DOUBLE ACT
TEACHER RESOURCE PACK
FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH PUPILS IN YEARS 3 – 6
DOUBLE DOUBLE ACT

FROM 20 JUNE – 7 JULY 2017
FOR PUPILS IN YEARS 3 – 6

THIS TOWN AIN’T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE FOUR OF US.

By Christopher Brett Bailey, Tim Cowbury and Jessica Latowicki.

Are children and adults sometimes the same? What does adulthood really mean? And what kind of things do we both find funny?

Made In China have created a show performed with 8-year-olds and adults that playfully explores these questions. Using the format of the comedy duo, an adult double act and child double act try to take control of the stage; they joke, mirror and test each other, they reverse roles and they subvert expectations.

With slapstick, humour and a lot of green slime, this clever and surprising performance offers us a chance to see the world through the others’ eyes.
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the resource pack for the Unicorn Theatre’s production of *Double Double Act* for audiences aged 7 and over.

*Double Double Act* is a playful exploration of the relationship between adults and children. What makes a child a child? When do we become an adult and what does it mean? What is the difference between childish and childlike? What makes something funny? and is it the same thing for children and adults?

Two double acts - one young, one older - have been booked and each wants control of the stage. But who should take the stage? It is a children’s theatre, but the adult double act argue that the children belong in the audience; that they, as adults, are in charge.

As the show develops we see roles reversed and expectations turned on their head. Should the children decide what happens, or do the adults know what works best for children and how to make the show run smoothly for the audience? After all we don’t want chaos and disorder, do we?

*Double Double Act* will look at the classic dynamic of double acts; two comedians who work together to perform their routines. The double acts rely on each other, but they also test and are in competition with each other. A classic double act is made up of two people who are very different from each other, either visually, in temperament or personality. Humour is often about getting things wrong, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or saying the wrong thing.

This show makes us look afresh at what adults might expect of children (how we can at times underestimate them and at others demand too much) at what children expect of adults, and what they think adulthood really means. Ultimately it reflects the fact that we are all humans, in the same world, with different kinds of experiences, hopes and fears. These differences aren’t always rooted in age and experience, but in what makes us who we are; our individual identities.

Acknowledging, sharing and laughing about our failings as human beings is useful in building confidence and emotional resilience. With reflective questioning these activities will also support children in noticing and articulating these human behavioural patterns and, as a result, give them more agency and control through understanding.

As teachers in primary schools you get to know your children well over an academic year. With the pressures of the curriculum and ensuring that each child meets their potential in core subjects it may be hard to give time and space for imaginative and open-ended explorations. We hope this resource will provide you with some ideas for playing together with your class and give children a chance to explore what it means to them to be a child, and to provide structures that allow them to give expression to their understanding of the world.

The show explores what happens when adults and children look into each other’s eyes and meet each other, when they take each other seriously and when they share a joke. It gives us a chance to look at things from a different view point, in ways that might be unexpected, interesting and insightful. The activities in this resource pack seek to do the same.
The pack provides drama activities, exercises and games that explore:

1. **Routines that go wrong** - use simple mirroring activities and working in unison to explore what happens when a routine is disrupted and things fall apart?

2. **Verbal misunderstandings** - use homonyms and homophones to explore words with different meanings.

3. **Status games** - master/servant improvisations that explore power dynamics at the heart of human interaction.

4. **Upside down day** - see what happens when children write the rules for a day, using the idea of the ‘Lord of Misrule’.

5. **Differences** - explore what makes us different and how differences in double acts are exaggerated and celebrated.

6. **Asking questions of adults** - if you could ask any question of an adult what might it be? Can children get closer to understanding adults’ perspective on the world and what lies behind adults’ answers?
Double Double Act is created by the theatre company Made In China with four children; Caitlin, Caspian, Nayana and Seb. For each performance the actors Jess and Chris will perform alongside two of the child actors.

Tim is the writer and director, Jess performs in the show and co-directs. Made In China do not start rehearsals with a completed script; the work is made gradually over many months and emerges out of improvisations between the child and adult performers, or from scripting that takes place between rehearsals.

The children auditioned and were cast last summer and have been working with the company, sometimes as a four, and sometimes in their double acts, since October 2016. Made In China have not worked in this way before. They have also been joined at key stages by Dominique Collet, dramaturg and coach on the project, who has a great deal of experience of making work with children through her company Kopergietry, based in Belgium.

The creative team is completed by musical director Lewis Gibson, designer Emma Bailey and lighting designer Alex Fernandes.

This interview the writer/director Tim Cowbury and actor Christopher Brett Bailey took place about half way through the process of making Double Double Act. Many ideas have been opened up, but few firm decisions have yet been made about exactly what will happen on stage. The interview aims to give teachers a sense of what the piece will focus on and the questions, images and themes which are preoccupying the company at this stage of making.

**Why did you want to make Double Double Act? Where did the idea come from?**

**Tim:** It was the very start of 2014 when we first talked to Purni (Unicorn Theatre’s Artistic Director) and she wanted us to propose an idea to her. If we were going to make a show for the Unicorn (Made In China usually make work for adult audiences) then there was an impulse to make it with children, not just for them. It shouldn’t just be us as adults, thinking of something and presenting it to the kids and expecting them to lap it up. I think there was an idea to be a bit radical about handing power to children in the process. We had the title the earliest we’ve ever had one. I remember the conversation with Jess when we said ‘Double Double Act’, we said ‘that’s it’. It’s such a neat construct.

**Chris:** The first show that I did with Made In China was just Jess and I, and it was a double act turned on its head. It was simply just ‘boy’ and ‘girl’. My persona would respond to a stimulus, and Jess’s...
would respond to a stimulus and the differences between us were just boy and girl. It was based on two people with the same accent, of approximately the same age. And so the idea of doing that again, but this time across the generations, was where the idea came from.

**What is the show about?**

**Chris:** The basic premise of the show is that two double acts, one adult, one child, have been booked to perform in the same space at once and they are in competition to run the show. That is Act One of the story in a sense. To a certain degree this show is a variety show. It may not be a variety show in the sense that it’s all just magic tricks and clowns and dance routines, but there might be some magic tricks and clowns and dance routines and there might be some more conventional, more theatrical forms within it; bits that seem like a play and bits that seem like it’s performance art.

**Tim:** In performance art, you’re not watching people on stage pretending to be or do things; you’re watching something genuinely happen. If there is a chase, people have to genuinely get exhausted.

**Chris:** It should do to your brain what art does to your brain; which is that there is more than one meaning and it is telling you something that could not be communicated by any other means.

**Tim:** It’s also about upsetting expectations – ‘nothing is as it seems’ is a mantra for the show. We are always interested in how you can lull the audience into something before you pull the rug from beneath their feet; the audience is here, and then we shift them right over to here. Having children on stage amplifies what you can do with that, because without a word being said there are already so many expectations from the audience. And rather than thinking ‘what’s the narrative in the story?’ we’re thinking ‘how can we mess with the expectations the audience will have?’. We’re interested in balancing quite conventional narratives with things that are not narrative.

**What are the main themes you are exploring?**

**Tim:** It is an exploration of age, ages, and humour. How perceptions of these things shift depending on the perspective: how adults look to children and vice versa. How it was twenty, fifty, one-hundred years ago, and how the culture and comedy of that time looks to us now. How things can be funny and not funny at the same time – or just depending on perspective. There isn’t one truth, no one definitive way to say what’s funny, or what an adult or child should be like. The show asks the question of whether anything ‘just is’ – is there such a thing as ‘universal’?

Or is everything, in it’s way, subject to change, fleeting and ephemeral? And if everything’s always changing, what does that mean for us? How do we make sense of things if they won’t stand still? What joy is in that, but also what frustration and sadness? It’s a freeing way to look at the world but also potentially a difficult one - especially since so many people like to believe some things ‘just are’.
Chris: There’s a question of, do you think this is funny? If not, why not? Was it ever funny? Could it be funny in the future? One of the things we’re finding is that there are a lot of things that are equally funny to adults and kids: misunderstandings and people doing something that doesn’t fit who they are and what their body is, is always funny. The Freudian psychologists really think the first joke you learn is that you are not what you think you are. So to misname someone, or to get their gender wrong, or to treat someone you love as if you’re angry with them, is the funniest thing that we find from the beginning of time.

Tim: Yes, because the beginning of your existence is always going to be about confirming you are what you are, and telling you that things are things; this is your name, I am your parent, this is food – you should eat that, you shouldn’t touch this; so any inversion of those rules is what all of humour is based on. Your identity is the first thing you have a concept of, so almost all humour is based on some advancement of that concept.

One of the key ingredients of any comedy is that you take a set of rules and you apply them somewhere they wouldn’t normally be applied, or you break them; you fantasise about what it would be like if they were broken. (Tim and Chris start to discuss the film Problem Child in which a child wreaks havoc and the adults are powerless to control him). You’re accepting the fiction of it and can delight in imagining it, only because you’re safe in the knowledge that it is an imagining and you’ll come back to reality and you won’t try doing that to your parents.

Chris: It’s your rampant id, and it is a terrifying prospect to authority figures.

Tim: The game that’s being played is breaking the rules and it doesn’t matter what age you are, it is a very exciting game. You could call it out of control, or you could just call it freedom, there’s always a negative and a positive way to see it.

Tim, you wrote an early possible structure that suggested a role reversal where the children have power over the adults for a time but then return to the conventional adult/child relationship at the end of the show, where order is restored. Do you think that will make it into the show?

Tim: Well that’s a classic story, narrative structure. I wrote that as an exercise; ‘if this were a classic Hollywood 5 act structure story what would happen?’ However it needs to be, as with all the shows we’ve made, that there are multiple interpretations to take away, rather than ‘it means this’. I want one person to go away and say ‘it means this’ and another to say ‘no, it means this’. We’re interested in seeing narrative and non-narrative side-by-side, one isn’t interesting without the other present. In a way that is perfectly embodied in the double act dynamic; the conflict between order and chaos, the thing that is doing what it’s told and the thing that is doing what it wants.

Could you tell us more about the idea of an ‘upside down day’ – a time when children and adults reverse roles?

Tim: We used to have that one day a week with my parents until it got too awful. It would be amazing at school if a whole class could say these are the parameters, no-one can harm anyone, let’s have an upside down day. Historically the ‘Lord of Misrule’ was a means of control. It was a way for the landlord of the tenant farmers in the countryside to say, ‘this is your day when you can do what you

Rehearsal photo by Helen Murray
want’. That might be a way of encapsulating that complicated thing we’re talking about. There is the pressure for children to be what adults far away have decided they should be; learning in maths and science, don’t learn drama. This is the kind of adult you need to be; an economically viable unit. And not someone who’s playful. Or complicated.

**Is working with children what you expected?**

**Tim:** We’ve discovered that you become the thing you’re trying to critique and you discover quite a lot about yourself as the adult - the oppressiveness of adulthood, that ultimately you’re always trying to get what you want out of a situation. It’s almost always disingenuous to say ‘just be yourself’ to the children. You might tell yourself (nevermind the world) that you want to empower children and let them be themselves, but we want them to be the selves that we’d like them to be.

**Chris:** Because the ultimate goal was not really to give them a great time but to make a show, and we have a certain criteria for making a show.

**Tim:** I think there will be a part where it gets a lot harder, so far we haven’t pushed it too far. We’ve learnt maybe how fast things can change, with children especially. And how wrong we can be in our judgements.

**What about working with the different personalities of the actors, both adult and child?**

**Chris:** The thing about the double act is, if you’ve got one that’s funny and one that’s more conventionally beautiful and can tap dance, they’re still equal, because they both have something positive. And they both have something annoying to the other person that makes them threatening. There’s equality, but not a sameness. Equality is not everyone being good at the same thing, equality is that everyone has good and bad in them and striking a balance within yourself allows you to orientate yourself in a way that doesn’t cause friction in your life.

**Can you tell us about the design of the show, how it might it look on stage?**

**Chris:** The beginning will probably be everyone in matching tail suits, red velvet curtains, how 1940s night club entertainers might look in your imagination. Then probably from there it will move into hyper-active techni-colour, over the top, early 90s colour explosion, from when we were kids. And then the final part I imagine being something more in the real world of theatre; where we see the actual lights, we’re all here for real, something that feels more contemporary, more of the present or of the future.

There will be jokes that feel ‘antiquated’, jokes that are for the adults, jokes that are for the kids, jokes that are for other kids that we don’t even get. So there is a sense of it being grandparents, their parents, us, them, other children. The design of the show will somehow embody that as well.
CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Before you begin the drama activities, let the class know that you are going to explore the idea of comedy and in particular ‘double acts’. Explain that you will be gathering information and investigating ‘what makes something funny?’ through a range of activities.

Start by talking about humour; the kinds of things that make them laugh and why things might be funny.

Go on to discuss double acts. Ask the children if they know what a double act is and whether there are any double acts they know of and like. The show Double Double Act looks at the idea of a double act and the way in which this has changed throughout the ages. In the days of Vaudeville and Music Hall, double acts were very popular and would perform short acts on a mixed bill alongside other kinds of performers; singers, magic acts, dance etc (a little like Britain’s Got Talent). The show will reference that history and will bring the idea of double acts up-to-date.

Researching different double acts from history would help to place the concept in context for the children, and they could interview relatives about double acts they know of and have enjoyed. You could watch a couple of short comic videos, one from the past - Laurel and Hardy for example, and one the children have referred to.

Resource 1 provides links to acts that have inspired the company in the making of the show and Resource 2 is a timeline of double acts through the ages which the children could add to.
SEQUENCE ONE
Routines That Go Wrong

AIMS

- To work, together in collaboration with a partner, creating a routine and then disrupting that routine when it ‘goes wrong’.

DRAMA STRATEGIES

Mirroring, working in unison, creating and performing routines, disrupting routines.

OPENING DISCUSSION

- Explain that the show Double Double Act has two double acts who work very closely together; one pair of adults and one pair of children. Part of the dynamic of a double act is how in tune they are and how they have a very close relationship, but also how different they can be. We are going to start with activities that help us to work together closely, concentrating on watching and co-operating with a partner.

WARM UP – FOLLOW THE LEADER (IN A CIRCLE)

- Start in a circle and lead a simple repeatable action which everyone else in the circle must try to copy as precisely as they can. Now, as leader, gradually change the action to something else, without stopping completely.
- Ask one person to volunteer to go out of the room and then choose a leader to start an action which everyone else follows. Ask the child who has left to return and stand in the middle of the circle. They then have three guesses to work out who the leader is.
- Between each round ask what makes the game successful for the group and harder for the person who is ‘it’ to discover who is leading the movement. Discuss how you can use your peripheral vision and what the leader needs to do in order to help everyone in the group to work together as one.

MIRRORING

- Move the children into pairs and ask them to face each other as if they were looking into a mirror. Ask them to label themselves A and 1. Ask the A’s to lead first, performing actions which the 1’s will mirror. Remind them that the aim of the exercise is to create the illusion that they are the same person looking in a mirror.
- Once they have tried this for a while, ask one pair to continue and the rest of the class to watch. Reflect on what the pair have to do to make the exercise successful and what makes it difficult.
- Draw the classes attention to pace and simplicity; if the action is too fast or complicated it will be very difficult to follow – it is about cooperation; working as a team.
- Ask half the class do the exercise and the other half watch, then reverse.
- Now challenge the children to work at a greater distance from each other; they will be working across other pairs in the space. What do they need to do to make the activity successful?
WORKING IN UNISON
- Ask the children to now work side-by-side rather than face to face, but still with one person leading the movement. By doing so they will be working in unison rather than mirroring, they will need to tune into each other and use their peripheral vision. Add some music to underscore, choose something which encourages them to take their time and supports concentration.
- As a whole class discuss: What makes the exercise work? Why does it sometimes not work as well? What is enjoyable to watch?

MAKING ROUTINES
- In their pairs, ask the children to work together to perform a simple routine; ask them to agree on five actions that they can repeat in a sequence. Underscore the rehearsals with some music.
- Ask them first to practise their five actions; performing them with clarity and confidence and with an audience in mind. Make sure they have a starting position and a finishing position, and have thought about direction and working at different levels. Ask them to add a bow to the audience at the end of the routine.

DISRUPTING ROUTINES
- Now ask the pairs to decide who will play the ‘straight guy’ and who will play the ‘clown’ and then to rehearse their routine with the clown getting the routine wrong.
- First, explain that the clowns need to decide why they are getting the routine wrong. They could be: 1) trying really hard to get it right but are clumsy and just can’t do it, 2) they are dreamy with their head in the clouds, so get things wrong, or 3) they are over enthusiastic, doing the movements too fast and adding bits.
- Explain that the straight guy is just as funny as the clown. They will need to decide whether they are: 1) completely serious and concentrating really hard, 2) getting angry but not wanting to show that to the audience or 3) trying to correct their partner (maybe limit this to once in the routine – as the tension between the routine going wrong and trying to pretend it’s all ok is often what makes it funny).
- As a class, briefly discuss the ways in which the routine might go wrong: the clown might go at the wrong speed, get stuck in one action, go in the wrong direction or get the actions in the wrong order.
- Ask the pairs to start together and finish together, so the routine goes wrong, but at the end both performers are together in a final position where they can take their bow.
- Make sure children decide exactly how the routine goes wrong, they need to be precise and able to repeat it. In performance showing something going wrong is just as difficult as it is going right.

PERFORMING THE ROUTINES
- Ask the pairs to now prepare to perform their routines. Mark out the spots where the performers begin their routine with tape, and imagine that is ‘on stage’ or in the spotlight. Mark out another area off to the side to be ‘in the wings’, where performers stand and can’t be seen by the audience as they wait to come on.
- Now ask them to prepare: 1) the moment just before they walk into the spotlight which shows how the straight act and clown wait, 2) their routine which the ‘clown’ gets wrong, and 3) what happens between them when they get off stage. Give the pairs time to practise and then see as many pairs as would like to show their pieces.
- Discuss what the children enjoyed in each other’s work and why. Focus on how both the clown and the straight guy need to be different for the activity to work.
EXTENSION – GROUPS OF 4
• Add an extra challenge; put the pairs into groups of four and choose one person to lead the activity and the other three to work to follow the actions in unison. How much more difficult is it with larger numbers? What are the skills necessary to make this activity work? When they have the routine running smoothly groups can ‘disrupt’ it, with either one or two (or even three) of the group getting it wrong.

ENDING DISCUSSION
• Discuss what children enjoyed in each other’s work. Talk about the way in which double acts often rely on one straight guy and one clown; the straight guy is trying to do something which the clown messes up. They need the tension between order (getting things right) and chaos (things going wrong and getting out of control). Some people find this uncomfortable and other people love it.
• You could watch some clips of double acts which relate to the work the children have done:
  - This clip from Duck Soup: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKTT-syOaLg demonstrates skilled mirroring work and develops the idea.
  - Shaw and Lee are a ‘classic’ double act. This act shows how they work in unison to tell their jokes, and at the very end, at around 8 minutes, they do a dance routine and take a bow in unison: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MasoKzv2cMU
  - This clip shows the straight man and clown dynamic, with the routine being disrupted as the clown keeps getting it wrong: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgck7pVakU8
  - Madeline Khan and Grover show a classic skilled/unskilled, funny/straight double act in which two very different characters are trying to do the same thing: www.vimeo.com/50896778
SEQUENCE TWO
VERBAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

AIMS
• To explore homophones and homonyms and find the comic potential in the verbal misunderstandings which might arise.

DRAMA STRATEGIES
Call and response, mime work, charades, scene-making, script writing.

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY
• Often humour comes out of verbal misunderstandings; when one person says something and the other thinks they are saying something else. This can happen with homophones – words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings, for example rain and reign. And homonyms – words that are spelt the same and have different meanings, for example; count and Count. Resource 2 provides a list of some useful homophones and homonyms, full lists can easily be found online.

WARM UP – THE GAME ISN’T OVER UNTIL...
• Explain to the children that this game is a little bit like ‘Simon Says’ and they will need to repeat after you whatever you say and do. They must only stop echoing what you do when you say the exact words ‘The game is now over’. Ask them to copy the rhythm, tone and volume of what you say as well as the words.
• Say a series of sentences, with simple gestures, which your class will copy. After you have been playing the game for a while start to say things like; ‘you can stop now’ and ‘no, no, I really mean it, stop, that’s enough’ etc. The children shouldn’t stop until you say the precise words ‘The game is now over.’

HOMONYM/HOMOPHONE CHARADES
• Define with the class the difference between homophones and homonyms then list as many homophones or homonyms as they can think of.
• Move into groups of five or six and give each group a different homophone or homonym on a piece of paper. There is a list in Resource 3 at the back of this pack. Ask them to come up with two mimed actions to depict the two different meanings.
• Take it in turns to guess what each other’s homophones or homonyms are.

VERBAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS
• Ask your class to think of any situations where a homophone could cause confusion, where there might be a misunderstanding about what has been said.
• Move the class into threes or fours and ask them to create a moment which includes verbal misunderstandings, choosing some homophones or homonyms to include in their scene.
• Give the groups a starter sentence for their scene for example: 1) Hi there, have you seen my ..., or 2) I’ve lost my ..., or 3) Where did you put your ... etc. The challenge is to have as many confusions
and jokes in their scene as possible. But the moments only need to be couple of lines of dialogue long.

- Explain that each person needs to stick to their understanding of what their word means, and speak and act accordingly.
- When the children have improvised they can then perform their situations to each other.

**DISCUSSION**

- Discuss the way in which misunderstandings are funny and what happens when one person cannot see another’s point of view. Is there a point when it stops being funny and starts being frustrating?
- Show the class the Two Ronnie’s sketch ‘four candles’: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cz2-ukrd2VQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cz2-ukrd2VQ)
  The misunderstanding is first based on pronunciation rather than homonyms and homophones, but the second item, a ‘plug’, is a classic homonym.
- You could look at Abbot and Costello ‘Who’s on first’ sketch: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg) which shows a verbal misunderstanding when basketball players are called ‘Who’, ‘What’ and ‘I don’t know’. You can see how long Abbot and Costello keep the confusion going.
- Look at jokes which rely on homophones and homonyms. There are examples in **Resource 4** and a link to more online.
SEQUENCE THREE
STATUS AND REVERSING STATUS

AIMS
• To explore the concept of status and power relations and connect this with comedy and double acts.
• To then explore the power balance, or imbalance, between children and adults.

DRAMA STRATEGIES
Stop/Go, Grandmother’s footsteps, master/servant improvisations, adult/child improvisations.

DISCUSSION – WHAT IS STATUS?
• Explain that often in double acts status is really important, with one of the duo seemingly more in charge than the other. Refer back to the routines that went wrong, where one person in the pair was controlled and did the routine right. Often the straight guy is seen as the authority figure, the one with higher status, and the more adult of the two. People might describe the clown as silly, or childish. Introduce the idea that you are going to play some games which explore status.
• Give a definition of status: relative social or professional position and ask the children to discuss what kind of people have high status and what kind of people have low status. High status people are often rich and powerful (but not always). Give some contexts where status might be different: at school, in government, on the football pitch, at a singing competition, at a conference for scientists, in a group of friends. Explain that status isn’t always fixed; it can change.

WALKING WITH HIGH AND LOW STATUS
• Ask the class to walk around the room and, when you call out a number, to walk as they imagine someone of that status might walk (with one as low status and ten as high).
• High status people feel confident, don’t have to prove themselves, they know they have a right to be there. Low status people are often under confident and may feel that they don’t belong or have the right to be there.
• Split the class in half, one will act as audience to the other. Now give the performers a number, half of them a ten, the other half a two. Ask them to walk around the room greeting each other. Use the Stop/Go commands to focus them. Swap the numbers and ask them to continue in the reversed roles.
• Discuss: from what they observed, what words would they use to describe the physicality (body language, facial expressions, eye contact etc.) of someone who is high status and someone who is low status?

GRANDMOTHER’S FOOTSTEPS
• One person is ‘on’ as Grandmother and stands facing the wall. The rest of the class start at the other end of the hall and must creep up on grandmother while her back is turned to them, trying to tap her on the shoulder. As soon as Grandmother turns they must freeze on the spot; anyone who is seen moving is sent back to the start.
• Add in the rule that as they are moving towards Grandmother they are ‘baddies’ (and can
show this physically) but as soon as Grandma turns to look at them they freeze in the image of ‘goodies’.

**MASTER/SERVANT**

- Explain that one place where status is really clear is in a master/servant relationship.
- First demonstrate the game for your class (or you could get a teaching assistant to do it, it is important it is an adult with a child). Ask for a volunteer and explain that they are going to be the master and that you will be the servant. The child playing the master can ask anything of you as the servant and you will do it. As servant, you must mime everything the master wants you to do for them.
- In pairs ask the children to decide who will be the master, who the servant.
- Explain that the master is in charge and can ask the servant to do whatever they want; the master owns the space and has all the power. Improvise what happens between the two. Explain that the pairs will swap around – the exercise isn’t about humiliating anyone else, the master isn’t cruel, but they have power and are assured of that power.
- The servant has to do everything the master asks and is respectful and ingratiating at all times. The servant is not allowed to say anything in the improvisation.
- See some of the improvisations and discuss what you observe about the relationship from the way they both behaved. Why does the master have power over the servant? How does this affect their relationship?

**THE SERVANT SHOWS HOW THEY FEEL**

- Now add in the idea that when the servant can be seen by their master they act in a subservient way, but when they cannot be seen they can show what they really think and feel behind their master’s back. Again the servant must not speak.
- Discuss why this is enjoyable to watch. Link it to the way in which much humour is about role reversals and turning power relations on their head. Often the laughs come at the expense of the rich and the powerful and we as audience are on the side of the downtrodden.
- Now ask for a pair to volunteer and ask them to do the improvisation again, but this time add in one moment where the servant shows the master, for a split second, how they really feel about their relationship. They then have to go on and do everything their master asks of them.
- How does this change the improvisation? Is this more funny or serious?

**ADULT/CHILD**

- Discuss who has the highest status, or most power, in an adult/child relationship and why.
- Put together a list of common rules that adults make for children. Guide the conversation by highlighting particular contexts, for example: are there any rules for when you are in a crowded shopping centre? What are the rules about bedtime? Do adults have rules around meal times and eating? What about school? etc.
- In pairs now ask the children to do the master/servant improvisation but between an adult and child. Ask pairs to choose one of the typical scenarios you have discussed where an adult might tell a child or children what to do. As with the master/servant activity the adult will speak, telling the child what to do, the child or children do not speak and they do everything asked of them with by the adult.
- Now try the improvisation again where the child does what is asked of them but shows their real feelings behind the adults back. Challenge the children to show their true feelings, rather than just being rude behind the adult’s back.
- Discuss what in these scenes was truthful and what they recognised in the situations.
- What power did the child have in any of the scenarios? What power did the adults have?
- Discuss how in the improvisations the child still did what was asked of them even if they showed
their displeasure.

• What happens when children refuse to do what an adult says? Discuss the different kind of things a child might do to resist and the tactics an adult might use to get a child to do what they want.
• Use one pair to explore what happens when the child doesn’t do what is asked of them.
• Ask the children to come up with all the reasons that adults might have power over children’s lives. Discuss whether there might be another way of organising the world.
SEQUENCE FOUR
AN UPSIDE DOWN DAY

AIMS
• To give children the opportunity to imagine a topsy-turvy world where children have the power to make the rules

DRAMA STRATEGIES
Discussion, circle game, teacher and children in role, improvisation, thought tracking, listening hand.

OPENING DISCUSSION
• Explain that the Lord of Misrule was a tradition in medieval times when someone with no power is given the role of the Lord for the day. Chosen by lots (drawing straws) one peasant would act as if they were in charge and could decide what happens. This would often result in lots of drinking and feasting before the usual order was restored.

IF I WERE KING OR QUEEN
• Stand in a circle with something to represent a crown. Pass the crown around the circle and each person holds, or wears the crown and speaks the line: If I were Queen for the day I would... and finishes the sentence.
• Discuss the kinds of things, big and small, trivial and serious, that the children would like greater control over.

RE-WRITING THE RULES
• Discuss what might happen if a child, or group of children, were given the power to decide what school looked like just for a day?
• Start by writing up all the rules that there are in your school.
• Explain that you are going to imagine your class has won the chance to decide on the new rules for ‘upside down day’ for the whole school. The only rule for the day is that no-one can harm anyone.
• Break into small groups and ask each group to come up with five things that they would like to propose would happen on an upside down day at school.
• As a group, share ideas and combine them to the rules that the whole group decide they would like to implement on an upside down day.
• Now create a group of children for each new rule, if you have ten rules you will need ten groups. Each group will report the new upside down day’rule to the Headteacher.

PRESENTING NEW RULES TO THE HEADTEACHER
• Explain that you are going to be in role as the Headteacher and support staff can be in role as other members of staff. Set up a space where you think the children and Headteacher might meet the night before upside down day to go over the rules.
• Act out the meeting between the Headteacher and the children who will be in charge tomorrow. Try to hand the power over to the children; hear and accept their rules but do not criticise or anticipate problems with them.
• How do the adults feel about the new rules? What do all the children feel about the new rules?
SMALL SCENE MAKING

• In groups of six, ask the children to create two scenes that show what happened on Upside Down Day in school. One scene will show the greatest success of Upside Down Day. The second scene will show problems or things that go wrong. They can play both children and adults in their scenes.
• See the scenes and hold the final moments in a freeze frame. Thought track some of the characters in these final moments.

PAIRED IMPROVISATIONS

• In pairs improvise a discussion that takes place the next day. They can choose whether it is between two adults, two children or an adult and a child. What are they saying about how Upside Down Day went? What did people enjoy and get out of it? Did people feel freer? What were the good things that happened? What were the drawbacks?
• Use the ‘listening hand’ technique to amplify some of these conversations: explain that when you hold your hand over a particular pair and open your fist this acts like a microphone so that we can listen in to the conversations. Listen to a number of the paired improvisations.
SEQUENCE FIVE
DIFFERENCES – EQUALITY IS NOT SAMENESS

AIMS

• To build confidence around the notion of our differences and explore the way double acts often enhance, exaggerate and celebrate their differences.

DRAMA STRATEGIES

‘Go If You...’, paired and small groups discussions, research and presentations.

GO IF...

• Start with a game of ‘Go If You...’. Everyone sits in a circle on chairs, apart from the one who is ‘on’. The person who is on says ‘go if...’ and then something that is true about them. For example, ‘go if you have a pet’ or ‘go if you like pizza’. Everyone in the circle who the statement is true about must leave their chair, cross the circle and find another one. The person who is ‘on’ must also try to sit down. Whoever fails to get a chair is the next person ‘on’.

• Discuss how children felt when they were the same as everyone else and what it felt like if they were the only person in a round ‘the odd one out’. Did it feel special or lonely and isolated?

DIFFERENCES AND THINGS WE SHARE

• Ask the children to find a partner and find one thing they have in common and one thing about them that is different.

• Have a chart with different/the same at the top. Hear all the things the pairs found and write them up. If there are some repeated (for example ‘we are both wearing trousers’) there is no need to write it twice; you can just put a tick next to it.

• Now ask the pairs to make a four and do the same thing; find one thing that is different about all of them and one thing that is the same. BUT they cannot use an idea that is already on the chart.

• Once again hear all of the new ideas and add them to your chart.

• Now make groups of eight and repeat, and keep repeating until you are one large group. Each time children have to find new ideas and cannot repeat what has gone before. This may take quite a long time and as the groups get larger you may need to help; for example, for differences they may all have different birthdays, live at different addresses, have different hairstyles, have lived different lives. For the things that they have in common; they all have hair, they are in the same class, they all breathe, and they all laugh.

DOUBLE ACTS

• Show the children some images of double acts from different historical periods (Resource 2).

• In small groups ask them to research one double act which they will make a presentation on to the rest of the class.

• The children should try to identify and describe in their presentations what is different about the two comedians and what things they might share. The differences could be physical differences, but also differences in terms of temperament, personality and the way they deal with things.

• Their presentation could include photographs or videos that can be found online, they could also re-create some of the acts most famous routines.
SEQUENCE SIX
VERBATIM – ASKING ADULTS QUESTIONS

AIMS

• For children to explore adults’ perspective on the world and consider how they might get closer to understanding adults through interviewing them and embodying them through drama.
• To then explore the power balance, or imbalance, between children and adults.

DRAMA STRATEGIES
Compiling questions, conducting interviews, rehearsing and performing verbatim.

THINKING OF QUESTIONS TO ASK ADULTS

• Discuss the way in which adults and children can sometimes think that they are very different, almost as if they live in different worlds. We all live in the same world and probably think about very similar things at times, even though we might have different experiences. Also ask the children to remember that every adult has been a child of their age.
• In groups of four or five, ask the children to compile a list of questions that they would like to ask adults if they could. Refer to some of the questions Tim and the company compiled as examples (Resource 5). Some of their questions are trivial, some are quite serious. Remind the children that they want to find out more about how adults think; what interests and concerns them, but not embarrass the adults or make them feel awkward. They should however ask the questions that they really want to ask.

INTERVIEWING THE ADULTS

• Find a way for the children to interview an adult and record their answers; recording on phones and iPads is quite simple to do. You could find adults in the school to interview or the children could find a way to interview adults at home.
• The aim is to ask the adults questions that might be hard for them to answer about the world and how it works, about people and why they do what they do, without being rude.

TRANSCRIBING THE INTERVIEWS

• Transcribing can take a long time, so you may want to select the best questions and answers first and enlist help to write them up as a script. The children could work in pairs with one child listening to the question and answer and speaking it as it is on the tape and the other writing it down precisely. Keep the interviewers question in the script and write it up ‘verbatim’ which means writing it exactly as it is spoken.

PERFORM THE INTERVIEWS

• In pairs give the children an excerpt of a transcribed interview (or one question and one answer) to recreate.
• First ask the children to practise performing the interview as precisely as they can; mimicking the adults in the interviews. They should listen carefully to the interviews in order to be able to recreate how the adults speak; their tone, pace and emphasis.
• When the children have rehearsed their interview questions either record the audio or film the question and answers; creating a short collage of the children performing as adults answering the questions.
• Discuss the answers that the adults have given to the questions and what this tells the children about the adults they have interviewed.
• Discuss what the children discovered about the adults by recreating the interview verbatim. Is there anything they found out through ‘stepping into’ the adults’ shoes?
RESOURCE ONE

Research from the Made In China creative team that has inspired the show:

• Abbot and Costello the ‘Who’s on first’ sketch: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg

• Shaw and Lee are one of the most interesting ‘classic’ double acts we’ve come across: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MasoKzv2cMU

• For physical comedy, we’ve been inspired by this act www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgck7pVakU8

• This clip from Duck Soup: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKTT-sy0aLg has a direct correlation to the mirroring work.

• In Ken Campbell’s play Skungpoomery there is a scene (p.33) where two characters draw faces on their knees and have a brilliantly absurd conversation with them.

• Madeline Khan and Grover exploring echoes demonstrate a classic skilled/unskilled, funny/straight double act in which they are doing exactly the same thing but are vastly different presences: https://vimeo.com/50896778. It’s interesting to note that someone being ‘bad’ at something is just as important in making this good to watch as someone being GOOD - but to act bad is a skill in itself.

• Problem Child is a movie that’s inspired us. It’s like a naughtier Home Alone: www.youtube.com/watch?v=boUXTA8VagQ. It is full of physical slapstick jokes in which the normal status relationship of adults and children is reversed.
In a classic double act, the jokes come from an uneven relationship between two comedy partners. They are usually of the same gender and age but quite different in terms of personality or behaviour. Often one of the acts is the ‘straight man’, portrayed as reasonable and serious, while the other, the ‘funny man’ or ‘clown’, is portrayed as funny, less educated or intelligent, silly or unorthodox.

Like a sibling relationship double acts are interdependent; at times loving, providing friendship and support, but also competitive and frustrated by the way they are tied to each other.

Here is a selection of double acts throughout the ages. Double acts would have started out in vaudeville or the music halls amongst many other acts on variety mixed bills. Successful double acts began to make films and TV series.

Children could research more acts and add them to this list, or discover more about the acts below.

1920s and 1930s
Laurel and Hardy
Laurel was clumsy and childlike whereas Hardy was pompous and over bearing. Hardy often gets annoyed with Laurel.

Shaw and Lee
Their movements are perfectly synchronised and they tell their jokes in a monochrome tone, glancing at one another with slightly worried expressions.

1940s
Abbott and Costello
Popular on film and television the double act told rapid fire jokes. Costello had a high pitched, babyish voice, which placed him in the funny man role to Abbott’s straight man.

1960s and 1970s
Morecombe and Wise
Probably the most famous British double act, Morecombe and Wise were favourites on television for years. Ernie Wise was the straight man, always trying to get on with the show. Eric Morecombe would upstage him (doing something daft behind Ernie as he was talking to the audience) or getting things wrong and disrupting the routines.

1980s
French and Saunders
Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders were very popular in television in the 1980’s and 90’s. They liked to do spoof sketches where they would dress up as famous people; for example Madonna or Leonardo Di Caprio and Kate Winslett in Titanic. They often attempted big stunts which failed miserably.

1990s
Vic and Bob
Vic and Bob are absurdist comedians. Bob could be considered the ‘straight man’ in some of their sketches as he appears to be slightly more mature, but they are both quite silly and enjoy dressing up as very strange characters.
**Timon and Pumbaa**
Timon and Pumba are a classic double act from the Disney film *The Lion King*. They are very different characters both physically (well one is a meerkat and the other a warthog) and in terms of temperament. Pumbaa is a Swahili word that means to be weakminded, foolish and careless. Timon’s name comes from the Greek and means ‘he who respects’.

**2000s**

**Ant and Dec**
Ant and Dec are not classic stand up comedians; starting out as actors, they are now hugely successful TV presenters. They always work together and have the classic double act dynamic with misunderstandings often at the root of their jokes.

*What other double acts can the children identify?*
## TEACHER RESOURCES

### RESOURCE THREE – HOMONYMS AND HOMOPHONES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homonyms</th>
<th>Homophones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arm</td>
<td>Ate/eight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bark</td>
<td>Ball/bawl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bat</td>
<td>Bare/bear</td>
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<td>Bow</td>
<td>Be/bee</td>
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<td>Cool</td>
<td>Farther/father</td>
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<td>Duck</td>
<td>Fir/fur</td>
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<td>Groom</td>
<td>Flour/flower</td>
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<td>Jam</td>
<td>Fort/fought</td>
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<td>Lie/lying</td>
<td>Foul/fowl</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>Genes/jeans</td>
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<td>Mole</td>
<td>Leak/leek</td>
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<td>Sick</td>
<td>Maize/maze</td>
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<td>Square</td>
<td>Moose/mousse</td>
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<td>Trunk</td>
<td>Muscle/mussel</td>
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<td>Watch</td>
<td>None/nun</td>
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<td>Yard</td>
<td>Saw/sore/soar</td>
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<td>Stalk/stork</td>
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<td>Swat/swot</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tale/tail</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Which/witch</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What kind of party do plumbers go to?
A tap dance.

Why did the cat come down from the tree?
Because it saw the tree bark.

“Waiter, will the pancakes be long?”
“No, sir, round.”

What did Tutankhamun say when he got scared?
I want my mummy.

Why are movie stars so cool?
Because they have so many fans.

Why did the boy take the pencil to bed?
Because he wanted to draw the curtains.

Why did the king draw straight lines?
Because he was the ruler.

Why were the elephants thrown out of the swimming pool?
Because they couldn’t keep their trunks up.

You can find more at:
www.firstschoolyears.com/literacy/word/other/homonyms/resources/homonym%20jokes.pdf
RESOURCE FIVE - QUESTIONS FOR ADULTS

Questions the adults and children from the Double Double Act Company have compiled:

What do you want to be when you grow up?
What was it like when you were little?
What’s your favourite game?
What’s the point of humans?
Do you think humans will go on forever?
Do you know about evolution?
Where do people go when they’re dead?
What do you worry about? What keeps you awake at night?
What are you scared of?
If you could go back in time, when would you go back to?
Why is the world round?
What’s the biggest mammal on the planet?
How do you spell ‘bomb’?
How do you explain the existence of bombs?
How come governments make bombs if their job is to protect people?
DOUBLE DOUBLE ACT
A UNICORN PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MADE IN CHINA

Resource pack written by Catherine Greenwood
Developed with pupils at Christopher Hatton Primary School