



# ICARUS

By Benjamin Henson

**TEACHER'S  
GUIDE**

AUCKLAND  
THEATRE  
COMPANY

**ASB**  
Partners with passion.

## USING THIS TEACHER'S GUIDE

***Icarus*, written by Benjamin Henson, is part of Auckland Theatre Company's Mythmakers series. It's a programme designed for year levels 4-8.**

This teacher's guide has been designed - along with the student activity pack - to help you and your students get the most out of the experience.

In the following pages you will find ideas for

- Preparing students for the performance.
- Developing understandings about how the performance was created.
- Prompting students to reflect on the themes and messages of the story.

The guide has been written by experienced New Zealand educators. At the end of the document you'll find links to the Achievement objectives, learning areas and key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum as well as references to Tataiāko (cultural competencies for teachers)

We hope you find the guide both practical and useful. We would love to get your feedback and any ideas for improvement.

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## BEFORE YOU SEE *ICARUS*

### EXPECTATIONS & PREDICTIONS

Talk to your students before the show about what to expect. Remember that for many, this may be their first experience of live performance. Some useful questions include:

- **What do you already know about theatre / performance?**  
Encourage students to describe any performance they have seen or participated in - including cultural performance - and what the experience was like for them.
- **What is the audience's role in live performance?**  
Talk about the differences between theatre / performing arts and watching movies or TV where the performance has already happened and been recorded. In live theatre the audience has a key part to play. The actors and audience members feed off each other.
- **How are we as audience members expected to behave?**  
Discuss the expectations of live performance: staying seated, watching and listening, responding to 'offers'. Explain that no phones or recording is allowed during the performance.
- **What are some of the extra challenges that arise when attending a show in a group of friends?**  
Acknowledge that social pressures arise when going into new situations as a group and talk about how to overcome this e.g. choosing who you sit beside, watching other audience members, respecting the performers and the story itself.
- **What kind of interaction with the performers is appropriate?**  
Discuss how laughing, clapping, answering questions, singing along... participating and contributing as requested can all be conventions in theatre for young people. Talk about how performers will signal what is and isn't OK.
- **What questions could you ask performers at the end of the show?**  
Identify possible areas of questioning e.g. asking about preparation, use of props and costume, music and other technologies. Reassure students it's also OK to ask questions to clarify understandings.
- **What do you already know about the story of *Icarus*?**  
Discuss how legends are traditional stories that carry significant messages for our lives. Every culture has them and they are told and retold in different ways. Without giving away the whole story, you could mention Icarus is a legend from Ancient Greece - and is sometimes called: 'the boy who flew too close to the sun....' Discuss how images and ideas from this ancient story are still commonly used today from classic oil paintings to modern comics, from video games to graffiti and from opera to rap and heavy metal. A quick online image search of "Icarus" will give a good sense of the range and variety.
- **Based on this, what do you think we might see in this play?**  
Encourage students to record their predictions (in written form or as voice memos) and then they can compare their expectations with the reality of performance.

Auckland Theatre Company productions are in English. For speakers of other languages, it may help to provide a summary of the story and give some context before the performance.

#### FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:

##### EXPECTATIONS

Imagine you have a friend from another class who is coming to see *Icarus* with you. They've never been to a live performance before and ask for your advice. What do you say to them?

##### PREDICTIONS

Describe or draw a picture to show what you expect to see in the performance.

##### QUESTIONS

Note down any questions you'd like to ask the performers after the show.

# THE PERFORMANCE

## **DURING THE SHOW**

Students will be observing their teachers' behaviour as well as watching the show, so ensure you demonstrate how to be a model audience member. Keep an eye on how your students respond to the show - look for those who are highly engaged and anyone who appears to be struggling. Mythmakers shows are physical, fast moving and visual so students should find plenty to entertain and hold their interest even if they don't grasp every detail straight away.

## **IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SHOW**

There may be a question and answer session following the performance. Prompt students to ask the questions they'd prepared and any new ones that have popped up. And feel free to ask questions yourself. As you leave the performance space, this might be a good time to check in with your students on what they made of the performance. Reassure them you'll be doing some more activities in class to deepen understanding.

# BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

In this section you'll find a range of activities you can use back in the classroom. Ideally, these should be done within a few days of watching the performance, while memories are fresh. The first few activities focus on recall and clarification. They are designed to ensure students understand the story and start to think about the way it was performed. The later activities require more creativity as students tease out the themes and develop their own ideas.

## **1. Whole class discussion**

**Objective** - to gauge students' first impressions and observations

**Organisation** - Whole class.

**Instructions** - Ask students to 'think, pair, share' on what they remember, and what stood out for them. Teacher could note down main points on the board.

## **2. Identifying characters**

**Objective** - to recall character names and consolidate understandings

**Organisation** - Whole class. Students working with their activity pack as you write on the board so everyone can see

**Instructions** - Ask students to recall the names of the characters. Students can write these in their activity pack. Next, ask for a word to describe each character - students can use the word cloud in the activity pack. Clarify character's relationships, ages and other details. Talk about which of the characters exist in the original Greek legend and which are from the modern times.

**Modern day characters:** Jason, Grace, Celeste, Bella, Icky & Teacher

**Characters from the original legend:** Daedelus - Icarus' father, Athena - Goddess of wisdom, Minotaur - (monster half man half bull), King Minos, enemy soldiers (played by actors and children)

### **FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:**

Write down the names of the main characters in *Icarus*. Which one was your favourite? Circle the word or words you think best describes them



### 3. Predictions and outcomes

**Objective** - To recall part of the performance and reflect on it.

**Organisation** - Whole class. Students working individually and in pairs.

**Instructions** - Ask students to complete the drawing activity in the student activity pack. Then invite students to compare the image they have drawn with the prediction they made before the show. Any surprises? Discuss these with a partner.

#### **FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:**

What was your favourite scene in *Icarus*? Draw what you saw. How does this picture compare to the predictions you made before the performance?

### 4. Sequencing the photos

**Objective** - To ensure students understand the story sequence

**Organisation** - Whole class, students working individually

**Instructions** - Ask students to complete the task in their activity pack, matching photos of key parts of the performance with headlines that sum up what was happening in that scene. Students may be able to make suggestions for even better headlines.

#### **FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:**

Here are some photos of key parts of the *Icarus* performance. Match each with the headline that shows what is happening. Can you write an even better headline?

### 5. Retelling the story

**Objective** - To recap and consolidate the story and to begin to imagine new perspectives.

**Organisation** - This is a practical activity which can be done as a 'game' with time limits to add tension. Everyone participates and speaks at the same time, making it safe. Students stand in a 'donut circle' (one circle inside the other, inside circle facing out, outside facing in - everyone with a partner). Ask outside group to duck down first.

**Instructions** - Round one: "When I say go, the outside people will jump up and immediately start retelling the story as we saw it unfold in the performance. Use as much detail as you can. But you'll need to talk fast - you have only 30 seconds!"

Round two: Repeat with the inside group. "Your turn to duck down. When I say go you too will jump up and tell the story. Your challenge is to add all the little details of the story that your partner forgot. You have only 30 seconds."

**Extension** - Round three: Outside group. This time we will retell the story from the perspective of a bossy teacher: She is telling the principal some of the things those 'naughty' children got up to at camp. Remember to use a booming voice as if you had a bucket on your head!

**Extension** - Round four: Inside people. Your turn to play the teacher now - but this time we will see the quieter more caring side. We're in the staff room and the teacher is having a quiet word with the school counsellor about Icky. Remember to use a quiet voice so that you can't be overheard.

**Reflect** - What did we learn? What new ideas came up? How does it change things when you tell the story from these different perspectives? Who else from the story would have a different viewpoint?

## 6. Understanding the use of props and objects

**Objective** - To explore how performers used props and objects within the performance.

**Organisation** - Ask the class to stand in a large circle. Reveal a photo of one of the everyday objects that was transformed into a prop in the performance. If you have access to the real objects, even better!

Cotton sheets - wings / togas  
Canvas cloth - Labyrinth / Minotaur  
Bucket - teacher / goddess head / bus seats  
Cardboard & paper - signs / paper birds  
Pool Noodle - sword

Ask students to raise a hand if they can illustrate for the rest of the class one way the object was used within the performance. Choose a student who can jump into the middle of the circle and mime while others guess.

### FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:

The performers in *Icarus* used a range of props and objects to make meaning in the performance. How were these used? Check out the photos below for some reminders.

## 7. Exploring the use of movement and sound

**Objective** - To explore how movement and sound played a part in the performance and how these add to the meaning

**Organisation** - Whole group then groups of three. Could use untuned percussion, found sounds or body percussion.

**Instructions** - Invite the class to describe moments in the show where actors moved a lot - and where there was stillness. How did these add to the story? What mood was created by singing at the start and the end? How was the live drumming used? What about the slow-motion fight scene between Icky and Celeste - how were movement and sound effects combined to make this effective?

**Extension** - In groups of three have a go at choreographing your own slow-motion fight ... choose between the 'rabbit fighting' of two friends on the bus or the 'mighty battle' of the minotaur and the soldiers. Those watching should be able to tell which you are portraying. Two to be involved in the fight at any one time, the other to add in live sound effects. Rotate places after 30 seconds without losing the flow .... Remember safety is paramount - no actual impact should occur. The idea is to convey the impacts of the fight on the body through OTT body language and facial expression.

## 8. Exploring characters' emotions and motivations

**Objective** - To gain more understanding about the characters and empathise with their conflicting emotions and motivations.

**Organisation** - Divide students into groups of 4-5

**Instructions** - Invite students to think of times in the performance when faced a challenge or turning point. Some examples below:

- Icky winding Celeste up by boasting about his Dad
- Athena warning Daedalus and Icarus not to build the statue
- The people of Athens deciding what to do with Daedalus and Icarus after the statue has fallen
- King Minos demanding that Daedalus invent weapons of war for him
- Daedalus trying to get Icarus to listen to his warnings about the wings
- Icky thinking about whether he needs his friends

Groups decide which moment they would most like to explore. Tell the students they will be creating a picture (freeze frame) of this moment. Before starting, they need to decide who is in the image, where it's taking place and what's going on. Important: ask them to keep two members of the group in 'reserve'. Those two can act as directors for now. The rest have 30 seconds to create a frozen picture of that key moment. Then the person playing chooses a simple 5 second movement - something that the character was doing. They mime the action over and over - in fine detail and slow motion. Then the two 'reserves' move into the picture, standing one either side and use words to express the conflicting motivations within the characters at that turning point moment. Each person is only allowed one sentence at a time.

**Extension** - The one on the left expresses the inner thoughts of the 'strong side' or the 'good conscience' while the one on the right speaks as the 'fearful side' or the 'bad conscience'. Body movements can also be used to mirror or contrast with the mimed movements of the character.

**Share and reflect** - What new understandings did this exercise give us about the characters and the turning point moments?

## 9. Exploring the key character's dilemma

**Objective** - to build empathy for Icky's situation. To acknowledge the complexities of the human dilemma. To sustain focus in role.

**Organisation** - This activity uses the strategies of teaching in role and the idea of questioning a character in role (sometimes known as hot seating). This could be done as a whole class or in small groups. Ensure you use clear signals to move in and out of role: there is a possibility that students may connect quite strongly with the character of Icky and so de-rolling is important. Remind students to take care of themselves emotionally when working in role - withdraw if necessary.

### Instructions

**Part 1:** Tell the class that you are going to go into role as the teacher from the story. This could be signalled by putting on a scarf or holding the bucket (suggest you don't put it on your head though!) Ask the students to imagine that they are fellow teaching colleagues and you are going to confide in them. In role, encourage a discussion about Icky's state of mind. Ask students in role as teachers what they've noticed since camp? Acknowledge that things seem a lot better and he seems to be making friends, but you still think he should talk to someone. You're also worried that he still doesn't seem to understand the science of flight and why humans can't do it.

**Part 2:** Set up a chair to represent the character of Icky. Ask students for input about where and when this conversation should be. Who is Icky talking to? How is he likely to be feeling? What can we do to put him at ease and encourage him to open up? What are some questions we should ask? Invite students to imagine themselves as the counsellors / teachers / friends Icky has agreed to talk to. One person at a time to volunteer to sit in the chair and speak as Icky responding to questions. If a question is too tricky to answer just step out of the chair and leave it to someone else to have a turn. The role stays in the chair. As teacher, stay close to the chair in support, encourage gentle, open ended questioning and filter all questions.

After de-roling, bring the teacher in role as teacher back to the group and offer her recommendations for what actions to take.

**Extension** - This activity could be developed into writing (e.g. writing letters to Icky or a formal report with recommendations in role as the teacher). The activity could be the starting point for further learning in health and wellbeing as well as an inquiry into the science of flight.

## 10. Exploring the big ideas

**Objective** - To explore the themes from the story - from words to expressive action

**Organisation** - Self-selected groups.

**Instructions** - Write these pairs of words on large pieces of paper and place them around the room. If necessary, take a moment to define the words as you place them down

***Longing for what is lost - Accepting things as they are***

***Hubris (pride) - Shame***

***Being an individual - Belonging in a group***

***Telling the truth - Making up stories***

***Naughtiness - Goodness***

Invite students to walk around the room looking at the words on the cards and thinking about how these themes were explored in the performance. After walking for some time in silence, ask students to stand beside a pair of words they'd like to work with - ask them to choose something they think came through strongly in the performance. Groups may be uneven, but that's fine. Ask groups to sit around their chosen word and discuss with others how the theme was explored in the performance. At this point, give out pens and choose a scribe for each group. Making sure everyone's thoughts are included, ask groups to start with a definition of the words on the paper, then to jot down any thoughts or impressions about that pair of words and how they were explored in the performance. 'Was there a particular character who represented one of these words?' 'How did the characters come to new understandings related to your theme?' 'What lessons could we take away into our own lives?'

After a few moments, ask each group to leave their piece of paper and pens and move on to the next sheet of paper. Read the ideas written there and add more of your own if you can. Keep rotating the groups. Once all groups have visited all pieces of paper, students return to their original paper and read what is there. Feedback main ideas to the whole class.

**Extension** - Invite each group to create two images representing their pair of words, to share back with the rest of the class. The idea here is not to make a 'snapshot' of a scene from the performance but to create an abstract sculpture representing the two words. If this sounds too tricky, you could start with individual 'hand' sculptures, then encourage students to enlarge the shapes they have made with their hands to their whole body and finally into a group tableau. Create one image first, then the other. Finally, find a way to move silently and smoothly between the two over a count of 5 seconds. Share the results with the rest of the class who can describe, then interpret the images.

**Reflection** - Discuss how these themes resonate beyond the story. Do themes resonate for our lives too? Are there things going on in the world today that could be categorised using these words? Are these word pairs simply good vs bad - or are there times when both are necessary?



## 11. Reflecting on the key messages

**Objective** - to encourage deep thinking on the moral of the story

**Organisation** - individual then whole class to share back

**Instructions** - remind students of Athena's words:

***A man who hears only praise becomes deaf.***

***A man who seeks fame and fortune for himself alone becomes blind.***

***A man who only wants more, will lose what he already has.***

These could be written on the whiteboard or projected for everyone to read.

Discuss the meaning of the words and their relationship to the story. How did Daedalus and Icarus learn these lessons? What about Icky? You could also clarify that in those days the word 'man' was used to mean every person.

Invite students to think of another important message that could be added in the form of another line. Must follow the format "a man (or person) who..." and contain a message or moral related to the play. Invite students to write down their new line then take turns to read them aloud as a group 'word poem'. This could be read over a music track to add impact.

**Extension** - Ask class to stand in a circle with their written morals. Spread pieces of A4 paper around on the floor inside the circle with these names on: "Icky" "Icarus" "Daedalus" "Myself" "People in our school" "A Famous person today" and "Everyone." Ask students read aloud their contributions and ask them to lay their piece of paper down nearest to who they think it applies to the most. Go for ritual and seriousness. No discussion until the end. **Ensure safety by not mentioning any individuals - other than the characters in the story and yourself.**

### FROM STUDENT ACTIVITY PACK:

We want to hear from you! Write a review of *Icarus* and send it to us.

Tell us about your favourite part of the play and why it stood out for you:

Was it the way the actors played their characters, the props they used,  
the songs they sang or the story they told?

Or was it a part when someone from the audience joined in?

How would you describe the show to a friend?

What else did you create in your classroom?

What are your new understandings?

Is there anything else you are still wondering about *Icarus* If so - Ask us!

Send your reviews and questions to [lynne@atc.co.nz](mailto:lynne@atc.co.nz)

## CURRICULUM AND OTHER LINKS

### BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE / DURING THE PERFORMANCE

#### **TĀTAIAKO LINKS:**

**Manaakitanga** - teachers trust and support students to bring their best selves to a new situation.

**Whanaungatanga** - teachers present theatre performance as an opportunity for a two-way relationship between the students and art makers within their community

**Tangata Whenuatanga** - teachers acknowledge and value the students' existing socio-cultural knowledge in the Arts

#### **KEY COMPETENCY LINKS:**

**Managing self** - Students consider expectations for audience behaviour and the reasons behind these.

**Thinking** - Students make predictions about the performance, reflecting and recalling prior knowledge and information. Students reflect on prior experiences of performance and their existing knowledge of the story.

**Participating and Contributing** - Students are introduced to the conventions of participation within an interactive performance and have opportunities to contribute as appropriate. By attending a theatre performance, students participate in the cultural life of their society.

**Relating to others** - Students consider how they will relate to peers, theatre professionals and others in a new social situation. Students relate to the 'fictional others' within the play and think about what these characters might mean to them.

#### **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREA LINKS:**

##### **The Arts Level 3**

###### Drama

Understanding drama in context (UC strand): Investigate the functions and purposes of drama in cultural and historical contexts

##### **English Level 3**

###### Listening, reading and viewing

Purposes and audiences - Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

##### **Health and Physical education Level 3**

Relationships - Identify and compare ways of establishing relationships and managing changing relationships.

Interpersonal skills - identify the pressures that can influence interactions with other people and demonstrate basic assertiveness strategies to manage these.

### BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

#### **TĀTAIAKO LINKS:**

**Ako** - Teacher sets up opportunities for reciprocal teaching and learning between peers, teachers and theatre makers.

**Wānanga** - Teachers give students opportunities for problem-solving, communication and innovation. Tasks are clear and have boundaries but within these, students can respond in original ways.

**Whanaungatanga** - Teacher ensures that relationships (teacher - student and student - student) are safe and supportive with high expectations for safety and respect.

**Manaakitanga** - Teachers value students' input and ensure that each participant has opportunities for participation. Participation in practical activities occurs in an atmosphere of trust. The cultural themes of the performance and the objects of significance are discussed with integrity and sincerity.

**Tangata whenuatanga** - Teacher acknowledges the existing socio-cultural awareness of students in relation to the cultural elements of the performance, and provides opportunities to grow this further.

#### **KEY COMPETENCY LINKS:**

**Managing self** - Students need to listen to and respect others' ideas. They will have opportunities to demonstrate understanding of appropriate audience behaviour - both within the performance and when viewing the work of others in the class. As participants in the activities, they will balance opportunities for increasing creative freedom with the constraints of tasks. They may need to step out of their comfort zone for some activities.

**Thinking** - Students will reflect on the performance, recalling details such as character's names and identifying features. They will be challenged to rapidly recall the details of the performance as well as thinking up new perspectives. Through the different classroom activities they are required to practice different kinds of thinking including sequential, spontaneous, creative and embodied. They have opportunities to analyse and critique the work of others and make links to prior experience.

**Participating and Contributing** - Students participate in activities as individuals, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. All activities require collaboration and compromise. Participation is increasingly active and embodied. In exploring these stories, students are participating in the ongoing telling and retelling of stories that are part of our identity as a nation.

**Relating to others** - Through these activities, students relate to their teacher and peers. They also reflect on the work of the theatre professionals who performed for them and they demonstrate growing insight and empathy for fictional 'others' within the performance.

**Understanding language, symbols and texts** - Students decode the rich 'text' of the performance in some detail, including the spoken language, visual language and the use of cultural and other symbols. They are exposed to words and phrases from Te reo Māori, some of which are translated and explored in depth. Students use writing and objects to make new meaning and perform their understandings through drama.

## **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREA LINKS:**

### **The Arts Level 3**

#### Drama

Developing ideas (DI strand): Initiate and develop ideas with others to create drama

Communicating and interpreting (CI strand): Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.

Understanding drama in context (UC strand): Investigate the functions and purposes of drama in cultural and historical contexts

#### Dance

Developing ideas (DI strand): Use the dance elements to develop and share their personal dance vocabulary

Communicating and interpreting (CI strand): Prepare and share dance movement individually and in pairs or groups. Use the elements of dance to describe dance movements and respond to dances from a variety of cultures.

### **English Level 3**

#### Listening, reading and viewing

Processes and strategies - Integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies with developing confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.

Purposes and audiences - Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Ideas - Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Language features - Show a developing understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

#### Speaking writing and presenting

Processes and strategies - Integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies with developing confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.

Purposes and audiences - Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

Ideas - Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

### **Learning languages levels 1-2**

Students can understand and use familiar expressions and everyday vocabulary.

Language knowledge - make connections with their own language(s)

Cultural knowledge - recognise that the target culture(s) is / are organised in particular ways - make connections with known culture(s)