



WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

A play for
Year 5 and Year 6
by
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Learning Resource: Post-performance Drama and Literacy Sessions Key Stage 2 | Years 5 & 6 | Ages 9 – 11

Curriculum links

These resources enliven key aspects of the PSHE Curriculum:

Preparing to play an active role as citizens.

Pupils should be taught...

2a to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events

2c to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities

2e to reflect on spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people.

Pupils should be taught...

4a that their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people's feelings and to try to see things from their points of view

4d to realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help

Learning outcomes

These resources are designed to continue to embed ideas explored in *What the Thunder Said* into children's learning, across a variety of areas including literacy.

Summary

Pupils will consider aggressive behaviours and reflect on moral, social and cultural issues, largely by using their imagination to understand other people's experiences. They will consider how their actions affect themselves and others, and learn how to respond to aggressive behaviours or feelings. These session plans may be adapted or combined to suit the needs of your pupils. We'd be very pleased to hear your feedback, or any suggestions you have for developing these resources further.

"We hope that through engaging with the resources, children will be able to explore the themes and subjects behind the play and directly connect these to their own experiences, using creativity and imagination." **Marigold Hughes, Schools Producer**

About Theatre Centre

Theatre Centre is a professional theatre company touring new plays for the benefit of children and young people. A registered charity, Theatre Centre has been commissioning new writing and touring to schools and venues across the UK since 1953. We work closely with artists, young people and teachers to ensure we consistently create high-quality, life-enhancing theatre experiences for young audiences. Find out more about our current touring productions via our website at www.theatre-centre.co.uk or give us a call on 020 7729 3066.

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- Activity Sheet 1: Script Extract
- Activity Sheet 2: Toilets After Chris's Fight, Part 1
- Activity Sheet 3: Toilets After Chris's Fight, Part 2
- Activity Sheet 4: How to Deal With Bullies – Conducting a Survey
- Activity Sheet 5: A Happy Soul – Body Outline
- Activity Sheet 6: Choosing the Right Friends

Session 1: Creating your own “Yowler”

Aim:

- To enable children to gain a more rounded understanding of their fears and how to overcome them.

Resources:

- Pictures of frightening characters from stories/TV programmes/films
- Glue
- Paper

Activity	Description
Introduction	The “Yowlers” are creatures that stalk the wasteland, hooded creatures smelling people’s fear and sucking out their souls. The action of the wasteland could be seen to be conjured from Toilets’ imagination, as a way of helping him think through the challenges of his real life. In this sense, the “Yowlers” are symbols of what Toilets is most scared.
Drawing a Yowler	Ask the children to think about what their Yowler might look like. Hand out some pictures of frightening or “bad” creatures/characters from films/stories/TV shows. Explain that they are going to create their own Yowler and ask them to make a collage of the characters/creatures that they would like to base their Yowler on. Finally, ask the children to draw a picture of their Yowler.
The Yowler’s home	Ask the children to think about where the Yowler lives and what its home looks like. This “homeland” should be drawn around the Yowler.
Bringing the Yowler to life	Ask the children to complete the following sentences to find out more about the habits and behaviour of their Yowler: My Yowler would use their <u> (e.g. sense of smell) </u> to find people. By day they <u> (e.g. sleep) </u> and by night they <u> (e.g. look for victims) </u> . They feed on people’s <u> (e.g. fear and souls) </u> .
Defeating a Yowler	In <i>What the Thunder Said</i> , Toilets manages to defeat the Yowlers by playing with them and making them laugh; doing these things make Toilets less scared, which means the Yowlers can’t smell his fear and they disappear. Ask the children that they need to make a list of five things that they would do to defeat the Yowler, i.e. five things that make them feel calm and happy.
Diary entry about a Yowler	Explain that they are going to write a diary entry in which the following things happen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A character of their choosing meets a Yowler. • The Yowler confronts her/him. • The character manages to overcome the Yowler. <p>When they are writing, encourage them to use all the information they have gathered about the Yowler, as well as adding in plenty of description and suspense.</p>

Session 2: What Happened to Chris?

Aim:

- To encourage the children to consider why people might become violent and what are some of the possible causes of their behaviour.

Activity	Description
Warm up: Frozen pictures	<p>Ask the children to get into groups of four/five and make two “frozen pictures” or “photographs” of the following moments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their journey into school. An activity that happened at the weekend. <p>Present and explain that you will return to this technique later in the session.</p>
Discussion on violence	<p>Ask the children to get into pairs and to talk to their partner about the following question: “why do you think people become violent?” Then, bring the pairs together again, collect these ideas and note them on the board. You can perhaps put forward some of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you think people feel when they hurt someone? Do you think that seeing violence lots makes someone more likely to act violently? How would you feel if one on your friends acted violently towards you?
Chris’s first “fight”	<p>Get the children into groups of four/five. Ask them to imagine that Chris is perhaps about nine or ten years old and that he hasn’t been in any fights. Tell them that they are going to think about the first fight that Chris ever saw. Explain that they are going to make three frozen pictures which will show what happened to Chris just before, and just after, seeing his first fight:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The first picture should show Chris with a friend of his, playing together. The second picture should show someone approaching them. The third picture should show his friend being “picked on” and Chris watching. <p>You can “thought-track” the students as they do this – placing your hand on their shoulder and asking them to say what they are thinking.</p>
Chris and further fights	<p>In the same groups, explain to children that they are now going to consider what happens next, i.e. what makes Chris decide to be violent. Explain that they are going to make three more pictures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The first picture should show Chris not helping his friend. The second picture should show him making friends with the “bullies”. The third picture should show Chris in a fight. <p>Again, you can thought track the students to find out what they are thinking.</p>
Discuss and close	<p>Reflect on the activities of the session and emphasise the consequences of making the choice to act violently.</p>

Session 3: Chris’s Fight

Aim:

- To help children understand the own emotions that might arise from witnessing acts of violence and how to make themselves feel better.

Resources:

- Activity Sheet 1

Activity	Description
Introduction	At the beginning of the play, Toilets sees his brother Chris get into a fight. Beforehand, he has been playing by himself, play-fighting and messing around – so when he sees his brother in a real fight, he is scared.
Action before the fight	<p>In pairs, ask the children to think about five things that might have happened before the fight.</p> <p>Explain that the story of the fight could be told from different perspectives; that the way that it is told by Chris would be different to the way it is told by Chris’s victims/aggressors. Ask them to choose whether they want to tell the story of what happened from the perspective of Chris and his “friends” or from the perspective of the other group. Then ask the children to complete the following sentences, adding in any extra if they want to.</p> <p>It all started when _____. Then, things got worse – this was because _____. I couldn’t believe it, but in the end what happened was _____.</p>
Action before the fight – a different perspective	Next, do the same – but write the account from the perspective from the opposite side of the fight. For example, if you were writing it from the viewpoint of Chris’s gang, you are now writing it from the point of view of the people they were fighting.
Pre-fight dialogue	<p>Now the children have got some information about what happened from both sides of the story, explain that they are going to write a scene of dialogue that goes right up to the point when they start fighting.</p> <p>First of all, ask them to think about how many people are with Chris and how many people are on in the other group. Using the script extract (See Activity Sheet 1) as an example of how to lay out a script, encourage the children to consider the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does each character want in the scene? For example, does Chris want to show someone in the other group how powerful he is, does that person on the other “side” want to show Chris how powerful <i>he</i> is? • What is the rhythm in the scene and does it change? As soon as they start fighting, everything is quick, but does it start slower with the speed gradually building up? • What is the “subtext”? Subtext is a general term for all the things that are unsaid – think about this and even make room for silences and pauses if you want to. • What are your stage directions? If you want to “write” action into the

	<p>scenes, then you can use your stage directions to do this.</p> <p>They can do this task individually or if it's easier, they can create this script in pairs.</p>
Bringing the script to life	<p>Once the scenes have been written, ask the children to get into groups and try acting out their scenes. Go through each scene at least three times. Once they have done this, offer the children a chance to present these scenes to the rest of the class. Encourage the children to offer constructive criticism to each other and reflect on what they have done.</p>
Changing the course of action	<p>Ask the children to read over their scripts again, with the following questions in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a point when the fight could have been prevented? • What might stop an actual fight from breaking out? • What could have happened instead? • What would you have done in that situation? <p>Tell the children to get back into their pairs and talk about these questions. You could suggest that they work on, or edit, one of their scenes and create another version with an alternative ending. In this version the characters manage to find another way of dealing positively with the situation. Watch a few of these new scenes and encourage the children to offer constructive feedback.</p>



Session 4: Toilets After Chris's Fight

Aim:

- To enable the children to reflect on the feelings and actions that can arise after witnessing violence.

Resources:

- Activity Sheet 2
- Activity Sheet 3

Activity	Description
After Chris's Fight	Using the table on Activity Sheet 2, explain to the children that they are going to think about what Toilets might have been feeling/doing after he saw Chris fighting. Ask them to describe what he is doing at the top of the box and write what he is feeling at the bottom. They can also draw a picture to show either what he is doing or how he is feeling.
How Toilets is feeling	Ask the children to look at the picture in the first box: how is Toilets feeling? If it was you, what would you do to make yourself feel better?
Making yourself feel better	In the boxes on Activity Sheet 3, ask the children to replace Toilets with themselves and write what they are doing and how they are feeling. See the example. Talk about how this might affect how they felt later on. They could make themselves feel better as soon as they had seen this fight happening, would change the way they felt in two days-time? Encourage partner talking and then discuss as a class.



Session 5: Imagination and Real-life Problems

Aim:

- To enable children to develop the way in which they relate to stories.
- To enable children to learn more about how they can draw upon fiction and imagination to make sense of their own lives and surroundings.

Activity	Description
	<p>Explain that difficult situations, with friends and family members are a normal part of life; sometimes, small problems can arise – sometimes larger ones can. It is often hard to know how to deal with these situations. Stories can help us understand ourselves and situations better because they can hold a “mirror” up to our lives and help us think about what could possibly happen.</p>
<p>Real life relationships</p>	<p>Ask the children to think about a friendship or a family relationship that was a bit tricky – perhaps something happened that made them upset or angry. Emphasise the fact that it doesn’t have to be something that happened recently, it can be something that happened in the past. Also, explain that if they would prefer not to use real life, they can make something up.</p> <p>Ask them to think back to this “situation” and to try and freeze one moment in their head. Ask if they can do a drawing of this moment, with a line underneath explaining what is happening.</p>
<p>Using reality to create fiction: characters</p>	<p>Explain that they are going to transform this reality into a “fictional” story and that first of all, they are going to think about their characters. Explain that they are going to turn their human people into animals, by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about some characteristics of each of your characters (maximum of four) and see what animals would suit the characteristics of these people. For example, if there is someone that is very headstrong, you could turn them into a goat. If someone moves very fast or talks very quickly, maybe they could become a jaguar or a cheetah. Do a drawing for each of your animal characters, with a few sentences underneath explaining a bit about them. • Think about where you would like to set your story: what kind of landscape would you like to use, think about the sounds/sights and feel of the place of your location. Is it hot or cold, gentle or fierce? Is it connected to the animals that you have chosen? Tell the children to pair up with the person next to them and describe the setting for their story. • Re-cap on some of the events of your real-life situation. Make a note of the answers next to the questions: <p>How did the “characters” come together and meet each other? What was the “problem”? How was the problem solved?</p>
<p>Using reality to create fiction: story</p>	<p>Once they have re-capped on this, ask them to replace the human characters with the animal characters. Then, ask them to invent a story that is based on a similar sequence of events. Explain that they can exaggerate certain parts of the story or make bits funnier. Once the stories have been written, ask if anybody wants to read theirs to the class.</p>

Session 6: How to Deal with Bullies: Conducting a Survey

Aim:

- To enable children to listen to other people's views on bullying and put their own in context.
- To help develop the children's research skills through creating and undertaking questionnaires.

Resources:

- Activity Sheet 4

Activity	Description
Background	Explain that in the lead up to <i>What the Thunder Said</i> , the company worked with a team of psychologists to help them understand how children feel about witnessing violent behaviour and how they are affected by it. As part of this research, a number of questionnaires were created and filled out by the children taking part in the research project. Looking at these answers helped the psychologists to find out how these children felt about violence in their lives.
Introducing the questionnaire	Tell the children that they are going to make a questionnaire of their own and use it to find out how about what people's beliefs are surrounding violence. Refer children to the example of a question they could include in their questionnaire (see Activity Sheet 4)
Making a questionnaire	In groups of four or five, ask the children to come up with at least five questions of their own, based on the example above. The questions could look at some of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings surrounding the witnessing of violence. • Being asked to get involved in a fight or being forced to act violently. • Being forced to watch a violent film/television programme. <p>Explain that the aim of the questionnaire is to find out more about the way in which people think and feel about witnessing, or being the victim of, violent behaviour.</p>
Conducting a survey	Once they have created the questionnaire, tell each member of each group that it needs to be completed by at least ten people. Once they have gathered all their results, they can make a graph or a pie chart to present their research.

Session 7: A Happy Soul

Aim:

- To encourage children to identify what makes them feel positive, happy and calm and to know what factors threaten these states.

Resources:

- Activity Sheet 5

Activities	Description
What is "soul"?	Have an open discussion about what the children think a "soul" is: how is different from the mind, or body or heart? Make notes on the board.
Soul outline	Using the body outline on Activity Sheet 5, ask the children to write down all the things that make their "souls" happy. Once they have completed this task, ask them to use a different colour of ink/pencil, to write down all their things that make their soul sad.
Last soul saloon	<p>Ask the children to get into pairs and share their outlines with each other.</p> <p>Next, ask them to imagine that one of them has been deserted by their soul. Tell one of the pair to take on the role of the soul; the other person should take on the role of the person that it used to belong to. Explain to the class that the body and soul have got one last chance to meet before they are separated.</p> <p>The pairs need to decide what the person did and why the soul decided to leave its body. Explain that the pairs need to plan a conversation between the soul and the person and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of the soul is to find out what will be different when it returns. • The aim of the person is to convince the soul to come back and what it is going to do to make things better. <p>Give the pairs 10-15 minutes to plan and practice their conversations and then watch a few.</p>

Session 8: Choosing the right friends

Aim:

- To enable children to reflect on how they make friends, what they might want to look for when making friends and what they might want to avoid.

Resources:

- Activity Sheet 6

Activity	Description
What makes a good friend?	Ask the children to fill in the gaps in the flow chart on Activity Sheet 6.
Partner discussion	Ask the children to pair up with someone and talk to their partner about what they think makes a good friend. Regroup and collect thoughts.
Top 5	On the basis of what they have talked about and through hearing ideas from other children, ask them to list their top five “qualities” of being a good friend. Once they have done this, ask them to list five actions, attitudes or “behaviours” that would stop them being friends with someone.
Bringing it to life	<p>Ask each pair to pair up with another pair and choose either a quality of being a good friend, or an action, attitude or behaviour that would stop them being friends with someone.</p> <p>Once they have decided this, ask them to think of a scenario that would bring this quality or action to life. For example, if the quality is “being a good listener”, then the scenario may involve one person approaching his/her friend(s) and talking about something that has happened to them and the other person being very supportive and attentive. Ask them to create a “photograph” – involving all four group members – showing a moment from this situation.</p> <p>When the photograph has been created, tell each group to develop a short scene, lasting no more than three minutes, to bring this photograph to life.</p>
Presentation and reflection	<p>Show some of these scenes back to the group and reflect on them using the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was happening in the scene? Do you agree with the qualities of what it takes to be a good friend, or with what would stop someone being a good friend? With which character in the scene did you have the most empathy? <p>Discuss and close.</p>

Session 9: Interview with Ed Harris – *What the Thunder Said* Playwright

Aims:

- To enable children to understand some of the thought process behind the development of the play.
- To encourage the children to consider the techniques behind writing a play.

Resources:

- Video, available from www.theatre-centre.co.uk/education

Activity	Description
Watch the interview	Play the filmed interview for the children. Explain that they do not need to make notes – that they just have to listen and pay close attention.
Questions about the story	<p>Explain that they are going to watch the interview again. Before playing it, say that they need to listen out for the answers for two particular questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did Toilets talk to anybody about what he saw when he saw Chris fighting? If not, why not? • Why did Toilets do what Chris said when they were playing with the BB Gun? <p>Leave a bit of time for them to write out their answers as fully as they can. They can share these answers in pairs or as a whole class.</p> <p>Then, ask the children to write down any other questions they might have about the story or the characters in <i>What the Thunder Said</i>. These questions might relate to parts of the play they found confusing or parts of the play they would like to know more about. The children can work in pairs or individually. Bring the class back together and invite the children to share their questions, asking other children to try and answer these questions.</p>
Questions about writing a play	<p>Explain that they are going to watch the interview again. Before playing it, say that they need to listen out for the answers for two particular questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the things that Ed did to make his play as good as possible? (Try and name two things). • How did Ed create a magical world? (Try and name two things). <p>Ask them to talk about their answers in pairs and then feedback to the class. Next, ask the children to imagine that have got a good idea for a play. Invite them to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they would do prepare themselves to write the play. • Who their main characters would be. • Once they had written a draft, what they would do to make it better. <p>Ask them to write their answers down individually and then share with a partner.</p>

Session 10: Interview with Dr. Natasha Kirkham – Developmental Psychologist

Aims:

- To enable children to understand some of the thought process behind the development of the play.
- To facilitate the children’s understanding of an interview and how to ask/answer questions.

Resources:

- Video, available from www.theatre-centre.co.uk/education

Activity	Description
Watch the interview	Play the interview for the children. Explain that they need to listen and pay close attention. Then, before you play the interview again, tell the children that afterwards, they are going to recall as much information as they can. Try to discourage them from making notes while they are watching it.
Re-call	<p>Ask the children to write down everything they remember about the interview. Give them five minutes or so to do this. Then, ask them to pair up and exchange notes with their partner. Once they have done this, re-group, listen to all the information gathered about the interview and write it on the board.</p> <p>At this point, ask if them what they found most interesting about the interview and whether they learnt anything new. Also, take any questions about the interview and find out if anything needs clarifying.</p>
Conducting an interview.	<p>In the same pairs, explain to the children that they are going to interview their partner about one of these options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The characters in <i>What the Thunder Said</i> 2) The story of <i>What the Thunder Said</i> 3) The design and the acting in <i>What the Thunder Said</i> <p>As a pair, ask them choose one of these three areas. Then, create a “brainstorm”, with the subject written in a circle in the middle, then lines pointing off in different directions, with different questions at the end of them. For example, if they were to choose option one, possible questions could be</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What was your favourite character? 2) Which character do you think is most like you? 3) What was the most surprising thing that your favourite character did? <p>Encourage children to use open questions, i.e. using what, where, how – rather than closed questions: did you...? were there...?, have you...? Explaining that open questions encourage your partner to talk more, but closed questions mean that their partner might just say “yes” or “no”.</p> <p>Once they have got more than five questions, ask them to imagine they are being filmed and they have to interview each other. They can take it in turns to be interviewer and interviewee. Watch a few pairs.</p>
A successful interview	As a group, discuss what makes a successful interview. Talk about body language and open/closed questions. Feedback and close.

