

ACTIVITY PACK 2025/26



SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS

**MARLOWE
THEATRE**

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WALKER CONSTRUCTION

DEAR ALL,

We are very excited to welcome you and your group here to the Marlowe Theatre for some festive pantomime fun.

Here, in this pack, you will find some information to get your group excited for their visit. There is information about the history of pantomime and we have also included a few activities and classroom games. These could be done pre or post your visit to inspire your young people about pantomime or to bring much joy and laughter to your classroom as you speed towards the end of term. We have also included a scavenger hunt for those students who want to see how much they can spot on their trip to the theatre.

Wishing you and all your team a very restful winter break,

The Marlowe Theatre Learning and Participation team



TIMELINE OF PANTOMIME

INTERESTING FACT: The most extravagant Victorian productions in the largest London theatres could last up to five hours and featured clever stage tricks.

16TH CENTURY

Street entertainment, *Commedia dell'Arte*, featuring tumbling, dancing and music and a quick witted miscreant Harlequin fills the streets of Italy.



17TH CENTURY

Harlequin, accompanied by a lively band of stock characters, including the old man Pantaloon and the comic Pierrot, start to spread across Europe improvising comic stories, centred around the love interest of Columbine. They start to appear on the London stage.

1732

John Rich, the most notable early Harlequin who danced but never spoke, builds Covent Garden Theatre with the profits of his magical pantomime.

1759

At the Drury Lane Theatre, actor-manager David Garrick astonishes audiences with a speaking Harlequin.



1778

The first recorded performance of *Aladdin* was at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Covent Garden.

1806

Joseph Grimaldi's clown in *Mother Goose* at the Covent Garden Theatre is a hit and clown starts to edge out Harlequin as the star of the show.

1830s

The fairy-tale extravaganzas of James Robinson Planche staged at the Olympic Theatre from 1831 starts a rise in popularity of elaborate stage scenery and stage effects.

1837

Lucy Eliza Vestre plays Ralph in Planche's production of *Puss in Boots* at the Olympic Theatre, starting the theatrical device of gender switching, which became a mainstay of Victorian pantomime.

1843

The Theatres Act lifts the restriction on spoken word in performances at theatres that don't have a royal patent. Witty puns, word-play and audience participation start to be added to plays.

1860s

Music hall performers start to be increasingly cast in pantomimes, bringing star quality and new audiences.

1888

Augustus Harris at the Drury Lane Theatre hires music hall star Dan Leno to play the wicked aunt in *Babes in the Wood*. He is the first recognised dame and goes on to play the Christmas season for the next 15 years.

TIMELINE OF PANTOMIME

INTERESTING FACT: The term slapstick (clownish physical comedy) came from John Rich's Harlequinades, as his Harlequin used a wooden bat to change the stage scenery, knocking down a series of hinged flaps.

LATE 19TH CENTURY

- It becomes customary for pantomimes to open on Boxing Day, forever linking this entertainment with Christmas and family. Toy theatres also become popular with families staging their own versions at home.

1900

- The production of *The Sleeping Beauty and the Beast* at the Drury Lane Theatre is recognised as one of the most lavish and successful pantomimes. It featured spectacular settings designed by Bruce 'Sensation' Smith.

1995

- Dave Lee first appears as the Marlowe Theatre dame. The iconic performer, who became synonymous with the Ghost Gag Bench, goes on to perform in over 1000 performances.

2004

- The Marlowe Theatre starts co-producing their pantomimes with Evolution Productions.

2008

- Ben Roddy first appears in panto at the Marlowe Theatre (not as the dame yet though).

2011

- The new Marlowe Theatre building opens. *Cinderella* is the first pantomime staged here.



2012

- Ben Roddy takes on the mantle as the Marlowe Theatre dame.

2020

- The Marlowe Theatre produces *Nurse Nelly Saves Panto*, an online panto for the pandemic, seen by over 90,000 people.

2022

- Jack and the Beanstalk* at the Marlowe Theatre wins Best Panto at the Pantomime Awards.

2023

- Ben Roddy celebrates his 1000th performance as dame.

DESIGN A DAME COSTUME

The pantomime dame is an essential component of the great British pantomime. Outrageously silly, over the top and of course super stylish, Ben Roddy has played the role of the Marlowe pantomime dame since 2011. In total Ben has nine different costumes per show, each one as outlandish and colourful as possible. This is a great activity for all budding designers in any Key Stage.

The task is to design the most stylish pantomime dame costume you can. Don't forget all the essential accessories too. **Hats, shoes, handbags, even gloves and stockings**, all add to the finished look - and the more colourful and sparkly, the better! Remember, the pantomime dame needs to really stand out on stage.

Before you start. Take some time to fill in these ideas as they will help you think about your costume.

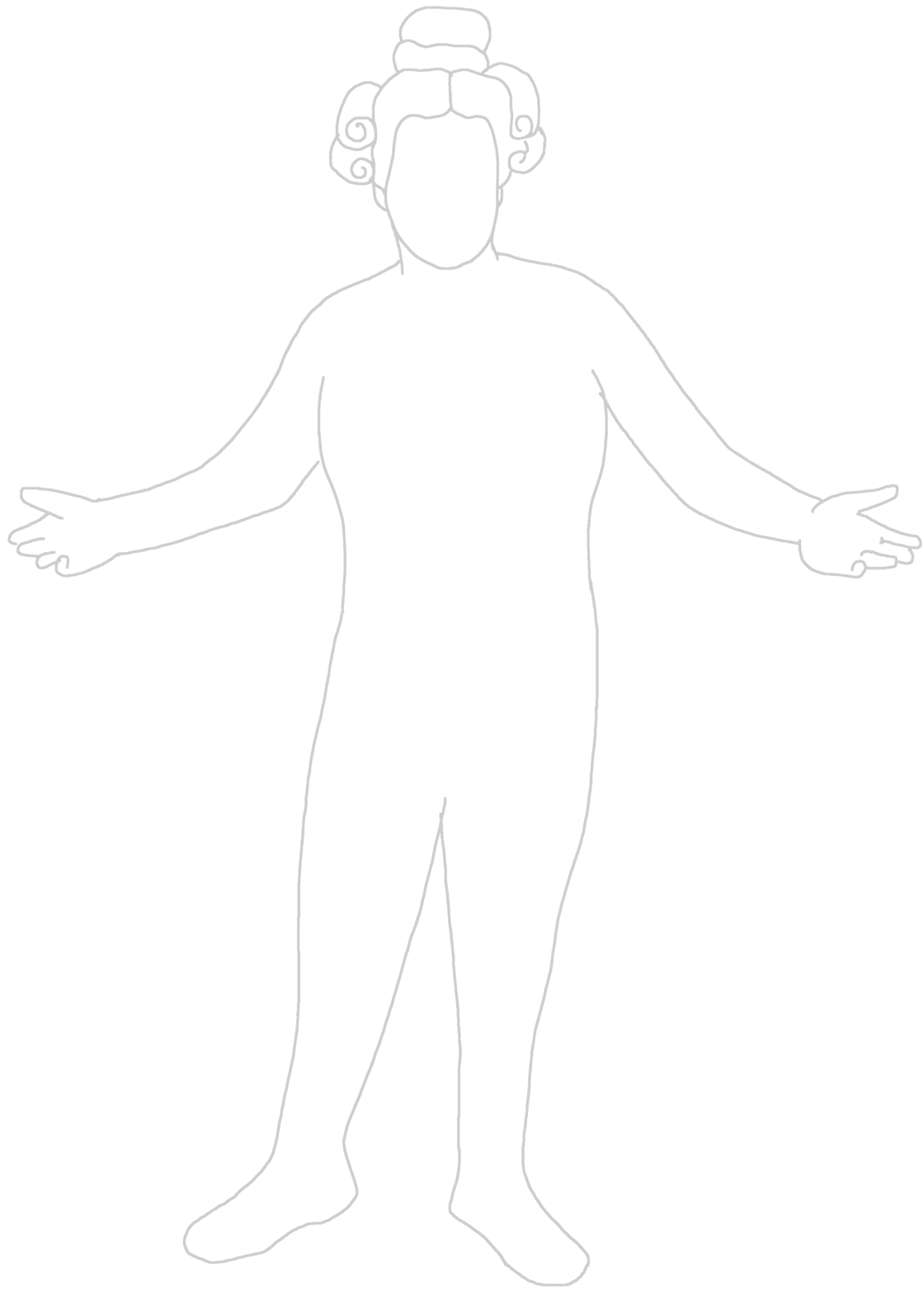
How is your character feeling at this moment or what is happening?

How do you want the audience to react to your character?

The dame's principal aim is to make the audience laugh, so remember, including unusual things in a costume can really help with this.

What colours do you want to use?

Remember you really want them to stand out. Sometimes clashing colours can help with this.



MATERIALS:

EXTRA DETAILS:

Share your great work with us! We would love to see your designs and share them on social media to celebrate your students imaginations! Please feel free to send photos of the costume designs to **education@marlowetheatre.com** or tag us at **[@marlowetheatre](https://www.instagram.com/marlowetheatre)**.

COSTUME EXAMPLES

Courtesy of Amy Chamberlain, Costume Designer



HELLO MARLOWE THEATRE

KEY STAGE 1 OR 2

Hello Marlowe Theatre is a game you can play for P.E., or as a games warm up, or even just for fun.

This is a classic call and response game. Ask the young people to move around the space walking calmly. Introduce the instructions one by one until they have them all. You can use as many or as few as you want. The instructions can be called in any order. To call the group back to walking at any point you just call **"walk."**

WHAT DO YOU NEED:

- Bench
- Large open space (school hall or playground is ideal)

- **"It's the law!"** - Everyone repeats the phrase and lunges as low as they can.
 - **"Well, we'll have to do it again then, won't we?"** - Everyone sits down on the bench. Once the whole group is on the bench, they sing the first lines of the *Ghostbusters* theme tune, "There's something strange in the neighbourhood... who you going to call?"
 - **"Water Fight!"** - Everyone ducks as low as they can.
 - **"This way!" and teacher points** - Young people shout **"That way!"** and move the opposite way to the way the teacher is pointing.
 - **"That way!" and teacher points** - Young people shout **"This way!"** and move the opposite way to the way the teacher is pointing.
 - **"Chase!"** - Everyone starts running in slow motion, forming a line behind each other and following each other.
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THE MARLOWE THEATRE BENCH

KEY STAGE 1 OR 2

This is a fun game you can play as either a P.E. or drama warm up, or with younger KS1 students. The principle is the same as Grandmother's footsteps.

One person sits on the bench at one end of the room with their back to the rest of the room. They are the dame. Everyone else is a ghost/zombie and starts at the other end of the room. When the dame is not looking the ghosts or zombies can creep towards the bench. As soon as the dame turns around to look round all zombies that are moving must freeze. Any that the dame sees moving must go back to their starting positions. Once a zombie/ghost reaches the dame, the dame must turn around and perform the most theatrical scream they can before swapping with the person who has caught them and the game starts again.

WHAT DO YOU NEED:

- Bench
- Large open space (school hall or playground is ideal)

PANTOMIME KINGDOM

KEY STAGE 2, 3 OR 4

This is a fast-paced game great for boosting energy and teamwork, perfect as a drama warm-up or just for fun. It helps improve concentration and coordination in groups.

Set Up: Divide your class into groups of 8. Have the groups each stand in a semicircle. Each player is assigned a character from the top of the hierarchy (Pantomime Dame) to the bottom (zombie/ghost). If you don't have 8 in each group you can skip some of the characters in the middle.

Characters & Actions: Each character has a phrase and action. Everyone should learn the phrases, actions, and order of all characters before starting.

Example Roles for 8 Players:

- **Pantomime Dame:** "It's the Law" – Lunges
- **Villain:** "Mwha ha ha" – Rubs hands together
- **Fairy:** "Happily Ever After" – Twirls wand
- **Hero:** "I love them" – Makes a heart with hands
- **Princess:** "I love them" – Puts hands over heart
- **Silly Sidekick:** "Hello Gang" – Waves cheerfully
- **Villager:** "Hey" – Jumps and clicks heels
- **Zombie/Ghost:** Groans "urghhh" – Waves arms side to side

Gameplay: The Pantomime Dame starts by doing their phrase and action. The next person (Villain) follows immediately with their own phrase and action, and so on. Pace and energy is crucial.

The goal is to keep the sequence moving fast without mistakes.

If someone is too slow or makes a mistake, they become the zombie/ghost, and others shift up in rank.

The aim of the game is to avoid mistakes and to stay at the top of the hierarchy.

REALLY, REALLY PUNNY GAMES

The 'pun' or word play is a classic part of panto. From bellyaching laughs to groans of despair, the one liner joke is crucial to making the panto fun.

Lots of these puns come from word play, playing with the meanings of words, particularly words that have double meanings.

Here are a few games you can play with your class to help them come up with puns of their own. Start with a list of compound words:

AIRFIELD	CROSSROAD	FOOTNOTE	RIVERBANK	SWEETHEART
ARMPIT	EARDRUM	HEADLIGHT	SANDWICH	UNDERDOG
BUTTERCUP	FIREFLIES	HONEYCOMB	SUNGLASSES	TIMETABLE
CLOCKWISE	FOXGLOVE	MOTHERHOOD	SKYSCRAPER	WATERCOLOUR

Discuss the meanings of any unknown words. Show the young people that if they take the compound words apart they end up with a very different meaning.

TASK 1: VISUAL PUNS

Teacher says the word out loud once. Then repeats it again, pausing where the compound word gets together. Young people to draw the literal meaning.

TASK 2: DEFINITIONS

Young people to choose one of the words and write new dictionary definitions for these words based on the literal meaning of the words that are combined to make them.

e.g. Clockwise: When you are knowledgeable about clocks.

Extension: Can they use their new meaning in the sentence? 'The watchmaker was a very clockwise gentleman.'

TASK 3: MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Young people to work in groups of twos or threes. One or two of them are to use the real meaning of the word, but one has to take the new definition or literal meaning of the parts of the word. Stage a conversation where the one using the literal meaning keeps misunderstanding. They can do this as many times as they like with different words.

e.g. Person 1 "I went to the riverbank"

Person 2 (literal) "Are you having money troubles?"

PUN MATCHING CARDS

Oh no! The trolley of puns has been kicked over and the puns have all fallen out!
Can you match up the jokes again?

Use these cards with your class to see if they are able to match up the punchline with the correct joke. This is an ideal activity to do with Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3. Take some time beforehand to look at a range of different types of puns, particularly homophonic ones and homographic ones. Once you have had a go at matching them you could make a list of words with double meanings and see if the young people can write some puns of their own.

ASTRONAUTS DON'T LIKE GRAVITY...	A PONY ASKED FOR SOME WATER...
I'M GOING TO SELL MY HOOVER...	DON'T TRUST TREES...
THE SCARECROW WON AN AWARD...	GHOSTS ARE BAD LIARS...
I TRIED WRITING WITH A BROKEN PENCIL...	AN ARCHAEOLOGIST LOST HIS JOB...
I HEARD A RUMOUR ABOUT BUTTER...	I'M GOOD AT SLEEPING...

PUN MATCHING CARDS (CONT.)

BINGO ADAPTATION

The teacher reads out the jokes and the young people cross out the answers.

For students in Key Stage 3 or 4 you could consider blanking out some of the words to see if they could work out what the words are.

<i>...HIS CAREER WAS IN RUINS</i>	<i>...IT BRINGS THEM DOWN</i>
<i>...I CAN DO IT WITH MY EYES CLOSED</i>	<i>...IT WAS OUTSTANDING IN ITS FIELD</i>
<i>...THEY ARE A BIT SHADY</i>	<i>...I'M NOT GOING TO SPREAD IT</i>
<i>...YOU CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THEM</i>	<i>...IT'S JUST GATHERING DUST</i>
<i>...IT WAS A LITTLE HOARSE</i>	<i>...IT WAS POINTLESS</i>

SCAVENGER HUNT

We know that for lots of your students the annual trip to the pantomime might be their only visit to the theatre of the year. This scavenger hunt is an opportunity for them to keep their eyes peeled to see how many details around the theatre they notice. On the next page there is a little bit of information that you can share about some of the things they might have spotted.



THE PANTOMINE DAME



A GIANT METAL HEAD



BOX OFFICE



**A PLAQUE ON
THE BACK OF AN
ORANGE SEAT**



AN ORANGE SEAT



**SOMEONE
USING A RADIO**



**A BENCH WITH A
METAL MAN ON IT**



**A DOOR LABELLED
STAGE DOOR**



**A GUITARIST
OR MUSICIAN**



**SOMEONE IN
MARLOWE THEATRE
UNIFORM**



**ICE CREAM
TROLLEY**



POPCORN

SCAVENGER HUNT INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

ITEM	INFORMATION
THE PANTOMINE DAME	Ben Roddy has appeared in the Marlowe pantomime since 2008. He took over the role of dame in 2012 after the death of Dave Lee. He has appeared in over 1000 performances of the Marlowe pantomime.
A GIANT METAL HEAD	This is an artist's impression of Helen of Troy. Christopher Marlowe (the playwright whom the Marlowe theatre is named after) once wrote a famous line about her in which he called her "the face that launched a thousand ships". The sculpture is made from 1000 pieces of metal that came from ships.
BOX OFFICE	In the last 12 months, the Marlowe Theatre Box Office has sold over 400,000 tickets - not all at this desk though. In total there are 10 staff members who work in the Marlowe Theatre Box Office team, and they have taken 58,000 phone calls in the last year.
A PLAQUE ON THE BACK OF AN ORANGE SEAT	When the Marlowe Theatre reopened in 2011 people who wanted to donate to the theatre could buy a seat to have their name put on it. Each seat was a £500 donation to the theatre. They don't have to sit on that seat when they come.
AN ORANGE SEAT	The Marlowe Theatre's seats are very special. The leather they are made from was made by the same factory that makes the leather for Ferrari cars. On the bottom of the seats there are tiny little holes that absorb sound so that when the seats are empty and flipped up and our sound technicians are checking sound levels it will sound exactly as if the theatre is full of people.
SOMEONE USING A RADIO	Our back of house and Front of House teams use radios to communicate. Lots of them wear earpieces. There is a lot of talking happening on these radios to get everything back of stage and front of house ready for the show to start, even if you can't hear it.
A BENCH WITH A METAL MAN ON IT	This is a memorial for our old theatre dame – Dave Lee. Dave Lee performed at the Marlowe Theatre from 1995 to 2011 and appeared in over 1,000 performances. You will have heard the famous line "we'll have to do it again then, won't we" in the modern Pantomime during the bench scene.
A DOOR LABELLED STAGE DOOR	Stage Door is where everyone who works at the theatre and all the actors enter the theatre. Since stage door opened in 2011 roughly 50,000 people have been through the door. Our stage door keepers are always the first people in the building in the morning and the last to leave at night (or indeed in the early hours of the morning if a touring show has been getting out). They also oversee all the fire and security systems, as well as welcoming all visiting company members to the theatre.
A GUITARIST OR MUSICIAN	Chris Wong has been the musical director of the Marlowe Theatre pantomime since 1995. He first appeared on the stage to do a guitar solo during the 1998 performance of <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> and has featured in many shows since then. Last year's <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> marked his 30th anniversary as musical director.
SOMEONE SELLING ICE CREAM	The Marlowe Theatre pride themselves on local produce. The ice cream we sell at the theatre is made just down the road in Faversham. Each year we sell 86,000 ice creams. That's about 10,000 litres, which is equivalent to the same amount of water a family uses in a year.
SOMEONE IN MARLOWE THEATRE UNIFORM	The Marlowe Theatre employs over 250 people. However, not all of them will wear uniform. In total there are 84 different jobs that people do in the theatre, from our backstage crew to our learning teams, to finance and producing. There are a lot of different jobs you can do at the theatre.
POPCORN	Popcorn is a special pantomime treat. Unlike a cinema, pantomime season is the only time of year we sell popcorn. In total, every pantomime season we sell roughly 6,540 portions of popcorn. That is around 2 million popcorn kernels in just six weeks.

WORD SEARCH

Can you find all the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* themed words in this word search?



SNOW WHITE

DAME

WICKED QUEEN

APPLE

PANTOMIME

DWARFS

SEVEN

CROWN

ANSWERS

PUN MATCHING CARDS

ASTRONAUTS DON'T LIKE GRAVITY... - ...IT BRINGS THEM DOWN

I'M GOING TO SELL MY HOOVER... - ...IT'S JUST GATHERING DUST

THE SCARECROW WON AN AWARD... - ...IT WAS OUTSTANDING IN ITS FIELD

I TRIED WRITING WITH A BROKEN PENCIL... - ...IT WAS POINTLESS

I HEARD A RUMOUR ABOUT BUTTER... - ...I'M NOT GOING TO SPREAD IT

A PONY ASKED FOR SOME WATER... - ...IT WAS A LITTLE HOARSE

DON'T TRUST TREES... - ...THEY ARE A BIT SHADY

GHOSTS ARE BAD LIARS... - ...YOU CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THEM

AN ARCHAEOLOGIST LOST HIS JOB... - ...HIS CAREER WAS IN RUINS

I'M GOOD AT SLEEPING... - ...I CAN DO IT WITH MY EYES CLOSED

WORDSEARCH

