



Teachers Resource Pack



★ Welcome to the Teacher Resource Pack for First Family Entertainment's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, sponsored by Robinsons!

For many of us the annual school pantomime trip was our first experience of live theatre, and a very exciting and fun-filled one that kept us wanting to return again and again.

Linking your traditional end of term Christmas treat to exciting projects back in the class can help you and your pupils gain more from the experience and we hope that this pack will provide ideas and inspiration.

We have included a variety of background information and follow-up activities inspired by the pantomime genre and *Snow White* itself. The activities are designed to be adaptable to a range of ages and abilities, although the pack is written with particular focus on the Key Stage 1 and 2 National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy.

How to use this pack:

The pack is designed for you to dip in and out as you wish, picking resources and activities that best suit your class. With each section you will find a range of activities; look out for the symbols indicating the type of activity:



Performance



Art and Design



Writing



Discussion



Research



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The History and Traditions of Pantomime...

In this country we have all grown up with the annual pantomime as a traditional part of our Christmas celebrations but try explaining pantomime to an American, French or German child and see how much they understand of this strange tradition...

For a start there's a man dressed as a woman... and often a woman dressed as a man, lots of audience participation, lots more slapstick comedy and very often one or two animals thrown in. It is really a very British tradition not usually seen in other countries. So what really is panto and where does it come from?

The word 'pantomime' comes from the words 'panto' meaning 'all' and 'mime' meaning 'no words'... it is a story told in actions without words. It is generally believed to stem from the 16th Century Italian tradition of 'Commedia Dell' Arte'. These were very physical shows performed by travelling actors which told a repertoire of stories using mime, music, dance, acrobatics and slapstick. 'Commedia Dell' Arte' made its way across Europe to Britain where it became very popular and where its stock characters (such as the 'Harlequin' and 'Clown') began to appear in British plays. The form was developed until, in 1717 the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane opened what is now recognised as the first modern pantomime.

From these very early performances the genre developed, becoming more widespread as more theatres were granted performing licences and the traditions that we recognise today began to be introduced. The first transformation scene (such as Cinderella's famous transformation into a princess fit for a ball), now a necessity in pantomime, was first seen in 1849 in Planché's 'Island of Jewels', the use of the fairytales that we now know and love as pantomime titles first came about in the 19th century as pantomime became popular with children who already knew the storylines, the Victorian era saw the beginning of many Christmas traditions and it was at this time that pantomimes became particularly associated with the festive season and in 1902 Dan Leno became the first ever pantomime dame starring in 'Mother Goose'.



Find out more about Commedia Dell Arte, what it was, where it came from and the characters and stories involved. Develop your findings into a display or even produce your own Commedia Dell Arte inspired production.



Discuss what experience the class has of pantomime. Who has been before and what are their favourite pantomime traditions? If this is a first visit, what expectations does the class have. Invite an older member of the community into class to talk about their own memories of pantomime.



Write a letter to a pen friend from America who has never heard of pantomime – how would you explain what it is?



The Story of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*...

Our story is set a long time ago, in a magical kingdom, which is ruled by Snow White's stepmother, a wicked and vain queen.

The queen owns a magical mirror, which is the source of all her power. Every day she asks the mirror 'Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?' and always the mirror responds that she is the fairest in the land.

However, the Princess Snow White is growing up and becoming more beautiful each day until one morning, the mirror responds that the Princess Snow White is the fairest in all the kingdom.

And so eaten up by jealousy and rage, the Queen vows to kill Snow White. She orders the Princess be taken into the forest and killed, but Snow White escapes and is lost deep inside the forest. It is there that she meets the Seven Dwarfs. They give her shelter and she ends up living in their cottage, happy and safe, although dreaming of a Prince that she met many years ago.

The peace is broken, when the Queen discovers Snow White is still alive and so sets out to kill her once and for all. She concocts a spell to create a poisoned apple, and disguised as an old lady, she pays a visit to the Dwarfs' cottage and offers Snow White the apple. Upon taking a bite, Snow White falls to the ground, seemingly dead.

However, as in all good fairytales, good finds a way to triumph over evil. The spell that has claimed Snow White can be broken by love's first kiss. And so when the Prince finds and kisses her, she awakens to great celebration!



The synopsis given here is the pantomime version that you have seen. Look at some other versions of *Snow White*, including the classic fairy tale by the Grimm Brothers and more modern versions such as the Disney animated film.

Discuss where the versions differ and where they are similar; can the class identify similar characters, places and events across the versions?

Use the discussion to explore how the same narrative can be structured and written differently to suit the writer's purpose. Ask the class to retell the story in their own way to suit a chosen audience and medium.



Design a set for one of the scenes in *Snow White*.

Think about what is included in the scene and any features that are integral to it. Make sure your design will fit in with the overall look of the fairytale story.

Display your set designs to share with the rest of the class or school.



Characters in *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*...

Every pantomime has a number of 'stock characters', which we expect to see in every pantomime. There is always a villain, a hero or principal boy and his helper, a principal girl, an over-protective parent figure, a fairy, a dame and usually an animal.

The following characters all appear in *Snow White*:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Snow White | A beautiful princess who is taken in by the Seven Dwarfs after her wicked stepmother tries to kill her. |
| The Prince | Our hero. He wakes Snow White with a single kiss after she is poisoned. |
| The Seven Dwarfs | Friendly miners who work in the mountains near the forest. They take Snow White in after she escapes from her stepmother. |
| The Wicked Stepmother | A very vain woman who is jealous of her stepdaughters beauty. |
| The Henchman | The Wicked Stepmothers right hand man. |



Discuss the characters you have seen in *Snow White*.

Identify who the 'stock characters' are in the story. How do we identify them? What other characters do we see and do they fit into any of the roles given above? Can you think of any other stock characters that you would expect to see in a pantomime?



Design a costume or a piece of headwear for one of the characters in *Snow White*.

Think about who they are and their personality and choose a design that reflects this. Are they rich or poor? Outgoing or shy? Good or bad?



Split into groups assigning one character to each group and give each person a name tag. Move around the room until the teacher shouts 'stop' and turn to the nearest different character. Improvise a short scene with them, thinking about how your character feels towards the other. On 'go' move around again, next time stopping at a new character you've not met before.



A History of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*...

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was an old and very well known fairy tale, which had been told by oral storytellers for many years before first being published in a famous collection of fairytales by the Brothers Grimm in the 19th Century.

It is thought that the Grimm Brothers heard the story from two sisters called Jeanette and Amelie Hassenpflug and the original story does not differ too greatly from the version we know today, although there are elements that have since been added or taken away.

Various, more modern versions followed the Grimm Brothers tale including written versions and film productions. A cartoon short, starring Betty Boop was released in 1933.

But, as with many fairy tales, the most popular version was Walt Disney's 1937 animated film. *Snow White* was the first feature length animated film ever produced and quickly became the biggest box office success of the era. The Disney version was the first to name the dwarfs but as the corporation holds the copyright to these names, other versions must name them differently (or not at all)!

After the release of the film, stage adaptations began to appear in Britain, with the licence of Walt Disney. It was after this that more pantomime versions of the story began to be developed, with various elements adapted and characters added to suit the genre.



Read the Grimm Brothers version of *Snow White* and develop your own play or musical based on the traditional fairytale.

This could be a big project culminating in a performance or a smaller class project.



Discuss how the story of *Snow White* has been adapted to fit into the pantomime genre.

Think about what elements are required to make a pantomime and what has been added to or taken away from the original story and the Disney version to make it into a pantomime.

Pick another classic story and discuss how you would turn this into a pantomime script. In small groups ask the class to produce this new script, if there is time perhaps it could become a new class production!

Who were the Grimm Brothers...?

The Grimm brothers are well known for their versions of traditional folktales - before their book *Children's and Household Tales* was published, stories were passed down through word of mouth. The brothers were among the first to publish the stories and their particular style of storytelling has made them famous the world over.

Jacob Ludvig Carl Grimm (b.1785) and Wilhelm Carl Grimm (b.1786) were born in Hanau, Germany. Both brothers went to law school and whilst there developed an interest in folklore (stories passed down from parents to children). They began collecting stories from local story tellers, with Jacob doing the research and Wilhelm putting them into literary form.

Their first volume of fairytales, *Children's and Household Tales*, was published in 1812 and included 86 stories. The brothers versions were true to the tales that they had been told and serve up life as many Europeans knew it - cruel and harsh. This means that they are often quite different to the rosy, 'happy ever after' versions later told by other storytellers.

The brothers published 6 more volumes of their book and the final version holds over 200 stories. It is one of the best-known works of German literature.

The brothers were also experts on German history and were professors and scholars. They became renowned across Europe for their knowledge of folktales, language and all things German and published many other books during their lifetimes, including *German Mythology*, *Old German Tales* and even the German dictionary.

Wilhelm died in Berlin in 1859 and Jacob in 1863.



Split the class into groups and give each group a selection of fairytales written by the Grimm Brothers.

Each child should read one story and report back to the group, identifying different aspects of the story and explaining their response to it. The group should identify common features across the stories and present their findings to the rest of the class.



Following on from the task above ask the class to compare specific features of the stories such as character types, settings and events.

Collect information about the main character types (heroine, villain etc) and use this to make predictions about how they will act in different situations and/or settings. Explore the characters feelings using improvisation and role play.



Producing Your Own Pantomime...

A big event in any school calendar is always the Christmas production but if this is your first time in the directors chair it can be a daunting prospect! Our brief guide to producing panto should get you started...

1/ Choose your title... Decide which pantomime you would like to produce. Traditional favourites include Peter Pan, Cinderella, Dick Whittington and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

You may wish to write your own script with references to local people or places (perhaps your baddie is the headmaster and your fairy the lollipop lady!) or use a pre-written script but if you do, remember that you will need to pay for the performance rights.

2/ Cast your stars... Once you have a script ready you will need to cast your stars... hold auditions to choose main characters although when working with young children it is nice to ensure there are enough parts for everyone, providing numbers are manageable. If there is a lot of interest some children could be encouraged to be involved behind the scenes.

It can be an idea to hold a workshop rather than 'x-factor' style auditions to take the pressure off individuals.

3/ Give out scripts and arrange rehearsals... Now your script is completed and your cast have been given their roles, hand out scripts and encourage everyone to learn their lines BEFORE rehearsals start. This will give you more time to devise each scene and work on movement and spacing.

Give out rehearsal schedules with dates and times so everyone knows when they are needed in advance. It may also help to outline what you hope to achieve in each session so you know that you are on track for opening night!

4/ Sets, props and lighting... Get some volunteers involved at this stage! The school caretaker and parents who are handy with DIY may be able to help. Sets and lighting may be more or less complicated depending on the facilities your school has but remember to make them easy to work with. If necessary it is better to keep things simple.

5/ Costumes... Again a volunteer who is handy with a needle is useful here! Your wardrobe mistress will need to identify any specific costumes needed for principal characters as these may need to be specially made or hired. For ensemble pick simpler costumes that can be picked up easily on the high street or that some may already have and ask parents for donations.

6/ Marketing... School plays always have a guaranteed audience of parents and family members but if you are relying on ticket sales to help cover the costs of the production some marketing is useful! Encourage the children to sell as many tickets as possible by offering a prize for the person who sells the most. Encourage the schools wider community to be involved by coming along as well...your local press and 'What's On' Guides can help with this.

7/ Opening Night..! Ensure you have had at least 3 run-throughs of the entire play, including a technical and dress rehearsal and you are ready to go! Break a leg!



Resources...

You may find the following resources useful for information on pantomime and ***Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs...***

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs by Ladybird.
Ladybird Tales, 2008.

Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. DVD.
1937; USA. Walt Disney Productions.

www.surlalunefairytales.com for a collection of classic fairytales and information on their origins.

www.its-behind-you.com for information on *Snow White* and the pantomime genre.

www.wikipedia.org - For information on *Snow White*, The Grimm Brothers and the pantomime genre.

www.grimmfairytales.com - For information on the Grimm Brothers and their stories.