



BY GENEVIEVE HEGNEY & CATHERINE MOORE

FLY GIRL

DIRECTED BY JANINE WATSON



AN ENSEMBLE THEATRE
EDUCATION RESOURCE BY
SOPHIE KELLY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	2
Curriculum Links	2
Life and History of FLY GIRL, Deborah Lawrie	4
Playwrights' Biography – Genevieve Hegney and Catherine Moore	5
Play Synopsis	6
Character List	6
Meet The Team	7
Director's Note – Janine Watson	8
Q&A with Actor – Emma Palmer	9
Q&A with Actor – Cleo Meinck	10
Q&A with Actor – Alex Kirwan	11
Bringing Design to Life – Q&A with Costume Supervisor Renata Beslik	12
Design Images	14
Rehearsal Images	16
Teaching and Learning Activity 1 - Drama Focus	17
Teaching and Learning Activity 2 – Drama Focus	18
Teaching and Learning Activity 3 – Drama Focus	19
Teaching and Learning Activity 4 – English Focus	20
Teaching and Learning Activity 5 – History Focus	21

ICON LEGEND



Discussion
Activity



Reflection

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ensemble Theatre proudly acknowledges the Cammeraygal people of the Eora nation as customary custodians of the land on which we stand and share our stories.

In harmony with the land and water, its seasons and cycles, the Cammeraygal people practiced their culture for thousands of years and the connection continues to this day.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

PREFACE

This education resource for Ensemble Theatre's production of FLY GIRL, by Genevieve Hegney and Catherine Moore, has been designed for secondary students and teachers across Australia. Exercises have been designed that encompass theoretical and practical components and can be applied to different stages of learning at the discretion of the teacher, class, and context.

CURRICULUM LINKS

For NSW based students, FLY GIRL and its accompanying resources have links to the following syllabus outcomes within the NESA Curriculum:

DRAMA

STAGE 6

Although FLY GIRL is not a prescribed HSC text, it is a curriculum aligned text for the study of:

Topic 2: Contemporary Australian Theatre Practice;

Topic 3: The Voice Of Women in Theatre

YEAR 12

Making: H1.3

Performing: H2.2, H2.4, H2.5

Critically Studying: H3.1, H3.3, H3.4, H3.5

YEAR 11

Making: P1.3, P1.4

Performing: P2.1, P2.2, P2.6

Critically Studying: P3.1, P3.2, P3.4

STAGES 4 & 5

The aim of the Years 7 - 10 Drama Syllabus is to engage and challenge students to maximise their dramatic abilities and enjoyment of drama and theatre through making, performing and appreciating dramatic and theatrical works. The study of FLY GIRL supports the following curriculum outcomes:

YEARS 9 & 10

Making: 5.1.1, 5.1.3, 5.1.4

Performing: 5.2.2, 5.2.3

Appreciating: 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3

YEARS 7 & 8

Making: 4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.1.4

Performing: 4.2.2, 4.2.3

Appreciating: 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3



FLY GIRL rehearsal photos - Prudence Upton

ENGLISH

STAGE 6

Texts and Human Experiences

YEAR 12:

EST-12-01
EST-12-02
EST-12-03

YEAR 11:

EST-11-01
EST-11-02
EST-11-03

STAGE 5

Study of Dramatic Texts

EN5-RVL-01
EN5-URA-01
EN5-URB-01
EN5-URC-01

STAGE 4

Study of Dramatic Texts

EN4-RVL-01
EN4-URA-01
EN4-URB-01
EN4-URC-01

KEY COMPETENCIES

- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Collecting, analysis and organising information
- Communicating ideas and information
- Planning and organising activities

KEY THEMES AND IDEAS

- Australian storytelling
- Gender roles
- 20th century Australian history
- Breaking the glass ceiling
- Friendship
- Aviation



A HISTORY OF 'FLY GIRL', DEBORAH LAWRIE

Deborah Lawrie, born in 1953 in Australia, became a trailblazer in aviation as the nation's first female commercial airline pilot. From a young age she was captivated by flying, earning her pilot's licence as a teenager and instructing at Moorabbin Airport before setting her sights on the airlines. In the 1970s, Lawrie applied repeatedly to Ansett Airlines, then one of Australia's largest carriers, but was consistently rejected, despite the fact that many male pilots flying with Ansett, had been trained by Lawrie. The airline's founder, Reg Ansett, openly opposed employing women as pilots, claiming safety and operational concerns. Determined to challenge this systemic discrimination, Lawrie brought her case before the newly established Equal Opportunity Board in Victoria in 1979.

Her legal battle became one of Australia's first major tests of anti-discrimination law. Despite fierce resistance from Ansett, the Board ruled in Lawrie's favour, finding that her gender - not her ability - had barred her from employment. This groundbreaking decision forced Ansett to hire her, and in 1980 she officially began flying as a commercial pilot, breaking a powerful gender barrier in aviation.

Lawrie's courage not only secured her own career but also reshaped Australian employment law and opportunities for women in male-dominated industries. She continues to enjoy a long and respected career in aviation, inspiring future generations of pilots.



Cleo Meinck and Deborah Lawrie at the Australian Aviation Museum. Photo: Catherine Moore

PLAYWRIGHTS' BIOGRAPHY

CATHERINE MOORE & GENEVIEVE HEGNEY

Catherine Moore and Genevieve Hegney have been acting, singing, teaching, producing, directing, devising, coaching and improvising across film, television and theatre for over 25 years.

They have been involved in numerous creative developments across Australia including Inscription's New Australian Works project under the guidance of Kristin Linklater and Edward Albee. They have also workshoped and performed in new works by Alana Valentine, Susie Miller, David Williamson and Tony McNamara.

As a writer and creator Catherine self-devised and performed in A JAKUES BREL CABARET and WEILL WOMEN which won Pick of the Fringe at the Melbourne Fringe Festival and earned a Green Room nomination.

Genevieve co-wrote, co-produced and acted in short film THE AMBER AMULET which won numerous awards worldwide, including THE CRYSTAL BEAR at Berlin International Film Festival and an AWGIE for Best Screenplay in a Short Film.

In 2018, Genevieve and Catherine were encouraged by Artistic Director Mark Kilmurry to co-write and co-star in their first play UNQUALIFIED for the Ensemble Theatre. This two-woman show enjoyed a sold-out season and they were commissioned to write the 2022 sequel, STILL UNQUALIFIED. They subsequently received funding from Screen West and Screen Australia to adapt UNQUALIFIED for the screen.

Genevieve and Catherine's third play and latest collaboration, FLY GIRL, was commissioned by Mark Kilmurry at Ensemble Theatre and supported by The Commissioners' Circle. FLY GIRL won the Blake Beckett Trust Female Playwrights Award in 2025. Their next collaboration will be an adaption of FLY GIRL for the screen.



UNQUALIFIED production photos - Prudence Upton



STILL UNQUALIFIED production photos - Prudence Upton



FLY GIRL SYNOPSIS

It's the late 70's and the Australian Aviation Industry is a boy's club. The only job women are allowed involves wearing heels, lighting smokes and serving nuts. Deborah Lawrie's got the chops to fly the big jets, but Reg Ansett won't let her. FLY GIRL unpacks the absurd obstacles faced by a trailblazing aviatrix who refused to be grounded. Inspired by a true story, FLY GIRL embarks on Deborah's turbulent journey to becoming Australia's first female commercial airline pilot.



CHARACTER LIST

Performed by Genevieve Hegney

Patricia
Pamela
Reg Ansett
Todd
Henry
Trish
Various

Performed by Catherine Moore

Glenda
Fay
Kenneth
Frank
Captain Ball
Mary
Various

Performed by Alex Kirwan

Peter Wardley
Helen
Garth
Bruce
Captain Tomlin
Various

Performed by Emma Palmer

Mum
Margaret
Richard
Captain Burnett
Dwyer
Various

Performed by Cleo Meinck

Deborah Lawrie



FLY GIRL rehearsal photos -
Prudence Upton

MEET THE TEAM

CREATIVES



GENEVIEVE HEGNEY
PLAYWRIGHT



CATHERINE MOORE
PLAYWRIGHT



JANINE WATSON
DIRECTOR



GRACE DEACON
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER



MORGAN MORONEY
LIGHTING DESIGNER



DANIEL HERTEN
COMPOSER &
SOUND DESIGNER



ZOE DAVIS
STAGE MANAGER



ALEXIS WORTHING
ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER



RENATA BESLIK
COSTUME SUPERVISOR

CAST



GENEVIEVE HEGNEY



ALEX KIRWAN



CLEO MEINCK



CATHERINE MOORE



EMMA PALMER

A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR, JANINE WATSON

What an immense privilege to have been a part of the development of FLY GIRL for the last two years, and to direct the World Premiere of this incredible new play. This is my third collaboration with Genevieve Hegney and Catherine Moore, who I just adore, and who have made my life infinitely funnier. In FLY GIRL, they have captured the heart and spirit of Deborah Lawrie. Deb is generous, kind, humble and honest. She's a leader, a teacher, a pioneer and an absolute game changer. I'm in awe of her. And when you see this story, you will be too.

FLY GIRL teems with life. Gen and Cath's writing fizzles and crackles on the page. So, when the actors take to the floor and perform their words, the rehearsal room practically bursts with energy. The scope of Deb's story is vast and sprawling, yet Gen and Cath have been precise, incisive and clear-sighted in their vision of it. The momentum of their writing sweeps us along. The funnies are extremely funny, the emotional power gut-wrenching. My job in directing the play has been to wrangle it without stifling it. To craft it without containing it. My love and thanks to the exceptional cast and creative team for aiding and abetting the madness.

I'm deeply grateful for this experience. I'm grateful for Deb's grit. She is a force - her fight for professional equality nearly fifty years ago created a slipstream of inclusion that still pulls us along today.

(I want to thank my dad, Mike Watson, for recording all the Air Traffic Control announcements in this production of FLY GIRL. He was an Air Traffic Controller at Moorabbin Airport when Deb worked there in the late 1970s, and the opportunity to honour that synchronicity was too good to pass up.)



Q&A WITH EMMA PALMER - ACTOR

EMMA, YOU PLAY OVER 8 CHARACTERS IN FLY GIRL – WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR AN ACTOR MOVING SO QUICKLY BETWEEN DIFFERENT ROLES?

Playing eight characters is definitely lots of fun! Beyond the sheer physical and logistical challenge—like making sure I have the right costume piece, the correct prop, or am I standing on the right side of the stage—the biggest hurdle is the emotional one.

I play both men and women, which means a lot of moustaches and rapid changes! But more than the external shift, the challenge is making sure I pick up the next scene in the right emotional and psychological state so that it reflects exactly where we need to be for the storytelling. Moving that quickly between roles means constantly managing both the technical details and the character's inner life.



YOU PLAY DEBORAH LAWRIE'S MOTHER IN THE PLAY – HAVE YOU ENJOYED DEVELOPING THIS RELATIONSHIP IN REHEARSALS?

Absolutely. We all play many characters, but we think of them on different 'levels.' Some appear for a single scene, giving us a limited insight into their lives. Others, like Deborah's mother, we see across several scenes, giving them a stronger character arc and allowing us to understand them in relation to other characters.

For me, Mum is one of those crucial characters. She has to have complexity for the audience, and her relationship with Deborah must feel very truthful—even if a few scenes earlier you saw me playing a bloke with a funny accent. I really enjoy the moments when I can "drop into Mum".

ONE OF THE CENTRAL RELATIONAL STRUCTURES OF THE PLAY, ARE THE HOSTIES – MARGARET, PATRICIA AND GLENDA, CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THEIR IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE STORY OF FLY GIRL?

The hosties are lots of fun, and in a way, they function as the voice of the audience. They are following Deborah Lawrie's fight to become an airline pilot with keen interest because the case directly impacts the company they work for and women in general. Because of this, they are perfectly placed to ask all the questions the audience might be asking themselves.

They also offer a delightful insight into the social structures and expectations around women in the 1970s. Each of the hosties is at a different point of maturity in terms of their social views and their feminist (or lack of) awakening, which creates a wonderful dynamic. They get a lot of fun, classic "flight business" and are an absolute joy to play!

IF YOU HAD ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO GIVE TO YOUNG ASPIRING PERFORMERS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

First, **try as many different styles of performance as you can.** You never know what you're going to love or what you'll excel at, so give everything a try—from classical text to physical theatre to screen acting. Broadening your skillset will only make you a more versatile artist.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, continue to develop other aspects of your life. Ultimately, what we as performers and actors do is reflect life back to our audiences on stage or screen. To do that truthfully and meaningfully, we need to have lived a broad and interesting life with varied experiences, not just one focused solely on acting. Be a curious person first, and a performer second.



Q&A WITH CLEO MEINCK

DEBORAH LAWRIE HAS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE LIFE STORY, AS AN ACTOR, WHAT ARE THE JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF PLAYING A REAL PERSON?

It is such a privilege to play a real-life person and tell their story. It does come with pressure to ensure you as the actor serve their story justice, but it has been such a joy to meet Deb - she has been so generous with her story and time with me. She took a couple of the cast and I down to the Wollongong Aviation Museum, where she has been inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame. It was an amazing day - her showing us around and getting me into the cockpit of a couple of the aeroplanes. Whilst as an actor normally you are able to build your characters world and personality with your imagination. In this instance I have to balance staying true to Deb, her personality and experiences, whilst also building the theatrical and imaginative world of the play.



ACROSS THE TIMELINE OF THE PLAY, YOU INHABIT THE CHARACTER OF DEB FROM CHILDHOOD ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE AGE OF 25. IS THIS SOMETHING YOU HAVE ENJOYED EXPLORING?

It has been fun to reconnect with child-like play, viewing the world with wonder and awe. Finding a freedom of movement has really helped me engage with playing that younger age. It has also been refreshing playing a character who is 24 years old, as that's my actual age! Quite often when you are an actor in your early twenties you play a lot of 17-20 year old roles.

GENEVIEVE HEGENY AND CATHERINE MOORE ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR UNBRIDLED COMEDIC WORK, BUT YOUR CHARACTER OF DEB, IS THE EMOTIONAL FULCRUM OF FLY GIRL. HOW DO YOU BALANCE BEING THE EARNEST HEART OF A STORY WITHIN SUCH A LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FUNNY PLAY?

It has been a challenge! The cast is SO funny! I have to stay in my own lane and not get caught up with all the fun they're having, which has been hard! I try to play to the truth of the given circumstances and keep connected to my own inner monologue of thoughts - this grounds me in the reality of the story. In saying that, I cannot ignore the heightened world around me - I also have to engage in it as if it was real and true.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'VE LEARNT ABOUT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO DEB LAWRIE'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE THAT HAS SHOCKED OR SURPRISED YOU?

Whenever I tell people about the play and Deb's story, people are always surprised to hear Deb is still flying commercially today. I think people are surprised by this because women working in any profession is so normalised today, but only 40 years ago the gender norms were completely different. I am forever grateful to these women who broke down these walls and didn't accept what was "normal".



Q&A WITH ALEX KIRWAN

AS ALEX, YOU PLAY PETER WARDLEY IN THE PLAY, DEB LAWRIE'S HUSBAND, WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED ABOUT EXPLORING THE JOURNEY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

Peter Wardley is a joy to play. I feel the writing does justice to Peter, portraying the charming, and supportive elements of his character as well as the parts of him that are the product of his time. He is a beautiful and flawed person, not a two-dimensional character and that brings an authenticity to the relationship he has with Deb throughout the play. I've particularly enjoyed exploring the playfulness of their relationship in the early parts of the play. Peter is the one who sets Deb on the path to fight Ansett and wholeheartedly believes she can win. It's a joy to play someone who is so invested in his partner and who sees just how gifted and determined she is.



CAN YOU GIVE US A LITTLE INSIGHT INTO THE REHEARSAL PROCESS FOR FLY GIRL? HAVE YOU WORKED QUICKLY TO GET THE FULL PLAY ON THE FLOOR? OR, AS IT'S A NEW WORK, ARE YOU TAKING TIME TO FEEL YOUR WAY THROUGH THE STORY?

This play has over 50 scenes! Which is a massive contrast to the usual 2-20 of a theatre play. Janine, our director has led us through a unique process that embraces the gargantuan nature of the play and leans into its sketch-like qualities. We have started with blocking and staging, then going back through to fill the shapes and images with performance and character. This is the complete reverse of a traditional approach to putting a show together but has been essential to get FLY GIRL ready in the time we have.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS ARE QUITE UNCOMPROMISING IN THEIR DEPICTION OF THE MEN WHO HELD DEBORAH LAWRIE BACK IN HER PURSUIT OF BECOMING A COMMERCIAL AIRLINE PILOT – WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND INTERESTING OR CHALLENGING ABOUT STEPPING BACK INTO AN ERA OF HEIGHTENED GENDER SEGREGATION, THAT MIGHT SEEM STRANGE TO US TODAY?

The strangest thing about the language and rhetoric of the men in FLY GIRL is how open and unapologetic it is. Unfortunately, many of the gender stereotypes and the misogyny that these characters portray are still perpetuated today, in hushed tones or as sarcastic jokes. The idea of expectation has been very helpful for me in preparing for these roles. Delving into what these male characters expect of woman and how those expectations are misplaced, met, or exceeded. I think this play represents a variety of male opinions of the time, varying from, complete and outspoken misogyny to outspoken feminism. I find the people in-between particularly interesting; the ones who support women but won't speak out, for fear of ridicule.

YOU ARE A RELATIVELY RECENT DRAMA SCHOOL GRADUATE, DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUNG PERFORMERS MOVING INTO THEIR FIRST FEW YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL WORK?

Stay curious and interested in the world! Acting and drama are representations and comments on the world, so we need to stay engaged in the real thing. I have sometimes been guilty of hyper-focusing on the craft of acting, neglecting that every active choice to engage in the world outside of it will nourish my ability to perform. Join a club, read the news, take up knitting, hike through the wilderness. All of it will inform who you are and therefore, your work as an actor.



BRINGING THE FLY GIRL DESIGN VISION TO LIFE: A CHAT WITH ENSEMBLE COSTUME SUPERVISOR, RENATA BESLIK



RENATA, YOU'VE WORKED AS A COSTUME SUPERVISOR ON OVER FORTY PRODUCTIONS AT ENSEMBLE – DO YOU HAVE AN APPROACH THAT YOU APPLY TO EACH SHOW, OR DOES IT CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE DEMANDS OF EACH PRODUCTION?

I have a basic plan for starting each show but then it very much veers off into various directions based on the show's demands and needs. I always start with the script and the designs the costume designer gives me. I do a script break down and a costume breakdown listing all the items and what I think they are going to cost. From there it is wildly different for each production. Sometimes there are things to be made, sometimes it's mostly sourced from stock or other theatre companies, sometimes it's all modern new buys from online or a shopping centre, sometimes it's trawling op shops and vintage shops.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO US WHAT A COSTUME SUPERVISOR DOES? IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ARE THE SKILLS MOST IMPORTANT TO THIS JOB?

A costume supervisor is a facilitator, and the one who builds the show based on what the script, director, designer and actor's needs and wants, but to the budget and schedule that the theatre company has given. The costume designer gives over the designs and the supervisor makes it happen with the designers guidance. Like how an engineer or project manager will put together plans an architect has drawn up. This includes all costumes but also hair, wigs and make-up needs. The size of the production and company determines whether the supervisor is making and sourcing things themselves or outsourcing those jobs and just focusing on people, budget and schedule management. At the Ensemble I do it all except complicated makes which I choose to outsource as there is just not enough hours in a day! The skills needed are sewing and pattern making skills, character analysis, budgeting and scheduling using spreadsheets, a design eye, an eye for detail while still seeing the bigger picture, and strong people skills and diplomacy.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A COSTUME SUPERVISOR AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DESIGN TEAM – WHO DOES A COSTUME SUPERVISOR WORK MOST CLOSELY WITH?

The costume supervisor works very closely with the costume designer and the costume team, eg makers, sewing assistants, art finishers. It's constant communication and back and forth about what is needed, what is doable, what is a priority etc. The fittings are done together with the cast. At the Ensemble we focus a lot on character driven plays so the cast does have a lot of say in what they wear and how they feel in it. I personally love that part of the process when we find items that everyone agrees is perfect for that character. I also work very closely with stage management who feeds me information from the rehearsals and books in fittings.



GRACE DEACON | SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

WHAT WAS YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING A COSTUME SUPERVISOR?

I started off with a costume degree from NIDA and a Certificate in Millinery from TAFE and worked my way up from there. I started sewing in workrooms such as at Opera Australia and Sydney Theatre Company, and then picking up freelance work as a maker. I always wanted to be supervisor and because it's a role that needs you to be a jack of all trades I took on many different jobs from designing indie theatre shows, to working on large films in millinery like The Great Gatsby, buying for television shows, making opera costumes, and working as a stylist for Napoleon Perdis who gave me lessons in make-up application. I was like a sponge absorbing everything anyone taught me. Between that I went back to NIDA to supervise student productions and then started freelancing as

supervisor and costume designer at Bell Shakespeare, Pinchgut Opera, Belvoir St Theatre, Sport for Jove, various one-off productions and of course at the Ensemble where I have been for 9 years now.

WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT WORKING ON FLY GIRL? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHALLENGES UNIQUE TO THIS SHOW?

Fly Girl is a very unique show, especially for the Ensemble Theatre, in that there are over 50 characters but only played mostly by 4 actors. Costuming is essentially characterisation so with the help of the cast we have had to put together looks for every single character. Because of the amount of quick changes they have to do it was impossible to do a full costume for this so we have given the cast a base costume in the era and style of the show, and narrowed down what is absolutely essential to tell who this character is. Is it a pair of glasses? A jacket? A wig? A hat? Or a combo of them all if the time changing between them permits. I love the collaboration this all brings. Everything needs to come on and off very easily so there are lots of velcro and press studs in this show!

AND FINALLY, IF YOU HAD ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ASPIRING TO WORK IN A COSTUME DESIGN/SUPERVISION OR A COSTUME RELATED INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Get involved with drama at your school or local community group. A drama background is what sets us apart from fashion people and gives you context for everything you may make or design. The rest of the skills like sewing or drawing can be taught but the experience of working in theatre cannot be replicated easily and learning how to collaborate with people creatively is the core of what we do. It's also good to start either sewing or drawing skills early as it takes years to master it. This could be through art classes, textiles and design at school, learning from a family member or friend. If you want to go on to formal study after school (which is almost a must for these roles) these skills will be needed.



FLY GIRL

**GRACE DEACON | SET &
COSTUME DESIGNER**

DESIGN IMAGES



FLY GIRL

• ALEX KIR



| Characters

1. Mum
2. Margaret
3. Richard
4. Captain Burnett
5. Dwyer
6. Reporter 1
7. Captain Tyler-Moore
8. Reg's wife



FLY GIRL

• EMMA PALM

DESIGN IMAGES



GRACE DEACON | SET & COSTUME DESIGNER
FLY GIRL rehearsal photos - Prudence Upton

REHEARSAL IMAGES



TEACHING AND LEARNING - ACTIVITY 1

DRAMA FOCUS: FRAGMENTED STORYTELLING

OVERVIEW:

FLY GIRL draws on historical events but uses non-naturalistic devices - such as fragmented scenes, shifts in time, and heightened theatricality - to tell Deborah Lawrie's story. This activity asks students to explore how non-linear storytelling and disjointed structural devices, can heighten dramatic impact, especially in drama that engages with political and social issues.

OBJECTIVES:

- To investigate how non-naturalistic structure shapes audience understanding of history and character.
- To experiment with fragmented storytelling as a theatrical device.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Choose Key Moments

Students select 3–4 key moments from Lawrie's story (e.g., learning to fly, rejection letters, courtroom scenes, first flight).

2. Fragment & Shuffle

In small groups, students perform these moments out of chronological order, deliberately breaking linear flow. Encourage students to think about why they are breaking the chronological order. What is the impact to the story? A theatrical device must be connected to the telling of the story – it must ADD to the story in a way a different device cannot.

3. Performance Exploration

Groups present their fragmented sequence. Afterwards, discuss:

- How does non-linear order affect the audience's emotional response?
- What truths can be communicated more clearly when the story is fragmented?

REFLECTION PROMPT:



How does fragmented storytelling challenge audiences to see Deborah Lawrie's struggle as more than biography, but as a universal fight for justice?

EXTENSION IDEA:

Students reimagine another Australian story of social change in a fragmented, non-naturalistic style.

DISCUSSION:

After sharing, engage the class in a discussion about what the journal entries revealed about the characters. Did any student's interpretation surprise others? How did the journal entry deepen their understanding of the character's motivations, struggles, or desires?



Cleo Meinck and Deborah Lawrie. Photo – Brett Boardman

TEACHING AND LEARNING - ACTIVITY 2

DRAMA FOCUS: SYMBOL & GESTURE: THE PILOT'S CHAIR

OVERVIEW:

Non-naturalistic drama often uses symbols and physicality to embody themes. In *FLY GIRL* the image of the pilot's chair can represent ambition, authority, exclusion, and victory. This activity asks students to explore how a single object or gesture can hold shifting symbolic weight across a performance.

OBJECTIVES:

- To experiment with the use of symbol and gesture in non-naturalistic performance.
- To analyse how simple stagecraft can effectively convey complex ideas.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Introduce the Symbol

Place a single chair centre stage: this represents the pilot's seat. (This could also be swapped out for a different object – trolley, suitcase etc)

2. Explore Associations

As a group, brainstorm associations with the chair (power, exclusion, freedom, flight, authority, masculinity).

3. Gesture Building

Each student develops one symbolic gesture with the chair (e.g., reaching but not sitting, circling it, standing on it, collapsing in it).

4. Ensemble Montage

In groups, combine gestures into a movement sequence.

5. Performance & Discussion

Present the sequences. Discuss:

- How did the chair's meaning shift across the performance?
- What is the effect of using physical symbols to convey a difficult or controversial idea?

REFLECTION PROMPT:



How does embodying the symbol of the pilot's chair help us understand the personal stakes of Lawrie's legal battle?

EXTENSION IDEA:

Add sound (e.g., airplane engines, typewriters, courtroom gavel) to deepen the symbolic atmosphere.



TEACHING AND LEARNING - ACTIVITY 3

DRAMA FOCUS: "CHICKEN OR THE BEEF?" THE ROLE OF THE CHORUS IN FLY GIRL

OVERVIEW:

In *FLY GIRL*, air hostesses MARGARET, PATRICIA and GLENDA function as a kind of chorus, providing commentary, humour, and differing perspectives on Deborah Lawrie's legal battle. More broadly, they reflect the political and social arguments around feminism and gender struggles of the time. While they don't necessarily adhere to all traditional Greek Chorus elements (breaking naturalism, acting collectively) the writers unquestionably use them as a lens through which to examine the social and political climate of the era. This activity invites students to explore how a chorus can shape atmosphere and embody broader social voices.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the dramatic function of a chorus in both classical and modern theatre.
- To experiment with choral voice, in non-naturalistic performance.
- To analyse how the flight attendants in *FLY GIRL* contribute to meaning and style.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Warm-Up: Choral Voice & Movement

As a group, practise speaking one line in **unison**, then in **canon**, then overlapping in a **whisper-to-shout crescendo**.

2. Chorus Commentary Exercise

Choose a key moment from Lawrie's story (e.g., being rejected by Ansett, entering the courtroom).

In small groups, create a choral commentary in the voices of the flight attendants or of another group of your choice. For example, you might choose to use a group of male pilots, airline passengers or the board of Ansett. The choral commentary should include:

- Repetition of key words/text: "safety," "ladies," "not suitable", "chicken or the beef?".
- Exaggerated/symbolic gestures linked to airline routines - safety routine, storing luggage in overhead compartments, trolleys coming down the aisle
- Shifts in tone (mocking, supportive, satirical).

3. Performance Exploration

Groups present their chorus sequences. The rest of the class observes: How did the chorus influence the scene's tone—was it comic, sinister, ironic, celebratory?

DISCUSSION / REFLECTION PROMPT:



How does a chorus create meaning beyond individual characters?

In *FLY GIRL*, do the flight attendants represent society's prejudices, or do they give voice to women's resilience—or both?

EXTENSION IDEA:

Students restage their chorus sequence in a different theatrical style (e.g., Greek tragedy, Brechtian commentary, or musical cabaret) to see how the chorus' role changes in different traditions of drama.



TEACHING AND LEARNING - ACTIVITY 4

ENGLISH FOCUS: VOICES OF POWER IN FLY GIRL

OVERVIEW:

FLY GIRL explores the power of language: courtroom arguments, sexist rejection letters, and the public debate over women in aviation. This activity focuses on analysing how words can exclude, persuade, or empower.

OBJECTIVES:

- To analyse how language reflects bias, authority, and resistance.
- To compare different textual “voices” in the play (corporate, legal, personal).
- To experiment with re-writing texts to challenge prejudice.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Text Selection

Students are given short extracts from FLY GIRL (or paraphrased lines, e.g., Ansett’s arguments, Lawrie’s words in court, the hosties’ commentary).

2. Language Analysis

For each text, ask:

- What tone or register is used (formal, dismissive, empowering)?
- How does this choice of words position the speaker?
- Whose voice holds power here?

3. Rewriting Exercise

Students rewrite one extract:

- Make a rejection letter sound empowering.
- Turn a legal defence into supportive rhetoric.
- Transform chorus lines into a rallying cry.

REFLECTION PROMPT:



What does FLY GIRL reveal about the way words can either uphold injustice or drive change?

EXTENSION IDEA:

Compare the use of language in FLY GIRL with another Australian play dealing with justice and discrimination (e.g., THE REMOVALISTS or NO SUGAR).



Cast & creatives with Deborah Lawrie. Photo – Brett Boardman

TEACHING AND LEARNING - ACTIVITY 5

HISTORY FOCUS: WOMEN, WORK, AND THE LAW IN 1970S AUSTRALIA

OVERVIEW:

Deborah Lawrie's case against Ansett was one of the first major tests of anti-discrimination law in Australia. This activity places the play in its historical context, linking drama to real-world change in gender equality and workplace rights.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the social and legal context of Lawrie's case.
- To analyse how FLY GIRL dramatizes a turning point in Australian history.
- To reflect on the impact of Lawrie's story on women's rights and employment.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Context Starter

Provide a short overview of the 1977 Equal Opportunity Act in Victoria and Reg Ansett's opposition to female pilots.

2. Scene-to-History Link

Students identify scenes or moments in FLY GIRL that illustrate historical realities (e.g., courtroom scenes → testing new laws; chorus gossip → workplace sexism).

3. Write your own scene:

Split the class into small groups or pairs:

- Ask the students to write a short dramatic scene that explores a moment from Deborah Lawrie's journey to becoming a commercial airline pilot.
- It could be a scene which expands on a moment already explored in the play;
- It could be a moment the writers did not include. For example: a conversation between journalists debating the merits of Lawrie's case or reimagining the arguments put to the High Court by Reg Ansett and Deborah Lawrie's legal team.
- Read and/or act the scene out for the class.

4. Discussion

After the reading out the scene, connect arguments to broader themes: how did Lawrie's case reshape not just aviation, but Australian society?



REFLECTION PROMPT:

What does FLY GIRL teach us about the fight for gender equality in 1970s Australia? How does this resonate with workplace issues today?

EXTENSION IDEA:

Research another landmark case in Australian women's rights (e.g., equal pay cases, the Gurindji Wave Hill Walk-off for Indigenous workers).

