

A theatrical production scene featuring three performers in white tutus against a backdrop of a blue and green curtain with yellow and pink paint splatters. One performer is hanging upside down from a horizontal bar on the left. Another performer is hanging from a rope on the right, holding a paintbrush. A third performer stands on the floor in the bottom left, also holding a paintbrush. The title 'BALLET SHOES' is written in large, white, distressed letters across the center.

National
Theatre

BALLET
SHOES

National Theatre Production of
Ballet Shoes: Scheme of Work

KS2
Years 5/6

National Theatre Production of Ballet Shoes: Scheme of Work KS2 Years 5/6

Welcome to the Ballet Shoes Scheme of Work.

Using the production as stimulus, this scheme of work is designed to support literacy, ignite children's imaginations and develop creative written outcomes in the classroom.

Aims of this scheme of work:

- To provide teachers with tried and tested, meaningful creative learning activities that can be used not only for this unit but in the future to develop strong, creative written outcomes across the curriculum.
- To highlight the full learning potential of a production and trip to a theatre.
- To offer a scheme of work that is adaptable for future theatre trips and for the exploration of any narratives and/or characters across the curriculum.
- To provide a scheme of work that is ultimately flexible, featuring lesson sequences that apply to the main aspects of any show: narrative, world and character.

The sessions offer practical activities to explore Ballet Shoes. We have also provided alternative options to ensure accessibility, inclusivity and appropriate application within your own learning and teaching environment.



Contents

Section One: Introducing the world of Ballet Shoes

- Creating a practical workshop space
- Warm-up activities – a practical guide to beginning drama sessions with your students
- Ballet Shoes synopsis

Section Two: Classroom sessions and activities

We recommend that session one takes place before your theatre visit. The remaining sessions can be delivered after they have seen the production, at an appropriate time for your learners.

Session one

Introduction to the narrative: *Key words: plot, character, setting, storytelling.*

Session two

Performance review: *Key words: recount, reflect, analyse, review.*

Session three

Creating characters: *Key words: move, hotseat, imagine, create, write, empathise.*

Session four

Generating stories: *Key words: story, narrative elements, structure, plan, write.*

Session five

Creating the world of the production: *Key words: setting, sound, lighting, costume, create.*

Section Three: Additional activities

These activities can support short and medium-term project planning. You may like to select activities from this section if you are unable to complete a full session from the lesson plans above, or if you need to adapt the activities for your students.



Additional Resources:

Find out more about a career in set design with Ballet Shoes designer Frankie Bradshaw:

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/ballet-shoes-set-design-careers-insight>

British Sign Language Ballet Shoes story synopsis:

[Ballet Shoes 2025 BSL Introduction Primary with subs.mp4](#)

Session One:

Introducing the world of Ballet Shoes in school

Creating your practical workshop space

Most of the activities in this resource pack are intended to be completed practically. The ideal space for these would be a school hall, a large classroom or gym space. However, it is possible to adapt these activities to smaller spaces.

If you are working in a classroom, aim to move the furniture to the sides of the room, and ensure that there are no health and safety risks, including protruding chair or table legs, trip hazards or slippery surfaces.

One way of establishing practical work as different from routine desk-based activities is to begin and end each session standing or sitting in a circle. This practice is often adopted in professional rehearsals because it allows everyone to see and hear each other, the working space is defined, and it reduces any sense of hierarchy.

Warm-up activities – a practical guide to beginning drama sessions with your students

We have made suggestions in each session plan of which warm-up activities would suit each session. However, you are welcome to pick and choose the warm-up activities which most suit your learners. You can also find more activities and detailed explanations in our [Creating Learning Activity Guide](#).

Position of Drama

Description:

Any activity that requires students to stand in a circle, work creatively and freely should start with this and be included throughout. It removes self-consciousness, creates focus and a physical position that is ready for any style of creative and active learning.

Method:

1. Invite students to stand in a circle.
2. Establish appropriate posture and focus by asking students to form a 'position of drama'.

3. To the count of eight, ask them to:
 - a. Separate feet into a 'first position' – with feet connected at the heel but separated to 45 degrees at the toes.

Method:

- b. Separate heels into feet hip-width apart with feet parallel
- c. Shrug shoulders to ears
- d. Drop shoulders
- e. Take a deep breath in
- f. Deep breath out
- g. Pull an invisible rope from the top of their heads to the ceiling until they are taller
- h. Bring their hand to their side so that both hands hang at the sides, heads up and shoulders back.

Shakes

Description:

A very quick, really fun physical warm-up that gets everyone focused and in a physical position ready for active learning. You can do this at any time of the day to recalibrate a group.

Method:

1. Invite students to stand in a circle.
2. Tell them to hold their right hand and arm in the air and to copy you. Shake your right hand in their air to a count of five. All students should shake with you.
3. Repeat with the left hand, deliberately lowering your right arm and hand and raising the left arm and hand in the air and shaking it to a count of five. All students should shake with you.
4. Now lower your left arm and hand and stick out your right leg and foot. Shake your right foot to the count of five. All students should shake with you. Repeat with the left foot.
5. Now go back to the beginning and raise your right arm and hand. Shake it to a count of four. All students should shake with you. Repeat with left arm, right leg, and left leg to the count of four, then three, then two and then one.
6. Lastly, shake everything all in one go!

Synopsis

Here is a short synopsis of the story covering the main plot points and main characters to refer back to if needed throughout the scheme of work.

Our story begins in London in 1919 and continues through to the 1930s.

Great Uncle Matthew, otherwise known as GUM, is an eccentric explorer and an expert in dinosaurs and fossils. When he is not off on adventures he lives in a very big house in London, full of books, fossils and curiosities, which is run by his housekeeper Nana.

One day he finds out he has a long, lost niece, Sylvia, who has lost all her living relatives and is needing a home. As her last living relative, Nana convinces GUM to take her in.

Sylvia soon discovers she has a talent for drawing when she paints a dinosaur from GUM's fossil collection.

The following year GUM is away on another adventure. Whilst crossing the Atlantic Ocean, his ship hits an iceberg and while searching for survivors he discovers an orphaned baby girl. He decides to take her in and send her back to London to give her a home with Nana and Sylvia. Nana names her Pauline.

Two years later, GUM finds himself in a Russian hospital after an abseiling accident whilst excavating a herd of woolly mammoth. In the hospital, GUM adopts another orphaned baby girl. He sends her back to London where Nana names her Petrova.

Another two years pass and GUM, whilst on his travels to excavate a giant alligator, takes in yet another baby after meeting a young dancer who can no longer look after her child. She leaves the baby girl with GUM, with a pair of ballet shoes and the name Posy. Gum takes her back to London before going off on his travels again.

Seven years pass and there is no contact from GUM. He has stopped sending money for their upkeep.

When they get older, the sisters choose for themselves the surname 'Fossil', after being surrounded by GUM's huge collection of fossils and curiosities.

Sylvia happily takes on the role of guardian to the girls and they nickname her Garnie.

As money runs out, Sylvia makes the decision to take in lodgers to help pay for the increasing costs of living.

Doctor Jakes takes one room; she is a Doctor of Literature with a passion for Shakespeare.

Miss Theo Dane, who is a dance teacher and works at the Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training, takes the second room.

Posy has always dreamt of being a ballet dancer and impresses Theo with her natural talent for



dance. Theo thinks Posy should join her stage school.

All three sisters join the stage school and each has a very different educational journey.

Posy is taught by the old, strict-but-brilliant headmistress Madame Fidolia. Posy learns just how much work and dedication it takes to be your best at something.

Pauline, who at first rebels against the dancing, discovers a love for acting – helped along by the tutoring of Dr Jakes and her love of English literature.

Petrova feels like a fish out of water as performing isn't really her thing. She dreams of flying a plane and is drawn to the technical engineering part of theatre.

Due to rising costs, Sylvia takes in yet another lodger, Jai Saran, a garage mechanic. Jai and Sylvia have an instant attraction. Jai owns a motor car which captivates Petrova and he secretly teaches her to drive.

The three sisters come together and make a vow to earn money and save the house from being sold. They decide to put on a show – a futuristic version of A Midsummer Night's Dream – that they can tour to earn money.

Madame Fidolia coaches Posy for an audition to the only full-time ballet school in England, but on the morning of the big audition Posy discovers that Madame Fidolia has died. Posy doesn't make it to the audition.

Posy hears that the famous, French ballerina Juliette Manoff is in London and decides she must go and dance for her to have a chance of joining her school in Paris.

With Petrova at the wheel, the sisters borrow Jai's car and head to the theatre.



STOP READING HERE IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE AWAY THE ENDING

After seeing Posy dance, Manoff offers her a place at her school in Paris but asks how she will be able to afford the six years of training. Pauline says that she will pay for her sister. This will be with the money that she earns from a film contract in America, which she has recently been offered after being discovered in their play.

Sadly, they have to sell the house, but just before they leave GUM returns. He had lost his memory for the past eight years following a fall and now returns to see all the girls have grown up.

Sylvia has married Jai that morning, and plans to live above his garage and become an artist.

Pauline is moving to America with Dr Jakes to become a movie star.

Posy is going to Paris with Nana to train as a ballet dancer.

Theo is to become the new principal of The Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training School.

Petrova decides to live with GUM in Croydon because it has an aerodrome. She hopes that one day she will fly a plane.

Before they leave, the three sisters vow once more that, whatever may be, they will remain sisters – always.



Themes of the story:

Ambition

Family

Compassion

Discrimination

Empathy

Poverty



Section Two:

Introduction to the Narrative

This introductory session is a practical alternative to reading the synopsis aloud. Using a very scaffolded drama activity, you will guide the students through the narrative. They will also get a chance to consider the characters in the play and to embody them. Using physicality will help to embed key story points, events and characters ahead of the viewing, enabling them to enter the theatre feeling more confident and able to access the production fully.

You will need:

- An open teaching space, with any furniture moved to the side of the room.
- The ‘Whoosh’ synopsis.
- Pens and Post-It Notes or paper.
- A device to capture photographs if appropriate for your learners.
- You may also like to play some music that is used in the production such as ‘Sing, Sing, Sing’ (by Louis Prima, Andy Razaf & Leon Berry), ‘Mama, I Want to Make Music’ (by R Byron, W Kent & J Jerome).

This activity introduces the idea of a drama circle, and also indicates readiness to engage in the practical creative task. You might like to return to this activity to refocus groups, or to introduce subsequent sessions, explaining that rehearsals often start with a circle for the cast to see each other and make a focused start to their work.

Activity One: Whoosh

Description:

Using the story synopsis provided below, lead the group through a story whoosh to learn the main plot points and characters of Ballet Shoes before watching the show at the National Theatre.

If you don’t want to give away the ending, run it up to
‘With Petrova at the wheel, the sisters borrow Jai’s car and head to the theatre.’

Method:

1. Ask the students to sit in a circle and explain that the area **inside the circle is now their stage – the world of the story they are about to tell**. You will be inviting them to enter the space as the characters in each story point. When they enter, they will either become a part of the scenery you have named or mime the actions of a character you are referring to. When all characters have entered and frozen you will say ‘Whoosh!’ and everyone must clear the space, returning to their place in the circle.
2. You will then move on to the next story point and repeat the process of choosing different students to mime or create scenery for that section of the synopsis.
3. Now say ‘Whoosh’. All students inside the circle will return to their places on the edge of the circle.
4. Continue through each story point, choosing different members of the group for each section.

For a more detailed explanation of Whoosh!, please see page 17 of the Creative Learning Activity Guide

Ballet Shoes Story Whoosh

Our story begins in London in 1919 and continues through to the 1930s. Great Uncle Matthew, otherwise known as **GUM**, is an eccentric explorer and an expert in dinosaurs and fossils. When he is not off on adventures he lives in a very big house in London, full of books, fossils and curiosities, which is run by his housekeeper **Nana**.

WHOOSH

One day he finds out he has a long, lost niece, **Sylvia**, who has lost all her living relatives and needs a home. As Gum is Sylvia’s last living relative, Nana convinces GUM to take her in. Sylvia soon discovers she has a talent for drawing when she paints a dinosaur from GUM’s fossil collection. GUM is very impressed.

WHOOSH

The following year GUM is away on another adventure. His ship hits an iceberg while crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

While searching for survivors, GUM discovers an orphaned baby girl. He decides to take her in and sends her back to London to give her a home with Nana and Sylvia. Nana names her **Pauline**.

WHOOSH

Two years later, GUM finds himself in a Russian hospital after an abseiling accident while excavating a herd of woolly mammoth. In the hospital, GUM adopts another orphaned baby girl. He sends her back to London where Nana names her **Petrova**.

Story continues on the next page »

WHOOSH

Another two years pass. GUM, whilst on his travels to excavate a giant alligator, takes in yet another baby after meeting a young dancer who can't care for her child. She leaves the baby girl with GUM, with a pair of ballet shoes and the name Posy.

WHOOSH

When they get older, the sisters choose for themselves the surname 'Fossil' – after being surrounded by GUM's huge collection of fossils and curiosities. Sylvia happily takes on the role of guardian to the girls and they nickname her **Garnie**.

WHOOSH

Seven years pass and there is no contact from GUM. He has stopped sending money for their upkeep. Sylvia makes the decision to take in lodgers to help pay for the increasing costs of living.

Doctor Jakes takes one room; she is a Doctor of Literature with a passion for Shakespeare.

Miss Theo Dane, who is a dance teacher and works at the Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training, takes the second room.

WHOOSH

Posy has always dreamt of being a ballet dancer and impresses Theo with her natural talent for dance. Theo thinks Posy should join her stage school.

WHOOSH

All three sisters join the stage school.

Posy is taught by the old, strict-but-brilliant headmistress, **Madame Fidolia**. Posy learns just how much work and dedication it takes to be your best at something.

Pauline discovers a love for acting – helped along by the tutoring of Dr Jakes and her love of English literature.

Petrova feels like performing isn't really her thing. She dreams of flying a plane and is drawn to the technical engineering part of theatre.

WHOOSH

Due to rising costs, Sylvia takes in yet another lodger, **Jai Saran**, a garage mechanic. Jai and Sylvia have an instant attraction to each other. Jai owns a motor car which captivates Petrova and he secretly teaches her to drive.

WHOOSH

The three sisters come together and make a vow to earn money by putting on a show and save the house from being sold.

WHOOSH

Madame Fidolia continues to coach **Posy** for an audition to the only full-time ballet school in England, but on the morning of the big audition Posy discovers that Madame Fidolia has died. Posy doesn't make it to the audition and misses her chance.

Posy hears that the famous, French ballerina Juliette Manoff is performing in London and decides she must go and dance for her to have a chance of joining her school in Paris.

WHOOSH

The sisters borrow **Jai's** car and with **Petrova** at the wheel they rush to the theatre.

WHOOSH

END HERE IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE AWAY THE ENDING

After seeing Posy dance, **Juliette Manoff** offers her a place at her school in Paris. Pauline says that she will pay for her sister to go. This will be with the money that she earns from a film contract in America, which she has recently been offered after being discovered.

WHOOSH

Sadly, they still have to sell the house but just before they leave, **GUM** returns. He had lost his memory for the past eight years following a fall and now returns to see all the girls have grown up.

Sylvia has married **Jai** that morning, and plans to live above his garage and become an artist.

Pauline is moving with **Dr Jakes** to America to become a movie star.

Posy is going to Paris with **Nana** to train as a ballet dancer. **Theo** is to become the new principal of The Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training.

Petrova decides to live with GUM in Croydon because it has an aerodrome. She hopes that one day she will fly a plane.

Before they leave, the three sisters vow once more, that whatever may be, they will remain sisters – always.

WHOOSH

Character Clay Modelling

Method:

1. Ask the students to find a space and in pairs decide which student is going to act as a lump of clay and which one is going to be the sculptor. They are going to create a character from Ballet Shoes, which they can choose, or you can allocate them. Consider these key words to help them: explorer; dancer; mechanic; actor; artist.
2. Invite the sculptor to change their partner's physical appearance to create a character, as if they were a sculptor working with clay. The sculptor can create a character or create an action/emotion that is related to them. Depending on your group, they can change their partner's appearance through verbal instructions or using touch. Facial expressions can be modelled by the sculptor and then copied by the person being 'sculpted'.
3. When all your statues are ready, ask all the statues to stay still like they are exhibits in a museum and ask that all the sculptors walk around the space and look at the different interpretations of each character.
4. Swap around so all students have a chance to be the sculptor and the clay.
5. You could also invite the students to sculpt the aspirations of the characters below from Ballet Shoes, to prepare them for the plenary:
 - **Posy** – wants to become a principal ballerina (which is the highest level of ballet dancer)
 - **Pauline** – Aspires to become a Hollywood movie star
 - **Petrova** – would like to become a pilot
 - **Gum** – a professor of fossils who dreams of his next big discovery around the world.
 - **Sylvia (known as Garnie)** – wants to become an illustrator/artist.

Return to your 'position of drama' circle that you used to begin the session. Asks students to stand, rather than sit, this time and counting down from three to one, ask them to strike their own clay model pose of what they would like to be when they are older. (You might like to give them advance warning that you will be asking this question so that they can think about it beforehand).

Curriculum links:

This session asks students to:

Spoken Language

- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions.
- Maintain and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.
- Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.

Writing

- Consider how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed.



Session Two:

Performance Recount and Review

This sequence will support students to reflect on and recount what they saw. Most importantly, it will allow for meaningful reflection and analysis of the production, developing cultural currency and allowing them to voice opinions as to what they enjoyed most, found most interesting, characters they liked or did not like or that might have changed. Activities lead to a written review.

The lesson will also give the children an opportunity to reflect on the skills they learnt in the workshop.



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The lesson will also give the children an opportunity to reflect on the skills they learnt in the workshop.

You will need:

- An open space for practical work, with any furniture moved to the sides.
- Interviewer prompt questions, which you will find towards the end of this session plan.
- Paper and pens to capture ideas if you extend the practical session to include written work after activity two.

Suggested Warm-Up: Shakes

Activity one: Values continuum

1. Explain that you are going to make some statements and students are going to show how they feel about them by moving to different parts of the room according to their view.
2. Move to one side of the room and tell students that, if they agree 100 per cent with the statement you are about to say, they should move to that end of the room. Go to the other side and explain that they should move to this side if they strongly disagree with what you are about to say. Stand in the middle of the room and tell students they should stand there if they neither agree nor disagree/have no real opinion about it.
3. Give your first statement. This should be something general/fun/non-text related and one that will evoke opinions, such as 'Breakfast is better than dinner' / 'Computer games are better than television' / 'Cheese and onion crisps are the best flavour crisps in the world', etc. Allow students to move to the area of the hall that reflects their reaction to the statement.
4. Move across the space interviewing a student in each area to ascertain their thoughts about your statement. Allow other students to hear the views and to adjust their position in the room if they feel they agree more or less than the person who has spoken.
5. Now that you have established how the measuring tool works, you can use the same activity to establish thoughts, feelings, opinions and confidence in their own knowledge of the text/subject you are studying by asking statements like:
 - a. I really enjoyed Ballet Shoes – it was the best thing I've ever seen
 - b. Gum is a good man and someone to admire
 - c. The women in the play would all have achieved what they did with or without Gum.

The statements you choose can help you to create learning groups suited to your next activity. For example, if you want a class debate you could use comments like the second and third statements and create debate teams using the opposing sides of the room, whilst inviting those in the middle of the room to stand as people who need to be persuaded. You could rerun the value continuum at the end of the lesson to see if any opinions have changed through the debate.

Activity two: Chat show interviews

This is a creative exercise to explore what your students thought of the show with a basic structure of a review but played in a chat show format. This is the final exercise before putting pen to paper to write their reviews.

- 1. Split your students into pairs and ask them to label themselves **A** and **B**
- 2. **A** will pretend to be a presenter that is interviewing **B** just after watching Ballet Shoes

Examples of Presenters

- A chat show host
- A YouTube presenter
- A CBeebies presenter
- A podcast host
- Ant & Dec!

Using the prompt questions you have already printed. **A** will ask the questions below with **B** giving them honest answers to how they felt about the show.

Ask your students to swap around, so now **B** will ask the questions and **A** will respond. (Once both students have exhausted their ideas, you may wish to give them an opportunity to jot them down on paper if you are extending the task to include a written response.)

If appropriate, choose three pairs to perform/share their interviews with the rest of the class. (This may be one way of collecting various viewpoints to help with the optional review task in this session plan.) You might also draw attention to the differences between the different styles of interview (YouTube vs chat show, for example) and discuss how we change how we speak and act depending on who our audience is.

Printable interview prompt card template:

- What was the story?
- Who was your favourite character? Why?
- Was there any character you didn't like? Why?
- Did you enjoy Ballet Shoes?
- What was your favourite part of the story? Why?
- What was your favourite prop from the play?
- Did you have a favourite set?
- Did you have a favourite costume?
- Did you enjoy the music?
- Would you recommend it? Why?

Plenary: sharing opinions on a scale

Ask your students to stand in a long line across the room (not one behind the other) facing you. They are going to share their 'scores' for various criteria, so that you can gauge how to develop today's learning in the future. Using this original line as, they show one out of five by taking one large step forwards. Two will be two steps, three will be three steps and so on, up to five. After each statement, ask them to go back to zero.

Rating out of five:

- Costumes
- Set
- Dancing
- Story
- Interesting Characters
- Makes them think about their own ambitions for the future

Optional extension: Writing a review

- 1. Recalling the chat show interview activity, explain to students that they are now going to explore the range of differing review styles.
- 2. Provide examples of reviews of the production, which you can find online. Students should read as many reviews as they can.
- 3. They can now write their review for any audience they want and should select a style and tone that they feel would most appeal to their audience profile.
- 4. Students can now be grouped together for a moment of peer assessment: students will take turns to read each other's reviews and to give feedback.
- 5. Authors will now have a chance to make final edits before submitting their reviews for 'publication'.

Curriculum links

This session asks students to:

Speaking and Listening	Writing	Reading
Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers	Identify the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own	Read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks
Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge	Note and develop initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary	Read books and text that are structured in different ways, and read for a range of purposes

Speaking and Listening	Writing	Reading
Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions	Selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning	Identify and discuss themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings	Use a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs Assess the effectiveness of their own and others' writing Propose changes to vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to enhance effects and clarify meaning	Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader



Session Three: Creating Characters

The characters from Ballet Shoes will be explored at the start of this sequence before moving onto the creation of new characters. Students will explore physicality, backstory and use interview techniques to develop new and vibrant characters. Students will then be guided to create a detailed diary entry in their character’s voice as their final written piece.

You will need:

- A large space, with any furniture moved to the side
- Printable character cards which you will find at the end of this session plan

Suggested warm-up: Shakes or Remote Control

Activity one: New characters

1. Tell your class that the National Theatre has called on them for some character development work. They want to extend their cast and to create more scenes in the performing arts school and they need more characters to be able to do that.
2. Briefly discuss the different characters that they have already seen in the production: they should focus not just on the named roles, but the supporting ensemble who played various different people throughout the play.
3. Now ask students to think about the type of character they would like to bring to the cast. You can now guide your students through the list of information areas on the ‘character profile card’, starting with their character’s name, and ask them to write down, (or speak out loud depending on your group) their ideas about their character’s:

- a. Name
- b. Age
- c. Nationality
- d. Home town
- e. Occupation
- f. Siblings – please describe them
- g. Physical characteristics
- h. Hobbies
- i. Ambitions
- j. Strengths
- k. Weaknesses
- l. Perfect day

Once students have responded to these character elements, they can either work alone or in pairs to create their character’s physicality and facial expression. Invite them to walk around the room and call out different prompts such as ‘show me how your character would walk in the rain’ or ‘show me how your character would stand whilst being told off by a teacher’ etc.

You can also adapt this activity to include ‘role on the wall’, which you can find on page 23 of the Creative Learning Activity Guide.
As an alternative, students could simply draw their chosen character, and consider the costume that they would wear.

Writing in role

The above practical activity can be followed up by a subsequent written session which asks students to write in role as their chosen character.

- 1. Invite students to imagine that they have become their character: they look just like their character, move like their character and they should sit just as their character might.
- 2. Using your own written or oral prompts, or inspired by the guided meditation in the Creative Learning Activity Guide (page ten), guides students through ideas of what to include in a diary entry.
- 3. Students then write their diary entry.

What about?

Creating a class diary once all entries have been published: collating all first-day experiences as a memento from the project.

The Children’s Academy of Dancing and Stage Training

Name:

Age:

Nationality:

Home town:

Occupation:

Siblings – please describe them

Physical characteristics:

Hobbies:

Ambitions:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Describe your perfect day:

Plenary: Meeting and greeting the new cast

Explain that at the beginning of every rehearsal period for a play at the National Theatre, there is a ‘meet and greet’ event where everybody involved in the production (who we call the ‘company’) attends part of a rehearsal. They might play games or give presentations about different aspects of the show (for example, a designer will show photographs and a model of the set, the director might give a welcoming speech etc.)

One activity that happens in the meet and greet is that people will introduce either themselves, or someone else, to the rest of the company. In role as their chosen character, your students can do one of the following activities:

Option one: introducing ourselves	Option two: introducing someone else
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Start in the position of drama

Teacher, in role as the ‘director’ welcomes everyone to the rehearsals for this revival of Ballet Shoes and emphasises how important these new characters are to the production. The teacher models how to introduce oneself, and embodies the character by considering voice, facial expression and body language.

An example script might be, ‘Hello. My name is Annabel, and I am one of the of the top ballet students in the school. Madame Fidolia is very keen for me to become a famous dancer. I will be making sure that everyone knows their steps very well and can help anybody if they find a dance difficult. Do come and ask me for help.’

Once the teacher has introduced themselves, ask each student in role to introduce themselves to the rest of the company.

Start in the position of drama

Pair students up as appropriate to your group. This may be a random choice combining students who are standing opposite each other in the circle, or who they are standing directly next to, for example.

Ask them to label themselves A and B. A will introduce themselves to B in role and tell them as much information about their character as possible. B must listen carefully. After one minute, B (in role) then gives A as information about themselves.

Each pair then introduces each other to the rest of the company. As well as focusing on passing on the information, students should think carefully about how they are speaking, moving and using their facial expressions to communicate character.

Extension activity:

This session asks students to:

Speaking and listening	Writing (in the optional extension activity at the end of the session plan)
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Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge.

Give relevant strategies to build their vocabulary.

Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings.

Identify the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing models to their own.

Note and develop initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary.

Select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning.

In narratives, describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action.

Use a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs.



Session Four:

Generating Stories

Using inclusive, active alternatives to the standard story mountain, students will work collaboratively to create their own narratives. The newly formed locations, characters and sequences of events will then be captured in the creation of exciting news stories – who will get the front page?

You will need:

- A classroom with desks, with space at the front of the room or a large clear space with at least six chairs
- Pens and paper to record ideas

Suggested warm-up: Fruits

Activity one: Six-part story generator: Gum’s missing years radio news report

In this activity, your students will create a radio news report about Gum’s latest discovery using the ‘six-point story method’. This technique is a way of learning the six parts of a story structure in an inclusive, fun and physical way. This activity can be carried out in small groups with one child at a time and each creating a new story, or as a whole-class activity, with each part of the story being created by several students. You will find full instructions for this activity on page 22 of our Creative Learning Activity Guide

Alternatively, seat the class in a circle. Tell students that they need to include character, environment, mission, obstacle, help and resolution in the story that they are about to tell. Each student contributes one sentence to the telling of the story before passing the responsibility to the person to their right.

Part two:

1. Divide your students into groups of six. This time they are each going to take turns to tell a whole story of what happened to Gum, still using the six points of the story to structure their responses.
2. Ask students to make notes of the stories they hear after each telling – the most exciting stories may well be chosen for a newspaper article.
3. Remind students that, if they want their story to be remembered/chosen, they need to get the attention of their audience – to be the most interesting new reporter they can possibly be!
4. Allow all students to create their own stories, making notes after each.
5. Once completed, they are ready to create their newspaper article for consideration (see next activity).

What about?

Using this exercise to explore alternative endings to Ballet Shoes. For example, you could use the following prompts to create new stories for each character from Ballet Shoes which might include: Posy in Paris; Petrova flies a plane; Pauline’s first film premiere; Sylvia and Jai’s road trip.

For example:

1. Pauline Fossil, the new movie starlet.
2. has arrived on sunny Hollywood Boulevard.
3. She is here for the world premiere of her new movie The Performer.
4. The problem is someone has forgotten to lay out the red carpet.
5. Luckily, her trusty friend Nana is on hand to lay out a rather large hand-knitted red scarf that she made earlier.
6. This means Pauline can pose as the flash bulbs of the waiting photographers go off.

Activity two: Newspaper reports

1. Inform students that they are going to continue working in the same groups as in the previous activity but this time, they are a newspaper team.
2. In groups, students should decide who their audience is: adults of their parents’ age, grandparents’ age, teenagers or students of their own age.
3. Students should each take responsibility for one part of the story, writing with a tone that would appeal to their audience.
4. As a team, they should evaluate their piece by putting all sections together and reading it to ensure flow of narrative and tonality, each having a chance to make comments and recommendations for improvements.

This session requires students to:

Speaking and Listening	Reading	Writing
Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers	Continue to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks.	Identify the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing models for their own.
Use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary.	Retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction.	Note and develop initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary.
Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings.	Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, and consider the impact.	Select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning.
Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.		In narratives, describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action.

Speaking and Listening	Reading	Writing
Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates.		Use a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs.
Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on contributions from others.		Evaluate and edit by proposing changes to vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, to enhance effects and clarify meaning.
		Ensure consistent and correct use of tense throughout a piece of writing.



Session Five:

Creating the world of Ballet Shoes

This session invites students to create a written or performed response to the prompt 'create the world of Ballet Shoes through sound and light'. Some students may find a written task the most appropriate but we encourage a practical approach wherever possible. We have made suggestions for what you may need, but you are invited to be creative, eclectic and imaginative in your use of materials for this session.

You will need:

- Paper – for the written exercise
- Paper (thin/translucent) – for shadow puppetry
- Scissors and card – if appropriate
- A range of light sources: this can be anything from torches (handheld or head torches), tablets, phones, lightboxes, desk lamps, bike lights etc.
- A source of sound, which might include YouTube, Spotify or another audio app, or more traditional sources such as CDs, percussion instruments etc. y
- Access to the internet and a site such as windowswap.com

Suggested warm-up: Position of drama

In your circle, you may wish to do a brief sensory check in where students think of what they can see, hear, smell, taste and touch, either within the space in which you're running the session, or in an imagined place. Mention that this use of the senses is important when creating a world for an audience. If you are using writing as a way of exploring worlds, move straight to activity four.

Activity one: Soundscaping

Explain that the production not only uses traditional music, but also a range of sound effects and sounds to create the world of the play. In this session we are going to create a soundscape for a particular moment in the play: a short sequence of sounds, notes, vocalisations etc to create mood and atmosphere.

Using Think-Pair-Share, ask students to think of, then discuss all of the different sounds that might have been used in the production. This could range from: the taps running when Garnie hides in the bathroom; Croydon aerodrome; Posy's new ballet school; the sounds of the streets as Petrova drives the car.

Choose three of those sounds, and ask students to make those sounds using their voices and/or their bodies. You could also ask them to use tables, chairs and other surfaces to explore different ways to elicit sounds. Ask students to explore different intensities and volume of sound, too.

Once students have explored the concept of ‘soundscape’ as a class, group the students into sound design teams of five.

Ask them to identify a moment in the play that they think would benefit from the use of soundscape. Where appropriate, provide percussion instruments to aid their approach. Ask students to create their soundscape in the next five minutes and then each team should share with the rest of the class. You might like to ask the other students to try to guess what the scene is that has been soundscaped.

Activity two: Painting the world with light

Back in the circle/position of drama, explain to students that lighting design is also an important way of creating mood and atmosphere, as well as providing information about where and when a scene is set.

Ask students to remind themselves of their chosen moment from the production. This time, they should identify what the characters might see, and what the audience needs to see, in this scene.

This activity is very flexible, and largely depends on what light sources you have available. You could:

- Position bright torches behind large pieces of paper and experiment with shadow puppetry (hand puppets or shapes cut from cardboard or thick paper)
- Use projections created by images online, or PowerPoint-style slides, to mimic the projections used in the production
- Place different coloured plastic document folders in front of torches to experiment with colours of light shone on an image or different surfaces
- Use acetate sheets on light boxes or an overhead projector on which different coloured images can be illuminated.

Ask the groups to create a sequence of light and/or images for their chosen scene, depending on the resources that are available to you.

After 15 minutes, ask students to share their lighting designs with the rest of the class.

Activity three: combining light and sound

Offer students the opportunity to combine their sound and lighting sequences to create their dramatic moment. This may require students to adapt their choices to enable them to create the different sound and lighting effects. Alternatively, you might extend this scene to combine teams: one team could operate the lighting for their paired team, and vice versa.

Activity four: Writing about your world (alternative or additional activity).

Suggested Resource: [What is an Audio Described Performance?](#)

Ask students to think back to their sensory check in during the ‘position of drama’ warm-up activity. Their task is to create a world through imaginative use of vocabulary, sensory imagery, onomatopoeia and use of structure.

Read the following script:

The theatre provides additional information for deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and visually impaired audiences to help access the world of the play.

Your job is to create one of the descriptions.

Choose a moment in the play and think about how you can describe what is happening. Your description should be written in the present tense, so that the people reading or listening to your description can imagine what’s happening at the same time as the performance takes place. This audio show and set description for Ballet Shoes may be a helpful example: [Ballet Shoes Audio Description.mp3](#)

Plenary

Returning to the ‘position of drama’ once again, ask students to consider what they have been most surprised by in their creation of the sound and lighting world of the play. Emphasise that the designers work with the director and cast from the very beginning of the rehearsal process and so the challenges that might have been encountered during your session would have been ironed out during that process. Students might also like to consider the adjustments they had to make during activity three when combining light and sound: this is an ideal opportunity to talk about the way in which the design elements (music, lighting, sound, set, costume and, sometimes, puppetry).

This session asks students to:

Speaking and listening	Writing
Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers.	Identify the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting appropriate form and using other similar writing models as their own.
Use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary.	Note and develop initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings.	consider how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed.
Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.	
Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates.	Draft and write by: Selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on contributions from others.	describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and enhance the action.

Section Three: Additional activities

These activities offer additional tasks and stimuli for students after they have seen the production of Ballet Shoes. These can be particularly helpful if space for practical work is limited or you need to cater for a range of needs and interests within your class.

1) Advertising: Story recap

In groups of four to six, students should create a short trailer for the National Theatre's production of Ballet Shoes. You might like to share examples from YouTube of recent films and highlight conventions such as voiceover, key moments from the story, music and sound etc. You can also offer phrases to include such as 'coming soon, to a theatre near you' and 'don't miss this season's blockbuster hit...' Once students have rehearsed their trailer, they can share with the rest of the class.

2) Speaking and Listening or Writing to argue: 'Anything you achieve, Pauline Fossil, will be attributed to you and you alone'

Doctor Jakes tells Pauline that she is lucky to have a name, and one that she has chosen for herself. Doctor Jakes says, 'My father gave me my last name, and his father gave it to him, and so one and so on – women, in history, forever tied to a long list of grandfathers.' This moment in Ballet Shoes offers you and your students to explore a range of ideas such as:

- i) women in history whose achievements could have been muted by their male counterparts (or who have been given credit unusually, such as Marie Curie's husband refusing the Nobel Prize for Physics unless his wife was included in the nomination)
- ii) a debate about whether there are still some occupations which are stereotypically associated with men rather than women (ballet dancers like Posy and pilots like Petrova are excellent starting points)
- iii) what's in a name? What our names mean and why we might be proud of them. The three girls are named 'Fossil' because it reflects Gum's interests and work. If students could choose their own first or last name, what would they choose and why?

3) Creating a time capsule

Inspired by the following stage direction from the play, this activity asks your students to imagine, design and create (if appropriate for your setting) a time capsule of their own, which will explain life in the 21st century to someone who found the time capsule in 200 years' time.

'Beneath the ground, the cherished relics remain...safe...waiting to be discovered...theatre, ballet and aeroplanes...now part of the vast, fragmented discontinuous history of the world.'

Gum has made exploration and discovery his life's work. He relies on the past to help his understanding of the world around him. Encourage students to think widely about what might change and therefore what might be of interest to people in the future.

4) Science presentations: Fossils

Using this [video](#) from the Natural History Museum as a starting point for their information, students can make a presentation (using PowerPoint for example), write a speech or create a physical demonstration using their bodies which explains how fossils are made.

5) Home

*****This activity may need careful consideration when working with looked after children, displaced children and those who have, or are currently dealing with, experiences of homelessness.*****

The house on Cromwell Road becomes home for many characters that we see in the play. This includes Jai, Theo, Doctor Jakes, Posy, Pauline, Petrova, Sylvia and Nana. Madame Fidolia and

Juliette Manoff are also living in countries other than their own, for various reasons. With 'home' as a stimulus, you could:

- Write Jai's diary for his first few days living in Cromwell Road
- Send a postcard from Theo to one of her friends with whom she has previously performed
- Track the story of Madame Fidolia across a map
- Explore Google images of Cromwell Road in London and create an estate agent's listing for the Fossil house, or draw/create in 3D the house as they imagine it
- Ask students to create their own definition of 'home' and/or imagine their own 'perfect home'
- Consider how the residents of the house in Cromwell Road will decide what to take with them and what to donate to museums when they sell it and move on to their next adventures. Don't forget that Nana sometimes insists that Gum gets rid of certain fossils to make room for the next child he has adopted. How will they decide what to keep and what to dispose of? .

Interested in more productions from the National Theatre? Access up to 15 productions for primary school children on the National Theatre Primary Collection. Bringing stories to life on stage, they introduce younger children to the magic and spectacle of theatre.

The National Theatre Collection is available to stream in the classroom and at home once a school is signed up, offering the best seats in the house whenever you want.

You will also be able to access resources, such as rehearsal diaries and short films related to each production. These can help students to understand the plays and the theatre-making process.

Find out more here: nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/national-theatre-collection/

