
FoRT
Asking For Trouble
Teacher Resources



Ideal for Early Years – Year 6

ASKINGFORTROUBLE 

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

In 2015 Asking for Trouble (aka Christy and Luke) were in New Zealand over summer. They rented a small apartment and spent a lot of time with Christy's cousin and her son Jana. The apartment had two excellent couches and they spent a LOT of time with Jana piling up the cushions and turning the couch into cubbies, rockets, trampolines, boats, caves and occasionally into strange outer space landscapes with aliens chasing them....

Around the same time they received an email from a festival asking whether they would like to create a new show and so they decided to create FoRT. As artists they were excited to see how many different scenes they could create with simple household objects, it reminded them of the kind of play they had done when they were kids – building forts and cubbies out of tables, chairs blankets and cushions. Asking for Trouble creates theatre using a process called devising (this basically means they make it up themselves rather than starting with a script so they had already started the process by playing with Jana).

When they returned to Clunes they spent time at their local neighbourhood house training some of the acrobatic moves they wanted to include in the show and arranging a whole lot of stuff into different shapes, they invited some friends to come along to see their work in progress and those friends brought their kids who also had a go at some fort making!

For More information about Asking for trouble: <http://www.askingfortrouble.com.au/fort/>

ABOUT FORT

FoRT is a circus/physical theatre production, which delves into the art of play and the creation of worlds from everyday objects. This show is about the enjoyment of making, exploring and dismantling.

Two strange characters appear with strange contraptions attached to them, they are hunting for whispers of adventure and possibility. They discover a pile of seemingly ordinary objects. In a series of vignettes a couch, table, cushions, sheets and broomsticks transform into rockets, trampolines, cliffs and tents... places to imagine and explore. Images appear and disappear. FoRT is full of ridiculous clowning, spectacular acrobatics, poetic visual imagery and celebrates the kind of creative genius that has been known to turn lounge rooms into volcanoes, trees into castles and cardboard boxes into racing cars.



THE BENEFITS OF PLAY

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development and is a fundamental part of being human, it is the way we learn, innovate and solve problems. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them.

Through their use of simple set objects, Asking for Trouble challenges the idea that play requires the newest fanciest toy on the shelves.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." — [Albert Einstein](#)



"Personally I liked the acrobatics the most! I find it amazing when you guys made imaginary items with the objects around you! Overall I thought your act was amazing!"

— Zafirah, Audience member. Art Is... Festival, Horsham 2016



Asking for Trouble makes theatre that challenges audiences to be brave and generous. Founded by Christy Flaws and Luke O'Connor, Asking for Trouble inspires people to laugh, ask questions and write letters. A multi-award winning theatre company using circus, physical theatre and clown to make ambitious, high quality, touring work for children and families. Based in Clunes, Asking for Trouble have strong relationships in regional Victoria and have performed seasons in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, regional Australia, The Netherlands, New Zealand and the UK. Over the last 12 years Christy and Luke have facilitated workshops in Circus and Physical theatre independently and for a variety of organisations including Circus Oz, Westside Circus, The Womens Circus and Footscray Community Arts Centre and the Fairfax festival.

COLLABORATING ARTISTS

Asking for Trouble is lucky to collaborate with an awesome group of artists.

[Ailsa Wild- Author & Circus Performer](#)

[Ania Reynolds- Sound Designer](#)

[Kate Kantor- Clown, Director](#)

[Anni Davey- Circus Performer & Director](#)

[Biddy Connor- Musician, Composer, Arranger](#)

[John Hall- Metal artist & Designer](#)

[Tim Elliot- Designer & Engineer](#)

[Gavin Roberts- Metal Sculptor](#)

SUGGESTED PRE AND POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

PLAY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

Ask students to interview someone older than themselves about play and childhood.

This could be a parent/grandparent or as part of a larger project to connect with the elderly this could include a visit to an aged care facility.

Questions might include: What kinds of things did you enjoy playing when you were little? Where did you play? Who did you play with? What adventures did you have? Have they ever built a fort or cubby?

See [here](#) for an inspiring cross-generational arts project.



ACTIVITY 2

Ask students to research different games which are played in different cultures using natural or waste materials. Play them!

Here are just a few examples to get you started.

[Ti Rakau](#) – See an example [here](#).

[Skipping Games](#)

[Knucklebones \(also known as Jacks\)](#)

ACTIVITY 3

Ask students to create an imaginary language or a secret handshake.

[See examples of secret handshakes here](#)

STOP MOTION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 4

Watch the [Stop Motion](#) developed by Asking For Trouble's FoRT with your students.

Questions and discussion:

Who knows what process was used to create the video?

What do you think the show will be about?

Has anyone ever made an animation?

ACTIVITY 5

Collect a number of unwanted books. Public libraries will often give away books which are at the end of their lives, I suggest collecting those with beautiful/interesting covers and students can make a flip book with the corners of the pages.

Ask students to create their own stop animations by drawing an action or activity one frame at a time.

Resources

[Examples of books which have been transformed into flip books](#)

[A simple way to create flip books using post it notes](#)

[Info re the history of flip books](#)

ACTIVITY 6

Ask your students to make a stop motion animation with plastic toys.

Using a digital camera students take a series of photographs moving plastic toys.

Photos can then be printed and turned into a flip book as above or images can be imported into a video editing program.

FORTS



(Image of a Dutch Children's project - [Timmerdorp](#) – no photographer credit supplied)

ACTIVITY 6

Have a discussion with your students as a class or in groups about forts. Who has built a cubby/fort? Where was the fort/cubby, what was it made out of, what did you like about it?

What would your dream fort look like? What would you use it for? Who would be allowed in? What kinds of things would be inside your fort? What would it be made of? Where would it be?

Ask your students to create their own Fort, by either drawing/designing their fort, sculpt one using clay or other materials, or building one from recycled objects.

Alternatively, as a large class activity you could use blankets, brooms etc. and attempt to turn the entire classroom into a fort.

Fort inspiration can be found [here](#).

SUSTAINABILITY AND ART

Reducing our impact reusing/recycling and making good art!

One of the limitations *Asking for Trouble* put on themselves for this project was to create a show using primarily props and set they found instead of building a set specifically for the show. As a company they have been thinking a lot about the environmental impact of their touring work.

ACTIVITY 7

Use found objects to create temporary/ephemeral visual art, by reusing and repurposing materials and things.

Ask your students to arrange objects in a way that you find aesthetically pleasing then they can be dismantled and packed away. The artwork could include a large quantity of materials or just a few and may work as a task for individuals or as a collaborative group activity.

For outdoor inspiration research [Andy Goldsworthy](#).

Alternatively, request for students to collect as many coloured plastic objects as they can, which are in a variety of colours to create a class mandala from recycled materials. Materials should first be sorted into colour groupings (this could be done prior if needed due to time constraints) to be reassembled as the temporary artwork.

Read more about Earth Mandalas [here](#).

INVENTIONS

The artists at Asking for Trouble often think creating a show is a bit like being an inventor. For FoRT our contraptions were made out of bits and pieces of found junk including a heater and a vegetable steamer among other things...

ACTIVITY 8

Start by your students to research [Chindogu](#), the Japanese art of creating seemingly useless inventions. Ask your students to build a contraption with found objects (ideal materials include cardboard boxes, parts of old unused appliances (don't plug them in), bottles and anything with dials, buttons or an interesting shape. These contraptions could be useful or ridiculous. See if you can find a tip shop or [reverse garbage](#) type resource in your area. Alternatively, students could draw a contraption.

DISCUSSION

Ask your students to present their contraptions to each other or to the class.

What does your contraption do? Who is it for? What sound does it make?

CIRCUS AND CLOWNING

FoRT presents a high level of acrobatic, clowning and general dramatic ability. The show can be used to provide inspiration or consolidation to students' beginning or continuing learning in these areas. Contemporary clowning involves more than a crazy wig and a red nose. Christy and Luke from Asking for Trouble trained in clowning with a master clown [Phillipe Gaulier](#) in Paris.

The [Artmedia](#) website provides a detailed source for students' to research specific organisations and projects that involve circus and clowning.

ACTIVITY 9

Making juggling balls (Appropriate for upper primary or younger age groups with older buddies)

This is a cheap, fun and useful circus activity. View detailed steps explaining how to make juggling balls at the following link ['The surfing scientist'](#), ABC education.

ACTIVITY 10

Learning and teaching juggling

For Junior primary juggling can be taught using scarves or plastic bags. This increases students' sense of success. A basic three ball juggling pattern is not hard to do and can be achieved quickly by practicing for ten minutes a day.

View detailed steps explaining how to juggle at, [The Instant Jugglers' Manual](#).

ACTIVITY 11

Making a clown suit out of newspaper

Students work in small groups to create a clown costume. The costume is sculptured onto one student (the model). The activity requires a stack of newspaper, sticky tape and scissors and a fair bit of space. It is an ideal group bonding/co-operation and design activity.

- Locate any clowning text from library and present images of clown costumes.
- Organise student groupings (max 4, min 2)
- Explain task, demonstrate paper techniques such as folding, wrapping and tearing.

Recommend that students create clothes, hat and shoes.

- Let students know how much time they will have. You may allow a set discussion time before resources are handed out.
- Have students present their model to the group and comment on their design and group process.

PHYSICAL THEATRE

Physical Theatre is creating stories using our bodies instead of words.

ACTIVITY 12

Pass an Expression

In this activity, students sit in a circle and a selected student devises an exaggerated facial expression. This expression is then copied and passed around the circle. The activity can continue in 'bursts' of a few students at a time, (number depending on age) so that students maintain focus and interest.

ACTIVITY 13

Honeycomb rock

Honeycomb rock is a good warm-up activity for the 'Postcard' exercise below.

Arrange the room so there is a large clear space (this is the 'stage')

Arrange the students so that they are sitting behind a defined line, one by one they enter the stage to create a frozen shape with their bodies, we usually leave it up to them as to when they go in rather than having a set order which allows them to jump in when inspiration strikes!

The rules include:

- You have to make a shape which is safe to hold
- You have to be connected in some way to another person
- As the facilitator you can 'direct' the shape by giving impetus such as make a 'spiky', 'melting', 'soft' or 'bubbly' shape.
- Once everyone is in the shape you can experiment with how they leave the space eg 'sneak', 'wiggle' or 'roll' back to the audience space.

This exercise can be repeated a number of times.

ACTIVITY 14

Postcards

Students use their bodies to create a frozen tableaux to create a scene.

Arrange the room so there is a large clear space (this is the 'stage').

Ask students to describe a place, if they were to take a photograph what might they see there?.

For example;

The beach. Usually answers include things like sand, waves, swimmers, dogs, ice cream, kids etc.

Then tell the group that in **complete silence** (no organising/talking to each other at all – this is key!) they are to make that picture of the beach. One at a time people can enter the stage to create a shape /physical offer. Once everyone is in the picture it can be fun to take an actual photograph if you have easy access to a digital camera. If there are 20 icecreams and no waves but the group has managed to create an image fast and in silence it is a success! We are more interested in inspiration and gusto than a 'correct' representation of what we think the scene should look like.

The next time ask the group for an idea of a different place but rather than brainstorm ideas together get them to jump in one at a time to build the picture. It can be fun to ask individual people 'what are you?' once the scene is completed.

ACTIVITY 15

That's not a...

Assemble a collection of random objects - these can be literally anything that you have on hand.

For example, plastic (or real) fruit, a chair, a book and a backpack.

The task is to imagine an object is something it's not and perform it's new purpose for the group (this can be done in small groups of 3 for younger students to make it less intimidating).

For example a banana could become a telephone, a very compact hockey stick or perhaps a hairbrush. A chair becomes a tutu or a ski boot...

The trick is to enjoy coming up with ridiculous suggestions and the rule is you can't speak to let the group know what the object has become (you can make noises but no talking).

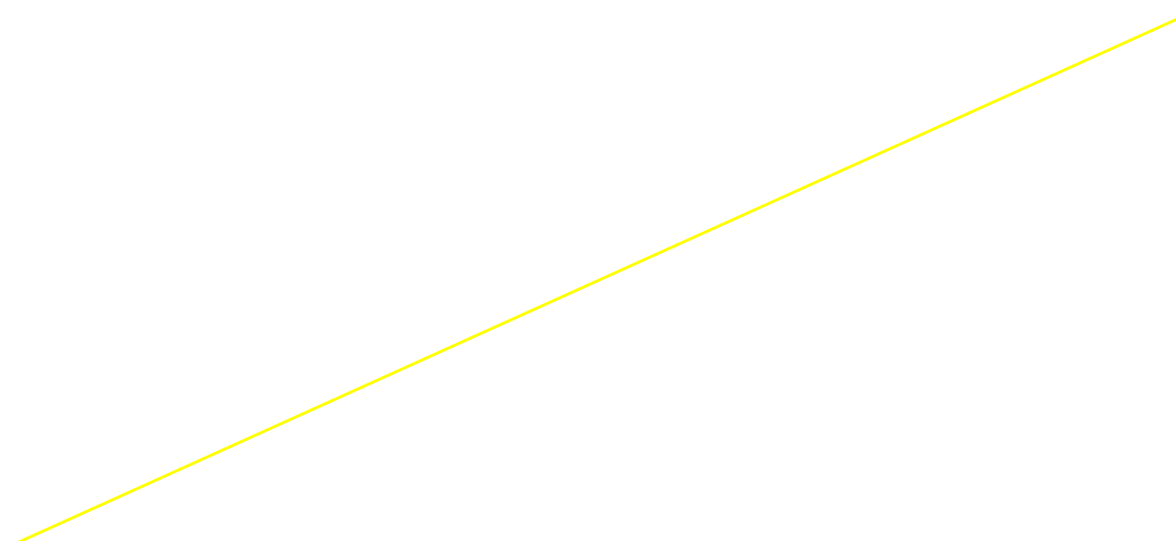
You can add another layer to this exercise by making the rest of the group try to guess what the object has become.

FURTHER READING

- www.askingfortrouble.com.au
- [Stop Motion for FoRT](#)
- [Example circus program for preps](#)
- [Info re forts and self led play](#)
- [Circus OZ archive](#)
- [Dutch Kids building projects](#)
- Environmental impact of consumer culture www.storyofstuff.org/
- [Kids own publishing app](#) is an excellent digital app for photo collage (as a side note Christy and Luke also both work for Kids Own Publishing where they help kids to create and publish their own books)
- [An orchestra where the instruments are made of junk](#)

[The London International Animation Festival](#) (LIAF) sponsors an annual flip book challenge contest. Flip books are entered into the challenge from around the world. The flip books provided come in a variety of sizes and styles. Flip book workshops are held. They also have flip book experts available during the event who share their expertise. The principals of flip book creation, as well as techniques involved in their creation, are discussed.

There are also a number of computer applications where students can create an animation/flip book, which are not included here.



CURRICULUM LINKS – Victorian F-10 Curriculum

FoRT offers many opportunities for extension activities and to embed this performance and workshop in an interdisciplinary way right across Curriculum areas (including Mathematics, Science, English), but for the purpose of this resource we have focused on The Arts and Health and Physical Education and Capabilities.

Learning Areas	Capabilities
<p>Appropriate for Early Years 4 + refer to: VEYLD Framework</p> <p>Victorian Curriculum: The Arts:</p> <p>Drama</p> <p>FoRT specialises in Physical Theatre and Circus Arts, although offers opportunities across the Arts Disciplines (Music, Visual Arts, Design</p> <p>The curriculum in each Arts discipline is based on two overarching principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• students learn as artist and as audience• students learn through making and responding. <p>Strands: Explore and Express Ideas</p> <p>Levels 1 & 2: Build on these for Levels 3 - Explore roles, characters and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama</p> <p>Drama practices</p>	<p>Critical and Creative Thinking</p> <p>Strands:</p> <p>Questions and possibilities</p> <p>Reasoning Meta Cognition</p>
	<p>Personal and Social Capability</p> <p>Strands: Self Awareness and Management</p> <p>Substrands:</p> <p>Recognition and expression of emotions Relationships and diversity Collaboration Development of resilience</p>
	<p>Ethical Understanding</p> <p>Strands:</p> <p>Understanding Concepts Decision making and action</p>

<p>Use voice, facial expression, movement and space to imagine and establish role and situation</p> <p>Present and perform</p> <p>Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community, to an audience</p> <p>Respond and interpret.</p> <p>By the end of Level 2, students make and present drama using the elements of role, situation and focus in dramatic play and improvisation.</p> <p>Students describe what happens in drama they make, perform and view. They identify some elements in drama and describe where and why there is drama.</p>	<p>Intercultural Understanding</p> <p>Strands: Cultural practices</p> <p>Intercultural capability is strongly connected to those areas of learning concerned with people and their societies, relationships and interactions, including the Personal and Social capability knowledge and skills related to empathy, openness, respect and conflict resolution.</p>
<p>Health and Physical Education</p> <p>Strands:</p> <p>Personal and Community health</p> <p>Substrands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being healthy, safe and Active • Communicating and interacting for health and well being • Contributing to health and active communities <p>Moving and Physical Activity</p> <p>Substrands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving the body • Understanding Movement <p>Focusing on:</p> <p>Health benefits of physical activity</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Active play and minor games</p> <p>Challenge and adventure activities</p> <p>Safety</p>	<p>AUSTRALIAN CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES embedded right across the curriculum</p> <p>There are be many opportunities to include the Cross Curricular Priorities when exploring Physical theatre and Circus Arts in other cultures, building forts etc.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures</p> <p>Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia</p> <p>Sustainability</p>