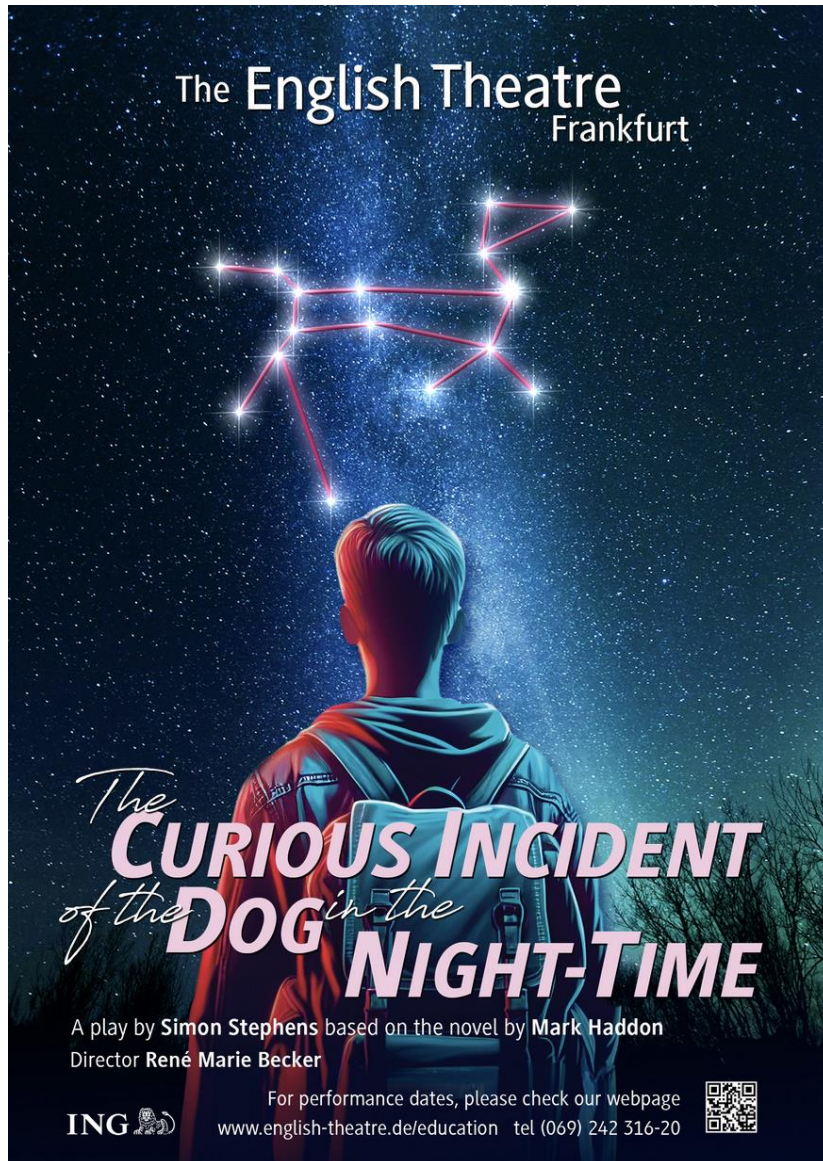


The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

A mystery play by Simon Stephens, based on the novel by Mark Haddon



This Education pack includes background information as well as tasks and topics to be discussed in the classroom. The tasks do not necessarily build on each other. Cut and paste as you please.

Introduction

THE PLAY

Characters

Christopher – Christopher is a 15-year-old teenager living in Swindon, England, with his father Ed. He goes to a school for students with special needs and has a pet rat named Toby. He is a gifted maths student and is fascinated by space.

Siobhan – Siobhan is the teacher Christopher feels closest to. She is very supportive and encourages him to take his maths **A-Level**. The play itself is a project led by Siobhan: she asked Christopher to write a book and adapt it for the stage at school.

Ed – Ed is Christopher’s father. He is a **handyman** and takes care of his son alone. He likes football and is not a very good cook.

Judy – Judy is Christopher’s mother.

Roger – Roger is a former neighbour of Ed and Judy.

All actors are playing various roles within the play, except Christopher. More information about the characters can be found below, in the synopsis. Careful, it contains spoilers!

Synopsis

Act I – Christopher is a teenager who lives alone with his dad, Ed, in Swindon. The story begins the night he discovers Wellington, Mrs Shears’ **dog, impaled on a garden fork**. Present at the murder scene in his neighbour’s garden, he is arrested by a policeman who tries to touch him and that he pushes back violently.

The events are unfolding under the eyes of the audience while being told by Siobhan, Christopher’s teacher. After the discovery of Wellington’s murder, Christopher decides to **investigate it** and writes down the **clues** he gathers. **Siobhan reads his book aloud** and the story develops as told.

Brought to the police station, Christopher is given a **caution**. His dad picks him up and would rather have his son not investigate the murder.

Meanwhile, we learn more about Christopher: he is **fascinated by space** and stars. His dream is to become an astronaut and he wishes to take his **A-Level in maths**.



My name is Christopher John Francis Boone. I know all the countries of the world and the capital cities. And every **prime number** up to 7507.

— Siobhan reading Christopher’s book

Teacher resources

Education pack

He does not always understand **figurative sense**, such as irony or metaphors, when words suddenly mean something different than what they are usually used to describe. **His mother, Judy, died two years ago from a heart attack.**

Despite his father's warning, he decides to enquire about Wellington's murder, and go on questioning neighbours. He meets Mrs Alexander, who later reveals that **his mother and Mr Shears had an affair.**

Ed ends up discovering Christopher's book and gets really angry at him. After a fight, Ed **confiscates** it **from** the teenager. While searching for it, Christopher discovers **letters** written by his mother in the last two years. She explains why she left them to go away with Roger Shears, in London.

The boy is **distraught** by the realisation that **his mother is still alive** and that his father lied to him this whole time. Ed, finding his son traumatised by this discovery, reveals in a desperate surge that **he killed Wellington** as well. Christopher decides to leave and to go to his mother in London.

Act II – Christopher starts **his journey to London**. We follow him on the train, in the tube, meeting new people and **being chased** by the police. His adventures are overwhelming but he finally reaches his mother. Judy realises that he never replied to her letters because he believed her dead. Roger is not happy to see the boy step into their life and becomes violent. His behaviour makes Judy leave him to go back to Swindon, together with Christopher.

Back in Swindon, Christopher is exhausted but **gets to take his maths A-Level** as planned. He moves in with his mother and starts seeing his father again. This latter adopted a dog that Christopher takes care of. Eventually, Christopher reveals the grade he got for his A-Level: **A***.

“

Maybe if things had been different, maybe if you'd been different, I might have been better at it.

— Judy

“

Does that mean I can do anything, do you think?

Does that mean I can do anything Siobhan?

Does that mean I can do anything?

— Christopher

Introduction

THE PLAY

The Writer – Mark Haddon

Mark Haddon is a British writer and artist. His first book for children, *Gilbert's Gobstopper* (Hamilton, first edition), was published in 1987 and followed by other books and picture books for children, many of which he illustrated.

His first novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was published to immediate success in 2003. His second novel, *A Spot of Bother*, was published in 2006. Haddon also writes poetry and paints. His most recent novel, *The Porpoise*, was published in 2019.

Haddon graduated from Oxford University and Edinburgh University. He then undertook a variety of jobs, including work with children and adults with mental and physical disabilities. He also worked as an illustrator and a cartoonist for publications including *The Spectator*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. From 1996, he worked on television projects and wrote several episodes for *Microsoap*. Mark Haddon teaches creative writing for the Arvon Foundation and at Oxford University.

The Playwright – Simon Stephens

Simon Stephens began his theatrical career in the literary department of the Royal Court Theatre (London), as a tutor in its Young Writers' Programme. Stephens is perhaps best known for his stage adaptation of the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, for which he won the 2015 **Tony Award** for Best Play. The play premiered at the National Theatre and later toured on the **West End** and **Broadway**.

Stephens has written close to three dozen plays over two decades, including the critically acclaimed *Pornography* (2007), which premiered in Hannover Germany, and *Punk Rock* (2009). He also adapted or re-adapted classics for the stage, including works of Chekhov such as *Vanya* with Andrew Scott in 2023 or *The Seagull* in 2017. Stephens also works as Artistic Associate at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre (London).



SOURCES:

Mark Haddon: "[Mark Haddon](#)", The Poetry Foundation

"[Mark Haddon](#)", Penguin Random House

Simon Stephens: [Articles related to Simon Stephens](#), The Guardian

"[Simon Stephens](#)", Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury Publishing

Introduction

CREATIVES



The Director – René Marie Becker

René Marie Becker is a professional American **actor and improviser** with over 15 years of experience as a teacher and trainer. She has a degree in Theatre from Nazareth University (Rochester, New York) and has performed and studied everything from the classics to devised theatre and fully improvised plays all over New York and Europe. Complementing her theatre training and practical production experience, René has studied **improvisation** with iO Chicago, Imprology, The Maydays, Fabio Marcioni, Lee White, and Anundpfirsich. René has also several years' experience as a **Producing Director**; on the board of 2 different theatre companies in NYC, and most recently, for Theater Language Studio Frankfurt. She recently **directed** the play ***Kindertransport*** for The ETF-Plays for Young Audiences and currently works as a freelance pedagogue and trainer, partnering with The ETF, Schultheater-Studio, ArtQ, Academy 404, and other companies within the Frankfurt Rhein-Main region.

“I have always been attracted to roles and projects that **speak to our humanity, to the specific yet universal stories** that remind us how connected we truly are to each other. I have loved Christopher’s story since I first read the book while living in New York City. I appreciate this opportunity, to create an impactful production with this exciting team of actors and artists.”

The Cast



Christopher

I’m **Leon Gross**, 26 years old, and freshly graduated from acting school. I have always been interested in playing in English and am beyond excited to be part of an English-speaking cast! In this play, I will be portraying Christopher Boone, the 15-year-old protagonist of the play, who is on the autism spectrum. When I read the book, I could instantly relate to Christopher, since I also have a light version of this **neurodivergence**. I am delighted to be working on that project!



Roger & other characters

I am **Mike Brendt**, the born latecomer, who entered the world stage in a special appearance. I scream, speak, laugh and sing out my feelings freely. I firmly believe that for every locked door there is an unlocked window. Why am I excited? Because of this warm-hearted team, great cast and because it is youth theatre again, based on a deeply moving, multi-faceted story. I am simply very grateful to be part of it!

Siobhan & other characters

I am **Sara Warner**, an American actor, singer, and educator with an extensive background in opera, musical theatre, and stage acting. In addition to my work as a performer, I am a dedicated vocal music teacher and acting coach. One of my greatest passions is connecting young audiences with the theatre, and I am excited to share this story with the Frankfurt community!

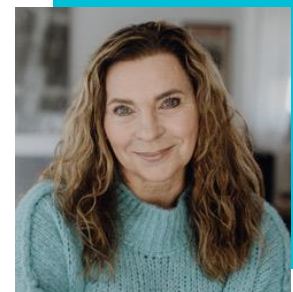


Ed & other characters

I am **Joseph Knitt** and have been performing on stage for various event promoters over the years and have recently been involved with a regional traveling dinner theatre troupe. I am excited for the opportunity to get back to theatre with a talented group of actors telling an engaging story about being on the spectrum in the modern world.

Judy & other characters

I am **Cornelia Gröger**, a bilingual actress, born and raised in Kuwait. I rediscovered my artistic passion whilst living in New York. I am excited and honoured to have been cast as Judy in this brilliant play. Being a mother and teacher myself, I am drawn to the way it explores complex themes such as family dynamics, trust, and the challenges of understanding the world from a different perspective.



Context

COMING-OF-AGE STORIES: A LITERARY GENRE

The *Bildungsroman* – the main features of a genre

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time and the journey on which Christopher goes can be read as a **Coming-of-Age story** or ***Bildungsroman***.

The *Bildungsroman*, or **novel of formation**, traditionally portrays the journey of **its hero** towards their **harmonious integration**, and that of their aspirations, with the demands of the social. The **tension** between the protagonist's ambitions and what society demands, in other words the limitation of such ambitions, is a key aspect of the *Bildungsroman*. The story usually leads to the **reconciliation** of both.

The *Bildungsroman* appears as a genre by the end of the **18th, beginning of the 19th century**. It stems from years of reflexion of what *Bildung* means, a term difficult to translate, as a **humanist ideal of cultivating inner talents**. It mirrors the political revolution of **the Enlightenment**, but at the individual's scale. The desire to break free from old structures while at the same time finding one's own place in the world.

The main story line is built around the protagonist **abandoning their familiar environment** to explore their intellectual and emotional capacities. Psychological **introspection** instils in the novel and one can discern a narrative coherence. The story is either told from the perspective of:

- **a third person narrator**, being an observer of the adventures and character's choices,
- **the hero themselves**. The events are then presented in the first person voice as a form of **fictional autobiography**.

The protagonist will develop individual views and personal values through their journey. The resolution mentioned above, between society's expectations and the lead character, is not always peaceful. By developing their own mind and reaching a form of maturity, the protagonist can end up **challenging the normative social guidelines**.

*“The *Bildungsroman* is thus always also an **interrogation of the respective [hero's] society**”.*

— “*Bildungsroman*”, p.3, Oxford Research Encyclopedia, University of Freiburg, Anne Rüggeheimer.

It is one of the criticisms that is addressed to the genre, subsequently seen as a **normalising genre** that celebrates **the taming of an initially rebellious protagonist** who eventually gives in to social norms.

But what about heroes for whom harmony with society is not eventually achieved? When the opposition between their aspirations and the societal constraints cannot be bridged? The “failure” then portrayed turns the novel into an **Anti-Bildungsroman**.

The Anti-Bildungsroman or novel of disillusion

The *Anti-Bildungsroman* is a broad concept that can cover different literary aspects and plot developments. For instance, one may consider both the following plot lines as its expression:

- The hero **fails** at **complying with** social norms and very often **dies or becomes an outcast**.
- The hero, and much more often, **the heroin, embraces what is expected of them in society, by renouncing their freedom** and “taming” their distinctive minds. Somehow renouncing simultaneously their own potential as heroes.

👉 In ***Lost Illusions***, by French writer **Honoré de Balzac**, Lucien de Rubempré leaves his small town to go to Paris and succeed as **poet and writer**. Quickly, he gives up on his dreams and becomes a **journalist**, a profession that barely saves him from **starvation**. Renouncing his youthful ideals, he gives in to the corruption of the commercialised French society of the time. His Parisian experience leads to **disillusion and doom**. By compromising himself, Lucien neither achieves a harmonious balance between passions and reason nor does he manage to climb the social ladder that remains broken for people of his class. Interested in the story of Lucien? The book was turned into a movie in 2021 by Xavier Giannoli. To see the trailer of *Lost Illusions*: <https://youtu.be/ZgBxByrgGj4>

👉 The novels of **Jane Austen** can illustrate the second category of *Anti-Bildungsroman*. At first glance, a reader might think that they do not subvert ideas of successful self-formation, quite the opposite. Her stories of young women **overcoming prejudice** – seen as the result of female inexperience – are resolved **by happy marriages**, both to the satisfaction of society and the young heroines themselves. However, some critics prefer to describe them as **tales of “humiliating decline”**. By abiding by the rules, the women are **renouncing the authority of their own judgement**. The author herself, with **irony**, acknowledges that her heroines must first **forsake** their own interpretation of the world, because flawed, to then adopt the view of their future husbands. These novels portray the

“incompatibility of striving for intellectual independence and of claiming the social role of the (subordinate) wife and mother”

as described by Anne Rüggeheimer.

Discussion

- In which way does the story of Christopher adopt the main features of the genre? Identify with your students the main points of the plot development.
- Ask your students which stories they all know that do have a similar pattern of development from childhood into adulthood.

A hint at the answer: fairy tales! Either by Perrault or the Grimm Brothers, they do tell us about children leaving their familiar environments and becoming self-reliable through trials.

- Do your students believe that the play is characterized by the final realisation of possibilities or on the contrary, by the realisation of the hero's limitations? In that sense, is it a successful *Bildungsroman* or rather an *Anti-Bildungsroman*?

Further readings of Coming-of-Age stories, all genres included

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë

The Red and the Black, by Stendhal

Little Women, by Louisa May Alcott

Anne of Green Gables, L.M. Montgomery

The trilogy *His Dark Materials*, by Philip Pullman

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis

My brilliant friend, Elena Ferrante

SOURCES:

- Rügemeier, Anne, "[Bildungsroman](#)", Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature, Oxford University Press 19 July 2023
- Engel, Manfred, "[Variants of the Romantic 'Bildungsroman' \(with a short note on the 'artist novel'\)](#)", *Romantic Prose Fiction*, John Benjamins, 1 July 2008

Context

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER AND NEURODIVERGENCE

Neurodivergence & the autism spectrum

Even though it is never directly mentioned in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Christopher is a **neurodivergent** protagonist and displays a behaviour that characterises people on the **autism spectrum**. The novel was published in 2003, when such characters in fiction were quite rare, and awareness of neurodivergence not wide-spread.

The author Mark Haddon, refusing to be seen as an expert on the topic, primarily wanted to write about “difference [...], about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way”. But what exactly does it mean to be neurodivergent and /or to be on the autism spectrum?

[The National Autistic Society](#) in the United Kingdom describes autism as such:

“Autism influences how people experience and interact with the world. [...] We understand the spectrum to mean each autistic person has a unique combination of characteristics. Autistic people can be very different to each other, with different sets of strengths and challenges.”

They identify the following “core characteristics” of autism:

- **Communication:** some people on the autism spectrum might find socialising tiring or confusing and understand words, tone of voice and body language differently.

Christopher, in the play, explains that he finds people confusing for that very reason: **he struggles to interpret non-verbal communication and double-meaning**. Metaphors are for instance very difficult to understand. Why would anyone express their love by saying “he is the apple of my eye” rather than “I love him”? An apple doesn’t seem to have anything to do with love.

- **Behaviours and interests:** people on the spectrum have specific behaviours and strong interests that can affect their daily life. These are sometimes a mechanism to keep calm through repetitions and focus but they can also be obstructive.

Christopher is great at maths and finds **prime numbers** fascinating. In the novel he explains that “prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them.” (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon, Vintage Classics 2012, p.15). In several scenes, he will recite prime numbers as way of calming himself. **Patterns** that can be identified usually help him focus and ignore the chaos around him. He will for instance pay attention to **his steps** “left, right, left, right” or to **the movements of the tube** and its passengers “Train Coming. Train Stopped. Doors open. Train going. Silence.”

Other behaviours can be repeated movements, such as **spinning** around, the preference for order, predictability or routine.

- **Sensory processing:** people on the autism spectrum can be very much or not at all sensitive to the five main senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell) and senses for balance, movement, spatial awareness and awareness of internal states such as hunger and temperature. A person may be very sensitive to one kind of sensory input, but not at all sensitive to another. Their reactions can also change depending on the situation and environment.

There are several scenes during Christopher's journey in which he is **overwhelmed** by the sound and chaos around him. Taking the tube in London is a challenge and leads to exhaustion. Some cities in Europe are now adopting **measures** to help neurodivergent citizens navigate public space and aim at reducing the "**visual smog**" mostly caused by advertising.

A few examples of such measures:

- In the UK, the visitors of the Coventry Central Library can now borrow '**sensory equipment**' such as noise-cancelling headphones, to help them temper with sensory **overload**.
- The **war on "visual smog"** or shift towards cleaner urban spaces is described as a global trend which started in Eastern Europe. In Prague for instance, **billboards** are replaced with **unified and minimalist design**. The train station of Plzeň implemented such changes and pictures taken before and after reveal a quieter public space.

Sensory overload actually impacts everyone. Studies have shown that people living in cities and walking busy streets often experience "**cognitive load**". In the long run, it can lead to a shorter attention span and to reducing our ability to handle stress.

Christopher's story enables us to live in someone else's shoes for a little while, someone whose different perception of the world reveals aspects of it that we might not have thought about ourselves. Representation and diversity in culture, in stories, and especially in theatre, fosters empathy.

Representation – why does it matter?

"If you can see it, you can be it"

Not so long ago, reading about the adventures of a hero like Christopher was fairly difficult. Neurodivergent characters were sometimes misrepresented or only there to **play second fiddle**. Raising awareness and advocating for **inclusion** found an echo in the cultural industry through the question of **representation**.

Representation and diversity on screen, in books and in the media has emerged as a successful way to push forward inclusion and show people that they "can do anything", as Christopher rightly wonders by the end of the play.

Teacher resources

Education pack

Anjali Adukia, Assistant professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, focused her research on the topic and its influence among children in Education. Eventually, the aim of her research is to understand how to give equal opportunities to all children. It is now possible to **measure childhood exposure to different levels of representation and link it to the formation of beliefs, preferences and societal outcomes.**

“I think of representation as a fundamental need: if you don't see yourself represented in the world around you, it can limit what you see as your potential; and similarly, if you don't see others represented, it can limit what you see as their potential; and if you only see certain people represented, then this shapes your subconscious defaults.”

It goes beyond the cultural world, when prominent female scientists are invited to talk about their jobs in **STEMs** to inspire young girls, thereby showing helping them project themselves into such similar careers.

SOURCES:

- [“What is autism?”](#) National Autistic Society UK
- [“The Game I Use to Explain the Challenges of My Son With Autism”](#), Cheyenne G., The Mighty, 14 May 2020
- [“Sensory library opens in Coventry”](#), Josh Giltrap, BBC, 6 March 2025
- [“The War on Visual Smog: Decluttering Public Spaces in Europe”](#), Mia Jones, feedme.design, 7 Sept. 2024.
- [“A manifesto for conscious cities: should streets be sensitive to our mental needs?”](#), Itai Palti and Moshe Bar, The Guardian, 28 Aug. 2015
- [“Books with neurodivergent characters mark new chapter for publishers”](#), Amelia Hill, The Guardian, 14 June 2023
- [“Representation Matters: Exploring the Role of Gender and Race on Educational Outcomes”](#), Interview with Anjali Adukia, Institute of Education Sciences, US, 11 Feb. 2021
- [“Study shows ‘catastrophic’ 10-year low for female representation in film”](#), Benjamin Lee, The Guardian, 21 Feb. 2024
- [“Samantha Morton's moving BAFTA Fellowship Speech”](#), BBC on YouTube, 23 Feb. 2024

Context

SCIENCES IN THEATRE

Christopher loves sciences, especially maths and physics. Did you know that maths could be important too if you one day wish to work in a theatre?

When one thinks of theatre jobs, the first things that come to mind are the artistic professions: the actors, the directors, the dramaturges etc. However, nothing would be possible without the **technical department**: light and sound design, sometimes video design etc. For a performance to go through as planned, on a technical level, you need maths and physics! And computers, and programming!

How so?

For instance, when you are a sound designer, you will need physics to set up the **speakers**. Why? To calculate the best position for **optimal sound distribution** in the theatre, so that every audience member gets the best sound experience possible.

The music or sounds you will hear during a show, as well as the lights you will see, are all **programmed and coded** in advance, during what is called “**tech week**”, and more specifically, “**dry tech**”. The week before the Premiere, everyone working on the play (the costume designer, the props master, the director, the actors etc.) will come together and rehearse in conditions. “Dry tech” is a rehearsal without the actors: it is a time during which the light, sound, video designers and technicians set up the technical sequence of the show. Eventually, the idea is only to have to press buttons during the show itself, following the directions of the Stage Manager. To programme the sounds and light cues, one uses **softwares** such as QLab.

Once the show is ready to be performed, the technical department needs to check and prep the **sound and light desks** before each performance. They are responsible for maintaining and checking the lighting and sound equipment during the performance. Light technicians can be assisted by follow spot operators.

To become a sound or light technician, it is possible to do an **Ausbildung** (apprenticeship): a *Tontechniker Ausbildung* or *Veranstaltungstechniker Ausbildung*. You can also study music production or computer programming originally. Several paths, with the right work experience, can lead to these jobs.



FURTHER RESOURCES:

To know more about the job of a lighting technician:

Presentation of the job <https://youtu.be/CatQ5oh7Sws>

Interview <https://youtu.be/qPjLL7XZk7w>

To know more about the job of a sound technician:

Presentation of the job <https://getintothetheatre.org/blog/what-does-a-sound-technician-do-in-theatre/>

Interview <https://youtu.be/PlVobbQOrJ8>

Curtain up! Creatives in conversation

Interview with Mirta Kljajo, Costume Designer

Can you describe the creation process of a costume? What are its steps?

First you need to **read the script** and to learn about the character to picture them and figure out what type of person they are. Sometimes pieces of clothes are mentioned directly in the text. I write these down and include them in the list of elements that belong to a character.

The second step is to **talk to the director** and understand **their vision** of the story and of each character. You need to make sure that you are on the same page before starting **researching**. I will then assemble everything that reminds me of one character, everything that would contribute to build them and make them exist on stage. It can be research about colours and their meaning, a more general structure, elements in nature etc. I gather them in one document as a source of inspiration. Then I ask myself what they're going to wear and I look for **inspirational styles**. I can have a specific piece of clothes in mind, or a fabric I want to use, a mood I want to give to the character through their costume. That's the case for instance with Roger, the boyfriend of Judy: he is a **douchebag** or a rather unpleasant person. That was inspiration enough to come up with a matching look. I was thinking of men whose behaviour irritates me or gives me that feeling by just looking at them, what they wear, how they are perceived or make themselves look. We talked about it and went back and forth with the director until we had the perfect costume in mind. A lot is happening in my head, but I still need a kind of guide. That's why I gather pictures of clothes that inspire me and draw a little bit.

Then **technical aspects** of costumes come into account: Leon, who plays Christopher, should have shorts. But he needs to carry things around in these shorts, they need pockets. He should be able to move easily in them, crawl on stage for instance, so they shouldn't be too tight etc. I usually attend a **few rehearsals** to understand what characters have to do in this or that costume.

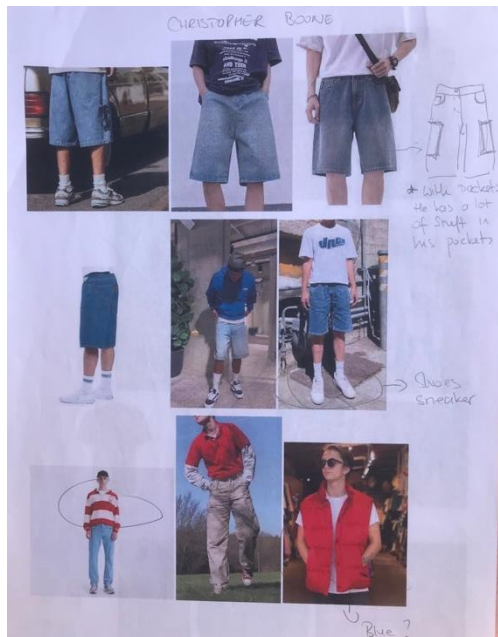
Once I get to that point, I go to the **Fundus** to look for pieces. It is a big hall with all the costumes we have kept from former plays. It is always good to try reusing costumes rather than buying new ones and ending up hoarding more clothes. I try to find **sustainable** options for my designs. You can also buy costumes or borrow them from other theatres. You can create them from scratch too or buy a base and alter them. It depends! I ask the actors for their measurements and then adapt the clothes to them. We then organise **costume fittings** to make the last alterations.



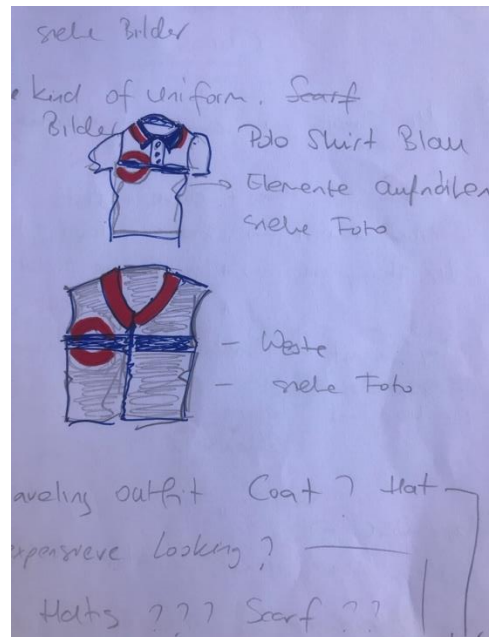
Teacher resources

Education pack

After dress rehearsals, it happens that some pieces must be replaced, that we have to alter some clothes for **security reasons** or because they are missing a pocket. Anything making the actors' life easier is taken into account. All costumes need to fit together as well, which is something we can only see during a rehearsal. **Actors** need to feel comfortable and shouldn't be disturbed in any way by what they are wearing. I also ask them how they perceive their character and what they think of the pieces we have put together so far. It should serve their vision too. Once the show starts, everybody keeps an eye on it, the actors, the **dressers** etc. and we mend anything that rips or get too used.



Working sheet for the character of Christopher Boone.



Research for the travel vest of London tube's information desk assistants.

Which of these steps is your favourite?

It is going to the **Fundus** and be surrounded by thousands of costumes. I love to look through them and find just the right piece I need. It is different when you search for a costume online, because pictures and descriptions are never as accurate as you'd like them to be.

Where do you find the inspiration to create a costume? Is it in shows you watch, in everyday life...?

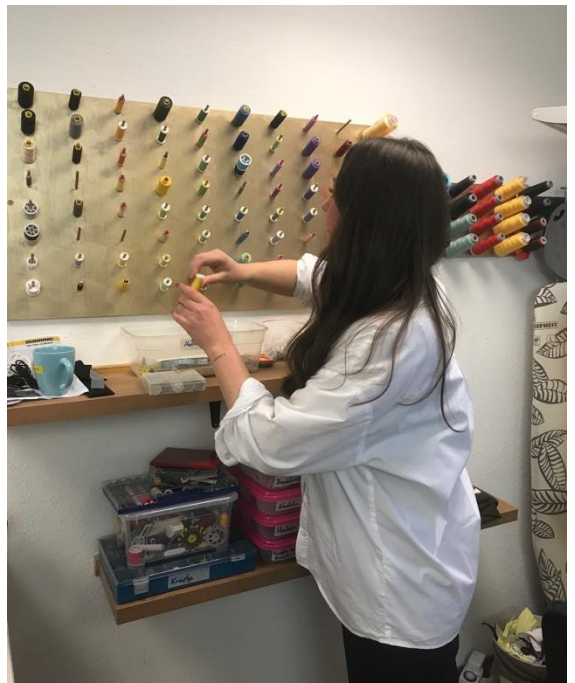
It depends on the play, honestly. Because for most, it is going to be about creating costumes in an **everyday and street style**. For this play for instance, because it is set in a specific time, the 2000s, I could get inspired by myself! And how me and friends dressed then, it was fun. They are iconic pieces and figures linked to every period, it was great going through them and rediscovering them. The IT-girls at the time were Mischa Barton, Lindsey Lohan or Hilary Duff and we were looking up to them fashion-wise. One piece of clothes that immediately came to my mind was this very skinny and long scarf that women were wearing. Long tank tops, long skinny jeans or mid-length trousers in denim or linen were stylish back then, variations of capri pants. Cargo pants too. High heels, high-heel boots, big jewellery. And a lot of layers! Skirt over pants was a thing. Sweet sweet memories!

Teacher resources

Education pack

In your theatre career, which costume was the most difficult to create and why?

Well, it's only been two years! But if I must think of one, then it was for our musical ***Something Rotten!***. There was this **one dress**, Renaissance-style, with a metal **crinoline**, **corset** and cushions. We bought it from another theatre, it was beautifully made! However, we had to alter it to make it smaller. It was such a challenge! Fun, for sure, but still difficult.



Depending on the play, how many costumes can be created for one show? Do you have a range?

Usually, they are **two costumes per role**, including a few accessories, shoes etc. So, if the play has 2 actors, depending on the number of roles, we can have maybe **6 to 10 costumes for one play**. For *Something Rotten!*, each actor had about 8 roles. With 2 costumes per role or so, and with 14 actors, you do the maths... We had **more than 200 costumes**. It is a wide range!

In *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, which costume was the most fun to design?

I have to say Roger! Just because he needed to give this vibe of “**douchebagginess**” away. It was fun to ask myself how to translate that feeling into clothes. I had immediately a certain jacket in mind and a specific style. It was interesting to create!

What is your favourite moment in the play?

I just really like the character of **Christopher and his arch, his journey**. How he gathers the courage to leave his town and the process he goes through until he makes up his mind. It is very moving when he acknowledges that he was very brave, and how he learns to help himself by overcoming his fears, at least for a while.

It is important to have people **learn about autism**, what a noisy and chaotic environment means for neurodivergent people. The play shows how hard it can be to evolve in society with a weight on one's shoulders. It doesn't prevent Christopher from succeeding, which is inspiring.

Is there something you would like the audience to pay particular attention to?

I would advise them to pay attention to **all the side characters and smaller roles**. It is often very funny, or it gives a clue as to what is going on, to observe what they are doing behind and around the walls. When Mrs Alexander is talking to Christopher in front of her house and neighbours come peak at the scene... it gives a good idea of what Swindon is like as a town.

Teacher resources

Education pack

In Germany, how can one become a costume designer?

The typical study path would be to **study costume design**. However, you can also study fashion design. Whatever you choose to study, costume or fashion design, I really recommend doing an **Ausbildung as a tailor** first, because this will help a lot, also at understanding costumes. If you don't have the ability to sew, it will be more difficult. **Costume history** is also important to know about: the decades, the styles, what was typical for each period etc. Most of costume designers are working as **freelancers** in Germany. It is quite rare to become a regular employee. You then apply to work on different shows.

Is there a designer that you particularly admire for their work?

I really admire **Hussein Chalayan** for the way he connects architecture and fashion. He is also bringing politics into some of his creations, giving them so many different layers. I am thinking of one of his installations, *Afterwords* (2000): in this piece, living-room furniture is transformed into clothing and accessories. Chalayan refers to the plight of refugees of the Kosovo War (1998–9) who were forced to flee suddenly, taking their possessions with them. As I was once a refugee, this talks to me personally. I also love the work of **Alexander McQueen!** I enjoy his avantgarde style. He also used historical elements in his designs (from the Victorian Gothic for instance) while subverting them. His work was always beautifully tailored and with remarkable draping. It is hard to describe him! His designs were just beautiful and incredible!



The three police agents' hats used in the play



Costumes packed and ready to go to the Volksbühne for the dress rehearsals.

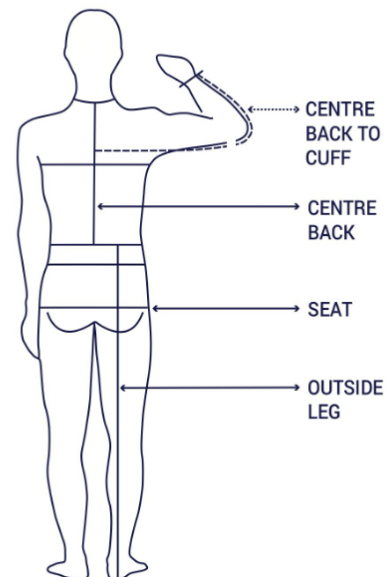
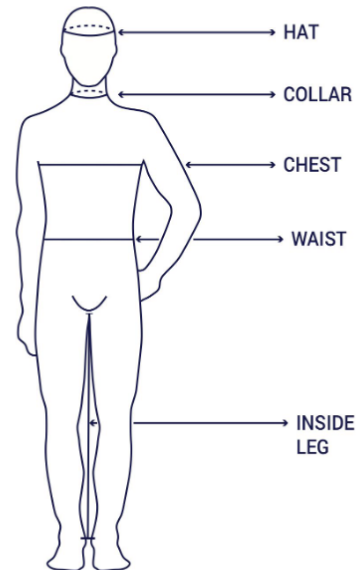
Template of a costume measurement form.

MENS MEASUREMENT FORM

ARTIST:
TELEPHONE:

CHARACTER:
PRODUCTION:

HEIGHT*
CHEST*
WAIST*
HIPS*
INSIDE LEG*
OUTSIDE LEG*
HAT
CENTRE BACK (RÜCKENLÄNGE)
BACK WIDTH (RÜCKENBREITE)
COLLAR
SEAT
CROTCH FROM WAIST
SHOE SIZE
CENTRE BACK TO CUFF
SHOULDER (SCHULTERLÄNGE)
LENGTH ARM (ÄRMELLÄNGE)
AROUND KNEE
AROUND CALF
AROUND ANKLE
BICEPS
UNTERARM
WRIST
Suit size
T-Shirt size
Jeans size



NOTES

Activities

BEFORE THE PLAY

Celebrating humanism with Maya Angelou – Reading and / or listening comprehension of “Human Family”

Christopher’s story is a tale about what can be perceived as **different**, out of the norm. It shows how the world is understood and inhabited differently from one person to another, making **empathy** a fundamental feeling and key to living together. However, Christopher is also, and perhaps first and foremost, a teenager trying to work out his way in the world, like any other teenager growing up. This tension between **uniqueness and universality** is also expressed in this poem of Maya Angelou, “Human Family”, published in her fifth collection of poetry in 1990 *I Shall Not Be Moved*.

- The poem can be found online: <https://allpoetry.com/Human-Family>
- To listen to it in class, read by Maya Angelou herself at the United Nations in 1996, have a look here: <https://youtu.be/lnU25q6Hw9E>

Maya Angelou (1928-2014) is an acclaimed American poet, storyteller, activist, and autobiographer. As a **civil rights** activist, Angelou worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Her first collection of poetry and autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), deals with her early years in Long Beach, St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas. Exploring the traumas of her childhood, this book remains her most famous work. Angelou’s use of fiction-writing techniques like dialogue and plot was innovative for its time and helped, in part, to complicate the autobiography genre’s relationship with truth and memory.

General observations and discussion about the poem:

- The structure of the poem and alternance of focus: the poet starts by describing what makes us unique as individuals, both physically but also in terms of temper, qualities, aspirations. However, and almost imperceptibly, she switches to focus on the universality of our desires and ambitions.
- Ask your students, once they have read the poem, to sort the vocabulary in these different lexical fields: the body or physical aspect, the mind and personality.
- The poem relies heavily on **oxymorons**, as if to exemplify formally the differences we find between human beings. However, the pronoun “we” resolves this first opposition, from the 7th stanza on.

- Ask your students to underline all pronouns. Make them notice how, from the isolate 'I' of the poet, the text evolves into a 'we'. They can also highlight all contrary words: "laugh" and "moan", "minor" and "major" etc. What do they think the poet is trying to symbolise through these oppositions? How does it make them feel?
- What do your students think about the poem being read at the United Nations? For them, what is the relationship between the arts and politics? To answer this question, they can have a look at the biography of Maya Angelou and see how she managed to interweave both.
- To read further: another great analysis of the power of language (and its political strength too) can be found in Toni Morrison's Nobel Lecture, in 1993. One can read it in its entirety here: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1993/morrison/lecture/> or listen to it here: <https://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/?id=1502>

SOURCES

- "[Maya Angelou](#)", The Poetry Foundation
- "[Human Family](#)", *I Shall Not Be Moved* (1990)
- "[Maya Angelou's Wise Words - 'The Human Family'](#)" | Poet | United Nations Archives
- [Toni Morrison's Nobel Lecture](#), December 7, 1993, NobelPrize.org

Activities

WHILE WATCHING

Quiz

1/ What was Mrs Shears' dog killed with?

- a. A **shovel**
- b. Poison
- c. A garden **fork**

2/ What pet does Christopher have?

- a. A gold fish
- b. A rat
- c. A dog

3/ Why does Christopher make this special gesture with his dad, when he holds his hand out with his fingers stretched and they touch Ed's fingers?

- a. He cannot stand being touched and it is the only physical contact he agrees to have with loved ones
- b. It is a secret signal he uses when he is in danger
- c. In the 2000s, it was the equivalent of a high-five

4/ When Christopher says that he will find out who killed Wellington, how does his father react?

- a. He tells him to stay out of it
- b. He encourages him
- c. He quickly changes the topic

5/ What does Mrs Alexander reveal to Christopher during their walk in the park?

- a. Who killed Wellington
- b. That Mr Shears killed his mother
- c. That his mother had an affair with Mr Shears

6/ How did Christopher's mother die?

- a. She had to go to the hospital because of heart problem
- b. She was run over by a car
- c. She disappeared

7/ What is Christopher fascinated by?

- a. History
- b. Space
- c. Volcanos

NOTES

Write your thoughts on the play, pay attention to the props used on stage, the costumes, the music etc.

Teacher resources

Education pack

8/ What does Christopher find when looking for his book in his father's bedroom?

- a. Letters from his mother
- b. A bag full of money
- c. Pictures of Mrs Shears

9/ At the end of the first act, Christopher finds out that... (multiple answers)

- a. His father killed Wellington
- b. His mother is alive
- c. Mrs Alexander lied to him about the affair between his mother and Mr Shears

10/ Why does Christopher leave Swindon to go to London?

- a. Because he misses his mother
- b. Because he's scared of his father
- c. Because his father told him to

11/ What does Christopher do to remain calm in public spaces, when he is overwhelmed by what surrounds him?

- a. He puts headphones over his ears, not to hear the noise
- b. He caresses his pet rat, Toby
- c. He imagines a red line on the floor and walks alongside it rhythmically

12/ How does Christopher escape from the policeman on the train?

- a. He hides between luggage
- b. He hides in the bathroom
- c. He gets off at the next station and runs away

14/ What is Christopher doing on the tube's tracks?

- a. He's running away from the police
- b. He tripped and fell down
- c. He's trying to save his pet rat, Toby

15/ Christopher is finally reunited with his mother. However, he wishes to go back to Swindon, why?

- a. Because he misses his father
- b. Because he wants to take his maths A-level
- c. Because he is afraid of Roger

16/ When Judy and Christopher leave London, Judy says that they have no choice or "someone is going to get hurt". What does she mean?

- a. That Roger is a violent man and could hurt his partner
- b. That Judy will lose her mind
- c. That Toby will be hurt by Roger

17/ What mark does Christopher get for his maths A-Level?

- a. B-, which is disappointing
- b. He fails his exam
- c. A*, the best possible result

NOTES

Write your thoughts on the play, pay attention to the props used on stage, the costumes, the music etc.

*What does your character look like?
Draw a picture*

Activities

AFTER THE PLAY

Character Exploration

Pick one character in the play. Have a thought about them and which scenes they are in. Answer the following questions as your character.

Character's full name:

Age:

Education

How far did you get in school? What did you study?

Profession

Current job _____

Where do you work? _____

What do you do there? _____

Do you like it? YES NO SOMETIMES

Why? _____

Hobbys

What do you like to do in your spare time? _____

Is there a particular talent you have? _____

Teacher resources

Education pack

What other likes and dislikes do you have? _____

What scares you? _____

What makes you laugh? _____

Family & Friends

Describe your family _____

Describe your friends. Who is your closest friend? Who do you spend the most time with?

Who do you care about the most and why? _____

What is your motto in life?

Anything else we should know?

Activities

AFTER THE PLAY

Scene worksheet

Students in the group: _____

Title of the scene (find a title that suits the moment in the play you have chosen to work on):

Setting

Name the characters in the scene:

Where does the scene take place?

Describe the scene

How does it start? _____

What is the weird / exciting / special / upsetting thing happening? _____

How does it end? _____

Who do you think is the main character? And why?

What do they want? What is their goal?

Activities

AFTER THE PLAY

Point of view... Point at a view

Activity

Break into small groups of 4-5 people. One person from this group should silently point at something they are looking at, either outside or across the room etc. Then all members of the group will follow, look and point in the same direction (at what they believe the first person is pointing at). Arms down. They spend one minute **silently** observing where they pointed: they should think about the size and colour of this object, how it makes them feel, whether it is permanent or not etc.). On the count of three, all people in the group will name the item they were looking at.

Discussion

Did you name the same item? Did you name different aspects of the same item? What other thought did you have about that item, after observing it for a minute?

The goal here is not to “correctly” name the same item, but rather to **notice** when it is the same, when it is close, or vastly different and **why** that might be. Sometimes, when we think we are looking at the same thing, we are not. And even if we are looking at the same thing, we perceive it differently. Our own biases, memories, tastes affect what we notice.

Three changes

Activity

Have participants in groups of twos (A and B). Have them stand across from each other and observe each other for 30 seconds. Then, have them turn their backs to each other. A should change 3 things about their appearance and raise their hand when done. The pairs will then face each other again: B will try to identify the 3 changes. After one minute, regardless of if everything has been guessed, they can discuss their experience, what they missed, why etc.

Now, have them turn back again. Have B change 3 things about their appearance, and once finished, raise their hand. Before they turn back, ask A what colour B’s eyes are. Turn around to see if correct and have them guess the three changes too.

Discussion

Ask pairs how they felt with the changing of the rules. Did anyone guess the right eye colour? What does it say about our ability to observe each other, what details stick out...

Appendix

ANSWER SHEET

Quiz

1/ What was Mrs Shears' dog killed with?

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- b. Poison
- c. A garden fork**

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Teacher resources

Education pack

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Appendix

REFERENCES & VOCABULARY

References

Tony Awards are the annual awards for American theatre. They were established in 1947 and are intended to recognise excellence in plays and musicals staged on Broadway. Awards are given for best play, best musical, best play revival, and best musical revival, and in categories such as acting, directing, music, choreography, set design, and costume design.

Broadway is a street running the length of Manhattan in New York City. It has been associated with American theatre since 1735, when the first theatre opened there. By the end of the 20th century, the word Broadway had come to refer to a category (a theatre with more than 500 seats) and a sensibility (commercial theatre run strictly for profit). Throughout the century, however, the word was most closely associated with the American musical.

The West End is an area in central London where one can find many theatres, including the Harold Pinter Theatre, Savoy Theatre and Trafalgar Theatre. Long-running shows are performed there, mostly musicals: the longest running show of the West End is *Les Misérables* with more than 15000 performances since October 1985!

The **Enlightenment** or the “Age of Reason”, began in Europe in the 1700s and spread to many parts of the world. The thinkers of the Enlightenment objected to the absolute power of the royal rulers and of the Roman Catholic church. They used reason, or logical thinking, and science to attack this power. Their ideas helped bring about the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

Honoré de Balzac (1799 - 1850) was a French literary artist who produced a vast number of novels and short stories collectively called *La Comédie humaine* (The Human Comedy). He helped to establish the traditional form of the novel.

Jane Austen (1775 - 1817) was an English novelist known primarily for her six novels, which implicitly interpret, critique, and comment on the English landed gentry at the end of the 18th century. Austen's plots often explore the dependence of women on marriage for the pursuit of favourable social standing and economic security. Her use of social commentary, realism, wit, and irony have earned her acclaim amongst critics and scholars.

The American Civil Rights Movement is a mass protest movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern United States that came to national prominence during the mid-1950s. This movement had its roots in the centuries-long efforts of enslaved Africans and their descendants to resist racial oppression and abolish the institution of slavery. Through nonviolent protest, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s broke the pattern of public facilities being segregated by race in the South. Although the passage in 1964 and 1965 of major civil rights legislation was victorious for the movement, by then militant Black activists had begun to see their struggle as a freedom or liberation movement not just seeking civil rights reforms but instead confronting the enduring economic, political, and cultural consequences of past racial oppression.

Vocabulary

Affair: a sexual relationship between two people not married to each other.

Airing cupboard: a heated cupboard in which clothes are placed to warm or fully dry them.

A-Level: the British equivalent of the Abitur.

Anemia: a medical condition meaning that you don't have enough red blood cells.

Billboards: a flat surface on which large advertisements or notices are posted.

Bloke: slang word for a person, "a guy".

Caution: in this context (a police station), a written warning indicating a precedent.

Carriage: one part or section of a train that carries passengers.

To comply with: to obey, to follow instructions.

To chase someone: to follow someone intently in order to overtake or arrest.

Chow: informal synonym of "food" or "meal".

Clues: anything that guides or directs in the solving of a problem, game, puzzle, etc.

To confiscate something from someone: to seize / to take away something by authority.

Corset: stiff undergarment, worn esp. to support the hips and waist.

Crinoline: a petticoat or frame worn under a full skirt to keep it belled out.

Distraught: to be deeply agitated.

Douchebag: a self-absorbed man, quite obnoxious.

Dressers: a person employed to dress actors and care for costumes in a theatre.

Dustbin: garbage, trash bin.

To fetch something: to bring something, to go get something.

Figurative sense (\neq literal sense): when words are used, not with their basic meaning, but with a more imaginative meaning, in order to create a special effect (like metaphors or with irony etc.).

Footnotes: additional piece of information printed at the bottom of a page.

Fork: cutlery to eat or a farm tool.

To forsake: to quit or leave entirely, to abandon.

To get cross: to get angry or agitated.

Teacher resources

Education pack

Handyman: a person hired to do small maintenance or repair jobs (see below: 'odd jobs').

To impale: to pierce through (something or someone's body)

To lose my rag: to lose patience, to get angry.

Monkey business: mischievous or disrespectful behaviour.

Neurodivergence: showing patterns of thought or behaviour that are different from neurotypical people. We can talk of neurodivergence when people have ADHD, have dys- conditions or are on the autism spectrum.

Neurotypical: not displaying or characterized by autistic or other neurologically atypical patterns of thought or behaviour.

Odd jobs: occasional isolated work, small jobs of different types, especially those that involve repairing or cleaning things.

Outcast: a person who is rejected or cast out, as from home or society.

Overload: a load or burden that is too much.

Oxymoron: a figure of speech that uses two words or phrases that seem to be contradictory or opposite, such as "cruel kindness."

To play second fiddle: to play a secondary role.

Precedent: an action, situation or decision that has already happened and can be used as a reason why a similar action or decision should be performed or made ("to set a precedent")

Prime numbers: a whole number, greater than 1, and that cannot be exactly divided by another whole number other than itself and 1.

Quid: synonym for "money".

Reconciliation: the act of bringing two different things, or two persons angry at each other, into agreement.

Revision: to practice, prepare for something.

To scarper: to run away.

Shovel: a tool used to dig in the ground, for instance to plant flowers, like a big spoon.

Smog: smoke or other gases that pollute, combined with fog in an unhealthy or irritating mixture

Starvation: a condition of great weakness or death due to lack of food.

STEMs: abbreviation for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Teacher resources

Education pack

To sort something out: to find a solution.

To spin: to rotate rapidly, to twirl

To trespass: entering someone's property without permission.

To tame: to domesticate, to harness or control

Tube: the subway.

Utility room: a room for tools or appliances for domestic work.