

POLKA

The Snow Queen Schools Activity Pack



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Polka Theatre

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Dear Teacher/Parent

We do hope you enjoyed the show! Here are a few activities for you to do with your children after you have seen the performance. Most of these exercises are drama based and are good for developing speaking and listening skills.



The Snow Queen, adapted for stage by Mike Kenny from Hans Christian Anderson's story is for children ages 5 – 11 years.

Most of the exercises in the pack can be used with Key Stage 1 and 2. Some adaptation might be necessary in some cases.

WARM UP GAMES

The following Snow Queen themed games can help develop a range of skills with your class such as speaking and listening, working as a team and turn taking.

Buzzy Bees:

Ask the group to buzz around the room like bees. When you shout 'FREEZE' and then a letter of the alphabet, for example 'D', all the children must shape their own bodies into a statue of something beginning with the letter 'D'.

Ask each 'statue' to tell you who they are. If there is more than one of the same thing they are 'out' and must sit and watch. This encourages the group to think of words and ideas that no one else will have thought of and not to copy each other. Engage the children who are 'out' by asking them to provide the next letter.

Each round is played until you have a winning child or several! The children become buzzing bees between each letter to have some time to focus their energy and then contrast it with the statues.

Extension: Instead of calling out a letter, you could ask the group to make their statues by theme, for example 'something you can do with snow,' 'friendship', 'an important object from the story ie mirror/roses' etc.

Follow the Leader - Mirroring

Ask the children to stand in a circle. Choose one volunteer to be the detective. The detective must stand in a corner of the room facing the wall or covering their eyes whilst you choose the leader by tapping them gently on the shoulder. The leader will wave to the whole group so everyone knows who they are following. This is all done silently so the detective cannot hear.

Explain to the class that they should focus their eyes on the person standing opposite them in the circle and use this focus as well as their peripheral vision to follow the leader's movements - if they all stare directly at the leader the detective will guess the leader's identity straight away. Ask the detective to re-join the group and stand in the centre of the circle. The detective has three

chances to guess who the leader is. Each member of the class should be following the movements of the person standing opposite them.

The Sun Shines On

Sitting in a circle of chairs with the practitioner standing in the middle. The practitioner must say, "The sun shines on..." followed by a statement that is true about them. If the statement is also true for students, they must move across the circle and find a new chair. The person left standing will repeat the phrase with something that is true about them. Examples include, "The sun shines on anyone with blue eyes/ a pet/ who likes basketball/whose favourite character was Crow.

Under the Snow Queen's Spell

Divide the group into pairs. Each pair decides who is Player A and Player B. Have partners check in with each other about any physical needs or limitations they might have (e.g. "Getting up and down off the ground is hard for me"). Ask Player A to hold the palm of his or her hand about six inches from Player B's face. Ask Player B to imagine that her or his partner's hand has cast the Snow Queen's spell on him/her and that s/he has to follow it anywhere it goes, keeping the same distance between her/his face and the palm at all times. As Player A moves around the room, Player B follows. After a set time, switch and let B's lead.

The following longer exercises will help your pupils to recall and explore the plot and themes of The Snow Queen through writing, speaking and listening, physical theatre and designing and making.

Exercises

The Snow Queen's Frozen Statues

Ask everyone to stand in a circle facing outwards. Explain that on the count of three, they must turn to face inwards and create a frozen statue of the emotion you will call out i.e. scared/happy/excited/surprised etc. Next, introduce the characters from the play: Kai, Gerda, Crow and Robber Girl. Read character descriptions (appendix 1) first and then ask students to face out again. This time when you count to three they must turn to face inwards and create a frozen statue of the character you name.

Escape the Snow Queen

Choose one volunteer to stand at the opposite end of the classroom with a key placed at her feet, this person is the Snow Queen. The rest of the group stands in a straight line as if about to compete in a race. The Snow Queen stands with her back to the rest of the group who must work together to escape her. The group must move towards the Snow Queen with the aim of retrieving the key from her and getting it back to the start line without her realising who has it at any one time.

Whenever the Snow Queen turns round (approximately every 3-5 seconds) the rest of the group must freeze. If she sees them move at all, they must go back to the start line. Once someone has retrieved the keys, the group must work together to get them back to the start line without the Snow Queen realising. If she guesses who is holding the keys correctly, the keys must be

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given to her and everyone must return to the start line and begin the challenge again.

Pen Pals

In this creative writing exercise, students take on the role of either Kai or Gerda. They write to their best friend in character. Kai is missing and Gerda is searching for him.

Extension: Write a newspaper article about the disappearance of Kai or how Gerda rescued him.

Ten Second Tableaux

This game is a great way to help the children recall key moments from the play. It also encourages teamwork and spatial awareness.

Divide the class into groups of around five or six. Call out, 'Make me a...' and then choose an object or scene that relates to the play.

For example, 'Make me a...

....mirror...

...rose garden...

...Crow...

...Reindeer...

The groups then have to the count of ten to use their bodies to make that thing.

They should be encouraged to work in silence.

With older groups, encourage the children to think about where they'd like their audience to be and what will make their poses interesting (such as using different levels and making physical or eye contact with one another).

When they are ready, they should freeze in position. Give the groups an opportunity to look at each other's work.

Snowy Soundscapes

First, ask everyone in the group to close their eyes and imagine the Snow Queen's palace. In particular, ask them to think about what sounds they might hear there.

Tell them that, in a moment, you would like them to make one of these sounds; this could be vocal, or made using the body or the floor. When you give the cue, ask everyone to make their sound and to keep repeating it until you tell them to stop.

When you have finished, discuss the impact of the soundscape with the group. Was it effective? Did anyone have a particular picture in their mind when you heard the sounds?

Conducted soundscapes

As above, but using a conductor. The conductor will point to people when it's time for them to start making their sound and will agree a signal for 'stop'.

Other signals can be built in along the way if appropriate, for example raising and lowering volume, speeding up or slowing down.

In this version, it is easier to hear contributions from individuals before building up into a whole group soundscape.

Once signals have been agreed, you can pass the responsibility (and power!) of conducting to members of the group.

A Day in the Life

Ask everyone in the group to choose a character from the play that interests them. Explain that everyone should work alone for this exercise. They must find a space and do their best not to interrupt what others are doing.

Tell the group that they are going to act out one day in the life of their character. Explain that you will talk them through different times of day and that they should act out what their character would be doing. Ask them to choose a day in which something unusual or exciting happens to their character.

Start the exercise at around 3 o'clock in the morning (this is your best chance that all the characters will be in bed!). You will need to talk the group through the day. Offer prompts at each stage, encouraging the children to think about all of the senses.

For example: 'It's 3 o'clock in the morning. Find a space and get into the position your character would be in. Are you in bed? Are you asleep, or have you woken up already? If you're awake, what woke you? Where are you? Think about whether it's warm or cold, light or dark. Are there any sounds? What does the room smell like?

Now it's 6 o'clock. A few of you are waking up I see. How do you feel? Is this the time you always wake up, or is today special? What do you do now? Do you see anyone else? What do you have for breakfast?

It's 7 o'clock. Are you still asleep? What are you dreaming about? Maybe some characters are leaving their house already. What is the weather like outside? Where are you going? Do you want to go there? What can you smell and hear when you get outside? How do you feel today? It's 8 o'clock. Where are you now? etc.'

Allow the exercise to go through a whole 24 hours. There will be times of day that you can skip through faster than others, when most people are asleep for example! Try to tailor your prompts to what you can see happening in the room. When you have finished, give everyone the opportunity to give you feedback. Did they learn anything interesting about their character?

Beginning. Middle. End

Working in groups of 4 or 5, ask the children to come up with three key moments in the story. These should form the beginning, middle and end. For example 1: Gerda and Kai playing in the rose garden, 2: the mirror smashing and Kai getting glass in his eye and heart 3: Gerda, Robber Girl and Crow working together to save Kai.

Each group must come up with a freeze frame for each of these important moments.

Extension 1: Bring the freeze frames to life by thought tracking each of the characters. Explain that when you tap them on the shoulder, they must say exactly what their character is feeling at that moment.

Extension 2: Ask each group to come up with movements that will continue to tell the story during the transitions between the three freeze frames. Explore using music to support the transitions.

Frozen Friendships

Using the "Nothing lasts forever" extract from the script (appendix 2) work in groups of 6 to take turns acting out the extract and consider how Kai and Gerda feel here? What is happening?

Extension 1: Hot seat the characters. One volunteer takes on the role of Gerda and one volunteer takes on the role of Kai. The remaining members of the group ask them questions in order to deepen their understanding of the characters and their relationship to each other.

Extension 2: On a piece of A3 paper, list all the good things about growing up and the challenges of growing up/changing schools. Using the snowflake template, make a note of who to speak to if you ever feel worried. The snowflakes of support can be linked together on string or stuck up around the classroom. They stay at the school.

Snowflake Selfies/Strengths

Each student is given a snowflake template (appendix 3) on which to draw or write all the things they are good at. The snowflakes are joined together or hung on a piece of string that is displayed in the classroom. This becomes a Snowflake chain of strengths.

Appendix 1 - Character Descriptions

SNOW QUEEN: There is no actual person playing the Snow Queen, She is created by the four of them.

KAI: Kai wants to be the leader, is a natural leader but isn't yet comfortable in taking it, needs to be given it.

GERDA: Gerda has qualities she is not yet aware of. She wouldn't naturally take the lead. She is a good girl. She is a little self-satisfied.

CROW: Crow is a follower. Would give you information (much of which you wouldn't need) or a joke, rather than engage emotionally or put himself on the spot.

ROBBER GIRL: Robber Girl is only just feeling her power and finding herself. What gets called a tomboy, and is in the difficult position of taking that into womanhood. Occasionally assertiveness comes out as aggression or lack of feeling.

Appendix 2 - Script Work

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KAI I must make the word Forever, or stay here forever.

GERDA Hurry. I'll help you.

KAI I can't do it! I can't do it!

GERDA What lasts forever?

KAI I don't know. I don't know.

GERDA Think, Kai. Think.

KAI Nothing. Nothing lasts forever

GERDA Kai, that's it. It can't be done.

BOTH Nothing lasts Forever!

Appendix 3 - Snowflake Selfie Template

