

Michael Morpurgo's

Believe

in

Unicorns



Educational Resource Pack
Suitable for Primary School Years 3-6



'Danyah's performance is a tour de force. The show is moving and memorable, a glorious example of the magic of storytelling. I didn't like it, I loved it!'

Michael Morpurgo

Contents

- 4** ABOUT: WIZARD PRESENTS
- 5** ABOUT: MICHAEL MORPURGO
- 6** MEET THE... DIRECTOR DANI PARR
- 8** MEET THE... DESIGNER KATE BUNCE
- 10** MEET THE... PERFORMER DANYAH MILLER
- 12** PLAY SYNOPSIS
- 14** DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PLAY AND THE BOOK
- 15** THEMES
- 18** CHARACTERS
- 20** LIBRARY ACTIVITIES
- 23** WHY STORYTELLING?
- 24** STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES
- 27** PRACTICAL CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
- 47** OUR ASSOCIATES
- 48** AUDIENCE FEEDBACK
- 49** WHAT THE PRESS SAY

About: Wizard Presents



Wizard Presents creates inspiring and compelling family shows and musicals for all ages.

The Secret Garden Experience, an interactive project based on Frances Hodgson Burnett's timeless classic, is available now to enjoy at home and on-line at www.thesecretgardenexperience.co.uk.

Pippi Longstocking – The Swashbuckling Musical Adventure, a co-production with Royal & Derngate Northampton and ABA International Touring (UK) opened to great critical success in Northampton for a Christmas Season 2019.

Meet Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking - a storytelling performance with Danyah Miller, was commissioned by Oxford University Press for the 75th anniversary celebrations of the first publication of 'Pippi Longstocking' book series.

Wizard Presents was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Musical, *Soul Sister*, inspired by the life and times of Ike and Tina Turner, created by John Miller and Pete Brooks. (Hackney Empire and Savoy Theatre). John Miller was also nominated for an Olivier Award for *Only the Lonely - The Roy Orbison Story*, which he co-wrote.

I Believe in Unicorns by Michael Morpurgo, in association with Royal & Derngate and Watford Palace Theatre, premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2013 before touring nationally and internationally. It received an Argus Angel Award for Artistic Excellence at Brighton Festival 2014 and an Audience Choice Award for Get Creative Family Arts Festival in 2015.

Why the Whales Came by Michael Morpurgo, in association with Watford Palace Theatre, was on tour throughout 2016 and 2017.



Perfectly Imperfect Women, written by Danyah Miller, supported by OvalHouse opened there on International Women's Day 2017 before performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and on national tour. It was ranked 6th top rated show in The List Magazine register.


Kika's Birthday, written by John and Danyah Miller, a co-production with Little Angel Theatre and Orange Tree Theatre, completed a successful run at Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2018 where it was named in The Guardian's Best of the Fringe and awarded the Runner Up prize in the prestigious Primary Times Children's Choice Awards.

Contact

Wizard Presents
info@wizardpresents.co.uk

www.ibelieveinunicorns.co.uk
www.wizardpresents.co.uk
www.danyahmillerstoryteller.co.uk

  @wizardpresents @danyahmiller

 WizardPresentsTheatreCompany

About: Michael Morpurgo



“Reading is the most interactive medium there is. On television or film, you’re given a face, a place and all the information. With reading, you’re simply given the skeleton, from which you can interpret this funny code we call words yourself.”

Michael Morpurgo was born in 1943 and went to three different schools in London, Sussex and Canterbury. He studied for his degree at London University, taking English and French and went on to become a Primary School Teacher.

“I get many of my story ideas from watching the children and by listening to what they say to each other, as well as what they tell me. I became a writer originally because I was sick of reading the same bedtime stories to my kids. I started making up my own stories and I read them to my class at school. They focused on [the stories] and listened, so I realised there was something in what I was doing. Eventually I wrote a book and got lucky with a publisher.”

Morpurgo and his wife Clare, also a teacher, eventually left their jobs and created Farms for City Children. Groups of children from Inner Cities travel to the Morpurgo’s farm in Nethercott in Devon and spend a week on the farm. The project has now expanded and he has similar projects in Gloucestershire and Pembrokeshire as well as North Devon. Each farm offers children and teachers from urban primary schools the chance to live and work in the countryside for a week and gain hands-on experience. For more information about the work of Farms for City Children, please visit www.farmsforcitychildren.co.uk

Between 2003 – 2005, Michael Morpurgo was the Children’s Laureate, a post he helped create with the then Poet Laureate Ted Hughes. The award aims to celebrate and champion children’s literature and the role it plays in promoting literacy. Morpurgo is passionate about children reading, and he spent much of his time as Laureate on the road, meeting children and talking with passion and enthusiasm about the work he does and the way he does it.

“Reading is the most interactive medium there is. On television or film, you’re given a face, a place and all the information. With reading, you’re simply given the skeleton, from which you can interpret this funny code we call words yourself.”

He was awarded an OBE for services to Literature in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in 2007. In the same year, his novel *War Horse* was adapted into a play that performed to critical acclaim at the National Theatre. The play returned to the National in 2008.

For more about Michael Morpurgo, visit: www.michaelmorpurgo.com

Meet the Director... Dani Parr



Dani Parr is Director of Participation at Almeida Theatre. Previously she was Associate Director at Royal & Derngate Theatres, Northampton, where she directed over 30 plays, and led a programme of innovative creative projects for all ages. She won two awards for *Flathampton* at Brighton Festival 2013: the Argus Angel Award for artistic innovation and Latest award for Best Children's Event. As a freelancer, Dani directed *Bear and Butterfly* for Theatre Hullabaloo and *Moominsummer Madness*, a co-production between Polka Theatre, Royal & Derngate and Little Angel Theatre.

She programmed *Take Off Festival 2013*, an international festival of theatre work for children and young people based in Durham, and directed *Dream Space* for Shakespeare's Globe. Dani has also directed two other plays for Wizard Presents: *Why the Whales Came* and *Perfectly Imperfect Women*.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME A DIRECTOR?

I have always loved stories. As a child I was an avid reader and I played imaginary games in the playground every day. I didn't realise at the time that I could make a living out of creating imaginary worlds! It was when I realised how powerful theatre can be – enabling us to be transported to another place – that I realised that I had to have a go at creating my own plays.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT DIRECTING SHOWS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES?

I love the honesty of the audience. You know instantly whether you have succeeded in inspiring the audience and it is clear that you have got something wrong if they become restless. I love creating interactive work, and I love how open young audiences are, how receptive they are to the idea of entering a story and how much they can teach us about how to play.

WHAT PRODUCTION/S HAS BEEN THE MOST INSPIRATIONAL FOR YOU?

On a grand scale, I have been most impressed and excited by the visual spectacle of *War Horse* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. On a smaller scale, I love the work of companies like *Oily Cart* or *Theatre Rites* who create immersive interactive work where the audience goes on the journey with the performers.

IS THE WAR IN I BELIEVE IN UNICORNS BASED ON A REAL WAR?

There are two wars mentioned in *I Believe in Unicorns*. The war which the Unicorn Lady refers to in her past is most likely to be the Second World War as it references



the book- burning which took place in Nazi Germany. The war which comes to Tomas' village could be a number of different wars. Michael Morpurgo is deliberately not specific about where and when this war takes place as we should be able to believe that it could be anywhere.

**HOW DID YOU WORK WITH THE DESIGNER KATE BUNCE?
DO YOU CREATE THE SHOW AND THEN HAVE THE SET
DESIGNED OR THE OTHER WAY ROUND?**



Kate and I always work really collaboratively. We talk before rehearsals begin about concepts and ideas, and then we have some development days to play and experiment with the actors with lots of different ways of staging the ideas we have come up with. In this case, we knew quite early on that we wanted to set ourselves the challenge of the set being made entirely from books, so that any prop we needed would be hidden inside a book. We then brainstormed all the different magical things which could appear from books and began to decide which ones would help us tell the story. Most of the set was then made and finished before we started rehearsals so that we could integrate the set into each scene of our play.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN UNICORNS?

Of course!



Meet the Designer... Kate Bunce



Kate trained at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design - MA Scenography, BA Hons Theatre Design. Kate has designed over 40 shows for companies including The New Vic, Almeida Young Company, The Wardrobe Ensemble, Birmingham Rep, ABA productions, Southbank Centre, MAC, Pentabus, BBC, Polka Theatre and Royal & Derngate with whom she has designed several interactive installation plays for young audiences directed by Dani Parr. Recent work includes *Snow Queen* for Tutti Frutti, *Underneath a Magical Moon* by Mike Kenny (US Tour), and *The Further Adventures of Owl and the Pussy Cat* for Little

Angel Theatre / Royal & Derngate. As well as *I Believe in Unicorns*, Kate has also designed *Why the Whales Came* and *Perfectly Imperfect Women* for Wizard Presents.

She has also worked as a design lecturer for The Royal College of Art, Central School of Speech and Drama and held teaching roles with Punchdrunk and Classical Opera.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO DESIGN FOR THEATRE?

I really enjoyed all aspects of Art, Design and Drama at school. Theatre design seemed to encompass them all. I also love that a stage set is so temporary and only comes to life with actors and lights. I love all the anticipation and excitement backstage before a show opens.

OF ALL THE SETS YOU HAVE SEEN IN PRODUCTIONS, WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

It's too hard to choose just one. In *Silence* at Birmingham Rep, there was a wonderful scene change where the entire floor lifted up, completely unexpected and beautiful. Hospital works by Theatre Rites, an installation piece set in a real hospital was great. I love beautiful clean sets; I especially loved a 'poorly room' with cracked walls covered in tiny plasters. Any set designed by Bunny Christie (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*) and all Oily Cart sets are gorgeous.

WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION FOR THE I BELIEVE IN UNICORNS SET?

Dani the Director and I had a really good chat about the story and what it means to us. We found the power and joy of books/stories within *I Believe in Unicorns* most inspiring. Also, watching the actors in the 'development days' interacting with the books. We used them as seats, towers, handbags, trees etc. It was exciting to see what fun we could have just using books for the entire set! Books themselves were an inspiration when designing the set: the titles, pictures, the size, the texture of the cover, the type of font or paper all gave me ideas of what prop to use them for.

I also looked at lots of artists like Su Blackwell who creates beautiful book sculptures. I wanted a mixture of beautiful surprises appearing from the books but also wanted the books to come to life and to be part of the fast movement and action of the piece.

WHICH PART OF THE SET ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

The little pop-up houses, Noah's Ark and 'the book within a book' section and the Unicorn Lady's little kite.

WHERE WERE THE BOOKS ON THE SET SOURCED FROM?

Most of them were from a second hand book store in the Town Hall in Berkhamsted. All the large books were from my sister's bookshop, South Kensington Books in Thurloe Street, South Kensington. Also I searched lots of charity shops for particular types or sizes of books I wanted to use. Some books that needed to do particular 'tricks' were made from scratch out of wood.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN UNICORNS?

I do now!



Meet the Performer... Danyah Miller



Danyah Miller works internationally as a solo performer, and has starred in five Wizard Presents solo shows, award winning *I Believe in Unicorns* by Michael Morpurgo (Edinburgh Fringe 2013 & 2019, UK and international tour and West End), *Why the Whales Came* also by Morpurgo (UK and international tour), *Meet Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking* (Imagine Children's Festival - Queen Elizabeth Hall 2020), *Kika's Birthday* (Little Angel Theatre, Orange Tree Theatre and Edinburgh Fringe 2018), *Perfectly Imperfect Women* (Ovalhouse, Edinburgh Fringe 2017 and UK tour). She recently adapted and recorded *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett for audio as part of *The Secret Garden Experience*.

She is also a writer and storytelling trainer, including over 10 years as a course leader at The International School of Storytelling. She trained in drama, dance and English and later studied at Lecoq in Paris.

For more information about Danyah's work in schools and as a storyteller trainer, visit www.danyahmillerstoryteller.co.uk

HOW DID YOU GET INTO PERFORMING?

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a performer, to be on the stage. As a little girl, my desire never wavered from this and as I grew older my love of theatre increased. My degree was in Drama, Dance and English; however afterwards, I found myself involved in theatre management, marketing, box office and administration. I was good at this but still yearned to be on the stage! When my daughter, Sofie, was born, I wished for her to follow her dreams and in an instant I knew that I would have to follow my own. When she was nearly one year old, Sofie and I set off to L'Ecole Internationale de Theatre Jaques Lecoq in Paris to retrain in mime and physical theatre. On my return, I immediately became involved in storytelling and performing. I had finally found my way of expressing my creativity and I have continued to develop that since and I love it!

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT STORYTELLING?

As a storyteller I love the balance between being myself and creating characters. The storyteller is in the central position from which everything else flows. I love interacting with the audience, sharing stories, offering stories, listening to stories. I love the depth and breadth of stories. They touch us in so many ways, unexpectedly sometimes. When left to its own devices, a good story, however it is told and in whatever medium, begins its secret work inside us! We are all story creatures, it is a large part of what makes us human. We are always sharing stories with each other...

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN A THEATRE PRODUCTION?

The audience! I believe that there is a triangle between the story, the performers and the audience where magic is created.

As a producer, I also recognise the importance of building and developing a really strong and coherent team to create a show, however large or small. This includes: creative, production, administrative and marketing practitioners. When the whole team is fully engaged and excited by the project alchemy occurs!



WHICH PRODUCTIONS HAVE YOU SEEN THAT HAVE INFLUENCED AND INSPIRED YOU THE MOST?

As a young girl, I remember seeing Geraldine Chaplin in *Le Cirque Imaginaire* and it took my breath away! I vowed then that I wanted to be part of this magic on stage. I was taken to the RSC as a young teenager and mostly remember the smell of the place and how imbued with emotion it was. Between school and university, I lived in London and went to see as much theatre as I possibly could. On every day off, I saw a matinee and evening show. I remember sobbing my heart out during *Angels in America* and *Normal Heart* and dancing and singing down the street after watching Robert Lindsay and Emma Thompson in *Me and My Girl*. More recently, I was thrilled to see *Tempest*, a collaboration between Little Angel Theatre and the RSC and later Little Angel's production of *The Man with Enormous Ears*. I loved the way they played with scale, the puppetry and the interaction between actors and puppets. *Mr Bunk* was pure joy and *Carnivali* was an extraordinary fusion between film and theatre.

I love how a piece of theatre, dance, physical theatre or music can take me on such a journey, transform me. This Christmas I watched Dani Parr's *Along the Riverbank*; it was delicate, funny and moving. As I watched I became a 5 year old again, my heart skipping when the butterflies and dragonflies flew over us and when Ratty and Moley chatted to the children. I was transfixed!

There are so many incredible theatre productions I have had the privilege to see. I particularly like children's and family shows, and I want everyone to have the chance to see superb and compelling theatre whatever their age.

WHICH PART OF UNICORNS DO YOU LOVE PERFORMING?

All of it! It is a superb story and one of which I never tire. As each show finishes I know that I have to wait until I can begin again! I love sharing this story and its interactive nature. Secretly I think my favourite part of the show is drinking the milk!

DO YOU BELIEVE IN UNICORNS?

Totally and joyfully and absolutely! Yes! What is great is that maybe you will too when you have seen the show...

Play Synopsis

I Believe in Unicorns is an intimate show, set in a library full of books that hold more than stories within their pages. It is a tale of the power of books and the bravery of a young boy called Tomas. Tomas hates reading and school, but his world is turned upside down the day he meets the Unicorn Lady in his local library.



Everyone is gathered in the library for an extremely special event, the re-opening of the new village library. The librarian (Unicorn Lady) is asked to make a speech and finds herself telling everyone a story about a boy, Tomas Porac, who was instrumental in saving all the books in the library.

When she first met him, Tomas was 8 years old. He hated books and school and could hardly read or write. Instead Tomas loved the mountains and would rather be there than anywhere else in the world..

One day, after school, Tomas' mum told him that she was going down into the village and that she would drop him at the library. He didn't want to go and dragged his heels all the way.

The Librarian, who the children called The Unicorn Lady, because she held a magical Unicorn, was already telling stories to the children. Tomas hid behind a stack of books, but the librarian called him over.

He didn't join in that first day but he loved listening to the stories that were read, told by heart and made up. So that day after day he returned to the library, bringing more and more friends with him.

One afternoon the Unicorn Lady told the children about her favourite book which her father had saved when she was just a little girl. She told the children that soldiers had come into her town and burned all the books they didn't approve of, which was most of them.

She asked Tomas to read a story from her favourite book. He wasn't sure at first, but he gained in confidence and his friends listened, as lost in the story as he was. When he finished the story he saw his mum and dad listening. He had read his very first story.

Tomas continued coming to the library, to listen to stories and to read his own.

The Unicorn Lady said that at this time war was in the country again although it was far away and no one thought it would come to their village.

Then early one summer morning bombs began to drop over the village. Everyone hid in the woods, although Tomas's dad wasn't there. Finally the soldiers left. Tomas ran to find his dad and The Unicorn Lady ran after him. She saw her library on fire.

Tomas and his dad came out of the library carrying stacks of books and The Great Book Rescue began. Eventually the library collapsed but everyone agreed to take some books home to keep them safe until the library was re-built.

The Unicorn Lady said that she was delighted that the library had been re-built. She concluded the opening ceremony with a story, the children's favourite, Tomas' favourite, The Unicorn story.

And that story explained why she believes in unicorns, believes in them absolutely.



For some footage of the show and children's responses to it, have a look at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwhL1u8Faxk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmdHdwwctT0>

Differences Between The Play and The Book

You may have noticed that there are some differences in what happens in the play and what happens in the book. One example is in the book The Unicorn Lady and Tomas' Father are the ones who begin the book rescue. In the play, it is Tomas and his Father.

Changes like these happen quite often when a book is made into a play or film. Some other changes include:

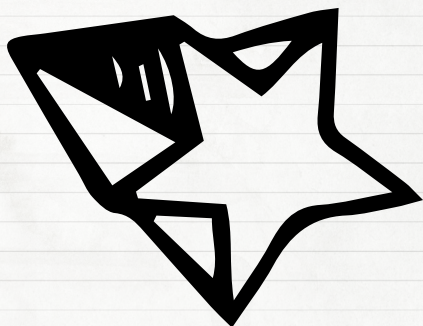
- In the book the Unicorn is much bigger than it is in the play
- In the book Tomas reads The Little Match Girl, in the play he reads The Nightingale Story
- The Noah's Ark story comes at a different place in the book than in the play

Activity

Why do you think some of the parts of a book are changed when it is turned into a play?

Can you think of any other times when the play was different to the book? For each change, write down why you think that change might have happened.

Please note: The following themes and characters are integral to both book and play, where specific references to either book or play have been, this has been highlighted.



Themes

These themes can be used with older children as a starting point for discussion.

Children in War

A motif running through many of Michael Morpurgo's books is children in war. We see how events happening on the world stage affect the day to day lives of children and how they react to the complexities of war. In *I Believe in Unicorns*, Tomas knows something of the war, but he is very detached from the reality as he doesn't know what the war means or why it is being fought. He knows that some of the local villagers have gone to fight and he has seen the soldiers on the television.

His first real experience of the war is when 'war came to our valley'. Tomas is getting ready for school and he goes outside to feed the hens, when he hears the sound of a plane above. Initially Tomas is still detached from the reality of war; he admires the beauty of the machinery and compares it to a silver eagle soaring above. However, Tomas is immersed suddenly in the panic of his parents as the family quickly runs for shelter in the woods with hundreds of the other village people afraid of the bombing. We still don't get a sense of Tomas' panic because he is in the process of understanding the significance of what is happening. However, the reader is made aware of the impact of events through the reaction of the adults: Grandma prays aloud and mother rocks backward and forward, moaning as if in pain and father runs off with a few other men to see what he can do to help the village.

It is only when Tomas comes face to face with the horrors of war, when he sees the fires and the soldiers on the ground blasting and shooting, that the reality hits him. He is also gripped with fear that his father will not return.

Transformative Power of Stories

I Believe in Unicorns explores the way in which stories have the power to transform lives, not only Tomas' life, but the lives of his family and other members of the village.

At the beginning of the story, Tomas doesn't play with friends outside of school, he doesn't like school and he certainly does not like reading. His father backs up his point of view as he says that schools and books had never done him much good. When Tomas' mother suggests that he goes to the library to hear a story read by the new librarian, Tomas tries to make as much of a nuisance of himself as possible as he does not want to go.

However, once Tomas is in the library, he slowly gets drawn into the magic of the Unicorn Lady's stories and cannot be kept away, visiting the library again and again.

As his imagination is awoken, we see the true impact that stories start to have on Tomas' life. He keeps going back to the library and therefore, he becomes less of a loner outside of school by spending time with the other children at the library. He also encourages his friends at school to come to the library and is an instigator of new activity within his peers. Tomas seems to be becoming more sociable and more confident. He says that he, 'had never been any good at reading out loud at school,' as he stuttered over his consonants and 'dreaded k's', but the Unicorn Lady gently encourages him, and he feels emboldened by the power of the magic unicorn. As he becomes emboldened by the unicorn, all his fear dissipates and he hears his voice loud and strong when he is reading a story. He is lost in the power of the

story and his audience is equally as lost. Tomas' character is growing and developing and the power of stories have aided this transformation.

Tomas' father listens at the door when Tomas reads aloud and is proud. Hearing his son read with such confidence has a transformative power on Tomas' father too. He describes it as 'magic' and can for the first time really see the impact of stories in people's lives. This ultimately leads to his resolve to save all the books in the library when the village is on fire. This is something we believe he would have never done before listening to his son read. Tomas' mother is also affected by her son's reading and hugs him the night she hears him in a way she had never hugged him before. Tomas' parents have seen how stories have inspired his growth as a person and the family seems very connected and united.

A strong symbol of transformation in the story is the way in which the unicorns survive the flood in the Unicorn Lady's tale of Noah and the Ark. The unicorns don't get saved on Noah's ark, so they are left to swim and swim for many years in the flooded land until eventually, they don't need their legs anymore and slowly they transform themselves into narwhals.

In contrast to the acceptance of the transformative power of stories lies the fear of the power of stories and the burning of books that the Unicorn Lady witnessed when she was a child. She describes a time when people ruled the country she lived in who 'were frightened of the magic of stories and poems, terrified of the power of books where, 'They knew... that stories and poems help you to think and dream. Books make you want to ask questions'. The Unicorn Lady is referencing a time in her past when individuality was controlled and people's mental freedom oppressed.

Community

Tomas is a boy who likes to spend time on his own, but through the story, we see the power of community and what can be achieved when people come together. There is the power of shared stories as children of the village gather to hear the Unicorn Lady's stories, but we also see the power of community when the whole village comes together to save the books when the library is destroyed. In the play Tomas and his father start to save the books; in the book The Unicorn Lady and Tomas' father start to save the books but as a crowd gathers to see what they are doing, the great book rescue begins:

'It wasn't long before a whole book evacuation system had been set up. We children were organized into two human chains across the square, from the library itself to the café opposite, and all the rescued books went from hand to hand along the chains ending up piled in great stacks all over the floor of the cafe and on the tables too' (p.68).

Magic and Power of the Imagination

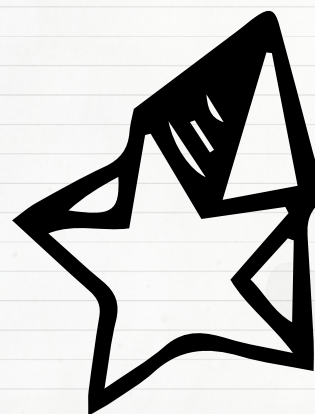
The unicorn symbolises the power of the imagination and magic. In folklore, the unicorn is seen as a woodland creature and associated with purity and grace. The horn of a unicorn is seen as particularly magical; it is said that if the horn is ground up it can be used to make strong medicines, which can cure many illnesses. In other stories, kings used the unicorn's horn as a drinking cup because it was said to make poisons harmless and purify water. Also, animals would wait by a dirty stream for the unicorn to come along. The unicorn would touch the dirty water with its horn then the animals could safely drink.

The wooden unicorn does seem to be magic in Tomas' story. In the book, when he sees it for the first time – he thinks it is real!

'That was the moment I first saw him, sitting there in the corner beyond the children. A unicorn! He was sitting absolutely still, his feet tucked neatly underneath him, his head turned towards us. He seemed to be gazing straight at me. I swear his eyes were smiling at me too' (p.24-25).

When the Unicorn Lady sits on the unicorn to begin her story, the magic seems to be even more powerful. All the children are hushed and attentive as if in the presence of something very special and out of the ordinary. Furthermore, Tomas himself seems to be affected by the magic of the unicorn, for when it is his turn to sit on the unicorn and tell his story, he is full of fear. His mouth is dry and he worries that he will stutter over his words; however, when he does actually sit on the unicorn, all his terror and dread vanishes as if he has been touched by magic and a calming power.

Children are often depicted as the embodiment of innocence, purity and grace, and the magic of the unicorn and the innocence of childhood in Tomas' story present a strong opposing force to the horror and destruction of war. Although Tomas' village is attacked and much is destroyed, goodness triumphs because the unicorn is saved and people come together as one to save all the books and rebuild the library and ultimately, their community.



Characters

Tomas

At the beginning of the book, we learn that Tomas hates reading, school and going to church and spends a lot of time wandering around his village and the surrounding countryside and hillsides alone. He doesn't listen at school and prefers to look out of the window. He loves to be outdoors and spend time with his father, but in the book he confides to the reader that he really prefers to be alone: *'But although I never told [Dad] so, I much preferred to be on my own,'* (p.19).

Tomas has a good relationship with his parents but he is quite stubborn. We see this as he drags his heels when his mother takes him to the library for the first time. However, he cares what people think because he gives up resisting his mother when he believes people are watching him.

On meeting the Unicorn Lady, Tomas' life changes forever. Tomas becomes more sociable and falls in love with reading and story-telling after listening to the Unicorn Lady's captivating tales. He also grows in confidence. The impact of the Unicorn Lady can truly be seen because as an adult, Tomas ends up as a professional writer. He becomes a master story-teller himself.

Mother

Mother is very caring towards Tomas – she worries and fusses about him, however, she is quite strict too. She is strict about Tomas going to school every day although he hates it, and she is strict about him drinking his milk, although he hates that too. She is not easily fooled either and doesn't believe Tomas when he pretends to have a stomach ache or headache to get out of something he doesn't want to do. She must also have a temper because Tomas talks about avoiding 'Mother's fury'. She wants the best for Tomas and pushes him into trying new things, like going to the library for a change. She is very proud of Tomas when he reads aloud for the first time and shows her emotion by giving him a 'tight hug'.

Father

Father is a bee-keeper and a farmer. He is an outdoors person and Tomas takes after him. He doesn't think much of school and books and believes that 'a day in the mountains will teach Tomas a whole lot more than a week in school'. In this sense, he seems stuck in his ways and unable to see the value in other experiences. However, he is a caring father, with a fun side because Tomas goes tobogganing with him in the winter and swims in the lake with him in the summer.

Like Tomas, his father goes through a transformation when he hears Tomas reading aloud so confidently for the first time. Father is proud, and his eyes are opened so he can see the value in books. This is symbolised by the fact that it is Father who helps to rescue all the books from the burning library. He is a brave man because he is one of a group of men in the village who goes to help when crisis strikes.

The Unicorn Lady

The Unicorn Lady is a calm and serene presence. She obviously has a good rapport with children because they hang on her every word and she never has to shout if the children are talking too loudly – all she has to do is hold up her hand and everyone stops immediately. She is a master story-teller, and she has a real passion for books. This comes across when she reads a story because Tomas describes her as telling a story as if she believed every word to be true.

The Unicorn Lady has had a bad experience in the past which we understand more about when she talks about the war and the burning of books when she was a child. She loved her father as she holds everything he gave her as precious (her charred book and the wooden unicorn which he carved). She is honest because she tells the truth to the children about how her special book got charred and how her father was beaten. She is also very brave because, in the book, she and Tomas' father are the ones who start the great book rescue in the fire.

Despite having bad experiences in her life, the Unicorn Lady has a fighting spirit and a positive outlook on life because at the end of the story she says about the soldiers:

'Buildings they can destroy. Dreams they cannot' (p.72).



Library Activities

Tomas never went to the library and hated reading until the new librarian – the Unicorn Lady – inspired him. Here are some suggestions of activities to do in a library with children to keep things fresh!

Book Review Game:

Children could have a go at writing a book review themselves (see book review template) or play the book review game.

Game:

Children each have a piece of paper and pen and write 1 or 2 sentences about their favourite book (why they like it). All bits of paper are then folded up and put in a bowl. Then, one person is chosen to pull a piece of paper out of the bowl and read the review. The rest of the class then have to guess who wrote the review and why they think it is that person (the real reviewer can also pretend to guess who wrote it). The child who guesses correctly then pulls out the next piece of paper.

Clues and Answers

Children choose a book each and then write a sentence about what the book is about. This is the 'clue'. They also write the answer (see examples below). The teacher / parent can then read out the descriptions of the books and others in the group have to guess the title and the author.

Examples:

Clue: A boy who can fly takes Wendy, Michael, and John on a magical adventure to Neverland.

Answer: Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie

Clue: Two boys are evacuated from London into the countryside during WW2 and stumble across two German airmen when they are out walking.

Answer: Friend or Foe by Michael Morpurgo

Clue: A lovable bear who wears a floppy, wide-brimmed hat and a duffle coat and enjoys marmalade. He finds trouble wherever he goes.

Answer: Paddington Bear Series by Michael Bond

Find A Person Who...

Talk to the others in your group and write down the names of anyone who answers the questions below.

1. Likes the same author as you do
2. Likes one of your favourite books
3. Knows where the poetry books are
4. Likes to read about sports
5. Can use the computer in the library to find a book
6. Has used a thesaurus before
7. Knows where the history books are
8. Likes to read fiction
9. Likes to read non-fiction
10. Has read a book longer than 200 pages
11. Has read 3 or more of the Harry Potter books
12. Likes to read out loud

Did you find out anything new about anyone in your group?



Library Fact Finding Mission

Either individually or in pairs use the library to find the answers to the following questions

1. Find 3 fiction writers with a surname beginning with 'T'

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. Who wrote the Horrible Science series of books?

3. Find the names of three poets in the poetry section

- a.
- b.
- c.

4. What is the first sentence of the first Harry Potter book in the series?

5. Find out if there is a fine for late library books in your library. If so, how much is it?

6. Write down the titles of 5 books written by Michael Morpurgo

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

7. Are there any books in your library about unicorns? If so, name one title

8. Can you find out three facts about narwhals from a book in your library?

- a.
- b.
- c.

Why Storytelling?

Our lives are stories. These, and the stories around us, form a powerful sense of who we are and who we will become. We tell stories everyday, as we interact with our families, friends, teachers, and colleagues. Storytelling is part of what makes us human.

Sometimes we confuse activity with accomplishment. Nowadays we live our lives at such a fast pace that we need permission to take a break. Storytelling gives us that opportunity. Stories give peace to our minds and feed our souls, so that we can meet the world renewed and with new vitality.

Imagination is like a muscle, it needs exercise, just as our legs and arms do. In a world of passive media, stories and storytelling activities play an important role in strengthening imagination.

- Stories can give us a moral compass and teach us to value ourselves, respect others and care for the world. They can inspire us to achieve more than we believed was possible.
- Scientific studies, together with anecdotal evidence from educational psychologists, confirm what we know instinctively to be true that children who are exposed to storytelling, both as listeners and as tellers, have better literacy skills including fluency, vocabulary, writing and recall.
- In addition to improving skills in reading and writing, many also benefit from improved self-awareness, visual imagery and cultural knowledge.
- Storytelling has the ability to motivate children to connect with their learning across the curriculum, and can be used in all subjects.
- Stories bring facts to life. Telling stories is like feeding our children bread rather than stones.
- What we are seeking to achieve with storytelling is not a short term quick-fix, but a powerful tool which will encourage the pursuit of lifelong literacy and learning.



Storytelling Activities

NAME GAMES AND ICE BREAKERS

Name and Action:

Introduction game in a circle. *"Hello, I'm X (state name)"* followed by an action, e.g. stick tongue out). Everyone then copies by saying X name and repeating their action. Next person in the circle then speaks out their name and with an action, which is repeated by the group, and so on round the circle until everyone has introduced themselves.

Bean Bag Throwing:

Use one beanbag and pass it around the circle, asking people to remember who they threw it to and who threw to them. As they pass the beanbag, they call out first their own name and then the name of the person to whom they are throwing. When everyone has caught the beanbag once (and it is back with the person who began) throw the beanbag around the circle again in the same order. Each time it completes a circle begin again. On the third or fourth round send a second beanbag shortly after the first one (and a third if you have a good focused group!).

You can then add to this basic structure (a) send one beanbag round backwards and one forwards at the same time (b) If someone drops the bag send it back to the beginning (c) make a sound with the throw (d) make the sound of the person before you instead of your own (e) Throw the sound around the circle without the beanbag.

Animal Game:

Circle with someone in the middle. Spin and point at someone. That person (a), plus one person on either side of (a) create an animal. The group has to guess which animal it is. If it looks like that animal then the person in the middle of the circle spins and points again. If it doesn't look like an animal, Person (a) has to go into the middle of the circle and spin.

PHYSICAL WARM UP GAMES

Grandmother's Footsteps:

One person ('grandma') stands at one end of the room with his/her back to the rest of the group ('grandchildren') who must try to sneak up on him/her and tap him/her on the shoulder. 'Grandma' can turn around every 2 seconds or so and if they spot anyone moving, s/he can send them back to the beginning to start again. You could introduce the roles to the group as a 'very fair grandma, whose word is final' and 'very obedient grandchildren' and this usually prevents any squabbles. The first person to tap 'grandma' on the shoulder is the winner and can replace him/her at the front. Variations include putting on items of clothing, such as hats or ties, or completing tasks along the way, such as climbing over a chair, or working in pairs to do any of these.

The point to explore what makes interesting pictures on stage and how stillness can be as interesting (if not more so) than movement, as long as the energy of the game remains. Energised stillness is captivating!

Fruit Salad:

Musical chairs except no-one is knocked out (Name everyone in the circle of chairs, plus person in the middle - apples, oranges, pears etc). Person in the centre calls out a fruit and those people have to change seat. Can't sit in same seat or seat next to the one that you have come from. Person without the seat calls out a fruit (or multiple fruits or 'Fruit Salad,' which is when everyone moves). Could change names so that it is relevant to your project/play etc rather than fruits.

1 2 3 Game:

In pairs pass 1, 2, 3 between each other. First person says 1, second person says 2, first person says 3, second person says 1 and so on. When there is a good rhythm change it slightly so that instead of saying 1 add a noise instead, then speak 2 and 3, noise, 2, 3, noise! Once this rhythm is established introduce a noise for 1, a movement for 2 and speak 3. Once this rhythm is established change it again so that the pair have noise (1), movement (2) and a sentence (3).

Stop/Go, Jump/Clap, Sky/Ground:

As the group walk around, aware of the space and each other, they must listen out for the teacher's instructions to STOP and GO. Once they are used to listening, ask them to do the opposite, so they GO when you ask them to STOP. Add in jump and clap and make sure you get the group used to doing it the right way round before they start to do the opposites. You can then add in shouting or whispering their names and any other opposites such as reaching for the sky and touching the ground. Keep varying the rhythm.

WORKING TOGETHER**Circle Of People:**

One person goes out. Chose someone in the circle. The one who left the room comes back in and asks questions of the group, questions such as 'If this person was a fruit/animal/car/tree etc what would they be?' Building up a picture they have to identify who has been chosen from the circle. They have three chances.

Name Game:

Everyone writes down the name of someone famous/cartoon/archetypal character and puts it onto the forehead of his friend without the friend seeing. Everyone has to then ask questions about who they think they are with questions only being answered with 'yes' and 'no'. The player can ask questions until the answer is 'no' and then it's the next person's turn. This works wonderfully in groups of about 6 – more than that could get boring - depending on the children

Silence Lines:

Ask the group to line up in order of height, eye colour darkness, birthdays, home numbers, distance of journey to school etc without saying a word. See how many ways of communicating they can find without resorting to spoken language or sign language.

STARTING A STORY

ABC Story:

In pairs or threes, the first person begins a story, the first word of which must begin with A. The second sentence (paragraph) begins with a B and so on through the alphabet to the end of the story (and alphabet!)

Word At A Time Story:

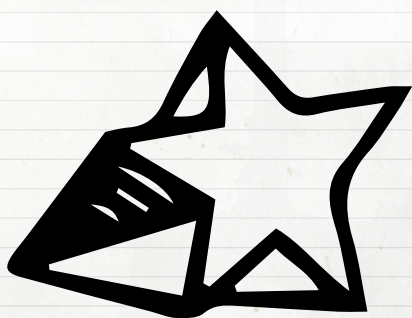
In a circle the group tells a story with each student saying only one word each so that each person contributes but no-one knows where the story is going. A simpler version is sentence at a time, where each student says one sentence that contributes to the story.

Salty Fish:

It begins with Grandmother's Footsteps, one leader at one end, everyone else at the other. As soon as someone has touched the 'leader' everyone comes into a standing circle. The winner stands in the middle of the circle and begins to tell a story. It can be about anything, but as soon as they use the words "Salty Fish" everyone has to scatter and the storyteller has to catch them. Each person that is caught then becomes a catcher too until the last person is still free. This person becomes the 'leader' and the game begins again. To keep everyone safe, I use methods of hopping and giant strides if we are in a confined indoor space.

Creating A Story Train:

Start with 'I swirled the tea leaves (or whatever) and went into my imaginative world..' Each member of the class adds a sentence beginning 'fortunately' or 'unfortunately'. (Or supply a bag of connectives on slips of paper and ask class members to pick one out of the bag and use it.) See where the story takes you...



Practical Cross-Curricular Activities

DRAMA

Bomb and Shield: Warm-Up (Theme – War)

Without letting anybody else know, each person must choose two other people in the room. The workshop leader tells them that the first person they chose is a bomb and the second person is a shield. On a signal, everybody starts moving around the room with the aim of staying as far away from the bomb as possible and keeping the shield between him or her and the bomb! The leader then gives a signal to freeze at any moment to check whether they are doing it correctly.

Improvisations From Photos (Theme – War)

As a class choose some pictures of war which can then be used as a stimulus for a piece of drama work. The pictures are discussed with the class and individual groups are asked to work with one picture each. In their groups, children decide who the people in the pictures are. They then can give each person a name and create backgrounds for them.

Example Questions to Ask:

- Where was I born?
- How old am I?
- What do I do for a living?
- Who is in my family
- Am I married?
- Do I have children?
- What am I doing?
- What time of day is it?
- How am I feeling about my current situation?

Now the children can make a tableau of the picture and then on the count of 3, bring the picture to life. Children can spontaneously improvise action and dialogue between the characters or even explore internal thoughts by thought-tracking what is on the mind of each character.

EXTENSION:

Children could write down their improvisations to create and develop a script.

Walk Together (Theme – Community/Group Sensitivity)

Everybody finds a space in the room. On a given signal, everyone starts walking, using all the space in the room. On a second signal, everybody stops. This time, without talking, everybody must decide to start walking at the same time and then to stop as a group at the same time. With sensitivity, it can be done and therefore is worth spending time on.

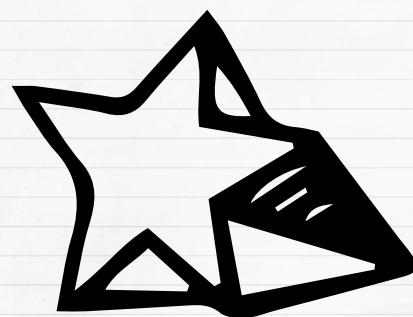
As a further challenge the group spreads out into the space. One person must walk, and then stop. Now - without talking - two people walk, and then stop at the same time. Now three, then four, then five. If a group can get as far as five, they can continue the game with four, three, two then one person walking alone again. If the game goes wrong at any time, it starts again with one person walking. What usually happens is that the wrong number of people start to walk, or they don't set off or stop at the same time. Again, it is challenging, but with sensitivity, and a mutual language of complicity, it can be done.

Count to 20 (Theme – Community/Group Sensitivity)

Sit or stand in a circle. The idea is for the group to count to twenty, one person saying one number at a time. Somebody is chosen to start the count. Anybody can say the next number - but if two or more people speak at the same time, counting must start again from the beginning. It is possible to get to twenty if everybody really concentrates. Children can try doing it with and without eye contact. Other variations include members of the group facing outwards and closing their eyes or counting back from twenty to one.

Drama, Stories and the Imagination

Children get into groups of 4. Then they are given a selection of props (umbrella, bow-tie, pencil, plant pot). The children have to improvise a story and use all the props they have been given in their story.



English: Non-Fiction Writing

Recount

Write about something that happened to you when you were younger that has made a difference to your life. Maybe, you made a new friend and did new things with that friend. Or maybe, you remember the moment that you learned to ride a two-wheeled bike or the occasion (like Tomas), you read aloud to the class for the first time. You can start your story in the same way Tomas starts his:

My name is:

I was years old when I:

Introduction – who, what, where, when?

**What happened – give a chronological sequence of events
(Useful connectives: after, before, during, eventually, finally, later, lastly, meanwhile)**

Conclusion – how did it make you feel? Why did it make a difference in your life?

English: Writing A Review

Use the following template to help you write a review of your favourite book.

Title of Book:

Author:

The Plot (What is it about? Who are the characters in the story?)

Write three things you liked about the book and up to three things that could have been better.

Who would you recommend read it? Why?

Colour in the amount of stars you would give it?

English: Fiction Writing

Story Starters

The unicorns were swept away in the flood so didn't need their legs any more.

Choose an animal (mythical or real) and use your imagination to make up a story about how that animal got or lost one of its features. Example: why has a cat no longer got wings and a tail instead?

Tomas comes to love the library and feels very safe there. Think of a place that you love and where you always feel happy. Describe what it looks like, the sounds you hear, the smells around you and what you can touch. Why does it make you feel happy?

Imagine you are Tomas' Mother, who keeps a diary about important moments in her life. Write a diary entry for the day Tomas first goes to the library, the first day he reads aloud, the day after the books from the library were rescued. Don't forget to explain what happened, how it made you feel and what your hopes for the future are.



English: Poetry

Read this poem then discuss different imaginary settings (Unicorn's Forest, Mermaid's Cave etc) and what the creatures who live there might leave behind. Write own poems using your own imaginary place...

Dragons' Wood

We didn't see dragons
in Dragons' Wood
but we saw
where the dragons had been.

We saw tracks in soft mud
that could only have been left
by some sharp-clawed creature.

We saw scorched earth
where fiery dragon breath
had whitened everything to ash.

We saw trees burnt to charcoal.
We saw dragon dung
rolled into boulders.

And draped from a branch
we saw sloughed off skin
scaly, still warm...

We didn't see dragons
in Dragons' Wood,
but this was the closest
we'd ever been
to believing.

Reading Aloud

Choose a poem or paragraph from your favourite book and practise reading it aloud.
Can you become more confident at reading aloud like Tomas?

Fun Nick Names

The Unicorn Lady is called the Unicorn Lady because she owns a magical story-inspiring unicorn. Can you think of names for the people you know based on something they do or own (be careful to choose names they would be happy to be called). The sports teacher might be the 'Yellow Trainers Man' because he always wears yellow trainers.

Maths:

All questions can be adapted for children's ages and abilities

Book Calculations

Children can be asked a series of maths questions based on themes/objects in I Believe in Unicorns or they can make up their own maths questions and swap with a friend and then answer each other's questions. Examples:

1. If a library can fit 10 books on a shelf and there are 7 shelves in a bookcase, how many books are there if the bookcase is full?
2. If there are 20 bookcases in the library, how many books are there in the whole library?

Estimation Game

The great book rescue in I Believe in Unicorns relies on a human chain of people passing the books between them.

1. Estimate how many people holding hands it would take to reach from the classroom door to the hall. As a class, join hands and find out.
2. Estimate how many people holding hands it will take to reach from one side of the classroom to the other? As a class, hold hands and find out.

Years and Age

1. Tomas was eight years old when he first saw the unicorn and that was 20 years ago. How old is he now?
2. In what year, were you / are you going to be 8 years old?
3. What year will it be 20 years from now?
4. How old will you be 20 years from now?
5. How old will you be in 2019?
6. What year will it be when you are 38?

Thunderclap

With stamping (THUNDER) and clapping (LIGHTENING)

One person stamps a number between 1 – 10

The second person then claps a number between 1 – 10

Ask the children to take the clapping number away from the stamping one (or the lower number from the higher number) You can also do multiplication and division

Smelling Game

Three food items maybe relating to a farm (sheep's wool / milk / egg in separate open containers), one person is blind folded and another person puts the container. How many times do they smell each item? Then add them all up together, or take away the egg smells from the milk smells etc.

Science:

The unicorns adapted their bodies to suit the changing environment in which they found themselves living. Although unicorns are mythical creatures, adaptation to the surrounding environment is something that real animals do in nature.

Adaptation Table

Animals have adaptations that enable them to live in their own habitats and carry out necessary functions such as eating. Research and make a table of different fish, amphibians and reptiles that have adapted in different ways to their environments.

Examples:

Animal / fish	Adaptation	Reason
Angelfish	Fins	Moving in water
Balloon fish	Spines	Protection against enemies
Polar Bears	White fur	Camouflage in the snow

Fun Fact Sheet

A really good downloadable sheet on the way in which animals adapt to their environments can be found at: www.durrell.org/kids/fun-factsheets/adaptation-factsheet/

Interactive Game

An interesting interactive game to play on screen on animal adaptation can be found at: www.ecokids.ca/PUB/eco_info/topics/climate/adaptations/index.cfm

CBeebies Report

This short factual film asks: how have different animals adapted to their habitats?

Duration: 03.40

The report looks at agama lizards, penguins, bats and camels.

www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/how-have-different-animals-adapted-to-their-habitats/12665.html

Report – Extension Activity

Children can investigate what other features these animals have developed to adapt to their habitat. Children can write a care booklet for one of these animals, explaining each of the adaptations.

Human Adaptation

Humans adapt to their environments but also make adaptations to their environments.

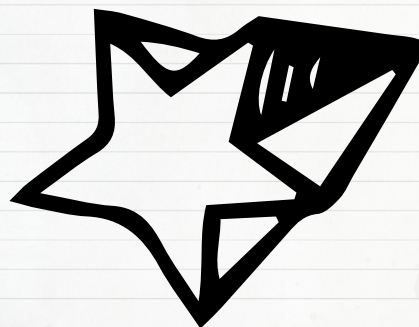
Look at your classroom. How have you, your teacher and school adapted your environment so that your everyday needs are met?

Example a) Pencil pots on the table so that you don't have to walk and look for pencils – work can be done more quickly.

Example b) White board on the wall so that everyone in the room can see information clearly.

What other ways has the classroom been adapted?

If you were given some money to make further changes to the classroom environment, what would you do?



History:

Picture Empathy

The first time Tomas experiences war is when it comes to his village. He is frightened and shocked by the destruction. Below are some pictures of children in war and some questions to stimulate empathising with people in a war situation.



- What are the children doing?
- Where do you think they are?
- How do you think the children are feeling?
- What do you think the soldier is saying to the children?
- Who do you think the lady is at the front of the line?
- How do you think she is feeling?
- In which country do you think this photo was taken?
- What do you think the person outside the fence is doing and thinking?

Notes for teachers:

This picture was taken in 1968 in Saigon during the Vietnam War. The children are in an orphanage. Picture taken from: www.vietnamwar.govt.nz/photo/children-saigon-orphanage



- How are the children feeling?
- Where are they going?
- What is in their brown boxes attached with string?
- During which war was this photograph taken?

Notes for teachers:

The children are being evacuated during WW2. They are carrying their gas masks in the brown boxes. Picture taken from: www.solwayplain.co.uk/evacuees.htm



- How do you think the children are feeling in the picture?
- Where do you think they are?
- Do you think they are frightened or feeling safe?
- Why are they frightened or feeling safe?
- What do you think the relationship is between the two girls in the picture?

Notes for teachers:

Esma, 7, and a friend peer out of a tent in Lebanon's Bekaa valley that has been her home since her family fled Syria in 2013. Photograph: Sam Tarling/Save the Children. Taken from: www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/13/syrian-civil-war-child-victims



- What do you think the children are doing?
- How do you think they are feeling?
- Where do you think they are?

Notes for teachers:

Syrian children wait for food in a park where they live with their families on November 3, 2013, in Istanbul. (BULENT KILIC/AFP/Getty Images). Photo taken from: www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/syria/131104/how-the-war-syria-has-become-terrible-tragic-mess

Burning of Books

For older children: look at the two pictures below. They show book-burning by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930's. Discuss the reasons why a government would want to burn books. Also, discuss what it means to live in a free society.



Picture taken from: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1252680

Picture taken from: www.the-history-notes.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/time-of-book-burning-nazis-burning-of.html

Powerful Words

For older children: read the below quote and discuss what it means.

'Where books are burned, human beings are destined to be burned too.' **Heinrich Heine**

Geography:

I Believe in Unicorns is set in war-torn Eastern Europe.

Using an Atlas

Ask the children to use atlases to research which countries can be found in the East of Europe.

Country Comparison Activity

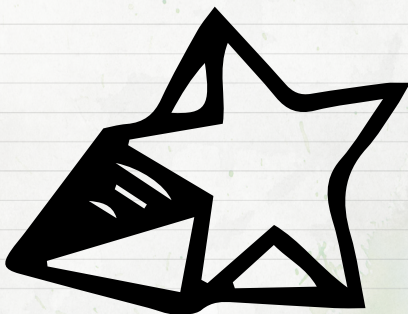
In pairs ask children to choose a country in Eastern Europe, do some research about it and then compare and contrast it with England by making a chart:

	England	Chosen Country
Size of country		
Language spoken		
Capital City		
Traditional food		
Colours of the flag		
Weather		

Where does Tomas live?

In the book and the play we never actually find out which village or country Tomas comes from. Using clues given in the book and/or the play, where do you think Tomas might come from? It could be any country in Eastern Europe, or it could even be Russia. Remember, there is no 'right' answer as we never find out, so give reasons for your answer.

Tomas' village is described in some detail. Can you draw a map of his village using some of the buildings he mentions? Don't forget to put in some other buildings you think might also be there, e.g. post office.



Music:

Unicorn Song

Younger children can learn the tune and words to the Unicorn Song by the Irish Rovers. They can also make up some actions to go with the words:

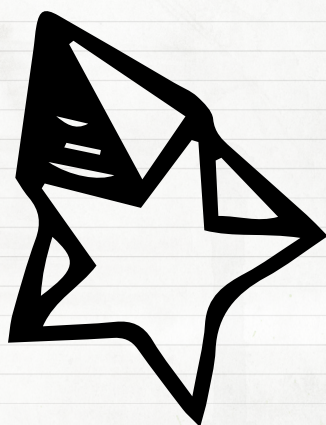
www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4bc9UwZsYs

Story Soundscapes

Children can use musical instruments, their voices and bodies to make soundscapes that accompany the story of I Believe in Unicorns:

- a. The sounds of nature that Tomas hears when he goes on his walks into the hillsides
- b. The magic of the unicorn
- c. The building of Noah's Ark
- d. The sounds of the flood
- e. The bombing and destruction the soldiers cause in the village
- f. The burning of the library

NB: This activity can also be used as a stimulus for descriptive writing



Art:

Unicorn Pictures

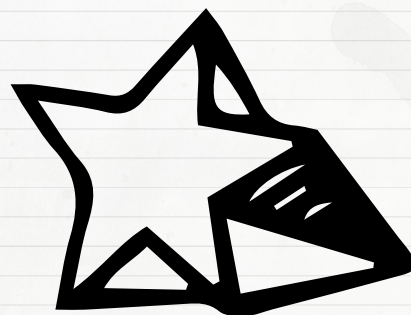
Look at these pictures of unicorns. Which do you like best and why?



By Jesse Waugh – Unicorn Purifying Water 2013.

Picture from: www.jessewaugh.com/paintings-blog/2013/6/20/unicorn-purifying-water

Picture from: www.thedollpalace.com/dollnews/Unicorns-aid3655.html



Unicorn Scrapbook

Research pictures of unicorns on the internet and make a scrapbook of your favourite pictures.

Mythical Animal Painting

Draw a picture of a unicorn or another mythical beast (Minotaur, Centaur, Mermaid).
Or, invent your own mythical creature (an anhound – half dog, half ant!)

The Unicorn Lady

Read the description of the Unicorn Lady and draw a picture of her:

‘Beside the unicorn, and just as motionless, there now stood a lady with a bright, flowery scarf around her shoulders, her hand resting on the unicorn’s mane... She gentled him, brushing his forehead with the back of her hand. Her hand, like the rest of her, was small, delicate and elegant’ (p.28-29).

The Unicorn Lady is someone who helped Tomas realise his love of books and stories. Think of someone who has inspired you and draw a picture of them.

Changing Objects

In the stage adaptation of I Believe in Unicorns many of the books are turned into different objects, eg: houses, Noah’s Ark, steps etc. Can you find an ordinary object that opens, or turns into something else? Eg: a shoebox that becomes an accordion

R.E:

Noah and the Ark

Read the story of Noah and the Ark in the Bible. Compare and contrast the story with the story the Unicorn Lady tells.

The Story of Noah

Depict the Bible story of Noah and the Ark in a series of pictures and speech bubbles.

Imagine that you are a member of Noah's family aboard the Ark when the flood comes. Describe how you are feeling.



Design Technology:

Book Surprise

Children decorate a shoe box as their favourite book and then design an object to go inside the book that can be taken out. Example: if the box is decorated as a Harry Potter book, then a broomstick made out of sticks and string could go inside. If the box is decorated as I Believe in Unicorns, a paper mache unicorn horn could be made to go inside or a chain of paper people to show the human chain needed for the great book rescue.

Paper Mache Animals

There is a good tutorial with pictures at: www.lilblueboo.com/2012/04/paper-mache-animal-heads-a-tutorial.html on how to make papier maché animal heads. The example used is a unicorn.

Clay animals

Using clay or plasticine, model your own unicorn or narwal, or create your own mythical creature. You could also create some of the animals that go onto Noah's Ark. You could also design and build Noah's Ark using a cardboard box.



Our Associates:

WATFORD PALACE THEATRE:



The creative hub at the heart of Watford, the Palace engages people through commissioning, creating and presenting high-quality theatre, and developing audiences, artists and communities through exciting opportunities to participate. Contributing to the identity of Watford and Hertfordshire, the Palace enriches people's lives, increases pride in the town, and raises the profile of the area through its work. The quality of work on stage and beyond is central to the Theatre's ethos.

The beautiful 600-seat Edwardian Palace Theatre is a Grade II listed building. Refurbished in 2004, the Theatre offers modern and accessible facilities including its own rehearsal room and wardrobe and scenic workshop. Recently, the Theatre opened the new Green Room Bar and continues to develop the quality of experience for the tens of thousands of people visiting the Theatre each year.

www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk

ROYAL & DERNGATE NORTHAMPTON:



Royal & Derngate, Northampton is the main venue for arts and entertainment in Northamptonshire. More than 250,000 people a year see shows at Royal & Derngate and another 140,000 see co-produced work across the country.

Royal & Derngate presents a diverse range of visiting work on both the Derngate and Royal stages, from popular family shows such as Peppa Pig's Big Splash and The Gruffalo's Child to West End hits Grease, Spamalot and Buddy. The programme includes: dance, comedy and music and concerts from the resident Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Recent years have seen the increased profile of Royal & Derngate as one of the major producing venues in the country, including being named Regional Theatre of the Year by the inaugural Stage 100 Awards in 2010. An onsite 90-seat cinema named after one of the theatre's most famous alumni, The Errol Flynn Filmhouse, opened at the venue this June.

Royal & Derngate also continues to work in partnership to manage The Core at Corby Cube – a venue in Corby with a strong emphasis on participatory arts for young people.

www.royalandderngate.co.uk

Credits:

This Educational Resource Pack has been created by Mhari Gallagher, Kirsten Hutton and Danyah Miller.

Designed by The Unloved.

UK Tours 2014 to 2018 – Audience Feedback

WHAT THE CHILDREN SAY:

'Amazing could not be better' – JoJo age 8

'I really loved your show!' – Mia Jotto age 8

'I could watch it again and again!'

'More interactive and fun than a massive theatre'

'I absolutely loved it' – Lia age 9

'It was amazing thank you so much' – Gabriela Age 7

A beautifully heart-warming performance remaining in my memories forever! – Olivia Age 11

'It felt like all the books came to life and it was amazing!'

'Very good, like your expressions very good. I believe in unicorns' – Millie-Mae age 9

'It was exceptional! It gave me lots of inspiration to write my own story!' - Natalia age 10

'We thought so clever - Danyah brilliant. I really loved it and I believe in unicorns. I was lost on my dreams' – Eleanor and April (8 & 6)

WHAT THE ADULTS SAY

'Absolutely amazing. Beautifully produced, acted and inspiring for children and adults too. Would happily watch over and over - like a great book I'm sure you could never get bored'

'Thank you beautiful and enthralling. Enjoyed by myself - a grandmother - and my 5 year old granddaughter'

'Absolutely stunning, children and grown-ups alike were completely captivated'

'Spellbinding and beautiful! Every child should see this! Thank you!'

'One of the most powerful shows I have ever seen - quite emotional at times. Thank you'

'Thank you so much; what a magical, mesmeric and moving production in both design and realisation. Thank you SO much!'

'I have worked with children for 17 years and I was transfixed - transported to another world - an exquisite, magical journey for young and old. A truly gifted storyteller.'

'I have to tell you this - I've been a teacher for over 20 years and this is the best children's show I've ever seen.'

'At first we were a bit scared our children wouldn't be able to focus for an hour as we realised you would be alone on stage. However, the whole experience, the involvement of the audience, the story, the visuals but especially the way you told it and your flawless performance was marvelous. We do not often go to the theatre but to our family it was a breath of fresh air and a memorable experience.'

What the Press Say

ARGUS ANGEL AWARD WINNER – FOR ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE – BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

★★★★★ *'A magical and captivating show celebrating the joy of stories and books in an beautifully performed, multi-layered and surprising show.'* – **Argus – Brighton**

'Breathtakingly beautiful and utterly charming... a must see' – **Primary Times**

'An utterly magical stage adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's enthralling children's tale' – **The Stage**

'At its best, I Believe in Unicorns taps into the inspiration and solace that books can provide. Its beauty is that it allows us to share those imagined new worlds together.' – **The Guardian**

★★★★★ *'It is that hard thing to achieve - great art which looks effortless. A delight.'* - **LondonTheatre1**

'Outstanding show... the best use of props I have ever seen on stage' – **Fringe Review**

'Danyah Miller is gifted in storytelling. She brings an ethereal quality to the piece, taking us through the story in an inspiring way' – **Fringe Review**

★★★★★ *'An absolute delight... for both adults and children alike'* – **One4Review**

★★★★★ *'A really powerful story... I loved it'* – **The Edinburgh Fringe Show**

'Kate Bunce's enchanting designs offer a world of surprises' – **Time Out**

★★★★★ *'Absolutely enchanting for all ages.'* – **The Upcoming**

'Something rather magical' – **TheArtsDesk.com**

★★★★★ *'Delightful show - if you love books then this must be your hot ticket for 2019'* - **Families Edinburgh**

