

PATCH



**IT'S A STRING THING**

**Education Resource**

# Welcome

## Geoff Cobham, Patch Theatre Artistic Director

*It's a String Thing* began with a simple question: what can one piece of string become? In the hands of a child, the answer is endless.

This work was created in direct response to the growing demand for high-quality arts experiences in early learning spaces — experiences that are up close, age-appropriate and genuinely responsive to the children in the room.

Developed in collaboration with author and educator Natascha Shaw and performer Ellen Steele, *It's a String Thing* is built around a triangle of connected experiences: a live performance, a picture book that grows from it, and these Education Resources which are designed to extend the learning through play-based inquiry long after the show ends. Each element reinforces the others, giving children multiple ways to revisit and explore ideas at their own pace.

What makes this work distinctive is how it was made. Children's ideas actively shape the performance, and our performer brings them to life by improvising and responding to what children offer in the room — a collaborative process that places them directly at the centre of the experience.

Performed to one class at a time, *It's a String Thing* creates space for every child to engage on their own terms.

Children's capacity to engage with big ideas — when they are explored through curiosity, play and shared experience — is extraordinary. This resource is your invitation to keep that play going.

Thank you for welcoming us into your classroom.

## Acknowledgement of Country

Patch Theatre acknowledges that we work, create and play on Kurna Yerta, the traditional lands of the Kurna people.

We respect their spiritual connection with their country and acknowledge the Kurna people as the Custodians of the Adelaide plains and surrounding regions.

We acknowledge cultural and heritage beliefs are still important to the living Kurna people today and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



## Curriculum Connections

### EYLF Learning Outcomes 1 2 3 4 5

- 1 Children have a strong sense of identity
- 2 Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- 3 Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- 4 Children are confident and involved learners
- 5 Children are effective communicators

*The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0 2022*

### Primary Learning Areas

English • Mathematics • Science • Humanities and Social Sciences • The Arts • Technologies • Health and Physical Education • Languages

### Cross-Curriculum Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture • Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia • Sustainability

### General Capabilities

Critical and Creative Thinking • Digital Literacy • Ethical Understanding • Intercultural Understanding • Literacy • Numeracy • Personal and Social Capability

*Australian Curriculum Version 9.0*

For online resources visit [patchtheatre.org.au/learn](https://patchtheatre.org.au/learn)

# STORYTELLING

## EXPLORE

### String It Together

In *It's a String Thing*, the string twists, stretches and transforms.

1. Pass a length of string around a circle.
2. Invite each person to complete the sentence "My string..." while demonstrating an action with the string.
3. Pass the string to the next person. *It's your turn now. Make me into a thing, a string thing.*

#### Explore more:

- Extend the activity by repeating previous actions before adding an additional action. Observe and discuss. *How did the movement change? What happens when we share ideas?*



## ACTIVITY

### Collaborative Story

Create a shared story using chance and imagination.

1. Write story elements on small cards with different colours for a place, character or action.
2. Attach a paper clip to each story element card.
3. Use a 'fishing rod' (stick with string and magnet) to select story elements.
4. Invite children to add additional story details with sticky notes of drawings, words or marks.
5. Discuss the process. *How did the story change with new ideas? Did the combinations surprise you? Could the story be reorganised to show something new?*

## ACTIVITY

### Story Paths

In this activity explore how stories grow from imagination.

1. Lay out a piece of string.
2. Move a finger, toy or paper character along the string while telling a story aloud.
3. Reshape the string, creating loops and turns as the story changes direction.
4. Invite children to add story details with sticky notes of drawings, words or marks. *Who might live along this path? What sounds can be heard here?*
5. Discuss the storytellers' choices. *Did the ending surprise you? Could the story keep going?*

#### EYLF Learning Outcomes

2 3 4 5

#### General Capabilities

Critical and Creative Thinking •  
Personal and Social Capability

#### Primary Learning Areas

English • Science • Humanities and Social Sciences •  
The Arts • Design and Technologies

# ART AND DESIGN

## EXPLORE

### Public Art

Explore how artists use line, colour and scale.

Look at public artworks such as the Royal Adelaide Hospital Facade or the Unley Swimming Centre mural *Poolside* by It's a String Thing Illustrator, Rachel Harris. Additionally city councils often list public artworks to view.

Discuss the artwork.

- What do you see and feel?
- Why might the artist have chosen those colours or shapes?
- Can you imagine a story behind this piece?
- Why is public art important?

Research how large public artworks are made.



## ACTIVITY

### Create

Invite children to redesign a small area of the classroom or outdoor space. They can sketch, build or collage their ideas using simple materials.

Discuss design decisions.

- What would you change or add?
- What materials might you use?
- What feeling would you like to create?

## ACTIVITY

### A Room Full of Lines

View the art of Chiharu Shiota who is renowned for her string installations and create your own.

1. Choose a space with anchor points such as trees or furniture.
2. Label anchor points with colours, numbers or shapes corresponding to dice.
3. Roll the dice and use a ball of string to connect the points shown on the dice, looping and stretching across the space.
4. Pause and reflect. *What patterns are emerging? How has the space changed?*
5. Place items inside the web and invite children to retrieve items without touching the string.
6. Work together to rewind the balls of string. *What do you notice as it disappears?*

#### Explore more:

- Call out challenges. *Work silently, as fast as possible, like playful cats, while singing Happy Birthday.*



Above (top to bottom): Rachel Harris in collaboration with Chebart (Deb Jones and Christine Cholewa), *Royal Adelaide Hospital Facade*, 99+ metre glass facade; Rachel Harris, *Poolside*, 18m x 2.5m, Unley Swimming Centre, Forrestville.

Right: Chiharu Shiota, born Osaka, Japan 1972. *Absence Embodied*, 2018, Berlin; and Adelaide. Wool, bronze, plaster. 16 hands (dimensions variable). Gift of the Gwinnett family through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2018. Courtesy the artist, Anna Schwartz Projects & Art Gallery of South Australia. Photo: Saul Steed

#### EYLF Learning Outcomes

2 4 5

#### General Capabilities

Critical and Creative Thinking • Literacy • Numeracy • Personal and Social Capability

#### Primary Learning Areas

English • Mathematics • Science • Humanities and Social Sciences • The Arts • Design and Technologies

# MAKING AND CREATING

## ACTIVITY

### String Prints

Explore how movement can leave a trace.

1. Dip pieces of string into paint, leaving one end clean to hold.
2. Place the string onto paper in a curve, loop or zigzag.
3. Fold the paper and gently press over the string.
4. Slowly pull the string out to reveal the marks it leaves behind. *Does the print match what you expected?*

#### Explore more:

- Layer with different colours and movements. *What changes when you pull the string faster or slower?*
- Try multiple strings at once. *Do new patterns appear?*
- Look for shapes or images within the prints. *What do you see?*

## ACTIVITY

### String Forms

Explore how string can create structure.

1. Provide inflated balloons and lengths of string dipped in glue.
2. Wrap the string around the balloon to create a web of lines.
3. Allow time for the structure to dry and become firm.
4. Once dry, pop and remove the balloon to reveal the hollow form.
5. Discuss. *What does your structure remind you of? How strong is it? What makes it strong?*

#### Explore more:

- Place objects or lights inside. *How does the form change?*
- Compare different wrapping styles. *Which hold their shape best?*

## ACTIVITY

### Circular Weaving

Explore patterns, repetition and connection.

1. Prepare a simple loom using a paper plate with an uneven number of cuts around the edge.
2. Thread string around the plate alternating over and under the sections of plate.

#### Explore more:

- Explore the use of different materials such as ribbon, fabric or natural fibres.
- Bend the plate with v-shaped cuts to create woven bowls.
- Invite a local artist, weaver or Elder to share traditional weaving practices.



## ACTIVITY

### Raised Line Art

Explore how lines can be felt as well as seen.

1. Create a design by gluing string onto cardboard.
2. Once dry, cover the surface with foil.
3. Gently press to reveal the raised lines underneath. *Can you feel the design as well as see it?*

#### Explore more:

- Add colour or shading to highlight the shapes. *How does light change what you see?*
- Create characters, places and props to embellish Collaborative Stories and Story Paths.



#### EYLF Learning Outcomes

4 5

#### General Capabilities

Critical and Creative Thinking

#### Primary Learning Areas

Science • The Arts • Design and Technologies

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

## ACTIVITY

### Lines in Nature

1. Invite children to look for lines outside in the natural world to draw or photograph.
2. They might notice spider webs, winding paths, branches and roots, cracks in the ground or lines in leaves.
3. Discuss which lines might be the smallest and which lines may be the largest.
4. Using a length of string measure objects to test predictions.
5. Challenge children to find items bigger or smaller, or even the same height as them.

#### Explore more:

- Recreate natural lines using string or found materials.
- Return to the same place later. *Are the lines the same or different? What has changed?*



## ACTIVITY

### Make a Moving Line

Create a simple moving sculpture using found and recycled materials.

1. Use leaves and a hole punch.
2. Thread pieces onto a string to create a garland.
3. Invite children to move and display their creations.
4. Discuss creations. *How does it move? What does it remind you of? Can it become something else?*

#### Explore more:

- Invite children to collaborate. *What happens when lines are joined together?*
- Hang the line in different places. *How does height change the movement?*
- Observe over time. *When is it most active? When is it still?*
- Explore different materials. *How do weight and texture affect how it moves?*



#### EYLF Learning Outcomes

2 4 5

#### General Capabilities

Critical and Creative Thinking • Literacy • Numeracy

#### Primary Learning Areas

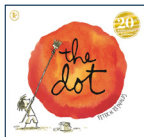
English • Mathematics • Science • The Arts • Design and Technologies

# It's a String Thing Book List



**It's a String Thing**  
by Natascha Shaw  
& Rachel Harris

Through a childlike lens and playful dialogue, explore themes of identity, imagination, and the nature of reality.



**The Dot**  
by Peter H. Reynolds

A story about creativity and confidence, showing how one small mark can grow into something meaningful through encouragement and self-belief.



**Ish** by Peter H. Reynolds

Encourages children to embrace imperfection and see the beauty in creating things "ish" rather than perfectly.



**Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me**  
by Eloise Greenfield  
& Ehsan Abdollahi

Celebrates imagination, poetry and connection to culture through a child's creative thoughts and storytelling.



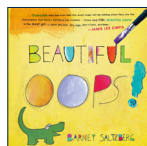
**Too Many Elephants in This House**  
by Ursula Dubosarsky  
& Andrew Joyner

A playful counting and imagination story about problem-solving and thinking creatively.



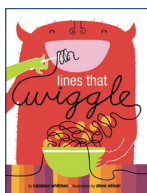
**Press Here** by Hervé Tullet

An interactive book that invites children to press, shake and explore cause and effect through simple actions.



**Beautiful Oops!**  
by Barney Saltzberg

Shows how mistakes can turn into creative opportunities, encouraging resilience and flexible thinking.



**Lines That Wiggle**  
by Candace Whitman  
& Steve Wilson

Explores different types of lines and movement, encouraging children to see lines in creative and playful ways.



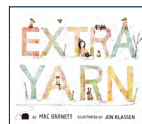
**Mix It Up** by Hervé Tullet

An interactive exploration of colour mixing that encourages experimentation and discovery.



**Not a Stick**  
by Antoinette Portis

Encourages creativity by showing how a simple stick can become many different objects.



**Extra Yarn**  
by Mac Barnett  
& Jon Klassen

A story about creativity and generosity, where imagination brings colour and change to a dull world.



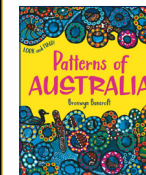
**The Noisy Paint Box**  
by Barb Rosenstock  
& Mary GrandPré

A vibrant story inspired by abstract artist Wassily Kandinsky, showing how he experienced colours as sounds and used shapes and colour to express feelings.



**Yayoi Kusama: From Here to Infinity**  
by Sarah Suzuki  
& Ellen Weinstein

This colourful children's book tells the story of the renowned Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama and her quest to cover the world in polka dots – from here to infinity!



**Patterns of Australia**  
by Bronwyn Bancroft

*Patterns of Australia* represents a series of Australian landscapes and habitats in "patterns", as seen through the eyes of acclaimed indigenous artist Bronwyn Bancroft.



**Seen Art?**  
by Jon Scieszka  
& Lane Smith

A playful introduction to modern and abstract art through a child exploring an art museum, encouraging curiosity and different ways of seeing art.



**The Journey of Tunuri and the Blue Deer: A Huichol Indian Story**  
by Jame Endredy

This children's folklore book follows Tunuri and a magical Blue Deer, connecting with nature and exploring identity. The book is illustrated with traditional yarn drawings by Mexican Huichol artisans.

# It's a String Thing Creatives

Many people were involved in making *It's a String Thing*. Meet the amazing team and find out what they do!

## CREATIVE TEAM

Creators are the inventors of the show, they come up with the ideas.

### Creators

The inventors of the show. **Geoff Cobham, Ellen Steele** and **Michelle 'Maddog' Delaney** created the ideas and look of the show. They came up with the story and all the different things you can do with string.

### Author

**Natascha Shaw** invented the character String and wrote the words in the book.

### Illustrator

**Rachel Harris** drew the pictures of String and pieced together the words and drawings.

## PERFORMERS

The people who bring the show to life with their story telling and expressions. Our performer is **Ellen Steele**.

She introduces you to String, creates the story with you and takes you on an adventure.

## AUDIENCE

You! We couldn't have a show without an audience. You can laugh, take part in the storytelling and touch and pass the string around. At the end, clap to show the performers and creatives how much you enjoyed it!





[patchtheatre.org.au](http://patchtheatre.org.au)



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