

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO
EDUCATION**

**PRE-SHOW
IN-THE-KNOW**

JULIA

**BY JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH
DIRECTED BY SARAH GOODES
WITH JUSTINE CLARKE**



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Image: Justine Clarke. Photo: Rene Vaile

Compiled by Kelly Young.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on **education@sydneytheatre.com.au**

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Sydney Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.

KEY INFORMATION

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CURRICULUM LINKS

NSW DRAMA SYLLABUS

Stage 5 and 6

- Stage 5 Dramatic Forms and Performance Styles: Scripted Drama
- Stage 6 Monologues
- Stage 6 The Voices of Women in Theatre (Joanna Murray-Smith)

NSW HISTORY SYLLABUS

- Stage 5 Modern World and Australia – Overview, Depth Study 4 or 6

THEMES & IDEAS

NSW DRAMA SYLLABUS

- Gender and Politics
- Power
- Australian Politics

BSSS DRAMA A-T-M STUDIES OF DRAMA A-T-M

UNITS

- Communicating Meaning in Drama
- Independent Study

SUITABLE FOR

Years 10 – 12

FORM & STYLE

- Realism
- Ancient Greek Theatre (Tragedy)
- Expressionism
- Political Theatre
- Shakespearean (Elizabethan) Theatre

APPROX. DURATION

1 hr 30 mins, no interval

CAST

Justine Clarke

Lotte Beckett

Anita Hegh (Understudy)

CREATIVES

Director Sarah Goodes

Designer Renée Mulder

Lighting Designer Alexander Berlage

Composer & Sound Designer Steve Francis

Video Designer Susie Henderson

Dramaturg Ruth Little

Assistant Director Charley Allanah

Voice & Dialect Coach Jennifer White

Lighting Design Realiser Véronique Benett

CONTENT

Strong language and strobe lighting.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- What has changed for women in politics since Julia Gillard delivered her speech in 2012?
- How do the elements of production work together to create different stages of Julia's life?
- What key props are used throughout the play? What might they symbolize?

CO-PRODUCER

CANBERRA
THEATRE
CENTRE



SYNOPSIS

On 9 October 2012, Australia's first and, so far, only female prime minister Julia Gillard took to the podium during question time to respond to a motion proposed by the then leader of the opposition, Tony Abbott. The motion accused Gillard of sexism and called her leadership into question.

In the months leading up to this moment, Gillard had repeatedly been criticised in the media and by politicians from across the Australian political spectrum for her unmarried status, her appearance, her decision not to have children and for her general demeanour which many commentators considered to be categorically unfeminine.

Inspired by the hypocrisy that she perceived to be motivating this accusation of sexism, Gillard delivered a now-historic speech that became an instant viral sensation around the world and cemented her position as one of Australia's most impactful and memorable political figures.

This play is an imaginative deep dive into the psychology of that speech and the woman who made it. It is an attempt to trace the influences and hidden histories that all came to head on that day in 2012, and an electrifying study of the power of words and the machinations of democracy as they function in the twenty-first century.



PRE-TEACHING: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT

KEY TERMS IN AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

The Westminster System

Named after the geographical area in London in which the UK Parliament is located, this system divides government power into three areas: the Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. The Parliament is responsible for making laws. The Executive (also called the Government) is responsible for administering the law and delivering government services. The Judiciary is composed of the Courts, who decide how the law will be applied.

Federation

The agreement between six Australian States (New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia) to amalgamate into the Commonwealth of Australia. The Australian Federal Government was established in 1901 and represents the Australian people as a nation. Its Parliament is in Canberra.

Parliament

From the French word 'parole', meaning to talk, the Parliament is the meeting place for government. The Commonwealth Government and each Australian State and Territory Government of Australia has its own Parliament. The Federal Parliament has four main functions:

- Making and changing federal laws
- Representing the people of Australia
- Providing a place where the government is formed
- Keeping a check on the work of the government

Additional information can be found at [About Parliament – Parliament of Australia](#)

Houses of Parliament

Parliament is divided into two meeting places, called Houses. The House of Representatives (Lower House) is made up of elected representatives. The party or parties that hold majority of seats in this House become the Government. The Senate (Upper House) made up of representatives from states and territories, is the place where the laws, made by the House of Representatives, are scrutinised and eventually passed. They go to the Governor General to be signed into law.

Two-Party System

A system of government where two major parties dominate parliament because they receive majority of the votes in an election. The party that has the most seats (majority) in the House of Representatives forms the Government. The other party then becomes the Opposition. Australia is often characterised as a Two-Party System. In practice, this is not the case, because there are three major parties in the House of Representatives – the Australian Labor Party, and the Liberal Party of Australia who work with its partner, the National Party of Australia. This is also called the Coalition.

Hung Parliament

A situation in which neither major party has a majority of seats and cannot form a majority government.

Governor General

Represents the British monarch in Australia. In practice, the Governor General is the Head of State.

The Floor of the Chamber

The place within the relevant house of parliament where elective representatives speak and debate.

The Speaker of the House

The principal office holder in the House of Representatives. They are elected by Members of Parliament (MPs). Their role is to ensure that the Parliament procedures are carried out properly and that MPs follow the rules.

The Clerk of the House

Sits at the Speaker's right-hand side at the head of The Table of the House. Their role is to announce each item of business to be discussed in Parliament, record and certify decisions made, and provide advice about the procedures of Parliament. When the House of Representatives votes on a matter, the Clerk of the House is responsible for ringing the bell that reminds all Members of Parliament that they must rush to the House to vote.

Question Time

A dedicated block of time used for scrutinising the workings of the government. This is the period where questions can be asked without notice.

Hansard

The official record of what is said, and by whom, in parliament.



KEY TERMS IN JULIA

Feminism

A social, cultural and political movement that advocates for women's rights based on equality of the sexes. Categories of feminism include liberal feminism, radical/cultural feminism and materialist feminism. Each category offers a critical view of human society but differ in their analysis of the cause of inequality and their solutions for change.

Sexism

Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender. It is based on the belief that men have superior qualities to women. The result is to exclude women from participating fully in society and realising their full potential. Ryan and Zehnter (2022) have identified different forms of sexism. These include:

- i. **Traditional Sexism:** Often blatant. Based on the idea that women are inferior to men and these 'deficits' are used to justify excluding women from participating in the public sphere.
"I was also very offended... when... the Leader of the Opposition said, 'What the housewives of Australia need to understand as they do the ironing.'"
Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2012)
- ii. **Subtle Traditional Sexism:** Based on the same ideas as traditional sexism, this type of sexism is subtle. Rather than being honest about sexist views, this type of sexism hides from the wider public shift in perception away from more conservative views about women and their abilities. This type of sexism often uses the "who will care for the children" argument to quietly reinforce gender norms.
- iii. **Benevolent Sexism:** The opposite to hostile sexism, this type of sexism rewards and protects women who live within more traditional constructions of gender roles. This type of sexism glorifies motherhood, caring, passivity and compliance.
"(She's)... a loyal girl..."
Prime Minister Tony Abbott about Julie Bishop, the Deputy Prime Minister (2009)
- iv. **Hostile Sexism:** Often abusive and directed toward non-traditional and feminist women, including women who have power that traditionally might have been held by men.
'Ditch the witch'.
'... a man's bitch'
Signs outside of Parliament House (2012)
- v. **Modern Sexism:** A form of sexism that reinforces traditional ideas about women by suggesting that sexism is no longer a problem.
- vi. **Sexism Shift:** A contemporary development that argues that sexism is now directed toward men and not women. Relies on ideas of male victimhood in the face of a system that has swung too far toward women.

Misogyny

Traditional definitions of misogyny suggest that misogyny is the individual hatred of women. Philosopher Kate Mann (2018), in her book *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, argues that misogyny is a societal tool with which women can be shamed, disciplined and punished for venturing into segments of society that are typically viewed as being in a male domain. In other words, misogyny ensures that sexism and sexist behaviour is maintained.

Ten Pound Pom

A colloquial term for British people who emigrated to Australia in the post-World War II era. The Australian Federal Government assisted with the cost of travel to Australia to meet the need for workers. The cost of processing immigration papers upon arrival into Australia was 10 pounds.

Kevin 07

The election slogan developed by the Australian Labor Party for the 2007 Federal Election. Led by Kevin Rudd, the Labor Party played on the assonance of Rudd's first name and the year of the election.

Union

A union is a group of working people who gather to improve their working conditions, with a particular focus on remuneration, working conditions, leave and entitlements.

The Gender Card

A derogatory term for women who call attention to their experience of sexism and misogyny. This term is often used by conservatives who dislike this kind of behaviour being made explicit by women. "Playing the gender card" silences women by invalidating their experiences, characterising them as whingers, or is a gateway to further abusive treatment.

Gender Wars

A metaphor used by the media and other political actors to describe a series of actions that suggest a battle between heterosexual men and women, in which both sides attack the other. The reality of the metaphor is that the cultural values that it communicates are generated from a place of sexism in which women are positioned as "victims" or, when speaking about poor behaviour exhibited by men, are unreasonably aggressive.

Shock Jock

A "shock jock" is a colloquial term that refers to a radio announcer that uses titillating and provocative language to gain attention and improve their ratings. Alan Jones, Ray Hadley and Kyle Sandilands are examples of this type of person. The Gillard years were notable for the misogynistic discourse that particularly Alan Jones unleashed on Julia Gillard when she became prime minister.

RUDD, GILLARD AND THE ALP

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) is one of the major parties that represent Australians in Federal, State and Territory Parliaments. The ALP emerged from the union movement and is traditionally focused on the betterment of the working class. In the quest for better pay and working conditions, unionists in various states ran for political office prior to Federation in 1901. After Federation, they joined together to form the ALP. It has branches in each State and Territory. In 2007, the ALP were elected to govern under the leadership of Kevin Rudd. In 2012, Julia Gillard challenged the leadership of the ALP, citing Rudd's leadership style as the reason for the challenge.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

When asking students/participants to embody characters who experience sexism, disempowerment, or oppression, encourage teachers/students/participants to:

a. Create a tap-out mechanism (so that no student should participate in triggering scenes if they do not want to).

b. Debrief about experiences of intersectional oppression or disempowerment (across race, gender identity, sexuality, disability, class).

Activity 1

Read the extract from Murray-Smith's *Julia*. Working in groups, divide the extract into manageable sections and allocate to each group to research the historical, social and cultural references in the script. Each group creates a 30 second performance that captures the spirit of the period, using the references and any other relevant cultural artefacts, including music.

"The 1980s. Everything is big. Hair is happening. In the US, Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first woman to be nominated as vice president by a major party. The first PCs bring the future into our homes. For the first time our countrymen reach the top of Everest. Ambition is more than acceptable, it's admirable. Trump's *The Art of the Deal* hits the bestseller list, along with *The G Spot*. Pat Cash and Evonne Goolagong win Wimbledon. Kylie and Danni cover Annie Lennox's *Sisters are Doing it for Themselves* on Young Talent Time. Kay Cottee becomes the first woman sailor to solo circumnavigate the world non-stop, MTV rises up and the Berlin Wall comes down. Fashion is never ever going to be as good again. Feminism enters the 80s a rebel – giving the finger to the mainstream establishment – and finishes the decade firmly established as a guiding light to a better world. And what's hotter than a smart good looking redhead? A smart good looking redhead who wants things for herself.

I want to change the world. I really do. But I am also just... hot.

We're alive with the thrill of battle. We're driving around in old Chryslers, buying our clothes at Disposal Stores: an army of camouflaged twenty-somethings who know, deep in their strong bones, that rage is sexy. It's charged. No tertiary fees! No multinationals! No uranium! No damming the Franklin River! And a big fucking YES to sex! The Guerilla Girls are tackling the Art World. Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* is ready to launch. The first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, is nominated to the Supreme Court. Sally Ride becomes the first woman in space literally defying the gravity of centuries worth of sexual politics.

And me."

- *Julia* (pg. 6 – 7)

Activity 2

The clips below are a selection of the ways in which Gillard's 'misogyny speech' has passed into popular culture.

As a class, watch the clips:

[Julia Gillard Speech TikTok – YouTube](#)

[“Not Now, Not Ever!” \(Gillard Misogyny Speech\)](#)

[The Bad Thing - Julia's Misogyny Speech](#)

Consider the following questions:

- How do you respond to these clips? Why?
- Why do you think people have decided to create these clips?
- What does it say about the Australian conversation regarding gender?

Activity 3

Murray-Smith's script uses direct quotes from Julia Gillard's examples of misogynistic terms in her speech. These include:

- Ditch the Witch (pg. 53)
 - (Making an) 'honest woman of herself' (pg. 53)
 - Ju-liar... Bob Brown's Bitch (the sign referenced on pg. 53)
 - "Unfit for leadership because she was deliberately barren". (pg. 34)
 - "Must have died of shame..." (pg. 42)
- a. Working in groups, students work together to research one of the expressions above including its definition, its intent when spoken, and cultural context. Each group presents their findings to the class.
- b. Working together as a class, discuss the following questions:
- What is the message being sent to the electorate?
 - Evaluate the impact of this message on the electorate.
 - Evaluate the impact of this message on Julia Gillard.



Justine Clarke and Jessica Bentley in the 2023 Season. Photo: Prudence Upton

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Photos courtesy of Prudence Upton.

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Edited by: Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen
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