

Discovering Darlington Hippodrome

Pantomime Magic

Pantomime Magic

In this section children will be introduced to the pantomime heritage of the Hippodrome.

From its opening in 1907 the Hippodrome presented pantomimes. The first was Jack and the Beanstalk. We've even got the original publicity copy for this in the Resources Folder [Publicity copy]. This began a long and profitable yearly feature in the theatre's programme that brought in large audiences. They continue today and are one of the most anticipated and annually celebrated shows.

Activities in this section support literacy development as well as offering many opportunities for creative engagement.

At the end of this section is a suggestion for TOPIC ACTIVITY building on children's cumulative learning from the whiteboard activities in this section.

Activities in this section can be enhanced by borrowing our [Pantomime Magic Discovery Box](#).

And of course, children's learning will undoubtedly be reinforced by seeing a pantomime or taking part in a pantomime themed workshop. Contact us for details.



22 | Pantomime characters - love them or hate them

ACTIVITIES

READ and EXPLAIN Pantomime

- Ask children which pantomimes they have seen – either in theatres or on TV. Who took some of the lead parts? Mention that just as today's pantomime stars are often TV celebrities, those in the past featured famous music hall stars.
- In which pantomimes do men take the roles of women and vice versa? Talk about the role of a pantomime dame. Dames have a bawdy sense of humour, wear outrageous costumes and are very extrovert characters. They interact with the audience, initiate slapstick and play tricks on the other performers. The costumes they wear play a large part in the jokes and are often visual puns.
- Discuss what type of characters there are in pantomimes – good and bad, funny or sad, rich, poor or downtrodden, brave or cowardly.
- Talk about what children expect to see in a pantomime.
- What contributes to the appeal of pantomime – comedy, music and singing, outrageous costumes, slapstick sketches, jokes, magic, special effects, a happy ending, secrets, audience participation, animals, dramatic staircases and hidden entrances?



23a | Pantomime posters - children's designs



23b | Pantomime posters - name the pantomime

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that for around fifteen years local children were invited to design the front cover of the pantomime programme through annual competitions.



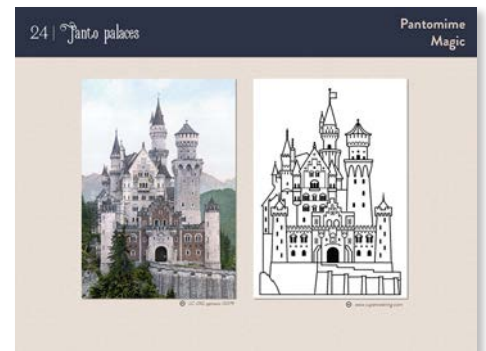
- Ask children to work out which pantomime in the second screen each poster is promoting.
- What clues in the poster tell them the name of the pantomime? What part do the features in each design have in the story?
- What do they know about some of the characters?
- Where would they write the name of the pantomime in each poster?
- You'll need to explain that in 1966 the Hippodrome was renamed the Civic when it was taken over by the council – hence the different name on the programme covers.
- Ask children to design a poster for their favourite pantomime story or the pantomime they will script in the TOPIC ACTIVITY at the end of this section.

LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Illustration

24 | Panto palaces

ACTIVITIES

- Talk about which pantomimes feature castles or palaces.
- Which characters live in them – good or bad? For example Prince Charming or Snow White's wicked stepmother.
- How might the stage designers have reflected the character of the person who lives in the castle within their designs for the castle sets – colour, detail, sets, props and sound?
- Identify key shapes or forms of the castle in the photograph and how they have been flattened to create this outline.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

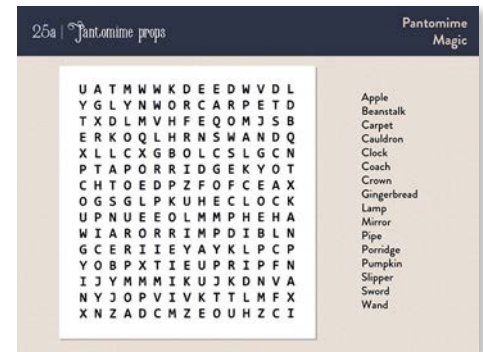
- Ask children to work in pairs or small groups to create a set for a scene that takes place in a castle. Provide images of a range of castles or let children research their own to use as inspiration.
- Prepare sketches of different ideas before children agree a scheme to work up in detail.
- You could develop children's understanding of composition and spatial awareness by talking about background (set), middle ground (props) and foreground (front of stage).
- Perhaps introduce perspective – how things get smaller and lighter the further away they are from the viewer.

LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Stage design

25a | Pantomime props

ACTIVITIES

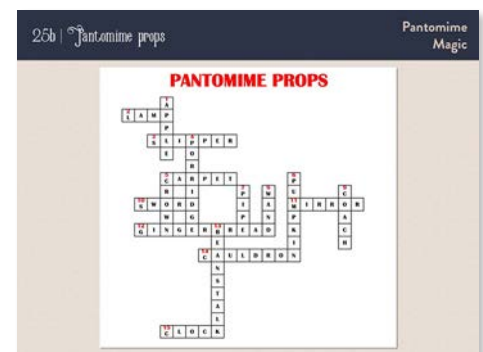
- Children work individually or pairs to recognise pantomime props.



25b | Pantomime props

ACTIVITIES

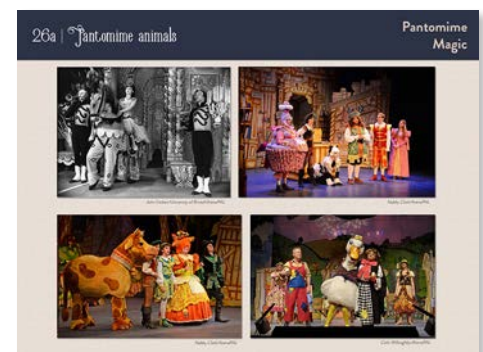
- Children work individually or in pairs to create crossword clues for these pantomime props.
- In the Resources Folder [Pantomime] you'll find an adapted version of this crossword showing only the initial letter of each answer to help children answer the clues that others may have created.



26a | Pantomime animals

ACTIVITIES

- Show children these images and ask which animals they can see and to name the pantomime. (The Snow Queen, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk and Dick Whittington.)
- What roles do these animals have in the pantomime and how do they contribute to the story line?
- How are they created on stage? People in costume, make-up, actions and mannerisms?
- We've included one image from 1948. You may need to explain that pantomimes then were not presented in black and white, but were just as colourful as today. It's because the photo was taken before colour photography was affordable. You could ask children to colour this photo by printing off an outline version in the Resources Folder [Pantomime].
- As a practical activity you could ask children to create small models or puppets of animals to be used in one of their favourite pantomime stories or the pantomime scene in the TOPIC ACTIVITY.
- These images also give you an opportunity to look at costume and sets.



26b | Pantomime animals

ACTIVITIES

- Talk about in which pantomimes these animals appear.
- What are their roles in each story?
- What are their characteristics?
- Print off copies of these animals from Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates] and ask children to work in groups to write descriptive or character words around the edges of each to assist language development.
- Then, as a whole class activity, attach a different animal onto the back of children, asking them to find out which one they are. Children can only do this through miming questions.



27 | Pre-pantomime party food

ACTIVITIES

- Read this newspaper article from 1934. You'll find a full copy in the Resources Folder [Pantomime]. Explain that it's not an original, but a transcript since the original is difficult to read.
- Talk about the suggested party food.
- What other things did the theatre manager ask mothers to think about?
- Look at the language used.
- Compare with what you'd eat today for a special treat.
- Research the recipes for some of the suggested items and make one or two. In doing so you'll be helping children to read and follow instructions.



TOPIC ACTIVITY

Pantomime scene

As a culmination activity, bringing together and sharing children's learning you could ask them to work in groups to create a pantomime scene that takes place in a castle.

- Ask children to plan and script the scene. It could be based on an existing pantomime or one that they create themselves.

- Which characters will appear in the scene?
- Which animals might appear?
- Design a backdrop for the scene.
- Which props might children want to use?
- Which special effects would they like to use?
- Design costumes for some of the characters. Use templates of figures in the Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates].
- What make-up might they like to use on some of the characters? Prepare designs on a paper mask.
- Prepare stage sets for the scene. Use the template of a stage set in the Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates].