

Let's Explore: Emil and the Detectives

Getting to know your play

By the end of this section you will:

- Have an in-depth understanding of your play and how the early stages of your rehearsal process can support learning across the curriculum
- Have prepared your class for the start of rehearsals by giving them a deeper understanding of what they are going to present to their audience
- Have used several creative learning techniques that can be applied to other texts and stories in your teaching practice.

By the end of this section the children will:

- Have read and understood the play
- Understand the particular context and setting of the play
- Have a greater understanding of the characters
- Have developed an understanding of key themes in the play.

The activities in this section will contribute towards the children's understanding of the play and prepare them for starting to create their production. This understanding will have a significant impact on your rehearsal process, the children's experience of performing and the quality of the final production. These activities mirror the work that a company of actors undertakes in the first couple of weeks of a professional rehearsal process.

You should feel free to pick and mix the activities in this section to suit your class and the time that you have available.

Synopsis: Emil and the Detectives

Scene One – Introducing the Play

We are introduced to the characters of Emil Tischbein and his mother, Ida Tischbein. Emil is preparing travel alone by train to Berlin.

Scene Two – Emil's Mum, the Hairdresser

Mrs Wirth, Mrs Woolf and Mrs Westerberg are getting their hair done in Ida's hair salon. They are concerned that Ida is letting Emil go to the big city alone. Emil will be taking some money to Berlin for his grandmother and Ida assures her customers that Emil will be met at the station by his grandmother and his cousin Pony the Hat. The customers tell Ida that they saw one of her regular clients going into the Crystal Salon (the other hair salon in Neustadt) which has one of the new electric hairdryers. The women discuss recent news about the Hanover bank robber and how you can't trust anyone these days. They start to tell Ida about a statue in the town that has been vandalised but Emil hurries them out of the hairdressers before they can say too much.

Scene Three – Emil is Trusted with a Lot of Money

Before they leave for the train, Ida gives Emil 140 marks for his grandmother which she puts in an envelope and Emil puts in his jacket pocket. They rush to leave in order to catch the train.

Scene Four – Walking Through the Village

As Emil and his mother hurry to the train station, Neustadt is bustling with activity. Girls hand out leaflets about the new electronic hairdryer at the Crystal Salon. Villagers discuss the vandalism of the statue of the Grand Duke and how someone has put a bucket on its head, drawn a moustache on it and given it a red nose so that it looks like the local policeman Chief Constable Jeschke. Emil, who clearly was involved in this act of vandalism, hurries Ida to the train station.

Scene Five – On the Platform

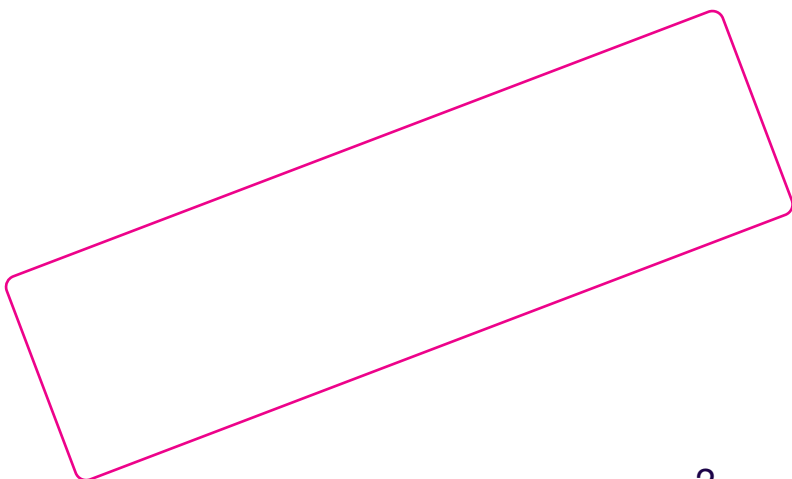
On the platform, Ida fusses over Emil, telling him to be careful in Berlin. She fixes his cuff with a pin and he gets on the train and waves his mum goodbye.

Scene Six (part 1) – On the Train

Emil finds a place to sit on the train. One man in the carriage introduces himself to Emil as Mr Snow.

Scene Six (part 2) – Alone with Mr Snow

All of the other passengers on the carriage get off and Emil is left alone with Mr Snow. Mr Snow offers Emil a slice of apple, which he accepts. Mr Snow appears to fall asleep. Concerned about keeping the money safe Emil takes the pin from his cuff and pins the envelope with the money into his inside jacket pocket and accidentally pricks his finger. Mr Snow wakes up and suggests to Emil that he needs to have a sleep. Slowly Emil drifts off to sleep drugged by the piece of apple that Mr Snow gave him.



Scene Six (part 3) – Emil's Nightmare

Emil has a nightmare that everyone in the Neustadt knows that he vandalised the statue of the Grand Duke.

Scene Six (part 4) – Arrival at Zoo Station

Emil wakes up on the floor of the train carriage. He is alone. He quickly checks his pocket and to his horror finds that the money has gone. He realises there can be only one culprit – Mr Snow. The train has arrived at Zoo Station, Berlin – the station before the one where Emil is supposed to meet his grandma. Emil sees Mr Snow disappearing through the crowd. Emil jumps off the train and tries to chase Mr Snow through the station...

Scene Seven – Chasing Through the City

Emil tries to keep track of Mr Snow as he moves through the city but struggles to fight his way through all the people. Emil spots that Mr Snow is about to board a tram...

Scene Eight – Emil on the Tram

Mr Snow gets on the tram with other passengers. Emil boards at the other end of the tram so Mr Snow can't see him. Emil realises that he doesn't have any money for a ticket and a kind man called Mr Kästner (who works for the city press) offers to pay for Emil's ticket. Emil promises to pay him back. Mr Kästner gives him his card.

Scene Nine – Emil Meets Toots

Mr Snow has disembarked from the Tram, and takes a seat at Café Josty. Emil watches Mr Snow from a distance. A boy called Toots (who always carries a bike horn) enters and sees Emil watching Mr Snow. He starts to tease Emil and they fight. Once the fight breaks up Emil tells Toots the whole story and how he is trying to track Mr Snow who stole his money. Toots asks if he can help Emil. Emil sends Toots off with a message to give to his cousin Pony the Hat.

Scene Ten (part 1) – Toots Gets Help: Meeting the Professor

Toots travels to the poor part of town to enlist the help of his friend, the Professor.

Scene Ten (part 2)

Toots travels to the rich part of town to enlist the help of his friend, Tuesday. He tells both the Professor and Tuesday to meet him at Café Josty.

Scene Ten (part 3)

Toots takes the message that Emil gave him to Pony. Pony springs into action and heads off with Toots.

Scene Eleven – He’s Getting Away

The children assemble at Café Josty and Emil tells them all what has happened to him. As they talk Mr Snow gets up and gets into a taxi. They decide to follow him...

Scene Twelve – Taxi Chase

The children get in another taxi to follow Mr Snow’s taxi through the streets of Berlin. Mr Snow’s taxi stops but when the children catch up Mr Snow is nowhere to be seen.

Scene Thirteen – Detectives

Just as the children are losing hope of ever finding Mr Snow in such a huge city, Tuesday arrives with loads of other children who plan to join the gang of detectives and be the eyes on every street in an effort to catch Mr Snow.

Scene Fourteen – Pursuit

One of the detectives walks past Mr Snow in the street and recognises him. More and more detectives appear until Mr Snow is completely surrounded. He makes a run for it and is chased through the streets by all the detectives.

Scene Fifteen – Pinholes

The police arrive and Mr Snow pleads for them to save him from the children. Mr Kästner arrives and reveals that Mr Snow – aka Mr Dollfus – is actually the Hanover bank robber. They find an envelope of money in Mr Snow’s pocket. Mr Snow claims it is his and that Emil has no proof at all that he stole Emil’s money. Emil shows his handkerchief with the blood stain on it from when he pricked his finger with a pin and says that if the money is his there will be pinholes though each of the notes from where he had pinned them to his pocket. The notes are examined and they do indeed have pinholes through each of them. It is then revealed that Mr Snow’s jacket is stuffed full of money proving that he is indeed the Hanover bank robber. Mr Snow is taken away by the police.

Scene Sixteen – Emil and his Mum Make Up

Ida arrives on the scene along with Mrs Wirth, Mrs Woolf and Mrs Westerberg. They tell Ida that now that Emil is a hero Chief Constable Jeschke is going to forget about the incident with the Grand Duke’s statue. The children tell Ida that there was a reward for the capture of the bank robber and that Emil was planning to use his share to buy her an electric hairdryer. Mr Kästner decides to write up the story in his newspaper with the headline ‘Emil and the Detectives’. Ida allows Emil to stay in Berlin for a while so that he can hang out with his new friends.

Emil and the Detectives addresses themes of:

- Trust
- Friendship
- Teamwork
- Honesty
- Kindness
- Growing up and independence

It reminds children to believe in themselves and their ability to stand up to what is not right. It champions honesty and integrity. It teaches us to recognise who our friends are and, and celebrate working together to bring about a happy ending.

Reading and Understanding the Play

Familiarising pupils with the script and inviting personal responses and interpretations supports the group in developing their understanding and co-construction of the world of play.

Reading the play together as a company is how almost all rehearsal processes begin. If possible, arrange the classroom or hall space so that everyone is sitting in a circle and give each child a copy of the script. Read the play through over the course of one or two sessions. One way to assign parts quickly and simply is to allocate each character round the circle in turn as they appear in

the script ie the first character who speaks is allocated to child 1, the second to child 2, the third to child 3 and so on. After a while you can reassign parts to ensure that everyone has a turn at reading. This process will also be good to familiarise the children with the layout and features of a script including the difference between dialogue and stage directions.

At key points stop to invite the children to discuss and respond to key aspects of the drama.

**Prompts could include:
Discussing Plot**

You might choose to stop at key points and invite the pupils to speculate about:

- What might happen next in the storyline?
- How might this affect the characters involved?
- How this heightens the drama or changes the mood of the scene?

Discussing Character

- Which character do you most identify with and why?
- How a character might feel at certain points in the plot?
- What motivates the character to behave in a certain way?
- You could plot the range of emotions experienced by a key character over the course of the play and use the overview to reflect upon the emotional journey of the character.

Discussing Setting

- How do you picture the scene in your head as you are reading it?
- What simple ways could be used to recreate this on stage?
- What are going to be the most challenging moments to stage once we start rehearsals?

Context and Setting

Having an understanding of the context and setting of the play will help the children use their imaginations to create the world of the play. This will have a huge impact on their performances as they understand the world that they, as their characters, are inhabiting. It will also help them to make informed decisions about how to communicate that world to an audience through the set, props and costumes.

Story Whoosh

Having done your read-through of the play, the next stage is to perform a version of the story. Try using the Story Whoosh exercise to further familiarise the children with the play and to get them thinking from the start about the play as a performance rather than something just on a page.

Mapping the World

Try using Masking Tape Maps exercise to create the different settings of the play in small groups. You could split the class in two with one half mapping the locations in Neustadt – Ida's hair salon, the town square, the train station – and the other half mapping the locations in Berlin – Café Josty, Nollendorf Square, Tuesday's house (in the rich part of town), The Professor's house (in the poor part of town). Ask the children to add in as much detail as possible. They should be told that they will need to justify their ideas about their locations to the rest of the group.

WHY NOT

You could also go into more detail and use this exercise to map out locations that exist in the world of the play but not in the action of the play. For example, you could map out Emil's bedroom. What does it look like? How is it laid out? What is on the walls? What objects are there on the bedside table? This can be a great way for children to flesh out the world of individual characters and help them to inhabit that character more successfully.

Music in the 1920s/30s

- Start with a brief discussion about the historical period in which the play is set to find out what impressions the children may already have of that time.
- Search for 'German music from the 1920s and 1930s' on YouTube and play a selection to the children.
- Provide the pupils with paper and pastels and invite them to respond to the music through illustration. Encourage them to draw any pictures that they see in their heads as they listen to the music.
- Once complete, provide the children with the opportunity to move around and view each other's pictures.
- Invite them to note the words and phrases that come to mind as they view the artwork. Ask everyone to share these and note their responses on a flipchart in order to formulate a word bank.
- Ask each pupil to use the artwork and the word bank to write a four-line stanza inspired by the music. Divide the children into groups of five or six. Ask them to each read their stanza out loud to the rest of their group. The group should then decide on order the stanzas should go in, with the aim of creating a longer poem.
- Ask each group to rehearse their poem in preparation for sharing it with the rest of the class.

WHY NOT

Using either the artwork or images from their poem, ask each group to create three tableaux (see page X) which they can use as part of the performance of their poem.

Daily Life: Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s

Resources:

A collection of images from the internet from Germany in the 1920s and 1930s using the following search terms e.g.

- Buildings in Berlin 1920s
- Children/adults clothes Germany 1920s
- Toys Germany 1920s
- Transport Germany 1920s
- Technology Germany 1920s
- Adverts Germany 1920s

Each table group should be allocated a different research area from the list above. Either give children a collection of images or you could ask each group to find images on the internet themselves that relate to their research area. They will then carousel (move around the room) so that every group has time with the images from each topic.

The children should examine the images from each area of research and complete a table like the one below, making statements about the differences between then and now.

Area Being Researched

Then they had...	Now we have...	<i>What would be the impact on everyday life?</i>
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Once they have completed their table, ask them to discuss the following questions in their groups:

- Which aspect of life in the 1920s and 1930s do you find most exciting, interesting or surprising? Why do you feel that way?
- What do you consider to be the greatest difference between then and now?

WHY NOT

Ask each group to present their answers to these questions to the rest of the class.

Exploring Character

Exploring characters enables pupils to be better placed to act out the parts in the play. With a greater understanding of character, they will find it easier to step into the shoes of their character and to physically present them as well as verbally.

Role on the Wall

Try using the Role on the Wall exercise to explore the main characters in the play. By engaging their imaginations in the development of the characters the children will gain a much deeper understanding of them and this will make it much easier for them to step into their shoes. You could also run this as an individual exercise if you wish every child to focus on their own particular character.

WHY NOT

Use the character boards that are created as the basis for your costume designs.

Diary Entries

Once all the parts have been cast, a useful exercise is to ask the children to write a diary entry as their character at a key moment for them in the play. Again, engaging their imaginations in the process of fleshing out their characters will help them to understand what they need to do to successfully portray them on stage.

More practical tips on helping children to develop their character can be found in the film *Creating Character*.

Hot Seating

Once the children are familiar with the plot, try using Hot Seating to examine the main characters in the play. You can use this device to introduce and examine some of the key themes in Emil and the Detectives. Guide the exercise by asking some questions that will help the child in the hot seat to think about how they feel about a particular moment in the play. If you were focusing on Emil, for example, you could ask how he feels the night before he takes the trip to Berlin on his own. This could then be used as a way into discussing the themes of growing up and independence.

WHY NOT

Encourage the children to develop a piece of writing based on the play, such as a letter from Emil in Berlin to his mum back in Neustadt. What would Emil tell Ida to reassure her that he is OK? What wouldn't he tell her so that she wouldn't worry?

Theme Exploration

Every play has key themes at its heart which are explored through the action of the play. They will raise questions for the audience to think about in relation to the story. It is important for the children to have thought about and discussed these themes as a team. This will feed into their understanding of what they are presenting to an audience.

What's it all about?

In groups of five or six, ask the children to create a mind map of as many words they can think of that describe what Emil and the Detectives is about.

Ask them to choose three of the words they have written down that they think best describe what the play is about. Ask them to create a tableau for each of their chosen words.

They could use the action or moments from Emil and the Detectives to depict their words.

Ask each group to perform their three tableaux to the rest of the class. The children watching should try to guess the word depicted in each tableau. If they are struggling to guess it then you could use Thought Tapping to give them a clue.

As each word is guessed correctly, make a note of it on the interactive white board or on a large piece of paper. Have several groups picked the same words? If so can we list the words or themes in order of importance?

Teamwork and Friendship

Sharks and Islands

Resources:

- One or two newspapers
- A hall space

This is a great warm-up exercise to start rehearsals and a great way of breaking down some of the physical contact issues that children often experience at this age.

Place about 20 newspaper sheets on the floor around the room.

Explain that the floor represents the sea and the newspapers are islands where they are safe in the event of a shark attack.

Tell them that they are going to go for a swim in the sea, making sure they stay in the sea and away from the islands.

When you shout 'Shark Attack!' the children must swim to a nearby island and remain there until you give the 'All Clear!'.

If any part of anyone's body touches the floor during a shark attack, then they are eaten by the sharks and are out (or can join you in spotting other people who are out in each round).

In each round, remove one newspaper island from the floor so that the places of safety become fewer each time. Children will have to work together to help each other stay safe and share the remaining islands.

Following the exercise, discuss what actions people took to try to help each other stay safe from the sharks. Did anything happen that might put them at more risk from the sharks? This can lead into the following exercise.

Role on the Wall

Try adapting the Role on the Wall exercise to explore what the children consider to be characteristics of a good friend and a bad friend. You could run this in table groups or as a whole class exercise. On the inside of the body outline ask them to write all the things that make a good friend and on the outside write all of the things that make a bad friend. Encourage the children to think about their own experiences with their own friends.

Discussion

Using the Role on the Wall they have created, discuss the following:

Which characters in Emil and the Detectives show qualities of a good friend?

Which characters in Emil and the Detectives show qualities of a bad friend?

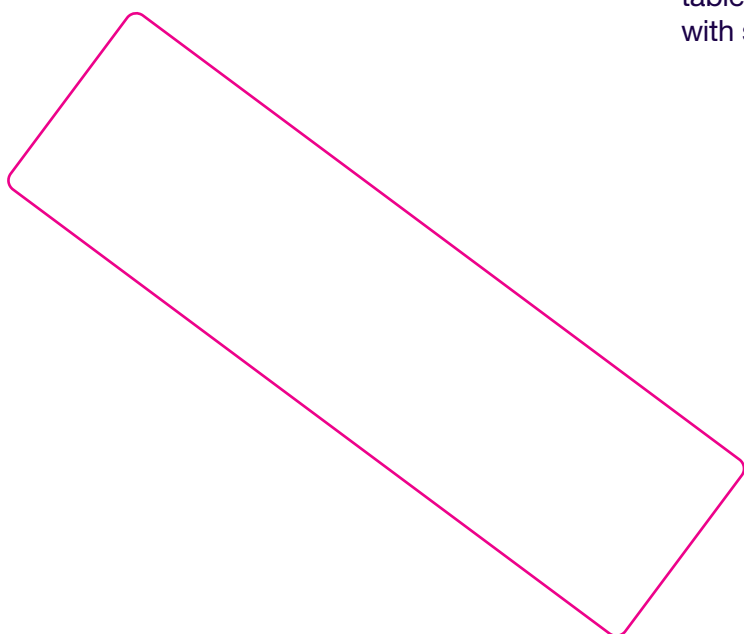
Ask the children to explain their answers. Are there any characters that show good and bad qualities?

WHY NOT

At the end of the play, Tuesday suggests that the story should have a moral. As a class why not decide on what you think this moral could be?

Suggestion:

It is amazing what you can achieve with the help and support of good friends.



Growing Up/Independence

As a class, go through the story of the play and make a list of the challenges Emil faces.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Travelling to Berlin on his own on the train
- Carrying money to give to his grandma
- Dealing with his mum treating him like a child
- Nearly getting caught for vandalism of the statue
- Meeting strangers and asking them for help
- Dealing with having his money stolen by an adult
- Being lost in the big city
- Having no money
- Not being believed by the police

Divide the children into groups of five or six. Allocate each group one of the challenges that you have identified. Ask them to discuss in their groups how they think a younger child might deal with such a challenge and also how Emil deals with the challenge in the play.

Each group should create two very short improvised scenes or a series of tableaux to depict each of their challenges. The first scene should show how a younger child might react when faced with the challenge. The second scene should show how Emil reacts to the challenge.

Each group should show their tableaux to the rest of the class. After each performance, ask the class to identify each reaction and use it to complete the table below as a group. The table is completed here with suggestions to help you to guide this exercise.

Challenge	What would a younger child do?	What does Emil do?
Travelling to Berlin on his own on the train.	Want his mum to go with him.	He is scared but tries to be confident. He is excited about being given the chance to be independent.
Being responsible for a large amount of money to give to his grandma.	Not take proper responsibility or precautions so he does not to lose it.	Pins the envelope to his inside pocket for extra security and takes proper responsibility for it.
Dealing with his mum treating him like a child.	Behave like a child or get angry with her.	Reassures her that he will be fine and by the end of the play proves to her that he can look after himself (and her).
Nearly getting caught for vandalism of the statue.	Avoid getting caught.	Admits his mistake and takes responsibility for his actions.
Meeting strangers and asking them for help.	Expect them to sort out the problem for him.	Seeks and accepts help from people that he feels he can trust.
Dealing with having his money stolen by an adult.	Accept it and turn up at his grandma's empty handed.	Takes matters into his own hands and tries to sort out his own problem.
Being lost in the big city on his own.	Panic and cry until someone helps.	Seeks and accepts help from people that he feels he can trust.
Having no money.	Panics and feels helpless.	Accepts help from Mr Kästner (but agrees to pay him back) and his new friends.
Not being believed by the police.	Gives up and feels helpless.	Stands up for what is right and accepts help from trusted friends.

What does growing up actually mean?

Emil goes on a journey of independence throughout the play and grows up a lot through the challenges that he faces in Berlin. Once you have created your table, work as a group to distil the list of the ways that Emil deals with his challenges into a list of ways of dealing with challenges in general?

Suggestions:

- Think for yourself and don't allow yourself to be easily influenced by others
- Take responsibility for yourself and your own safety
- Sort out your own problems – don't always rely on adults to do this for you
- Ask for help and find out who is the best person to go to for help
- Prove to your parents that they can trust you
- Admit when you are wrong or have made a mistake – take responsibility for your own actions.

WHY NOT

Extend this exercise into thinking about the challenges or fears that the children might have about starting secondary school. Can they use any of the approaches they've already identified to deal with this challenge?