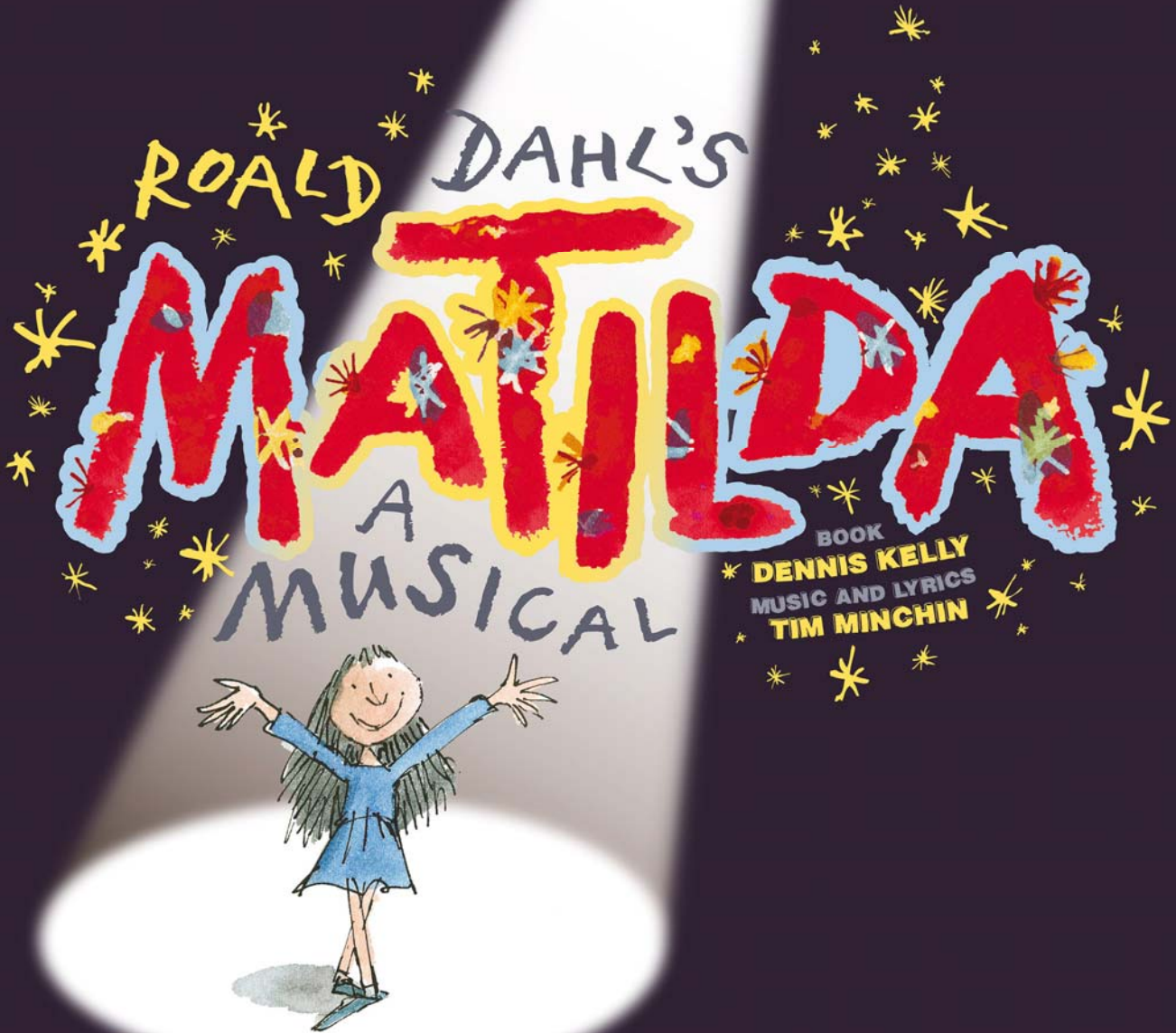


RSC

ROYAL
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Education Pack



The Prince's Foundation for
Children & the Arts



THE ROALD DAHL
MUSEUM AND
STORY CENTRE



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ENGLAND**

Introduction to the Pack

RSC Education practice is about taking rehearsal room methods and adapting them for use within the classroom.

In this pack, we'll be using a variety of different sources to bring the creative process to life for you and your students: Roald Dahl's novel of *Matilda*; the script and songs from the RSC's latest production *Matilda, A Musical* written by Dennis Kelly and Tim Minchin respectively; notes taken in Director Matthew Warchus' rehearsal room as the production was brought to life onstage; insights and exercises from our Literary department plus our general practice with Shakespeare. We are very grateful for all the input from cast and production teams as well as from the *Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre*, Quentin Blake, Puffin Books and *Children and the Arts*.

The activities are geared towards upper Key Stage Two and Lower Key Stage Three but can be adapted for older or younger pupils. They are designed to help them to engage with the characters and the story but also to use as inspiration for their own creative writing. Playwright Dennis Kelly believes that we hold stories in our hearts and that we instinctively know what makes a good narrative from an early age; we hope that these activities are useful in helping young people to connect to those stories and help them to find their own voices in expressing them.

We recommend that if you or your group are not used to using drama as a tool for learning then you might want to start each class with some gentle warm-up activities to build confidence in this approach – there are many great resources available on the internet and in good book stores to help you with this.



Introduction to *Matilda, A Musical*

Our production of *Matilda, A Musical* has taken approximately five years to come to fruition onstage. It has involved a great deal of negotiation, collaborative working, redrafting and 'workshopping' to achieve.

We know that a book or script is never written perfectly in its first draft and that this is an important concept for young people to understand: there is a cyclical process of trial and error, reflection, drafting and redrafting. A key part of this process with plays is about the writer being able to hear and see their words in action i.e. being said by somebody else. Whilst in a school term, we understand that time is a major factor, we have found through our work with young people of all ages that this process is as valuable to them as it is to those who are working in the professional theatre.

We hope you'll enjoy trying out this work and look forward to hearing any comments you may have. For more information about the work of the RSC's Education department and how we might be able to support you and your students in their classroom learning, please visit:

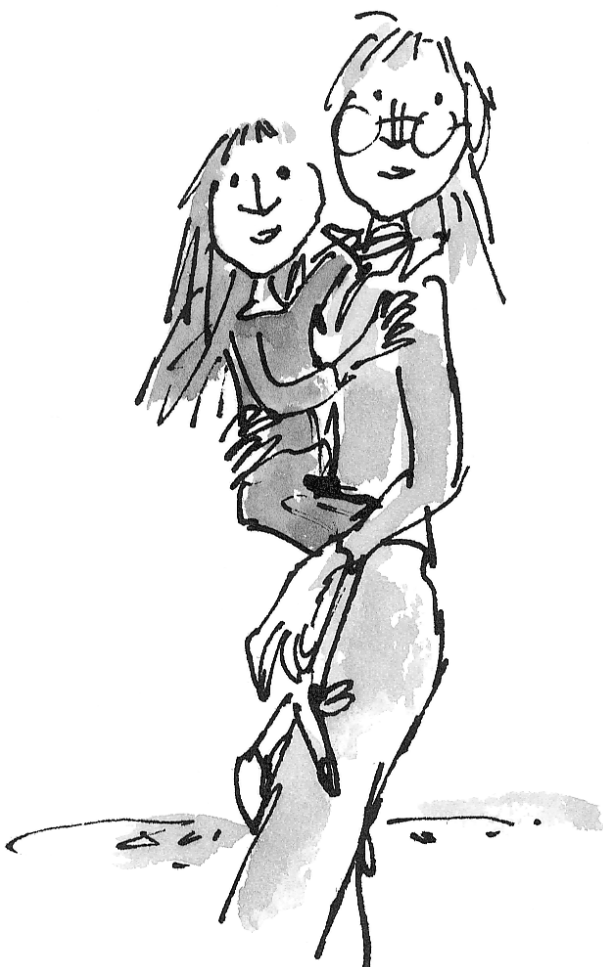
www.rsc.org.uk/education

Or call our specialist team on our education ticket hotline 0844 800 1113 (open 8.30am – 5pm Monday-Friday during term time)

or email education@rsc.org.uk

For more information about Roald Dahl, including the *Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre*, please visit

www.roalddahl.com



Making the Characters Come Alive

See Appendix 1 for Character Descriptions

Text extracts taken from *Matilda* © Roald Dahl Nominee Limited 1988

- Start off the session with participants moving around the room as individuals, finding the spaces and filling them
- Then ask them to lead with a different part of their body such as nose, toes, tummy, chest, and chin and ask them what type of person might walk like that?
- You can get them to try walking at different speeds and on different parts of their feet (toes, outside of feet, heels) and ask them what sort of person might walk like that?
- Ask participants to think of a line from a nursery rhyme and to repeat these out loud as they move around in the kind of voice that their character might use – ask them some questions about how high or low or slow or fast or old or young their voice might sound
- Choose a character to work on and ask all participants to find a space of their own and as you read through the related Character Description – they should listen and respond to the words - physically becoming that character and adding in an action and a way of moving around the room for the character
- At times, ask the group to 'freeze' and at these moments walk around and ask questions of individuals such as 'Where exactly are you?' 'What are you doing at this precise moment?' 'What are you wearing?' 'What are you thinking?' to check what participants have decided upon for their characterisation
- In small groups make the character altogether – adding in their spoken line or thinking of some other words/sounds that their character might say

Option: Use the Quentin Blake pictures in this pack as alternative or additional inspiration for starting points and ask participants to bring the individual characters to life, thinking of the words they might say and the kind of movements they might make



Telling the Story in Pictures

See Appendix 2 for Story Sections and Character Lines

Text extracts taken from *Matilda* © Roald Dahl Nominee Limited 1988

- Divide the class into small groups of threes or fours
- Give one of the Story Sections to each of the groups and ask them to tell their section of the story using frozen pictures
- At first, the frozen pictures should start with a freeze frame and end with a freeze frame and have no speaking except for one person who reads their story sentence out whilst the action is taking place (or you can read this for them)
- Next ask the group to add in their lines from the play that the characters in their section of the story say – groups can use one or all of these to help to tell their story better
- Try and show the whole story as one piece with no stops between when one group starts and another finishes
- Explore with the group how this felt and whether working in this way provided any greater insights to the story





How Does it Feel to be Inside The Chokey?

See Appendix 3 for

Description of The Chokey

Text extracts taken from *Matilda* © Roald Dahl Nominee Limited 1988. Adapted from Hortensia's description of The Chokey

- In a circle, ask all participants to close their eyes as you read out the description of The Chokey
 - Ask participants to think about how it might feel to be inside and listen for the sound words – ask the group 'What sounds did you hear?' 'What other noises might you hear if you were inside The Chokey?' Including those that might be inside your own head or body?
 - Read through the description again and encourage individuals to make the sounds at the appropriate moments
-
- Divide the class into two large groups – give a description to each group and a selection of percussion instruments - ask them to use these as well as their own vocals to create a sound-scape of the noises of The Chokey
 - Group 1 stands on their own in a space very still with their eyes closed as Group 2 makes their sound-scape around them – the words being read out either by a member of the group or you will help Group 1 to stay still and focus. Encourage the sound-scapers to walk amongst the other group but not to touch them
 - Swap over groups and elicit how this felt

Option 1: Get participants to write an immediate diary entry about this part of their day at school and how it felt to be locked inside The Chokey, what they did to get put inside there, whether it was justified etc

Option 2: You could use this experience as an opportunity to create a short poem (or song or advertising jingle) that in some way recreates this experience using onomatopoeia as the basis e.g. the old Alka Seltzer advert that went: "Plop plop, fizz fizz, Oh, what a relief it is!" Ask participants to write down the words for some of the sounds they heard on separate pieces of paper as well as what might they might have seen, smelt, touched or tasted and, in small groups, see if they can make these into a poem simply by adding in the word 'Chokey' at the end of each line for example.

Using the Sounds of Words to Create Meaning

See Appendix 4 for Examples of Names of Characters, Character Fact List, Parts of Composite Names

Great writers throughout time have used the sounds of words to help give the readers or actors clues about the character.

- Read out some of the names in Appendix 4 and ask the group what these characters might look like – how might they walk? What might they say? What's their job? *
- Ask individuals to find a space and to create some of these characters physically
- Ask them to freeze, then walk around and ask individuals about their characterisation of the name – What are they wearing? Where are they? What is on their mind?

Even before you know anything about the story of *Matilda*, you can use the characters' names to think about the clues that Roald Dahl might be trying to give us about **Miss Honey, Miss Trunchbull, Mr and Mrs Wormwood, Bruce Bogtrotter?**

- Get the group to work in pairs to create another character in *Matilda* – they could be a child be at the school, a nice aunt of Matilda, the bullying father of Miss Trunchbull etc
- Ask them to start with the name and to create the character from that
- Give them a Character Fact List to help them fill in the holes
- Ask participants to bring their character to life thinking particularly about how their character might move, walk, talk etc

Option 1: Use some parts of words to help inspire new names of characters as found in the table provided by the *Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre*:
Parts of Composite Names

Option 2: Using stimulus such as a trip into the garden, a picture of a beautiful holiday destination, a flick through a dictionary or just items seen around the classroom, get individuals

to use the table: Create Your Own Starting Points for Names and to write their own bits of words or 3 or 4 letter words. Ask them to swap with a partner to use as a basis for creating their character names. See to what extent the source material can influence the types of characters that are created.



* This links to earlier movement/character work - you can incorporate previous learning in this area or combine the two exercises

Hiding Meanings Within Words

See Appendix 5 for Words to 'Big Kids - Alphabet Song'

- Participants should move around the room and when you say a number, they should get into groups of that number with those that are closest to them.
- Then call out a letter of the alphabet and groups need to create that letter physically
- It's best to mix these up rather than going in order so that participants don't start to pre-plan what they'll create and who with
- Make sure the numbers in groups constantly shift also to make the task more difficult
- As they get used to this task, when they've created one version of the letter – ask them to create another and another so that they have to think about different ways of approaching the task
- Working as individuals - slowly read out the first verse of the 'Big Kids – Alphabet Song' and ask them to create the letters when they hear them – you can choose to what extent you emphasise the letters of the alphabet or read it normally – you may want to repeat it a few times or give them the first two as an example
- Using their character name created in the previous activity – can they create a poem that hides the letters of that name using the sounds of the letters?

Option 1: Instead of using the sounds, just use the letters of the name as the first letters of the poem lines to create a more traditional 'spelling poem' but try to ensure that the poem is in-keeping in tone to the character.

Option 2: Get participants to read through Version 2 of the song and see if they can pick out where the sounds of the letters are.



Using Everyday as Inspiration for Writing

In early drafts of *Matilda*, Roald Dahl had the main character of the same name as a wicked child – the first chapter being entitled ‘Wickedness’ and containing a list of examples that demonstrate the book’s claim that Matilda ‘was just about the most wicked child in the world’. It’s likely that Roald Dahl drew his inspiration from a poem that was written at the turn of the 20th Century with the title ‘Matilda – A Cautionary Tale of a girl who told lies and was burned to death’ by Hilaire Belloc. The opening lines of this poem are:

*MATILDA told such Dreadful Lies,
It made one Gasp and Stretch one's Eyes;*

It is a good lesson to learn that stories change from draft to draft and that inspiration can come from anywhere: we can use just about anything as a stimulus for writing. In the RSC’s production, Dennis Kelly wanted to introduce the concept that Matilda’s storytelling comes from what she hears around her – in the scene just before she starts the story of ‘The Acrobat and the Escapologist’, the dialogue she overhears between her parents goes:

*Mr Wormwood: I'm trying to pull off the biggest deal of my life and I gotta listen to this?
It's your fault; you spend us into trouble and you expect me to get us
out. What am I, a flaming escapologist?*

*Mrs Wormwood: Escapologist he says! What about me then? I've got a whole house to
look after – dinners don't microwave themselves you know! If you're an
escapologist I must be an acrobat to balance that lot – the world's
greatest acrobat!*

We can use this concept of creating drama from the stories of what we see, hear and do on a daily basis. Try this exercise as a starter activity:

- Write a list of words on the board such as:

School, Love, Miracle, Tricks, Books, Home, Anger, Secret, Revenge, Magic

(They should be a mixture of things, concepts and feelings)

- Participants should work individually and in 10 seconds they should choose one of the words and write down a sentence containing that word.
- If they can't think of anything then they should write the same word over and again.
- Participants should be encouraged not to spend too long thinking about it but writing their first thoughts spontaneously

- When completed, choose one of the words and those sentences relating to that word can be shared with the group
- Divide the group into small groups of 4 or 5 based on the word that they first selected and ask them to pool their sentences together and to create some sort of sequence from them
- If groups cannot be formed naturally, then repeat the first activity but this time, select the word that small groups should create their initial sentence from rather than allowing free choice
- They can change connectives and tense of words to create sense but the sentences must stay in the same structure - the sequencing of the sentences will create a poem that the groups should read to the rest of the class
- If the group are comfortable in using practical drama, they could present this poem using actions to enhance meaning
- Participants are then divided into pairs and they have to use the whole list in sequence to write a sentence containing each of the words that makes up a dialogue
- You may wish to give pairs the titles of A and B and recommend that A takes the word 'school', B then responds using the word 'love' etc
- Next they should be asked to think of a context – the specific set of circumstances for their dialogue to take place in – they should redraft to accommodate this accordingly
- Volunteer pairs present their dialogue to the rest of the group

Option 1:

- Ask participants to think about their journey here today and give them 3 pieces of paper to write on
- On the first they must write how they got there, the second should have two things that they saw, smelt, felt or heard and the third should say something that was extraordinary that happened (try and encourage participants to keep it truthful!)
- Put group into pairs – nominate As and Bs where A is the journey maker and B is the interrogator – A tells the story of their journey using the things written on the piece of paper but B asks questions of A to create more of a story structure and particularly focussing on any 'he said/she said' moments
- They both then use that conversation as a basis to improvise dialogue for a 'scene' based on the journey
- You could give this a context and so by swapping over partners repeat the activity with Bs story this time but with an external element such as B is madly in love with A, or A is Bs psychiatrist

- Reflect on how dialogue was created and how this can be captured as a naturalistic way of two people communicating an everyday activity

Option 2:

- With a more drama confident group, instead of talking it through first, A acts out the journey and B has to guess what's going on and what the extra-ordinary event was without A telling B
- Reflect on how this helps to build up a picture and what things were pure description, which could be captured using props, set etc and which elements could be translated into dialogue
- Draft this as a script without the use of a narrator other than one who reads the stage directions

Option 3:

- In groups of 6-8, they choose just one of the journeys as created in the first part of this exercise and work out the best way of telling this story as a group – whether that is with one narrator and the rest as actors in the story or chorally where they share the telling in different ways etc



Appendix 1

Making the Characters Come Alive

Matilda – “*You mustn’t let a little thing like little stop you*”

Extra-ordinary, sensitive and brilliant – her mind was so nimble and she was so quick to learn. By the time she was three, she had taught herself to read by studying newspapers and magazines that lay around the house.

Mr Wormwood – “*If you knew the deal I’m pulling off at work, you’d soon see clever...*”

A small ratty-looking man whose front teeth stuck out underneath a thin ratty moustache. He liked to wear jackets with large brightly coloured checks and he sported ties that were usually yellow or pale green. Gormless and wrapped up in his own silly little life; he is a dealer in second-hand cars who does pretty well at it although he has some very dishonest tactics.

Mrs Wormwood – “*Looks is more important than books*”

A large woman whose hair was dyed platinum blonde except where you could see the mousy-brown bits growing out from the roots. She wore heavy make-up and she had one of those unfortunate bulging figures where the flesh appears to be strapped in all around the body to prevent it from falling out. She is glued to the TV screen most of the time which leaves her so exhausted both physically and emotionally that she never has enough energy to cook an evening meal so she usually gave her family TV dinners or fish and chips.

Miss Honey – “*Bad times don’t last forever*”

Not more than twenty-three or twenty-four. She had a lovely pale oval Madonna face with blue eyes and her hair was light-brown. Her body was so slim and fragile one got the feeling that if she fell over she would smash into a thousand pieces, like a porcelain figure. A mild and quiet person who never raised her voice and was seldom seen to smile, but there is no doubt she possessed that rare gift for being adored by every small child under her care. Some curious warmth that was almost tangible shone out of Miss Honey’s face when she spoke to a confused and homesick newcomer to the class.

Miss Trunchbull – “*Children are maggots!*”

A formidable middle-aged lady. A gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster who frightened the life out of pupils and teachers alike. She had an obstinate chin, a cruel mouth and small arrogant eyes. When she marched – Miss Trunchbull never walked, she always marched like a storm-trooper with long strides and arms aswinging – when she marched along a corridor you could actually hear her snorting as she went. She had once been a famous athlete, and even now the muscles were still clearly in evidence. There was an aura of menace about her even at a distance, and when she came up close you could almost feel the dangerous heat radiating from her as from a red-hot rod of metal.

Appendix 2

Telling the Story in Pictures

1 A girl is born to stupid, lazy and dishonest parents who don't want her – she is called Matilda

- *'dinner doesn't microwave itself you know'*
- *'the child is clearly an idiot'*
- *'telly is better than books'*

2 Matilda discovers that she loves reading and can escape her unhappy family life by entering the fantasy worlds of books

- *'I really love Dickens. Mr Pickwick makes me laugh'*
- *'your stupid books and your stupid reading'*
- *'the sooner you're locked up in school the better'*

3 Matilda's parents are very mean to her so she plays tricks on them to cheer herself up – she's too clever for them and never gets caught

- *'a man's hair is his greatest asset'*
- *'Your.....hair! It's... it's.... green!'*
- *'Maybe you used some of mummy's peroxide by mistake?'*

4 On Matilda's first day at school, she meets her lovely teacher Miss Honey who sees how clever the girl is

- *'How about this: two times four hundred and eighty seven, if you took your time do you think you could –'*
- *'Nine hundred and seventy four'*
- *'My, my that is good'*

5 Matilda and her friends meet the terrifying headmistress of the school – Miss Trunchbull who puts children into a horrifying torture chamber

- *'Quiet you maggots!'*
- *'To teach the child, we must first break the child.'*
- *'You ought to be in prison, in the deepest, dankest, darkest prison!'*

6 Matilda discovers that if she concentrates really hard, she can make things move with just her eyes

- *'Tip it...tip it over!'*
- *'I moved it with my eyes'*
- *'I think it's something to do with that incredible mind of yours'*

7 Matilda discovers that her lovely teacher Miss Honey has been treated terribly by the cruel headmistress Miss Trunchbull for many years

- *'My father was a wonderful man. Magnus was his name. Magnificent Magnus I used to call him.'*
- *'She was so cruel to you. Miss Honey, your aunt's a murderer! She did him in!'*
- *'All the grown-ups in this town think she's wonderful. They would never believe such a thing of her.'*

8 Matilda uses magic to write something on the blackboard for the evil Miss Trunchbull which scares the headmistress and makes her run away forever

- *'The chalk! Look, the chalk, it's moving!'*
- *'No-one's doing anything!'*
- *'Run, Agatha, now. Or I will get you – like you got me!'*

9 Matilda's parents run off to Spain and so the girl and the lovely Miss Honey live together happily

- *'Quick, in the car!'*
- *'What about the girl? Do you want to stay? Here with Miss Honey?'*
- *'Yes! Yes I do!'*

Appendix 3

How does it feel to be inside The Chokey?

The Chokey is a very tall but very narrow cupboard. When you get locked up in there, you have to stand more or less at attention all the time. The floor is only ten inches square so you can't sit down or squat in it. You have to stand. And three of the walls are made of cement with bits of broken glass sticking out all over, so you can't lean against them. You can't lean against the door as it's got thousands of sharp, spiky nails sticking out of it – they've been hammered through from the outside. It's terrible. It's pitch dark and you must stand up dead straight - if you wobble at all you get spiked either by the glass on the walls or the nails on the door – you'll be spiked and cut all over when you come out or babbling like an idiot – off your rocker! It's absolute torture!

Appendix 4

Using the Sounds of Words to Create Meaning

William Shakespeare created characters such as:

Mistress Overdone is a brothel keeper in *Measure for Measure*.

Justice Shallow is an elderly and money-orientated landowner in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Peter Thump fights a duel with his master Thomas Horner in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Sir Toby Belch is a drunken knight, and kinsman to Olivia, in *Twelfth Night*

Bianca is the younger and more placid sister of Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Nick Bottom is a weaver, one of the mechanicals, a figure of fun in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Charles Dickens invented:

Cheeryble Brothers are the benevolent businessmen who employ and befriend Nicholas and his family in *Nicholas Nickleby*

Thomas Gradgrind is a mill owner retired from business who runs a school and emphasizes the importance of facts and figures over fancy to his students and his children from *Hard Times*

M'Choakumchild is a schoolmaster in Gradgrind's school in *Hard Times*

Artful Dodger is the most successful and interesting of Fagin's thieves who shows Oliver the ropes of the pickpocket game in *Oliver*

Rosa Bud is the betrothed of the hero in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

Roald Dahl has written many characters whose names are clues to their character; examples from other books that participants might be familiar with include:

The Bloodbottler, the Fleshlumpeater, the Meatdripper, are monsters from the *BFG* who eat children

Aunt Sponge in *James and the Giant Peach* is a lazy, greedy, selfish, and morbidly fat woman

The Twits are the truly silly couple from the book of the same name

The Bucket Family are the extremely poor family from *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*

There are many other examples that you could reference such as pantomime villains, J.K. Rowling stories, Sesame St, Dora the Explorer etc.

Character Facts

Name:

Age:

Height:

Job:

Distinguishing facial features:

Body Type:

Last seen wearing:

Often heard to say:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Any other relevant information:

Parts of Composite Names

ies	oct	roo	squink
snot	zee	fizz	ly
fish	cious	plane	ster
stink	hump	whiff	zig
er	tri	fly	a
cent	whizz	jig	tip

Kindly provided by The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre

Create Your Own Starting Points for Names

Appendix 5

Hiding Meanings Within Words

'Big Kids – Alphabet Song' written by Tim Minchin for *Matilda, A Musical*

This extract is from a rehearsal draft and is subject to change; it must not be photocopied, distributed or used for any purposes without express permission from the RSC.

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So you think you're

A	A ble to survive this mess by	
B	B eing a prince or princess but you will soon	
C	S ee there's no escaping traged y	D
E	And e ven if you put in heaps of	
F	E ffort, you're just wasting ener gy	G
	Cos your life as you know it is	
H	a ncient history	
I	I have suffered in this ga ol	J
	Have been trapped inside this	
K	C age for ages	
	This living ' e ll	L
	But if I try I can rem e mber	M
	Back before my life had e nded	N
	Before my happy days were o ver	O
	Before I first heard the	
P	P ealing of the bell	
Q	Li k e you I was curious	
	So innocent, I a sked a thousand questions,	R
S	But un l ess you want to suffer,	
	Listen up and I will t each you a thing or two	T
U	Y ou listen here, my dear, you'll be punished so	
V	Se v erely if you step out of line and if you cry it will be	
W	D ouble, you should stay out of trouble,	
	And remember to be e xtrremely careful	X
	W hy	Y
	Why?	
	Did you hear what she said?	
	Just you wait for Phy s -Ed	Z

Appendix 5

Version 2

'Big Kids – Alphabet Song' written by Tim Minchin for *Matilda, A Musical*

This extract is from a rehearsal draft and is subject to change; it must not be photocopied, distributed or used for any purposes without express permission from the RSC.

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So you think you're
Able to survive this mess by
Being a prince or princess but you will soon
See there's no escaping tragedy

And even if you put in heaps of
Effort, you're just wasting energy
Cos your life as you know it is
ancient history

I have suffered in this gaol
Have been trapped inside this
Cage for ages
This living 'ell
But if I try I can remember
Back before my life had ended
Before my happy days were over
Before I first heard the
Pealing of the bell

Like you I was curious
So innocent, I asked a thousand questions,
But unless you want to suffer,
Listen up and I will teach you a thing or two

You listen here, my dear, you'll be punished so
Severely if you step out of line and if you cry it will be
Double, you should stay out of trouble,
And remember to be extremely careful

Why
Why?
Did you hear what she said?
Just you wait for Phys-Ed

We are grateful to the following for their support of the RSC's Education Programme:

Arts Council England, The Ernest Cooke Trust, Creative Partnerships, The Equitable Charitable Trust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Alan Edward Higgs Charity, John Lyons Charity, The Ohio State University, The Polonsky Foundation, The Nomura Charitable Trust, RSC Friends and Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust as well as the many individual donors who annually support our work.

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