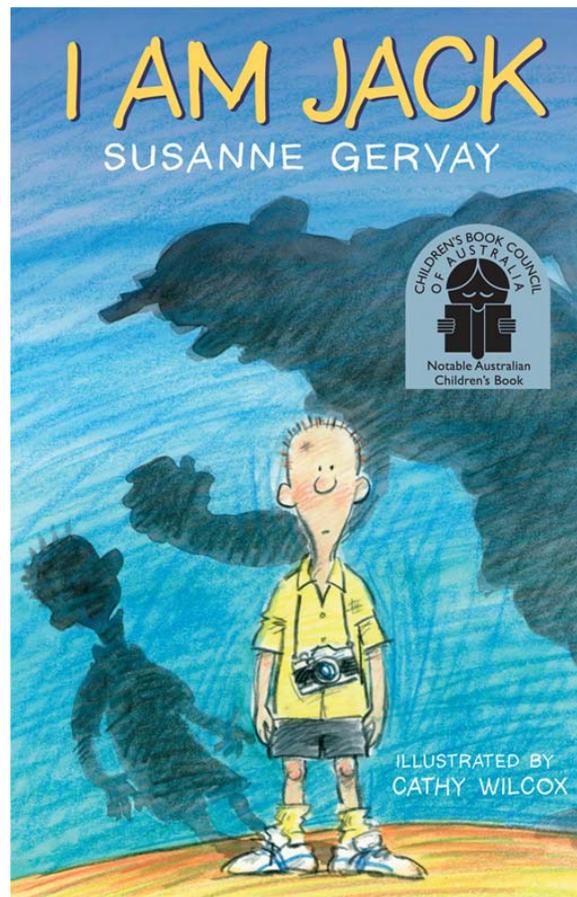


Presented by the Arts Centre's Performances Program 2009

# I am Jack



Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People

Years 3 – 7

Prepared by Jack Migdalek

NOTE: Please remember to arrive 30 minutes before the starting time of the show.

The Arts Centre’s Performances Program is dedicated to fostering the arts by giving schools the opportunity to see a diverse range of excellent theatre in fully produced form.

These teacher notes have been designed to complement the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

Activity suggestions are arranged according to theme and/or broad focus area. This arrangement is designed to serve educators as a useful guide toward drawing cross-curricular links across VELS domains and to complement whole school planning.

Themes will be addressed across learning strands via activities relating to domains of relevance that draw upon applicable knowledge, skills and behaviours (VELS dimensions).

Activity suggestions can be adapted by teachers to suit student levels.

Notes for *I am Jack* are divided into the following themes:

THEME #1: BULLYING .....	5
THEME #2: FRIENDS AND FAMILY .....	8
THEME #3: STORY TELLING.....	9
THEME #4: THEATRE ARTS.....	15

Author: Jack Migdalek

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# About 'I am Jack'

## *I am Jack*

By Susanne Gervay

Adapted for the stage by Eva Di Cesare, Sandra Eldridge and Tim McGarry

Director: Sandra Eldridge  
Designer: Alice Lindstrom  
Lighting Designer: Luiz Pampolha  
Sound Designer: Jeremy Silver  
Dramaturge: Caleb Lewis  
Performer: Tim McGarry

## SYNOPSIS

Jack is smart and funny and eleven years old. Jack is also being bullied and needs help. Unfortunately, Jack's mother is too wrapped up in herself to see this and Jack's teacher, Mr. Angelou, is too busy to pay attention to the warning signs. But little does Jack know that help is close at hand.

## SUSANNE GERVAY

'I Am Jack' is inspired by Susanne's son when he was growing up.

Susanne Gervay also wrote a sequel to 'I am Jack' called 'Super Jack'. The 'JACK' books have been translated into Korean and Indonesian.

For more information on Susanne Gervay and her writing visit her website at:

[www.sgervay.com](http://www.sgervay.com)

## MONKEY BAA

Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People was started in 1997 by Tim McGarry, Sandie Eldridge and Eva Di Cesare. The company is committed to using celebrated Australian literature as a platform to create theatrical experiences for young audiences.

For more information on MONKEY BAA, visit their website at: [www.monkeybaa.com.au](http://www.monkeybaa.com.au)

## ON BULLYING

What forms can bullying take?

- Verbal bullying (name calling, taunting, teasing, gossip/rumour, sms, etc.)
- Emotional bullying (rejecting, isolating, terrorising, etc.)
- Physical bullying (punching, poking, beating, sexual contact, etc.)

How do bullies select their targets?

- because of a person's physical characteristics, eg. height, weight, colour, attractiveness, physical disability
- because of a person's behaviour, eg. disposition, manner, religious beliefs, cultural conduct
- because of a person's situation or status, eg. family, financial, associations

## LINKS AND RESOURCES

Youth Counselling service: [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au) or phone 1800 55 1800

If you believe that your students may need anonymous help or advice in regard to bullying (or other matters of concern) let them know about Kids Help Line, a free, confidential, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people in Australia aged between 5 and 25.

Department of Education, Victoria, webpage on bullying and well being:  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm>

National Coalition Against Bullying: [www.ncab.org.au](http://www.ncab.org.au)

Alanah And Madeline Foundation: [www.amf.org.au](http://www.amf.org.au)

Australian Government, Catholic and Independent school communities' anti-bullying website with pages for teachers, parents and students: <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au>

Information page on bullying and harassment:  
<http://www.childsafetyaustralia.com.au/children/bullying/bullying.htm>

Bully Blocking, bullying and social resilience resource: [www.bullying.com.au](http://www.bullying.com.au)

Bullying in Schools: [www.kenrigby.net](http://www.kenrigby.net)

Friendly Schools and Families Program, a bullying reduction program:  
[www.friendlyschools.com.au/](http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/)

National Coalition Against Bullying: [www.ncab.org.au/](http://www.ncab.org.au/)

YWCA, Bullying is violence PDF:  
[www.thesource.gov.au/find/crisis/crisis\\_pdf/Bullying\\_IS\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.thesource.gov.au/find/crisis/crisis_pdf/Bullying_IS_Violence.pdf)

Further reading for teachers: *"Bullies, targets & witnesses : helping children break the pain chain"*, Suellen Fried, Paula Fried, 2003.

Further reading for students: *"Stick Up for Yourself! Every Kid's Guide to Personal Power and Self Esteem"*, Gershen Kaufman and Lev Raphael, 1999

PRE-SHOW: For some students, seeing *I am Jack* may be a first experience of live theatre. The following page can be used as a worksheet to promote discussion on what constitutes appropriate audience behaviour at a live performance.

# Theatre Etiquette

Live theatre differs greatly from other medium such as film or television. For audiences, the experience of seeing a live performance differs to that of watching a pre-recorded one. For performers as well, working to a live audience is vastly different to performing in a studio to a camera.

<p><i>What constitutes appropriate audience behaviour at a live theatre event?</i></p>
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Certain behaviour is expected of audiences at live theatre events. Please ensure that you observe the following:

- Arrive on time. Missing the start of a performance will diminish your enjoyment and/or understanding of the piece. It will also disrupt the show for others.
- Turn off any mobile phone, Walkman or other electronic device. These are disruptive to the performance and distracting to audience members and performers.
- If necessary, visit the bathroom prior to the commencement of the performance. Going to the bathroom during the performance disrupts the show for yourself as well as others.
- A member of the front of house staff will usher you to your seats. Follow their directions.
- When the lights dim, it is a signal to quiet down.
- During the performance observe the following;
  - no photography
  - no talking
  - no eating food
  - remain seated
- Applauding or cheering is the most appropriate way to acclaim the performance and performing artists. Ordinarily this occurs at the conclusion of the performance.

All of the above are to ensure that you and other audience members get the most out of the production and your visit to the theatre.

# Learning Activities

## THEME #1: BULLYING

A major issue in *I am Jack* is that of bullying. The following worksheets can be used as a springboard to stimulate reflection on issues of bullying. Worksheets can be conducted in discussion, or as individual or small-group writing exercises. Where students have read the book or seen the play of *I am Jack* encourage students to refer to incidents and characters in the book/play to substantiate their comments.

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; English; Health and Physical Education*

**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Reading; Writing; Speaking and listening; Health knowledge and promotion*

## WORKSHEET (years 3-4)

### Bullying

In what ways can a person be bullied?

When a person is bullied, how do you think they feel?

Why do you think some people bully other people?

In *I am Jack*, why do you think Jack's friends Christopher and Paul stopped playing with him?

When a person is bullied, what do you think they should do?

When a person is bullied, what can their friends, parents, teachers do to help them?

## WORKSHEET (years 5-7)

### **Bullying**

*'one in six children in Australian schools are bullied'* (Susanne Gervay)

What is bullying? What types of bullying are there?

Why do you think a person become a Bully? How do you think Bullies choose their targets?

When a person is bullied, how do think they feel?

Are there differences between boy bullies and girl bullies? If so, what is the difference, ... and why?

Do you think bullying happens to adults too? If so, how is it different/similar to bullying that happens to children?

Do you think that teasing and bullying are the same thing? How are they different?

Do you think calling people names can be hurtful? (eg. names like Bum Head, 4-eyes, metal mouth, retard, dork, wog, chink, geek, nerd, fat slob, bitch, poof). Are some names worse than others? How can we solve problems of name-calling?

Can you think of some films or television programs that you have seen that have bullying in them? (eg. 'Beavis and Butthead', 'South Park', 'Malcolm in the Middle', 'Rugrats', 'Harry Potter'). What negative things can children learn from these programs? What positive things can children learn from these programs?

What is the best advice to give someone who is being bullied? Why is it important for someone who is being bullied not to just 'take it'?

What is the best advice to give someone who knows someone who is being bullied?

What is the best advice to give bullies? What do bullies need to learn?

What is the best advice to give parents and teachers who think that their child or their student is being bullied?

What is the best advice to give parents and teachers who think that their child or student is a bully?

How can we stop bullying?

## BULLYING SCENARIO

### Change the situation

Susanne Gervay (the writer of *I am Jack*) said:

*'I remember the time I was afraid to go to school because 'the gang' surrounded me and stole my lunch. No one played with me. It was lonely and scary. I didn't feel I could ask my parents for help. They were both working so hard and tired all the time, so how could I bother them?'*

Imagine how this situation would have been.

Change the situation: Write or illustrate the same situation so that it ends with a positive outcome that leaves no one feeling lonely or scared.

## TACKLING BULLYING

### Slogans and posters

In *I am Jack*, Jack's school made anti-bullying posters, eg:

"BULLIES ARE COWARDS"

"WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FLU AND A BULLY?  
THE FLU MAKES YOU SICK. THE BULLY IS SICK"

"BULLIES ARE WEAK. NO BULL!!!!!!"

Make your own anti-bullying slogans and posters.

Display them around your school.

## THEME #2: FRIENDS AND FAMILY

The focus of the following activities is on the importance of family and friends.

### FRIENDSHIP

*Domains: Interpersonal development; Personal learning; English; The Arts*  
*Dimensions: Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

In *I am Jack*, Jack's friends are very important to him.

Have students think about their own friends and consider the following:

- What are some good things about having friends?
- What does it take to be a good friend?
- How can people make new friends?

These questions can be addressed through discussion, writing, fine arts, performance arts.

### LOVED ONES

*Domains: Personal learning; English*  
*Dimensions: Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing*

In *I am Jack*, we meet members of Jack's family: his mother, sister, grandmother, and Rob (his mother's boyfriend). In both the book and the play, Jack talks about his loved ones with humour and affection, eg. stories about Nanna's buying bargains, his mum doing star jumps while she cooks, etc. Using Jack's anecdotes about his loved ones as inspiration, have students relate comic tales about members of their own households/families. These could be presented in written or spoken form.

### FAMILY

*Domains: Interpersonal development; English*  
*Dimensions: Working in teams; Speaking and listening; Writing*

Traditionally families were considered to be groups consisting of parents and their children. In modern times family can mean other things too.

Together with students define the term 'family'. Consider if and how families of the future may be different to families nowadays.

## THEME #3: STORY TELLING

*I am Jack* is based on the children's book of the same name written by Susanne Gervay. The focus of the following activities is on narrative and storytelling.

### DIFFERENT STORIES

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

Compare Susanne Gervay's *I am Jack* with children's stories by other authors, eg. Tim Winton, Morris Gleitzman, J.K Rowling. What similarities/differences are there between storylines, characters, settings? Have students articulate which stories and styles of story they prefer and why. Have students write, illustrate or enact their own original tale/s to match their favoured style of children's tale

### FOLLOW UP STORIES

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

Explain to students that many writers write sequels to stories that they have written, eg. Susanne Gervay wrote a sequel to '*I am Jack*' called '*Super Jack*'. Where students have seen or read *I am Jack*, have students invent stories or adventures that involve Jack or other characters in his life *after* the time of the story, (or alternatively *before*). These could be relayed in spoken, written or dramatised form.

### IMAGINE IF

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

Where students have seen *I am Jack*, hypothesise what might have happened had certain things in the story been different, eg.

- if George Hammel had a brother or sister in Samantha's grade
- if George Hammel had been Anna's brother
- if George Hammel had been Rob's son
- If Mum had been the principal of Jack's school
- If Jack had become famous because of his 'ponto' plant
- If Jack were captain of George Hammel's rugby team

- If Anna was being bullied, and not Jack
- etc.

Have students follow one or more “*What would have happened if...*” questions and retell the story accordingly. Stories can be retold in written, spoken, illustrated or dramatised form.

## ENGAGING STORY TELLING

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Creating and making*

Discuss with students the skills involved in the telling of a story. What qualities maintain or heighten a listener’s interest? List these, eg. eye-contact, facial expression, gesture, pause, variation in rhythm, stress, pitch, pace, volume, etc. What qualities might lose a listener’s interest? eg. shuffling around, mumbling, fidgeting, speaking in a monotone, speaking too slowly/quickly, etc.

Prepare and tell simple stories to one another (3<sup>rd</sup> person narrative) bearing the preceding discussion in mind.

Have each student tell their story again, but as a character from the story. Identify if and how this changed the impact and effect of the story.

The focus on this activity could also be on the telling of jokes, something that Jack in *I am Jack* loves to do. Teachers can draw students’ attention to word play and puns such as those used by Jack, eg.

When Jack talks about the wheels of a car he says ‘Mum rolls her eyes’.  
 When Jack talks about George Hamel having muscles that stick out like hamburgers he says ‘He’s a real meathead’.

Have students play with words in similar ways and make up and present their own wordplay jokes to the class.

## MESSAGES

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing*

Many stories communicate messages. Focus on *I am Jack* as well as other children’s books that the class know. Identify messages or lessons that those stories communicate. Are the messages of some stories (eg. messages about friendship, overcoming fear, caring for others) communicated in other stories too? Why might that be?

## MAKING STORIES

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Speaking and listening; Creating and making*

Sit in a circle. Going around the circle, have students, make up a story, sentence by sentence, or word-by-word, each student adding on to the story according to what the person before them has contributed.

Extension: Divide class into three groups. Have one group of students tell a story. Have a second group mime the story as it is being told. The third group can serve as an audience whilst also supplying relevant sound effects as required.

## FROM JACK'S WINDOW

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing; Creating and making*

In *I am Jack*, Jack says:

*'Our unit is at the front of the building. I really like my bedroom. I can see everything that happens on the street – kids hanging around, people buying hot bread from the old bakery, car crashes, fire engines screaming down the road...'*

Have students imagine other things Jack might observe from his window overlooking a busy street.

Have students describe the people and things that they might see in the streets from Jack's window, eg. drivers, pedestrians, pets, traffic warders, police, storekeepers, customers, residents, etc. Descriptions could be presented in writing, illustration or dramatic form.

Follow on by having students describe things they might see from other vantage points, eg. a tall gum tree in the country, a city skyscraper, a lighting tower at the MCG.

## CHAPTER TITLES

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Creating and making; Exploring and responding*

Together with students, read through some of the chapter titles in *I am Jack*:

Mum, Will you Listen?  
Burping  
Wipe your Bum  
Late for School  
Nanna Discovers her Underpants  
Karate Kid  
Anna Tells  
Bright Yellow Sunflower  
Surf's Up  
Mr Angelou's Bald Head Shines  
Goodbye to Orange Cupboards  
Jack's Back  
I can Fly to Jupiter

Discuss with students which chapters sound interesting and why.

Have students make up 3 - 6 chapter titles each. Shuffle these and randomly allocate several chapter titles to each student or small groups of students. Students are to make up a situation that connects all of their allocated chapter titles into one story. Write, illustrate, tell or enact these original stories for one another.

## STORY TRANSPOSITION

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Writing, Exploring and responding*

The play *I am Jack* was adapted from the book by the same name. Where students have experienced both the play and the book, compare the two. Which did students prefer? Why? List and discuss other books that were turned into films, plays, ballets, cartoons. Working individually or in small groups, have students present comparisons between two or more versions of the same story, eg. book/film/play/ballet/opera/cartoon versions of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Harry Potter*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, etc. These could take the form of written or oral presentations.

## BOOK ILLUSTRATION

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Creating and making*

Together with students look at and discuss an assortment of illustrations from different children's books. Which ones appeal most? Which do not? Have students articulate why/why not. When illustrating a book, an artist, has to depict the characters, places and situations described in the book. Where students have read *I am Jack* have them comment on the book's illustrations by Cathy Wilcox.

Have Students write or tell short stories (original tales or well known ones). Have students illustrate one another's stories. View these. Identify how effectively stories and their illustrations match. Students may create a class library of picture books.

## TABLEAUX STORY TELLING

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; The Arts*  
**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Creating and making; Exploring and responding*

Have students form small groups of 3 - 5. Each group is to create 4 tableaux (frozen poses) that illustrate a story about bullying. All group members are to be in each frozen tableaux. Give students the following format to follow, instructing groups to problem-solve and work out what should happen in tableaux 3 in order to reach a positive conclusion for all involved:

Tableaux 1: someone is being bullied  
Tableaux 2: the bullying gets worse  
Tableaux 3: *turning point*  
Tableaux 4: conclusion

View each group's frozen tableaux, and interpret the stories being represented.

Using a tambour, beat a slow regular rhythm and ask students to be in each of their 4 tableaux positions by count 8 of every 8 beats, eg. using counts 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 to move into the next tableaux.

Give groups some time to consider and work on how they might move between tableaux (on counts 1,2,3,4,5,6,7) in order to reflect the dynamic of the story. Using music and/or incorporating dialogue may also be optional.

## POINTS OF VIEW

*Domains: The Arts; English; Interpersonal development,  
Dimensions: Creating and making; Speaking and listening; Writing; Building social relationships*

Jack's story in *I am Jack* is told from the point of view of Jack himself. Where students have read the book or seen the play, ask them to imagine how someone else would have seen Jack's situation, eg. his sister Samantha, Mum, Rob, Nanna, his best friend Anna, Anna's parents, Christopher & Paul, the school principal, Mr Angelou, the librarian, other teachers, George Hamel, members of George's gang, older students in the school, younger students in the school etc.

Have each student take on the role of a character in Jack's life. Conduct interviews with characters (in small groups or as a class) and have interviewees explain:

- what they knew of Jack's situation
- how they felt about Jack's situation
- what they might have been able to do to help Jack

Use this activity to draw attention to what it must be like to be a bully, a victim of bullying, or someone who is witness to bullying.

## THEME #4: THEATRE ARTS

The focus of the following activities is on theatre craft, creation, production, review and appreciation.

### REVIEW

*Domains: The Arts; Design, Creativity; English*  
*Dimensions: Responding; Writing; Speaking and listening*

The following can be used to frame a written or spoken review of *I am Jack*:

- What did you like best about *I am Jack*? Why?
- What did *I am Jack* communicate (eg. about bullying, family, friendship)?
- Identify the skills of the actor in *I am Jack*
- What did you like about the design, sound effects in the show? How did these add to the impact of the show?
- Were there any parts of the show that you did not like? Why?
- How long do you think it would have taken to prepare the production of *I am Jack*?
- Compare *I am Jack* with other live performances you may have seen
- Rate *I am Jack* out of 10. Explain strengths and weaknesses of the production to justify your rating

### THEATRE DESIGN

*Domains: Interpersonal development; Personal learning; The Arts*  
*Dimensions: Working in teams; Managing personal learning; Creating and making*

Where students have seen *I am Jack*, discuss how the set in the show was used to suggest various locations in the story.

Have students design sets and props for theatre performances of original or well known children's stories. Construct models of designs.

Extension: Create performances using sets/props that students have constructed.

## SOUND EFFECTS

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; The Arts*

**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Creating and making; Exploring and responding*

Sound effects and music are used in *I am Jack* to add to the mood and atmosphere of the production.

Form small groups. Using voice (but no verbal text), implements and/or musical instruments, have groups create sound effects representing elements such as fear, happiness, danger, a lucky escape, youth, old age, etc. These can be recorded.

Play or perform these for one another. See if students can identify what other groups' sound effects represent. Discuss how groups used tempo, volume, rhythm, pause, speed and pitch to evoke different feelings or atmospheres.

Record a soundscape sequence, eg. misery turning to happiness, danger turning to safety, confusion turning to understanding, youth turning to old age.

Have small groups prepare or improvise short skits or dances to match pre-recorded sound-effect sequences. Perform these.

## CHARACTERISATION

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; Personal Learning; English; The Arts*

**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Building social relationships; Managing personal learning; Speaking and listening; Creating and making; Exploring and responding*

Ask each student to choose a character from a book they know, eg. characters from *I am Jack* such as Nanna, George Hammel, Samantha, Mum, Rob, Anna, Jack, Mr Angelou.

Have students explore ways in which their character might sleep, brush their teeth or hair, drink, walk, greet other people, make a telephone call, eat an apple, etc. In developing their characters, have students pay attention to how their posture, movement style, expression, breathing and voice can be used to reflect who their character is.

Have individual students perform short actions as their chosen character, eg. playing with a pet, searching for something, eating a meal, etc. View these and comment on the character being portrayed. What is their age, size, disposition, temperament, etc. See if students can guess which story character is being portrayed. Hints may be supplied.

Extension:

Ask students to consider the kinds of situations their characters may find themselves in. Have students work in pairs and create a conversation, interaction or scene that may occur between their characters. How might the two characters come to be good friends?

## STORY TO STAGE

**Domains:** *Interpersonal development; English; The Arts*

**Dimensions:** *Working in teams; Speaking and listening; Exploring and responding; Creating and making; Producing*

Where students have seen *I am Jack*, discuss what was involved in transforming the written story into a live show.

Working as a full class (or in smaller groups) transform a selected story (well known or original) from written form to theatrical form.

The production may include costumes, props, sets, posters, dances, songs, music and sound effects.

## SPRINGBOARD TO OTHER ACTIVITIES

Teachers can use *I am Jack* as a reference point to spark students' interest in projects such as those pursued by Jack, eg. photography, or making a 'ponto' (onion shoot grafted onto a potato).