

# National Theatre Collection



## The Magic Finger

**Cross-Curricular Learning Guide**

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# Introduction to the Production

## Recommended age group: KS1 & Lower KS2

The Unicorn Theatre's ***The Magic Finger*** uses innovative storytelling techniques and clever staging to bring Roald Dahl's text to life.

The lead character is a strong young girl who has a clear sense of right and wrong. Her reaction to those who are bad or wrong is to cast a form of spell on them by way of her magic finger. When experiencing rage she is unable to control herself, and her anger is always directed at those who are acting in ways they shouldn't. But are her actions correct – do two wrongs make a right?

As a text, ***The Magic Finger*** sits as a strong text for a literacy unit, but perhaps the element that sets it apart from other texts is the fact that it ties into the PSHE curriculum very well.

Cross-curricular learning opportunities:

- English
- Geography
- PSHE

This Cross-Curricular Learning Guide illustrates how primary school teachers can use this production to support teaching across curriculum subjects such as English, History, Geography and PSHE. This guide offers sequences of activities and suggested lesson structures.

Any activity highlighted in red can be found in the Creative Learning Activity Guide, a separate document found on the [National Theatre Collection](#) and [National Theatre Learning Hub](#). That guide offers step by step instructions on how to deliver the exercises.

# Cross-Curricular Learning

## English

### Key outcomes of the curriculum targeted:

*Spoken Language: Physical; Linguistic; Cognitive; Social and Emotional Oracy (Leading to high-quality written outcomes)*

- Students will need to grasp the narrative completely to fully consider events, locations and character actions.
- Before writing, students will need to be able to retell the story and, to develop confidence to do this, they will need to approach the story in different ways: shared retelling, individual retelling and acting out parts of the story.
- The following combination of activities will empower all students to create high-quality written narrative-based outcomes, to build out the world of the narrative in their Geography sessions and to move on to conversations that focus on character actions in their PSHE sessions.

### WHY NOT:

- Follow a viewing of the production with **Group Speeds** (see Creative Learning Activities), inviting students to move around the space, retelling the story to themselves as they walk.
- Call 'Stop' and ask students to find partners and to carry out **3-2-1** (see Creative Learning Activities).
- Merge partners to make groups of four and give them a selection of stones, paper and pens and invite them to make **Story Stones** (see Creative Learning Activities). Allow groups to present their story stones and how to use them to the rest of the class.
- Use the Story Stones activity to identify the main story points. Capture them on individual pieces of paper and then divide your class into groups of five or six. Carry out **Freeze Frames with Reporter and Line Ghost**.
- Gather the class together and carry out **And Then** (see Creative Learning Activities).
- Students will now be ready to carry out a written English activity with confidence and/or to apply their thinking to any of the following Foundation subject areas.

**Key outcomes of the curriculum targeted:**

*Reading: Word Reading and Comprehension*

- The Magic Finger could serve as an introduction to the world of Roald Dahl

**WHY NOT:**

- Fill your reading corner with a range of Roald Dahl texts and provide Post-It notes and pens, encouraging students to critique the books they have read and to make recommendations for friends.
- Take a trip to your local library to find other stories that link to the text.
- Provide students with a range of non-fiction texts that introduce them to the UK countryside so that they can fully understand the world and empathise with the narrator's frustrations over the actions of the Gregg family.



## Geography

### Key outcomes of the curriculum targeted:

*Location Knowledge; Place Knowledge; Physical and Human Geography; Geographical Skills*

- *The Magic Finger* takes place in the countryside. Locations include: farmhouses; lakes; fields; farmyards. For many students these locations will be unfamiliar. Students will need to fully understand the world before they are able to truly imagine the events in the story and to write about it.

### WHY NOT:

- Create a list of locations in the narrative and use ICT and information texts to establish the human and physical features of the UK countryside. Allow students to search for images that make them think of the locations in the story and save them for printing and use in the following activity.
- Use the **World of the Story Mindmap** activity (see Creative Learning Activities) to bring the different locations in the story to life, dividing the class into groups of five or six and supporting them to create their own detailed worlds, using all senses and gathering images, textures, smells, sounds and tastes. These could be used to create a tourist guide to the area or to add detail to a diary entry or descriptive passage in a story rewrite.
- Invite students to think about the world of the story from a bird's eye view. Where would each of the locations be in relation to each other? How would the characters get to each location? Using geographical knowledge from earlier research, students should work together to create a **Masking Tape World** for *The Magic Finger*.

## PSHE

### **Key outcomes of the curriculum targeted:**

*Health and Wellbeing; Relationships; Living in the Wider World*

The narrator in *The Magic Finger* has a strong sense of right and wrong. When something is, in her mind, wrong, she feels immense anger. Her magic powers mean that she acts on her judgements: her magic finger starts to tingle and she causes physical harm to those she is angry with.

The Gregg family are avid hunters. They kill animals and birds without a care. The ducks seek revenge, they invade the Greggs' home and almost carry out the same crime committed against them.

### **Key areas for discussion:**

- Was the narrator right to punish her teacher and the Gregg family? Is there something else she could have done? What methods help us to use our words over physical actions?
- The ducks have experienced a terrible amount of tragedy and loss. Are their actions understandable? Did they act in the right way or should they have done something different?
- Areas to consider could include the following (as listed in the Programme of Study for PSHE Education, PSHE Association):

#### **KS1**

- Mental Health: H11–16, H18 and H19
- Respecting Self and Others: R21, R23, R25
- Shared Responsibilities: L1–3

#### **KS2**

- Mental Health: H15–24
- Respecting Self and Others: R30–34
- Shared Responsibilities: L1, L2, L4, L5

## WHY NOT:

- Use **Role on the Wall with Statues and Thought-Tapping** (see Creative Learning Resources) to develop in-depth studies of the inner thoughts, feelings and reactions of key characters.
- Identify a key moment, from which all other events unfold. How could that be changed? Which character needs to change their actions? How should they change them? Select a character from one of the Role on the Wall groups and use **Conscience Alley** (see Creative Learning Resources) to provide alternative actions for the character. Play out and find out if the story now has an alternative outcome.
- Follow Role on the Wall with **Group Speeds** (see Creative Learning Resources) and ask the class to get into partners with a 'character' from a different Role on the Wall group. Carry out **Character POV** (see Creative Learning Resources) to hear the stories from alternative viewpoints.
- Hand out **Open-Ended Questions** (see Creative Learning Resources) to partners and use **Hot-seating** (see Creative Learning Resources). Invite them to ask each other three questions, following the Character POV activity.





# Reading Corner Themes

## WHY NOT:

Select one of the locations from the narrative to inspire a themed reading corner. You could use one of the **World of the Story Mindmaps** created in your geography sessions to create a sensory and cosy space to read and reflect. You might want to create a space that celebrates the outdoors and nature, the nest the Greggs spend a night in or, perhaps, a room from one of the character's homes – the narrator's bedroom, the Greggs' living room.



# Linked Texts

Roald Dahl's catalogue is sizeable and could almost fill a reading corner on its own. We know, however, that students may prefer an alternative author voice or may wish to explore non-fiction texts in place of fiction. The following list of texts is by no means exhaustive but should offer some options for a range of different ability readers who are avid Roald Dahl fans, readers keen to explore texts linked to the narrative but by another author and for those who want to explore information texts.

## **Roald Dahl Novels**

- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
- *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*
- *James and the Giant Peach*
- *The Magic Finger*
- *Fantastic Mr Fox*
- *Danny: The Champion of the World*
- *My Uncle Oswald*
- *The Twits*
- *George's Marvellous Medicine*
- *The BFG*
- *The Witches*
- *The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me*
- *Matilda*
- *Esio Trot*

## **Roald Dahl Novellas**

- *Parson's Pleasure*
- *The Great Switcheroo*

## **Roald Dahl Collections of Short Stories**

- *Revolting Rhymes*
- *The Umbrella Man and Other Stories*
- *The Great Automatic Grammatizator and Other Stories*
- *Dirty Beasts*
- *The Best of Roald Dahl*
- *Two Fables*
- *Completely Unexpected Tales*

## Texts Similar to The Magic Finger by Other Authors

- *Mr Majeika* by Humphrey Carpenter
- *The 13-Storey Treehouse* by Andy Griffiths
- *The Worst Witch* by Jill Murphy
- *The Worst Witch Strikes Again* by Jill Murphy
- *Liar, Liar Series* by Gary Paulsen
- David Walliams novels:
  - *The Boy in the Dress*
  - *Mr Stink*
  - *Billionaire Boy*
  - *Gangsta Granny*
  - *RatBurger*
  - *Demon Dentist*
  - *Awful Auntie*
  - *Grandpa's Great Escape*
  - *The Midnight Gang*
  - *Bad Dad*
  - *Blob*

## Non-Fiction Texts

- *What a Waste* by Jess French
- *The English Countryside* by Ruth Binney
- *Countryside* by Anne-Kathrin Behl
- *The Last Garden Paperback* by Rachel Ip
- *Dear Earth Paperback* by Isabel Otter
- *A Year on Adam's Farm* by Rachael Saunders
- *National Trust: Look What I Found in the Woods* by Moira Butterfield and Jesus Verona

## Our Funders

Lead philanthropic support from Richard and Kara Gnodde. NT Collection is made possible in primary schools by the Hearn Foundation, as the Principal Funder of the Primary Schools Programme. NT Collection is also supported by The Attwood Education Foundation, Mike Staunton, and The Michael Marks Charitable Trust.

National Theatre Collection in New York City is supported by Penny and Bill Bardel.

All images in this guide are by Peter Schiazza.

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**Thank you**