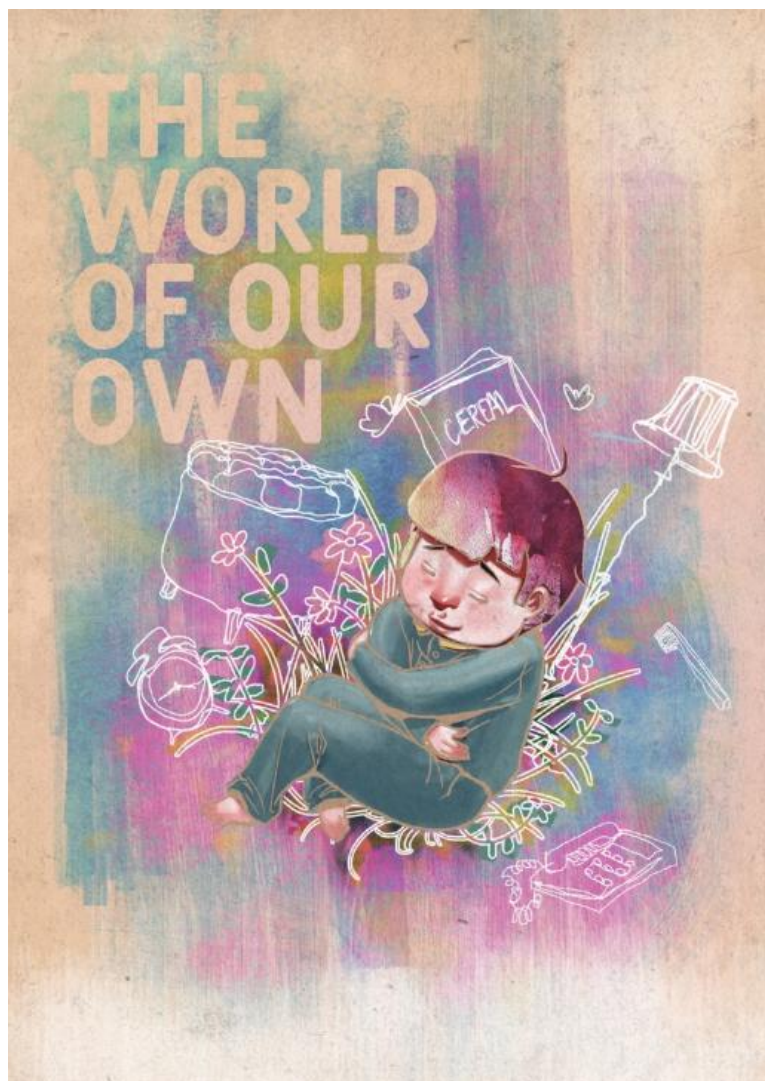




The World of Our Own

by The Finger Players (Singapore)

25 – 28 August 2026

Esplanade Annexe Studio

Pre-Show Educators' Guide

Recommended Level: Upper Primary – Lower Secondary

Synopsis

Most days, PENG comes home to an empty house. Today, however, he has MOOD MANAGER (BETA) — a tiny machine inside PENG that senses his feelings and helps him make sense of them. As MOOD MANAGER (BETA) springs into action and the invisible world of PENG's emotions begins to unfold - How is PENG feeling? Is he lonely? Or is he simply alone? Sometimes, it's hard to tell.

Together, PENG and MOOD MANAGER (BETA) explore what lies beneath the surface, recognising and understanding feelings, while discovering healthy ways of navigating them.

Feelings of loneliness can be difficult for children to recognise and express. Through puppetry and visual storytelling, *The World of Our Own* provides an accessible, age-appropriate way for children to better understand their emotions, build empathy, and explore healthy ways of navigating feelings.

This programme complements schools' social and emotional learning (SEL) efforts by providing a shared experience from which meaningful classroom conversations can begin.

Learning Objectives

Genre Exposure and Character Development

- **Inspire** young imaginations to create a world for themselves and gain confidence in building a world of their own.
- **Explore** and **practise** strategies for recognising, expressing and regulating emotions in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Foster** connections among young people by discovering shared experiences and co-developing strategies to cope with feelings of loneliness.
- **Cultivate an appreciation** for puppetry and demonstrate how the arts can be applied meaningfully to daily life as tools for expression, reflection and communication.

About The Finger Players

The Finger Players is one of Singapore's leading theatre companies, best known for inventively fusing traditional and contemporary puppetry elements, and integrating other artistic disciplines into its visually arresting productions.

Founded in 1999, The Finger Players is Singapore's oldest contemporary puppetry theatre company. It has been awarded the President's Design Award (2007), the Singapore Youth Award (Team) (2008), and numerous accolades in The Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards for its efforts to engage the masses through drama and its pursuit of artistic excellence in theatre. Its body of work is extensive and has garnered recognition from both domestic and international media.

A Note to Educators

The World of Our Own deals with the sensitive issue of loneliness in young people. While the subject of loneliness is a universal one, it may hit close to home for some students. We encourage you to approach the activities in the pre- and post- show guides with a spirit of curiosity and to remind students that there are no right or wrong answers.

Some students may find that certain activities bring up strong feelings. We recommend establishing a brief agreement with the class before commencing the activities. For example, you may wish to establish that sharing is always optional and that classmates will listen to one another without judgement and with respect.

If a student discloses something that concerns you, please follow your school's existing safeguarding protocols.

How to Use This Guide

The following activities are designed to prime students for the performance of ***The World of Our Own*** and to help them engage more meaningfully with the themes and form of the show. You are welcome to select any combination of activities based on your students' needs and the time available. However, **we strongly recommend reviewing the theatre etiquette section below** with your students prior to attending the performance to ensure a respectful and enjoyable experience for all.

Theatre Etiquette

To ensure a good experience for all:

- **Before the Show**
 - 1) Arrive on time and be seated before the performance begins.
 - 2) Switch off or silence all phones, smartwatches, and other devices.
- **During the Show**
 - 1) Watch and listen actively. Feel free to react and reflect.
 - 2) Do not talk amongst yourselves or use your devices.
 - 3) Refrain from eating or drinking in the theatre.
- **After the Show**
 - 1) Pick up your belongings and dispose of any litter responsibly.
 - 2) Feel free to share your thoughts with your friends and/or teacher and complete the student resource. Your reflections matter!

Activity 1: Rod Puppetry 101

This activity aims to introduce students to rod puppetry as an art form and explore why it can be a powerful tool for telling stories about emotions and inner life.

Teachers can start by giving a short primer on rod puppets to students.

Rod puppets are three-dimensional puppets controlled by rods attached to their limbs and head. Rod puppetry has a long history across many cultures. For instance, *Wayang Golek* in Indonesia, to *Bunraku* in Japan, to contemporary theatre companies like The Finger Players in Singapore, who made this show!

Teachers can show the following videos to students:

- 1) Indonesian Puppets *Wayang Golek* | Asian Art Museum [6:12]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wph0cBNi7Yo>
- 2) Brief introduction to Japanese *Bunraku* Puppet Theatre [0:00 - 1:50]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZXdtXa5qs>
- 3) Introduction to Rod Puppetry | The Finger Players [2:32]
<https://vimeo.com/838803003/9363a70c48?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
- 4) Hainanese rod puppetry: a vanishing art | Esplanade Offstage
<https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/articles/2022/hainanese-rod-puppetry-a-disappearing-heritage>
- 5) A *Wayang Kulit* of our own | Esplanade Offstage
<https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/articles/2022/a-wayang-kulit-of-our-own>
- 6) Backstage Pass: Daniel Sim - Puppet Designer and Fabricator | Esplanade Offstage
<https://www.esplanade.com/offstage/series/backstage-pass/2026/backstage-pass-puppet-designer-and-fabricator>

As students watch the videos, teachers can ask them to keep these questions at the back of their mind:

- How many puppeteers can you see manipulating the puppet in each video? Are they visible/invisible to the audience?
- What materials do the puppets appear to be made from?
- Are the puppets ever completely still?
- What do the puppeteers do to make it seem as though the puppets are living, breathing things?

Discussion Questions:

- How is a puppetry performance different from one with human performers, in terms of impact on the audience?
- How do you connect to the characters differently if they are puppets?
- Rod puppetry sometimes requires multiple puppeteers to work in tandem with each other. What do you think that demands of the puppeteers, both physically and mentally?

Activity 2: Reading The Body

This activity prepares students to understand and interpret a non-verbal performance by paying attention to physical gestures and posture.

Part 1: Role play

Teachers can ask students to demonstrate in groups, the following scenarios:

- 1) What it looks like when you are all looking for something, and one of you finally finds it.
- 2) What it looks like when one (or more) of you is upset and your friends are trying to console you.
- 3) What it looks like when something unexpected happens when everyone is together, bringing joy to the whole group.

Part 2: Unpacking the scenes**Guiding Questions:**

- How would you describe your posture in each of these images or mini-scenes you created?
- Were there any repeated gestures or movements? What did they communicate?
- Where was your gaze directed? Where were your eyes naturally drawn? Were you looking at a particular friend, the ceiling, the floor or something else?

Activity 3: What does loneliness feel like?

This activity aims to help students activate their prior emotional knowledge and build a shared vocabulary around loneliness before the show.

Part 1: Ask students to write or draw their responses to the following prompt:

Think of a time when you felt lonely. This does not have to be a dramatic / explosive moment or event. It can be a quiet or fleeting feeling.

- Where were you?
- What was happening around you?
- What did it feel like in your body?

Students who are uncomfortable thinking about this can instead describe a time when they thought that someone else looked lonely, or a character from a book or film who felt that way.

Part 2: Bring the class together and ask the following:

- Without mentioning anything too personal, what were some words or images that came up for you?
- Did you notice where in your body you felt loneliness? Your chest, your head, your stomach?
- Is loneliness always a bad thing?

Additional Resources:

1) State of Youth Mental Health

<https://temasekfoundation.org.sg/work/tsc-youth-mental-health-session-1>

This article argues that youth mental health in Singapore must be addressed through stronger mental health literacy, earlier intervention, and more connected systems of care, especially as many young people experience loneliness alongside anxiety and sadness.

2) Hyperconnected Yet Alone

<https://www.nuhsplus.edu.sg/article/hyperconnected-yet-alone>

This article explains that being constantly connected online can still leave people lonely, because passive scrolling and surface-level interactions cannot replace meaningful, real-life connection.

3) Tinkle Friend

<https://www.tinklefriend.sg/>

Tinkle Friend is a national toll-free helpline (1800 2744 788) and chatline for all primary school children (13 years old and below) in Singapore. Tinkle Friend provides support, advice, and information to lonely and distressed children, especially in situations when their parents or main caregivers are unavailable.

Interested to learn more about the arts? Check out www.esplanade.com/schools for more resources and content!

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