THE OWL WHO WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK
FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH PUPILS IN NURSERY – YEAR 1
THE OWL WHO WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK

FROM 13 SEP – 4 NOV
FOR PUPILS IN NURSERY – YEAR 1

DARK IS EXCITING. DARK IS KIND. DARK IS NECESSARY...

Plop closed his eyes, took a deep breath and fell off his branch.

Plop is a Baby Barn Owl, fat, fluffy with a beautiful heart-shaped ruff and knackety knees. He’s still learning to fly, very curious and almost always hungry. And he’s afraid of the dark, which is not very helpful for a night-bird. So his exasperated mother sends him on several missions to find out more about night time.

‘Dark is exciting’ says a small boy. ‘Kind’ says an old lady. ‘Necessary’ says a little girl. Then he meets a cat who tells Plop ‘there are many kinds of dark’ and shows him the beauty of the night.

After all this enthusiasm, will Plop learn to embrace the dark?
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE PACK p.4
ABOUT THE SHOW p.5
MAKING THE PLAY: INTERVIEWS WITH THE CREATIVE TEAM p.6
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES – OVERVIEW p.8

We are currently developing the full sequence of classroom activities with our partner school. They will be added to this pack by July 2016.
INTRODUCTION

This resource pack is for teachers bringing pupils to see *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark* in autumn 2016.

The classroom activities (which will be added to the pack by the end of July) are designed to support and extend your pupils’ visit to the theatre and offer teachers ways to pick up on and explore the themes in the play, before and after a visit. They will use drama, and storytelling as ways of exploring ideas that are relevant to the play and to children’s lives.

Resources will support the EYFS framework and employ the characteristics for effective learning; playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. There will be clear links to the key areas of learning at the Foundation Stage; personal, social and emotional development; communication and language; physical development; expressive arts and design and understanding the world.

At Key Stage One the resources and theatre visit will have particular relevance to spoken language, writing and science, as well as supporting the social and emotional aspects of children’s learning.

There will be a free teacher CPD day for *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark* on Wed 14 Sep from 10am – 4pm which is a chance for teachers to find out more about the show and gain practical experience of the classroom activities, before leading them with a class.

To find out more about the CPD or book your place, email schools@unicorntheatre.com.
ABOUT THE SHOW

The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark is a show about Plop, a young owl. Plop is grown up enough to be ready to fly off with his father and begin hunting for food for himself, but there is a problem, he is afraid of the dark. His parents try to encourage him, but he tells them that dark is black and is frightening. And so Plop stays awake all day, when his parents are trying to sleep, and sleeps at night time when he should be awake.

But then Plop has a series of encounters with people and animals who each have something to share with him about the night time; they see it as beautiful, exciting, necessary, fascinating and fun. Each day he flies off the branch of his tree, landing badly with a bump or a roll as he hasn’t quite learnt how to land properly yet and finds out something new about the darkness of night time.

Firstly he meets a boy who is waiting for the night to come because it is fireworks night; fireworks are exciting and need darkness to be seen in all their splendour.

He meets an old woman who tells him how kind the dark is; she loves it because in the dark she is able to remember all the stories of her life.

A little girl is adamant that the dark is absolutely necessary; Father Christmas never, ever visits in the light of day, it has to be dark.

A young woman shows him how fascinating night time is because of all the nocturnal animals she can observe only at night. In her notebook she has drawings and facts about daytime creatures and nocturnal creatures, but she finds the night time creatures most fascinating.

Another encounter is with a boy scout who takes Plop to his scout camp and shows him how the dark makes their games such as hide and seek even more fun and it means they can sit around a bonfire telling stories.

He also meets a man who studies the stars and shows him the wonders of the night sky and teaches him the names of the constellations.

Gradually Plop becomes more confident, until he ventures out into the growing darkness of the early night with a cat called Orion (the hunter) as his guide. Orion shows him the sheer beauty of the night time, and tells him how this is just one kind of night time beauty and there are many more; winter nights, stormy nights, summer nights, cloudy nights. Finally Plop is ready to join his father on a night time hunt. At last he knows he is a nocturnal creature, he can fly in the dark with confidence, and he can land. And at last his parents can get a good day’s sleep.

This beautiful coming of age story deals with the anxieties of growing up, trying new things, facing fears of the unknown and becoming independent.

The Unicorn production of The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark will immerse the children in a theatrical version of a bedtime story; sitting around the space amongst the actors, they will begin by hearing the story book read to them and then gradually the story will come alive with moments of drama and the visual and aural elements of theatre: animation, lighting, sound and music. We hope the children will go on a journey with Plop as he gains confidence in the growing darkness around him.
INTERVIEW WITH PURNI MORELL – ADAPTOR

WHY DID YOU WANT TO ADAPT THIS STORY FOR THE STAGE?

In my opinion, it is the best piece of literature ever written in the English language. I have known that since I was two, and it continues to be the best book ever written. It was my favourite, I was obsessed with Plop. The reason I was obsessed by fireworks was because of that book, the reason I’m now obsessed by astronomy is because of that book.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BOOK IS ABOUT?

It’s about an owl who’s afraid of the dark, which is a problem for owls, and about how he overcomes his fear of the dark so he can become a better owl.

You might say this is a story about a child who knows what is expected of him and understands that his generally benign parents would like him to fit in. He would also like to fit in, but what it’s about is not doing it their way but finding his own way to fit in, on his own terms. So it is Plop who finds out that he loves the dark, but it’s not a relief, it’s an opening of a new world. The dark that he finds isn’t the same dark that his parents see. I think the reason I loved it when I was little is that it’s about how you can do what the world expects of you but do it on your terms, so it doesn’t feel like a prison. That you can find your own excitement and possibility in the world in your life, you don’t have to do things the way other people say, you can do them your way. But you can still fit in at the same time.

WHY ARE YOU STAGING IT AS A THEATRICAL READING OF A BEDTIME STORY?

The thing you connect with in the book is the narrative tone. For example there are little bits in the book where his mum says ‘Plop looked down at his toes and mumbled something.’ An actor can’t do that; I mean he can look at his toes and mumble, but it’s not the same as when someone tells you ‘he looked down at his toes and mumbled’.

We will start off with someone telling a bedtime story in the dark and it should gradually get darker.
INTERVIEW WITH LEE LYFORD – DIRECTOR

INTERVIEW COMING SOON
The full sequence of activities will be added to this pack in July 2016.

The activities are designed to capture children’s imaginations, increase motivation to learn and offer a range of possible ways to link with your classroom priorities.

Most of what we suggest are drama activities; working through drama allows children to notice and draw on their feelings and thoughts about the world, to explore things that matter to them within a fictional context, draw on their prior knowledge and apply it to new situations, develop language as they give expression to new understandings and develop emotional intelligence and critical thinking. It will also allow the children to take responsibility, make decisions, solve problems and explore possibilities from within the drama.

**ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE**

- Drama, movement and story making activities that explore ideas around darkness and light, night and day. This activity will draw on Vivian Gussin Paley’s ‘Helicopter Technique’ which facilitates children telling their own stories and acting these stories out with their peers.

- Movement and drama in-role work exploring owls, their habitats and how they live.

- A drama sequence set on a camping trip which allows the children to investigate daytime and nocturnal creatures and the social and emotional aspects of such a trip, including trying new things, becoming independent and, through a gentle ‘mantle of the expert’ drama, helping someone (teacher in role) face their fears and anxieties.

- A post-show activity using imaginative play and storytelling to explore what happened to Plop after the play.
THE OWL WHO WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK

A Unicorn production

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