



These stories
will be different

ZANNY BEGG

Education Kit



About:

This education resource has been produced by Museums & Galleries of NSW in conjunction with UNSW Galleries, Dr. Megan Fizell and artist Zanny Begg to support the touring exhibition *Zanny Begg | These Stories Will be Different*.

This resource offers:

- Insight into the practice of artist Zanny Begg
- A glossary of terms
- Thinking and creative activities for use in the classroom, and the gallery
- Links for further reading and exploration

The activities in this resource are aimed at Year 9 and 10 students of varying abilities, and can be undertaken before, during or after an exhibition visit. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities and topics to suit all students at a secondary level.

We encourage gallery staff to use the information and activities in this resource to complement the visitor experience.

Before You Begin:

The artworks in this exhibition focus on themes of feminism, cultural identity, diversity, migration and inequality. Before engaging with this resource, we recommend setting ground rules to ensure a respectful and safe space where students can express their ideas in an accepting and supportive environment.

In the exhibition, there are people who identify as transgender, refugees who have experienced trauma, and violence towards women, which may be uncomfortable or triggering for some students. It is important to allow students to step away or sit out of certain exercises or screenings.

Left: Zanny Begg, The Beehive (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Philippa Bateman.

Glossary

Feminism	Feminism is a movement campaigning for women's rights and advocating for gender equality across social, political, and economic systems. Additional forms of feminism like Black feminism and postcolonial feminism have emerged in recent decades to account for multicultural and intersectional perspectives.
Afrofeminism and Black Feminism	Black feminism exposes the numerous forms of oppression that intersect to constitute the lived experiences of Black women where institutional racism, sexism, and classism overlap to compound and further aggravate inequality. Afrofeminism (also afro-feminism) focuses on the experiences of women of African descent living in Europe by further contextualising their marginalisation and discrimination within the legacy of colonialism.
Classism (also known as class discrimination)	To hold prejudiced opinions or discriminate against members of a specific social class. These class structures are based on social and economic factors, like an individual's wealth, occupation, or education. Frequently classism results in policies or institutional systems designed to benefit further those at the top, also known as the upper classes, often at the added cost to lower socioeconomic groups.
Decolonisation	Decolonisation is the process of reversing colonisation whereby the invading settler-nation with-draws, leaving the formerly colonised region independent to determine the form and structure of its statehood and government. In Australia, where First Nations peoples still do not have self-determination and the Eurocentric coloniser's sociocultural systems remain, decolonisation is still underway.
Diaspora	Diaspora describes peoples dispersed or scattered from their original geographic locale, often through forced displacement. Although diasporic populations resettle away from their ancestral homelands, they still maintain cultural ties and identify with their home country.
Gentrification	Gentrification occurs in lower socioeconomic areas when affluent individuals move in and 'improve' urban spaces, displacing the current businesses and residents. The influx of wealth associated with gentrification contributes to rising property and rent prices, with some redevelopment projects targeting social housing estates. Gentrification alters the social, racial, and economic demographics of urban neighbourhoods.

Islamophobia	Islamophobia is a hatred or prejudice against Muslims or individuals practising the Islamic religion. Islamophobia is a form of xenophobia, a fear or hatred of peoples from another country that can manifest in discriminatory behaviour or aversion to their customs or culture.
Misogyny	Misogyny is an extreme form of sexism that seeks to maintain patriarchal systems of power. It involves a deep, ingrained hatred or contempt for women.
Nuit Debout	Nuit Debout is a 2016 French social movement that formed in response to new labour laws. Trade unions and student groups protested the removal of certain employment protections that made it easier for employers to lay off workers and reduced overtime and severance pay. The activists gathered nightly in Place de la République in Paris to demonstrate their resistance to the labour reforms.
Political Asylum	An individual seeking political asylum leaves their home country to request protection or refuge in another country. Many individuals applying for asylum are fleeing dangerous situations like war or political unrest.
Socialist Feminism	Socialist feminism synthesises a campaign for women's liberation with a critique of capitalist systems that benefit the patriarchy. Socialist feminism emerged from Marxist feminism, which points out that women are responsible for a significant amount of unpaid labour (domestic chores, childcare, for example) and frames these gendered divisions of labour as a form of exploitation in capitalist societies. Extending these ideas, socialist feminists argue that women's liberation is connected to the social and economic justice of all peoples.
Tamil	The Tamils are a group of people from the southern part of India and Sri Lanka. Tamil is also the name of their common language, one of India's oldest classical languages. Following the decolonisation of Sri Lanka by the British, the Tamils suffered institutionalised discrimination that led to a 25-year civil war between the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil Tigers. From the mid-20th century on-wards, many Tamils were displaced from their homeland and migrated to other parts of the world, forming the Tamil diaspora.
White Privilege	White privilege is a form of racial inequality that describes the hidden benefits and inherent advantages white-skinned or Caucasian individuals receive solely because of their race.

About the Exhibition:

Zanny Begg | *These Stories Will be Different* brings together the artist’s most significant video works to date including *The Beehive* (2018), *The City of Ladies* with Elise McLeod (2017) and *Stories of Kannagi* (2019). These works explore human and civil rights, in connection to social justice, feminism, civil war, migration and cultural expression.

To produce these videos, Begg worked closely with other creatives and embedded herself within relevant community groups by engaging in **community consultation, collaborating with experts, and co-authorship.**

“If you think history is on your side, let me tell you: women did not write these books. If women had written the books, the stories would be different” - Christine de Pizan

Activity:

Speak to the person next to you, or as a group, and write down definitions for these three terms.

Activity:

Thinking about your school or classroom, when have you engaged in these three modes of working together?

What have you learned from working in each of these ways?

Exhibition Starting Points:

In her artistic practice, Zanny Begg is interested in illuminating and exploring human rights on a global and local scale. **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. In this declaration there are 30 Articles that outline fundamental global terms for freedom, justice and peace in the world. Explore **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** here: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Thinking Activity:

Draw a table with four columns and divide them into ‘**global**’, ‘**national**’, ‘**local**’ and ‘**personal**’.

1. In groups consider some global human rights issues and write them down in the ‘**global**’ column. These human rights issues could include freedom of expression, equal pay, access to education, or discrimination.
2. In the second column ‘**national**’, consider how one of the global human rights issues nominated in the first column relates to Australia.
3. In the third column ‘**local**’, think about how the national human rights issue in the second column relates to your community (town, city, suburb, area, cultural group).
4. In the ‘**personal**’ column, consider how you can personally make an impact on this issue through action, conversation, advocacy, or support.

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Above: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Philippa Bateman.

Curriculum Links

Year 9

History - ACOKFH019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlining the features that reflect the emergence of a belief in social and political equality, including the right to vote, egalitarianism and universal education in Australia • The role of Classical models and theories on the invention of democratic values
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Year 10

History - ACD-SEH023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
History - ACOK-FH022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the major movements for rights and freedom in the world recognising the continuing nature of civil rights movements in the twentieth century

Curriculum codes taken from: <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>

The City of Ladies (2017)

“[The film] plays over scenes of the teenage girls engaged in acts of political and sexual liberation, or caught unaware in moments of self-actualisation. Developing confidence in their own voices, they join in the provocative chorus” – Zanny Begg’s *The City of Ladies: resistance, revisionism and reclamation* by Nina Miall, Art Review, 2018 <https://artreview.com/ar-april-2018-zanny-begg/>

WARNING: This film contains sexual references, explicit language and adult themes.

About:

The City of Ladies 2017, co-produced with Elise McLeod, was inspired by *The Book of the City of Ladies*, written by Christine de Pizan in 1402. In this book, Pizan details a utopian city constructed and run by impressive women from all walks of life.

Begg’s film follows seven young feminists living in France through moments of growth and rebellion, creating dialogues between scripted text, interviews, and spontaneous scenes. Begg and McLeod collaborated with software programmer Andrew Nicholson to create an algorithm with over 300,000 possible story combinations. Each time *The City of Ladies* plays, it begins and ends in the same way with the central narrative segments varying to explore different **feminisms**.



Above: Zanny Begg, *The City of Ladies* (still) 2017. Co-directed with Elise McLeod. Image courtesy of the artist.

Thinking Activity:

Sit in front of *The City of Ladies* and watch the film through two complete cycles.

1. During the first cycle write down words/terms that come to mind, creating a mind map of the themes and ideas expressed in the film. **For example, ‘intersectional feminisms’, ‘wage disparity’, or ‘friendship’ depending on which cycle you watch.**

2. During the second cycle, do the same exercise on a new page.

3. Compare and contrast the two mind maps. See where there are crossovers, similarities and differences in your two experiences of the film.

4. Thinking about these similarities and differences, why do you think Begg and McLeod have chosen to present their exploration of feminisms in this way (consider their artistic intention)?



Left: Zanny Begg, *The City of Ladies* (still) 2017. Co-directed with Elise McLeod. Image courtesy of the artist.

Creative Activity:

In small groups play a game of **exquisite corpse**, using one of the words/terms from the previous activity to inspire your collective creation.

1. Look at your mind maps and find one word/term that you all wrote down and use it as inspiration for this activity (such as 'intersectional feminism', 'wage disparity', or 'friendship').
2. Take a piece of paper and fold it into equal sections, like an accordion, so that each person in the group will have one panel to draw on.
3. The first person will draw a representation of this word/term and then fold the page to hide their drawing before passing it on to the next person. You may want to use text or symbols to enhance your image.
4. The next person then draws their own interpretation of the theme and folds the page to hide their drawing and passes it to the next person, until everyone has had a turn. **Tip: if each time the person draws just a little bit over the folded crease mark, the next person will be able to see a hint of lines or shapes and can connect their drawing with it.**
5. Unfold the entire page to reveal your co-authored drawing and discuss your sections with each other. Consider what story is being told through their combination.
6. Present your co-authored work to the class.

Further Learning:

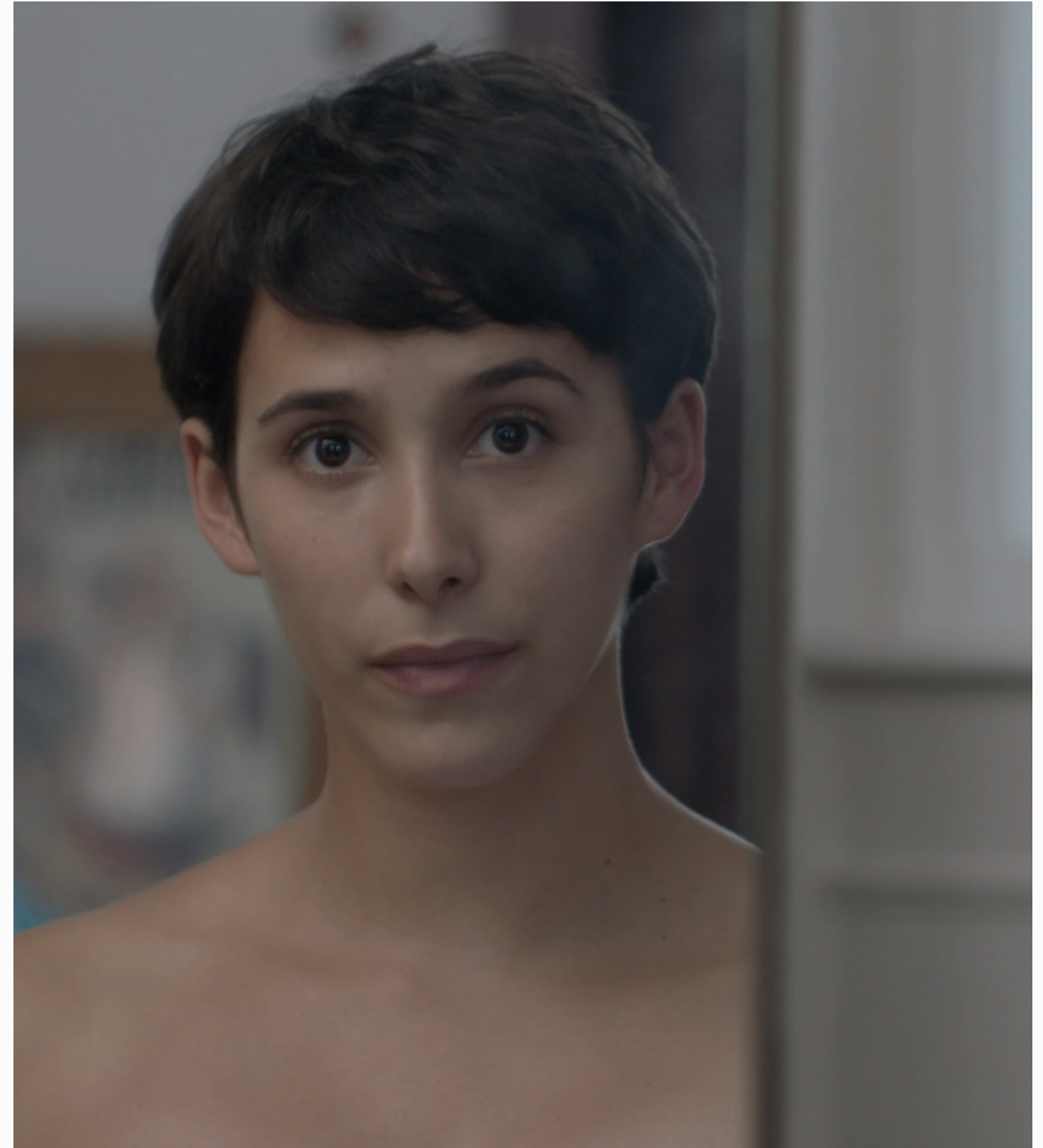
The City of Ladies was presented as part of *The National* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in 2017. interviews with the artist, MCA curator Blair French and further reading can be found here:

<https://www.the-national.com.au/artists/zanny-begg/city-of-ladies/>

Curriculum Links**Year 9 & 10**

Visual Arts - ACAVAM129	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present ideas for displaying artworks and evaluate displays of artworks
Visual Arts - ACA-VAR130	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making
Visual Arts - ACA-VAM125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists.

Curriculum codes taken from: <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>



Above: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (detail) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Philippa Bateman.

The Beehive (2018)

“Bees have shared our city spaces since ancient times. There is a medieval tradition called telling the bees. When the beekeeper dies, the hive must be allowed to mourn if it is to ever produce honey again” – dialogue from *The Beehive*, 2018

WARNING: This film contains explanations of violent acts, sexual references, and adult themes.

The Beehive asks, “Who killed Juanita Nielsen?”. The murder of Nielsen, an anti-gentrification and fair housing activist, remains unsolved. The film is **constructed** from a combination of interviews with people who knew Neilson, staged/ hypothetical re-enactments, scripted dialogue, and personal opinions. In *The Beehive*, Nielson is played by twelve people from varying backgrounds, all of whom represent aspects of her public persona, personality, and politics.

As with *The City of Ladies*, Begg collaborated with software programmer Andrew Nicholson to create *The Beehive’s* non-linear narrative. The film’s beginning and end remain the same, but the story in between is different each time. The result is a multitude of possible combinations that give light to varying aspects of Neilson’s life and legacy.

Thinking Activity:

Many visual, poetic and narrative devices have been used to convey meaning throughout the film, with each cycle using different techniques to explore elements of Neilson’s story. Sit through two or three cycles of the film and write down when you notice the use of a literary technique. Some have been listed below as examples, but please add your own:

- Ambiguity
- Anecdote
- Contrast
- Flashback
- Juxtaposition
- Symbolism
- Sound
- Tone
- Zoomorphism
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-
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Above: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Hugh Hamilton.

Creative Activity:

Reflect upon all the literary devices you identified in *The Beehive* and consider what you found the most engaging or impactful. Attempt to use the device you found the most successful for the following exercise:

1. As a class, set a timer for 3 minutes, close your eyes and think about what ‘home’ means to you.
2. Once the 3 minutes is over set a second timer for 7 minutes.
3. In these 7 minutes, individually write a 2 or 3 sentence text on the theme of ‘home’ using one visual or narrative device to enhance your writing (such as symbolism, simile or juxtaposition). This could be a personal or cultural experience of home, an ecological consideration, a feeling, a fact, a memory, or even a prediction about houses in the future

4. Now as a class, sit or stand in a circle, facing inwards towards one another, ready to read your texts aloud, or nominate someone to read your text for you.
5. Taking turns around the circle, one by one read your texts aloud without leaving time between each person so that it flows like a disjointed story. Adopt any voices or expressions you feel are relevant to the literary device you have chosen to employ in your writing.
6. As a class reflect on the story that was collectively told and the effectiveness of the different styles you all used.
 - Were there any unexpected cohesive or contrasting moments that occurred?
 - Did anyone tell similar stories, but in different styles?

Curriculum Links	
Year 9 & 10	
ACELA1552 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor.
ACELA1553 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that authors innovate with text structures and language for specific purposes and effects.
ACELA1770 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare and contrast the use of cohesive devices in texts, focusing on how they serve to signpost ideas, to make connections and to build semantic associations between ideas.
ACELA1560 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse and explain the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning.
ACELA1560 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify how vocabulary choices contribute to specificity, abstraction and stylistic effectiveness.
ACELA1560 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes.
ACELA1560 – English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create literary texts, including hybrid texts, that innovate on aspects of other texts, for example by using parody, allusion and appropriation.

Curriculum codes taken from: <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>

Further Learning:

Listen to an interview with Zanny Begg and Phillipa Bateman about *The Beehive* and the mystery of Juanita Nielsen’s disappearance on ABC Radio’s The Screen Show: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/the-screen-show/zanny-begg,-the-beehive/10770504>



Above & below: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Hugh Hamilton. Zanny Begg, *The City of Ladies* (still) 2017. Co-directed with Elise McLeod. Image courtesy of the artist.

Stories of Kannagi (2019)

*“I am an Australian-born Tamil woman. There’s many... facets and aspects to being a Sri Lankan Tamil, because most of us aren’t here by choice” - Srisha Sritharan in *Stories of Kannagi*, 2019*

WARNING: This film contains references to war, trauma, and adult themes.

Stories of Kannagi, 2019 was commissioned by STARTTS (Service for the Treatment And Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) and was initiated by Jiva Parthipan, who worked collaboratively with Zanny Begg on this project. Begg and Parthipan engaged in community consultation to represent the experiences and history of the Australian Sri Lankan Tamil community in Western Sydney. The film reimagines the 2000-year-old legend of Kannagi, a woman who comes to the defence of her repentant husband despite the consequences.

Thinking Activity:

Stories of Kannagi not only explores the legend of Kannagi and her legacy, but also introduces other stories through the connections made by writers Niromi de Soyza, Shankari Chandran and Srisha Sritharan.

1. As you watch the film, fill in the blanks below with other themes that are explored in the film. The first two have been filled in as examples:

- Stories of civil war
- Stories of language
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____
- Stories of _____

2. In groups, compare your list of themes and discuss the following questions:

- How do these themes relate to Australia’s changing identity as a nation?
- Why is it important to learn about perspectives of Australians from different backgrounds and experiences?



Left: Zanny Begg, *Stories of Kannagi* (still) 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.

Creative Activity:

Begg, her collaborator Parthipan, the three writers featured in the film, and the community that advised on the content in the film, all contributed technical, creative and cultural knowledge to this project.

Working in groups, consider your knowledge strengths and collectively create a two-minute clip on the theme of ‘Australia’s changing identity’.

1. First, choose a direction for the two-minute clip. Will it be about the cuisine introduced to Australia due to migration? Will it reflect First Nations sovereignty? Will it look at the many languages Australians speak? Remember it is only two-minutes, so keep it simple.

2. Decide on the delivery of the two-minute clip. Will it be an interview? Will it require a re-enactment? Will it be images with a voice-over? Be as creative as you like.

3. Thinking about the skills of your group, be they technical, cultural or creative, you may want to nominate someone to:

- Research the content
- Interview members of the group on their personal experiences
- Write the script
- Perform the script
- Choose the location and background imagery
- Film and edit the clip

4. Present your clips to the class and see how the class interprets your film.
 - Did your classmates easily understand the themes in your clip?
 - Did your classmates add new meaning to your clip through their interpretations?
 - Did your clip require some explanation or decoding for your classmates to understand the themes?

Further Learning:

Read *Stories of Kannagi: a Tamil classic in the Blake Art Prize* – an article in IndianLink News: https://www.indianlink.com.au/arts/visual-arts/stories-of-kannagi-a-tamil-classic-in-the-blake-art-prize/?fbclid=IwAR16eHViuuNpBPAKAQjucTMx5VnkNFGHBMUtFZu8Zptwk-tn_ILgmXzWVwVg

Curriculum Links	
Year 9 & 10	
Visual Arts – ACAVAM126	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and represent their own artistic intentions (ACAVAM126)
Visual Arts - ACA-VAR130	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making Considering viewpoints – meanings and interpretations Investigating the practices, techniques and viewpoints of artists from different cultural groups and their use of persuasive, communicative or expressive representation
Visual Arts - ACA-VAM125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists.
Year 10	
History – ACDSEH144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The waves of post-World War II migration to Australia, including the influence of significant world events
History - ACDSEH147	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The contribution of migration to Australia’s changing identity as a nation and to its international relationships

Curriculum codes taken from: <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>



Above & below: Zanny Begg, *Stories of Kannagi* (still) 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.



A UNSW Galleries and Museums & Galleries of NSW touring exhibition. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory.



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& Galleries
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