

# National Theatre Collection

*wonder.land*

## Key Stage 3 Resource



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### wonder.land

These activities are designed to support Key Stage Three students as they watch *wonder.land*. They include research, discussion, writing and creative tasks, most of which can be carried out in isolation or via a digital platform if required.



#### Research The Original Story of Alice in Wonderland

*wonder.land* is based on Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The novel is one of the most famous and most popular novels in the literary nonsense genre. It has been adapted for the stage and screen many times. Research the origins of the novel and its evolution in popular culture:

- Find out about Lewis Carroll and what inspired him to write the original novel (you might like to look in particular at Alice Liddell).
- Find out about other poems and stories which are part of the literary nonsense genre. You may recognise some of them from your childhood. Why do you think people enjoy these?
- Look at other adaptations of the story in books, films and stage productions ranging from the 1951 and 2010 Disney films to the graphic novel *Alice in Sunderland*. The story remains very popular and has stood the test of time. Why do you think this is?



#### Discuss The Dangers and Merits of the Online World

In the production, Ally struggles with her real life and finds an escape in an online world.

At the end of the show, the MC holds up a smartphone and says:

*"So if you want to hide here,  
Be careful what you play.  
To follow the White Rabbit,  
You only press OK."*

This suggests how easy it is to enter an online world, but also offers a warning about doing so.

- Discuss the positive and negative aspects of the internet, particularly its use by and influence on young people.
- Do you think that it is fair to restrict young people's access to the internet?
- Do you think there is a danger in people expressing their views online? Or do you think this can encourage healthy debate?



## Create Your Own Avatar and Design their Costume

In the production Ally creates an avatar (Alice) who is everything she is not and everything she thinks she wants to be.

Try designing your own avatar character:

- Think about who they are, what they look like and what they represent. Will your avatar take on a human form, an animal form or something completely made up? Are they a big, bold character or are they small and quiet?
- Draw your avatar, labelling their different characteristics.
- Design their costume, thinking about how it might illustrate their character and help the audience to understand something about them. You might (like Ally) like to take inspiration from a character from a well-known story like Alice in Wonderland. You might also like to think about what gaming characters look like and use some of their characteristics in your design.



## Write a Song or Poem

Ally sings the song 'Secrets' to Alice, revealing a lot of things that she usually cannot say out loud to anyone:

*"I've got secrets that loom in my head when I sleep,  
Secrets I'm burning to say not to keep."*

- Choose another character from the production and think about the secrets they might be keeping from others.
- Write a short song or poem for your character to sing/speak, revealing their secrets to the audience.
- Think about the structure of your song/poem and how you can gradually reveal the information, making it exciting for the audience to listen to. Think about how you can use rhyme and repetition in your writing to make your song or poem more dramatic.





## Research the Work of Rae Smith

Rae Smith was the set designer for the National Theatre production of *wonder.land*.

Research her career and see if you can find out:

- Why she wanted to be a theatre designer and whether anyone in particular influenced her.
- What her training to become a designer involved.
- Which other productions she has designed. You might like to start with her work on *War Horse*.
- Whether she has key collaborators that she works with on a production – for example, does she often work with a particular director?

## Write Your Own Adaptation

As discussed above, *wonder.land* is based on Lewis Carroll's celebrated novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The story has been updated to resonate with a modern audience, but many of the original themes are still present.

Choose another traditional story and think about how you would update it for a modern audience. Write a summary of the new version of your story. You should think about:

- Which characters you will keep from the original story and how you will update their journeys.
- The new setting for your story.
- How you can incorporate the themes and key messages from the original sort or what you might need to update them.
- A new title for your story.

You might like to use your summary as the basis for creating your own piece of theatre. Exciting adaptations of existing stories are a great starting point for devised work. You might like to research the work of Sally Cookson, whose brilliant stage adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Peter Pan* are part of the NT Collection.