

National
Theatre



ROALD DAHL'S

WITCHES

THE

POST-SHOW
ACTIVITY PACK



Introduction

Welcome everyone!



The National Theatre and the Roald Dahl Story Company are putting on a musical – and you're invited! This activity pack has everything you need to join in the fun and create your own theatre adventures at school or at home.

Explore the story of *The Witches* and become a costume and lighting designer, musical director, choreographer, director, performer, and illusionist to stage your own musical with friends and family.

We would love to see what you make. Ask your parent, guardian or teacher to share your creations and tag us online using **#TheWitches**.

SYNOPSIS



Luke is a very brave and imaginative ten (and a half!) year-old-boy who lives with his mum and dad. When his parents die in a car crash, his unconventional, eccentric grandma, Sofie, whom he has never met, arrives from Norway to take care of him. She tells Luke she is a witch hunter and has dedicated her life to stopping witches. She says witches may look like ordinary women but want to squelch, squiggle and fry children. Luke doesn't believe her until he meets a witch for himself.

Grandma has a heart attack, and despite her resistance, the doctor orders her to go to Bournemouth to recover. Luke and Grandma stay at the very grand Hotel Magnificent, run by Mr Stringer, a rather short-tempered, unfriendly and impatient man. There, Luke meets Bruno Jenkins, a rich and greedy boy with a sweet tooth.

Luke is exploring the hotel's ballroom when the annual meeting of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children arrive. To Luke's horror, the RSPCC turn out to be the witches of England, led by the formidable and evil Grand High Witch. The Grand High Witch details her new plan to make all the children of England disappear. They will lace sweets and chocolate with Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse Maker, a potion that will turn children into mice. She demonstrates by offering

some chocolate to Bruno, who turns into a mouse. When Luke calls out to warn Bruno, he too is caught and transformed into a mouse.

Luke and Bruno, now mice, find Grandma and plot to overthrow the Grand High Witch. They plan to steal a vial of Formula 86 from her hotel room and pour it into the soup made especially for the RSPCC's dinner. They steal the potion and Grandma narrowly escapes the Grand High Witch. Luke is scared after the encounter.

Uncertain he is ready to take on the witches alone, Luke is inspired by an unlikely collection of hotel ornaments... children who were transformed by the witches in years gone by! He sneaks into the kitchen, darting around the kitchen staff, but he's seen and his tail is chopped off by the chef. Luke finally pours the potion into the soup pot, and when dinner is served, all the witches are turned into mice. Bruno is reunited with his parents, who are initially alarmed to have a mouse for a son. Luke – who is also still a mouse – and Grandma set off on an adventure to find and stop the witches all over the rest of the world.





Make Your Own Musical

Now you know our story, it's your turn to create your own musical.

This activity pack has everything you need to become a costume designer, composer, choreographer, director,

actor and illusionist so you can make your very own musical of *The Witches*.

Using the synopsis of *The Witches* think about the following things below to get you started:



Our musical tells the story of _____

Our story is set in _____

The main characters in our story are _____

Our story begins with _____

In the middle _____

And finally, at the end of the story _____

The biggest challenge the character of _____ will face is

The character of _____ can help them with this problem

One of the great things about musicals is that you can tell the story through song, music and dance as well as words. Look at your ideas above and think about which parts of the story would be best told through song, music and dance.



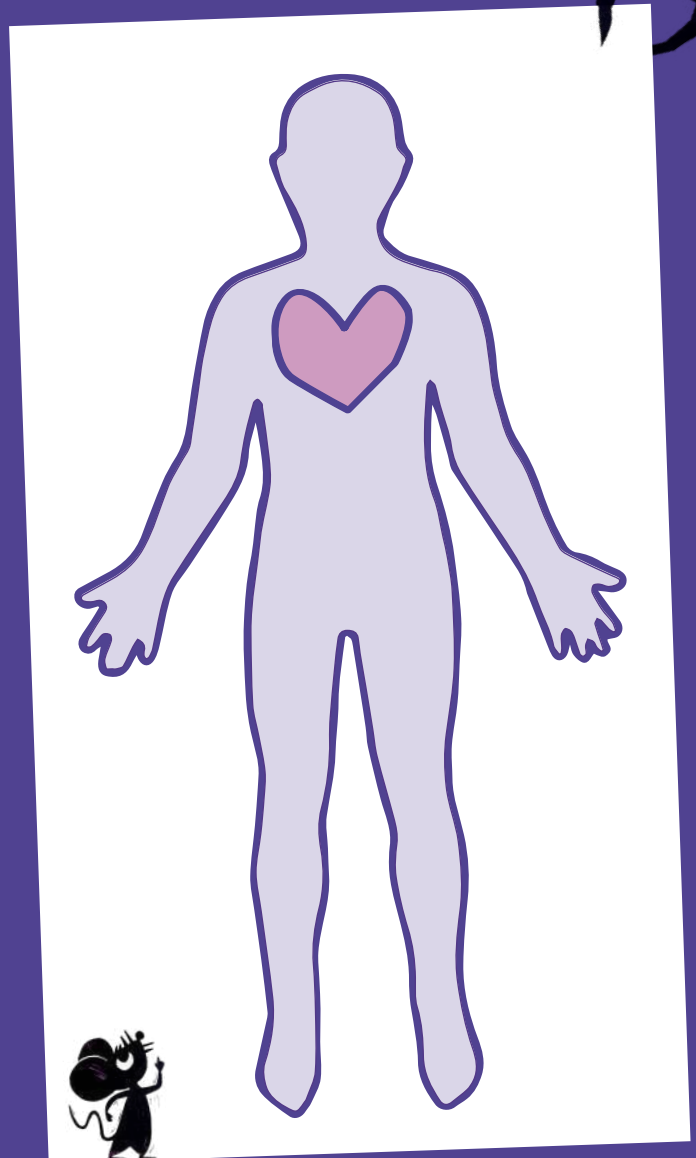
Creating a Character

The story of *The Witches* musical has been adapted from a book, also called *The Witches*, written by Roald Dahl. In the book of *The Witches*, the hero of the story isn't named, and we just get to know him as 'boy'. In our musical adaptation, Lucy Kirkwood (Playwright) and Dave Malloy (Composer & Lyricist) thought the name Luke was cool – especially as it's the name used in various film adaptations of the story. As you begin to stage your own production of *The Witches*, why not place yourself in the shoes of Luke as you prepare to go with Grandma on a trip to the Hotel Magnificent and begin your quest to save all of the children of England.

You could give a new name to the character. Does he have to be a boy?

To help an actor to bring a character to life on stage they need to think carefully about who that character really is – both on the inside and on the outside. Every character has a unique personality with their own hopes, dreams and fears. It is an actor's job to turn someone on the page into someone you want to watch, follow and cheer for.

- Ask someone to draw round you on a large piece of paper. Draw a heart in the centre of the body shape.
- On the inside of the body, write or draw everything about that character that you can think of that they might feel on the inside.
- On the outside of the body write or draw everything about that character that they show on the outside; to the world.
- You can base this on what you saw in the production or maybe from the book of *The Witches*. For example, at the start of the story Luke feels very sad on the inside because he only recently lost his parents. However, on the outside he tries to be cheerful because he doesn't want to upset his grandma.
- Finally, in the heart shape write or draw the thing that your character wants more than anything else.





Get Composing



In musicals, one of the first songs is often the 'I Want' song. This is usually sung by the main character and is about something that they aren't happy about in their life and how they want this to change.

In Act 1 of *The Witches*, Luke sings his 'I Want' song called 'I'm Ready to Go' about how he feels that he has now grown up. In it he lists all the things he is now ready to do that he wasn't allowed to do as a child:

*I'm ready so ready to go
Ready to ride on the big rides
Ready to slide on the big slide*

*I'm ready so ready to go
Ready to sit in the front seat
Ready to march to my own beat*

Imagine you are the young person in this story. Can you write two or three verses for this song?

Think about the things that you are ready to do now that perhaps you weren't allowed to do when you were younger.

Can you make sure that the last two lines rhyme like the example above?

I'm ready so ready to go

Ready to _____

Ready to _____

You could try writing your own tune to your song or perhaps you could use a well-known tune to sing your lyrics to?



Get Moving

Now that you have all the verses for your song, can you put together some movement to add to the song as you perform it?

Which style of movement will go with your song? Upbeat, joyful, slow, dramatic? Think about the lyrics that you have written. Can you create a move to go with each line of the song to help to communicate your ideas to your audience?

Once you have come up with a move for each line, think about how you could link each movement so that you create a fluid routine to accompany your song.





Get Designing: Costume



In *The Witches*, we meet many children who have been turned into household objects when they have come face to face with a witch. Can you create a friend that has been turned into an object by a witch? You could use one of your own friends as a starting point – what do they normally wear? What do they look like? What are their hobbies?

Based on this, what kind of object might they be turned into?

Here are some ideas from our production:



Next, create a backstory for this character. What were they doing when they encountered the witch, and how did she trick them?

Have a go at writing a verse from our song 'How to Recognise a Witch' to tell their story:

***'I was skipping down the lane not
a care in the world***

***When a nice-seeming lady said
'Hello little girl'.***

***She gave me a lolly and I gave it
a suck***

***Then she gave her head a scratch,
and that's when I started to cluck.'***

Now you try it:

I was....

When a....

She...

Then...

Can you make each pair of lines rhyme as in the example from our song above?

Now that you have decided which object your friend has been turned into, can you create a costume for them?

- Find a large cardboard box, ideally one that is the same height as the distance between your shoulders and your knees.
- Carefully cut a hole in the sealed end that you can fit your head through.
- Now create some arm holes on the side of your box. You may need someone to help you do this so that you get them in the right position.
- Finally paint your box and add fabric and other textures to create a costume for the object your friend has been turned into.
- Wait for it to dry and then create a way of moving and walking as your object. How does a hot dog walk?!



Get Designing: Set

A set designer decides how the world of a play looks to an audience. They work closely with lighting and sound designers to create different environments and worlds. The designs for *The Witches* created by Lizzie Clachan (Set and Costume Designer) are very detailed to create the right feel for the different locations.

For her design for the Hotel Magnificent, Lizzie has taken inspiration from a famous company called *De Gournay*. They create beautiful hand-painted patterned designs for luxury wallpaper. These designs are perfect for showing off the grandeur of the Hotel Magnificent. You can do an image search for *De Gournay* on the internet to see some examples of their work. All of the wallpaper designs in *The Witches* have been hand painted by the National Theatre's expert team of scenic artists.

Can you create your own design for the wallpaper in the Hotel Magnificent using De Gournay as inspiration?

- Firstly, sketch out some initial ideas for your design – different animals, objects, shapes and colours that you might like to incorporate at this stage. Are there any elements that you liked from the De Gournay designs that you might like to use?
- Next, draw out the design for your wallpaper on a square piece of paper placing each of your chosen elements in a position that you are happy with.

Use paints or colouring pencils to add your chosen colours to the design.

- Once you are happy with your design, it's time to enlarge it to create a full-size backdrop for your production. You need to create a large enough canvas to transfer your design to so that it can be the backdrop to your performance. You could use strips or pieces of paper joined together or perhaps even an old bed sheet. The important thing is that the shape of your original drawing and the shape of your canvas are both the same shape i.e., a square, but just different sizes.
- Now here comes the clever bit. It is possible to scale-up your image by eye but this can be tricky especially if your design is quite complicated. One method that is still used today by scenic artists is the grid method. See below for instructions if you wish to try this.
- Once you have finished, hang your design up at the back of your performance space. You now have the backdrop for the scenes that take place in the Hotel Magnificent. Think about any furniture or props you might have that look like they might belong in the Hotel Magnificent and that you could also use in these scenes.

What other locations will you need to create to tell the story?



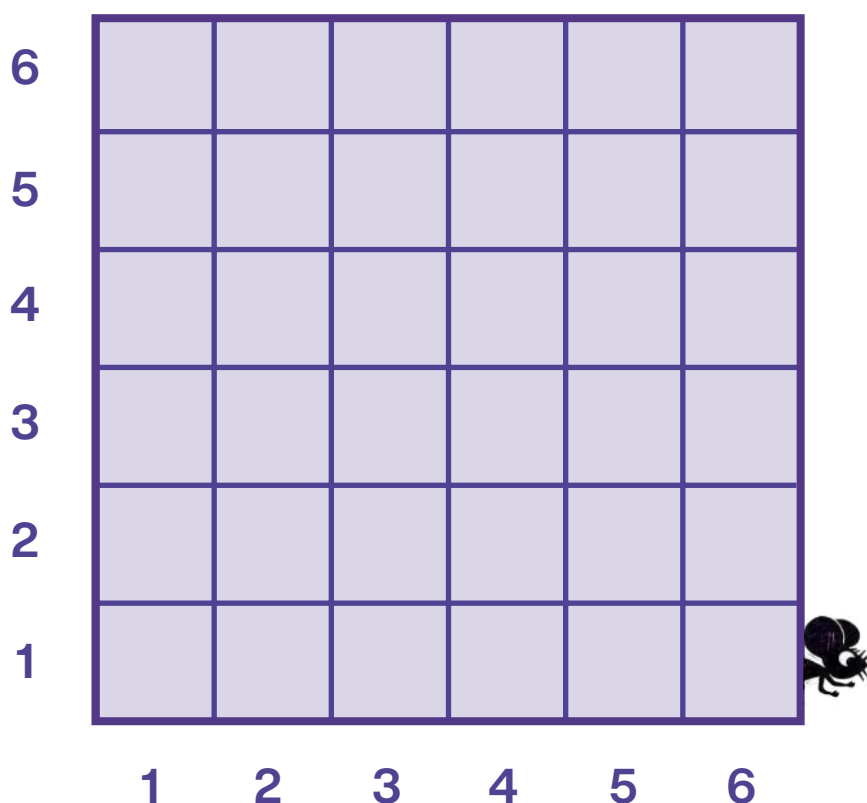


The Grid Method

Take the original drawing that you want to enlarge and lightly draw a grid with squares 3cm in size over the drawing in pencil.

If you don't want to draw on your original image, you can draw the grid on a piece of acetate or clear plastic using a thin marker. Place it over your image so that you can still see the picture underneath.

Number the squares on your grid like this:



Now in pencil, lightly draw another grid on your canvas with the same number of squares as the grid covering your original drawing and number these squares in the same way. There should be the same number of squares but this time the squares will be much larger.

Still using pencil, carefully sketch the content of each square in the grid on your original drawing onto the matching squares on your canvas. If you do this accurately then you should end up with the same image(s) on your canvas as your original drawing just much larger.

You can then rub out the grid marks on your canvas and add the colour.

There are also lots of videos on YouTube showing how to do this.



Make Some Magic

There are some wonderful magical illusions in our production of *The Witches* that have been cleverly created by our Illusion Designers Will Houstoun and Chris Fisher.

Here's a trick you can incorporate into your production that will surprise and outwit your audience.

You will need:

- **A postcard or similar sized piece of paper**
- **A pair of scissors**

Explain to your audience that in *The Witches*, Luke can save the day because as a mouse, he can sneak around and hide in small places. In your show you have worked out how to make yourself so small that you can fit through a hole cut in a postcard.

Do any of the audience think that you could do it?
Let them see if they can work it out.
Most likely they won't be able to!

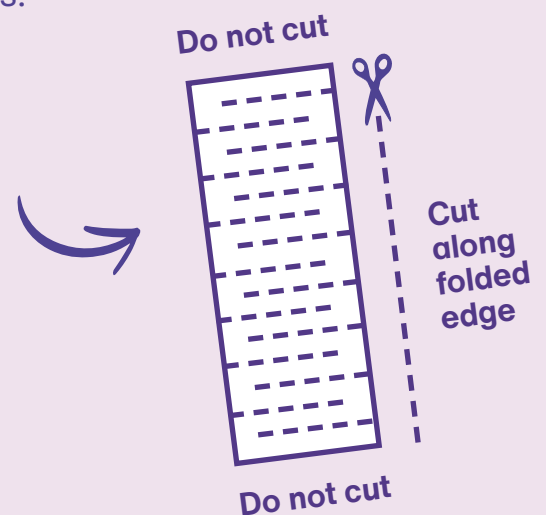
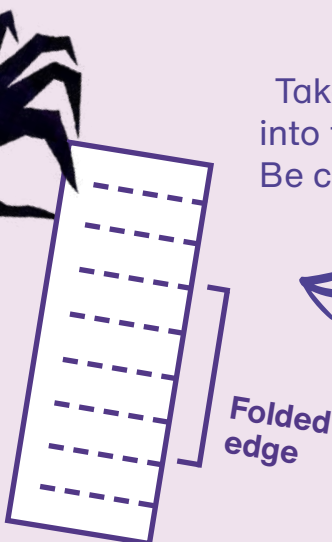
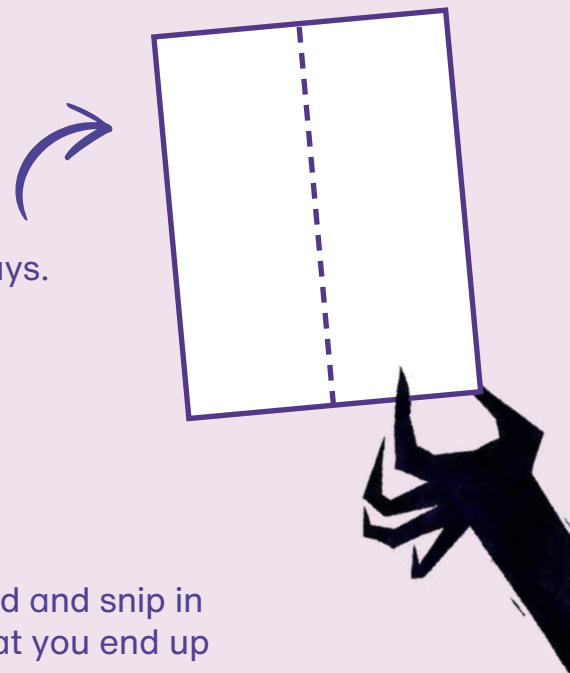
Take your postcard or paper and fold it in half lengthways.

Take your scissors and snip cuts into the postcard from the folded edge. Be careful not to cut all the way through.

Then turn the card around and snip in from the other side so that you end up with this pattern of cuts.

Now cut along the folded edge but make sure you leave the two ends intact.

Unfold the card and you will find that you have a large circle that you can easily step through!
Magic!





Light Your Show

You can experiment with lighting your performance space with the things you have at home or school e.g., lamps, fairy lights. Lighting can help to create atmosphere and drama, show your location (for example in a forest or underwater), or add special effects.

In our production of *The Witches*, we can see the spooky hands of the witches reaching out as they try to find children to squallop. In theatre lighting, gobos are often used to create different shapes with light. Follow the steps below to create your own gobo of a witch's hand to see how this works.

You will need:

- **A torch or the light from a mobile phone**
- **Cardboard**
- **Sellotape**
- Cut out a square of cardboard big enough to cover your torch or phone light. Trace the witch's hand shape below onto your card and carefully cut out a hand shape in the middle so that you have a frame. This frame is called a gobo.



- Place your gobo in front of your torch or phone light and tape into place.
- Now turn the lights off and turn your torch or phone light on to see your witch's hand.
- You can use this same technique with any simple shape. Why not experiment with adding some colour?
- Follow step one above cutting out the shape you'd like to create.
- Now cut out a section of cling film which is just larger than your frame and Sellotape it into place, so it covers your frame.
- Colour in the cling film with a marker pen. Different colours can suggest different moods, times or locations. Red light might suggest anger, while green could create the appearance of a forest and dark blue could represent night-time.
- Place the coloured cling film in front of your torch or phone light. This will change the colour of the light and give you different effects.



Bring it all Together



Now you have all the skills you need to create your own mini musical.

Production Meeting

First up, assign your production team (you could take on more than one role each):

- **Director:** someone who is very organised and has lots of ideas for how to bring this story to your stage.
- **Designer:** someone who loves to draw and create worlds and characters.
- **Musical Director:** someone who plays a musical instrument or has a good speaker.
- **Composer/Lyricist:** someone who likes to sing and make up tunes.
- **Choreographer/Movement Director:** someone with great rhythm, who loves to dance.
- **Lighting Designer/Operator:** someone who is quite good at technical things and science.
- **Playwright:** someone who is great with words; speaking and writing.

Casting

- To decide who will play each character you could hold auditions for your friends or family.
- You could ask them to perform a page from your script, or their favourite song, or even a little bit of choreography.
- When everyone has been told what roles they are playing, why not have

a ‘meet and greet’ – this is where the cast and production team sit down together and talk through their ideas for the musical. Your designer could show their set and costume designs at this point.

Rehearsals

- Time to begin staging your show (you can use the activities in this pack to help).
- The Director could use the character exercises to bring a scene to life
- The Musical Director will teach the songs
- The Choreographer will teach the dance routines
- The Designer will create the costumes and set

Once you’ve worked through the whole show:

- Hold a technical rehearsal to add your lighting and sound effects
- Hold a dress rehearsal for a final practice
- You could create programmes which list everyone involved in making the show, or posters to advertise your production

And finally... It’s show time!

Invite your closest friends and family to attend the opening night of your brand-new musical! We’d love to see what you’ve created. Why not take a photo of your performance and ask your parent, guardian or teacher to share your creations and tag us online using **#TheWitches**

Get Involved

Throughout the run of *The Witches*, we will host **The Witches Adventure Trail**; a free family friendly puzzle activity across the NT building, inspired by the production. Young visitors aged 8+ will be given a game pack containing a series of activities inspired by Luke's quest to defeat the Grand High Witch and stop her from seeing out her most evil plan yet.

Also available **The Witches Pre-show Activity Pack**. Aimed at KS2 and KS3 teachers and their pupils, this pack contains lots of activities for exploring the story, characters and world of *The Witches* as well as introducing the concept of musical theatre and the different roles that contribute to the creation of productions at the National Theatre, such as *The Witches*.

The Witches book is also a splendidly spooky way to bring some adventure into your classroom throughout the curriculum. With free downloadable lesson plans from the Roald Dahl Story Company, use the original story of *The Witches* to explore Maths, English, PSHE, Computing, Art and Design:

- Create your own Witch awareness videos
- Collage the fearsome face of the Grand High Witch
- Explore maths challenges with the Formula 86 recipe

Visit **roalddahl.com/teach** to download

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