



WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

A play for
Year 5 and Year 6
by
ED HARRIS

Learning Resource: Pre-performance Drama 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:

- Lay groundwork in advance of Theatre Centre's visit, maximising learning opportunities.
- Maximise the social development pupils benefit from when watching live theatre.
- Address key aspects of the PSHE Curriculum.

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.

"It is our hope that through using these resources and through taking part in these sessions, children will begin to reflect on how seeing violent behaviour may make them feel or behave, so they already have an awareness of the ideas being explored in the production and how they relate to them."

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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Resources:

Hansel and Gretel – The Story
The Body Outline



Session 1

Exploring Violence through fiction: Hansel and Gretel

Aim:

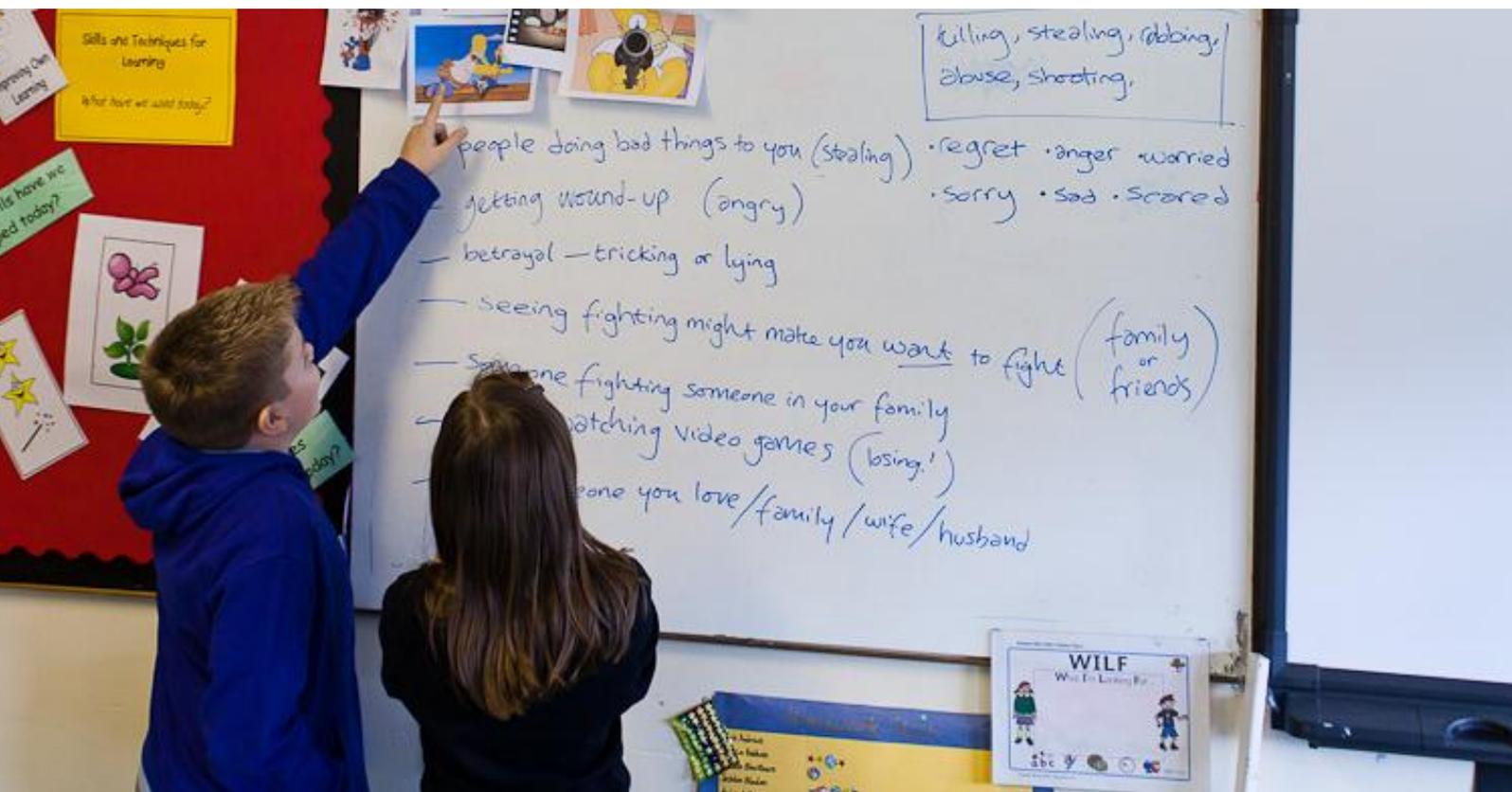
- To introduce or remind the children of the story of Hansel and Gretel.

Resources:

- Hansel and Gretel – The Story (included at the end of this document).

Activity	Description
Set up story square	<p>Using masking tape, mark out a “story square” on the floor of the classroom (2m x 2m). Ask children to sit around the square, introducing it quite formally.</p> <p>Explain that when the pupils are sitting around the edge they will make stories. When they are in the middle they will perform stories.</p> <p>When they are sat around the edge they have to help each other concentrate and focus. When their classmates are performing in the middle, they have to be a good audience, watch quietly and be respectful.</p>
Read Hansel and Gretel	<p>Then read the children the story of Hansel and Gretel. Tell the children they need to listen carefully because once you have told it they are all, as a class, going to try and remember what happens.</p>
Set up story square and remember Hansel and Gretel	<p>Once you have read the story, tell the children that you are going to try and retell it together.</p> <p>Start them off and then ask pupils to put their hand up and say what happens next.</p> <p>Write down everything they say and get through the whole story based on their contributions, prompting when necessary. When they have finished, read the story back to them and see if they think that they have got everything – give them a chance to add anything that has been missed.</p> <p><i>Timesaving tip: You can skip this stage and use the original story resource at the next stage.</i></p>
Re-enact the story	<p>Use the story as a script. Explain that when you will read out the story and go around the square, choosing children one at a time.</p> <p>They will take turns to play the characters. You may decide that as well as the children enacting the characters of the story, they can also enact the landscapes and creatures (birds, trees) as they come up.</p> <p>Start with the first children in the square and ask if they want to play the first characters (likely the woodcutter and perhaps his wife), if they do, ask them to step into the middle. If they want to pass, that’s fine, just move on to the next child.</p> <p>When children opt to perform, ask them to step into the middle and respond to what you are saying as you read the story – bringing the words to life. You move around the square like this, telling the story and allocating parts, turn by turn. Explain at the beginning that the children should not call out if they want to be a character, because you are moving around the square and taking turns.</p>

	<p>If the same children have been playing the same characters for too long and you want to change the cast, you might want to instigate a trigger word from the outset that will mean all the children in the middle should sit down (for example, “whoosh”).</p> <p>If you are creating an environment such as a forest, you might want to suggest that the children sitting around the square can help make the sounds of the forest – it keeps them involved and adds atmosphere to the retelling.</p>
Refine the story	<p>Once you have acted out the story once, ask the children if there is anything they can do to make it better. For example: more soundscapes, certain ways of bringing the characters to life. Once you have talked about this, repeat the process.</p> <p>Feedback / evaluate the session and close.</p>



Session 2

Investigating the characters

Aims:

- To help children understand more about their character and explore their characteristics.
- To explore the emotions behind witnessing destructive or violent behaviour.

Activity	Description
Recap the characters	<p>Ask the children to name all of the characters in the story, and write them on the board as they do so.</p> <p>Ask them which characters they think of as good characters and which ones they think of as bad characters. Ask them to pair up with a partner to discuss this, prompting them with questions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think they are bad / good? • Which of their actions are bad / good? <p>Once they have finished talking, gather their comments and discuss with the rest of the class.</p>
Recap on actions	<p>Focus on one of the actions the children have decided is bad. For example, the stepmother leads the children out into the forest, the witch locks Hansel in a cage, the father doesn't step in to help.</p> <p>Ask children to get into pairs and make a still picture of that action – working together.</p> <p>Following this, split the class into two groups and watch one group at a time. Explain that you are going to “thought-track” the children. When you place your hand on their shoulder they should say what their character is thinking. Do this for a few individuals from both groups.</p>
Explore the emotion of the witness	<p>Choose a pair from the previous exercise (the thought tracking exercise) with an effective image of an action with a strong intention behind it. Ask them to perform it again.</p> <p>Ask the other children to imagine that they are in the same room as the characters. They are invisible to the characters but they can see and hear everything.</p> <p>Remaining in a circle, sitting down, ask the children to use their hands and their facial expressions to express how they would feel if they had to watch this (really quickly, for just a couple of seconds or so). Choose a few individuals to verbally describe how they would feel if they had to watch this happening.</p> <p>Explain that the pair will now try and bring the picture to life a bit, changing it from a still picture to a scene. Ask the other children to keep on imagining they are in the room and say that if they want to stop the scene at any point, to try and make it better, they can. For example, if they are watching the stepmother lead the children into the forest, Gretel could say something to her – what could it be? If they saw that the witch was about to lock Hansel in a cage, what would Gretel want to say to her?</p> <p>Once you have worked on one scene, you can build on it – working with another couple of pairs. Ask them to do their still picture of their bad action, move it into a scene and then ask the people watching what they might want to do or say to make it better – if they can.</p> <p>Evaluate and close.</p>

Session 3

Violence in Hansel and Gretel

Aims:

- To explore the presence of violence in the story.
- To question the young people's idea of what constitutes violence.

Activity	Description
Discuss violence in Hansel and Gretel	<p>Ask the children whether they think there is any violence in Hansel and Gretel.</p> <p>Ask children to pair up with a talking partner and ask them to make a list of all the acts of violence in the story.</p> <p>Once the children have been talking for five minutes, ask them to read out what they have on their lists, writing them on the board.</p>
Explore levels of accessibility in violence	<p>Clear a space and define one end of the room as "ten" and the other as "one", with a scale of numbers in between. You are going to read the list of acts out and the children will position themselves between one and ten, according to how acceptable they think this act is. One means that this level of violence is acceptable and probably isn't even violence, ten means it is totally unacceptable.</p> <p>As you go through the list, pick an act to pause on. Take up the role of an interviewer, perhaps using a prop to represent a microphone, and ask individual children why they have chosen to position themselves where they have. Repeat this as many times as is feasible before the group loses focus.</p> <p>Make a rough note on the where the majority scores each action.</p>
Talk about results	<p>Once children are back at their desks, draw a scale up on the board – and draw up the results. Discuss these with the children; do they think they are right? Should they be higher or lower?</p> <p>Focus on one of these acts and ask the children to think about how they would feel if they saw something like this happening to a stranger. Ask them to talk to a partner about how it would make them feel.</p>
Write an account	<p>Ask the children to write an eye witness account of one of the moments in Hansel and Gretel, as if they were observing an act of violence. Ask them to explain what happened and how it made them feel. Evaluate and close.</p>

Session 4

Creating stories inspired by Hansel and Gretel

Aim:

- To provide the children with a chance to read and perform their stories.

Resources:

- Masking tape.

Activity	Description
Tell stories in the story square	<p>This is a chance for children to tell or perform their eye-witness account in the story square.</p> <p>Mark out the square and then invite children that want to tell their story to volunteer.</p> <p>Explain the rules of the story square again: that when a pupil reads out their story you will go around the square, choosing children one at a time to take turns to play the characters.</p> <p>Give as many children as you want to the opportunity to retell their story.</p> <p>Evaluate and close.</p>



Session 5

Developing the content and structure of the children's stories

Aim:

- To allow children to develop and change their existing story and improve on what they have written.

Resources:

- Masking tape.

Activity	Description
Explore narrative structure	<p>Group discussion: ask the class what a story needs to make it a good one. For example, characters; a beginning, a middle (which includes a point of drama) and an end.</p> <p>Once more, ask the children to recap the narrative structure of Hansel and Gretel, initially ask them to get into pairs to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens in the beginning? • What happens in the middle and what is the drama (that is to say, Hansel and Gretel nearly being cooked and then reversing their fortune). • What happens in the end? <p>Ask them to discuss each point separately and then feedback. When they feedback, write down the headings: Beginning, Middle and End, and write down what they say underneath.</p>
Develop stories	<p>Tell the children that you are going to collect all the eye-witness accounts that they have written and bind them together to make a book.</p> <p>Ask the children to revisit their eye-witnesses accounts and see if they can turn them into stories. Ask them to think about how they could include a beginning, a middle and an end. Ask them to pair up and read their stories aloud to each other, asking the other person to suggest changes or developments.</p> <p>Tell them they can make any changes they like and allocate time for rewrites. They may add pictures if they wish.</p> <p>Evaluate and close.</p>

Session 6

Violence: From Fiction to Fact

Aims:

- To allow children to feedback on their process and the questions / concerns they have raised.
- To enable children to connect the emotional fabric of the stories to their own lives.

Resources:

- Body Outline worksheet (included at the end of this document).

Activity	Description
Explore feelings around violence	<p>Introduce the session by explaining that you are going to be looking at how pupils may feel when they see someone being hurt. For example, this may be on the television, it could be a stranger on the street, or it could be someone they know.</p> <p>Ask the children how they would feel if they saw somebody get hurt. Tell them to pair up with a partner and discuss this. Then ask the children to come back together and share what they have been talking about.</p> <p>Explain that it's natural to have lots of different feelings when you see someone being hurt and that you are going to look at this a little bit more.</p>
Body Outline worksheet	Hand out the worksheet (at the end of this document) and ask the children to fill it out using the things that they have discussed with their talking partner to help them.
Inside or outside?	<p>In a group discussion, ask the children whether they think it's better to keep these thoughts and feelings on the inside or to bring them.</p> <p>Ask how they think it would make them feel if these feelings stayed on the inside, and then what would happen they came out. Explain that these feelings can come out in a way that is "harmful" and also in a way that is "helpful".</p> <p>On the board make two columns, one labelled "Harmful" and the other labelled "Helpful". Ask the children to think of ways that people might express their emotions that are harmful. For example: hit someone, hurt themselves. Once this list is complete, ask the children to think of ways that are helpful – in that they help the person to feel better. For example: talk to a friend or an adult, write something down. Take all suggestions and discuss and say that you are going to come back to this.</p>

Session 7

Sharing thoughts and feelings about violence

Aims:

- To allow children to consider how they express their feelings when faced with violent behaviour.
- To enable children to reflect on dealing with negative feelings through positive action/activities.

Activity	Description
Recap on last session	<p>Explain that the class is going to do some more thinking about the harmful and helpful ways that individuals can express the thoughts and feelings they have when they see someone being hurt, or when they are angry or sad.</p> <p>Recap these and write them on the board.</p>
Make a still picture	<p>In groups of three, ask the children to discuss something that makes them angry or sad. It shouldn't be anything too personal, just something they are happy to share with their classmates.</p> <p>Once they have each talked about one, ask them to decide on one example they feel is very clear. Ask them to make a still picture of this moment, involving all three of them. Explain that two of them have to be involved in the action and one of them has to be watching it.</p>
Thought track exercise	<p>When all of the groups have finished, split the class in half and watch each group using the thought tracking technique (touching their shoulder and asking them to say what they are thinking) with different children.</p> <p>Feedback and talk about the different things that make people feel angry or sad.</p>
Express thoughts and feelings	<p>Ask the children to look at the board and the helpful ways of expressing thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>Ask the children to remember the thing that made them sad or angry, to try and recall what that feels like. Explain that the class is going to try and mock up some helpful ways of dealing with these feelings. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking to someone: ask the children to pair up and tell their partner why they are feeling sad or scared • Writing down their thoughts: ask the children to write a short story or a diary entry and explain how they are feeling <p>Talk through other possible, positive ways of feeling better and reflect on them. For example, playing sport might help people feel better because they are working as a team, which feels good. Exercise releases endorphins; chemicals in the brain that make you feel happier.</p>
Questions about violence and the "ask it" basket	<p>Give each child a strip of paper and ask them to write a question about violent behaviour they want to ask. These strips of paper will then be placed in the "ask it" basket.</p> <p>Explain that these questions will be read out in front of the class, but that they will not have a name on them: everyone will try and answer them together.</p>
Present stories	<p>If the children are keen to, give them another chance to present the stories they finished in Session 5. This will conclude the set of activities before they see the production.</p> <p>Ask if there are any other questions. Evaluate and close.</p>

Resource 1

Hansel and Gretel – The Story

A poor woodcutter and his wife had two children named Hansel and Gretel. Their mother died when they were young. Hansel and Gretel were very sad.

Soon their father remarried but their stepmother was very cruel. One day, the stepmother said to her husband: "There is not enough food in the house for us all! We must get rid of the two brats." She persuaded her husband to take Hansel and Gretel into the forest and leave them there.

Hansel had overheard this conversation and filled his pockets with some little white pebbles. He said to Gretel – "don't worry, if father does leave us in the forest we'll find our way home."

The next day, Hansel's father led Hansel and Gretel away into the forest. But as they walked further and further, Hansel dropped his white pebbles behind him to make a trail of pebbles that would lead them home. When they got far into the forest, their father left them by themselves. Not long after, Hansel took Gretel's hand and they followed their trail of pebbles in the white moonlight and got all the way home.

When the stepmother found out that Hansel and Gretel had returned, she was very angry and gave them nothing for supper but a sip of water and some hard bread. Hansel saved his bread in case they got sent into the forest again.

Sure enough, the next day their father took the children into the forest again and Hansel broke his piece of bread into little crumbs and used them to make a trail back to the house. However, this time the birds of the forest ate all the crumbs and they couldn't find the path that led back home.

Hansel and Gretel went deeper and deeper into the forest. They were hungry and tired. Finally, after walking for a long time, they saw a cottage made of chocolate, sweets, and cake. "Look, Hansel! A chocolate brick!" shouted Gretel in delight. They ate it hungrily. Now, a wicked witch lived there. When she saw Hansel and Gretel, she wanted to eat them. She grabbed the children and locked them in a cage.

The witch decided to make a soup out of Hansel and eat him first. She began boiling a huge pot of water for the soup. Just then, Gretel crept out of her cage. She gave the wicked witch a mighty push from behind and the witch fell into the boiling water. She howled in pain and died instantly.

Hansel and Gretel found treasure lying around the cottage. They carried it home with them. Their stepmother had died and their father welcomed them back with tears of joy. They never went hungry again!

Resource 2
Body Outline

When I see someone hurt somebody else, this is what happens inside me.....

My hands want to...

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My feet want to.....

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I think that....

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I feel that...

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