

RSC

ROYAL
SHAKESPEARE
COMPANY

THE
BOX
OF
DELIGHTS
BY PIERS TORDAY BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JOHN MASEFIELD

IMAGE BY P. S. VISUAL ILLUSTRATIONS © P. S.



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The activities provided in this pack are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students attending the performance but all activities can be adapted for learners of different ages and abilities. These activities aim to help students explore some important features of the text and production, using the RSC's rehearsal processes.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



WRITE

A classroom writing or discussion activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses and research tasks

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

This 2023 production of *The Box of Delights* is based on the original stage production first produced by Wilton's Music Hall and Hero Productions at Wilton's Music Hall. Directed by Justin Audibert and designed by Tom Piper, this festive production follows orphaned schoolboy Kay Harker who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams. Caught up in a battle between two powerful magicians, Kay fights to save not just the people he loves but also the future of Christmas itself.



Photo by Manuel Harlan © RSC

EXPLORING THE STORY



SYNOPSIS

Watch our [*The Box of Delights* - Trailer](#).

DAYDREAMING

In a dusty old attic, Grandpa Kay Harker comforts his Grandson after he worries about what Christmas will be like now that his parents have divorced. Grandpa shows him an empty vial which once contained magic and asks the young schoolboy if he dreams. Suddenly, the schoolboy is transported to a time just before the war. He finds himself sat in a train carriage as the young Grandpa Kay Harker (Kay).

THE OLD MAN AND HIS DOG

Kay meets a mysterious travelling Showman and his dog Barney who tell him he will have to save Christmas. Shadowy figures appear who are desperate to seek an Old Man (Cole Hawling) and his Dog. Kay arrives at Caroline's (his guardian) and is delighted to discover his friends - Maria and Peter Jones are there. Kay summons Cole to perform a Punch and Judy show. Cole tells a story of two rival wizards who compete to find out who is the greatest magician. One finds an eternal life elixir in a vial, and the other returns with a magical Box of Delights which can transport you through time. Suddenly, two shadowy men try to steal the box but Cole magically escapes through a painting.

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS

Kay is entrusted with the Box of Delights which must not get into the hands of Abner Brown, a devil in a dressing gown. Abner and his companion Sylvia Daisy Pouncer concoct a devious plan to retrieve the Box, they torture their new hostage - Cole. Kay rallies Maria and Peter to go rescue Cole.

THE KIDNAPPING

At Tadchester Cathedral, the Christmas party is a seeming success. However, one by one all the townspeople are kidnapped and it's up to Kay to rescue them. Abner speaks to an all-seeing 'Head' who tells him he must stop Christmas from happening and retrieve the Box so he isn't sent back to his own time.

SAVING CHRISTMAS

Kay races to save everyone trapped but Abner floods where the captives are being held with water. Kay manages to save almost everyone by conjuring a Sailboat from his imagination. Kay sacrifices the Box to Abner in order to save Maria but a flood washes away Abner and the Box. Everyone manages to make it in time to Tadchester Cathedral to sing and celebrate Christmas.

THE PHOENIX

The schoolboy realises he's back in the attic with his grandad. He asks if that was a dream or a story because everything looked so real. Grandad says the only thing that matters is how it made you feel. He holds up the empty vial, and says we never really lose anyone we love because we hold them in our memory. Suddenly, a Phoenix soars through the attic, illuminating everything with its fiery glow.



Photo by Manuel Harlan © RSC



ACTIVITY 1: EXPLORING THE TONE

“In the rehearsal room, we often discussed how multi-faceted this play was and how flexible actors needed to be. It’s such a heightened show and the story is at times a comedy, an adventure, it’s a period piece which is set just before the war, at times it’s a thriller and downright scary, and other times it transforms into a fantasy. We spoke a lot about how we can explore the tone of this piece.”

Thyrza Abrahams, Assistant Director, Box of Delights, RSC 2023

This exercise will encourage students to become comfortable working practically by exploring the effects of storytelling styles and devices. *(This exercise will take 25 minutes. It’s best suited to a hall but can be done in a classroom. You will need pens, paper and Resource A: Act 1 Scene 3: Kay, Maria and Peter from the end of this pack).*

- Ask the students to discuss their favourite genres of books, tv, film and theatre as a group. Encourage them to focus on the different tropes or devices used in each of these genres. Tropes are a commonly used and understood storytelling device which quickly and efficiently communicates something figurative to an audience. (e.g. the Superhero and Super Villain Archetypes like ‘Batman’ and the ‘Joker’ to communicate the moral struggle between Good and Evil or the cliffhanger at the end of a Soap Opera episode.)
- Read the scene between Kay, Maria and Peter (ACT 1 SCENE 3) from Resource A.
- Ask the students to get into groups of 3 or 4 and invite the students to explore different tones and styles in the scene.
- Invite them to experiment reading the scene in the following styles and give them examples where needed:
 - Sitcom (Comedy)
 - Historical Period Piece
 - Horror
 - Film Noir
 - Silent Film
 - RomCom
 - Soap Opera/Telenovela
- If the students feel comfortable, invite them to each share their work with the group.
- Encourage the students to reflect on what they found funny, sad, or what styles worked against the text and investigate why this scene might not suit a particular genre, and which style and tone lends itself comfortably.

Reflection Point

Discuss how altering the tone of a piece can affect an audience. *How might this be used to influence people? What examples can you find in our world today? What other purposes could there be for changing the tone?*



ACTIVITY 2: THE MAGICAL BLUEPRINT

“Often, a rehearsal period will start with a Table Read, this is where the creatives and actors sit down and read through the play and at the end of each scene they discuss the Characters, Themes and Story. During this process, there were lots of discussions about the core tropes which feature in The Box Of Delights which have since become a staple of modern day ‘Magical Realism’ and are central to many of our most recent well-loved stories such as Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings and His Dark Materials.”

This exercise will help students explore symbolism in stories and also the process of creating characters and plot. The exercise will take 30 - 45 minutes. (*This exercise can be done in a classroom, it may be helpful to put tables and chairs to one side to create a bit of space. You will need pens and paper, and if you would like to create a spider map, you will also need A2 Paper and marker pens.*)

- As a group, research and create a spider map of all the magical tropes (devices) you can think of in *The Box Of Delights* which also feature in your favourite books/films (examples can be found in devices such as the *Wardrobe in Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the *Port Key*, the *eternal Elixir Vial*, flying cars such as in *Harry Potter*, trio of young people embarking on a quest trope, a mystical guardian figure like in *Lord of the Rings*, etc.) Ask your students to write down what the core of each of their favourite stories are about (e.g., in *Harry Potter*: Love is the most powerful magic of all or *Lord of the Rings*: even the smallest person can affect huge change.)
- **Creating a Monster:** We are now going to explore meaningful emotions through the device of Magical Realism. Organise the students into groups of 4 or 5 and assign each group a powerful emotion such as Anger, Insecurity, Grief, Jealousy, Hopelessness and Fear. Ask the students to write their word in the centre of a new sheet of paper. Ask the students to create a spider map of the qualities of their emotion: *Where does it manifest most in the body? What tempo does it most feel like? Is hopelessness slow? What other qualities can they use to describe their emotion? Is anger hot and spiky? Does it feel like a liquid or a solid?*
- Inform the students that they have 5 minutes to create a character/monster that is a magical embodiment of their emotion. Ask the students the following prompts: *What form do they take? Is Sadness like water? Is Anger fiery? Does their monster feel elemental, or do they take the form of an animal like a Bear or a ball of Snakes? What powers would they have and how would they use them? Do they have an object which is the source of their power, like Abner's magical black glove? What is their monster's name? How do they move, how do they take up space in a room? Are they gigantic or tiny? Do they hold eye contact or are they shifty, or do they only stare down at the floor?*
- **Creating a Hero:** Now ask the students to list their best qualities in themselves. From this list, assign each group a quality which has been mentioned such as: Bravery, Kindness, Organisation Skills, Joy, Compassion. Inform the students they have 5 minutes to create a 'Hero' character inspired by their assigned quality (i.e Bravery). *How does this affect their physicality, what do they sound like? What is their power? Do they have an object to symbolise their power (i.e an object for Bravery could be a magical sword, an object for Joy could be shooting light orbs out of a wand. Kindness could be a magical fluffy cloak which envelopes people in need in a warm hug.)* Encourage students to push their imaginations and think outside the box.
- **Movie Trailer:** The core of a good story is Character. Now that we have established our characters and our conflict, inform the students they have 10 minutes to create a movie trailer inspired by their two character creations. Within each group there must be a narrator, and an ensemble which depict the narration as well as sound effects which support the story telling or characterisation.
- Structurally, the movie trailer should also include:
 - Introducing the two opposing characters and what they represent to the audience.
 - The two characters meeting and entering into a battle.
 - How that battle resolves and the story ends. *Does the Hero triumph over the Monster, do they befriend one another? Does the monster prevail?*

Reflection Point:

Invite the students to discuss the following questions. *Is it escapist to enjoy Magical Realism or is it beneficial in offering a fresh perspective and a way to process important emotions and challenging experiences? Why is magical realism so popular in today's media? Magical Realism exists to explore big ideas in a real-world setting, what do you think are some of the big ideas in *The Box of Delights*?*

EXPLORING THE CHARACTERS



ACTIVITY 3: ACTORS PUPPETRY WORKSHOP

“The scale of this story is so big and puppetry is an integral element to the storytelling. Many of the actors were completely new to puppetry and so this was an exercise which helped the ensemble. We used plastic bags because they are so easy to manipulate and move into shapes, as well as move around a space.”

Thyrza Abrahams, Assistant Director, Box of Delights, RSC 2023

This exercise will introduce the basic principles of puppetry to students and will take 25 minutes. *The exercise should be done in a hall so the students have space to move around. Each student will need a soft plastic bag and Resource B: Act 1 Scene 2: The Old Man and his Dog from the end of this pack.*

Kay Harker uses the Box of Delights to become as small as a mouse, he spends a lot of time trying to rescue the people of Condicote in this form in order to sneak in unnoticed. In rehearsals, the actors did a puppet workshop using plastic bags as they were easy to manipulate and move into shapes.

- Invite the students into small groups and read the excerpt from Scene 2: The Old Man and his Dog (Resource B).
- Invite the students to each choose a plastic bag (this could alternatively be done with school jackets or anything else that is on hand, flexible and light).
- Invite the students to explore individually what shapes they can make with their object. Once they have found something comfortable, start allowing the puppets to ‘breathe’. *What does this breath look like for this puppet? Do they expand gently? Does their chest rise and fall? Do you breathe with the puppet?*
- Encourage the students to explore how it walks around the space. *Is it flighty and defensive or fluid and carefree? Occasionally, remind the students to drop their shoulders and shake out any tension in their arms during this exercise.*
- Invite the students to experiment with how their puppet interacts with other puppets. *Are they cautious? Are they super friendly and outgoing? Are there size differences which might affect the puppet’s ability to have easy eye contact?*
- As an additional exercise you can offer the students to get into groups of 3 and see if they can work as a team to create one single puppet, *do they take one leg each? Or are there no legs, and their puppet has wings?*
- Finally, invite the students into groups of 3 and take turns rehearsing the scene using their puppet to play ‘Barney’ the Dog. You can invite the students to share their work with the class, and reflect on what made the puppets feel alive in the scene. *If something didn’t work, what ideas and offerings do students have to help breathe more life into the puppets?*

PRODUCTION NOTES:

The choreographer Simon Pittman put on a playlist of music, a few tracks were calm and some were more upbeat. If you have the resources to do this, it is an effective way to help focus the room and enable the students to feel freer as well as an effective exercise in how different music affects the tempo, mood and movement of their puppets.



ACTIVITY 4: EXPLORING CHARACTERISATION

This guided visualisation exercise helps students expand their imagination as well as gain a further insight into the character of Abner Brown. As storytellers, it's important that we don't judge any characters, and we try to understand what motivates them in order to gain an understanding and empathy for them and their behaviour. *This exercise will take 20 minutes and should be done in a hall, or a classroom with lots of space to safely move around. You will need Resource C: Act 2 Scene 2 (Abner's Plan) and Resource D: Guided Visualisation, (Abner's Lair).*

- Gather your students and form a seated circle. Ask them to read aloud this scene (Resource C, Act 2 Scene 2 Abner's Plan) as a group, start around the circle with one student, and change to the next student in the circle when a full stop is reached.
- Ask your students to call out the first words that come to mind when they think of Abner Brown. *Is he a Villain, Evil, the Baddie, Monster, Wicked?* He is described in the play as a "Devil in a Dressing Gown".
- In the play, Abner Brown is trying to stop Christmas at Tadchester so that he isn't sent back to his own time and he can be reunited with his Box of Delights which was stolen from him by Cole Hawkings. He tortures, kidnaps and kills in order to try and retrieve the Box. Ask the students to put themselves in Abner's shoes. *How might he feel about his Box of Delights being stolen? What reasons might he have to explain his actions in the story?*
- **Mirroring:** Organise the students into pairs, assigning one person A and the other person B. Ask the pairs to find a space in the room facing one another. In their pairs, ask the students to slowly mirror one another. First, Student A will lead. Invite Student A to raise their hand slowly, and Student B will copy their movement as if they are a mirror image. Invite Student A to shift their weight very slowly onto their right, and Student B to follow whatever movement Student A makes as if they are their mirror image. Encourage Student A, with both feet firmly on the floor to explore what movements they can make with their mirror image. Now ask the students to swap round and repeat the exercise with Student B leading the movements and Student A becoming the mirror image.
- **Gentle Guide:** Invite Student B to close their eyes, and Student A to gently take Student B by the arm, being careful to not hold by any joints. Student A is going to take Student B on a 15 second journey to a different place in the room, being careful to avoid any obstacles or other travelling pairs. Invite the pairs to check in with one another that they are happy and comfortable. Invite the students to swap round, with Student A closing their eyes and Student B gently leading Student A on a 15 second journey to another part of the room. Invite the pairs to quickly check in with one another again.
- This time, Student A is going to take Student B on a longer journey around the room. Remind the students to move very slowly and carefully around the space, making a lot of room around other partners. As they move, you (the teacher) are going to read aloud Resource D (Abner's Guided Visualisation). As you read aloud the visualisation, you can encourage the students to gently touch and explore objects such as a wall, or a table and imagine that they are sweeping fresh snow off the grass, or the brick facade of Abner's lair. After you have read the visualisation, ask the students to swap around so that Student B is leading Student A. Now repeat the exercise.

Reflection Point:

Invite the students to reflect on the exercise. *Have they reviewed their opinion of Abner? Can they empathise more with his intentions and behaviour? Where do they feel most comfortable and happy? How does the environment and setting affect your mood? Do they often notice a correlation between the outer space, and their inner world?*

EXPLORING THE THEMES

Theme 1: IMAGINATION & DREAMS

ACTIVITY 5: IMAGINATION

“We often spoke about imagination, dreams and stories. How they can be used as escapism or to save us, that we can find solace in stories, and it can be a powerful tool to enact meaningful change.”

Thyrza Abrahams, Assistant Director, Box of Delights, RSC 2023

This free writing exercise helps students tap into their unfiltered imagination. The principle of automatic writing is that there is no self editing, no-one but the writer will see what is written, and once the pen hits the paper you keep writing words, if the writer feels stuck on a thought you can either keep writing out the same word again until you are able to continue the thought. Keeping the flow going is fundamental to this exercise.

(This exercise will take 20 minutes, you will need pens and paper. You will need Resource E: Act 2 Scene 5: The Flood and the Sailboat from the end of this pack).

- Invite the students to read Resource E (Act 2 Scene 5) in pairs.
- For 10 minutes, invite the students to begin free writing inspired by this scene and prompted by questions. Ask the students to imagine the sensation of being immersed in cold water, *what does it feel like on the body? What does the water taste like on their lips? Is the water clean or dirty? Is it easy to see through? Do they feel scared or excited for the adventure and is the danger a thrill? What can they hear? What does it feel like to hold their breath? What do their clothes feel like against their skin?*
- Organise the students into groups of 5. With the free writing exercise fresh in their mind, ask the students to re-read the scene in their groups again.
- Inform the students they have 10 minutes to explore how they would stage the scene (Act 2 Scene 5). Within the group, appoint a director who can listen to everyone’s ideas and help finalise all decisions, ensuring it’s a focused but collaborative process.
- Encourage the students to utilise the empty space and get creative with their use of physicality. Think about using distance and proximity, states of tension, use of eye contact and uses of levels. (Helpful tip: try to avoid getting stuck in thinking about things too literally.)
- Invite the students to share their work and reflect on each other’s scene work. *Did any of the group’s work have similar imagery and ideas? Or did each group interpret the scene differently as an ensemble?*



Reflection Point:

How did the students find the freewriting exercise? Did they find it freeing or frustrating? When the students revisited the scene after the freewriting, did their perspective or experience of reading the scene change in any way? Why might one use freewriting as a tool before creative work? Are there other times when freewriting might be a useful exercise for individuals?



ACTIVITY 6: MADE UP WORDS

The Box Of Delights uses a lot of made up words, as did Shakespeare (Assasination, Lonely, Lackluster, Gloomy) (*This exercise will take 10-15 minutes. You will need pens and paper and Resource F: Act 1 Scene 6: Scrobbling and the Scrounger from the end of the pack*).

- Ask the students to get into small groups and write down in two columns words that they love to say, and words that provoke a negative response (e.g moist, bubble, grunge, poorly tummy).
- Encourage the students to break down which vowels they find more satisfying to say, what emotions do certain vowels evoke, and the same with consonants.
- Shakespeare often used big open vowels such as 'Oh, Ah, Aye Me' when his characters were feeling sad or desperate. Invite the students to stretch out their arms and do a big yawn, holding that position for 5 seconds. *Do any students notice that their eyes have become slightly watery?* This is a theory as to why Shakespeare often used 'Ah' vowels when his characters were very upset. Ask the students to explore with vowel sounds like 'Oh No!' or why 'Hey there' might feel different to 'Oh Hi'. *What story do certain vowels evoke? Why might a character speak in short and clipped vowels? Why might another character speak in long expansive vowels?*
- Now ask the students to explore different consonant sounds. Invite the students to spit out certain words like 'I HATE IT' or 'Yuck, that's DISGUSTING'. How does that feel different to saying aloud 'This feels fluffy and warm' or 'that is delicious'. Encourage the students to really pronounce and lean each consonant for the purpose of the exercise. *What do punchy consonants like 'D's', 'T's' and 'K's' communicate from a character perspective? What emotions do consonants like 'M's', 'F's' and 'S's' indicate?*
- Invite the students to make up some new words for feelings and things they would like to explain.
- As a writing prompt, make up some words to express how it feels to be in certain situations, for example the feeling you get when you're content and full after a great meal, the feeling you get when you get caught in the rain and you have to stay in your drenched clothes for the rest of the day, the feeling you get when you step in muck, the feeling you get when you see a delicious baked good through a shop window on a spring day. Ask them to suggest scenarios too and create new words for their own scenarios.
- Invite the students in small groups to read Resource F (Act 1 Scene 6: Scrobbling and the Scrounger.) *Do these words feel clear or are they confusing? What do they think these words mean?*
- Invite the students to experiment with replacing 'scrobble/scrobbling and the Scrounger' with their own ideas.
- If the students feel comfortable - invite them to share their work with the class and reflect on which of the new words they have created are their favourite and why.

Theme 2: CHOSEN FAMILY



ACTIVITY 7: FAMILY DYNAMICS

"Don't you see? We can have a proper adventure now! One with real blood. Shall we rough up some vicars? Maria" (Act 1 Scene 5.)

This exercise uses improvisation to help students discover a character's instincts. Through this exercise we will gain a deeper insight into Maria's perspective, her boundless imagination and love of adventure. Peter who is much more cautious and logical when it comes to problem solving. Also, Kay with his ability to daydream and his kind-hearted nature. *The exercise should take 20 minutes and can be done in a classroom or a hall.*

- **‘No Because...’ Exercise:** Organise the students into groups of 3 and ask the students to assign someone to play Maria, Kay and Peter. You can remind the students of each character and their qualities in the exercise outline above. In the first instance, students will take turns in their groups suggesting an activity for them to do. *For example, ‘let’s go rowing or let’s grab an ice cream at the park’.* The rest of the group will reject the idea, and state an issue to why the group cannot do this activity. *For example, ‘No, we can’t go rowing because it’s raining and we don’t have any boats.’ or ‘No we can’t get an ice cream because it’s December and the parks are all shut’.* Ensure the students take turns to suggest an activity to their group which is rejected by the others and given a reason for the rejection.
- **‘No But...’ Exercise:** Ask the students to repeat the exercise except instead of saying ‘No because’ when a student offers an activity, they will reply ‘No But...’ and offer another suggestion. *For example, ‘No we can’t go rowing, but we could go swimming instead?’ or ‘No we can’t get ice cream in the park but we can get Hot Chocolate at my house?’.*
- **‘Yes and...’ Exercise** Ask the students to repeat the exercise but now when a student suggests an activity, the rest of the group will reply ‘Yes and...’ and also offer something helpful. *For example, ‘Yes and I can bring chocolate’ or ‘Yes let’s get ice cream with sprinkles and then play football in the park’.*
- **‘My Box of Delights’:** Invite the students to think specifically about their assigned characters. Kay is now going to hold an imaginary Box of Delights to show Maria and Peter.
 - Kay is going to open the Box of Delights and offer a time and location that the box can take the trio to. *For example, ‘This Box can take us to the Sahara Desert in 1806’.* Encourage the students to share and describe within their groups what they can see, hear and smell in each location.
 - Peter is then going to reply with something that is dangerous in that time and location. *For example, ‘But what about scorpions? What if we get stung?’*
 - Maria is going to offer something that can protect and save the trio. *For example ‘No matter, I can protect us with this magical sword which creates a forcefield around us’.*
 - Kay will now close the Box, and reopen it in order to offer the group a new time and location that the trio can adventure to.
- Organise the students in a seated circle and offer a few minutes for the groups to reflect back how each exercise felt. *Which exercise did they prefer? Did any exercise feel stale or did any flow? Ask them how it felt from the perspective of each character? Did it feel frustrating and difficult? Did you feel in a flowstate? As your character, did any feelings arise towards any other characters?*

Reflection Point:

Kay, Maria and Peter are all very different, but they share the same values. How does it feel to be surrounded by people who think and feel in a similar way to you? Is it comforting? Is it necessarily always a positive thing? Are there benefits to surrounding yourself and creating a chosen family consisting of people who are different to you? What are the benefits to exposing yourself to a variety of opinions, experiences and perspectives? Family is about love. What are the positives of caring for people who think, feel and act differently to you?



ACTIVITY 8: FAMILY

This exercise encourages students to explore different perspectives and viewpoints. Whether that is characters with opposing views, or how an audience interprets a story. (*This exercise will take 30 minutes. It’s best suited to a hall but can be done in a classroom. You will need Resource G: Act 2 Scene 5 Caroline’s Apology from the end of this pack*).

- Ask the students to get into small groups and read Resource G (Act 2 Scene 5: Caroline's Apology.)
- As a group, discuss with the students what family means to different people. *Is it a more traditional mother and father? Or just a mother? Is it a best friend? Is it time with a pet? Step or grandparents?*
- Discuss with the students what makes people feel like family, *are they good listeners? What are the good things, what are the annoying things?*
- Then using the descriptions from what has been discussed in the room, invite the students in small groups to form tableaux made up of their own chosen families.
- Invite the students to explore how the characters they have created in their tableaux might react to witnessing powerful magic performed by evil Abner. *Are some excited, or petrified? Is it funny or serious? Would the grown-up characters be more reluctant to believe it is real?*
- Ask the students to direct each other's tableaux and form them into short scenes. Thinking from an audience perspective how to make the characters, and the dynamics between them clearer.
- In the story, the children run to Caroline (Kay's Guardian) for help and warn the people of Condicote but Caroline doesn't believe them. On Christmas Day, Kay ends up rescuing both the grownups and children of Condicote. Caroline apologises to the children for not listening to them.
- Invite the students to split into two groups, inform them they have 10 minutes to discuss this moment, one group will be in Defense of Caroline and one group against Caroline and in Defense of the children. *Should Caroline have believed them or was she in their right to think it was 'kids and their imagination'? Do we think Caroline is a good guardian? It's quite a big deal for an adult to apologise to a child, does she deserve to be forgiven?*

Reflection Points:

From an audience perspective, why is it funny to see certain characters scared, and why does it feel more dramatic to see other characters petrified?



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RESOURCES

Resource A: **Act 1 Scene 3 – Kay, Maria and Peter**

SCENE THREE: GUNS FOR CHRISTMAS

Seekings House, a happy sprawl of rugs, armchairs and lamps and an oil painting of a wintry landscape. KAY is reunited with MARIA JONES, 13, going on 25, and her brother PETER, 12, going on 55.

- MARIA:** *A Punch and Judy man? A PUNCH AND JUDY MAN? It's been over a year since I've seen you, Kay Harker, and you're still a total ass. Why didn't you ask him to do his show here?*
- KAY:** *He said I had to stop some wolves, as Christmas depends on it. What do you think he meant?*
- MARIA:** *That modern advertising leaves a great deal to be desired... He was trying to get you to book him for his show, don't you see?*
- PETER:** *I can't say that Caroline Louisa would approve, Maria.*
- MARIA:** *Oh, Peter! If you weren't my brother, I would pop an orange in your mouth every time you opened it; you marvellous bore.*
- PETER:** *I wish you would be civil to me for once.*
- MARIA:** *I wish we would hear about a gang of jewel thieves in the neighbourhood who have come down to rob us while we are having our Christmas lunch! But we are ready and waiting for them - and there is the most glorious gunfight!*
- PETER:** *I don't want guns for Christmas. I want plum pudding and a posset before bed.*
- MARIA:** *I only want a posset if there is a lot of brandy in it, or at the very least, sherry.*

The others look at her in amazement.

- What? Christmas ought to be brought up to date. It ought to have gangsters, aeroplanes and a LOT of machine guns. (She points a toy gun at Kay. Gangster accent.) "Your money or your life!"*
- KAY:** *(hands in the air, only half playing) I told you! I've lost all my money. (MARIA jabs the gun at his chest.) Will you settle for a Punch and Judy show?*
- MARIA:** *If you can find the old man. But be quick!*
- KAY:** *I'd better ask Caroline Louisa first - (MARIA aims the gun again) All right! I'll walk into town. He said he would be at The Drop of Dew.*
- MARIA:** *No doubt the roughest inn in town! The kind full of cut-throats and smugglers. That's where his sort hangs out.*
- PETER:** *Are you sure you want to go out in this weather? Look. It's started to snow.*

So it has.

- KAY:** *(wistful) Perhaps there will be enough to make a snowman tomorrow.*
- PETER:** *I don't like building snowmen. Your hands get frostbite, and they always melt in the end.*
- MARIA:** *You are too dull for Christmas! The sentence is death!*

MARIA chases PETER off to bed with her gun.

Resource B: **Act 1 Scene 2 – The Old Man and his Dog**

A DOG appears, like the stuffed dog from before. He paws at KAY, trying to wake him up.

KAY: *(stirring) Hello, boy! Where did you come from?*

CONDUCTOR: *Tickets, please, lad!*

KAY: *(to DOG) Good thing you woke me...*

DOG agrees enthusiastically.

(feeling his pockets) I can't find it.

CONDUCTOR: *Ticket, please, young man.*

KAY: *I had it when we left Musborough...*

DOG paws at KAY, whining.

It's no good, dog. Unless you know where my ticket is?

DOG scrapes at the floor, barking. KAY looks and picks up his ticket.

KAY: *You found it! Clever dog!*

Resource C: **Act 2 Scene 2, Abner's Plan**

ABNER: I was the greatest villain of every age! Until I arrived in this wondrous century of aeroplanes, movies, and machine guns. Only for that wretch Ramon to catch up with me at a fair - and steal my Box using a cheap trick. But I must have it back by midnight tonight - by Christmas!

JOE: Why, is it a present for someone?

ABNER: No Joe, By the laws of magic, without my box, I will be sent back to my own time.

JOE: I see! You're kidnapping half of Condictote to ensure that Christmas doesn't happen. Which means you can't get sent back. Then you'd be unstoppable!

ABNER: Finally, he sees the light.

JOE: I still don't like it, boss. Charlie and me... we used to be just a simple criminal outfit... That's an honest man's game. But all this magic...it gives me the shivers, it does.

ABNER: You don't believe in magic, do you, Joe?

JOE: Not half! Not from Ramon or Cole, whoever he is, or you neither... Arnold.

ABNER: That's funny.

JOE: Why so?

ABNER: Because magic doesn't believe in you either.

The Scrounger opens up, a glowing red pit of grinding terror.

JOE No, no... not - The Scrounger!

WOLVES *drag him in with a roar of machinery and mangled cries.*

ABNER: What's that? Take your time...

He laughs cruelly.

Resource D: Guided Visualisation - Abner's Lair.

Imagine you are on a stretch of green lawn at the end of a village. The sun has just set, and the air is crisp and cool. Snow is starting to float down from the sky and gently lands on the ground. You can feel the soft snowflakes land on your skin, they are delicate and icy cold. To your left is a beautiful ornate Cathedral, and directly in front of you is a dark old gothic-looking building, it has gargoyle statues on the roof which peer over you as if they can see you.

As you slowly walk towards the old looking building, you pad your feet on the ground. The grass has a slight springy bounce under your feet. The door to this old building opens with a creak. You stand in the doorway and step through. You see a long dark tunnel. You start to walk down this tunnel and it turns into a spiral. As you walk, you realise you are winding further and further down, until you are deep underground. The further you travel, the heavier your body feels. You can hear the drip, drip, drip of water which echoes around the stony walls.

As you travel further into this dank basement, you can feel with your hand that the walls are soaking wet, it is the dripping of water that seeps down the walls. The air is stale down here. We walk over to a wardrobe and open the doors. You feel Abner's velvet gowns which he wears. They are smooth and luxurious, however when you examine them more closely, the seams are frayed and heavily worn.

We open a drawer, and we can feel something leathery inside. It is Abner's magic glove. It feels heavy to hold, and very cold. You put the glove on. It's scratchy and hard on the inside. You bring it to your face, it smells musky and damp. As you put the glove on, you feel a distinct sense of loneliness which dissolves when you take the glove off. We put it back inside the drawer.

We open another drawer, it is very difficult to open. It is full to the brim with beautiful coloured jewels, you pick up a ruby and examine it, even in this dark dank room it twinkles. You carefully place it back inside the drawer. You notice how dark and oppressive it is in this dank basement. There is no natural light at all, and you crave to take a fresh breath of air. There is a distinct smell of rotting and mould whenever you breathe in which makes the pit of your stomach lurch.

You journey back up the spiral, along the dark tunnel and you see a sliver of light spilling through the doorway. The door opens with a creak and you step through the doorway onto the pavement. You fill your lungs with the crisp winter air. The moon is shining brightly over the snowy lawn, and illuminates the Cathedral. You feel a lightness in your chest, and you no longer feel a distinct sense of worry and sadness once you step out of the old building and onto the street.

You can now invite the student who was being guided to open their eyes.

Resource E: **Act 2 Scene 5 – The Flood and the Sailboat**

(With his glove, ABNER makes the sluice wheel turn magically of its own accord. A mechanical groan, a gurgle of pipes and distant explosion of released water.

Do you hear? Thirty feet of water rushing to drown you all--clergy, children, and you! Farewell Cole, I shan't remember you...

*ABNER blows him a kiss and departs.
The water enters as KAY rushes over.*

TINY KAY: Mr Hawlings! Mr Hawlings!

COLE: *(looking down)* I wouldn't keep that size if I were you, Master Harker.

TINY KAY: I've lost the Box! So now I can't return to normal size.

COLE: But the water is roaring in, and I'm all locked up.

TINY KAY: Is that it, then? Is Abner Brown going to win?

COLE: The Wolves have run us very close, haven't they? But do you remember that time at Seekings? When they got as near... and yet I got away?

TINY KAY: The painting! But... *(he looks around)*

COLE: There is no painting by your father here in this watery cave. You are quite right. But do you have imagination, Kay?

TINY KAY: Caroline Louisa says I have too much imagination.

COLE: No such thing! And can you draw, like your father?

TINY KAY: A bit, but I'm not nearly as good... oh Mr Hawlings.

COLE: Then let us hope you are a quick artist.

TINY KAY: I have nothing to draw with.

COLE: Now, perhaps the wind will settle a little in favour of a travelling man...

COLE magics a drawing pad and pencil out of thin air - and hands them to him.

TINY KAY: What should I draw, Mr Hawlings?

COLE: What was the last truly beautiful thing you saw?

TINY KAY: *(thinks)* I know! My toy boat, the one the Bishop gave me! Captain Kidd's Fancy!

COLE: That will do us nicely.

As TINY KAY draws, the water draws nearer and nearer.

Do not heed the waters, Master Kay. Think of your father and mother; how we will avenge them still.

TINY KAY: *(finishing his sketch)* I think that's the best drawing I've ever done. Can I keep it?

COLE: You can do more than keep it. Look what you've done, Kay, you and your imagination.

The sketch becomes a magic vision of a boat, which then becomes two real boats.

TINY KAY: I can't leave you!

COLE: Don't mind me, Master Harker - now go while you still can!

TINY KAY: No! Mr Hawlings! Please -

He disappears beneath the waves as TINY KAY is alone, adrift in his boat. Then, over the roaring water, he hears behind him, from the cells - the imprisoned townspeople sing as the boat rises in the water, sails unfurling.

Resource F: **Act 1 Scene 6 – Scrobbling and Scrounger**

POUNCER *gives* **RAT** *his bacon*.

RAT: If you want that Box, you must scrobble 'im at Bottler's Down tomorrow at dawn.

ABNER: Charles, Joe, do you think you can follow a simple instruction this time?

CHARLES: Scrobbling old men in the snow? I was hoping for a little more glamour.

ABNER: I won't ask you again. Or do you want a little visit to... The Scrounger?

A tiny sneak preview of the Scrounger: hiss of smoke and faintest mechanical roar.

Resource G: **Act 2 Scene 5 – Caroline’s Apology**

- KAY:** The Box, Peter, the Box! How did you get it?
- PETER:** That thief, Pouncer, ran past my cell with a sack of jewels, laughing, so I stuck my foot out and tripped her up.
- PETER:** She picked up the jewels... but left this behind.
- CAROLINE:** Peter, Kay. How did you find us?
- KAY:** You remember that fellow who gave us a Punch and Judy show?
- PETER:** Mr Hawlings! Is he alive?
- KAY:** I don't know... the water pulled us apart.
- CAROLINE:** You spoke of him several times, and I didn't believe you. I'll never not believe you again, Kay. I'm so sorry.
- MARIA (O/S):** Help! Help! Kay!
- KAY:** Maria! I'll go back for her.
- CAROLINE:** Kay, Absolutely not. It's far too dangerous.
- KAY:** I'm sorry, Caroline Louisa. We'll be home for Christmas.
- CAROLINE:** Oh Kay. My dear child. Do you promise?
- KAY:** With all my heart.
Box, take me swift to Maria!