National Theatre Collection

I Want My Hat Back Primary Schools Learning Pack

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About

This learning pack is designed to be used by primary school teachers as they explore the National Theatre's production of *I Want My Hat Back*, which was directed by Wils Wilson, based on the much-loved children's picture book by Jon Klassen. The production opened at the National Theatre on 12th November 2015.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK primary school curriculum. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Background Information

Recording Date – 22nd December, 2015 Location – Temporary Theatre, National Theatre Age Recommendation – 3+ / Early Years+

Cast

Thing, Ensemble	Naana Agyei-Ampadu
Bear, Ensemble	Marek Larwood
Trumpet, Ensemble	Adam Pleeth
Snake, Ensemble	Natalie Klamar
Tortoise, Ensemble	Pieter Lawman
Rabbit, Ensemble	Steven Webb
Tuba, Ensemble	Richie Hart
Ensemble	Oliver Birch

Creative Team

Director	Wils Wilson
Writer	Jon Klassen
Music	Arthur Darvill
Book and lyrics	Joel Horwood
Set and Costume Designer	Fly Davis
Lighting Designer	Beky Stoddart
Sound Designer	Joel Price
Movement Director	Imogen Knight
Music Director	Oliver Birch

Teaching Information

Suitable for ages 3+ / Early Years+

- This production is an adaptation of Jon Klassen's picture book of the same name. It was adapted for the stage by Joel Horwood, with music by Arthur Darvill. The original book is only 30 pages long, with very few words. The production lasts just under an hour and elongates the telling of the story with song, movement and audience participation.
- When the production was originally staged, the marketing material stated it was suitable for audiences aged 3 to 103. Whilst the production was created with young children in mind, it is suitable for all ages.
- This production offers a vibrant and accessible introduction to theatre for children, allowing them to engage with a story they may know from a book and see it brought to life on-stage.
- You might like to explore the similarities and differences between the original picture book and the stage adaptation with your class.
- The way in which the production is staged is very imaginative and playful. You might like to explore the way in which the different animal characters are brought to life, or how music is used to create different moods.
- The production offers opportunities for cross-curricular learning, from design technology and art, to PHSE, drama and literacy.

Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

The band (The Stags) play as the audience and actors come in.

(01:20) Bear is tired. He lovingly removes his red hat, before falling asleep.

(04:55) Rabbit hops in, sees the hat and can't believe his eyes. Rabbit sings about how entranced he is by it – he thinks the hat is meant for him, it even fits and he can't see anyone else it could belong to.

(08:50) Rabbit takes the hat to Lost Property, but can't bring himself to hand it over: 'This hat is not mine but I am TAKING IT!'

(10:10) Bear wakes up and realises his hat has gone. He wants it back and begins interrogating members the audience.

(13:45) Bear then goes to Lost Property. He is given a number of different objects including an umbrella, bunting and a traffic cone, but his hat isn't one of them.

(17:30) Every time Bear takes a step, music plays. He decides to go on the hunt for his missing hat.

(18:25) Bear asks Three Frogs if they have seen his hat – they discuss it amongst themselves and laugh at something. Realising Bear is still waiting for answer they turn to him: 'No hats around here'.

(19:46) Bear continues his quest and meets a Fox, who is hunting. (Rabbit hops past, singing to his stolen hat.) Fox hasn't seen Bear's hat either, and gets back to hunting.



Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

(22:12) Tortoise is trying to climb a rock. He hushes Bear as he goes through a 'strength-building' workout. After failing several times in his attempt to scale the rock, Tortoise listens to Bear. Tortoise hasn't 'seen anything all day'. Bear takes pity on Tortoise and lifts him to the top of the rock.

(26:27) Rabbit dances: 'There's a red hat sitting on my head / And I'm singing about it'.

(27:29) Bear turns up and asks if Rabbit has seen his hat. Rabbit is shocked Bear is asking him: 'I would not steal a hat'. Bear accepts his answer and Rabbit runs away.

(29:21) After continuing, Bear encounters Snake, who has seen lots of hats. She offers him lots of hats and sings as she tries to figure out what colour Bear's missing hat is. Finally she produces a red hat as Rabbit dances across the stage, but it's not the right one.



Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

(35:40) Continuing his journey, Bear dismisses the band before bumps into Thing. He asks if she has seen his hat, but she doesn't know what a hat is.

(38:15) Sad music plays as Bear worries about never finding his hat again. 'My poor hat. I miss it so much.' In sadness, he plays a kazoo.

(39:45) The Stags have been watching Bear and ask what his hat looks like. He starts to describe it and realises he has seen his hat. Running past Snake, Fox and the three Frogs, Bear finally finds Rabbit again.

(42:44) Bear accuses Rabbit of stealing his hat. After a stand-off, Bear takes it back. Spanish music plays as Rabbit sings his goodbye.

(46:35) Squirrel comes looking for Rabbit. Bear is shocked he's being asked about him, 'I haven't seen any rabbits anywhere... Don't ask me any more questions'.

(47:40) The seasons pass, and Bear sits, feeling guilty. Thing comes past and takes an interest in Bear's hat. He gives the hat to her, and she sings in delight. Not only does she now have a hat, it's in her favourite colour (red), and she also has a new friend (Bear). The company sing about how wonderful they feel when they wear a hat: 'A hat's a creature's bestest friend / I'm gonna wear my lovely hat / Until the very end'.

The End

Classroom Activities and Exercises

Below you'll find a selection of exercises designed for teachers to use with their **Key Stage 1** students to help begin to open up different aspects of the play.

Before you begin these exercises with your children, you should read *I Want My Hat Back* with them and/or watch the production on the National Theatre Collection. You may wish to read sections again or watch clips as you do these exercises.



Classroom Activities and Exercises

Activity 1: Role on the Wall

Role on the wall is a technique that uses a displayed outline of the character to record feelings (inside the outline) and outward appearances (outside the outline) at various stopping points throughout the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character's emotional journey.

- 1. Show the children the front cover of the book with the title and text obscured. Invite the children to respond to the illustration and express their initial perceptions.
- 2. Draw a large outline in the shape of the bear on some sugar paper and conduct a role on the wall activity. Discuss and note words, phrases and reflections on what the illustration tells us about his outward appearance on the outside of the drawn outline. On the inside of the outline note words, phrases and reflections on what he might be thinking and feeling.
- 3. Place the outline and corresponding notes on a wall that is visible and accessible in order to allow you to revisit it as you move through the sequence.
- 4. Provide the children with thought bubble templates and invite them to write what they think the bear might be thinking in this moment.
- 5. Make a large colour copy of the bear and place this either, on a page at the beginning of a class journal or at the start of your working wall. Place the different thought bubbles around the bear. This activity can be repeated at key points in the story in order to consider how his thoughts and feelings develop and change as the story progresses.

Classroom Activities and Exercises

Activity 2: The Indefinite Prop

Drama activities enable children to explore character feelings, dilemmas and motivations. An exercise to encourage consideration of the purpose of a prop. This activity also develops a child's ability to infer meaning, hypothesis and construct simple sentences.

- 1. Prior to the session create a cone shaped hat using red card in the style of the hat depicted in the book.
- 2. Invite the children to form a circle. Reveal the hat and place it in the centre of the circle without naming or identifying its purpose.
- 3. Ask the children to consider what it might represent and how it might be used. Once they have an idea they should be encouraged to take it in turns to enter the circle and using the prop model what it might be and how it might be used. Once modelled encourage them to state, 'It's a/ an...' Take a photograph of each pose.
- 4. Each child can at a later stage be invited to write the sentence that accompanies their photograph using the simple sentence structure, 'It's a/ an ...' or more extended sentences as appropriate. The photographs and accompanying text can then be compiled to form the basis of a class book.
- 5. Using masking tape stick a long roll of paper either on the wall of the room or on the floor and invite the children to draw or write down the different variations of purposes that the red object might have.
- 6. Place the completed roll of paper either along the top or bottom of your classroom wall.

Classroom Activities and Exercises

Activity 3: The Definite Prop

An exercise to generate imaginative responses to the question 'Who does this hat belong to?'

- 1. Invite the children to enter a hall space.
- 2. Prior to entering the space, ensure that the red, pointy hat has been positioned in the centre of the room.
- 3. Form a large circle around the hat.
- 4. This time identify the object as a hat and ask some questions of the children. Where did this hat come from? How long might it have been here? Who might have left it here? Who might it belong to? Why did they leave the hat behind? What should we do with the hat?
- 5. Once you have generated some responses, explain that the hat actually belongs to someone in the room. However, they will only be able to wear the hat if they can tell a story about the hat that convinces everybody that they are the owners.
- 6. As it is their hat, they will be able to tell everyone things about the hat, such as how they came to own the hat and how long they have owned it or how it came to be in the middle of the hall.

Classroom Activities and Exercises

Activity 4: Still Image Work

This is a pre-reading exercise to stimulate story-making and sequencing skills.

1. In groups of 4/5, ask children to create a series of still images with the following titles:

A bear in a forest

A chase through the forest

A snake in a tree

A fight between a bear and a rabbit

A hat

A naughty rabbit

A bear talks to other animals

- 2. Once the children have created all of the still images, ask them what order they feel the tableaux should be presented in and ask them to practice this sequence. What do they think is the story?
- 3. Children can then add a simple line to 3 of their still images to help us understand what is happening in their story. For example, what might the bear be saying when he talks to the other animals?

Classroom Activities and Exercises

Activity 5: Who is the Thief?

This is an exercise to introduce children to dramatic tension.

- 1. With children standing in a circle, ask everyone to close their eyes. Tell the group that you are going to walk around the circle and tap someone on the shoulder and that person is the hat thief they have stolen your hat!
- 2. On your signal the children can open their eyes and must look at each other carefully to see if they can identify who the thief might be from their body language alone. Who looks guilty? How can you tell? Is it the way they stand? Are they pulling a strange face? Do they look worried?
- 3. Once they have made their decision about who the culprit is, they should point at their suspect and exclaim "You stole my hat!" Challenge pupils to justify their decision. Ask the thief to step forward. Ask children to apologise to anyone they falsely accused.
- 4. Play in 3 distinct rounds where, firstly, you nominate one person; in the second round, nominate no-one; in the final round, nominate everyone in the group.
- 5. Discuss what might have informed the choices made by the nominated bear and how it felt to be accused by the bear.

Find out more

Short Film Content: Theatre-Making

In addition to the above films, which are specific to this production, you might also like to explore this series, which introduces a younger audience to some of the fundamental roles in the theatre. These films are aimed at children and will help them to understand the different people who work together to bring a play to life.

What is an Actor?

What is a Director?

What is a Designer?

What is a Composer?

What is a Playwright?

You might also like to show your class this short film, which gives a glimpse behind the scenes at the National Theatre and introduces who and what it takes to put on a production.

Welcome to the National Theatre

Staging Children's Stories at the NT

If you'd like to find out more about other children's stories that have been staged at the National Theatre, you might like to explore this **Google Arts and Culture exhibit**.

Find out more

More for Primary Schools

The Primary Programme works with schools both in London and across the UK, offering pupils and teachers enriching opportunities to experience theatre both as audience members and theatre makers, with a focus on creative learning across the whole primary curriculum.

If you'd like to find out more, visit https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/schools/primary

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and learning about *I* Want My Hat Back. Don't forget that there are more fantastic productions to explore as part of the **National Theatre Collection**.

We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?

If you have any comments or feedback on our resources please contact us: ntcollection@nationaltheatre.org.uk