

Festive Fables

Creative Writing Activity Bank
for KS1 & KS2

Including activities inspired
by The Nutcracker

**THE
NUTCRACKER**



How to Use this Activity Bank

Thank you for downloading our **Festive Fables Activity Bank**.

This resource is full of activities designed to inspire children to begin writing their very own wintry stories.

We have designed the activities in this resource to fit into your existing lessons. While the content of this resource has been inspired by the 2024 Polka Production of **The Nutcracker**, the activities themselves can be completed by children and classes who have not been to see the production onstage, or read the book. Activities can be completed as standalone tasks, or followed one after the other to make a full writing workshop.

If you have any questions about how to use Polka resources please don't hesitate to contact us on
creativelearning@polkatheatre.com

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Word Bank Worlds

This quick activity is great for generating ideas for settings, as well as recapping subject vocabulary. We've used winter words here, but you can adapt to a theme of your choosing.

How to lead the activity (Part 1):

- Begin by putting your class into groups of around 4 or 5.
- If you are using our premade word banks, skip to Part 2.
- Otherwise, give each group two pieces of paper, one labeled 'Adjectives', and one labeled 'Places'.
- Set a timer for two minutes. On their 'Adjectives' sheet, each group must write as many adjectives to do with winter and the festive season as they can!
- Reset your timer. On their 'Places' sheet, each group must now write as many wintry or festive locations as they can think of.
- Gather in all the sheets, mix them up and hand them back out. Each group should now have a list of wintry adjectives and a list of wintry places that they did not write.

How to lead the activity (Part 2):

- If you are using our pre-made word banks, give each group a copy of the Word Bank handout on the next page.
- Ask each group to work together to choose one adjective and one place to create their own setting. For example, if they chose 'frosty' and 'workshop', their setting would be a frosty workshop.
- Now, in their groups, ask everyone to discuss what their setting is like. Hand out large pieces of paper for them to make notes and draw pictures. You can write up the following questions on the board as prompts.

What are 5 things you can see in your setting?

What are 4 things you can touch in your setting. What do they feel like?

What are 3 things you can hear in your setting?

What are 2 things you can smell in your setting?

What is something you can taste in your setting?

- Groups can now either present their settings back to the class, or you can move on to the next activity to develop them further!

Festive Word Banks

Adjectives

Frosty
Icy
Frozen
Sparkly
Snowy
Glistening
Peaceful
Merry
Jolly
Magical
Bleak
Shiny
Glittery
Candlelit
Cozy
Enchanted

Places

Workshop
Grotto
Forest
Mountain
Cabin
Lake
Stable
Ice Rink
Ski Lodge
Village
Toy Shop
Igloo
Iceberg
Cottage
North Pole
Penguin Enclosure

Setting Hot Seating

This activity helps children to develop their ideas, using improvisation to add detail to their settings. The interview style of this activity also helps to develop oracy skills.

How to lead the activity (Option 1):

- This version of the activity works well if you completed 'Word Banks Worlds' with your class, or have created settings for another purpose.
- You may wish to start by working together as a class to come up with some questions you can ask about a setting. You could use the senses questions on page 2 as inspiration, or we've provided a few more at the bottom of this page.
- One group at a time, invite your class to introduce their setting in one, first person sentence - for example they might say 'We are a magical ice rink, and we grant wishes'.
- Now, the rest of the class can ask the setting (the presenting group) questions. The group may already know some of the answers, but they'll have to make some up! If they're not sure of an answer, you can give them a few seconds to confer.

How to lead the activity (Option 2):

- If you are just beginning to look at settings, or want to explore the settings in your class book, this version of Hot Seating Settings can be really fun!
- Split your class into small groups. Write each of your settings on slips of paper, and give one to each group. To scaffold this activity, you may also wish to write the full list of available settings on the board for everyone to see.
- One at a time, the groups go to sit at the front of the class. The rest of the class must ask questions, and the group must reply in the first person, as if they are the setting. For example, the class may ask 'are you hot or cold?', to which the setting may reply 'We get really hot in summer but really cold in winter, too'. If they're stuck, the group can take a few seconds to confer.
- It's up to the class to try and guess the setting in front of them!

Do any people call you 'home'?
Who was the last person to walk through you?
Are you home to any animals?
Are you hot or cold?
Do you contain plants or trees?
Where is your comfiest place to sit?

Cardboard Country

Providing children with a limiting craft medium, such as cardboard, encourages creative problem solving. Through this exploration, not only will their locations become more tangible and easier to describe, but they may make all sorts of new discoveries, and come up with lots of new ideas inspired by the shapes they have to work with.

How to lead the activity:

- For this activity, you can use the locations created in 'Word Bank Worlds', 'Setting Hot Seating', or you can use the settings from your class text. Alternatively, let your pupils' imaginations run wild with a simple prompt such as 'the perfect home'.
- If you came to see **The Nutcracker** at Polka, this would also be a perfect opportunity to discuss some of the cardboard creations you saw onstage. What was everyone's favourite?
- Lay out lots of recycled cardboard. Try to provide a wide variety of shapes, such as tubes, boxes, interesting packaging and more. You may also want to provide sticky tape, but scissors are optional for this exercise.
- In groups of 3 to 5, ask children to create their setting out of cardboard on the floor of the classroom. Their creation can be as big or as small as they like, and they can add or change their setting's details as they wish.
- Once they're finished, let everyone walk around the classroom and inspect the other locations. What can they see?

Extension

Can you work together to build roads between your settings?

Can you come up with a class story that follows your road through each location?



Cross the Circle

This activity uses location as a prompt to create characters. Improvisation, guided by the teacher or practitioner, helps children to add detail and life to characters.

How to lead the activity:

- For this activity, you can use settings your students have created, or come up with your own - for example, a snow-capped mountain or a toy factory.
- Ask everyone to stand in a circle, and pick your first setting. Ask children to give suggestions for people or animals who might be found in that location. For example, for the North Pole, you might say Polar Bears, Walruses and Explorers.
- Pick a few volunteers. They will be acting as the characters from this setting. You can let them choose a character for themselves, or ask them all to perform the same character (for example, 'you're all penguins!').
- Ask your volunteers to try walking around the inside of the circle as their character. How do they walk?
- Challenge your volunteers to perform a few more actions, for example:

Do your favourite hobby
Eat your favourite meal
Perform your party trick

- Now you can get the rest of the class involved. Ask the students around the outside of the circle to 'become' the setting. They could create a soundscape or move their bodies to become objects. For example, if your setting was a forest, they might stand tall, like trees, and make the sounds of whistling wind and hooting owls.
- Ask your volunteers to explore their setting. You can continue to give them prompts, such as:

Find your home
Go to your favourite spot
It starts raining, where will you shelter?
Hide something precious to you
Explore an area you've not visited before

- You can try this with a few different settings, taking it in turns until everyone has a character.
- Next, you can challenge their students to fill out the worksheet on the next page with details about their characters!

All About My Character Worksheet

Name:

Physical Appearance:

Home/Habitat:

Favourite Hobby:

Favourite Food:

Favourite Place:

Best Friend:

Greatest Fear:

Biggest Secret:

Example Character Worksheet

Name:

Sugar Plum Fairy

Home/Habitat:

The Kingdom of Sweets

Favourite Hobby:

Flying around the
lollipop forest

Physical Appearance:



Favourite Food:

Salted caramel fudge
ice cream

Favourite Place:

The candy floss cloud
fields

Best Friend:

Mother Ginger

Greatest Fear:

Being trapped in the
human world with no
sweets

Biggest Secret:

I hate liquorice!

Character Sculptures

This activity uses the body as a stimulus for creating characters, prompting children to think creatively about how stock characters are portrayed.

How to lead the activity:

- You can use this activity to create additional characters to sit alongside those you explored in the previous activity, or to create brand new, standalone ones.
- Ask everyone in your class to find a partner, and label themselves A and B.
- First, ask As to 'sculpt' Bs to look like a statue of a 'Hero'. They can do this by giving instructions ('put your hand in a fist', 'look up', etc.), and/or by physically moving their partner's limbs. You can model this for the class first, and remind them to always ask before touching their partner.
- When every pair is finished, ask all the statues to freeze. Go round the class, and ask a few As to introduce their heroes. You can ask them prompting questions such as 'where are they from?' and 'what is their greatest achievement'.
- Next, swap round, so that Bs are sculpting As. Continue all the steps above for the following characters, swapping sculptor and statue between each one.

Villain

E.g. a witch, an evil king, a troll

Best Friend

E.g. a childhood friend, an unexpected ally, an animal

Magical Creature

E.g. a fairy, a gnome, a unicorn

- Once you have completed each of the above steps, you may wish to give your class time to discuss their characters, make some notes and/or draw pictures. You can use the worksheet on the next page to help you.

Stock Characters Worksheet

The Hero

Name:

Physical Appearance:

Fun Fact:

The Villain

Name:

Physical Appearance:

Fun Fact:

The Best Friend

Name:

Physical Appearance:

Fun Fact:

The Magical Creature

Name:

Physical Appearance:

Fun Fact:

Example Worksheet

The Hero

Name: Nutcracker

Physical Appearance:



Fun Fact:

He used to be a prince that got turned into a Nutcracker

The Villain

Name: Many-Headed Mouse King

Physical Appearance:



Fun Fact:

He wants to steal all the cheese and ruin Christmas

The Best Friend

Name: Clara

Physical Appearance:



Fun Fact:

She has a younger brother who she has to share everything with.

The Magical Creature

Name: Sugar Plum Fairy

Physical Appearance:



Fun Fact:

She got stuck in the human world and lost the ability to fly.

Prop Plots

Providing children with props as a stimulus is a fantastic way to get their creativity flowing!

How to lead the activity:

- For this activity, you'll need:
 - Settings: either use the settings children have already created, or come up with a list of your own wintry settings, write them on slips, and put them in a hat.
 - Characters: either use characters the children have created themselves, or put a selection of festive characters into a hat for them to choose from. E.g. a lost penguin, a grumpy elf, a dancing snowman.
 - Props: use any winter-themed items you have lying around the house or at school. E.g. Christmas decorations, blankets, scarves, paper snowflakes, tinsel, candles, ice cubes, gloves, etc.
- Put your class into groups of 3 to 5. Give each group:
 - One setting
 - Two or more characters
 - One prop
- Each group must now create a 2-minute roleplay, in which one of their characters sets off on a journey. Their play must include their setting, characters and prop!
- For example, if a group had the North Pole, an evil fairy, a princess and a candle; they could tell a story about an evil fairy who is jealous of how everyone loves Santa Claus, so she casts a spell over the North Pole, drowning it in darkness. A young Princess journeys to the North Pole by candlelight to confront the evil fairy and save Christmas.
- When everyone is ready, ask your pupils to sit in an audience.
- One at a time, invite each group up to the front to perform their plays. Remember to give them a big round of applause!

Story Strings

This activity breaks down story structure into simple steps. The washing line provides children with the freedom to play with the structure of their own story.

How to lead the activity:

- For this activity, you'll need:
 - A print out of the resource on the next page.
 - Scissors
 - Pens and colouring pencils
 - String
 - Laundry pegs
- Hand out copies of the resource on the next page, and invite children to cut out the squares.
- Encourage children to write or draw on each square. The blank ones can be used to add any other story elements of their choosing.
- Hang string up around the classroom, like small washing lines. Give each child six pegs, and invite them to pin their story points up in chronological order.
- Ask each child to find a friend and tell them their story using the story points as a prompt.
- Discuss in their pairs: Did they want any elements of the story to happen earlier or later? Maybe they wanted to introduce the villain a little later, or have their magical creature do something amazing right at the beginning!
- Now is their chance to move any of their story points on their washing line!
- Now that you have the structure of a story, why not try writing it down?



Story String Template

Once upon a time there was...

The villain was plotting to...

Fortunately...

Unfortunately...

Example Story String Template

Once upon a time there was...

A young girl called Clara who lived with her dad and brother in a rickety old house.

The villain was plotting to...

Steal the special Christmas Cheese and ruin Christmas for everyone. The villain is a mouse with many heads.

Fortunately...

The Nutcracker came to life and rescued Clara from the Many Headed Mouse King.

Unfortunately...

The Many Headed Mouse King realised Clara wasn't a mouse, but a human!

Clara's aunt came to visit, and gifted Clara and her brother a beautiful Nutcracker in the shape of a soldier.

The Sugar Plum Fairy gave Clara a disguise to help her look like a mouse.

Thank you!

We hope these activities have helped to bring a little bit of Polka Magic back to your classroom or home!

Did you write an amazing story? Share it with us on Instagram by tagging
@schoolspolka

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 topic you like, including exploring the themes and production elements of **The Nutcracker!**

For more information, please visit our website:
polkatheatre.com/schools

Or contact Lizzie, Polka's Schools Relationship Officer:
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We hope to see you at Polka Theatre soon!

Best wishes,
Polka Theatre's Creative Learning Team

