in the court

Present students with a mock scenario involving an item of significance belonging to the school, for example, an old school bell, a section of the playground, a collection of musical instruments, etc. Explain to them that a family who lived in the area thirty years ago has written to the principal asking for the item to be returned to them as the rightful owners. The principal, on the other hand, believes the item belongs to the school community. (Flesh out the scenario as best fits your school and circumstances.)

Set up a mock court in the classroom including a judge, jury, a representative of family, the principal, lawyers for both sides, witnesses etc. Give students who are playing different roles some time to prepare their arguments then develop the role play - giving the jury time to reach a decision at the end and the judge to deliver his/her verdict and subsequent punishment.

After the role play, debrief with students:

- How did you feel in your role?
- Did you feel the process was a fair one for you? Why/why not?
- How could the process have been improved?
- Do you feel the outcome is fair?
- How do you think this compares with a real life law court?

As a follow up to this activity, Read Mary O'Toole's big book, *Kangaroo Court* (1988) Macmillan, Australia.

Going further

These activities provide extension and enrichment ideas for individuals, groups or the whole class. The selection of activities will depend on both the time available, the needs of students and the direction in which the unit has already gone.

In the public interest?

Many of the scenes and issues in this episode revolve around museums or collections of items considered valuable and 'publicly' owned. Make a list of museums, art galleries, state libraries etc. in your particular city or town. Find out more about their function and where some of the items on display come from. Are there items which the museum no longer considers 'appropriate' to have on display? Write to or visit the local museum and talk to them about how the items are procured.

Penelope claims that her family's collection strives to 'preserve things that could otherwise be lost'. Discuss this issue.

This activity may lead to a class debate about the value of institutions such as museums, or whether valuable and rare cultural artefacts should remain with their traditional owners or be 'preserved' for wider, public viewing.

Discuss: *'If rare, indigenous objects are found many generations after they have been used, should they be displayed for the general public interest or returned to indigenous people - even if the true owners cannot be traced?'*

Excursions

Visit a local court or invite a lawyer to come and talk to the students about the court system. Have students draw up a set of questions beforehand.

Issues in song

The issue of rightful ownership of cultural possessions is very relevant to the contemporary Australian context of Aboriginal culture. While students of this age may be too young to explore these issues in depth, they will have heard of terms such as 'Wik', 'Mabo' and 'The stolen generation' and should be given the opportunity to express what they understand about these issues.

One 'way in' to discussing some of the feelings surrounding land rights and the 'stolen generation' is to listen to the popular music of Australian indigenous people, for example:

- Archie Roach;
- Kevin Carmody;
- Ruby Hunter;
- Yothu Yindi;
- Christine Anu;
- Tiddas.

Some of the songs of non indigenous Australians are also about the same issues, e.g.

- Shane Howard '**Solid Rock**' and many others;
- Midnight Oil '**Beds are Burning**' and many others;
- Paul Kelly 'From Little Things, '**Little Kings**' and others.

Ask students to listen to the songs and examine the lyrics. What are they singing about? What are some of the common themes in the songs?

Local history

Find out about the Aboriginal history of your local area. You should contact your State Aboriginal Education Authority for information. Many places now have organised ways to introduce students to the history of their local area (trails, guest speakers, education centres, etc.)

Borrowed cultures

The Australian culture has 'borrowed' many aspects of other cultures in developing its identity. We are a nation of immigrants and our food, architecture, religion, clothing, etc. can be traced back to many different sources. Depending on your location, you may be able to show students evidence of this simply by taking them on a walk through the local CBD. Look for evidence of cultural diversity in the buildings, signs, foods, people, clothing, public art, etc. Students can represent this through art work or a photographic when you return.

Household audit

Students can conduct an audit of some of the items in their homes - finding out the countries from which they originally came. Share audits and visually represent the gathered data.

Technological fantasies

Review this segment from the episode **The Opal is a Boomerang** where each party uses different means to try and retrieve the opal.

Scene: Townes Hall at night - Otto and Conrad are crouched outside the window.

Begins with: Otto saying '*Shhhh no noise*'.

Ends with: Diana and Mossop, disguised as 'Gas men' telling Bubbles they are '*Just reading the meter*'.

Students can then design and draw how they might have taken the opal from the glass case - encourage them to be creative and inventive in their designs!

What a farce!

The retrieval of the opal by the various interested parties has can be described as a farce and also involves an element of slapstick (as is often the case when Otto and Conrad are involved).

Ask students to consider what makes this scene 'work'? What does the audience know that the characters have hidden from them? Why is this a powerful form of comedy? How does it make the audience feel? The theft scene is also playing with a genre associated with action films - such as James Bond. Ask students to watch the scene again and make a list of all the elements that remind them of this genre. What makes the scenes funny is that the actors 'play' on our experience of this genre -we recognise it and enjoy seeing it 'sent up'.

Teacher references

Cam, P. (1995) *Thinking together: philosophical inquiry for the classroom*, PETA and Hale and Iremonger, Sydney Australia.

Dalton, J. (1985) *Adventures In Thinking*, Nelson, Melbourne Australia.

Wing Jan, L. and Wilson, J. (1994) *Thinking for Themselves*, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

Wilks, S. (1995) *Critical and Creative Thinking*, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

What's the Attraction?

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English; The Arts; Health and Physical Education |
| Themes/Topics: | Self and Relationships; Growth and Development |
| Description: | Many of the activities in this unit need to be managed with sensitivity by the teacher as they deal with issues are very 'close to home' for young people. |
| Resources: | Stocks and Bonding <i>ep 9 Vol 5 The Genie From Down Under</i> Other relevant episodes: The Cold Shoulder <i>ep 3 vol 4 The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Otto Rules OK <i>ep 12 vol 6 The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Caution: It would be useful to establish some 'ground rules' for listening to each other, sharing ideas in groups, accepting different points of view, etc. If teachers are not familiar with some of the approaches and strategies used to facilitate whole and small group discussion, the references listed might be useful. Skills and processes fostered through the activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• discussing• reasoning• expressing and justifying opinions• accepting the views of others• challenging questioning.• expanding viewpoint of cultures |

Lesson plan:

These activities prepare the students for viewing the key episode related to the topic. Students: explore some of the main concepts involved in the episode; make predictions; reveal some of their prior knowledge; and raise questions for further exploration.

What is a relationship?

Pose the question: what is a relationship? Conduct a quick brainstorm of all the different kinds of relationships students know about (friend-friend, parent-child, boyfriend-girlfriend,

husband-wife, teacher-student, boss-employee, doctor-patient, service provider-customer, grandparent-grandchild etc.) Make a list of these.

Ask students to look through magazines and on line (such as Creative Commons) for images that represent different kinds of relationships. Create a large mural and label them accordingly.

Relationship rings

Provide students with, or have them draw, a series of concentric circles on a page. In the centre circle they draw themselves. In the circle immediately around that, they list the people with whom they feel they have the closest relationship. The next circle represents those with whom they have a less close relationship with and so on.

Insert diagram

Students can share their diagram with a partner, discussing the different roles or purposes fulfilled by the relationships represented in their rings. Ask students: if you had done this exercise five years ago - how might the results have been different? What are contributing factors in forming relationships? If you were to do it in five years' time, how would the results be different? Why?

What makes a healthy relationship?

Students divide a sheet of paper into four boxes. The boxes are headed, accordingly:

| Friends | Boy/Girl friend | Teachers | Parents |
|---------|-----------------|----------|---------|
| | | | |

In each box, students list words/phrases to describe their feelings about happy, positive relationships, for example: trust, respect, fun, sharing, standing by, etc.

Words and phrases may be repeated across categories. After the initial exercise, ask students to highlight the words that seem to come up in every box. Are there qualities that we think are characteristic of most 'good' relationships?

Students can also attempt to brainstorm words and phrases that describe these relationships in negative ways. For example 'jealousy' may be an example of a word associated with a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship.

Preparing for the episode

Explain to students that they are about to watch an episode of **The Genie From Down Under 2** in which a character named Penelope tries to 'get a boyfriend'. At the beginning of the episode, she says, 'I need a boyfriend'. Ask students to predict why she might say that. What could be Penelope's motivation for having a boyfriend? How does the statement make students feel? Do we need boyfriends/girlfriends? Why?

Viewing

View **Stocks and Bondings**

Responding

These activities help students process the ideas and issues raised in the episode they have viewed

Back to the brainstorm

Return to the original brainstorm list of relationships and the mural of different kinds of relationships in 1.1. Ask students: Of those you have listed, which ones are represented in this episode? (mother-daughter; friend-friend, boyfriend-girlfriend, boss-employee, etc.). Ask students to add any relationships they do not have which are evident in the story.

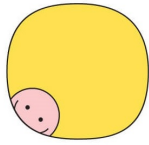
The highs and lows of relationships

Penelope's attempts to develop a 'relationship' with Monty cause her to experience several different emotions. Ask students to think about the sequence of feelings and emotions they have seen in the episode.

Students can represent these emotions through visual art - drawing a series of different facial expressions for each one. Explain to students that the actors' skills in using facial expression plays a significant part in making this a humorous episode.

To assist students to recall the scenes, make a sequential list of the main events that took place regarding Monty and discuss the feelings and emotions evident in each scene.

- 1 Introducing 'big Baz' to Marcia, Sophie and their boyfriends (e.g. being proud)
- 2 Meeting Monty (e.g. being shy, love struck, awkward).



| | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Monty leaving with Marcia and Sophie (e.g. Being humiliated, angry). |
| 4 | Monty visiting Penelope. |
| 5 | Monty and Penelope in Australia - Monty asking Penelope to the Junior Stockbroking Awards. |
| 6 | Sophie and Marcia joining them in Australia. |
| 7 | Diana and Bruce telling Penny what they think about Monty |
| 8 | Discovering Monty has asked all three girls out. |

Over the top

Throughout the series, the actors are required to use facial expressions to convey feelings. This is often deliberately exaggerated for comic effect. On small cards, ask students to write some of the feelings that Penelope experienced during this episode.

Place the cards in a hat and ask students to pick one out then use facial expressions to show that feeling in an exaggerated or comic way. The rest of the class must guess what the feeling could be.

Making an impression

Appearances count for everything in Penelope's view of a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. It is important simply to be seen as having a boyfriend - the quality of the relationship doesn't count! Note Bruce's sarcastic comment in the episode: *'You've obviously got a real special relationship ... silent, but special.'*

Revisit the following segment of the **episode Stocks and Bondings**.

Scene: Penelope, Marcia and Sophie watch Monty working at his computer. Begins with: Penelope telling the others, *'He's working towards his stock broking competition.'*

Ends with: Penelope saying to Diana that Monty is *'the love of my life and I want the world to know it.'*

Ask students to identify ways in which the boys and girls try to impress each other in this episode. Discuss:

- How do they act?
- How do they respond?

- How true is this portrayal of the way boys and girls behave with each other in 'real life'?

Ask students to consider the qualities they regard as important in a friend and/or boyfriend/girlfriend (select which ever you wish to focus on according to the level of maturity of the students with whom you are working).

Design 'Wanted' posters that describe these qualities. Share the wanted posters and discuss

- What are the qualities many of us seek in a partner or a friend?
- Why are these things important?
- What influences our ideas about the ideal friend or boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Does this pressure you to behave in certain ways?

Discuss: I want to be remembered for my character, not my outfit.

Who holds the power?

There are several power shifts in the relationships between people in this episode. Discuss with students what they think the word 'power' has to do with relationships. Are there relationships in which they feel more powerful (e.g. perhaps with a little brother or sister) less powerful (e.g. with the school principal) or where power is shared? (E.g. with a good friend)? How do people exert power over others in relationships? Is this ever necessary?

Revisit the episode and ask students to note incidents where they see a power shift has taken place - for example where someone in a weaker position becomes the stronger or vice versa. Some examples include:

- Mossop gaining power when she becomes 'Mad Moss' and Diana realising how much she needs her
- Penelope, Sophie and Marcia gaining power when they realise what Monty has been up to
- Otto losing power when the campers decide to take the tour into their own hands.

This analysis could lead to an important discussion about ways in which people exert inappropriate 'power' over others.

Extension activity

View some excerpts from the **episode Otto Rules OK** where Otto is given power as the King of England and uses it to intimidate others.

Scene: In the Throne room, Otto is moving in.

Begins with: Otto saying, '*G'day Di. The Royal Family's moving in.*'

Ends with: Diana saying, '*Coming, your highness.*'

and/or

Scene: In the throne room with Bruce and Penelope - Otto decides he wants a wife.

Begins with: Otto saying, *'Know what I need Bruce?'*

Ends with: Otto throwing Darlene, Mossop and Diana in the dungeon, *'Throw her in the dungeon till she learns to love me ... and those stirrers too!'*

These scenes may also be discussed in terms of the way Otto uses his power to 'get his way'. Ask students: what happens to real-life relationships when people do this?

Relationship webs

Ask pairs or trios of student to write these characters from the episode on a set of cards:

Diana
Monty
Sophie
Marcia
Mossop
Otto
Penelope
Baz
Otto
Bruce
Conrad
Darlene

Using lines, arrows and connecting phrases, students can conduct a relationship web describing the ways the characters relate to each other. For example on an arrow drawn from Penelope to Conrad, students might write 'Penelope admires Conrad - wants to be liked by him.' On an arrow going the other way they might write, *'Conrad thinks little of Penelope, but pretends to like her to get closer to the opal.'*

Visual gags

This episode employs an almost slapstick style of visual comedy at the end, when Monty becomes glued to his computer and finally 'takes off' into space. Watch these scenes again and ask students:

- Why do the script writers and directors use this device?
- How does it affect us as an audience (pleasure in anticipating that he will get stuck and in seeing him get what he deserves...)?
- How is this effect achieved? What technical devices are used?

Share examples of other slapstick/visual comedy from cartoons or other TV programs. Why do they make us laugh?

Making connections

These activities draw the threads of the mini unit together; assess the degree to which students ideas have developed; and provide direction for possible further investigations.

You've got a friend

At the end of the episode, Penelope says to camera, *'Friends are important. As I always say, if you didn't have girlfriends - there would be no one to show boys off to.'*

Penelope's final statement may bring about a collective groan from the class! Use it as a springboard to discussion about the nature of friendship.

- What purposes do the students think friendship serves in life?
- Are they important? Why?
- Is there any truth in what Penelope says?

Give out strips of paper to small groups of students. On each strip they write one of the benefits of a good friendship. Share these ideas and then ask students to attempt to priorities the strips from most to least important.

Compare results across the groups and ask: was it easy to agree on the order of statements? Why? Why not? We value friendship in different ways - why?

Helping ourselves manage relationships

Having discussed the issue of power in relationships, use some scenarios to help students explore some ways of dealing with a lack of power. For example:

A group of friends is having an after-school party at one of their houses. Their parents will not be home and do not know about the party. You know your mum and dad would not approve of you attending this party and you are being encouraged to tell them that you will be working late at the library instead. You feel really uncomfortable about lying but you are worried about what your friends will think of you.

Students can work in teams to act out this scenario using dialogue to show what may happen if they 'give in' and are influenced to lie. This role-play helps students to understand a situation where they may feel a lack of power.

Encourage students to act the scene out again, this time using dialogue to show how they might negotiate with their friends and not have to lie to their parents, so power is shared.

Ask students to prepare a range of scenarios using different kinds of relationships and situations. Select some scenarios to perform, experimenting with changing the outcomes.

Let's communicate

Review the segment early in the episode Stocks and Bondings in which Penelope meets Monty.

Scene: Badminton court at Marcia's house.

Begins with: Hamish, one of the boys saying *'I'm off to Ibiza for the hols'*

Ends with: Penelope saying to herself, *'How humiliating.'*

In this segment there are several examples of poor communication between the boys and girls. The girls give mono-syllabic responses to the boys - even the usually confident Penelope becomes tongue-tied. Ask students to consider how realistic they think these interactions are. Ask: have you ever felt like that when you have met someone?

Students can rewrite the scene using a more natural, comfortable dialogue between the characters. For example, they might rewrite the dialogue between Penelope and Monty after he says, *'Hello, I'm Monty.'*

Students can then write other examples of good communication between girlfriends and boyfriends. Ask them to write short dialogues representing what they think is an example of good communication in the following situations:

- Meeting a boy/girl you like and introducing yourself
- Asking someone out
- Breaking up with someone
- Introducing your boyfriend/girlfriend to your parents or friends.

Students can rewrite the scene using a more natural, comfortable dialogue between the characters. For example, they might rewrite the dialogue between Penelope and Monty after he says, *'Hello, I'm Monty.'*

Students can then write other examples of good communication between girlfriends and boyfriends. Ask them to write short dialogues representing what they think is an example of good communication in these situations:

- meeting a boy/girl you like and introducing yourself
- asking someone out
- breaking up with someone
- introducing your boyfriend/girlfriend to your parents or friends
- a healthy relationship...
- an unhealthy relationship...
- friendship is...
- people use power in relationships to...
- different relationships...
- relationships can change when...

Once they have completed their generalisations, students can share them with the class - challenging and questioning accordingly. Decide on a final statement for each that collectively summarises what you have learned about relationships.

Going further

These activities provide extension and enrichment ideas for individuals, groups or the whole class. The activities in this section examine gender construction more closely - using popular culture as the source of investigation.

4.1 Soaps and sitcoms

The exaggerated portrayal of male/female gender stereotypes is central to the humour in **Stocks and Bondings, Episode 9, The Genie From Down Under 2** and other episodes. However, such portrayals of gender roles on film and television are not always meant to be funny! Ask students to make a list of the characteristics which have been assigned to the males and females in the episode. What stereotypes for girls and boys are obvious? E.g. Monty as the 'bright' successful male, Penelope as the love struck and stupid female (initially!).

Students can view other television programs to examine the representation of girls, boys and the relationship between girls and boys. Develop a data chart to record the findings, e.g.

| TV program | Character (M or F) | Attributes/ Characteristics | Sample dialogue or situation |
|------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Neighbours | Johnny M | Prankster, loud, messy | Destructive behaviour on last day of school |

Ask students to analyse their findings and discuss:

- To what extent do 'soaps' and other programs for young people challenge the stereotypical ideas of girls and boys?
- Why are they presented in this way?
- How 'like' the characters in these programs are you?
- What are the realistic and unrealistic images or scenarios you have seen?

See if you can arrange access to old television programs such as day time repeats like 'Bewitched' or 'I dream of Jeannie'. Show these to the class and compare the way women and men were portrayed in these 'sitcoms' to how they are portrayed in current favourites (e.g. The Simpsons, Friends etc.)

The same analysis can be done of advertisements (TV and magazines), examining the ways boys, girls and the relationships between them are used to sell products.

Creating a new 'soap'

Students can work in groups to create an overview of a new 'soap' about young people. Their brief is that the soap must be inclusive of girls and boys and must avoid stereotyping people and relationships. Ask students to:

- List some possible characters;
- List some possible settings;
- List some possible story lines.

If you have time, some of these ideas might be fleshed out into a storyboard form for one sample scene.

Songs about relationships

Find examples of popular songs that express different views of relationships between men and women. Compare the underlying messages in one or more of the first four songs with the messages in the last three songs.

Respect (Aretha Franklin);

Express yourself (Madonna);

Would I lie to you? (Eurythmics);

Sisters are doing it for themselves (Franklin and Lennox).

and

Stand by your man (Tammy Wynette);

Tell him (Dusty Springfield);

Wishin' and Hopin' (Dusty Springfield);

Consider how popular music reflects changes in our perception of men, women and their relationships with each other over time. Analyse the lyrics of contemporary 'love' songs (those students currently listen to) to look at the nature of relationships, the values underpinning them, and the images of men and women portrayed.

Teacher references

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Wing Jan, L. and Wilson, J. (1994) **Thinking for Themselves**, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

Wilks, S. (1995) **Critical and Creative Thinking**, Eleanor Curtain, Melbourne Australia.

Music

You're got a friend – James Taylor

Wish you well - Bernard Fanning

Encourage students to find their own.

Where It's At

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Genre; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | With these activities, students discuss the use of parody in story-telling, the role of sub-plots in a series and the use of the device of narrative knowledge. |
| Resources: | Where It's At, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> |

Lesson plan:

View Where It's At and discuss parody

After viewing, replay the early scene in which Lady Townes is working in the garden and Conrad Von Meister is spying on Penelope. This scene offers the opportunity to discuss issues of intertextuality and the idea that we read any text in relation to other texts and that we bring our own cultures and experiences to the texts also.

Visually this scene creates humor by parodying the spy genre. To understand this segment as a spoof on the spy genre viewers must, even subconsciously, be making reference to other similar texts. Identify the spy genre conventions which are imitated and parodied in this scene - the head rising into frame, the point of view shot of the binoculars, the use of the tree as a camouflage.

Discuss the sorts of knowledge the audience must have to understand the comic parody that is going on. Refer to other spy genre films that the students have seen, eg. *Golden Eye*.

Discuss the ways in which we build up knowledge of a genre and its conventions - previous viewing experiences, advertising, novels in the same genre, cover designs for books and videos, songs written to accompany films, articles in newspapers, television and press interviews with stars, reviews, associated marketing and so on.

Discuss the sub-plots

This episode establishes some of the complications and conflicts which will sustain the narrative over the series. After viewing identify and discuss the subplots established in this episode. They can be described in terms of character conflicts and aspirations, for example:

- The Genies - Bruce wants to be human and fall in love but he is a genie

- Conrad and Otto Von Meister - want the opal but Penelope has it
- Penelope - wants to return to England but is stuck in Australia.

Invite students to use their narrative and generic knowledge by making predictions about how these subplots might develop in later episodes. Discuss with students the purpose of sub-plots in narrative particularly television series. Ask students to describe the sub-plots running in other TV series they watch.

Discuss the use of the technique of narrative knowledge

This episode raises the question of narrative knowledge. Different levels of narrative knowledge are established by having some characters know things that others don't. This offers comic opportunities for misunderstandings and mistakes in later episodes. Identify the different knowledges held by each character and by the audience, using the following as a guide to discussion:

- Which characters know that Bruce and Baz are genies?
- Who knows about the ancient feud between the Meister family and the Townes family?
- Who knows how the genies can get their freedom?
- Identify the hierarchy of narrative knowledge established in this episode from the character with least knowledge to the character with most knowledge.

How does the fact that certain characters do not know certain things create opportunities for later plots?

Draw attention to the fact that it is the audience that has the most knowledge and this is a source of narrative pleasure because the audience can laugh at and feel superior to characters who are ignorant.

Wishing and Hoping

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 8 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | English |
| Themes/Topics: | Narrative Structure; Film Language; Stereotypes; Humour and Satire |
| Description: | Students analyse the use of exposition, conflict and dialogue in storytelling. They write their observations of the characters and situation presented then analyse how they made these observations. |
| Resources: | Wishing and Hoping, <i>The Genie From Down Under</i> Skeleton on the Dunny, <i>Round the Twist</i> |

Lesson plan:

View Wishing and Hoping then discuss exposition

Like the first episodes of most television series this, the opening episode of ***The Genie From Down Under***, serves an important expository function, teaching viewers how to read the series by establishing the ongoing situations and problems which will form the basis of the series.

Explain the expository function of first episodes and then view the first episode of ***The Genie From Down Under*** in its entirety. After viewing ask students to write their responses to the following:

- What have you learnt about Penelope's personality from this episode?
- What have you learnt about Penelope's family situation from this episode?
- What have you learnt about Penelope's financial situation from this episode?
- What have you learnt about Penelope's friends from this episode?
- What have you learnt about the genies from this episode?

As a way of drawing attention to the variety of expository techniques used ask students to review their answers to the above and identify the information that they:

- learnt directly from Penelope's statements to the audience
- learnt from other characters reactions to or statements about Penelope
- learnt from observing Penelope's behaviour
- learnt directly from the genies' dialogue
- learnt from the genies' physical appearance.

Compare this introductory episode with the first episode of another series, such as **Skeleton on the Dunny** from *Round the Twist*. Both episodes give an exposition for their respective series but in different ways. Compare the similarities and differences between the two forms of exposition.

Discuss:

- the effect of the direct address to camera by the character of Penelope
- the possibilities and limitations of the technique
- students' own responses to the use of this technique (it is unusual in a fictional dramatic form).

Discuss the role of conflict in narrative

Point out to students that this episode gives the background to two different but interrelated stories - that of Penelope and that of the genies. It is the bringing together of these two stories - with the different character backgrounds and desires - which provides the impetus for the ongoing conflict within the series and which provides the basic situation for later story problems.

Discuss the ongoing conflict: the genies' desire to return to Australia and be free versus Penelope's desire to have her wishes come true. Similar basic conflicts form the basis for many other situation comedies and is a part of the conventions of that genre.

Ask students to identify the basic conflict on which other situation comedies with which they are familiar are based. By way of stimulus you might draw on examples from the past such as *Bewitched*: Samantha's witchcraft powers versus Darren's desire to lead a normal life.

Explore the use of dialogue in film

This episode is useful for examining the contribution that dialogue makes to characterisation. Dialogue as a form of characterisation has two dimensions - what is said and how it is said. Ask students to make notes on the dialogue of Bubbles and Bruce and list the key words that each uses which indicate something about their personality for example:

Bubbles - "hip" "dude" "cool" "uptight" "Give me five."

Bruce - "Gday" "mate"

Discuss the connotations of social class attached to particular sorts of accents. How many different accents are heard in this episode? Why are the American 'paying guests' included in this episode? What function do they serve and does it matter that they are American? What are the students' responses to the accents in the program? Why do they think Mrs Mossop is given a different accent from Penelope?

Would I Lie to You?

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Program: | The Genie From Down Under |
| Year Level: | Year 5 to Year 9 |
| Curriculum Study Areas: | The Arts; English; Health and Physical Education |
| Themes/Topics: | Self and Relationships; Ethics, Values, Justice |
| Description: | Students explore the nature of lies, do a PMI activity about what the world might be like using Lennon's Imagine as the stimulus; create a slogan about truth and explore the concept of truth in media. |
| Resources: | Peace in our Time <i>ep 5 vol 4 The Genie From Down Under 2</i> Other relevant episodes: The Opal is a Boomerang <i>ep 10 vol 6 The Genie From Down Under 2</i> The Cabbage Patch Fib <i>ep 4 vol 1 Round the Twist 1</i> Other: butcher's paper; the words to Imagine by John Lennon. |

Lesson plan:

These activities prepare the students for viewing the key episode (or episode segment) related to the topic. Students: explore some of the main concepts involved in the episode; make predictions; reveal some of their prior knowledge; and raise questions for further exploration.

Initial brainstorm

Place some large sheets of butcher's paper around the room - either on groups of tables or up on the walls. In the middle of each sheet, write one of the following words:

Truth; Trustworthiness; Lie; Honesty; Belief; Wisdom; Falsehood.

Give students a limited time to move around the classroom and write something on each sheet in response to the central word. They may write a word, phrase or statement or draw a picture that comes to mind when they think of the word.

The process is the same as when a whole class brainstorms an idea except that all students are actively involved. For example: around the word 'lie' they may write statements like *'there are different kinds of lies - some are worse than others'; 'lying gets you into trouble'; 'a lie*

detector can tell whether you are telling the truth or not', etc. They may also simply write objectives like 'false'; 'wrong'; 'dishonest', etc.

Initial definitions and questions

Now divide the class into seven groups and allocate one sheet to each group. The groups task is to summarise some of the ideas represented on their given sheet and come up with an initial definition. For example:

- Trustworthiness is....
- A lie is.....
- Truth is.....

Each group shares their definition with the class and discusses it. There will probably be questions raised as to the adequacy of the definitions. Talk about why students think these concepts are hard to 'pin down' or define. Write these questions up on the board as they arise.

Once each group has shared their ideas, they may compare their definition with those found in a standard dictionary. Display these dictionary definitions alongside the brainstorm sheets and students' definitions. A thesaurus could also be used by students to find and list a variety of words that could be used instead of a particular word.

Begin a vocabulary list using the seven key words as a starting point. Other words that may be added during the sequence of activities could include: leader, follower, evidence, fact, fiction, fantasy, reality, etc.

Discussion and sharing experiences - fishbowl activity

Organise a circle of chairs or cushions for up to ten students in the class. These students are 'in the fishbowl'. Other students can stand around the circle listening to, and observing the discussion that goes on in the inner circle.

Pose this question to the inner circle: *'Is it ever OK to lie?'*

The inner circle discusses the question while the outer circle notes any interesting arguments, statements, contradictions and examples put forward.

After a time limit set by you, students who are part of the outer circle may nominate to join the inner circle. With your permission, they tap someone on the shoulder and join in. The person in the inner circle swaps places with them and becomes an observer.

Allow the discussion to proceed for a while, including several interchanges between outer and inner circle members.

Everyone now returns to their tables and writes about what they have heard and/or said using these focus questions:

- What were some of the points raised (in the inner circle discussion) with which you agreed? Why?
- With what points did you disagree? Why
- What did the discussion make you think about?
- How were the most effective points made?

Re-visit the focus question: *'Is it ever OK to lie?'* and consider whether some kind of general consensus has been reached as a class.

When we were very young

Share with students, a time from your childhood when you can remember lying about something. You will probably focus on something fairly minor ...but this is up to you! Ask students to think back to when they were younger - to a time when they might have lied to a parent, friend, teacher, etc. (It is less threatening for them to focus on the past!) Ask students to write an account of that time - including why they lied, what happened when they did, how they felt then and how they feel about it now. (Reason, circumstances, consequences, reflection)

The emphasis here is on the kind of 'lies' often said by young children and which we see as a part of growing up - not on anything too serious or revealing. Once they have finished writing, students may volunteer to share their story. Compare students' feelings evident in their writing. How do students feel about these incidents when they look back on them? How would they manage the situation now?

Prediction

Before viewing the **episode Peace in Our Time**, ask students what they think a genie is. Establish that a genie is a (fictional!) character which can grant its 'master' any wish they desire. They could find other genie stories (Ali Baba, I dream of Genie etc) Tell the students that in this **episode of *The Genie From Down Under 2***, they will see what happens when a girl named Penelope asks her genie to grant her the following wish:

'I wish everybody was honest. I wish everyone would tell the truth all the time'

In pairs, students can have a quick discussion about some of the things that may happen when people are made to be completely honest! Write some of the ideas up as general predictions about some of the stories events. These can be reviewed after viewing.

Viewing

View **Peace in Our Time**

Responding

These activities help students process the ideas and issues raised in the episode they have viewed.

Reviewing predictions

Return to the predictions made by students about the consequences of Penelope's wish.
Ask:

- What are some of the things that happen?
- What surprises you about the episode?
- How accurate or inaccurate were our predictions?
- What did the writers of the episode want to communicate to the audience: what do you think the writers think about the issue of truth? Why?

Speaking the unspeakable

Review the first part of the episode (from the beginning through to the transfer of the opal to Bubbles) this time asking students to focus on the elements in the episode that make it 'funny'. Why does this episode make us laugh? Much of the initial comedy comes from the scripting of lines where characters 'speak the unspeakable' and, therefore, reveal their true selves.

Assign a different character to small groups of students and review the episode. Ask them to note ways their character's lines (and the reactions of others to their lines) contributes to the overall humorous effect of the episode. (Include Penelope, Diana, Otto, Darlene, Bubbles, Mossop, Conrad and the Thugs on the bus, Penelope's 'friends' Marcia and Sophie.) Students can then present a short report to the rest of the class, explaining how their character's lines contribute to the comedy of the episode.

Outer and inner thoughts

The effect of Penelope's wish is often to reveal the true feelings of the characters - as opposed to the feelings they usually, outwardly express. This contradiction between the 'outer' and 'inner' thoughts of a person is used as a comic device in this episode. The fact that characters actually 'tell it like it is' makes us laugh because it breaks conventional codes of behaviour and challenges acceptable ways of relating to others.

Daring or diplomatic?

Students can consider the way this contrast between the 'outer' words and the 'inner' thoughts and feelings occurs throughout our own daily interactions with others. Provide some examples of where this could be true, for example:

- When you receive a gift that you don't really like.
- When you dislike the food you are served at someone else's house.
- When someone asks you whether you like their new haircut and you don't really think it suits them.
- When you are wearing a new outfit your mother bought you and you don't like it
- When your friend takes you to a movie you think is "lame"

Have students write and illustrate this with word and thought bubbles.

Ask students to suggest other examples where this kind of '*masking of the truth*' occurs

In pairs or threes, students can take one such incident and act it out twice - once showing the use of a 'white lie' and the other showing the truth being told and the consequences.

Students can perform short skits to the class before discussing the concept of a 'white lie' - why do we use these? When should we be honest? How do we judge this?

Students can be encouraged to spend a day noting the number of times they don't tell the whole truth in their interactions with others. Share these observations.

Follow the Leader: data chart

A prominent feature of the story line in **Peace in Our Time** is the transformation of Bubble's character into the guru - '*Baba Bubbles*'. Ask students why they think the writers included this as part of the story. What does it have to do with the concept of 'Truth'?



Baba Bubbles spreads words of wisdom to his followers.

'Baba's' words of wisdom are believed to be true by his followers. Why? Do they believe him? Ask students if they know of any real life examples of 'Gurus' like 'Baba'. Ask students to gather information about some key figures or leaders that may be 'followed' or revered in some way by others (historically or in the present). For example the head of a religious organisation or a prominent political or social figure. Brainstorm a list and allow students to

gather more examples in their own time. Some might include the Dalai Lama, Jesus, Buddha, Aung San Suu Kyi, Hitler etc.

Create a data chart summarising the information about these people under key headings. You may do this using 'Baba Bubbles' as your first entry!

Name of 'leader'

What were/are their main views/ beliefs and actions?

How did/do they gather support or a following?

What did/do their followers do. Did they behave or respond in certain ways?

Did anyone disagree with them? Why?

What impact did/has this person had on the world?

Compare the information written on the chart. Are there any patterns? Why do people follow figures such as these? Students can also reflect on the leaders they most admire and respect. Ask: whose ideas do you believe in? Why?

Where have I heard that before ...?

At one stage, 'Baba Bubbles' says *'Imagine having no possessions. Can you, I wonder?'*

Ask students if they know where these words are borrowed from? Play them the song "Imagine" by John Lennon (have the words written up for students to read). Discuss why he might have written the song. Why is the song so popular? Note that this kind of referencing

to aspects of popular culture is a comic device used by the script writers throughout The Genie From Down Under series. Students can consider some other television programs they know that use the same device for example The Simpsons.

Imagine ...

The idea of not having any material possessions is taken to extremes in this episode (culminating in everyone losing their clothes!) Review the words of Lennon's song Imagine. What other scenarios does Lennon ask the listener to 'imagine?' For example:

- no religion
- no more greed
- no hunger
- no countries.

Ask students to take one of these ideas and explore the consequences using De Bono's 'PMI' thinking strategy. Rule up three columns headed as follows:

| Plus (what could be the positive outcomes of this?) | Minus (what could be the negative outcomes of this?) | Interesting What might be interesting to see... |
|--|---|---|
| | | |

Students can analyse one of Lennon's scenarios using this system.

Extension activity

Students innovate on the song text and write their own lyrics which explore some other visions for the world. Ask: what would your wish for the world if you had the power to change something?

Visual humour and satire

Review a section of the **episode Peace in our Time** where the focus is on Bubbles as 'Baba Bubbles' the Guru. For example:

Scene: Bubbles sitting on cushions in robes surrounded by followers.
Begins as: Bubbles saying, *'And remember the trees. The trees are very important.'*
Ends as: Bubbles saying, *'I mean world peace.'*

Ask students to consider why this is funny. What are some of the 'real life' aspects of cults, religions, leaders, etc that are 'borrowed' and exaggerated in this section? How has the use of costumes and other props added to this effect?

The students' understanding of the use of satire may be developed by reviewing the clip toward the end of the **episode Peace in our Time** where Otto, Conrad and Darlene are sitting in a circle with the 'Thugs' and becoming emotional:

Scene: Otto, Conrad, Darlene and the thugs sitting in a circle holding hands.

Begins as: Thug saying, *'You know it's really quiet here when you are not smashing things.'*

Ends as: Darlene saying, *'I am going to be sick.'*

Ask students to analyse why this is funny. What 'real life' situation is being drawn on and satirised here? (self-help groups, men's groups, etc.)

Making connections

These activities draw the threads of the mini unit together; assess the degree to which students ideas have developed; and provide direction for possible further investigations.

Sayings and slogans

Bruce states, *'The truth is a thorny rose'*. Ask students to reflect on what this means in the light of the work they have done so far. Collect and share some other phrases or sayings that explore the notion of truth. For example:

- *'Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we set out to deceive.'*
- *'Truth is stranger than fiction.'*
- *'To thine own self be true.'*
- *'Honesty is the best policy.'*
- *'The truth will set you free'*

Ask students to use one of these statements or come up with a phrase or slogan of their own that captures something they think is important about the concept of truth. Create posters to illustrate the meaning behind the phrase or slogan.

Moral dilemmas

When Penelope is made to speak the truth she faces some momentary dilemmas such as whether to admit she lied about Bruce kissing Diana's friends. Present the students with a sample dilemma involving truth telling. For example:

'During a test or exam, you see a classmate copying someone else's work or using a mobile phone to access the internet. You know they have been under a lot of pressure lately and that they are struggling with

the work. The teacher asks you whether you saw anyone cheating during the test.'

Do you tell the truth? In pairs students can act out the dialogue that might take place between the teacher and the student in this situation - perhaps with alternative endings. Ask students: what would you do? Why?

Students can now write some of their own moral dilemmas about truth telling. These scenarios can be presented to others to perform and then discuss.

Key words

Return to the initial brainstorming carried out at the beginning of this Lesson plan. Are there ideas which could now be added or refined?

Reflection

At the end of the episode, Penelope says:

'Sometimes though, you have a choice between telling the truth, but making someone miserable; and telling a little fib, but making them feel better. Sometimes the fib might be better.'

Write this quote up on the board and ask students to discuss the degree to which they agree or disagree with Penelope's conclusion. Can they think of examples where 'a little fib' may make people feel better?

Students can return to their initial reflections on the question, 'Is it ever OK to lie?' and consider whether their opinion on this has changed in any way.

Ask students to write a written reflection on what they see as the role of truth and honesty in a friendship. Share these ideas as a class.

Going further

These activities provide extension and enrichment ideas for individuals, groups or the whole class. The selection of activities will depend on both the time available, the needs of students and the direction in which the unit has already gone.

Truth in the media

The issue of truth - of what is said, unsaid, misleading, etc. is central to a study of the media. Ask students to compare the way the same stories are reported on various television stations, on the radio and in newspapers. Ask:

- How does the message change from report to report? Why?
- What is said and what is left unsaid?
- What are the facts? Where do the facts come from? etc.
- How does the 'message' in a headline compare with the information actually supplied in the article.

The truth in advertising

Students can investigate some of the claims made in advertising. How is the truth distorted or manipulated to sell a product? Examine the language used and find out about codes of practice in advertising.

Do you swear to tell the truth ...

Watch the courtroom scene from *The Opal is a Boomerang*, where various parties are claiming to be the rightful owners of the opal.

Scene: Court room

Begins as: Judge Smythe says to Mr Repo, *'Mr Repo, state your case!'*

Ends as: Judge Smythe makes a ruling, *'There it will stay on display for ever'*

Compare the exploration of truth and lies in this scene with **Peace in Our Time**. The issue of 'truth telling' is central to our justice system. How are people encouraged to tell the truth? How is truth finally decided? Ask students to investigate the processes and procedures for determining the truth of a situation in a court case. What does 'beyond reasonable doubt' mean? Explore some famous cases where 'the truth' was fiercely debated (Lindy Chamberlain, OJ Simpson, etc.).

The truth is out there

Examine the concept of truth as explored in other texts - such as film, television and literature. Compare, for example, the story-line and devices used in the films "Liar Liar" or "Yes Man" (starring Jim Carey) or in stories like *The Cabbage Patch Fib* by Paul Jennings (Puffin 1988) and **The Cabbage Patch Fib** from *Round the Twist 1*. Students can examine the relationship between fantasy and reality in texts. Ask: what does it mean to 'suspend your disbelief' when you are watching or reading a work of fiction?

Changing truths

Explore some of the ideas about the world - particularly in science - which have been disproved over time. For example:

- The world is flat;
- There are only nine planets in our solar system;
- The earth is the centre of the universe;
- Smoking is harmless...

What do these changes in knowledge and/or understanding over history tell us about the nature of 'fact' and 'truth'?

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