



# EPISODE 6: 1958: MICHAELIS

## English: teaching strategies

Unit focus: English

Year level: Years 3–6

### The Australian curriculum: English

The national English curriculum is based on three interrelated strands:

**Language:** Knowing about the English language ...

**Literature:** Understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature ...

**Literacy:** Growing a repertoire of English usage ...

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## **EPISODE CLIP: GREEK SCHOOL**

### **ACTIVITY 1: YOU'RE A GREEK BOY**

**Subthemes: Character; Customs and traditions; Social order and education**

#### **Discover**

- Michaelis has to go to Greek school. View the clip and discuss this scene, focusing on how Michaelis feels about being made to go. Ask students to explain how they know that Michaelis doesn't want to be there, for example, body language, dialogue and interaction between characters. Discuss the reasons why Michaelis is made to go to Greek school. Find out if any students in the class attend a language school outside regular school hours. If so, ask them to describe their school, what they learn and what they enjoy about it.
- Michaelis has his mind on other things while he is at Greek school. He misses important dates in Greek history and information about the Patriarch. His teacher berates him for his inattention. Discuss the purpose of this scene with the class. What does it tell the audience about Greek school? Relate this discussion back to the reasons put forward in the previous discussion about why Michaelis is forced to go to Greek school.
- Michaelis's Greek teacher Kyrios Josephides tells him, 'Michaelis, if you are good, your life will be good to you in return.' Discuss this advice with the class and have students write a description of what they think it means. As a class, create a list of useful advice on how to live your life.

#### **Reflect**

- Explain that many groups of people who have migrated to another country deem the preservation of their language, culture and traditions to be important. To help maintain cultural traditions, they may plan for children to attend special classes during weekends. Have students write an argument for or against this practice, or hold a class discussion on the issue.

### **ACTIVITY 2: TELEVISION**

**Subthemes: Entertainment and games; Inventions and electronic media**

#### **Discover**

- Michaelis catches snippets of the popular TV series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* using binoculars. Discuss why watching television is important for Michaelis. Ask students: What does this tell us about Michaelis as a character? What does it tell us about his family?
- Have students discuss Michaelis's ingenuity in finding ways to watch the TV program. Ask them what they would have done in his place. Ask students to write a short story describing what their life would be like without a television. They should include how this would be a benefit or a problem for them.

### Reflect

- Ask the class what they feel the role of television is in our society today. How important do they think it is? What other forms of entertainment do people use? Ask students to write a report describing what they think is the future of television. What will television be like in ten years' time?

### Download

- Student Activity Sheet E6.1: Life without television

## ACTIVITY 3: ROBIN HOOD

Subthemes: Entertainment and games; Inventions and electronic media

### Discover

- Michaelis loves watching the TV show *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Discuss the TV show with the class and list the key characteristics that can be identified from the snippets seen on screen.
- Discuss the origin of the legend of Robin Hood. There have been many adaptations of the story. Students can research these on the internet, compiling a list of all the versions they find. If possible, view a sample of the many clips from film, animation and TV shows available online and compare them. Have students rate the different versions, from the ones they like best to those they like least, and explain their choices.
- Survey the class and create a list of all the TV shows that students like to watch. Create a graph showing the most to the least popular. Introduce the term 'action drama' to describe shows like *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Students could identify other programs that fit into this category.
- Brainstorm what students like about their favourite action drama TV shows. Discuss this information as a class and then have students work in small groups to classify and group the information into key categories. When students report back to the class, combine similar ideas to create a formula for the elements that are 'must haves' in children's television action dramas.

### Reflect

- Ask students to write a descriptive, detailed review of their favourite action drama TV show, drawing on information gathered in the previous activities.

### Download

- Student Activity Sheet E6.2: Robin Hood and TV drama

## EPISODE CLIP: A GREEK GARDEN

### ACTIVITY 4: GREEK GARDENING

Subthemes: Chores, business and employment; Food; Multiculturalism

### Discover

- Michaelis's family places great importance on keeping an extensive domestic garden to meet the family's needs. Discuss this with the class, focusing on why having a garden is an important



aspect of this story. What relationship does this garden have with Michaelis's family's Greek culture?

- Find out how many students have vegetable gardens at home. These students can tell the class about their garden, what they grow in it and why they have it.
- Explain to the class the concept of the 'kitchen gardens' now found in schools and community areas.

### **Reflect**

- Have students find out more about the 'Kitchen gardens program' established by Stephanie Alexander. Discuss the possibility of setting up a kitchen garden at the school and have students design their ideal kitchen garden. What would they grow? Why have they made these choices?

## **ACTIVITY 5: LINKS TO THE OLD COUNTRY**

**Subthemes: Chores, business and employment; Historical events; Multiculturalism**

### **Discover**

- The opening shot in the clip includes a record player playing Greek music in the background. This clip highlights some of the ways in which Michaelis's parents are preserving links with the country of their birth. The clips 'Greek school' and 'A Greek garden' demonstrate two ways family members connect with their old way of life. Discuss this issue with the class.
- Ask students to find examples of Greek culture in this clip, including Michaelis's parents speaking Greek. Have students share their ideas, discuss what they have observed and consider why they think the family continues these practices.
- If there are students in the class or in the school who have recently arrived from another country, ask them to share some of their memories and traditions from their home country. Some suggestions could include music, food, sport and family traditions.
- Have students reflect on, and write a description of, the Australian traditions they would take with them if they were to emigrate to another country.

### **Reflect**

- Michaelis helps the family in a number of ways. Discuss what is expected of him and the chores he has to do. Have students consider the statement: 'Childhood is for playing and children should not have to do chores.' Ask them to write their arguments 'for' or 'against' this statement in the form of a persuasive text.

## **EPISODE CLIP: THE CHRISTENING**

### **ACTIVITY 6: THE 'WOG'**

**Subthemes: Art, music and literature; Character; Language and scripting**

### **Discover**

- Discuss what Janice means when she tells Michaelis, 'I don't think you're a wog.' Do students think this is a compliment or an insult? Discuss the term 'wog' with the class, what it means and

- Discuss how Michaelis might respond to being called a 'wog'. In small groups, have students produce a poem describing Michaelis's feelings about this term and about Janice telling him she thinks he isn't a 'wog'. The form could be a cinquain, haiku or ballad; it could be rhyming or free form.
- Read students some extracts from the book *They're a Weird Mob* by Nino Culotta. In the story, an Italian immigrant who has recently arrived in Australia tells what it is like trying to make sense of the Australian way of life. Explain to students that Nino Culotta is actually the pseudonym of the author John O'Grady. This novel and the subsequent film were very popular. The story outlines the problems Nino has as he struggles to understand the English spoken by the Australian working class of the 1950s and 1960s. View and discuss the three clips from the 1996 film found on the australianscreen website, <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/theyre-weird-mob>

### Reflect

- Ask students to design a poster that could be used to welcome immigrants to Australia. Alternatively, design and construct a booklet of advice for people who have recently arrived in Australia.

### Download

- Student Activity Sheet E6.3: Immigrants

## ACTIVITY 7: FATHERS AND SONS

### Subthemes: Currency; Customs and traditions; Relationships

#### Discover

- Ask students to describe the relationship between Michaelis and his father and discuss their responses. Ask them to use evidence from the clip to support their observations, for example, Baba kissing and hugging Michaelis, and the kind way he speaks to his son. Ask students to then examine the relationship between the McCormack boys and their father. Discuss these responses.
- Screen the segment that shows the McCormack boys giving Michaelis the penny and watch carefully the portrayal of their father in this scene. He doesn't speak, but his body language conveys many emotions. Draw the students' attention to the way camera angles and shots are used to enhance the meaning of this scene. Discuss the reasons why the filmmaker has portrayed the McCormack family in this way. Use the following questions as prompts:
  - 1 How does this scene make the audience now feel about the relationship between Michaelis and his father?
  - 2 Why does the filmmaker want the audience to have sympathy for the McCormack boys?
  - 3 What does this scene add to the story?

#### Reflect

- Ask the students to reflect on the scene and complete these statements on the activity sheet.



- 1 The filmmaker portrays the Greek family as ... because ...
- 2 The filmmaker portrays the McCormack family as ... because ...

### Download

- Student Activity Sheet E6.4: Fathers and sons from two families

## ACTIVITY 8: TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

### Subthemes: Beliefs; Celebrations; Currency

#### Discover

- At baby Sophia's christening, Michaelis's father asks him, 'Do you feel Greek now?' Ask the class what they think was meant by this question. Do students think Michaelis feels Greek now? Why or why not?
- Have students list and discuss some of the Greek customs relating to the christening that are shown in the clip. Some suggestions could include throwing coins and Greek dancing.
- Introduce the term 'christening' to the class and clarify what it means. Have students identify and discuss other cultural practices for welcoming a baby into the family, the community, or the world. Use examples such as a naming ceremony or first birthday party. Have students ask their families for information about any ceremonies that might have been held for them as babies and to share these with the class.
- Discuss the importance of food in celebrations and have students write about a special occasion in their own family and what food they would enjoy at this occasion. Read the book *Let's Eat!* by Ana Zamorano, illustrated by Julie Vivas, to find out about the importance of sharing a meal together in a Spanish family.

#### Reflect

- Ask the students to design a special naming ceremony for someone or something important to them. This could be a pet, a person or a special toy. Students should include a speech, saying why this person or object is special and what they would wish for its future. Create a menu of food and drinks to celebrate the occasion.

### Download

- Student Activity Sheet E6.5: Celebrating special occasions

## Aligned resources

O'Grady, John 1958, *They're a Weird Mob*, Nicholas Kaye, London.

Zamorano, Ana, Vivas, Julie (ill.) 1996, *Let's Eat*, Omnibus Books, South Australia.

australianscreen, 'They're a Weird Mob', <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/theyre-weird-mob>



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Activity Sheet E6.1  
Activity 2: Television

Episode 6: 1958: Michaelis  
Clip: Greek school

## **Life without television**

- 1 Write a short story describing what your life would be like without a TV. Include reasons why this would be a positive or a negative experience for you.

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- 2 What is the role of television in our society today? How important is it? What other forms of entertainment are popular today? How will television have changed in ten years' time?

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Student Activity Sheet E6.2  
Activity 3: Robin Hood

Episode 6: 1958: Michaelis  
Clip: Greek school

## Robin Hood and TV drama

- 1 Compile a list of print and broadcast versions of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Find clips online from films, animations and TV shows and compare them. Rate them on a scale between one and ten and explain why you rated them this way.

Robin Hood TV shows	Rating 1–10 (1 is the best)	Reasons why you gave this rating

- 2 Create a list of the TV shows you like to watch. Identify the 'action drama' TV shows on your list. What do you like about your favourite action drama TV shows?

Favourite TV shows	Action drama (yes or no)	Reasons why you like the TV show

- 3 Write a descriptive detailed review of your favourite action drama TV show, drawing on information collected in questions 1 and 2.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Activity Sheet E6.3  
Activity 6: The 'wog'

Episode 6: 1958: Michaelis  
Clip: The christening

## Immigrants

- 1 Why do people sometimes use derogatory terms when referring to immigrants or to people from different cultural backgrounds? What do you think about this?

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- 2 Write a poem describing Michaelis's feelings when Janice tells him she thinks he isn't a 'wog'. It could be a cinquain, haiku or ballad; rhyming or free form.

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- 3 Design a poster that could be used to welcome immigrants to Australia. Or design and produce a booklet of advice for people who have recently arrived in Australia.



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Student Activity Sheet E6.4  
Activity 7: Fathers and sons

Episode 6: 1958: Michaelis  
Clip: The christening

## Fathers and sons from two families

1 Describe the relationship between Michaelis and his father.

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2 Examine the relationship between the McCormack boys and their father.

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3 What does the filmmaker want the audience to think about the McCormack family?

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4 Copy and complete the following statements:

a The filmmaker portrays the Greek family as ... because ...

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b The filmmaker portrays the McCormack family as ... because ...

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## **Celebrating special occasions**

- 1 List the Greek customs in the clip that relate to the christening.

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- 2 Identify other cultural practices for welcoming a baby into a family, the community, or the world.

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- 3 Write about a special occasion in your own family and what food you might enjoy at this occasion.

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- 4 Design a naming ceremony for someone or something special to you (this could be a pet, a person or a special toy). Write a speech saying why this person or object is important to you and what you want for its future. Create a menu of food and drinks to celebrate the occasion.

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