

Teacher Resource – Hitler’s Daughter Seminar At the Sydney Jewish Museum 2016



Kate Worsley and Melle Stewart in the 2011 revival of Hitler's Daughter © Heidrun Lohr

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The original production of the play – 2006

Hitler's Daughter was published as a novel by Jackie French in 1999 by Harper Collins. Eva Di Cesare, Sandra Eldridge and Tim McGarry (Monkey Baa's Creative Directors) wrote the adaptation for the stage in 2006. Since its premiere seasons in 2006, *Hitler's Daughter* has become a syllabus favourite for both English and Drama students.

The production won the Helpmann Award for Best Presentation for Children in 2007, as well as a Glug Award for Best Children's Theatre in 2011.

Directed by Sandie Eldridge, *Hitler's Daughter* moves between the Australian countryside in the present day and WWII Germany. A group of Australian primary school students play a storytelling game at their local bus stop, as they wait for the school bus to collect them every morning. One of the children, Anna, starts to tell the story of Hitler's daughter, Heidi. No one has ever heard of Heidi, because Hitler kept her a secret from the world. Throughout the story we are never completely certain it is pure fiction, and we are forced to re-evaluate the rise of Nazism in Germany against our own contemporary context.

Hitler's Daughter was first produced by Monkey Baa Theatre Company for Young People, at the George Fairfax Arts Studio, The Arts Centre, Melbourne, on 26 April 2006, with the following cast:

Mark/Soldier	Matt Goodwin
Anna/Mum/Fraulein Gelber	Mikaela Martin
Tracey/Heidi	Tahli Corin
Ben/Dad/Frau Mundt/ Mr McDonald/Frau Leib/ Mrs Latter/Driver	Nathan Carter
Recorded Voiceover of Hitler	Markus Weber
Director	Sandie Eldridge
Designer	Imogen Ross
Lighting Designer	Luiz Pampolha
Stage Manager	Zilla Morrow
Dialect Coach	Jennifer West

The seminar – 2016

Director and facilitator	Sandie Eldridge
Seminar written by	Sandie Eldridge and Saskia Ilott
Education program for the Sydney Jewish Museum	Marie Bonardelli
Stage Manager	Sam Johnson

The cast of the seminar for the play was not confirmed at the time of compiling this resource.

The seminar was developed in lieu of a full production of *Hitler's Daughter*, as a remount of the full production was not possible for Monkey Baa in the near future. Due to the popularity of *Hitler's Daughter* as a syllabus text, Monkey Baa is thrilled to be working with the Sydney Jewish Museum on a dynamic, practical and creative seminar experience for teachers and students.

NB: this resource refers to the Monkey Baa play version of *Hitler's Daughter* unless otherwise specified. Some references may differ in context of the novel by Jackie French.

What to expect from the seminar

Why are we doing this seminar, and not a production of the play? A tour of the production had been scheduled for 2016, but sadly sufficient funding could not be raised to remount the show. Monkey Baa programmed this seminar to give students a sense of the play in production, and we are thrilled our friends at the Sydney Jewish Museum are working with us to host the seminar: this places the event in a rich educational context.

This seminar takes place in the theatrette at the Sydney Jewish Museum, which seats approximately 100 people. Some groups will be made up of one school; other sessions may have more than one school present. Each session happens in a different order – some groups will see the seminar first while others will tour the museum first etc.

The seminar script has been devised by Sandie Eldridge (co-adaptor of the play, director of the original production, Monkey Baa creative director) and Saskia Ilott (Monkey Baa's Education Manager). The seminar itself is 45 minutes long. There is about 5-10 minutes' time within the seminar to ask questions of the cast and Sandie. There are around four scenes from the play performed, as well as additional sections of text and readings from Jackie French's novel.

Production images, research images and design images will be shown throughout the seminar, and referred to throughout the presentation. Students (and teachers) can expect to be able to contribute answers to discussion questions posed throughout.

Overall, we will provide an engaging, exciting and enriching experience of the story and themes of *Hitler's Daughter*, enhancing classroom studies of the text by seeing professional actors perform excerpts of the play, and having the co-adaptor/director of the production facilitating.



Kate Worsley in the 2011 revival of *Hitler's Daughter* © Heidrun Lohr

Thinking Routine

As a way of tapping into the story and themes of *Hitler's Daughter*, have the class complete the following activity:

You will need strips of paper about the size of a bookmark, on which there are three printed boxes: at the top, one box labelled IMAGE, the middle box labelled SYMBOL and the bottom labelled COLOUR. You will also need plenty of coloured textas. Ask students to respond to a given word that ties in with *Hitler's Daughter*, by firstly choosing a colour and putting this in the COLOUR box. There is no right or wrong: just a response through colour. Now, ask students to respond to the same stimulus word with a SYMBOL (and it should be a simple symbol, not an ornate drawing). The third will be an IMAGE. The students can choose their own colours for each. On completion, reflect and share the different offerings the students have made. This is a great starting point as there are no wrong answers: it's way of tapping into the world of the play.

Characters

The actors in the production all play more than one role. This technique of doubling is largely used for practical reasons, as it reduces the number of cast members required in the production. However, there is a deeper reason than this: doubling as a theatrical technique encourages the formation of connections between character journeys, and shines light on themes and ideas within the story. Watching actors transform from one character to another, often very swiftly, is a joy to watch as an audience member.

Techniques for transformation:

Can you suggest some techniques actors use to transform from one character to another? (Physically, vocally – what else?)

How do they do this and how can you do this?

Mark: 11 years old, quiet and intelligent. A bit of a loner. The actor playing Mark plays a **Nazi soldier** towards the end of the play. As Mark becomes more engrossed in Anna's story, he finally takes on this 'imaginary character' of the guard in the final scenes in Berlin.

Anna: 11 years old, quiet, serious, highly intelligent and thoughtful. Compelled to tell her story. The same actor also plays Mark's **Mum**, a farmer's wife who works locally in a grain store in town. This actor also portrays **Fraulein Gelber**: in her 30s, Fraulein Gelber is described as a thin German woman, carer and tutor to Heidi. She speaks with a soft German accent, and is contained, strict and kind to Heidi. She has dedicated her life to the Fuhrer. Initial discussions had the actor playing Anna also play Heidi, but this made it difficult for her to be able to step into and out of her storytelling/narrator role as Anna weaves the story.

Ben: 11 years old, boisterous, loud, rude and funny. In contrast, this actor also plays Mark's **Dad** – a stoic and kind Australian farmer. This same actor plays Mark's school teacher **Mr McDonald**. This actor is a male, but plays several female characters: **Mrs Latter** (the school bus driver in the Australian scenes), **Frau Mundt** (40-60 years old, head cook and housekeeper at Berchtesgarden), and **Frau Leib** (70s, a peasant farmer's wife and dedicated Nazi). The effect on the audience of having a man playing a woman was really interesting, Sandie says. "The audiences would often laugh at first, before they became horrified by what this character was actually saying". This actor also plays **Mrs Latter**, the school bus driver and provider of comic relief in the story.

Tracey: 'little Tracey', 8 years old, enthusiastic and bubbly, with a happy-go-lucky disposition. This actor also plays **Heidi**, Hitler's daughter. Heidi ages from 9 to 11 through the story. She is described as small and dark 'like her father', she has a birthmark on her face and a profound limp. Hitler has kept her hidden away because she is not a perfect example of the Aryan race.

Duffi (Hitler): rather than having an actor portray Hitler, Hitler appears as a shadow. His lines of dialogues are pre-recorded and heard as a voiceover. Rear and front lights are used to distort and manipulate the image of this shadow Hitler.

Themes

Themes in the story include:

Significance of personal action: Mark is struck by how a single person can, or cannot, make a difference to the outcomes of a situation. He questions his own moral fortitude in the face of mass indoctrination such as that perpetrated by the Nazis.

Morality: the play explores the moral compass of an individual and of a community. The Sydney Jewish Museum has some wonderful resources exploring the ethics and morals of communities during WW2.

Evil: it would be simplistic to reduce *Hitler's Daughter* to being a tale about evil, but evil exists within the story none the less. The production uses theatrical techniques to describe evil on stage, for instance Hitler is portrayed on stage as a shadow looming large over the set. His voice is heard as an off-stage recording, sometimes treated with audio effects to manipulate the sound to being something nightmarish or otherworldly.

What other themes are in the story?

How are these written onto the stage through theatrical techniques and/or the elements of Drama?

Classroom Activities

RESPONDING TO IMAGES

Use sourced images to create a series of tableaux. The images can be drawn from the historical context of the play.

Have the students respond to the images, working in small groups. Their tableaux can reflect the moment before the given image, for example what they imagined happened 30 minutes before the image. The second image is a response to the image itself, and the third is a tableau of an imagined moment 30 minutes after the pictures.

The groups can present their three images to the rest of the class. The class 'reads' the images and makes suggestions about what they see, before having the original stimulus image shown to them.

SOUND DESIGN

It's an interesting exercise to look at passages from the novel by Jackie French and consider how a sound designer might create the sound effects for this passage.

Finally, he dozed.

He dreamt of the creek, and the flood smashing its way across the rocks. He dreamt that Hitler was across the creek, but this Hitler just wore jeans and his haircut was modern in spite of the moustache under his nose that looks as if it is sticky-taped on. Hitler was making a speech. And suddenly there were people all around on Mark's side of the creek, listening, cheering.

'Go away,' Mark yelled at them. 'It's a silly speech! Can't you hear it's silly?'

But his voice made no sound.

There was Ben on his motorbike with a swastika on his arm, and Bonzo in a uniform, and even little Tracey was saluting Hitler too. Bonzo just wanted excitement and Ben didn't think about things at all and little Tracey would do what her friends... 'But he's wrong!' cried Mark. 'Can't you see he's wrong!'

But they were laughing and cheering and excited, and no one was listening to Mark. They were wading into the creek, into the flood. They'd be washed away, thought Mark, and anyway, they shouldn't be there at all. It wasn't their farm and Dad would be angry with all the strangers on it, and the radio was talking about people being killed in that place in Africa, and Hitler was laughing, laughing, laughing...

'You are all my children,' screamed Hitler. 'None of you really care. None of you question. You are all Hitler's children!'

'Go away,' cried Mark again. 'Can't you see I'm trying to sleep?'

And suddenly he must have woken, or half woken anyway, because he was in bed and the people were gone. He rolled over, and pulled the doona up to his head, and this time he slept deeply.

-- From the novel *Hitler's Daughter* by Jackie French, pages 87 and 88

Add the sound design to the above reading:

- Source the sound effects
- Compile them into a reliable and manageable format for performance
- Monitor the sound levels
- Present your ideas to the class

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Here are two examples of promotional material Monkey Baa has created for productions of *Hitler's Daughter* over recent years.

What is the essential information on the flyer, and why has this information been chosen? What would you change about the flyer? Have a go at creating your own flyer design for the show. Why do you think the designer chose those particular colours?



Hitler's Daughter
BASED ON THE BOOK BY JACKIE FRENCH

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FOR AGES 10+

'Wonderful performances...moving and beautifully handled... it stayed with me for weeks' LOWDOWN MAGAZINE

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Join us for an afternoon with author Jackie French at Lend Lease Darling Quarter Theatre on Sat 20th Oct - for a performance of *Hitler's Daughter* followed by a read from Jackie's new book *Pennies for Hitler* a companion piece to *Hitler's Daughter*.
Tickets \$35

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www.monkeybaa.com.au



An afternoon with Jackie French

Join us for an afternoon with author Jackie French at Lend Lease Darling Quarter Theatre

on Saturday 20th October at 2pm

for a performance of Monkey Baa's award winning *Hitler's Daughter* followed by a read from Jackie's new book *Pennies for Hitler*

Pennies for Hitler is a companion piece to *Hitler's Daughter* and examines the life of a child during World War II, from a different perspective.



For further information or to book your tickets

visit: www.monkeybaa.com.au
or tel: 02 8624 9340

Why was the image of Heidi and Gelber chosen as the 'hero' image, the main promotional image for the show?

OPENING SCENE OF THE PLAY

The first scene of the play is a great one for exploring stage action, the physical action undertaken in the portrayal of a scene. Students can consider how to clearly and effectively set up the story in this first scene by considering the physical plot of each character: entrances, exits, timing, focus, levels, movements, gestures and so on. Have the students analyse the script for this scene, and perhaps divide the class into groups of 5 so that there are 4 actors and one director to oversee the physical staging of Scene 1. This is a long scene, and the director needs to craft the scene right from start to finish, paying careful attention to the scene in its entirety and finding the climactic moments/moments of change, and momentum. You could also divide the scene into beats of action and have each group only look at staging one beat if this is more manageable.

SCENE ONE:

Ben Hey, move your bag! Check out the creek. It's all gone yellow. The bridge'll go if this keeps up.

Mark Hey Ben, have you ever noticed that cows look all shiny when they're wet?

Ben Nuh. *(sneezes)*

Mark Like someone's polished them. Do you think cows can sneeze?

Ben Nuh.

Mark How come they can't then?

Ben Dunno.

Mark Maybe they only sneeze when we're not around.

Ben Whatever?

(Ben scrapes the mud off his boots.)

Mark It's just they're kind of sad looking – wet cows.

Ben Hey, there's Anna. Her Mum must have picked up Tracey too.

(SFX Two car doors slam shut. Car skids off.

Anna and Tracey run into the bus shelter. Anna carries both backpacks and holds Tracey's hand.)

Anna Hi Mark.

Mark Hey Anna, have you ever heard a cow sneeze?

Anna No.

Mark Maybe if a cow had hay fever, it'd sneeze.

Tracey Come on Anna...

Anna Later, Tracey.

Mark What?

Tracey If the bus is late, Anna says we can play the game again.

Ben Which game?

Anna The one I use to play with my Grandma.

Tracey You know, we make up a character and Anna makes up the story.

Ben Boring.

Mark There's nothing else to do.

Tracey I want a story about a fairy...or a pony.

Ben How about something good like some dude that steals a million bucks and...

Mark How about a dinosaur? A Pteranadon?

Tracey Yeah. A baby one. A baby Pteranadon called Billie. She gets separated from her mother and...

Ben Blerck!!

Anna I'll choose this time.

Mark You? But you never choose.

Anna Then it's my turn, isn't it?

Ben Just make it something good. No fairies or fish or crap like the last time.

Mark The bus'll be here if you don't shut up. Go on, what's the story going to be about?

Anna It's about...it's about Hitler's daughter.

Ben Hey, cool.

Tracey Who's Hitler?

Ben Hitler? He was this bloke in World War Two. He was the leader of Germany and they were the enemy. He had all these brown shirts and the Gestapo and they tortured people and had concentration camps and everyone had to go 'Seig Heil' or 'Heil Hitler!' You know, like in those movies on TV.

Mark But Hitler didn't have a daughter.

Ben So what? Hitler's heaps better than a stupid old Pteranadon. Who cares if he had a kid or not?

Mark But...but we can't have a story about something that's not real.

Ben Why not? Fairies and other crap like that aren't real, are they?

Tracey They are too real.

Mark No of course not. But...it's just different when you make stuff up about a real person. It's just...okay then, what was Hitler's daughter's name?

Ben Buffy.

Mark You so got that from TV.

Ben So what?

Mark You can't have someone from TV in the game. Anyway, Buffy isn't German.

Anna Austrian. Hitler was Austrian.

Ben What's the difference? Who knows any Austrian names?

Tracey Her name was Heidi.

Ben Tracey, that's from that boring book.

Mark Give it a rest Ben. Let's just get on with the story. The bus'll be here soon. OK Anna. Her name was Heidi and she was Hitler's daughter.

Tracey And she lived in a castle.

(Ben groans)

Anna Not really. But it was big with wide terraces and so many rooms that...that Heidi could never count them. And then there were the 'don't go down there' rooms where Duffi talked with people in uniforms and flowery dresses.

Ben Who was Duffi?

Anna Hitler.

Ben Duffi?

Anna I don't know why she called him Duffi. I don't even know if it means anything. It was just what she did.

Ben Yawn. Get to the good bit.

Anna Duffi's own rooms were upstairs but she wasn't allowed to go there either. When Duffi visited he came to her rooms instead.

Tracey What were Heidi's rooms like?

Ben Who cares? Get to the battles. You know, the Russian front or Rommel in Egypt.

Anna I don't know about any battles or the Russian front. He kept her away from all of that. Look, this isn't going to work. Hitler's Daughter was a stupid idea. Forget I started it. OK. How about another story? Tracey you can choose.

Tracey But I want the story about Heidi.

Anna Okay. Let's make her a princess. Princess Heidi...

Tracey No, I want a story about the other Heidi. The one you were talking about.

Anna But...oh, alright then. But I can't tell you anything about battles. She never saw any battles.

Ben She must have! She was Hitler's daughter.

Anna He kept her away from the battles. He kept her away from everyone. No one knew about Heidi. She lived with Fraulein Gelber at Berchtesgaden – that was where Hitler had a house in the country and that was the only world she knew.

Mark But why?

Ben Oh man, what does it matter? It's only a story.

Mark Why did he keep her a secret?
Anna Because she had a birthmark...across her face. And she had a limp. She wasn't perfect and Hitler wanted to breed the perfect race...tall children with blue eyes and blond hair who could run and jump and conquer the world. His daughter was small and dark like him.

Tracey Then he didn't love her.
Mark Of course not. He was Hitler. I bet Hitler never loved anyone.
Anna I don't know if he loved her or not. She always hoped he did.
Mark But someone like Hitler couldn't...how many people did he kill?

(SFX Bus screeches to a halt)

Ben Bus. That story's weird.
Anna I said it wasn't working.
Tracey It's not weird. I like it.

(Ben exits and Tracey follows him)

Mark Anna
Anna Yeah what?
Mark What happened to Heidi's mum?
Anna I think she died. She must've died. Heidi never knew her.
Mark Will you go on with the story tomorrow?
Anna Yes...no...maybe. If it's raining.
Mark Why don't we get down here earlier tomorrow so you've got more time?
Anna I thought you didn't like it.
Mark It's alright.

(SFX Bus horn. They exit to the bus.)

**How is stage action indicated by the writers in the above scene?
Why are certain details included and others omitted in the stage directions?
How much can you stray from the stage directions that are included in a scene by the writers?**

CHARACTERISATION AND COSTUME DESIGN

Make a list of all the characters in the story. Compile images for each, from magazines and the Internet and some of your own rough sketches. Create costume drawings for a chosen character, and present your design to the class. Consider how 'the clothes maketh the man' (or woman): what crucial information about the character can be conveyed by what they are wearing? What happens to the information the audience reads about a character if you get the costume design wrong?

Experiment with getting the costume design 'wrong': change elements of your costume design and have the class read the new images, describing verbally what they deduce from this altered design. For example, manipulate the age, gender, status and time period of your design.

DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

The following may form the basis of fruitful debates and discussions for the class:

“The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity” (Yeats)

“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing” (Edmund Burke)

Heidi should have done more to save Jewish people and dissuade her father.

Future generations will question why we did not do more to help refugees in detention centres.

How do you know that you are doing the right thing – that you are doing enough?

CLOSING SECTION OF THE NOVEL

‘Anna?’

‘What?’ Anna didn’t turn around.

‘I’m sorry.’ Mark didn’t know why he was apologising. But it seemed right.

Anna shrugged. Her jacket rustled against the bus seat. Mark tried again.

‘Of course I can see why she couldn’t tell anyone. No one would understand, not really.’ He tried to put it into words. ‘She’d be afraid they’d just see Hitler, not her.’

Anna turned round and met his eyes. She nodded. ‘She’d just be Hitler’s daughter. All her life.’

‘I just thought...’ stumbled Mark, ‘that maybe...maybe sometimes she couldn’t keep it to herself.

That she’d have to tell someone, just once.’

Anna glanced out the window, at the grey sky and greyer rain. Then she looked back at Mark.

‘She told her granddaughter,’ she said softly. ‘Just once, like you said. One day when it was raining like today. It was just before she died. She told her all about Fraulein Gelber and Frau Leib and the Schmidts. But it was just a story. That’s what she told her granddaughter. Only a story.

Just pretend, that’s all.”

‘Just pretend,’ echoed Mark.

Anna nodded. She turned back, and looked out the window again. The wet cows watched them pass in the small, grey bus with orange mud splashed about its wheels, carrying its passengers to school.

-- From the novel *Hitler’s Daughter* by Jackie French, pages 135 and 136

What is the tone of the end of the novel?

What is the tone of the end of the play?

What is the inherent drama or mystery of the conclusion of the book?

Create a scene with no words, only silent action, that stages this last passage from the novel.

FURTHER READING/RESOURCES

These are some of the resources that playwrights Eva, Sandie and Tim used as research when adapting the play, and that Sandie used as research materials when directing the production.

***NB: not all of these titles are suitable for children.*

Books:

Pennies for Hitler by Jackie French
The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak
The Dark Room by Rachel Seiffert
The Boy in Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne
Hitler's Children and Hitler's Women by Guido Knopp

Films:

Lore
Downfall
Europa Europa
The Reader
The Boy in Striped Pyjamas
Schindler's List
The Pianist
Hope and Glory
The Brothers Grimm

Music:

Wagner
The Singing Detective soundtrack
Pennies from Heaven soundtrack

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SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM

HOLOCAUST AND AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORY

Thank you to our Monkey Baa Education Advisory Panel for their input and guidance in creating this event, and our education program:

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