Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta GAME and App Hub inspired by ZOMBIE THOUGHTS

EDUCATIONAL NOTES FOR CLASSROOM USE

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INTRODUCTION

The activities are designed for students in years 3-8. NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has been used as guides for planning them, however you should adapt each one to suit the stage of your class as well as the curriculum focus, and outcomes used in your school. We recommended that you navigate the site before using it in the class.

The National Theatre of Parramatta (NTofP) app platform features games inspired by the Zombie Thought production and also gives the user an opportunity to design and share their own game.

These notes have been designed to assist with curriculum-based learning activities in relation to the NTofP Game Hub App created with Cogniss and inspired by the live performances of *Zombie Thoughts* written by Jennifer A. Kokai and Oliver Kokai-Means. This resource supports using the app in your classroom.

APP DESCRIPTION

The *Zombie Thoughts* app was developed in response to the 2021 *Zombie Thoughts* production (the original script was written by a then nine year-old boy to help him cope with anxiety). In Australia, almost one in seven children struggle with anxiety. Like the live performance, the app offers a powerful tool to teach young people about Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), in a fun and entertaining way. It is designed to be returned to and engaged with on numerous levels. The app can be played on Android or Apple handheld devices. Instructions on how to access is through the National Theatre of Parramatta website:

https://riversideparramatta.com.au/NTofP/zombiethoughtsgame/

The *Zombie Thoughts* app is a safe private environment. It features two games inspired by the play as well as a feature through which students can make their own game online. From a teaching perspective the app and existing games features:

- Opportunities for talking about decision making.
- Opportunities for critiquing aesthetics and art in computer graphics.
- Mediation activities for breathing, taking a moment and calming fears.
- Structures for stimulating student's own imagination and sequencing skills to collaboratively create their own special journeys to be shared with others.

CLASSROOM CONTEXT AND CURRICULUM LINKS

The **App Hub** provides learning opportunities for students in years 3 - 6 (Stage 2 - 3), with links to the following curriculum areas: English, Technology and PHDE. The General Capabilities, in these activities, as suggested in the NESA educational Standards include:

Information and communication technology capability - The study of English enables students to develop and apply knowledge, understanding and skills of ICT in their composing, responding and presenting, and as part of the imaginative and critical thinking they undertake in English. Students have the opportunity to become competent, discriminating and creative users of ICT as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately when investigating, creating and communicating ideas and information. Students learn about the ethics of information communication through technology

Critical and creative thinking - Students develop critical and creative thinking by seeking new pathways or solutions when they evaluate knowledge, ideas and possibilities.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND ICT RESOURCES CURRICULUM LINKS

The K–10 curriculum documents refer to Working Mathematically, Working Scientifically, Working Technologically, historical inquiry, geographical inquiry skills, problem-solving, critical thinking and design processes. These thinking processes are analogous to computational thinking and develop students' abilities to think abstractly – a key aspect of computational thinking.

Computer coding thinking and knowledge can be used in the creative arts to design and develop artworks and program devices to create artistic works as well as to create games, stories, illustrations, music that support English and literacy.

The English syllabus allows teachers to develop integrated units of work that may emphasise areas of focus, such as computational thinking, and its application in the real world. The support document Suggested texts for the English K–10 Syllabus provides examples of texts that require computational thinking, for example encouraging analysis of the content and layout of a text and providing opportunities for problem-solving and abstraction from a given situation.

The computational thinking here is emphasized in:

- Finding a way to think positively to overcome anxious and negative thought patterns.
- Tell a story effectively through a mobile app.
- Use the knowledge of software and develop computer literacy skills that develop a student's range of presentation platforms for storytelling.

English Curriculum Links

Stage	Content	Objectives	Outcomes
Stage 2	Text Type: Computer Games Texts in different media and technologies Symbolism in texts	Reading and viewing Thinking Imaginatively and Creatively Expressing Themselves	EN2-1A communicates in a range of informal and formal contexts by adopting a range of roles in group, classroom, school and community contexts EN2-4A uses an increasing range of skills, strategies and knowledge to fluently read, view and comprehend a range of texts on increasingly challenging topics in different media and technologies EN2-6B identifies the effect of purpose and audience on spoken texts, distinguishes between different forms of English and identifies organisational patterns and features EN2-10C thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts EN2-11D responds to and composes a range of texts that express viewpoints of the world similar to and different from their own
Stage 3	Text Type: Computer Games Texts in different media and technologies Symbolism in texts	Reading and viewing Thinking Imaginatively and Creatively Expressing Themselves	EN3- 2A composes, edits and presents well-structured and coherent texts N3-3A uses an integrated range of skills, strategies and knowledge to read, view and comprehend a wide range of texts in different media and technologies EN3-7C thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and ideas and identifies connections between texts when responding to and composing texts EN3-8D identifies and considers how different viewpoints of their world, including aspects of culture, are represented in texts.

PDHPE Curriculum Links

Stage	Content	Objectives	Outcomes
Stage 2	Health, Wellbeing and Relationships	Knowledge and Understanding	PD2-2 explains and uses strategies to develop resilience and to make them feel comfortable and safe
Stage 3	Health, Wellbeing and Relationships	Knowledge and Understanding	PD3-2 investigates information, community resources and strategies to demonstrate resilience and seek help for themselves and others PD3-3 evaluates the impact of empathy, inclusion and respect on themselves and others

Science and Technology Curriculum Links

Stage	Content	Objectives	Outcomes
Stage 2	Digital Technologies: Zoom (video conferencing)	Digital technologies including digital systems and how digital technologies represent data	ST2-11DI-T describes how digital systems represent and transmit data
Stage 3	Digital Technologies: Zoom (video conferencing)	Digital technologies including digital systems and how digital technologies represent data	ST3-11DI-T explains how digital systems represent data, connect together to form networks and transmit data

GETTING STARTED, DOWNLOADING THE APP

The *NTofP App* hub is accessed via the **Cogniss Community app** and features:

1. Two games inspired by the *Zombie Thoughts* play
2. A create your own adventure platform

These activities use smart phones to engage students in critical thinking, learning, creating. It also enables student to reflect on their own possible struggles with anxiety in an engaging and easily accessible way.

Important: Prior to the class ensure students have easy access to phones, laptops or ipads that have been charged and have download and or wifi access. Before the app can be played it will need to be downloaded on each device.

To set up you can use one central email to set up multiple accounts, but each user should have their own account/username if possible.

## Step 1: Install the *Cogniss Community* mobile app.

You can download this in the Google Play Store or Apple mobile app stores.

Android devices: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cogniss.community&hl=en_AU

Apple/iOS devices: https://apps.apple.com/au/app/cogniss-community/id1498868514

Step 2: Create a user account.

Once the app has been downloaded as per below instructions users will be able to click on the *Zombie Thoughts NTofP app* to access one of two game/stories. *Zombie Thoughts Cave of Calamity* or *Zombie Thoughts The Zen Forest.*
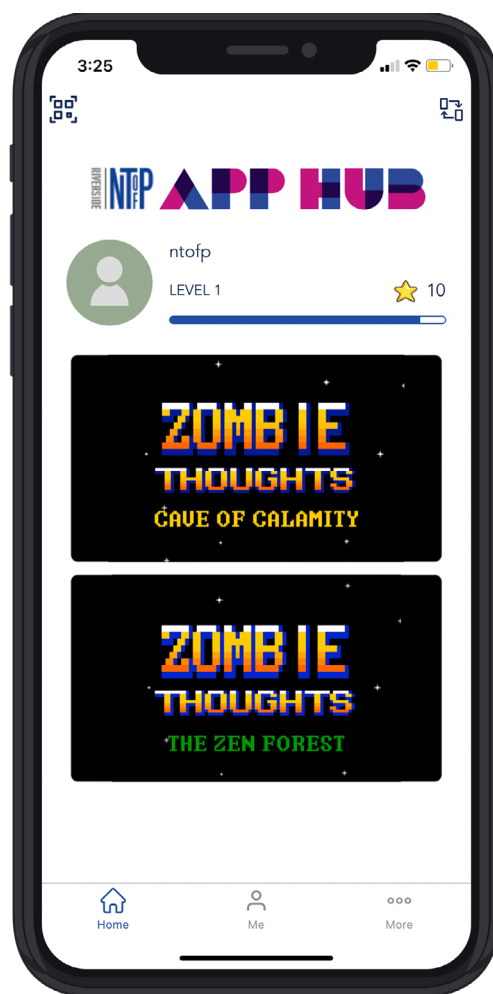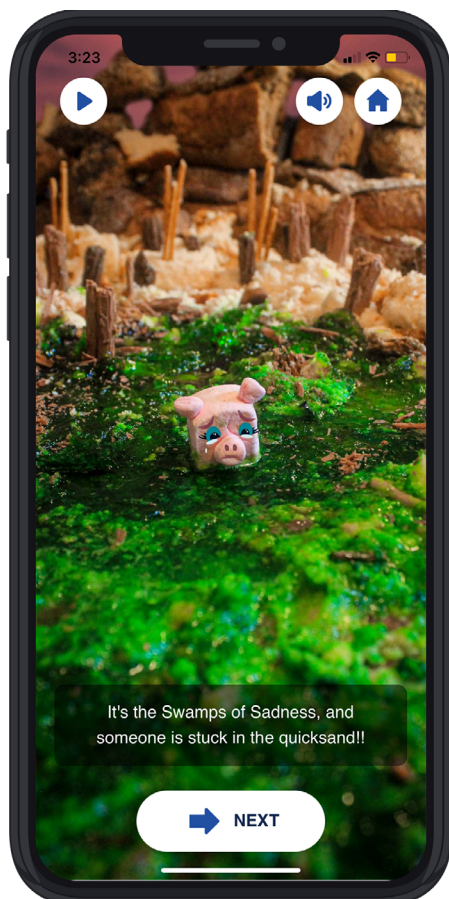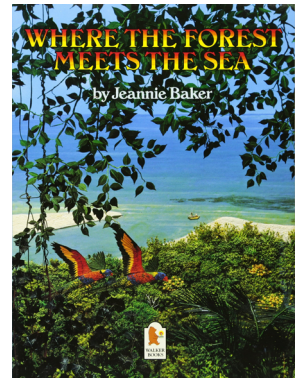
NTofP APP HUB INSPIRED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. CRITIQUING THE GAMES

Give students time to play both games then ask them to reflect on their responses:

- What did you like about the games?

- Aesthetics: What do you notice about the artworks? Notice how *The Cave of Calamity* uses cartoonlike graphics based on older style computer games. *The Zen Forest* uses a style of art called collage, similar to Jeanie Baker's picture book style in *Where the Forest meets the Sea*. More information can be found about her at: Jeannie Baker - Home (weebly.com)

- What sounds are used – did you notice any voice over's, noises, music affects?

- What did the games ask you to do? What type of questions?

- What was the common thing both games suggested could help when we are stressed? To stop and breath? Are there any other tips that could help children to feel calm?

It's the Swamps of Sadness, and someone is stuck in the quicksand!!

NEXT

You are in a warzone

NEXT

2. CREATING YOUR OWN GAME: A THOUGHT PALACE OR MEDITATION JOURNEY

The aim of this project is two-fold: 1. creating an adventure or journey that helps the creator overcome zombie or negative thoughts 2. helping someone else who plays the game also feel good.

When feeling anxious it can be useful to:

1. Remember to **breathe.**

2. Turn fears into practical things that we can **do** (rather than worry about).

3. Think about places or people or music that **soothe us** and encourage us to positively face a situation.

This learning project activity involves sequencing a series of gentle images that essentially takes the "app user" on a journey of the mind. Along the way users meet various situation in which they choose alternative scenarios with at least one offering a sense of pleasure or hope. These experiences are to be shared and enjoyed with others.

The activity is in three parts:

Part 1 is the creation of the story, building a series of places and spaces with characters and messages of hope. This section uses research, imagination and artmaking to collaboratively build the user "discourse' which will used in the app.The story can be brought together without technology for this. Even classrooms that do not have easy access to software can participate in the process of sequencing a mediation journey.

Part 2 uses the NTofP app hub found via the **Cogniss App** to bring the created stories of the students to life within a 'gaming' format.

Part 3 encourages the sharing of the apps, encouraging students to experience each other's mediation journeys.

PART 1: DEVELOPING IDEAS AND CREATING THE STRUCTURE

This part concentrates on ideas and structuring and does not require use of the app.

1. Imagining places and spaces

Task: create a vision board in the classroom of spaces and places which inspire us, which make us feel peaceful or good about ourselves.

- In groups or as individuals ask students to think about at least four different environments that makes them feel calm: trees, water, sand, bedroom. They can be real or imaginary.

- What are the features of your places and spaces? What colours are in them? What is it about those places that make you feel good – books that can be read, trees to climb, water to swim in, fields of flowers etc.?

- From the group each student should create at least one physical picture or 'scene' using drawings, photos or even sculptural sets that reflect a place of peace. They may even create collages and cardboard sets made out of found, recycled materials and even vegetables.
Check out the behind-the-scenes video of how a set designer put together the set of the *Zen Forest* story.

  - **RESOURCES:** Videos of behind the scenes creating scenes used in game 2

2. Music and sound

Task: each group finds or creates a piece of music or sounds that makes us feel calm and relaxed.

Students may find music that enhances the pictures they have made. Alternatively, they might record bird sounds, chimes, or soundscape that enables them to feel positive.

3. Friendly characters, animals and creatures

Task: create a list of caring friendly kind characters, animals or creatures that might live in the environments that have been created

- Make a list of four friendly personalities that a person might meet in the places you have created. They can be real, mythical, imaginary or cartoon characters.
- How might those characters react to a person who came in the environment to make them feel welcome there?

4. Messages of hope

Task: create a list of inspiring messages that can be shared with everyone.

- Each character in your story should have a message of kindness or a special gift.
  What would the gift or message be?
- Write a list of at least four messages of inspiration or hope. These can be imagined, found on the internet or taken from stories that have been inspirational to you.

5. Sequencing

Task: place the environments in order to create a delightful journey for app visitors.

Students now put together a sequence of four different places that a person might visit. For instance, a peaceful wood, then a stream, an open field, a dining room with a table full of delicious food.

- At each scene choose a character who is met there, with a special message.
  Each scene may have its own background music.
- How does the app user get their message?
- Is there a decision for them to make at each place?

6. Transitions and adventure

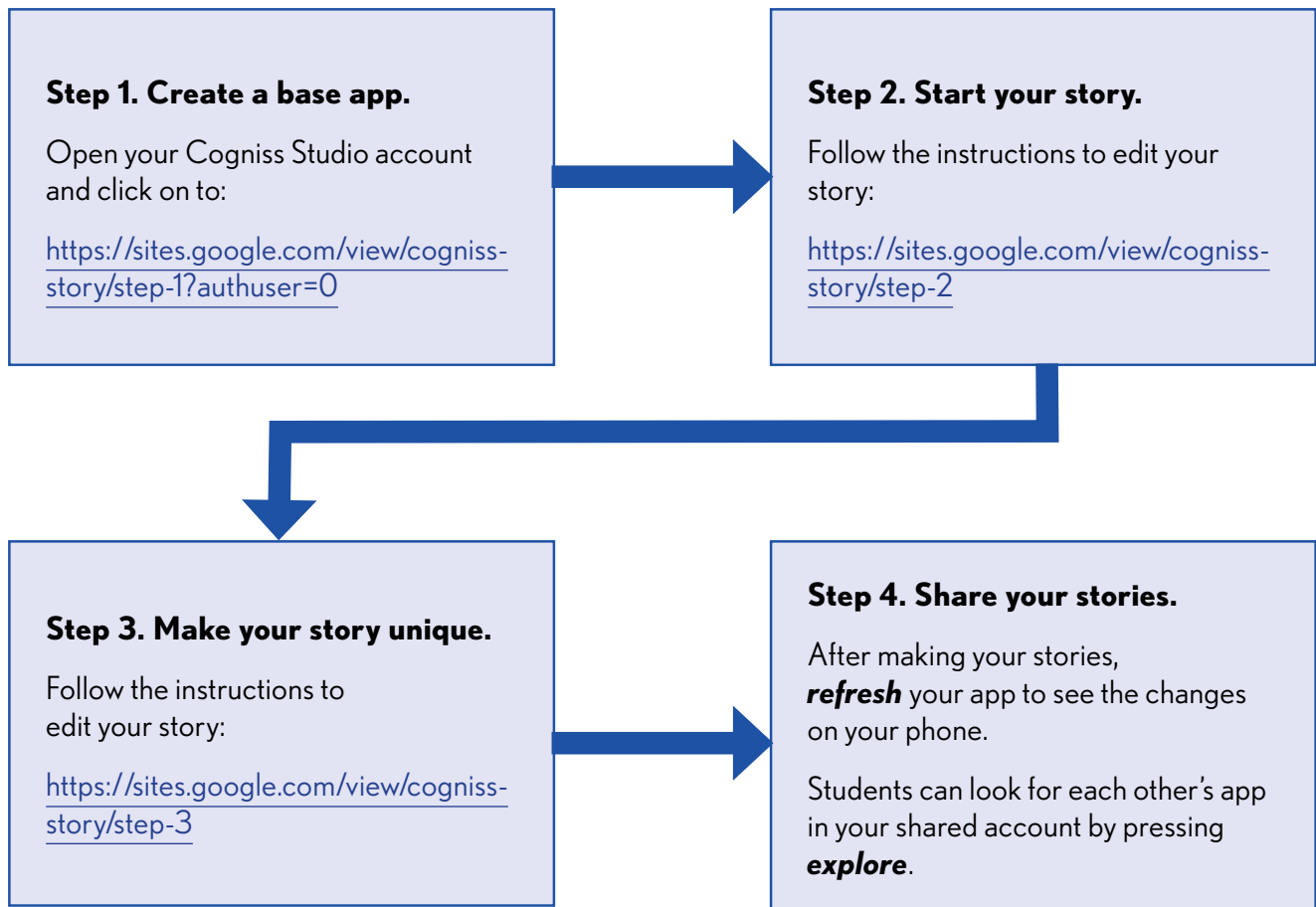Task: to create a sense of journey from the sequence.

- How does the gamer explore each of the space or go on the journey to find the person and get the messages? How do they travel to the next place?
- Write down the questions or tasks, instructions that a person needs to do to go to the next place.

7. Presentation.

Task: Each group presents or act out their story to the rest of the group, using the pictures and sound effects.

PART 2: UPLOADING AND EMBEDDING THE STORY IN THE APP

Once students have created their journey outlines, they are ready to upload them into the app to share. **All the underlined instructions below are hyperlinks that will take you directly to the Cogniss Website.**

Step 1. Create a base app.

Open your Cogniss Studio account and click on to:

https://sites.google.com/view/cogniss-story/step-1?authuser=0

Step 2. Start your story.

Follow the instructions to edit your story:

https://sites.google.com/view/cogniss-story/step-2

Step 3. Make your story unique.

Follow the instructions to edit your story:

https://sites.google.com/view/cogniss-story/step-3

Step 4. Share your stories.

After making your stories, *refresh* your app to see the changes on your phone.

Students can look for each other's app in your shared account by pressing *explore*.

Keep it simple

The Cogniss app offers students a sample which they simply modify to make it their own. Click one of the stories and go to the **"Questions"** tab, which will list all of the pages in the story selected. Press **"edit questions"** to open the story builder.
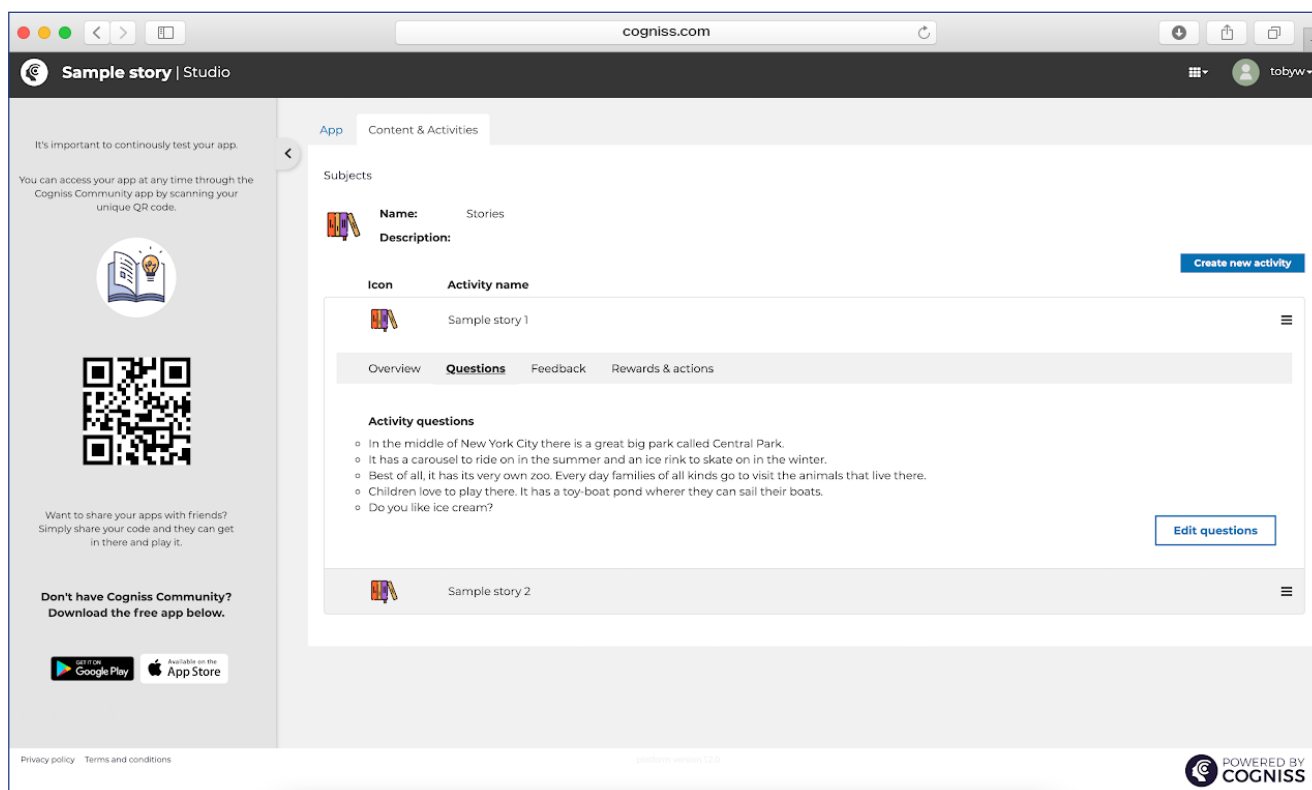
Page list sidebar on the left side shows all the pages of your story, which will be experienced by the app user in descending number order (01 > 02 > 03 > ...).

- The **centre section** shows the **story page interface**, as it will appear to the app user for the page currently selected. You can add images, text, audio, and options here.
- **The right section** of the interface shows **additional page information** which can be helpful to quickly see the relationship between other pages.

Tip: Remember to always press "**save**" (top right-hand side) whenever you make any changes to your story, otherwise, those changes will be lost.

Tip: You can delete pages by selecting the "**delete pages**" button (trash icon).

Tip: To view your app on your phone device, open the QR code scanner in the Cogniss Community app (icon on top-left corner) and scan the QR code displayed on the left side of Cogniss Studio on your computer web browser.

Tip: You can search for your app by name in the Cogniss Community home page, via "explore" in the navigation bar on the bottom.

Tip: To navigate between your app, and the "Cogniss Community" homepage, use the refresh button on the top right, "back to Cogniss Community Home".

Tips for making the story your own

- Add a new page by clicking **"+ add new"** at the bottom of page list and enter a name for your new page.
- Add image or audio by clicking the relevant icon on the top of the blank story page, then select from existing files or upload a new file.
- To change the **background image** displayed on the page, select the button on the left. The supported file types are **JPEG, PNG, and GIF.**
- To change the audio/music that plays when the user opens the page, select the button on the right. The supported file types are **MP3.**
- You can change the order of the pages by pressing and dragging the anchors on the right of each page.

IMPORTANT: After completing your story, you will need to refresh your app In order to see the changes on your phone.

1. Click the button on the top-left corner of your screen (shown on the right).
2. Select **"refresh current app".**
3. The app will now have the updated changes.
4. The Refresh button shown is on the top-right side of the app.

QR code scanner

Refresh current app
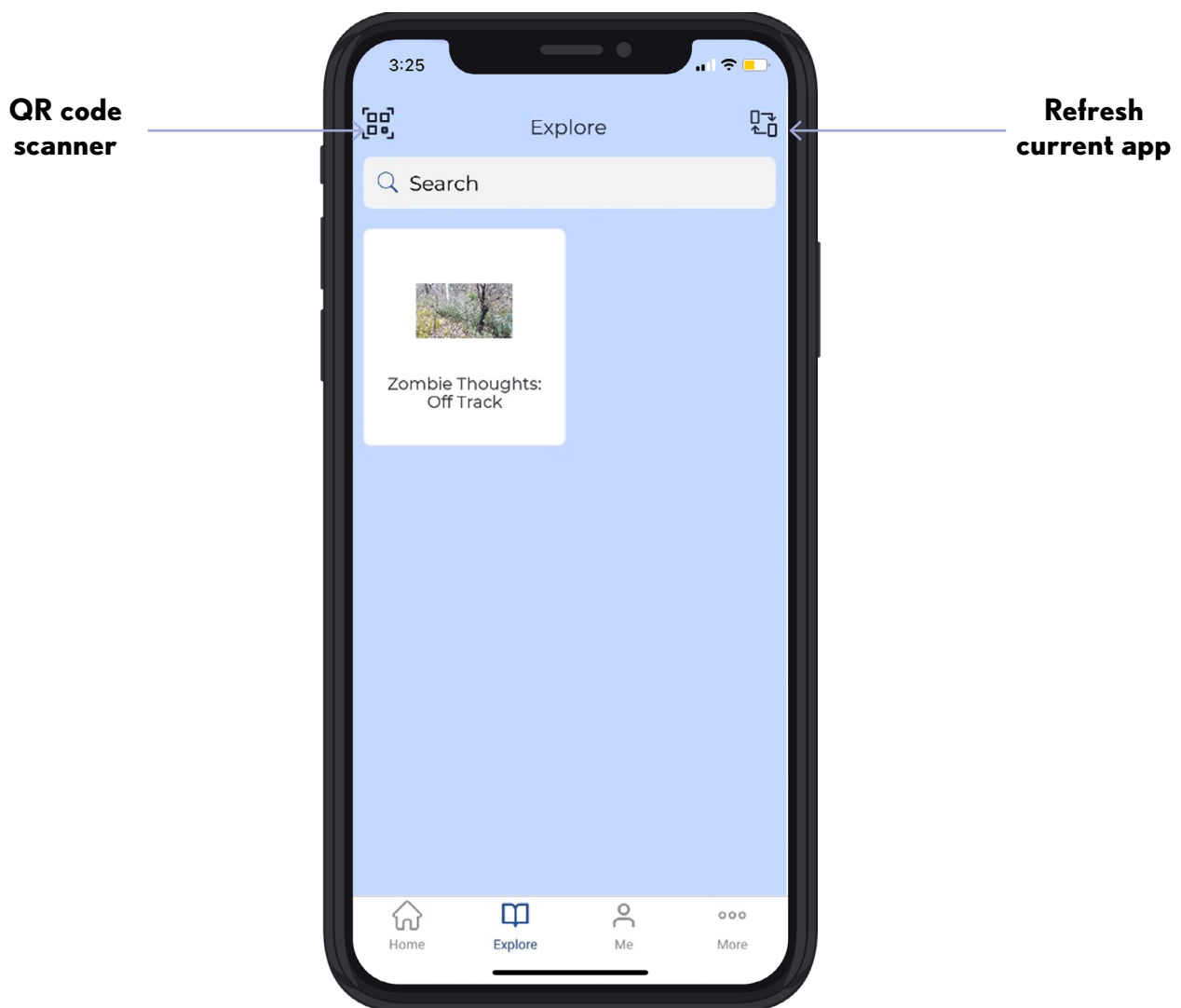
PART 3: SHARING AND RESPONDING

This final and important part involves sharing the work with others in the classroom.

1. Give time for students to share their journeys with others.
2. Questions – what did you like about the other journey's you went on?
3. What special messages of hope do you remember?

We hope you enjoy creating and sharing stories and adventures on this.

Remember to set up you can use one central email to set up multiple accounts. Users should have their own account/username.

TECH HELP

All the underlined instructions are hyperlinks that will take you directly to the Cogniss Website. However, if you need any extra help, email Leigh on: office_ntofp@nationaltheatreofparramatta.com.au.

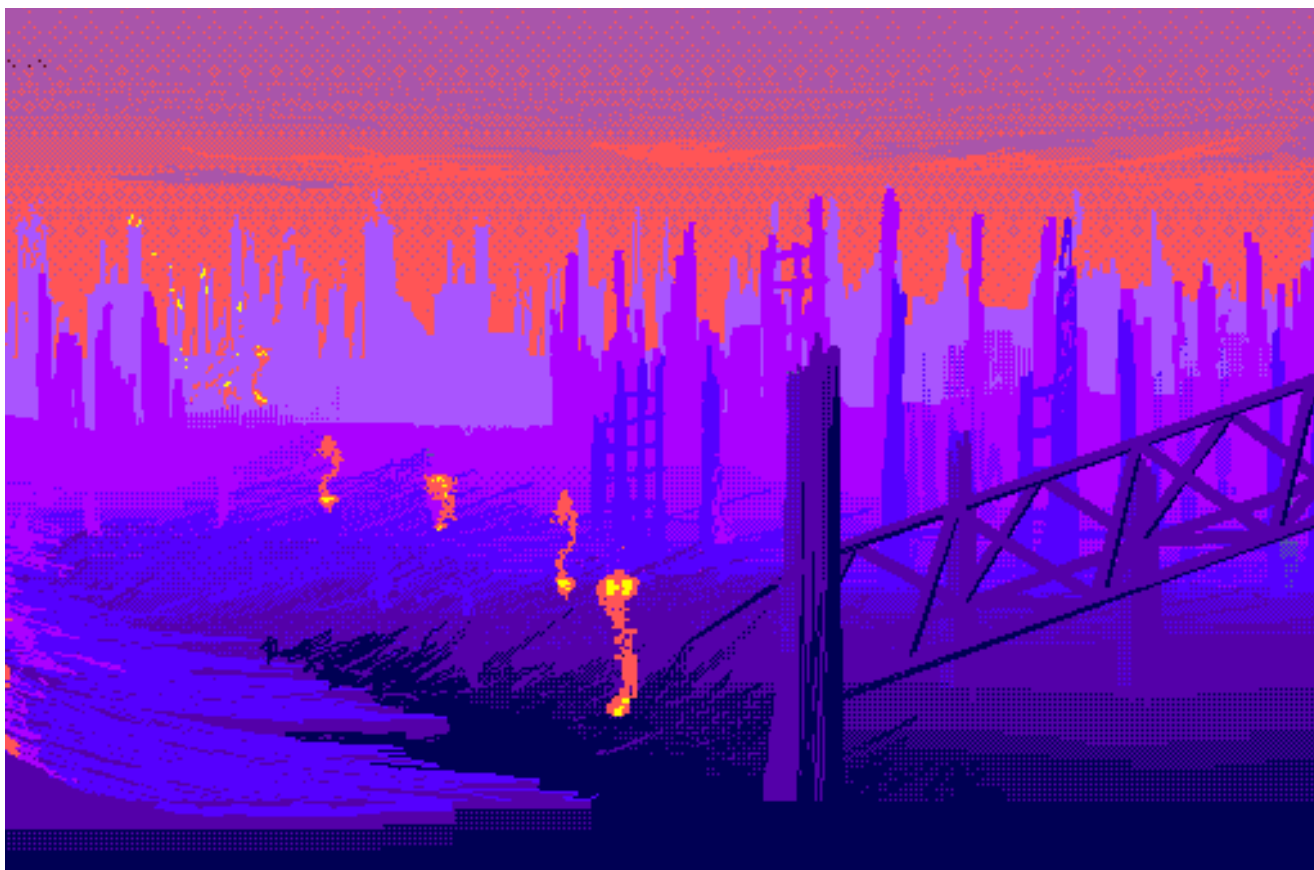Please send any feedback on your students experience with the app resource to office_ntofp@nationaltheatreofparramatta.com.au.

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RIVERSIDE and NTofP EDUCATION

NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARRAMATTA

Launched in 2015, Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta (NTofP) is creating and presenting transformative and inspirational professional theatre experiences that reflect the world around us and the diversity that is contemporary Australia.

We are *Putting the Nation on Stage.*

As part of Riverside Theatres, NTofP commissions, creates, produces, presents and tours work. We are equally committed to capacity building and nurturing talent by providing opportunities for theatre practitioners both on and off stage to develop their craft. We are creating communities, access, visibility and infrastructure that supports and builds capacity for performance in our region and beyond.

We engage the imagination of our audiences, taking them on inspirational journeys.

NTofP is committed to producing work and opportunities for young people through dedicated productions and programs.

RIVERSIDE THEATRES

Every year Riverside strives to compile the best performances for children and young people from around the country and around the world for our annual Education Program.

We bring our schools audiences shows that are not only educational, but creative, innovative, relevant and that have important things to say about our world.

From shows based on popular books, to stories we've never even dreamed of, Riverside's education program is all about providing top quality arts experiences to students of all ages and backgrounds.

In 2019, Riverside saw over 24,000 students see show as part of Riverside's Education Program.

COGNISS APP CREATORS

Cogniss is a no-code platform that people use to develop apps that help users acquire knowledge, master new skills and adopt positive behaviours. As a community of IT specialists, gamers and educators with an interest in psychology and neuroscience, the Cogniss team has created a platform that harnesses the knowledge of how the brain learns, unlocking methods that actively engage users and develop the resilience required for mastering new content.

These following questions are answered from the point of view of Leon Young, the founder of Cogniss. Leon is both a former games developer and software engineer with a strong interest in how the mind works and how to apply neuroscience and psychology to app design.

What attracted you to this project?

Cogniss started life as a platform for creating educational and health-related games apps. These are called 'Serious Games' and are very important tools that combine fun with learning and health outcomes. Recently Cogniss has been mostly used by academic researchers promoting mental health literacy or developing mental health interventions. It has always been part of our vision that students can use Cogniss to build their own fun and creative apps. NTofP's project approaches the problem in a very unique and innovative way, combining art and technology to engage a young audience, and to then empower them to create their own stories. We are excited to see what kids will create.

What do you hope the audience will feel engaging in the app?

We hope that the Zombie Thoughts app helps players better manage their own stress. This should lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of mental health challenges around them. We're excited to see students using the NTofP App Hub and the Cogniss platform to create their own interactive story-based apps and hope that this inspires a new generation of game and app developers, especially 'serious game' developers.

What were the challenges creating the app and how did you overcome them?

The app needed to be created quickly and with a modest budget. By training the NTofP team to use Cogniss, they were able to be actively involved in the apps creation, even though they were not professional
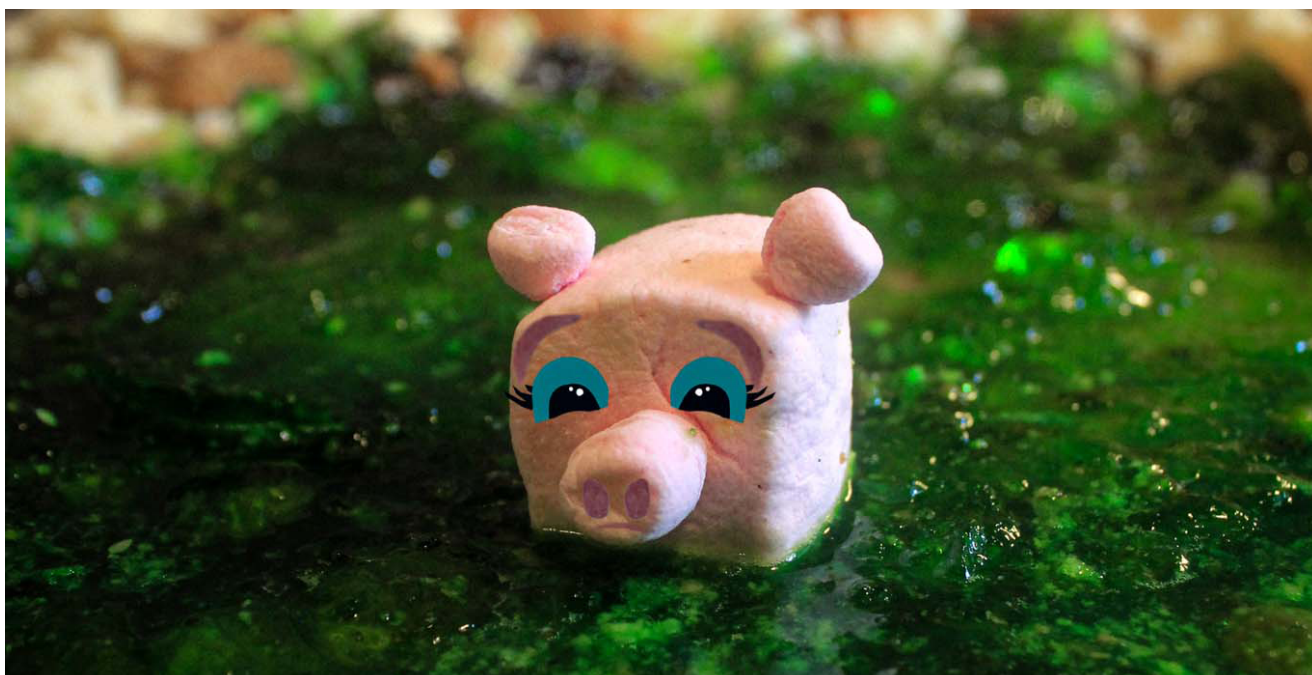
developers or games designers.

How did you get into the gaming industry?

As a teenager in the 1980's I was obsessed with the early arcade video games. This is the same time that the home computer revolution started. I taught myself to program, and launched my first business at 14 years old, publishing games that I had designed and built. In those days there was no internet, and people used to purchase those games from me by mail order. It turned out there were a lot of other kids and adults in Australia creating their own computer games, and within a year I was publishing games for 14 other amateur programmers. I'm very envious of kids today. There are so many great tools that allow you to create your own apps and games, and the internet and app stores make it easy to publish those and share them with the public. I had two businesses prior to starting Cogniss. One was a creator of a no code development tool for building web apps. The other was a specialist developer of educational games. Cogniss was created by my team combining the learnings from those two experiences into one product.

What is the best thing about working in gaming technology?

Gaming technology, and broadly all technology that influences behaviour change, attracts problems and projects that are quite unique and interesting. Also, often the solutions developed have a meaningful impact on the intended audiences. I've had the opportunity to work with leaders in education, games, neuroscience and mental health and contributed to solutions that have helped millions of people. I've also got to have a lot of fun and work with really creative and smart people.

What tips would you give a young player in creating their own game in the NTofP hub?

We'd recommend that young people see this as an opportunity to tell their authentic story, while having fun and being creative. The NTofP hub is simple enough that an individual student can do everything to create their own game. But as the interactive-story games incorporate game mechanics, story writing, graphics and sound, this is a great opportunity to collaborate with friends and classmates and combine your different passions and skills to create something amazing!

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