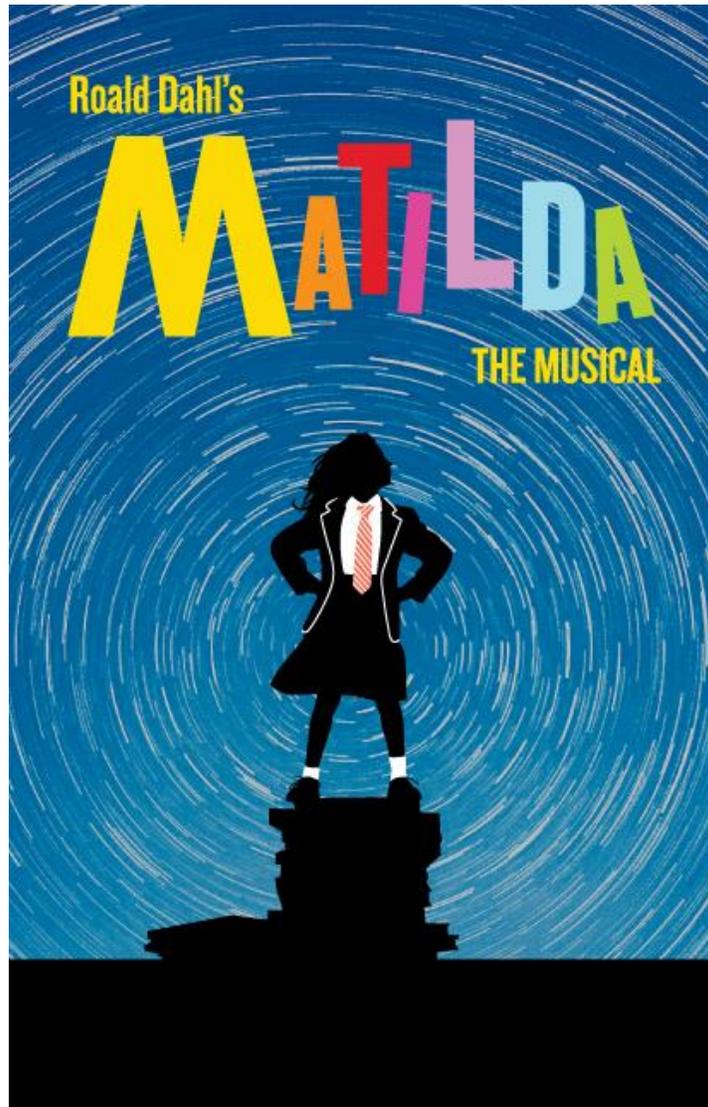


Arts Club Theatre Company

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Matilda the Musical

2018/2019 Season



Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

MAY 16 – JULY 14, 2019

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Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play’s story, as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of the theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our group sales representative at 604.687.5315 ext. 253 or groups@artsclub.com.

This guide was written by Kerri Lee and Becky Gold.

About the Arts Club Theatre Company

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 55th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Goldcorp Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at artsclub.com

Learning objectives

After viewing *Matilda the Musical* and working through the following activities, students will be able to:

- Identify how real-world conflicts can drive story
- Be able to engage critically with the process of theatrical adaptation
- Gain understanding of storytelling through music

Connections to New BC Curriculum

Arts Education (Kindergarten to Grade 3)

Big Ideas

- Creative expression develops our unique identity and voice.
- Through the arts, people connect to the hearts and minds of others in a variety of places and times.

Core Competencies

- *Exploring and creating:* Explore elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques of the arts. Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences.
- *Reasoning and reflecting:* Observe and share how artists (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques. Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences.
- *Communicating and documenting:* Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through the arts. Describe and respond to visual and performing art pieces.

English Language Arts (Kindergarten to Grade 3)

Big Ideas

- Language and story can be a source of creativity and joy.
- Everyone has a unique story to share.
- Through listening and speaking, we connect with others and share our world.

Core Competencies

- *Comprehend and connect:* Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding. Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to stories and other texts in order to create meaning. Recognize the structure and elements of story.
- *Create and communicate:* Identify, organize, and present ideas in a variety of forms. Explore oral storytelling processes. Communicate using sentences and most conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Arts Education (Grades 4-7)

Big Ideas

- Engaging in creative expression and experiences expands people's sense of identity and belonging.

- Experiencing art is a means to develop empathy for others' perspectives and experiences.

Core Competencies

- *Exploring and creating:* Create artistic works collaboratively and as individuals, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play. Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through the arts.
- *Reasoning and reflecting:* Reflect on creative processes as an individual and as a group, making connections to other experiences. Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world.
- *Communicating and documenting:* Express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways. Demonstrate increasingly sophisticated application and/or engagement of curricular content.

English Language Arts (Grades 4-7)

Big Ideas

- Using language in creative and playful ways helps us understand how language works.
- Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.

Core Competencies

- *Comprehend and connect:* Identify how differences in context, perspective, and voice influence meaning in texts. Recognize how literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance meaning in texts. Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts.
- *Create and communicate:* Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding. Use oral storytelling processes. Select and use appropriate features, forms, and genres according to audience, purpose, and message.

Drama (8-12)

Big Ideas

- Arts often challenge the status quo and open us to new perspectives and experiences.
- Drama uses a unique sensory language for creating and communicating.
- Identity is explored, expressed, and impacted through arts experiences.
- The arts provide opportunities to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places, and cultures.

Curriculum Connections

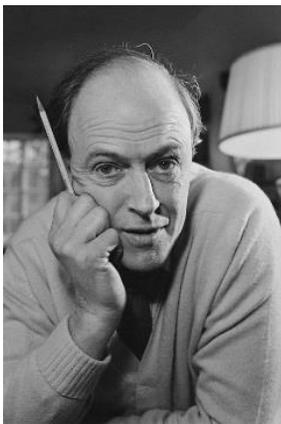
- Reflect on dramatic works and make connections to other experiences.
- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through arts activities and experiences, and explore the ways in which drama impacts cultures and society.

Summary

Matilda is a little girl with astonishing wit, intelligence, and psychokinetic powers. She's unloved by her cruel parents but impresses her schoolteacher, the highly loveable and caring Miss Honey. During her first term at school, Matilda and Miss Honey have a profound effect on each other's lives, as Miss Honey both recognizes and appreciates Matilda's extraordinary personality. However, the school's tyrannical and child-hating headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, is out to terrorize and punish those children who don't abide by her rules. Armed with her courage and intelligence, Matilda takes a stand to change her destiny and save the fate of her classmates.

Meet the Author – Roald Dahl

“Roald Dahl was a spy, an ace fighter pilot, a chocolate historian and a medical inventor.”



Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Wales on September 13th 1916. After completing his education, Dahl decided to travel—first to Canada and then to East Africa. When World War Two began, he enlisted in the Royal Air Force at the age of 23. In September 1940, Dahl experienced severe injuries to his head, nose and back when his plane crash-landed in the Western Desert. After six months of recovery, Dahl returned to action and fought in The Battle of Athens. He later was posted in Washington, D.C where he provided intelligence to the Secret Intelligence Service.

In 1953, Roald Dahl married an American actress named Patricia Neal; together they had five children. After 30 years Dahl and Neal divorced, and he later married Felicity “Liccy” Crosland.

From there, Roald Dahl began writing and writing! *James and the Giant Peach* was published in 1961, followed by *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which was published in 1964. In the early 80s, Dahl wrote *The Twits*, *The BFG*, and *Matilda* in 1988. Roald Dahl died on November 23rd 1990 at the age of 74.

Meet the Playwright – Dennis Kelly



Dennis Kelly was born in 1970 in the London borough of Barnet. He left school at the age of 16 and proceeded to take on a variety of odd jobs. He then attended Goldsmiths College as a mature student and acquired a degree in Drama and Theatre Arts. He has written a number of plays including *Debris*, *Deoxyribonucleic Acid*, *The Gods Weeps*, and is most well known for *Matilda the Musical*. Dennis Kelly is recognized for having a “dark style of writing”.

Meet the Composer and Lyricist – Tim Minchin



Tim Minchin is an Australian composer, lyricist, musician, comedian, actor, writer, and director. He was born in 1975 in Perth, Western Australia. Minchin spent most of his 20s writing music, playing in bands, acting, composing for theatre, playing piano accompaniment for cabaret artists, and writing “tongue-in-cheek” beat poetry. In 2003, he debuted his first solo comedy cabaret show at the Melbourne Fringe Festival called *Navel – Cerebral Melodies With Umbilical Chords*. His show was well received, and he continued developing solo work, including *Dark Side*, which won the Perrier Best Newcomer Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Tim Minchin continued writing and developing solo shows, which took him to venues across the world. In 2009, he was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company to write the music and lyrics for a stage adaptation of Roald Dahl’s *Matilda*. Minchin continues to perform solo, and has had his music and poetry transformed into a variety of performance media including a graphic novel, an animated movie, and a children’s book.

Characters

Matilda Wormwood: The title character; an intelligent, brave, and powerful young girl. At such a young age, Matilda has exceptional abilities and an innate sense of right and wrong.

Miss Agatha Trunchbull: The tyrannical headmistress of Matilda’s school; once a famous athlete, the terrifying Miss Trunchbull despises children and is a bully to both teachers and pupils.

Miss Jenny Honey: Matilda’s teacher; she is a quiet but warm person who is loved by every child she meets. She supports Matilda in her learning and believes in her exceptional abilities.

Mr. Wormwood: Matilda’s neglectful father; he is a bully to Matilda and a con-man car salesman who scams his customers.

Mrs. Wormwood: Matilda’s gold-digging mother; she is an inattentive parent who is more concerned with her appearance than her children.

Michael Wormwood: Matilda’s older brother; he is the favoured child and is being groomed to follow in his father’s footsteps.

Mrs. Phelps: The local librarian; she is welcoming and encourages Matilda’s advanced reading and storytelling.

Rudolpho: Mrs. Wormwood’s dance partner.

Sergei: The head of the Russian mafia; he is intimidating and doesn’t like when people underestimate his intelligence.

Other characters include: Escapologist, Acrobat, Henchmen, Teacher, Doctor, Nurse, Cook, Judge, Children’s Entertainer, Parents, Big Kids, Little Kids (Amanda, Bruce, Nigel, Eric, Alice, Hortensia, and Tommy).

Discussion Questions

These questions can be used as writing prompts, as well as prompts for small-group and large-group discussions.

Pre-show discussion questions:

The following questions have been included in order to spark discussions and to get students thinking about what they might experience prior to viewing the production.

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- What do you already know about the play, including the plot, production elements (such as lighting, sound, costumes, and sets) and the characters? How do you anticipate that these elements will come together in the play?
- Have you read the book, *Matilda*, by Roald Dahl? Based on what you know about the book, what do you expect to see on stage in this production?
- How are musicals different than plays? Do you think that musicals enhance storytelling, and if so, how?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed bullying? How did you feel in that situation, and what did you do? Why can it sometimes be hard to stand up for what is right?

Post-show discussion questions:

The following questions are ideal for engaging students in reflection and exploration of the major themes, characters, and other elements of the production.

- What ideas or themes did the play make you think about?
- What did you notice about the ways in which the characters communicated with one another?
- What did you notice about the ways in which the characters displayed their emotions?
- What did you think about the technical elements of the production: which elements stood out to you the most, and why? What effects did this have on your understanding of the play?
- Imagine that you could meet with members of the cast, crew, artistic team, or production team. What questions would you ask them about the choices and elements in the production?
- If you have read the book, *Matilda*, or seen the movie, what similarities and differences did you notice after watching the live performance?
- What are some of the main messages and morals in *Matilda the Musical*?
- Think about the various experiences that the characters have been through. How do experiences like this shape a person's character?
- Can you relate to any of the characters in *Matilda*? If so, which one(s), and why?
- Do you think that *Matilda* is just a story for children, or is it just as powerful for adults as well?
- What does Matilda's character teach us about *adversity*?
- If you had powers like Matilda, what would you do with them?
- Many of the characters in *Matilda* deal with bullying as either victims, bullies, or bystanders. In your opinion, what causes bullying, and what do you think can or should be done to address and prevent bullying?

Primary-Junior Activity #1: Our Favourite Books

The main character of *Matilda the Musical* is a young girl named Matilda, and she loves to read. What books do you like to read, and why do you like to read them? What elements of stories draw us in? Can you connect to characters or situations in the books that you read? On this page, list your favourite books, why you enjoy these books, and whether or not you would recommend them. *Extension ideas: Get into small groups for a book chat to discuss your lists, then compile a list of books to read as a class.*

My name is: _____

I enjoy reading because:

Favourite Book #1:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Genre: _____

I enjoyed this book because:

Who would I recommend this book to, and why?

Favourite Book #2:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Genre: _____

I enjoyed this book because:

Who would I recommend this book to, and why?

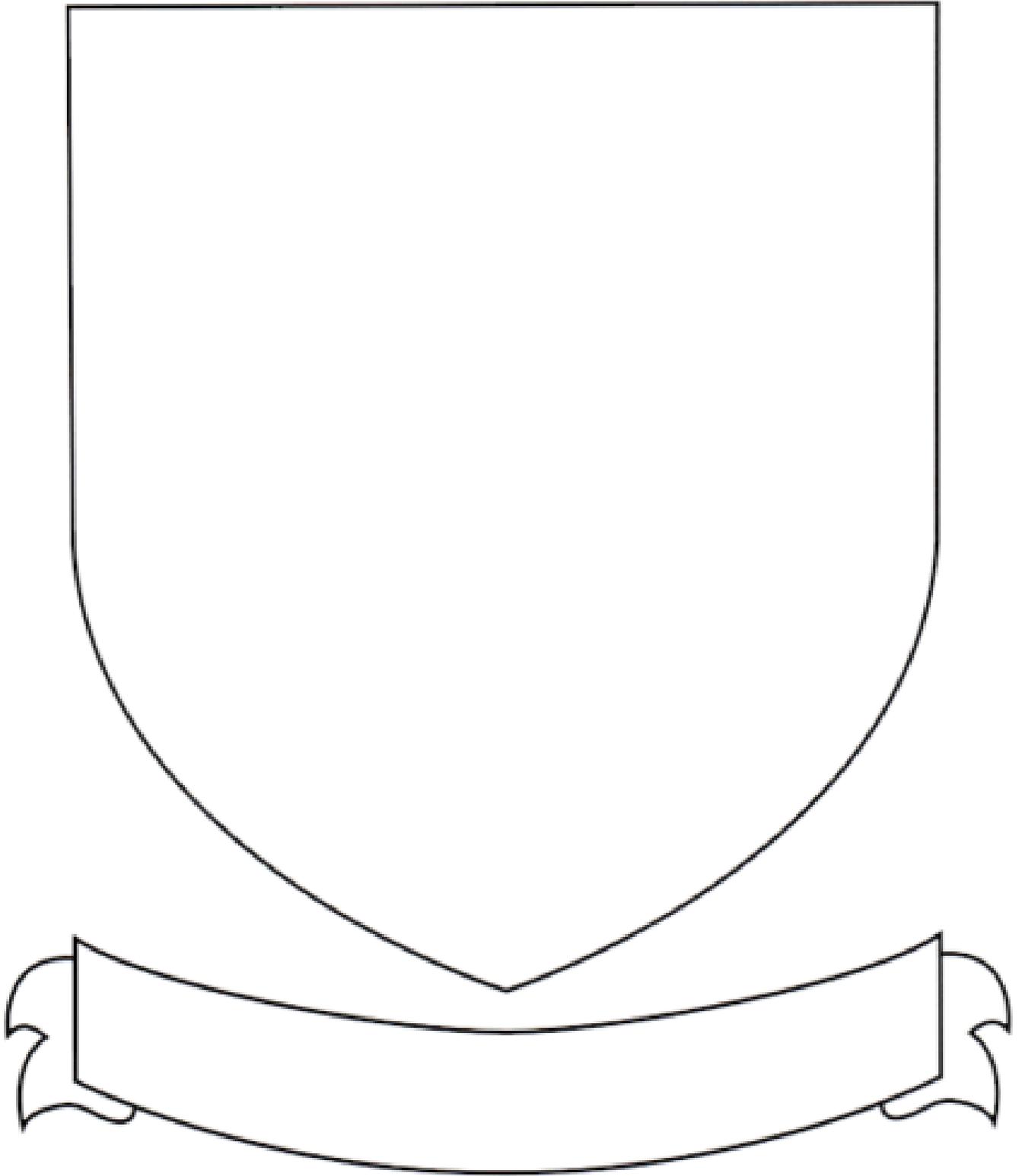
Primary-Junior Activity #2: School Crest

The setting is an important aspect of a play or a musical because it sets the mood and tone of the story. Matilda attends a school called “Crunchem Hall,” which is an intimidating school run by the mean headmistress Ms. Trunchbull. Student prompts: *What did you think about Crunchem Hall? What was the significance of Crunchem Hall in the musical? Do you think you would want to go to school there (why or why not)? What is your school like? What about your “dream” school?*

Complete the compare/contrast chart of Crunchem Hall and your “dream” school, and then draw your new “dream” school crest on the template provided on the following page. How do you think you can symbolize the aspects of your dream school using images and words? Remember to consider *audience, purpose, and message*. What similarities and differences do you notice? Which school would you rather go to, and why?

Crunchem Hall's motto is *bambinatum est maggitum*, which means, *children are maggots*. What do you think about this school's motto? What is the importance of a motto, and what motto would you give your school?

| | Crunchem Hall | My “dream” school |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Who is the Principal/Head of the school? What are their duties and responsibilities? | | |
| What is the school motto, and what does it mean? | | |
| What teachers work at the school? What kinds of characteristics do they have? | | |
| What subjects are taught at the school? | | |
| Are there school rules? What happens when students break the school rules? | | |
| What does the school building look like? | | |



Primary-Junior Activity #3: Standing Up for What is Right

In the musical, Matilda stands up for what is right even though it is hard to do. The focus of this activity is to have the students connect the storyline of *Matilda the Musical* to their own lives. Student prompt: *What are some examples of how you can stand up for what is right in your own life?*

Students will brainstorm, write, rehearse, and perform a skit in a small group, or write a monologue (a one-person speech) to show how they can stand up for what is right in their home, school, or community.

Here are some examples:

- Standing up for a friend/sibling/younger student at school who is being bullied.
- Promoting recycling or energy-saving strategies for a greener Earth.
- Telling the truth even though it might be tempting to lie.

Step One: Have you ever been in a situation where you had to stand up for the right thing? Sometimes this can be hard to do. In the boxes below, either write about a situation or draw a picture of a situation where you stood up (or wanted to stand up) for what was right.

| | | |
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| | | |
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Step Two: Using the notes or the pictures from your brainstorm boxes above, fill in the following information to help you as you write your script.

Characters: who was involved?

Setting: where did the situation take place? What time of day was it?

Describe how the situation began. What was the main problem, and how was it caused?

What options did you have? What did you want to do in the situation?

What was the “right” thing to do, and why?

Describe how the main problem was resolved. What actions did you take? What actions did the others take?

Explain the “moral” of the story. What did you learn from this situation, and what do you think other people should learn from this situation? Would you do anything differently next time?

Begin writing your script! Use the questions that you just answered to guide your script. You can add different characters to your script and write a scene, or you can write a monologue (a long speech for one actor).

Primary-Junior and Intermediate-Senior Activity: Storytelling

Storytelling plays a big role in *Matilda the Musical*. Matilda loves to read stories, and she also shares an important story throughout the musical. People tell stories to create a connection, to share and to listen, and to learn something new. This activity can be done in small groups or with the whole class. Students will receive prompts and will have the opportunity to practice their oral presentation skills by telling a story related to their prompt.

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Tell a story about...</i> An adventure that you went on with a friend. | <i>Tell a story about...</i> Your earliest memory. |
| <i>Tell a story about...</i> The most delicious food you have ever tried. | <i>Tell a story about...</i> The funniest thing that has ever happened to you. |
| <i>Tell a story about...</i> Something that made you angry. | <i>Tell a story about...</i> Something that made you sad. |
| <i>Tell a story about...</i> Your favourite part of the school day. | <i>Tell a story about...</i> Your favourite holiday. |
| <i>Tell a story about...</i> The most exciting thing that has ever happened to you. | <i>Tell a story about...</i> Something that made you happy. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>The best book you have ever read.</p> | <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>The silliest dream you have ever had.</p> |
| <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>What you would do if you won the lottery.</p> | <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>A time that you were worried.</p> |
| <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>What you would do if you were stranded on a desert island.</p> | <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <p>A time that you overcame a challenge.</p> |
| <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <hr/> <p>(create your own idea!)</p> | <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <hr/> <p>(create your own idea!)</p> |
| <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <hr/> <p>(create your own idea!)</p> | <p><i>Tell a story about...</i></p> <hr/> <p>(create your own idea!)</p> |

Storytelling Discussion questions:

- What are the elements of storytelling? Which elements did you find easiest to use? Which elements were the hardest? Why?
- What choices did you make when you told your story? For example, did you...
 - Use hand gestures or facial expressions?
 - Change the pitch of your voice?
 - Use different voices to represent different characters/people in your story?
 - Change the speed of your story?
 - Add any pauses for dramatic effect?
 - How can these elements help to enrich and enhance storytelling?

Extension ideas:

- Experiment with descriptive writing to see how the use of adjectives can enhance a story and make the audience feel like they are also a part of the story.
 - Write one version of your story using as few adjectives as possible.
 - Write a second version of your story using carefully selected adjectives to add colour and excitement into the story.
 - Read both versions to the class or small group, and get their feedback. Which story did they enjoy more? Which story was more engaging?
- Incorporate music as a form of storytelling:
 - Do you know any songs that you believe connect well to the story you told?
 - If you could play any song in the background of your story, what would you play, and why?

Intermediate-Senior Activity #1: Characters and Dialogue, “In the Hot Seat”

This exercise will help students explore how characters might express themselves and their personalities, using their backstories and experiences. This activity uses improvisation and focuses on character development and dialogue writing.

Step One: Ask students to choose a character from *Matilda the Musical*. Provide time for the students to reflect on the character they have selected and to identify their character’s traits, experiences, and backstory.

Step Two: Have students engage in a warm-up activity to help them get into character. Students can walk around the room in character and practice improvisational reactions and dialogue when they make eye contact with other students/characters in the room.

Step Three: Divide students into small groups. Each student should now be prepared with their character, as well as an understanding of their character’s backstory and characteristics.

Step Four: Within their groups, ask the students to select a “character,” “writer,” and “interviewer(s).” The writer will listen and take notes and the interviewer(s) will conduct an interview with the person playing the character.

Step Five: Choose an interview scenario (for example: *TV interview, job interview, police interview*). Think about how characters might express themselves differently in different scenarios. The interviewers can ask the character anything about their backstory, experiences, or opinion/perspective. The questions can be related to the musical or other invented situations. Remind the student who is being interviewed to answer “in character”—the focus is on answering the questions as if they were that person (not necessarily getting all of the backstory details perfect).

Step Six: Conduct the interviews. The writer can write down anything they find useful, or any interesting information they hear from their character (for instance, unusual phrases, repeated words, use of pauses, etc). Swap the interview roles every few minutes so that everyone has a chance to try each role.

Discussion:

- What did you notice when you were the writer? How can this help us when we write dialogue in scripts?
 - *Do people always speak in perfect sentences?*
 - *Do people ramble often?*
 - *Are people abrupt? When do they elaborate?*
- Describe your experience when you were the character in the “hot seat.”
 - *How did it feel to step into the character’s shoes and embody that character?*
 - *What details or elements of your character’s backstory did you choose to speak about? Are there any that you omitted?*
 - *Did you gain any new insight about your character from this activity?*

Intermediate-Senior Activity #2: Musical Theatre, Reflecting on Storytelling through Music, Song, and Movement.

From solos to large ensemble numbers, *Matilda the Musical* features music and songs to tell the story. Think about the music and lyrics from the production and how these elements shaped the production. *How did the songs affect your experience as an audience member? Were there any specific songs that stood out to you (if so, which ones, and why?) What is it about a song that makes it so powerful in a production?* In this reflective activity, students will take a closer look at the music and movement elements from *Matilda the Musical* and reflect on the power of storytelling through music, song, and movement.

Step One: Choose a song from *Matilda the Musical* (music and lyrics by Tim Minchin). Some ideas are:

- *Miracle*
- *Naughty*
- *School Song*
- *Loud*
- *Bruce*
- *When I Grow Up*

- *Quiet*
- *My House*
- *Revolting Children*

Step Two: On your own, reflect on the song you chose. *Which character(s) sang this song, and in what part of the play? What thoughts or emotions are being expressed in this song? Why is this song important to the storyline?* Think about the musical elements of the song as well: *rhythm, dynamics, melody, harmony, key, tone, texture, form, etc.* In your opinion, how did the composer/lyricist use these elements in the songs? How did these elements resonate with you as an audience member?

Step Three: Find the sheet music or lyrics of the song that you chose. With a highlighter or pen, go through the song and identify the parts of the song that, in your opinion, capture the essence of what the song is conveying in *Matilda the Musical*. *Why do these lyrics stand out to you? Is there a deeper meaning to the sections you have highlighted?*

Step Four: Now, look into the movement aspect of the song you chose. What do you remember about the choreography for this song when you saw the performance? What was unique about the style of choreography? How did the choreography contribute to the essence and impact of the song? Think about the elements of movement: *body, space, dynamics, time, relationships, form, and movement principles.*

Step Five: Discuss your personal reflections in a small group—with others who chose the same song, and also with peers who selected different songs. *What are the similarities and differences among your personal reflections? What did each person notice about the song's lyrics, musical elements, and movement elements?*

Ideas for Extension:

- Individually or in a group, write a song inspired by *Matilda the Musical*. What character(s) would sing it? What thoughts and emotions are being portrayed through this song? Share your song with the class.
- Individually or in a group, choreograph a movement piece inspired by *Matilda the Musical* (using a song from the production, or another song that connects to the production's main themes). Which character(s) would be featured in this piece? What thoughts and emotions can be portrayed through this piece? Present your movement piece to the class.
- Brainstorm a list of other songs that you think would fit well with the themes of *Matilda the Musical*. Explain why you chose these songs, and what parts of the storyline or the characters they connect with.
- Choose a solo or group number from *Matilda the Musical* to perform for the class, keeping in mind the reflections and analysis in this activity. Incorporate music, song, and movement elements, and remember to stay in character!

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