




A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings Classroom Activity Pack

A complementary teacher's resource of
A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings
by Dan Colley

Classes: Y5 & Y6

Subject Areas: Drama, Music, English, SPHE



Introduction & The Story

Introduction

This classroom activity pack can be used to further explore the themes and experience of watching “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” with your class.

Pupils will have the opportunity to react and respond creatively to the performance through various activities. Many of these are cross-curricular, containing elements of the Drama, English, and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curricula.

Activity 1a is perfect either before or after watching the show, while Activities 1b–6 are best done with your class after they have seen the show and are familiar with the story and characters.



The Story

Starting from Gabriel García Márquez’s short story “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings”, Dan Colley brings this classic piece of magic-realism to the stage. A young couple find an injured old man outside their house, an old man who just happens to have a pair of enormous wings. The wise neighbour woman tells them he’s an angel. She warns them to keep their distance. The priest says he’s an imposter. He warns them not to be tricked. The doctor examines him. He thinks more men should have wings. As pilgrims flock to see him, hoping to be healed by him, hoping for a gawp, they leave with something different than what they expected.

Using a combination of storytelling tools including music, puppetry, live video projection and the willingness of the audience, Dan Colley brings this story to the stage in search of its beautiful, strange, emotional richness.

Activity 1

Exploring Sounds

Time:

20 minutes for Part A,
up to an additional
30 minutes for Part B

Resources:

Circle of chairs, space for
dividing into groups

Subject Area:

Drama/Music (Listening
and Responding;
Performing; Composing)

Activity (Part A)

- ★ **In the show, the performers use their voices to help create the soundscape of the story.**
- Form a circle (this can be seated or standing).
- Ask your students to suggest a setting (e.g. a zoo, a forest, a beach).
- You, as teacher, will be their conductor. Select a pupil to begin and slowly continue to introduce different voices into the mix by looking/gesturing to a child to join in.
- Once all the children have joined in, allow the soundscape to settle and take in the texture of the sounds.
- You can then slowly dismantle the soundscape by gesturing to children to stop in turn. This will allow everyone to listen and enjoy the differences in the sound combinations.
- Afterwards, have a chat:
 - what did they like/dislike?
 - Were there sounds that worked well together?
 - Did some of the sounds clash? Did that matter?



Activity 1

Exploring Sounds

Time:

20 minutes for Part A,
up to an additional
30 minutes for Part B

Resources:

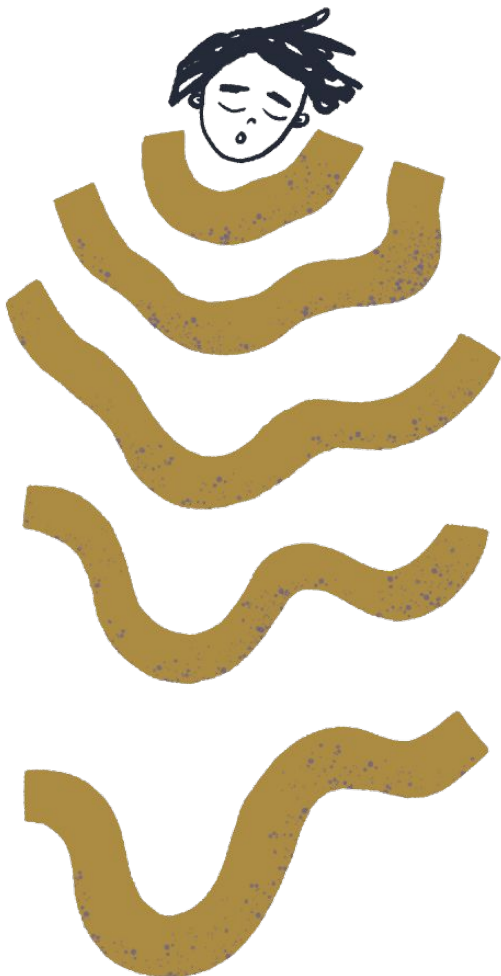
Circle of chairs, space for
dividing into groups

Subject Area:

Drama/Music (Listening
and Responding;
Performing; Composing)

Variation / Addition (Part B)

- In smaller groups (5–6 per group), ask the children to create their own sound design based on a moment in the play of their choosing. Give them approx. 10 minutes to create their soundscape.
- Ask each group to share their piece with the class. If time/space allows, you can nominate a person out of each of the other groups to sit inside the circle of the performing group.
- At the end of their piece, ask the class what moment they think the performing group was illustrating.
- If instruments are available to you, you can also try this exercise using them.



Activity 2

Tableaux

Time:

20 — 30 minutes

Resources:

Space to move around

Subject Area:

Drama (Co-operating and Communicating, Reflecting)



Activity

- Divide your class into groups of 4—5.
- Ask each group to pick a moment from the show (e.g. the woman who was turned into a spider, the carnival) and recreate it in a frozen image. They do not have to play the characters in the play, they can also choose to be the chicken coop, the sea, etc.
- Give them 5 minutes to create their frozen image.
- In turn, ask the groups to share their image with the class. Can they guess what moment they are recreating?
- Why did the group choose to pick that moment?

Variation

- While still working in their groups, tell the students that when you say action they will bring their picture to life. They should think about sounds as well as their movements.
- After they have presented their frozen image to the rest of the class and they have had time to guess what moment they are recreating, say “action”.
- Did the class guess correctly? Was this the moment that they had expected?

Activity 3

Newspaper Reports

Time:

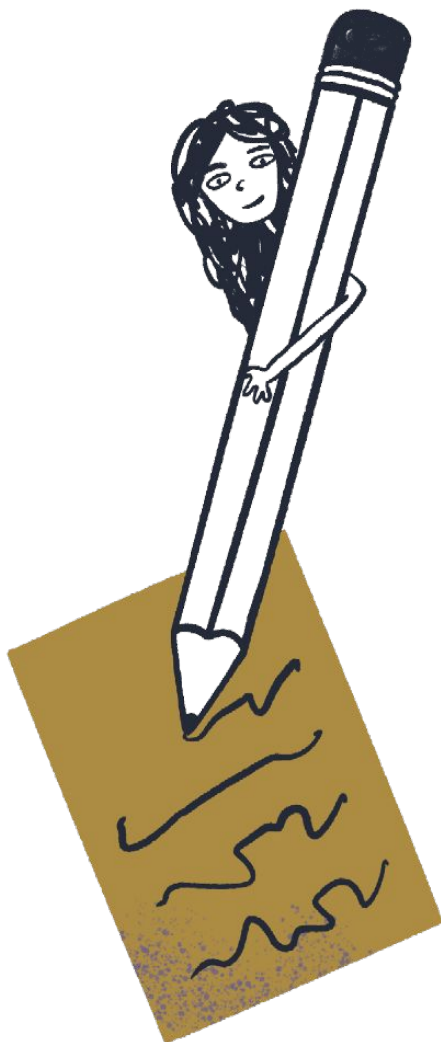
30 minutes

Resources:

Pens and Paper

Subject Area:

Drama (Exploring and Making; Co-operating and Communicating),
English (Creative Writing; Imagining)



Activity

- ★ **Word spreads quickly that there is an angel living in Pelayo and Elisenda's chicken coop.**
- Ask your class to imagine that they are reporters who have heard these rumours in a neighbouring town and decided to investigate. Create a headline and write an article about this strange event. They may choose to include interviews with people from the village in their article – how do they feel about the arrival of the angel?
- What other questions might a journalist ask when investigating this story?
- **Tip:** Some of your students may favour expressing themselves through drawing rather than writing. Why not have them create the cover for the newspaper or pictures to go alongside the article?

Variation

- Ask your students to act in role as journalists, interviewing their classmates as the villagers before writing them up for the newspaper. As a class, brainstorm a list of questions that a journalist would want to ask the villagers before starting the activity.

Activity 4

Cross the Room if...

Time:

20 minutes

Resources:

Space to move around

Subject Area:

Drama (Reflecting),
SPHE (Myself and others,
Making Decisions,
Developing Citizenship)



Activity

- Before the activity, write up a list of agree/disagree statements that your class can respond to.
- Divide the class into two lines with space in between them. There should be roughly the same number of students on each side.
- Invite the students to cross the room if they agree with a statement, or stay in their line if they do not agree. Give them 5 seconds to make their decision.
- If it feels appropriate, stop to ask: why did you make that decision? What made you agree/disagree? Has anyone changed their mind based on something someone else said?
- After the activity, you can hold a discussion with a class based on what you all noticed. Were there any statements that divided the group? Was there anything that everyone agreed on? What did we learn about the group from this activity?
- Example statements could include:
 - The very old man was an angel.
 - I felt sorry for the very old man.You and your class can add to this list, or create your own.

Variation

- If space is limited, you can ask students to stand if they agree with a statement or stay seated if they disagree.