

# Treehouse Theatre Programs:

## Teacher Guidelines and Resources

'Tree of Life' or 'Suitcase Stories' performances provide both a humorous and a dramatic introduction to refugee issues. Over 30,000 students as well as adult audiences have seen these performances over the last seven years.

Treehouse programs are recommended for students from school Years 5 to 12. Younger children, depending on their maturity, enjoy the show accompanied by their parents or caregivers. Adult audiences of course especially appreciate this show.

In these performances, young refugees perform their own stories of childhood fun, of terror and tragedy, and finally of triumph. The audiences are taken on an emotional roller coaster. In the words of one audience member, "I laughed so hard in the beginning, cried in the middle and couldn't stop smiling at the end."

To get the most out of the performance, and to guard against the extremely rare possibility of students being disturbed by the content, we recommend some brief preparation. A follow-up discussion might also be useful.

At the show, the Treehouse Director will explain that if any student feels upset by the show, it is important to talk to teachers and/or parents.

On our theatre programs, contact details will be provided for:

- [KidsHelpline](#),
- [Headspace](#),
- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [LifeLine](#)

## Pre-show Preparation

### Information on Refugees

It is useful to provide basic information on the following refugee issues.

- Key terms - asylum seeker, refugee and migrant.
- Information about [1951 United Nations Refugee Convention](#)
- Where Australia is taking refugees from and where they are settling.
- Brief information on the sorts of things that happen to refugees and asylum seekers.

The Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors (STARTTS) have provided [information](#) on the above dot points.

# Student Preparation

## Introduction

Teachers should emphasise that Treehouse stories are real stories and just like in real life, the stories may make you cry or laugh, but the show will certainly be fun!

## Suggested Experiential Activity

Students develop an awareness of the needs of refugees by imagining an experience of being forced to leave home to seek safety.

**Reflect** on a time when you packed up to leave (eg going on a holiday, moving house). What did you take? How long did it take to get ready to leave?

**Imagine** you have to leave home in a hurry in fear, the roads are blocked and you cannot use your phone or electricity.

- What will take? (Remember: you have a short time to pack, you will have to carry your bag and there may be few other resources to help you until you reach safety.)
- Where will you go?
- How will you travel?

**Use** current news reports from a conflict area to expand your ideas.

**Develop** four mind maps showing how being forced to leave home in a hurry would affect your:

- health
- safety
- family
- future.

**List** the support you might need. Where would you get that support and how easy would it be to obtain?

**Write** a reflection of this experience of leaving home and list three ways you might change your behaviour when you hear of refugee stories in the media in the future.

This and other activities can be found at:

[Global Education Teacher resources to encourage a global Perspective across the curriculum.](#)

## **PDF of Treehouse Script**

After the show, teachers may request a PDF of the script to use as a resource for follow-up.

## **Post-show follow-up:**

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How do you feel after you have had time to reflect about the show?
- Has the show changed the way you think about refugees and asylum seekers, about yourself and about your own life?
- Do you think other students should see a show like this and why?
- Is there anything you and your class would like to do to help refugees and asylum seekers in Australia or overseas?

### **NB**

If any student appears distressed, teachers should inform parents and make appropriate referrals to the school counsellor and/or mental health services. Among the 20,000 students who have seen Treehouse performances, there have been just two reported cases of such referrals. In both cases, the Treehouse performance acted as a catalyst to open up a conversation with the school counsellor, about pre-existing conditions. Thus attendance at a Treehouse performance actually served to assist in the treatment of pre-existing conditions.

Therefore, teachers have no need to feel afraid of emotions which may be stirred up by this performance.

### **Post-show Activities:**

- Paint or draw a picture about a story that especially affected you. Describe your drawing/painting to the class or small group. Explain why you chose it and why it affected you.
- Write a recount or narrative about a story that especially affected you. Read your work to your group. Each group chooses one piece of writing and creates 3 freeze frames which retell this story. Each group performs this for the class.
- Write a response to a story that especially affected you. How did it make you feel? What did it make you think?
- Research the socio-political history of one of the stories that interested you.
- Email a cast member. Cast members love hearing how individuals responded to their stories.

## Further Refugee Teaching Resources:

### From World Vision Australia

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/get-involved/school-resources/detail/get-connected-migration-lesson-plan>

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/get-involved/school-resources/detail/get-connected-migration---people-on-the-move>

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/get-involved/school-resources/detail/the-refugee-journey>

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/get-involved/school-resources/detail/asylum-seekers>

### Units on Migration and Refugees on the Global Words website:

[http://www.globalwords.edu.au/units/Refugees\\_JSY8\\_html/index.html](http://www.globalwords.edu.au/units/Refugees_JSY8_html/index.html)

[http://www.globalwords.edu.au/units/Refugees\\_UPY6\\_html/index.html](http://www.globalwords.edu.au/units/Refugees_UPY6_html/index.html)

### Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education Resources

[www.erc.org.au/Resources\\_for\\_Schools/Asylum\\_Seekers\\_and\\_Refugees](http://www.erc.org.au/Resources_for_Schools/Asylum_Seekers_and_Refugees)