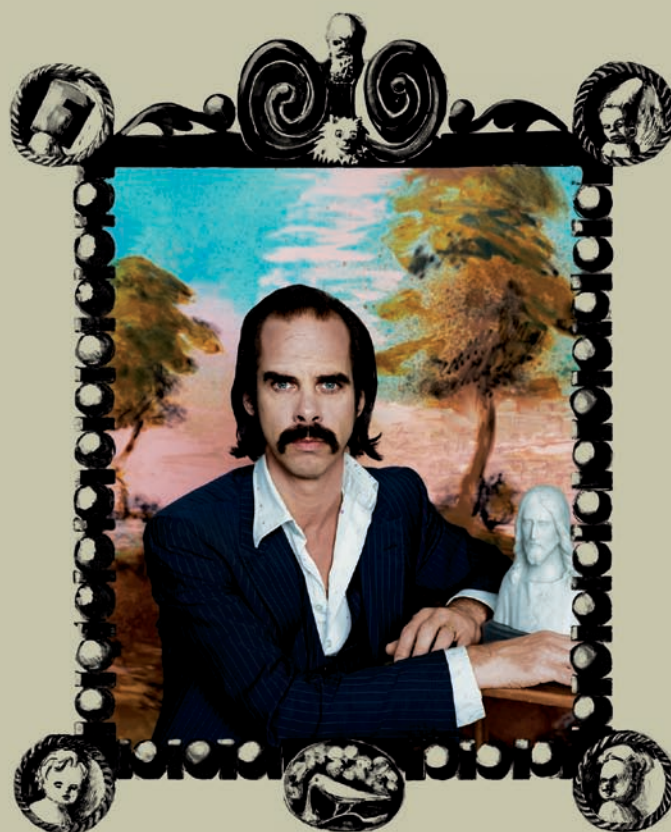


Western Australian Museum - Perth and the Arts Centre, Melbourne present

English

NICK CAVE

THE EXHIBITION



Photograph by Polly Borland / original painting by Tony Clark. Commissioned by the Arts Centre, 2007

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Iconic Australian musician, songwriter and author Nick Cave is now the subject of his own exhibition.

Go behind the music and into Nick's imagination and the sources of his unique vision through original lyrics, notebooks, artwork, photography and books. There will also be objects from the musician's own library and office, and rare and previously unavailable video and documentary footage.

INTRODUCTION

Nick Cave produces and performs texts that incite strong responses from audiences. His eloquent writing is ideal for analysing how language constructs themes and power relationships and the exhibition's strong visual component allows students to critically analyse photographs and films. This exhibition is useful for students of the subject English as they will be encouraged to communicate ideas, feelings and attitudes through reading, writing, viewing, listening and speaking.

The English package contains activities, background information, and teacher resources for years 10, 11 and 12. Activities range from prescriptive to open-ended and vary in difficulty. The package includes activities such as song interpretation, language analysis, viewing analysis, role play and creative writing. Activities may be helpful in aiding students to understand the concepts of theme, values, attitudes, symbolism, and stereotypes.

USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/exhibitions/NickCave>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ew4tll-wRc>

<http://www.nick-cave.com/>

This education resource has been developed by
Nikki Davenport, Cyril Jackson Senior Campus, Western Australia.

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PRE-EXHIBITION

Quiz

Questions

1. Where was Nick Cave (NC) born?
2. When NC was 19, someone very close to him died. This person was NC's reason for writing creatively. Who was this person?
3. Name three countries NC has lived in.
4. Name two NC songs.
5. Outline NC's writing process when he creates songs.
6. Name two bands NC has been in.
7. Which member of The Bad Seeds was NC's collaborator for 35 years?
8. Which instrument does NC mainly play?
9. List four symbols and/or images that are reoccurring in NC's writing and visual works.
10. NC wrote the manuscript and musical score for a film about Australia set in the 19th century. Name the title of this film.

Answers

1. Warracknabeal, north- west of Melbourne, 1957
- 2.. NC's father
3. Australia, Germany, England
4. 'The Mercy Seat', 'Where the Wild Roses Grow' etc
5. At times he has written lyrics on scraps of paper and in notebooks. He also typed his lyrics on typewriters and on computers and then edits his lyrics by hand.
6. The Birthday Party, The Bad Seeds, Grinderman...
7. Mick Harvey
8. The piano
9. A cross, Jesus Christ, the grim reaper, angels, hell, heaven, birds, rivers, etc
10. The Proposition

EXHIBITION

Stereotypes

Bono is a rock star stereotype, Tupac is a ganster rapper stereotype and Beyonce is a RnB soul diva stereotype. When we stereotype people, we categorise people into groups by the way they look and act. For a performer, their music style also contributes to their being labelled as a particular stereotype.

Look at a number of images of Nick Cave and then choose one that is typical of how he is usually represented during a particular time period. Make notes on his appearance in the chart below and then choose his stereotype.

Body size	
Facial expressions	
Gestures	
Hair	
Clothing	
Accessories/jewellery	
Objects	
Singing voice and music	

Nick Cave is:

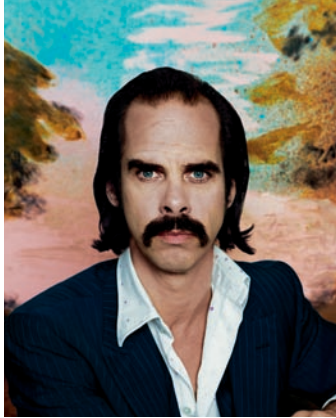
- a) a serious rock star stereotype
- b) an alternative rock star stereotype
- c) a controversial rock star stereotype
- d) (you decide):_____

EXHIBITION & POST-EXHIBITION

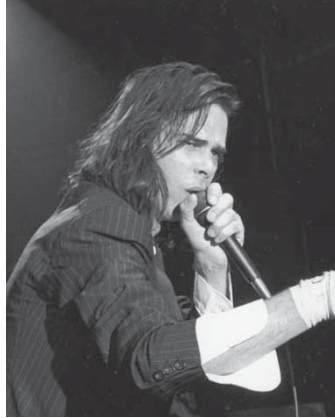
Visual Interpretation

Find these images and make notes on how Nick Cave is represented.

Photograph by Polly Borland / original painting by Tony Clark. Commissioned by the Arts Centre, 2007



Photograph by Peter Milne. Purchase, 1992, Performing Arts Collection the Arts Centre



Photograph by Bledwyn Butcher. Original print kindly lent by Nick Cave.



A. For each photograph make notes on the conventions listed below:

Framing: what is in the frame

How are people and objects positioned? How much of the setting can you see?
Consider foreground, mid ground, depth of field...

Identify the use and effect of the following:

Facial expression, gaze in relation to the camera, gestures, body language,...

Objects

Symbolism

Setting

Identify the use and effect of the following:

Light, colours,...

Camera angle (high, low, eye-level), shot size (close-up, mid, long)

Perspective

Depth of field

Juxtaposition

B. Make notes on the overall meaning of each image.

Describe how Nick Cave is represented.

Post-exhibition

Extended written response

Describe how Nick Cave is represented in the different photographs. Give your interpretation of him in each photograph and support ideas with examples from the text. Consider how your own context (life experiences, your values and attitudes, other viewing, etc.) influences your interpretation.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Post-exhibition activity

Written Personal Reflection on the Nick Cave-the Exhibition

- Complete the Y Chart (on the next page) where you record sights, sounds and feelings you experienced at the exhibition.
- Choose one of the following writing activities and then follow the points on how to structure your writing.

You may choose to:

Write a review of the exhibition for a particular magazine or newspaper. Decide on the magazine or newspaper before you start writing so you are clear on your target audience.

OR

Write a review of the exhibition for a radio station. Decide on the radio station before you start writing so you are clear on your target audience.

OR

Write a letter to a friend informing them of your thoughts and feeling about the exhibition.

How to structure your writing

Introductory paragraph:

Where and when the exhibition took place

Why Nick Cave is famous

Background information on the exhibition – Nick Cave donated 800 objects, etc.

Body paragraphs:

Describe the event – how many people attended, the atmosphere of the day, etc.

Overview of the exhibition layout

Detailed descriptions of some of the objects

Conclusion:

Your opinion of the event and if you recommend it

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Y CHART

Topic:

Looks Like

Sounds Like

Feels Like

Activities on the song, 'The Mercy Seat'

Activities follow the lyrics. Other songs suitable for interpretation and analysis are:
'And No More Shall We Part' and 'The Ship Song'

The Mercy Seat

It began when they come took me from my home
And put me in Dead Row,
Of which I am nearly wholly innocent, you know.
And I'll say it again
I..am..not..afraid..to..die.

I began to warm and chill
To objects and their fields,
A ragged cup, a twisted mop
The face of Jesus in my soup
Those sinister dinner meals
The meal trolley's wicked wheels
A hooked bone rising from my food
All things either good or ungood.

And the mercy seat is waiting
And I think my head is burning
And in a way I'm yearning
To be done with all this measuring of truth.
An eye for an eye
A tooth for a tooth
And anyway I told the truth
And I'm not afraid to die.

Interpret signs and catalogue
A blackened tooth, a scarlet fog.
The walls are bad. Black. Bottom kind.
They are sick breath at my hind
They are sick breath at my hind
They are sick breath at my hind
They are sick breath gathering at my hind

I hear stories from the chamber
How Christ was born into a manger
And like some ragged stranger
Died upon the cross
And might I say it seems so fitting in its way
He was a carpenter by trade
Or at least that's what I'm told

Like my good hand I
tatoood E.V.I.L. across it's brother's fist
That filthy five! They did nothing to challenge or
resist.

In Heaven His throne is made of gold
The ark of his Testament is stowed
A throne from which I'm told
All history does unfold.
Down here it's made of wood and wire
And my body is on fire
And God is never far away.

Into the mercy seat I climb
My head is shaved, my head is wired
And like a moth that tries
To enter the bright eye
I go shuffling out of life
Just to hide in death awhile
And anyway I never lied.

My kill-hand is called E.V.I.L.
Wears a wedding band that's G.O.O.D.
'Tis a long-suffering shackle
Collaring all that rebel blood.

And the mercy seat is waiting
And I think my head is burning
And in a way I'm yearning
To be done with all this measuring of truth.
An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth
And anyway I told the truth
And I'm not afraid to die.

And the mercy seat is burning
And I think my head is glowing
And in a way I'm hoping
To be done with all this weighing up of truth.
An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth
And I've got nothing left to lose
And I'm not afraid to die.

And the mercy seat is glowing
And I think my head is smoking
And in a way I'm hoping
To be done with all this looks of disbelief.
An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth
And anyway there was no proof
Nor a motive why.

And the mercy seat is smoking
And I think my head is melting
And in a way I'm helping
To be done with all this twisted of the truth.
A lie for a lie
And a truth for a truth
And I've got nothing left to lose
And I'm not afraid to die.

And the mercy seat is melting
And I think my blood is boiling
And in a way I'm spoiling
All the fun with all this truth and consequence.
An eye for an eye
And a truth for a truth
And anyway I told the truth
And I'm not afraid to die.

And the mercy seat is waiting
And I think my head is burning
And in a way I'm yearning
To be done with all this measuring of proof.
A life for a life
And a truth for a truth
And anyway there was no proof
But I'm not afraid to tell a lie.

And the mercy seat is waiting
And I think my head is burning
And in a way I'm yearning
To be done with all this measuring of truth.
An eye for an eye
And a truth for a truth
And anyway I told the truth
But I'm afraid I told a lie.

words by Nick Cave
music by Nick Cave, Mick Harvey

Song Interpretation

Nick Cave is a storyteller. He mainly conveys his stories through song and film. Read through the song, 'The Mercy Seat' and give your interpretation of the song. You can post your interpretation on the website – www.songmeanings.net/

An easy way to understand song lyrics

1. Read through slowly so you have a general understanding of the meaning of the song.
2. Next to each verse and chorus write its meaning. This will help you understand how the story develops and help you justify your opinions.
3. Write a paragraph that explains your interpretation of the song. You can begin your paragraph with "I think the song is about..." You can post your paragraph on the website – www.songmeanings.net/
4. In a small group, discuss your interpretation and the interpretation of others. Justify your opinion by giving examples from the song that clearly show how you came to your understanding.

Song Analysis on 'The Mercy Seat'

Answer the following questions:

Subject-matter of song

1. What event, situation, or experience does the song describe or record?

Purpose or theme

2. What is Nick cave's purpose in writing this song – what message does he want to communicate?

Emotion or mood or feeling

3. What is the main emotion or mood of the song? What emotions or feelings does Nick cave try to encourage in the reader?

Structure

4. How is the song structured? How many lines does each verse contain? Is there a reason for some verses being shorter than others? How many lines are there in the chorus? Can you identify a pattern?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Visual imagery

5. Highlight the sections in the song where you can see visual images clearly. Describe the images in your own words.

You will notice Nick Cave creates powerful visual images in his writing. For example, in the second verse, NC has created an image of a prison inmate eating his dinner. The prisoner is distraught and sees danger everywhere, "The meal trolley's wicked wheels" and "those sinister dinner meals". Cave creates a depressing scene for the prisoner but he also creates hope for the prisoner by the image of "The face of Jesus in my soup". You will find NC often contrasts images of good and evil to express his ideas. In this case, the prisoner is in a terrible situation but a belief in god may help him cope with his situation.

Choice of Language

6. Overall what type of language does NC use to express his story? Is the language formal, informal, colloquial, slang? Give examples to support your opinion. Is the language easy to understand? Why or why not?

Positive and negative words

7. Nick Cave often uses contrasts in his songs to emphasise ideas. To identify the contrast of good and evil/bad, list the positive and negative words in a T Chart like the example below:

Positive words	Negative words

Repetition

8. Highlight examples of phrases and lines that are repeated. What ideas do these examples emphasise?

Repetition is an effective technique to emphasise ideas. A sentence or phrase is repeated a number of times so the reader pays attention to the idea. The chorus of a song is an obvious use of repetition but there are also examples of repetition in the verses.

Metaphors and similes

9. Underline examples of metaphors and similes. Next to each example, write what two things are being compared and what meaning is conveyed by this comparison.

A metaphor describes something as if it is something else: she is a statue. However, a simile describes something as if it is like something else: she is like a statue or she is as still as a statue.

Rhyme

10. Identify the words that rhyme. Is there a rhyming pattern or is the rhyme random?

Rhythm

11. Does the poem have a regular (slow or fast) rhythm? What is the effect of any rhythmic qualities?

Framework adapted from - Hayllar, T. A. S. and Sadler, R. K., (1986),
Appreciating Poetry, Macmillan, Australia.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Ideas, Values & Attitudes

Readers are positioned by texts to understand ideas, values and attitudes in particular ways. The chart below outlines a couple of ideas readers are encouraged to understand in the song “The Mercy Seat”.

- Brainstorm for some more ideas raised by the text.
- Find examples to support the ideas.
- Explain the effects of the examples on the reader.
- Identify attitudes the writer has towards subjects.
- Identify values conveyed.

Ideas	Example from the text	What meanings can be made from the examples? Consider attitudes the writer has towards subjects. Consider any values conveyed.
Some people may go to the electric chair but are innocent Some criminals are reluctant to accept they have committed a crime	The main character is represented through most of the song as being innocent of the crime	The song encourages the reader to question the use of capital punishment as the wrong person may be convicted of a crime. The text conveys a negative attitude towards capital punishment. Therefore, the text values punishment other than killing.

Write a speech that is either ‘for’ or ‘against’ capital punishment.

Debate the statement, “Capital punishment reduces crime”.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Photograph by David Tonge. Kindly lent by David Tonge



Themes

You would have noticed from the exhibition that there are recurring themes in most of the texts displayed in the exhibition. Nick Cave often expresses ideas about love, death and violence across many different genres. Make notes on these themes in the chart below. Begin by adding notes to the theme of 'love'.

Theme	What is said about the theme?	How do you know this? Refer to specific texts
Love	Men are active, women are passive when they are in love.	<p>Photograph of Kylie Minogue and Nick Cave: they are next to each other like lovers but she is asleep/dead and he is awake looking directly at the camera. He is powerful, in-charge and she is passive and controlled by him.</p> <p>Song, "Where the Wild Rose Grows": the male character loves Elisa Day but kills her as "All beauty must die". The murder can be seen as symbolic for the power men have over women in society. (See lyrics next page)</p>

Discuss ideas by participating in a small group discussion, panel discussion or in a Round Robin.

Where The Wild Roses Grow

(Chorus)

They call me The Wild Rose
But my name was Elisa Day
Why they call me it I do not know
For my name was Elisa Day

From the first day I saw her I knew she was the one
She stared in my eyes and smiled
For her lips were the colour of the roses
That grew down the river, all bloody and wild

When he knocked on my door and entered the room
My trembling subsided in his sure embrace
He would be my first man, and with a careful hand
He wiped at the tears that ran down my face

Chorus

On the second day I brought her a flower
She was more beautiful than any woman I'd seen
I said, "Do you know where the wild roses grow
So sweet and scarlet and free?"

On the second day he came with a single red rose
Said: "Will you give me your loss and your sorrow"
I nodded my head, as I lay on the bed
He said, "If I show you the roses, will you follow?"

Chorus

On the third day he took me to the river
He showed me the roses and we kissed
And the last thing I heard was a muttered word
As he knelt (stood smiling) above me with a rock in his fist

On the last day I took her where the wild roses grow
And she lay on the bank, the wind light as a thief
And I kissed her goodbye, said, "All beauty must die"
And lent down and planted a rose between her teeth

Chorus

words by Nick Cave
music by Nick Cave, Mick Harvey

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Writing and Discussion Questions

Personal Response

What was your overall impression of Nick Cave? Compare your impression with the impressions of others.

Is there a difference between how you see him as a writer and how you see him as a performer? Explain your understanding.

Describe his writing process.

How does he represent men and women? What is his attitude towards women?

Do you like his style of music? Why or why not?

What are some common themes across his body of work?

Did the viewers seem to enjoy the exhibition? Give reasons for your opinion.

Did the exhibition remind you of similar performers, songs, movies, music clips, photographs and/or documentaries? Who and how?

What are the common symbols used across his body of work? Make a list of these symbols and their meaning.

Creative Response

Role play an interview with Nick Cave.

Write a song in a similar style to a Nick cave song.

Choose a Nick Cave song and re-write it in another genre – short story, newspaper article, drama script, etc.

Create a poster for the exhibition that includes symbols associated with Nick Cave.

References:

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