

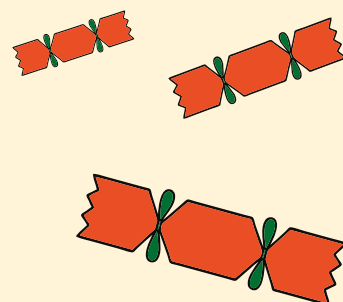
# Teacher Resource Pack

## *Crackers: A Festive Family Farce*



A Polka Production

Written by Charles Way and Directed by  
Nicky Allpress



@SchoolsPolka

Dear Teacher/Parent/Carer,

We are so pleased that you came to visit us at Polka Theatre for Crackers: A Festive Family Farce. We hope you enjoyed seeing the production and visiting our brand-new venue.

Here are a few activities to do with your children and young people after you have seen the performance. These exercises are creative and drama based, which is good for developing speaking and listening skills, as well as expanding concentration and imagination.

Included in the pack are activities which are suitable for children in KS1 and KS2 to do in class, and some extra fun activities for your children to do at home to encourage and engage creative minds!

We would love to hear what you think about these exercises and how your children got along. Please send any feedback to [creativelearning@polkatheatre.com](mailto:creativelearning@polkatheatre.com).

We look forward to seeing you again soon,  
Polka Theatre's Creative Learning Team

**Key  
Curriculum  
Links  
KS1 & KS2  
(ages 5 -11)**

Key themes of family and relationships. Being aware of our own and other people's feelings. Links to PSHE Education Programme of Study. The genre of farce, links to Language and Literacy, developing writing skills and spoken language.

To recognise the importance of laughter and the positive effects it has on our mental health.

To talk about and share how we are feeling and to manage our feelings in a positive way.

To consider social and moral dilemmas that they come across in everyday life.





**Charles Way, Crackers' Writer**

**Can you tell us a little about you and what inspired you to write Crackers?**

I've written a lot of big journey plays which often contain humour but are essentially dramas and I wanted to write something for young audiences which wasn't quite so serious. I'd never seen a farce for children and thought I'd give it a go. Feels like the right time to have a good laugh!

**How would you rank the chocolates in a tin of celebrations?**

Pass me a tin and I'll tell you when I've eaten them.

**What is the best Christmas present you've ever given or received?**

A cowboy costume, when I was about 6 years old. The start of my theatrical life dressing up and pretending that my bicycle was a horse and Devon was Texas!

**If you owned a pet shop, what would you call it?**

Creature Comforts

**What is your favourite Christmas tradition?**

Decorating the Christmas tree.



**KS1**

## The Snow Falls On...

This activity is great for increasing energy and focus at the beginning of the lesson. The children are encouraged to observe others, listen to their interests and dislikes and to respect similarities and differences, all whilst having fun!

### How to lead the activity:

This activity starts with the children sitting in a circle on chairs.

Ask the children who would like to start as the leader in the middle of the circle. Remind the children that there will be multiple leaders so everyone can have a go!

The teacher will explain to the children that the leader will start the game by saying "the snow falls on..." and the leader will choose a feature or interest/dislike that they think will get everyone moving off their chairs. The teacher can demonstrate as a leader in the circle first.

Examples could be:

*The snow falls on anyone who has brown eyes*

*The snow falls on anyone who like reading*

All the children who share this feature or interest/dislike must swap places and the leader must try take one of their places on the chair, leaving a new person in the middle to say the next "the snow falls on..."

As the children become more confident with the game why not try a Winter themed version! The teacher can suggest to the children that they think of examples which are to do with winter or Christmas.

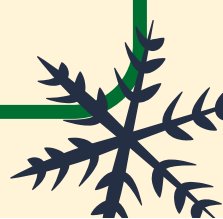
Examples could be:

*The snow falls on anyone who like mince pies*

*The snow falls on anyone who prefer winter over summer*

*The snow falls on people who like hot chocolate*

*The snow falls on anyone who doesn't like Brussels sprouts*



## Snowman, Elf, Robin!

This activity is great for warming up the body in a creative and fun way. The physical movement energises the group whilst bringing focus, as the children work in a team to achieve a common goal.

### How to lead the activity:

This activity starts with the children standing up, divided into two teams.

To begin this game, all of the children will need to decide together on a pose and/or action for Snowman, Elf and Robin. Once the children have decided on their poses, the teacher will ask the two teams to stand on either side of the room ready to begin the game.

The two teams will need to discuss as a group whether they are going to be Snowmen, Elves or Robins without letting the other team overhear!

Once the two teams have decided, the children are to line up facing each other ready for their Snowman, Elf, Robin battle! The teacher will countdown 1, 2, 3 and after 3 the children are to take the position of their character.

Snowmen beat Elves, Elves beat Robins and Robins beat Snowmen!

The winning team get to choose 2 players from the opposite team to join their team.

The game continues until one team has no players left.



## Exaggeration Circle

This activity increases physical confidence, introducing the children to the idea of exaggerated body movement and gestures which is often a physical theatre technique used in comedy or farce. The children are encouraged to experiment with non-verbal ways of communicating, helping children overcome the barrier of feeling silly in front of their peers and to have fun!

### How to lead the activity:

This activity starts with the children standing up in a circle.

The teacher will explain that one child is to start by sending a small gesture around the circle. The next child will copy and repeat this gesture but make it even bigger. This will continue all the way round, until the last child takes it to the most extreme the gesture can be.

The children can play with varying levels on how to make the gesture bigger. The teacher can suggest that at the start they might want to show the gesture in a subtle way, then see how the gesture builds and progresses further around the circle. The teacher may also want to encourage the children to avoid losing a sense of the original gesture.

Once the children are feeling more confident with this warm-up, the teacher can introduce different themes. Can the children create a gesture which links to the theme of winter?

This activity is great for starting conversations around physical character development, a key element of farce. The key purpose of farce is to make the audience laugh which often involves exaggerated physicality and larger-than-life characters.

For more activities on character development, turn to the next page!



## Comedy Characters

This activity is great for introducing the children to different energy levels and exaggerated characters to suit farce, a genre of comedy. The children are encouraged to play

### How to lead the activity:

This activity starts with the children walking around the room in neutral.

The teacher will explain to the children that farce is a style of comedy that can often include exaggerated and/or stereotyped characters. This means that their gestures and body language are considered over the top and can feel unnatural to how they move in everyday circumstances.

The teacher will explain to the children that they are going to read out loud certain scenarios for them to act out, as well as give the children specific energy levels to respond to.

Below are some examples you could use from Crackers. Teachers may want to elaborate on these scenarios or ask the children what happens next:

*I haven't sold a Robo Dwarf Hamster for weeks. I can't even buy my own children Christmas presents. We have to move – sell up and rent a smaller house.*

*We've had a stroke of incredible good fortune. We've come into some money – In the shape of a necklace made of diamonds. Our lives are gonna change forever.*

*When I woke up this morning, I really knew that this was going to be the worst day of my whole life – and it is. Christmas Eve, the worst day of my whole life for ever and ever.*

As the teacher reads out the scenarios, they will give the children an energy level between 1 and 10. 1 being the lowest energy you can possibly be, and 10 being the highest and most energetic you can be.

The children may want to think about how different energy levels will affect how they react to the story, their body language and facial expressions.





**KS1**

## **Pet Shop Paradise**

This activity uses Imaginative Play and encourages children to act out various animals using physical and vocal characterisation. The activity encourages children to experiment with decision making on how to move and behave, improving imagination and creativity skills.

### **How to lead the activity:**

This activity starts with the children in pairs.

In their pairs, ask the children to discuss what their favourite pet is. Do they have a pet at home? What are the most common animals which are kept as pets? Would they like a pet rat like Joe?

Ask the children to decide who is going to be A and who is going to be B. The teacher will explain that for this activity, person A is the owner and person B is the pet.

Ask the children to imagine they have entered the Crackers Pet Shop and have chosen an animal of their own choice to be their new pet!

In pairs, the children will move around the space as if they are the animal and owner. Person A will need to think about how they would look after this pet. Person B will need to think about how this animal moves around the space. What body part do they lead with? Where does this animal live and how might that affect how they move?

The teacher may want to suggest starting this exercise in mime so the children can focus on physical characterisation. Once the children are feeling more confident in the space, they can start to add sound.

The teacher can extend this exercise, by asking the owners and pets to meet each other around the room. Maybe there is more than one of the same animals in the room! How would these animals greet each other?





## Emotion Mimes

This activity encourages children to think about how we can express emotion physically and how this varies depending on the individual. The children have the opportunity to discuss different feelings, promoting confidence in sharing ideas.

### How to lead the activity:

This activity can be completed individually or in small groups of your own choice.

Explain to the children that the characters in Crackers feel lots of different emotions within the story. Ask the children to discuss in small groups what emotions they remember from the show?

The teacher may want to use the following as examples:

*Sad / Upset / Worried - when Mum announces to sell the house*

*Happy / Excited / Relieved - when the family finds the diamonds*

*Embarrassed / Brave - when Joe doesn't wash his football top*

*Scared / Shocked - when Mike finds out Joe has a pet rat*

Once the children have finished discussing these emotions, the teacher will ask the children to choose one emotion and show it on their face.

The teacher can get the children to think about how they are using different parts of their face. For example, are they using their mouth to smile or frown? Do their eyebrows go up to the top of their head or turn downwards?

Next, can the children show this emotion through their body?

As an extension, the teacher can ask the children to get into small groups and mime a short scene based on one emotion of their choice. Encourage the children to be as creative as they like and to be big with their facial expressions and movement!



## Crack-er Christmas Joke!

This activity is great for getting children writing and using creative language. The children are encouraged to consider the structure of a Christmas joke and how to present this in a comedic, light-hearted format.

### How to lead the activity:

This activity can be completed individually or in pairs.

Ask the children to think of their best joke that they would put in a Christmas cracker. Encourage the children to be as creative as they like and to think outside the box!

To start with, ask the children to discuss in small groups or pairs what they think makes a good joke. Is it play on words, rhymes or crossing a Christmas character with an animal? Give the children a few minutes to discuss their ideas and then feedback to the rest of the group. If the children have a favourite joke, suggest they think carefully what makes it funny to them and how they might incorporate this in their own joke.

Explain to the children that most joke structures are built around two fundamental elements - a setup, followed by a punchline.

1. The setup tells the characters, the place, and a situation that sets the scene.
2. The punchline is a plot twist, a resolution which the audience isn't expecting.

Set a countdown for the children to come up with their own jokes.

Once the children are finished with their joke, ask the children to gather in a circle and take it in turns to share their joke with the class.

***Why not use these jokes from Crackers if the children get stuck!***

Who delivers presents to cats? Santa Paws.  
What do monkey's sing at Christmas? Jungle Bells.  
What did the dog get for Christmas? A mobile bone.



## Fantastic Farce Stories

This activity gives the children the opportunity to express their own creativity and devise their own scenes, whilst incorporating comedic elements. The children are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and play with characterisation and storytelling.

### How to lead the activity:

This activity can be completed in small groups of your own choice. The teacher will need to prepare slips of paper to hand out to the children with certain scenarios on them (see below for examples).

The teacher can explain to the children that farce comedy often uses unrealistic and extravagant stories. These stories are exaggerated and can appear silly to an audience. The element of surprise is often the comedy which makes the audience laugh!

The teacher will explain to the children that their task is to create a short scene based on the sentences which are on their slips of paper. The teacher will then go to each group and ask them to pick two slips of paper, one from A and one from B, which may be completely different!

Below are examples you could use:

#### Line A:

Excuse me, I need to return this dress for a refund...

I'm afraid the plane will be making an emergency landing, do NOT panic...

Please explain why I found your fingerprints in the victim's house...

I am pleased to inform you, that you are our lucky winners for this month's lottery...

#### Line B:

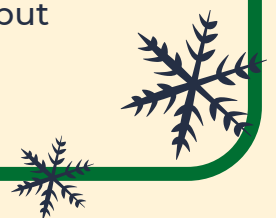
...Help, security! That man stole my purse!

...This is the best day ever!

...Arrrrggg there's a rat!

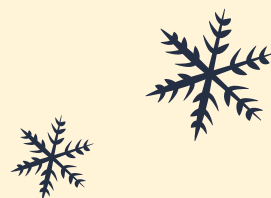
...I wish I could go back to the way things were before.

The children can be as creative as they like with their devised scenes but remember the audience will need to hear both lines throughout their performance!



## Spot The Difference!

Can you find ten differences between these two pictures?



## Crackers Wordsearch

Can you search and find all these words that are from Crackers?  
Put a line through or circle them with a pencil when you've found them.

See if you can tick all nine off in 10 minutes!

A	T	J	E	W	E	L	S	N	O	P	R
T	C	A	K	E	J	F	W	P	C	Y	A
A	N	R	O	S	H	R	A	P	H	A	Q
P	F	Y	A	W	N	D	U	M	R	I	T
W	A	C	D	C	H	R	Y	U	I	S	P
L	R	S	T	M	K	S	J	O	S	L	V
A	C	A	F	H	J	E	S	W	T	G	Y
P	E	W	T	G	B	N	R	L	M	K	T
T	F	S	B	J	Z	W	H	H	A	J	M
P	E	T	S	H	O	P	V	T	S	W	T
D	M	J	W	F	E	S	T	I	V	E	C

**CRACKER**

**PETSHOP**

**FESTIVE**

**FARCE**

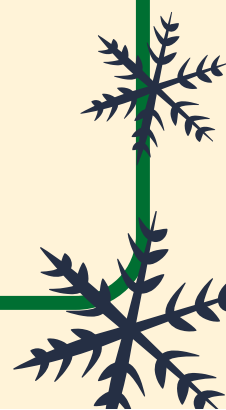
**CHRISTMAS**

**RAT**

**JEWELS**

**FAMILY**

**CAKE**



We hope these activities have been useful to help bring a bit of Crackers: A Festive Family Farce back to your classrooms or homes!

We can also provide plenty of opportunities for follow-up activities. Polka's experienced team of actors, directors, storytellers and puppeteers are on hand to deliver a range of workshops in your school.

We can create tailor-made workshops for you and your pupils based on any theme you like, including exploring the themes and production elements of the performance you have just seen!

For more information, please visit our website:

[www.polkatheatre.com/schools](http://www.polkatheatre.com/schools)

Or contact Elysia, Polka's Schools Relationship Officer to request a workshop enquiry form.

We look forward to seeing you at Polka Theatre again soon!

Best Wishes,

Polka Theatre's Creative Learning Team



**@SchoolsPolka**