



ROALD DAHL'S

# Matilda

THE MUSICAL

Celebrating 15 Years on Stage

**Educational Resource Pack**  
**UK and Ireland Tour 2025/26**

# About this Pack

At the RSC we see direct parallels between teaching and learning in the classroom and the way our theatre company works, making discoveries through collaborative enquiry. Our work enables young people of all ages to have a deep understanding of text, interrogate language and to be open to a range of interpretive possibilities and choices.

These resources have been inspired by the creative process of adapting and staging **Matilda The Musical**, written by Dennis Kelly with music and lyrics by Tim Minchin. **Matilda The Musical** is a fantastic introduction to the performing arts for students. The production crosses different artforms, including drama, dance and music, providing students with a wonderful cross-curricula experience.

The activities provided have been created by Jo Herrero, Headteacher at a primary school in Stratford-upon-Avon. They are designed to support KS1 and KS2 students who are seeing the production, and can be adapted and extended to cater to different students' experiences. We hope that teachers will enjoy using these activities in the classroom, creating opportunities for their students to learn, discover and perform.

**Georgia White**

Deputy Director of Creative Learning & Engagement  
Royal Shakespeare Company

## Contents

About the Production .....	p.2
Writing Lesson Activities .....	p.3
Drama Lesson Activities .....	p.18
Music Lesson Activities .....	p.28
Dance Lesson Activities .....	p.37
PSHE Lesson Activities .....	p.45
Resources .....	p.52

Production photography by Manuel Harlan

# About the Production

**Matilda The Musical** is a multi-award winning musical from the Royal Shakespeare Company, inspired by the beloved book by Roald Dahl.

With book by Dennis Kelly, music and lyrics by Tim Minchin, **Matilda** is the story of an extraordinary little girl who, armed with a vivid imagination and a sharp mind, dares to take a stand and change her own destiny.

Winner of over 100 international awards, including 25 for Best Musical, the 'unique and unforgettable' (Rolling Stone) global phenomenon, **Matilda** has now delighted over 12 million audiences worldwide.



**‘The best British musical  
of the 21st Century’**

DAILY TELEGRAPH

In this pack, you will find a selection of activities to help you work with young people to explore the story, characters and themes of **Matilda The Musical**, focussing on a variety of creative and performance methods.

# Writing Lesson Activities

Many of us love the story of **Matilda** for its larger than life characters, Miss Trunchbull being one of the most memorable characters in children's literature and on stage. The pupils that interact and prevail against her need to be memorable too, so creating a new character can be tremendous fun.

## In this series of lesson activities pupils will:

- Build up to writing about a new classmate in the story of **Matilda**. Vocabulary and plot will be inspired through images, drama and music.
- Consider how we can write about the intimidating character of Miss Trunchbull.
- Create a new character that will trigger Miss Trunchbull's rage.
- Learn how writers take an ordinary idea and exaggerate it into something extraordinary. These exaggerated character traits can then act as a superpower that can be used to overcome Miss Trunchbull's wrath.



All the way through the process, children will be collecting and gathering language, so having a jotter or a writer's notebook will be essential for these lessons.

## Part One: Describing Miss Trunchbull Entering the Classroom

### Pupils will learn:

- How physicalising characters and using words to describe this can help us to use suggestion (show, not tell) in our writing.
- How writers create key features in their characters that make them more memorable.

**ACTIVITY 1****Describing Miss Trunchbull**

1. Watch the film and find a good point to freeze the image of Miss Trunchbull.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp8FeBZW21E>
2. Or look at the image of Miss Trunchbull from the stage production.  
(Resource A)
3. Ask the pupils to get up on their feet. Show them how to copy (steal the expression) of her body and face. In other words, look at the frozen image and capture this in your own body and ask the children to do this too.
4. Ask the children:
  - What do you notice about her shoulders?
  - What simile or metaphor could you use to describe it? Using classroom images can be helpful, e.g. shoulders as broad as a blackboard. Ask the children to jot down their ideas.

**Example: Her shoulders are as wide as a blackboard  
OR her shoulders are blackboard broad.**

5. Move on to her eyes. Ask the children:
  - What about her eyes?
  - What shape are they?
  - Could you think of a metaphor or a simile to describe this? Again, if the children are stuck for ideas, encourage them to think of old-fashioned classroom images. This actually makes the imagery more meaningful.

**Example: Eyes hard and round as inkwells, or her eyes are cold, shiny inkwells.**

## Planning Frame 1

It is helpful for the children to have a simple planning frame on which to quickly record ideas. The pupils should not worry too much about spelling at the planning stage, and for some children, including some sketches rather than words might be helpful. It is always useful to model some examples to point pupils in the right direction, ensuring that you leave space for the children's imagination. Here is an example of how the grid might be filled in. You can find an empty planning frame to work from in [Resource B](#) at the back.

PHYSICAL ELEMENT	WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?	WHAT CAN YOU COMPARE IT TO?
Eyes	Penetrating and round	Gobstoppers Marbles Ink wells
Back	Big and terrifying	A squash court A blackboard
Shoulders	Broad and straight	A two-metre ruler of a school entrance, barely passable, wide and creaky as garage doors.
Hair	Stiff and wiry	Brillo pad
Mouth	Spitting Big and bellowing	A dark cave Like a spitting pressure cooker



The children now have vocabulary prepared for a description of Miss Trunchbull. They need to gather ideas to describe how it feels to experience the tension in her classroom.

**ACTIVITY 2****Chosen for Chokey**

1. Children are on their feet. They spread out in the space with their heads down and their eyes closed.
2. Miss Trunchbull is going to choose a child to go into the Chokey. It will be a child who dares to move, even a little bit.
3. You are Miss Trunchbull. Walk in and out of the pupils making a loud sound with your feet on the floor to add tension. Keep stopping and starting, so the children feel like you might be about to choose them!
4. Eventually, tap a child on the back to show that they are out and they are going in the Chokey. You can continue this for a while if you wish.
5. Before the next stage of the activity, ask the pupils to think of ways to describe your footsteps.
6. As a teacher, steal the expression of the pupils in the room, showing the class what you saw as you walked around them. Model in your body the tension you saw in the children's bodies.
7. Ask them to show this again.
8. Ask them the following questions and to collect the language as you go.
9. How does your back feel?
10. Is there an object in school or in life that reminds you of how your back feels?

**Examples: Ruler straight or straight as a ruler. As rigid as a netball post.**

11. What has happened to your eyes?
12. Where do they look if Miss Trunchbull moves around the room?
13. Go through different parts of the body and what we notice about how we react when we feel Miss Trunchbull coming near.

## Planning Frame 2

You can provide pupils with another blank planning frame **Resource C**, to help gather ideas. Model some examples for the children (there are some below). Encourage pupils to look for objects around the classroom to give them ideas, but to also think of what the old fashioned classrooms in **Matilda** look like.

There are images of the school set for inspiration in **Resource D**. There are also examples from the film on this website that could be used for information.

<https://www.phoebewe.com/film-tv/matilda>

Pupils who struggle to write should not worry about spelling at this point as it is the planning stage. They can also draw if it helps them to record more easily.

PHYSICAL ELEMENT	HOW DOES IT FEEL?	WHAT CAN YOU COMPARE IT TO?
Back	Stiff and tight	Ruler netball post counting stick
Shoulders	High, almost touching ears, tense	Like wound up clockwork not yet released
Eyes	Wide and round Piercing and focused	Dinner plates As sharp as a compass point



Now we have ideas to produce the first part of our writing, which is how Miss Trunchbull entered the room and how the pupils reacted. Model for the children how you use your planning grids to include the language and ideas you have gathered for your writing.

## Example of Modelled Text

Miss Trunchbull entered, her shoulders towering above them as wide and as creaky as garage doors. Her globular gobstopper eyes penetrated the room, looking for fresh blood.

Her heavy feet resounded in the room. Pupils sat up at their desks, their backs, straight as netball posts.

“Stand up!” she boomed.

Pupils scrambled out of their chairs and made themselves tall.

As Miss Trunchbull paced in and out of the desks, the pupils avoided her gaze, looking everywhere but down and everywhere but her eyes.

Children tried not to shrink behind their desks as the hard feet of Miss Trunchbull echoed through the classroom. Their shoulders were hunched and tense, like tight little springs in a clockwork toy waiting to be unwound. She was coming for someone. Had she noticed the new child?

## Part Two: A New Pupil Comes to School

The next stage of our writing is to create a new character for the story.

**Pupils will learn:**

- How writers often start with quite ordinary ideas and exaggerate them.
- How to produce a tableaux or freeze frame that encapsulates a moment in a story.
- How to collect ideas and record them ready for a final piece of writing
- How to produce ideas for a simple plot.

### ACTIVITY 3

### Character Traits

All the characters have a larger than life element to their personality, which is an ordinary trait which is exaggerated. First of all explore what this looks like in the text.

Use the character trait boxes in [Resource E \(example below\)](#)

CHARACTER	ORDINARY TRAIT	HOW THIS IS EXAGGERATED	HOW THIS BECOMES A SUPER POWER
-----------	----------------	-------------------------	--------------------------------

1. Give out one of the characters to each group but don't share all the examples with all the pupils so there is room for discussion and questions.
2. Ask each group to produce a tableaux or freeze frame of the scenario they have been given. It should include the main character in the scene, a selection of pupils, Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull.
3. When creating the tableaux they should think of what the audience can see. They should position themselves in a way that looks interesting to the eye - perhaps at different heights and make sure they are facing the audience.
4. The expression and frozen mannerisms of each character are an important element of how their image will be interpreted by the audience.
5. After the children have produced the freeze frames, look at one at a time.
6. Click your fingers so the characters can come to life and invite the rest of the class to ask them questions.

7. These questions should never be “who are you?” or “are you Miss Trunchbull?” They should focus on the action and the feelings that are being expressed, e.g. “you look distressed! Can you explain why?”
8. After this you can discuss with the children how a very simple idea like having long hair can be exaggerated to produce a really exciting vignette and this is what we are going to do with our writing.

## ACTIVITY 4

### Ordinary Traits Games

1. Children work in groups to turn these traits into an exaggerated superpower. It's important that they are exaggerated but not so much so that they are too silly to be funny or effective.
2. The children play in groups of three or four of mixed ability. You can give them a timer of 5 minutes to introduce energy and incentive.
3. Find out which group in the class finishes first.
4. They get through as many as they can, thinking of a way to exaggerate each ordinary trait to outwit Miss Trunchbull.
5. Although you would not necessarily want to provide all of these for the children, some examples have been given below to show how these ordinary traits might be exaggerated to get ideas off the ground.
6. They don't have to write them down, but each group can be allowed a note taker to remember the ideas to share later on if they wish.
7. If the children get through all of these within the 5 minutes ask them to think of their own ordinary traits that can be exaggerated.
8. Discuss the ideas with the class and ask the pupils which of their classmates' ideas they liked the best.

### Example of traits (Resource F)

ORDINARY TRAIT	EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT WHEN EXAGGERATED
Has a huge rucksack for school	Can climb inside rucksack or allow others to climb inside to hide from Miss Trunchbull
Good football skills	Can bend it like Beckham and pinpoint a shot to any given position e.g. Miss Trunchbull's window, or her hammer as it flies through the air
Has huge glasses	The glasses are reflective and when they catch the light can dazzle the eyes of anyone looking at them - including Miss Trunchbull - so they are not able to see anything
A high jumper	
An impressionist	
A climber	
A collector (keeps lots of curious things in their desk)	

You now have more ideas to gather together for your writing. Model for the children how they might write this next stage, using the notes that they have.

Model for the children how they might write about their new character standing up and waiting like the other pupils as Miss Trunchbull walks around the classroom:

### Example of Modelled Text

Gertrude Glint was glad of her glasses that day because she knew Miss Trunchbull would not be able to see the fear in her eyes. These glasses had bedazzled many enemies before in her time. Once the reflective lenses caught the light she could temporarily blind anyone looking into her face. Would this work on this new enemy, the greatest enemy she had ever faced? An enemy of children?

## Part Three: Introducing Plot

### Pupils will learn:

- How to play ideas for a plot - thinking ahead about how their story will end before they write it.
- How ideas can become exaggerated and lead to an interesting plot.

### ACTIVITY 5

### Planning the Plot

1. Ask the children to move into pairs and choose one extraordinary character example that they are pleased with from the previous activity.
2. This could be one of their own, or an idea they have heard from someone else in the class.
3. They don't have to stick to exactly what they thought of in the game, they can tweak it a little if they want to make some improvements.
4. Provide a grid like this and model each step for the pupils as they plan and develop their character ready for their writing. ([Resource G](#))

ORDINARY TRAIT	CHARACTER NAME	EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT	HOW THE CHAPTER/WRITING WILL END

5. Model through each step with the children, choosing a character yourself and writing on a white board, showing how you would build on the ideas and record your thoughts.

**Example of modelling ideas for the child with the big glasses - Has Huge Glasses.**

6. Now think of a Matilda style name that will tell us a bit about the character. Some of the character names in **Matilda** are quite old fashioned. The children could even do an internet search for old fashioned names to help them.

### Example - Gertrude Glint.

#### 7. What makes this ordinary trait extraordinary?

**Example - Gertrude Glint's glasses are so big and reflective that Miss Trunchbull is dazzled and blinded when her glasses catch the light and she looks into Gertrude's face.**

#### 8. This section in the writing is going to build up to a moment when Miss Trunchbull is outwitted.

#### 9. The children then need to think about what happens at the end of their writing - how will this special trait be used to outwit Miss Trunchbull?

**Example - Miss Trunchbull is dazzled by Gertrude and every time she tries to look away Gertrude moves towards her so that Miss Trunchbull's eyes are always dazzled by her glasses. Whilst this is happening and Miss Trunchbull cannot see, the pupils start to escape from the classroom and run home. Gertrude Glint backs out of the room and when she gets to the door runs away as well.**

So your planning grid might look something like this:

ORDINARY TRAIT	CHARACTER NAME	EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT	HOW THE CHAPTER/WRITING WILL END
Large Glasses	Gertrude Glint	Gertrude's glasses are so big and reflective that the Trunchbull is dazzled and blinded when they look at Gertrude	Miss Trunchbull is dazzled by Gertrude and every time she tries to look away Gertrude moves towards her so that Miss Trunchbull's eyes are always dazzled by her glasses. Whilst this is happening and Miss Trunchbull cannot see, the pupils start to escape from the classroom and run home. Gertrude Glint backs out of the room and when she gets to the door runs away as well.

## Part Four: Trunchbullian Attacks!

### Pupils will learn:

- How to use what they know about Miss Trunchbull's style of speaking to produce dialogue.
- How to play with the dialogue they have created in a game.

### ACTIVITY 6 Write Some Trunchbullian Attacks

How might Miss Trunchbull talk to your new character?

1. Explain to the children that you are going to create some dialogue that you are going to test out on a pupil that you haven't yet worked with!
2. You are firstly going to write four things that Miss Trunchbull will say before they attack.
3. Most children will find it most productive at this point to work in pairs for ideas, but others might prefer to work individually. The children should be given a simple planning grid like this ([Resource H](#)).

NASTY QUESTION	NASTY OBSERVATION	COMMAND	WHAT SHE SAYS SHE WILL DO TO ATTACK
Who is this big eyed creature?	You have solar panels for eyes!	Take those things off your face this minute	If you don't take those things off your face I will snap those things in two

4. Once the children have their ideas, ask them to form an inner circle and an outer circle in a 'speed dating' style.
5. The children in the inner circle will be a child, the children on the outer circle will be Miss Trunchbull.
6. The outer circle children call out the Trunchbullian questions and commands they have created (I suggest they take their written ideas with them), allowing the pupil on the inner circle to respond.

7. Then, when the teacher asks them to stop, ask the inner or outer circle to move, whilst playing some music from Matilda.
8. When the music stops, they stop and they have a new person to work with.
9. After a while the children should swap characters.

Once the children have played around with the language in the dialogue, they will have collected ideas for responses and perhaps thought about some of the changes they might want to make to their ideas.

You can now model for the children how this can be transferred to a piece of writing.

After walking in and out of the desks, scanning for her prey, Miss Trunchbull's eyes fell upon Gertrude, whose eyes looked almost dragonfly like covered with the large reflective lenses.

"Who is this big eyed creature? You have solar panels for eyes!" she boomed.

"My name is Gertrude Glint. I have sensitive eyes so I have to wear special glasses," she explained, her voice with a slight quiver.

Miss Trunchbull's dark cavernous mouth started to spit like a pressure cooker...

"Take those things off your face this minute! If you don't take those things off your face, I will snap those things in two!"

## Part Five: Weaving our Ideas Together

### Pupils will learn:

- How to bring their ideas together to complete a piece of writing.

### ACTIVITY 7

### Put it Together

So we now have all the jottings we need to complete a piece of writing. We just need to return to our plot idea to complete our initial piece of writing

We have:

- A description of Miss Trunchbull using comparative vocabulary
- A description of the pupils' reaction to Miss Trunchbull
- An idea for a new character
- Ideas for dialogue - what will the Trunchbull say to our new character?
- Ideas for plot - what will our character do to outwit Miss Trunchbull?

The children will already have recorded ideas for most of the above, the teacher will now simply model for the pupils how the last stages of their writing might look:

Just at that moment, a glorious beam of sun shone with triumph through the classroom window. If Gertrude could get the angle right she knew she could outwit Miss Trunchbull. Miss Trunchbull's heavy shoulders, as big and square as a squash court loomed before her, so she had to act quickly. She moved her face just enough to catch a pool of light on the surface of her glasses. At that point, Miss Trunchbull was preparing to grab her glasses so was looking straight into her eyes. Dazzled, Miss Trunchbull cried out,

"Someone turn the lights on! I can't see!"

Someone shouted "move fast, everyone get out while you can!"

And so on.

You have worked through the writing process step by step, gathering ideas along the way that you can continually come back to and use in your writing.

Although this is a descriptive piece there are now many things that you can do with these ideas. You could produce a diary entry, a newspaper article, a letter to Ofsted.

Obviously all of these pieces of writing have different features to explore and you will consider this further and study their features as a class.

# Drama Lesson Activities

With their exaggerated gestures and sensational language, the characters in **Matilda** are enticing and children will love the opportunity to act them out and embody them in their own performances.

**In this series of lesson activities pupils will:**

- Create and describe an original character who could appear in **Matilda The Musical**.
- Use body language, voice, and movement to bring their character to life.
- Collaborate with others to devise a short scene featuring their character.
- Perform and reflect on their creative choices.



Although these lessons are largely practical, children will find it useful to have paper and pen to gather ideas.



You will also need an empty space like a school hall, as the children will need the opportunity to move around freely and safely.

Explain to the pupils that by the end of the lesson they will have created a scene involving a new character in **Matilda The Musical**. The scene they will be creating will be one when other characters warn this character about what Miss Trunchbull is going to be like.

## Part One: A New Pupil Comes to School

**Pupils will learn:**

- How to show how one character reacts to another.
- How to build an understanding of character using rehearsal room techniques.

**ACTIVITY****1****Blink Chokey**

1. Explain to the children that this activity is very similar to Blink Murder, but the twist is that if someone blinks at them, they are going to the Chokey.
2. Ask the children to spread out in the room and tell them that you are going to choose someone to be Miss Trunchbull by tapping them on the shoulder. Request that they close their eyes.
3. Ensure that, as you walk around the room, the children are in silence but you are making big sounds with your feet. This will add suspense.
4. Once you have chosen Miss Trunchbull, ask the children to open their eyes. They will now walk slowly around the room. They are not allowed to look down at the ground. If they can work out who Miss Trunchbull is, they will be able to try and avoid them.
5. When Miss Trunchbull blinks at another child (make sure the signal is something very obvious like closing both eyes twice), they call out “Oh no! Not the Chokey!” and go and sit at the edge of the room.
6. Those children who have been sent to the Chokey should be asked to observe the movement closely. How is the tension in this game displayed in the children’s bodies?
  - As the teacher, draw the game to a close and ask the pupils to reflect on how they moved around the room.
  - Show examples of body shapes that you saw.
  - Discuss how children held their shoulders and how furtively their eyes moved.
  - Remind children to hold on to the way they moved in this game to reflect the nervousness of the characters they will portray later on in the activities.
  - Reflect on the ways bodies moved and how they expressed suspense in their bodies in this game.

**ACTIVITY 2****Saved from Chokey**

1. Now we are going to introduce Matilda to the game, who is going to try and identify who Miss Trunchbull is. She can have three guesses.
2. Ask the children to spread out in the room again, but this time, before they close their eyes, instantly announce who Matilda is. This makes it more difficult for Matilda to guess who Miss Trunchbull is because they will avoid her gaze.
3. Repeat the activity from the previous game where pupils close their eyes and you walk around the room and choose Miss Trunchbull.
4. Go through the process again, stopping at points to ask Matilda who she thinks Miss Trunchbull is. She needs to try really hard to find her to stop too many pupils from going into the Chokey.
5. After the game has ended, ask children to reflect on how Matilda was moving. Matilda's determination to outwit Miss Trunchbull in the original story is what allows the characters to win out in the end. But she has to be clever and calculating.
  - What did you notice in her movements in this game that suggested what skills she might be using to solve the problem of who Miss Trunchbull was?
  - Are there any expressions we can steal for the final scene we will create later on?

An interesting variation to this activity is using spooky or suspenseful music because it adds an extra element to the way children move around the room.

**Part Two: Getting Used to the Setting****Pupils will learn:**

- How a sense of the setting in which their characters live and breathe will have an impact on the way they act within it.

**ACTIVITY 3****Guided Tour of the Classroom**

Show children photographs of the classroom from **Matilda The Musical (Resource D)**. It is quite old fashioned in style with wooden desks. It does not look like a particularly comfortable place to learn.



1. Ask the children to work in pairs and spend a couple of minutes discussing what they see in the picture and how different it might be to their own classroom.
2. Explain to the children that they are going to take their partner on a guided tour of the classroom. One child will have their eyes closed, the other will be the guide. Once they have completed the exercise they will swap over.
3. Ideally, the children should place their hands on the other child's shoulders and move them around the space, describing the things that they imagine they can see in the classroom. Encourage them to discuss keeping each other safe and how they would prefer to be guided around. They should be really descriptive to heighten excitement and suspense, E.g. "You are now moving down the aisle of the desks which are very rickety and very close together". The teacher should model this to begin with, so pupils get a strong sense of expectation for language and movement.
4. Gather the children together and ask them to reflect on the experience.
  - How did it feel being guided around the classroom with eyes closed?
  - How can this help us to develop a sense of how it might feel to be on stage in this classroom setting?

## Part Three: Building a Character

### Pupils will learn:

- To explore the different elements that we consider when developing a character.
- To use their imaginations to develop a character in the style of **Matilda The Musical**.

## ACTIVITY 4 Extraordinary Exaggerations

In **Matilda**, characters are larger than life, but we can consider ordinary traits from which these characters have emerged.

Here are the examples that we also looked at in the **Matilda** writing activities. (Resource E)

CHARACTER	ORDINARY TRAIT	HOW THIS IS EXAGGERATED	HOW THIS BECOMES A SUPER POWER
Amanda Thripp	Long Pigtails	Pigtails so long that the Trunchbull can use them for swinging around and hurling	Amanda loves her journey through the air and ends up in a beautiful field of flowers. She feels like she is flying
Bruce Bogtrotter	A big appetite and sweet tooth	An appetite so big that the small child can eat a giant cake	The whole of the school becomes brave enough to cheer Bruce on
Matilda Wormwood	A strong sense of injustice	So strong that it comes out of her eyes and she able to send a force that makes things move	She is able to outwit the Trunchbull and her parents even though she is small, she becomes powerful

1. Look at the grid above and discuss what you notice about the characters.
2. Then move onto the second grid which shows how we can transfer ordinary ideas into the extraordinary. (Resource F)

ORDINARY TRAIT	EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT WHEN EXAGGERATED
Has a huge rucksack for school	Can climb inside rucksack or allow others to climb inside to hide from Miss Trunchbull
Good football skills	Can bend it like Beckham and pinpoint a shot to any given position e.g. Miss Trunchbull's window, or her hammer as it flies through the air
Has huge glasses	The glasses are reflective and when they catch the light can dazzle the eyes of anyone looking at them - including Miss Trunchbull - so they are not able to see anything
A high jumper	
An impressionist	
A climber	
A collector (keeps lots of curious things in their desk)	

3. Just as we did in the writing activity, some ideas have been left blank at the bottom for pupils to develop ideas themselves.
4. It is up to the teacher whether to decide on a new character as a class, or for pupils to think of a new character in small groups, so each group will have a different new character. This will depend on the confidence and imagination of your group, but the main purpose is for pupils to embody this new character and to explore interactions with others.

**ACTIVITY 5****Hall of Mirrors**

This is a building character game with two parts to it.

**Part One - Explore the character**

1. Once the pupils have decided on their character, they need to start to embody it. Ask them to get into groups of 3 to 5 and form a circle facing each other. They are going to explore different elements of the character and bounce ideas off each other. Tell them to imagine that every person in the circle that they look at is a reflection and they are a reflection. They can pick up ideas from anyone in the circle to build up their character.
2. The teacher will prompt by asking questions about different physical aspects of the character which they must try to act out. By facing each other, they are giving each other ideas and building up their confidence to be more imaginative together.
3. Prompt by asking questions like this:
  - How does your character look around?
  - How does your character hold their shoulders?
  - Do they walk proudly or nervously?
  - How do they respond when Miss Trunchbull walks into the room?

And so on.

**Examples:**

If we had created the character of Gertrude Glint, who has huge reflective glasses, she would have to move her head very steadily to stop her glasses from falling off.

If we had created the character of Barry Bolsa with a big rucksack, so big that someone could hide in it, the rucksack might be quite heavy so he might move around with his shoulders leaning backwards.

## Part Two - Character walk

Now the pupils are going to embody the character even further by going for a walk in the character's shoes.

1. Ask the pupils to spread out into their own space in the room. Now they have had the chance to participate in the Hall of Mirrors, they will have lots of ideas for their character.
2. To begin with, everyone should walk around neutral, moving at a safe pace, looking for space. Faces and posture should be relaxed.
3. Start with simple instructions such as:
  - Walk as though you want to take a long time to get to your next lesson.
  - Walk as though you are tired.
  - Walk as though you think you might meet the Trunchbull round the corner.
  - Walk as though you are late for your lesson.
  - Walk as though you have something exciting to go and tell a friend.
4. The next stage is to ask them to consider living their character. So you can ask them to think of the following as they walk around the room:
  - How old are you?
  - Which school did you go to before? How different do you think this one might be?
  - Why did your parents decide to send you to this school?
  - What makes you stand out from other people?
  - What are you most worried about?
  - What are you most excited about?
  - You have never met the Trunchbull before, so how do you feel about them?
5. Get feedback from the pupils about what their thoughts were and discuss how this can be introduced into the final scene.

## Part Four: Creating a Scene

### Pupils will learn:

- How to confidently use language from the text, apply it to new contexts, and develop character interactions.
- How to plan, rehearse, and perform a short scene as an ensemble.

**ACTIVITY 6****Make a Scene**

1. Ask the children to move into groups of about 5 pupils. Explain that one of them is going to be the new character, the others will be characters from **Matilda** who will be warning them about what the school is like.
2. Depending on licensing in school, watch **The School Song**. The first and second time, encourage pupils to gather some of the language they hear that they want to steal for their own scenes. The third time they hear it, they can call out the language they have gathered as they hear it in the song. This builds up their confidence in using it.
3. Pupils should create a short scene, where their new character meets others at Crunchem Hall. Ask the pupils to consider the following:
  - Who are the characters you will choose for this scene?
  - How will the new character be noticed by the others and how do they approach them? Do they gather around them? Do they call them over?
  - What are the key messages they will want to share about Miss Trunchbull and what advice will they give to the character to protect themselves?
  - How might they find out about the character's extraordinary trait and how will this be praised?
  - Finally, the school bell will ring and they must all walk in together. How will they perform this?
4. You may wish to give the children a prompt sheet that includes the ideas above or write these points on a whiteboard to support them planning and creating the scene.
5. Support the children as they rehearse, encourage them to think about where the audience will be and what they will see. Remind them to think about how they are staging it.
6. Children should perform their short scene to the rest of the class. Encourage other pupils to comment on the strengths of each performance and how these can be improved.

Following this you may decide to develop this into a piece of writing, or explore further scenes with this new character in the story through other drama lessons. You may decide to repeat the same scene with another new character.

## Summary

The children have step by step, deepened their understanding of character and with this, their confidence will develop. Little by little they will enjoy becoming a larger than life character as you have gently introduced each new element for them to consider when embodying this new idea.

# Music Lesson Activities

Even before the wonderful story of Matilda was made into a sensational musical, there has always been a very strong rhythm pulsing through its narrative. The very names of the characters and the language of Miss Trunchbull have their own unique patterns that help to leave the characters emblazoned in our memories and imaginations.

## In this series of lesson activities pupils will:

- Learn to be playful with language and build up to creating a simple rhythmic composition.
- Play with the name of one character, then start to recognise the rhythm in other character names.
- Move on to creating a verse of Trunchbullian Insults which can be performed as a poem or a rap with words, a percussive rhythmic piece (with the words taken away) or even turned into a song with a simple choice of notes.

These lesson ideas can take place over several different sessions depending on how teachers choose to approach them.

## Part One: Warm Up

### Pupils will learn:

- That words have rhythm.
- That our voices have different textures and pitch and these can make a difference to the way a word is said. Our voices can express different emotions. This is what singers do when they perform.
- That we can use the rhythm in words to create a rhythmic composition.

## ACTIVITY 1 Make a Scene

Explain to the pupils that you are going to begin by exploring the rhythm in names. The names of characters in Matilda are full of music and rhythm. We are also able to explore the different sounds and pitches that our voice can make.

### Introduction

1. Start with the name Bruce Bogtrotter.
2. Talk about him as a character in the story.
3. Ask the children to say his name and discuss what you all notice about it, e.g. it is alliterative, it sounds funny (because of the word Bogtrotter) it is rhythmic and memorable (the plosives in the name provide emphasis).

### Development: A whole class exploration of sound

4. Say the name Brrrrrruce Boggggtrotter
5. Ask the children to repeat this in the same style
6. Emphasise the plosives (hard sounds in the word)
7. Explore saying the name in different ways. To start with, the teacher models first and the pupils copy. Ask the children not to call the name until the teacher clicks their fingers. It is very important that they appreciate there must be space/silence around each sound:
  - in a whisper
  - quick as a flash
  - in the Trunchbull's voice
  - in Matilda's voice
  - in Miss Honey's voice

Sometimes the way someone feels about us at a given time can be heard in the way they say our names. As the children are developing confidence with this, the teacher may not need to model any more, but it is still important that children wait for the finger click.

8. Ask the children to say Bruce Bogtrotter:
  - in a joyful voice
  - in a cheering on voice
  - in an angry voice
  - in a nervous voice

9. Discuss with the children. What are the moments in the musical/novel where people feel these things about Bruce? e.g. Children cheered on his name when they saw he was going to finish the chocolate cake, they were nervous when the Trunchbull found out that he had eaten her cake.
10. Experiment with texture and pitch. Ask the children to say/sing it in a:
  - high voice
  - low voice
  - shaky voice

Ask them to play around with song. If the teacher feels confident to do so, they can sing Bruce Bogtrotter and the children can echo. For example they could use two different notes (e.g. C E) and the children could sing this back. You can then follow the same styles of how we said Bruce Bogtrotter in song.

If you wish, you can further explore this with other names of characters in the musical/novel.

## Part Two: Rhythm and Beat

### Pupils will learn:

- About how to keep a pulse, and maintain it.
- That rhythms can be played over the top of a beat/pulse.
- We can use words to create rhythms.









### ACTIVITY 2

### Play a Name

#### Introduction:

1. Watch the trailer of **Matilda The Musical** here: <https://youtu.be/EEcrvrFziBO>
2. The trailer includes some of the song **Revolting Children**.
3. Get the children up on their feet and encourage them to move to the music.
4. Ask, why does the music make us move?
5. Explore the importance of rhythm and beat.
6. Once the chorus starts ask the children to clap along the background beat to the song. Then ask them to join in with singing the words on top of the beat.

7. Say that songs almost always have a background beat.
8. We can see the children in the trailer dancing in time to this beat.
9. Then, layered on top, we have different rhythms and we can hear this rhythm in the words of this song.









			
			
			we
Are	re	vol-ting	chil-dren
in	re	vol-ting	times
			Living

**Development:**










You can either give out names of characters on cards or give the children an element of choice and have the names written on your whiteboard for the children to pick and call out.

Matilda Wormwood	Agatha Trunchbull	Miss Honey	Mrs Phelps
Mrs Wormwood	Mr Wormwood	Michael Wormwood	Hortensia
Lavender	Eric	Nigel	Tommy

1. Clap a beat in the background and ask children to maintain this pulse.









			
			

1. Model saying a name over the top of the beat, whilst clapping the name rhythm (the children will be continuing the pulse whilst the teacher claps the rhythm of the name).

Children clap the pulse				
Teacher claps the rhythm and says the name		 		
	MA	TIL DA	WORM	WOOD

1. Pupils then stop clapping the pulse and echo and clap: Ma-til-da Worm-wood (as above).
2. The pupils go back to continuing the pulse so there is a constant beat.
3. Give the children different character names from Matilda and ask them to clap and say them over the top of a beat.

Here is another example:

			
 			
A GA	THA	TRUNCH	BULL

**Further Development:**

1. Children should move into a circle. Depending on numbers in the classroom, you may want to make more than one circle, especially if you have another adult to lead another circle.
2. Continue clapping the beat as you move around the circle, one child at a time. Each child says and claps a Matilda character name over the top of the beat. The other pupils echo this, then go back to maintaining the pulse.
3. If you wish to, you can do this again, just clapping the rhythm of each name without also saying the name at the same time, and see if the children can remember the rhythms without saying the words.

4. If you would like to explore this further, you can replace clapping with percussive instruments.

Explain that all words have rhythm, even our own names. It is understanding and feeling the rhythm in words that helps composers to write lyrics. Sometimes people start with the lyrics first and then the music comes afterwards. Sometimes it is the other way round. Today we are starting with lyrics.

## Part Three: Composing a Rhythmic Piece Using Lyrics

### Pupils will learn:

- Maintain a beat.
- Use words to piece together their own rhythmic composition.
- Understand that each word will be worth one beat.
- Understand that each line in our verse will comprise of 4 beats.

### ACTIVITY 3

### Silly Insults

#### Introduction:

1. Listen to the trailer once more and once the chorus begins, clap the background rhythm. <https://youtu.be/EEcrvrFziBO>. Wait for the chorus to clap as the beat is more obvious.
2. Notice that we can count four beats throughout. There are four beats for each line of the lyrics. This is the same model that we will be using to create our own **Matilda** song.
3. We are going to write a song based on the funniest element of the Trunchbull's character, which is the insults she hurls at other people. These are not insults that we would use for others. They are larger than life and often use animal references that do not sound like people at all, so we can play around with them and have fun.

Here are some examples taken from the book and the stage production of the kinds of things that you might hear the Trunchbull say about children.

## Book (Roald Dahl)

- “You squirming little toad!”
- “You revolting little blister!”
- “You disgusting little slug!”
- “You miserable, grovelling little maggot!”
- “I cannot for the life of me understand why small children take so long to grow up.”
- “I think they do it deliberately, just to annoy me.”
- “I’m right, you’re wrong, I’m big, you’re small, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

## Stage Adaptation

- “Disgusting little slugs!”
- “The squirt of squirts!”
- “Snot-stain!”
- “Miserable collection of excuses for children!”
- “Cockroach! You did this you vile, repulsive, malicious little sinner!”
- “You are a fiend! You are a crook, you are a thief and I shall crush you!”
- “This clot, this foul carbuncle.”
- “You suppurating spleen!”
- “She is a squib, a shrimp, an unhatched tadpole.”
- “Children are maggots!”

You can draw out with children what kinds of things each insult has in common. Once discussed you can mention that there is a specific pattern.

They all contain an exaggerated adjective, a comparison to some kind of creature or thing and an extra bit of nastiness at the end. It doesn’t matter how small or tall a child might be, to the Trunchbull ALL children are small and she likes to point this out (as she is so very big and likes to make them feel as small as possible).

## Development:

For a simple approach to creating a rhythmic composition, it would be hard to use some of these sentences as some of them are, as they are difficult to fit in with a constant beat. So instead, we are going to use a breakdown of the phrases to piece together lines of insults that add up to four beats per line. Every single word or phrase below is worth one beat, but some of the rhythms vary.

On the following page is a breakdown of some of the phrases. You can use a selection of words to put together to create a Trunchbull insult song. (Resource 1)
















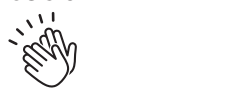
TYPICAL ADJECTIVES	TRUNCHBULL'S NASTIEST WORDS	BASIC/ EVERYDAY SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	HUMOROUS SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	SUBJECT COMPARISON
revolting	squirming	tiny	pint-sized	worm
squirming	shrivelled	little	teeny	maggot
miserable	runt	miniature	itty-bitty	slug
disgusting	scrappy	petite	wee	toad
repulsive	measly	slight	miniscule	shrimp
tiny	vile	compact	microscopic	tadpole
grovelling	malicious	modest	teensy	insect
wretched			pocket-sized	blister
pint-sized				squit
				sinner

1. Model for children how you can take four words that add up to four beats and produce a line of lyrics.
2. If they create four lines like this they have created their own verse.
3. Ask the children to move into groups or pairs.

Next is an example of how you might piece them together and how they fit in with a one beat pulse, that adds up to four beats each line.

You can use them in almost any order, but it is best to end each line with the subject.

You can use the illustration if you wish, but it is mainly to show how the words fit it with the pulse. It may be helpful to provide children with a grid so that the children can work out how to fit in the words. They will then look at the picture and say the name.

♥	♥	♥	♥
re- vol- ting 	pint sized 	shri- velled 	worm 
miser a ble 	min ia ture 	i tty bit ty 	slug 
gro vel ling 	wee 	mi cro sco pic 	blis ter 
ho rri ble 	min is cule 	ti ny 	toad 

Once the children have produced their verse, there are several things you can do with this.

1. Remembering the first activity when we played with our voices saying the word 'Bruce Bogtrotter', ask the children to think about the ways in which they use their spoken voices to perform each word and each line, making it as expressive as possible. Introduce contrasts such as a booming and a whispering voice to add drama to the lyrics.
2. Perform the lyrics as a rap, with actions.
3. If the children are confident enough, encourage them to try singing their lyrics. Let them just play around with pitch and their voices. Suggest to them that repeating the same note sound can sometimes make a song more catchy (e.g. in **Revolting Children**, there is one note that is repeated a lot, with a change of one note close to the end of each line).
4. Introduce simple tuned instruments such as keyboards, glockenspiels, xylophones. I would suggest using a creative restriction such as 5 notes only CDEFG (for a happy song) or CDE flat FG (if you want the song to sound sadder or more menacing). Ask the children to play some notes with their lyrics. You can suggest the first two lines follow the same pattern and the second two lines follow a different pattern.

Even when just saying the names of the characters in **Matilda** aloud, it feels as though a strong rhythmic pattern is occurring. The idea of composition can be daunting for pupils and teachers alike, but these simple activities can make the process joyful and fun, and most importantly, offer a deeper insight into the language of **Matilda** and from where Tim Minchin's inspiration came.

# Dance Lesson Activities

The triumphant voices of children resound through the songs in **Matilda The Musical**, representing a battle cry for justice in an adult led world. The song **Revolting Children** is not so much about children being Revolting as it is about Revolution and the determination that soars out of the song can make the listener feel invincible! The songs are so well written that it is impossible not to want to move to them. One cannot sit still whilst listening and watching.

These lessons are an opportunity to embody the zeal and resilience in the songs, which will not only allow pupils to develop their dance and movement skills but also a powerful sense of resolve.



You will need an empty space, such a school hall, so the pupils can move safely.

## In this series of lesson activities pupils will:

- Consider how words and character can be expressed through movement.
- Learn how to represent character in a frozen image.
- Learn how a dancing style can express how a character is feeling.

## Part One: Warm Up

### Pupils will learn:

- To develop awareness of rhythm.
- To explore character expression through movement.

### ACTIVITY

**1**

### Playing the Beat with Your Feet

1. Clap a simple rhythm and ask the pupils to echo this beat with their feet.
2. Explain to the pupils that you are going to call out names of characters in the story. They need to echo the rhythm of the names by stomping them out with their feet.

- Miss Hon-ey
  - Ma - til - da Worm - Wood
  - Mis-ter Worm - Wood
  - Ag - a - tha Trunch - bull
3. After the children have got used to stomping out the different name rhythms, think about how their movements could reflect the characters behind the names: Miss Honey’s stomping might be more gentle and perhaps a little floaty.
- Zinnia Wormwood loves salsa so perhaps there might be a little bit of Latin movement when she moves to her name.
  - Agatha Trunchbull could be described as quite aggressive, so how can we show that in our actions?
4. Following on from the music lesson, you may wish to ask the children to stamp out some of the Trunchbull’s amusing insults. These are always very rhythmic, and again will help pupils to explore character as they move. (Resource 1)

TYPICAL ADJECTIVES	TRUNCHBULL’S NASTIEST WORDS	BASIC/ EVERYDAY SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	HUMOROUS SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	SUBJECT COMPARISON
revolting	squirming	tiny	pint-sized	worm
squirming	shrivelled	little	teeny	maggot
miserable	runt	miniature	itty-bitty	slug
disgusting	scrappy	petite	wee	toad
repulsive	measly	slight	miniscule	shrimp
tiny	vile	compact	microscopic	tadpole
grovelling	malicious	modest	teensy	insect
wretched			pocket-sized	blister
pint-sized				squirt
				sinner

1. The teacher can begin by calling out different words, and then put these together as simple phrases that add up to four beats. So the children have to listen and remember to stomp out the correct rhythm.

**Example - Grovelling, measly pocket sized squirt**

2. You can ask the children to stomp these out in different ways, which will help them consider how it might feel for the characters to respond - in their own ways - to the Trunchbull's words.
3. You can ask them to move:
  - Dolefully
  - Angrily
  - Hesitantly
  - In fear
  - Etc etc

After the teacher has modelled this, you can then ask children to choose groups of words to stomp out.

## Part Two: Building a Sense of Character Through a Pose

### Pupils will learn:

- How to build character through gesture and expression.
- How to evoke character and personality through movement.
- How to move to a rhythm, and hold a position for a certain length of time.

### ACTIVITY 2

### Revolting Statues

If you have the appropriate licensing, watch **Revolting Children** on film.

Look carefully at the way that the children are moving. Discuss the style. E.g: How would you describe the way they are moving? What is this telling us about their characters?

1. Explain to the children that they are going to do an activity that is like musical statues but with a slight difference. Just like in the game, they will dance to the music when they hear it, but they will try to dance in the style that they have seen on the screen. When the music stops, just like in musical statues, they must form a statue. But in this case the teacher will be looking for pupils who have managed to capture the character really well in their frozen pose.
2. Play the music **Revolting Children** and ask children to dance to it in the style of the characters they have seen on screen. When the music stops the children freeze.

1. Ask half of the room to relax and look at the other half. Ask them to carefully walk up to the characters and look carefully at the gestures they can see. You can even ask them to speak to the characters in their pose. Ask them to try to mirror the pose of a character they have seen. Repeat the activity, this time asking the other half of the class to stop and then interact with the characters.
2. As the teacher, choose a particularly strong example and engage the pupils in a brief discussion:
  - What makes this typical of the type of pose you would see in the film?
  - How is strength shown in this pose?
  - What is the posture and stance telling us about the character?
3. Each time you continue this activity the pupils should be building on the strengths you have highlighted as you focus on the powerful frozen images you have seen around the room.
4. Ask the children to reflect on the following
  - How would you feel about joining the revolting children?
  - What qualities do you see in their actions and their movements?

## Part Three: Creating a Motif

### Pupils will learn:

- To create and refine group movement motifs.
- To explore body shapes, contrasts, and transitions.
- To practise timing movement to lyrics and musical cues.
- Add variation to movements.

### ACTIVITY 3

### Group Shapes

1. Organise the class in groups of between 3 and 5 pupils.
2. Ask them to reflect on the character shapes they have seen both in the film and the game that they have just played. They should then move on to explore different poses that create interesting shapes and in some cases, contrasts.
3. Whilst they are choosing, ask them to also consider what they want to convey in the characters of the children using the music from **Revolting Children**. Each of these shapes should be performed with strength and integrity, and the pupils should aim for a consistent standard of performance in their group. They should hold each pose for 4 seconds (which amounts to a line of lyrics).

4. Children should then consider how they will move from one shape into another. We will explore travelling later on, so it may be best to suggest that the movement should be on the spot.
5. After they have established their shapes and how to move from one to the other, ask the children to practise performing this to the opening section of the song. The timing is quite difficult here, so they will need to listen for specific words to prompt them to move from one shape to another. They will need to move through the process of these poses more than once, so introduce them to ways of using the same shapes but creating a variation for each chorus.

DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUE	MEANING / HOW TO EXPLAIN TO PUPILS
Change of level	Perform it higher, lower, on the floor, or standing
Change of direction	Face a different way each time
Change of size	Make the shape bigger or smaller
Fragmentation	Use just a small part of the motif
Embellishment	Add a detail, gesture or dynamic quality
Canon/Unison (group work)	Perform the motif one after another or all together

They should then think about how they will move from one shape to the other. At this point they should try moving on the spot, as we will explore travelling later on.

## Part Four: Portraying Characters Through Movement

### Pupils will learn:

- How moving in a particular style can say different things about how a character is feeling.
- How we can adapt a motif by using different development techniques, introducing variations that add interest to the performance.

## ACTIVITY 4 Move Like Revolting Children

1. Explain that the choreography in **Revolving Children** involves a lot of very fast movement and much of this in the way the children walk or move from one place to another.
2. Talk to the children about the title of the song. It doesn't really mean that it looks revolting, in the song the word 'revolting' is more like a battle cry and the movement that comes out of the dance is triumphant and defiant.
3. Say that we are going to learn about different ways to walk in dance and think about the timing and rhythm of this.

Here are some examples:

- Stride
  - March
  - Shuffle
  - Slide
  - Jog and hop (jump from one foot to the other and hop with knees high)
  - Jog on the spot with knees high
  - Jog on the spot with heels towards bottom
4. Ask the children to repeat the phrase "we are revolting children living in revolting times" and simply walk around the room getting used to the rhythm of these words. Call out different ways of moving to the children. They should continue saying the phrase as they move so they feel the rhythm in their bodies.
  5. Children should then develop their own four ways of moving, ensuring that each movement is executed with integrity, creating good phrasing and focusing on precision.
  6. Draw out the qualities in each movement and emphasise the attitude that is being conveyed by the characters. How do we show determination in our bodies? Chins up, backs straight, firm definite footsteps, looking fearlessly straight ahead.
  7. Guide the children to look for different poses that are made by the characters. You can model this by pausing the film at different moments and asking the pupils to comment on what they see. You can also model the shapes yourself or ask a confident child to do this for the class. Explain that they will need to choose four that can be used to create motifs.
  8. Ask the children to move into groups of between three to five pupils. Ask them to practise some of the travelling movements they have seen and choose up to four that they can develop in their dance.

DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUE	MEANING / HOW TO EXPLAIN TO PUPILS
Repetition	Repeat the movement perhaps with a variation
Change of level	Perform it higher, lower, on the floor, or standing
Change of direction	Face a different way each time
Change of speed	Perform it faster or slower
Change of size	Make movements bigger or smaller
Fragmentation	Use just a small part of the motif
Embellishment	Add a detail, gesture or dynamic quality
Inversion	Turn the movement upside down or reverse the body shape
Canon/Unison (group work)	Perform the motif one after another or all together

## Part Five: Combining Movements

### Pupils will learn:

- To structure a dance sequence by linking actions and formations.
- Use repetition and variation to match changes in musical pace, verses, and choruses.
- To make collaborative decisions by selecting movements, formations, and development techniques.

## ACTIVITY 5 Piecing the Dance Together

1. The opening bars change in pace, so starting with the four statue poses at the beginning of the music, carefully moving from one to another is a good place to start here.
2. As mentioned earlier on, these four poses will need to be repeated, and children will have used the suggested development techniques to introduce variation in these shapes each time they are repeated.
3. This can then develop into the chorus and main verses, where children can join their still poses with the movements they have practised to travel around their space. They will have considered the number of dancers in their group and how they want it to be placed: in a circle, in triangle or in a line. They will have also considered whether they want to change from one formation to another.

It is up to the teacher as to how prescriptive they choose to make this, depending on the ability and creativity of the children. Once the children have developed and rehearsed the different movements in their dance they could:

4. Use four different travelling actions in the chorus (one beat each) and vary them with development techniques when they are repeated. They use still movements for the verses, travelling from one to another on the spot and introducing variation when they are repeated.

Or

5. Move from one still motif into another using a different travelling action each time and continuing this throughout the music.

Or

6. You could leave it open to the pupils to decide how they will match all their ideas together in the dance.
7. These sessions will probably take place over a number of different lessons whilst pupils fine tune their movements. Revolting Children is certainly one of children's favourite pieces in the musical and they are likely to enjoy the opportunity to be a little bit 'Revolting' and there will be a sense of joy and triumph in their movements and actions that may well carry them through the day!

# PSHE Lesson Activities

With its larger than life characters, **Matilda** is a delightful story that brings joy and laughter to the classroom. But there are some serious themes in the narrative from which children can learn. Discussing aspects of the story and showing how we can relate these to our own lives can actually lead to a sense of empowerment for pupils. These learning sessions will give them the opportunity to reflect on the times when we need to be brave for ourselves and how this can make a significant difference to our lives.

**By the end of this lesson, pupils will be able to:**

- Understand themes of resilience, fairness, and kindness from **Matilda The Musical**.
- Explore strategies for finding safer places and safe adults.
- Reflect on the importance of sharing concerns with others and understanding who to trust.
- Apply these lessons to their own experiences at school and beyond.

## Part One: Introduction

### ACTIVITY 1

### Growing Up Charades

1. Show a short clip from the song, **When I Grow Up**.
2. Ask children to chat in pairs to discuss three things they think about this song and why.
3. Explain that when we are children we often want to be grown ups who seem to have the freedom to do exactly what they want to do.
4. Ask the children to work individually - not sharing their ideas with their partners at this point - to jot down 3 things they would like to do when they grow up. For children who might be stuck for ideas, tell them that they can use some ideas from the song if they wish.
5. Play **Growing up Charades**. Ask the pupils to move into pairs and, taking turns, mime for their partner each Growing Up Idea they have had. In this game, it is not really whether the pupils guess correctly or not, it's more about the varied ideas that will come out of this game.

6. After the pupils have played this game for about 5 minutes, gather them together and ask for some examples (you can even ask the pupils to mime this to the whole class if you wish). Talk to children about why their choices are so important to them. Ask pupils why adults don't always seem to do the things children think they should be doing!
7. Finally ask the question
  - What do we need from our safe adults to support us?
  - What qualities do we need to see in them in order to trust them?
  - How do we know who we can trust and who we should not trust?

Teachers should take ideas from the pupils but then summarise some important points.

#### **They Listen to You**

- They take your worries seriously and don't laugh at or ignore you.
- They listen without judging or shouting.

#### **They Respect You**

- They don't ask you to do things that feel wrong or uncomfortable.
- They respect your personal space, body, and feelings.

#### **They Tell the Truth and Keep Promises**

- They don't make you keep secrets that make you feel worried or unsafe.
- They might need to tell someone else (like another adult who can help) if you're not safe — that's because they care about keeping you safe.

#### **They Have Rules and Boundaries**

- They help you understand what's safe and what's not.
- They don't break rules to get you to do something.

#### **They Make You Feel Comfortable and Safe**

- You feel calm and protected when you're with them.
- You don't have to pretend or hide how you feel.

Explain that we all have challenges in life and children often need the help of adults to overcome them. We are going to be thinking about how our school can support pupils to overcome challenges. Draw a picture of Miss Honey and around it, label the things that made her a safe person to talk to.

**Ask pupils to remind themselves of who their safe people are.**

## Part Two: Facing Challenges

The children in **Matilda The Musical** all have personal challenges and because it is a funny work of fiction, they are larger than life. However, if we dig down to where the ideas from Roald Dahl originally might have come from, we can see some ordinary everyday challenges that we all have to face. But perhaps we can use the determination of some of these characters to help us through them.

### ACTIVITY 2

### Busybody Neighbours

1. Children work in groups of between 3 to 5 pupils. Tell them they are neighbours that live in Matilda's road and they are going to be gossiping about her family. Imagine they are staring out of the window and talking about them. What kinds of things would they say?
2. Move onto asking them to gossip about Matilda and how they are worried about her. What are the main challenges that they would draw out?
3. After this, get feedback from the children and ask for examples from their discussions.
4. Then, provide the pupils with the following grid: [\(Resource J\)](#)

MATILDA'S PROBLEM	TYPICAL EVERYDAY PROBLEMS
Her parents think reading is bad	
She is cleverer than her teachers	
She gets so angry that she can control things with her eyes	

5. Ask the pupils to think of a more realistic challenge for each of the challenges above. And fill them in on the other side of the grid. They should think about the challenges that they or their friends might be more likely to experience in school.

There are some modelled examples on the next page suggesting how this might be filled in.

MATILDA'S PROBLEM	TYPICAL EVERYDAY PROBLEMS
Her parents think reading is bad	There aren't many books to read at home/parents work or have young children so there is not always time to read at home
She is cleverer than her teachers	The learning seems a little bit easy and they are finishing everything very quickly. They feel that the learning could be more challenging
She gets so angry that she can control things with her eyes	They sometimes find it hard to control their temper

6. Once the children have written down more ordinary challenges, move back into pairs to discuss the ways in which you could get help in school to overcome these challenges. The teacher should then address this as a class.

Example - talk to us at school if you are not having time to read at home. We always have books in school and we can find someone who will hear you read every day, etc.

## Part Three: Identifying Support and Help

### ACTIVITY 3

### Hot-Seating

1. Introduce the character of Matilda into the classroom, to sit on a 'hot seat'. This could be a confident pupil from another class, yourself or another willing adult.
2. Explain that Matilda has just joined our school and she wants to share with you some of the problems that she has been having at her old school. She wants to know what will happen if she has similar problems. How should she approach this and who should she go to?
  - If she was in our school, what would happen if she didn't attend?
  - If she loved books but her parents did not want her to read, what should she do?
  - Who were Matilda's safe people?
  - Everyone needs someone that they can trust in times of difficulty. And they need to be aware of people they cannot trust too.
  - Who were the people that Matilda could not trust?
  - It must have been very difficult for her to have not had a safe space at home where she could feel like herself. When did she have a safe space?
  - Everyone needs a safe place that they can go to, with a

trusted adult. If school or home does not feel safe, you need to talk to someone you can trust about it.

- School will always change things or work with pupils to make school feel as safe as possible.

**Important:** Teachers and pupils will know the specific systems in their own school (e.g. DSLs Mental Health leads etc) and these safe points and processes should be drawn out in the discussion to remind children of where they can go.

## Part Four: Supporting Each Other

In **Matilda**, the characters show real resilience and they overcome their barriers through strength and unity. They support each other. They cheer for Bruce when he manages to eat the chocolate cake and they prepare each new child who enters the school for what to expect by giving them warnings about the Trunchbull.

### ACTIVITY 4

### Playground Chatter

1. In everyday school life, we can support each other. Ask the pupils to move into pairs or threes. Pairs are best, but a three can be adapted if needed. Ask them to give themselves a number one or two (or three!) One is a child with a challenge at school, number two is Matilda/Bruce and number three is Bruce/Matilda.
2. Ask the pupils to move around the room as if they are talking on the playground. If the weather is good, you can actually take the children out onto the playground to do this activity.
3. Number Ones talk about one scenario at a time with Matilda or Bruce (or both if in a three). The teacher gives pupils between 3 to 5 minutes for each and asks pupils to stop. When it is time to discuss the next scenario, the teacher may choose to ask the pupils to swap role.
4. Before the pupils start, explain to pupils that if they think there is a way that school could improve things to help the children feel happier and safer, they can collect the ideas later to share with school counsellors or pupils' parliament.
  - The child is being left out a playtime and has no one to play with.
  - Other pupils are being unkind to the child.
  - They are finding it really difficult to complete their homework at home because it is really noisy and busy.
5. You can then ask the pupils to think of other challenges to share with our expert role models Matilda and Bruce.

## Part Five: Bravery and Resilience are Our Superpowers

We can always ask for the support of safe adults or our trusted friends to help us through difficult times. But sometimes this requires some inner bravery.

### ACTIVITY 5

### Four Corners

We are going to look at moments in **Matilda** where characters might have responded in a particular way and they had to be bold and strong.

1. Divide the room into four zones, and label them with the following titles:

**Terrified**

**Courageous**

**Worried**

**Wanting to change something**

2. Take the example of Bruce Bogtrotter. Ask questions about how he felt at different points in his narrative.
3. Ask the pupils to stand in the part of the room that they feel best describes how the character was feeling at these points.
4. How did he feel when the Trunchbull first brought him into the room to show her anger for eating her chocolate cake?
5. How did he feel when he was told that he had to eat the entire cake?
6. How did his friends feel when they were watching him being threatened?
7. How did he feel when his friends cheered him and encouraged him to eat the entire cake?
8. If you wish, you can introduce other interesting real life characters like Greta Thunberg who have done brave things to change the world.
9. Discuss with the pupils how all these characters move from moments of trepidation to bravery and courage. Ask them what helps people to be braver and what we could learn from them. What do we need to tell ourselves to help us to be more brave.

**ACTIVITY 6****Confidence Scale**

1. Ask the children to draw a line on a piece of paper. This is their own line and they do not need to share it with anyone.

Very Scared

Truly Courageous

2. Ask them to label it with one end as above or you could use sketches that identify with the words.
3. Go through some scenarios with the pupils. Ask them to identify where they are on the scale, and without drawing out anyone's individual response, talk about how we could move along the scale to be braver in each situation.
4. Discuss strategies that pupils could use, and how we can tell ourselves a more positive story. Sometimes it is the doubting voices in our minds that stop us from doing simple things that would make a real difference to us.
5. Share the following scenarios:
  - Someone is being very unkind to me on the playground and it is stopping me from wanting to come to school. I need to tell the teacher.
  - I haven't finished my homework because it was a busy weekend and I didn't get a chance to do it. I need to tell my teacher.
  - I have taken something from someone else. I need to admit to it.

**Summary**

Go around the class: Each pupil shares one word they'll take away from today's lesson (e.g., courage, fairness, kindness, resilience).

Through the fun of this much loved text, pupils will have explored a range of themes and hopefully left the lesson with some strategies that support their resilience and the confidence to know that there are places to find help when they need it.

## Resources

### RESOURCE A

### IMAGE OF MISS TRUNCHBULL - ACTIVITY 1 / P.4



## RESOURCE B

### PLANNING FRAME 1 - ACTIVITY 1 / P. 5

PHYSICAL ELEMENT	WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?	WHAT CAN YOU COMPARE IT TO?

## RESOURCE C

### PLANNING FRAME 2 - ACTIVITY 2 / P. 7

PHYSICAL ELEMENT	HOW DOES IT FEEL?	WHAT CAN YOU COMPARE IT TO?

# RESOURCE D

## CLASSROOM IMAGES - ACTIVITY 2 / P. 7 + ACTIVITY 3 / P. 20



**RESOURCE E****CHARACTER TRAITS - ACTIVITY 3 / P. 9 + ACTIVITY 4 / P. 22**

<b>CHARACTER</b>	<b>ORDINARY TRAIT</b>	<b>HOW THIS IS EXAGGERATED</b>	<b>HOW THIS BECOMES A SUPER POWER</b>
<b>Amanda Thripp</b>	<b>Long Pigtails</b>	<b>Pigtails so long that the Trunchbull can use them for swinging around and hurling</b>	<b>Amanda loves her journey through the air and ends up in a beautiful field of flowers. She feels like she is flying</b>
<b>Bruce Bogtrotter</b>	<b>A big appetite and sweet tooth</b>	<b>An appetite so big that the small child can eat a giant cake</b>	<b>The whole of the school becomes brave enough to cheer Bruce on</b>
<b>Matilda Wormwood</b>	<b>A strong sense of injustice</b>	<b>So strong that it comes out of her eyes and she able to send a force that makes things move</b>	<b>She is able to outwit the Trunchbull and her parents even though she is small, she becomes powerful</b>

**RESOURCE F****ORDINARY TRAITS GAME - ACTIVITY 4 / P. 11 + ACTIVITY 4 / P. 23**

<b>ORDINARY TRAIT</b>	<b>EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT WHEN EXAGGERATED</b>
Has a huge rucksack for school	Can climb inside rucksack or allow others to climb inside to hide from Miss Trunchbull
Good football skills	Can bend it like Beckham and pinpoint a shot to any given position e.g. Miss Trunchbull's window, or her hammer as it flies through the air
Has huge glasses	The glasses are reflective and when they catch the light can dazzle the eyes of anyone looking at them - including Miss Trunchbull - so they are not able to see anything
A high jumper	
An impressionist	
A climber	
A collector (keeps lots of curious things in their desk)	

## RESOURCE G

### PLANNING THE PLOT - ACTIVITY 5 / P. 12

ORDINARY TRAIT	CHARACTER NAME	EXTRAORDINARY TRAIT	HOW THE CHAPTER/WRITING WILL END

## RESOURCE H

### TRUNCHBULLIAN ATTACKS - ACTIVITY 6 / P. 14

NASTY QUESTION	NASTY OBSERVATION	COMMAND	WHAT SHE SAYS SHE WILL DO TO ATTACK

# RESOURCE I

## SILLY INSULTS TABLE - ACTIVITY 3 / P. 35 + ACTIVITY 1 / P. 38

TYPICAL ADJECTIVES	TRUNCHBULL'S NASTIEST WORDS	BASIC/ EVERYDAY SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	HUMOROUS SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	SUBJECT COMPARISON
revolting	squirming	tiny	pint-sized	worm
squirming	shrivelled	little	teeny	maggot
miserable	runt	miniature	itty-bitty	slug
disgusting	scrappy	petite	wee	toad
repulsive	measly	slight	miniscule	shrimp
tiny	vile	compact	microscopic	tadpole
grovelling	malicious	modest	teensy	insect
wretched			pocket-sized	blister
pint-sized				squit
				sinner

TYPICAL ADJECTIVES	TRUNCHBULL'S NASTIEST WORDS	BASIC/ EVERYDAY SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	HUMOROUS SYNONYMS FOR SMALL	SUBJECT COMPARISON

## RESOURCE J

### BUSYBODY NEIGHBOURS - ACTIVITY 2 / P. 47

MATILDA'S PROBLEM	TYPICAL EVERYDAY PROBLEMS
Her parents think reading is bad	
She is cleverer than her teachers	
She gets so angry that she can control things with her eyes	