During this unit, we will...

• develop our knowledge of the pantomime genre

• understand the main features of pantomime

• explore the acting style used in pantomime

• create characters from a script

• develop a performance from a script

• develop our understanding of the role of the audience
Lesson 1: The Pantomime Genre

Learning Objectives

- to develop knowledge of the pantomime genre and its features
- to explore some of the characters from pantomime
- to work with a script to create an effective performance
What is pantomime?

The story of pantomime is a tale of dragons and serpents. It features men dressed as women, and women pretending to be young men. Pantomime presents a tale of good and evil, where hope triumphs over adversity after danger and virtual despair.

Pantomime's unique mixture of strangeness, confusion and absurdity has much to tell us about ‘being British’. Christmas, for many of us, would not be Christmas without pantomime; and pantomime is the place that many people discover the magic of theatre.
2 Minute Talk – what do you know?

You have 2 minutes to discuss these questions, in pairs...

• what do you already know about pantomime?

• what stories are told in the form of a pantomime?

• what is different about how these stories are told when they become pantomimes?

• what pantomime characters can you name?

• how is the audience for a pantomime different to most other theatre shows?

• when do pantomime’s traditionally take place?
The pantomime tradition

Pantomimes take place around the Christmas period and are nearly always based on well known children's stories such as Peter Pan, Aladdin, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty etc.

Audience participation is a very important part of a pantomime. The audience are encouraged to boo the villain whenever he enters the stage, argue with the Dame (who is always a man) and warn the Principal Boy (who is always a girl) when the villain is behind them by shouting out "He's behind you!".

Slapstick is an important part of a British pantomime - the throwing of custard pies, the ugly sisters (who are always played by men) falling over, lots of silly costumes including of course, the pantomime horse which is played by two people in a horses costume.

By the end of the pantomime, the villain has been defeated, true love has conquered all and everyone lives happily ever after.
Task

Get yourselves into pairs. Your teacher will now join your pair up with another pair to make a group of 4.

Together, read through the following script extract 4 times, with each of you getting a chance to play all of the parts in turn.

Try to think about how your voice should sound for each of the characters. What do you think might be an appropriate ‘sound’ for them? Can you use your voice to make them sound convincing?

Queen, mirror, on the wall
Who is the fairest of them all?

Mirror, you what? (Aside) The mirror says to Queenie, Don’t talk to me, you vicious meanie!

Queen, look, tell me what I want to know, At once, you hear, and then I’ll go.

Mirror, well Wicked Queen, you know it’s true, That beauty doesn’t lie on you, For, lovely as you know you are, Snow White is prettier by far!

Queen, snow White! Snow White! Oh, who is she? She can’t be prettier than me?

Mirror, the kitchen maid, I think you’ll find, But Queen why should you ever mind? She’s only in the kitchen here, Cooking food and serving beer, She’s always in a frantic hurry, Surely there is no need to worry.

Queen, I will not rest until she’s dead, I will not heed what you have said, Servant, servant, come to me, I want a job done painfully.
Queen: Mirror, mirror, on the wall
Who is the fairest of them all?

Mirror: You what? (Aside) The mirror says to Queenie,
Don't talk to me, you vicious meanie!

Queen: Look, tell me what I want to know,
At once, you hear, and then I'll go.

Mirror: Well Wicked Queen, you know it's true,
That beauty doesn't lie on you,
For, lovely as you know you are,
Snow White is prettier by far!

Queen: Snow White! Snow White! Oh, who is she?
She can't be prettier than me?

Mirror: The kitchen maid, I think you'll find,
But Queen why should you ever mind?
She's only in the kitchen here,
Cooking food and serving beer,
She's always in a frantic hurry,
Surely there is no need to worry.

Queen: I will not rest until she's dead,
I will not heed what you have said,
Servant, servant, come to me,
I want a job done painfully.
Now, return to your original pairs. Together, your task is to create your own version of the magic mirror scene.

DON’T try to remember the exact words – make up your own! They don’t have to rhyme! DO use your imagination to create believable characters that sound different to your normal voice. REMEMBER – to give both of your characters attitude!
Plenary

Which of the mirror scenes that you watched today were most successful?

What did the actors do well?

What could have been improved?

Which were the most successful examples of effective characterisation?

What two things have you learned about pantomime in today’s lesson that you didn’t know before?
Lesson 2: Audiences & The Narrator

Learning Objectives

• To develop performance work from text
• To explore the role and impact of the narrator
• To develop ways of showing audience awareness
2 Minute Talk – Recap

You have 2 minutes to discuss these questions, in pairs...

• when do pantomime’s traditionally take place?

• what is the audience’s involvement at a pantomime called?

• which characters are usually played by actors of the opposite gender?

• what is the drama term that covers some of the silliness of pantomime, characters falling over, custard pies in the face etc?

• how does pantomime always end?
2 Minute Talk – what do you know?

You have 2 minutes to discuss these questions, in pairs…

• what do you already know about pantomime?
• what stories are told in the form of a pantomime?
• what is different about how these stories are told when they become pantomimes?
• what pantomime characters can you name?
• how is the audience for a pantomime different to most other theatre shows?
• when do pantomimes traditionally take place?

Audience Participation

What do audiences expect from:

a) the style of acting in a pantomime?
b) the pantomime characters?
c) their own interaction / involvement in the show?

Audience Participation
The Narrator

What is the role of the narrator in pantomime?

What do they bring to the pantomime?

As a class, we are going to read the opening scene of a pantomime script...
Narrator: Good friends, we now present before you, And I trust, we will not bore you, A happy, hippy, pantomime, Snow White, and Gnomes, told just in rhyme. I know it should be dwarves on stage, But really, they have come of age, Gnomes are funnier, you’ll see, They give me more variety. We go at once to ‘Castle Doom’, Flit at once into the room, Where Wicked Queen sits combing hair, She thinks she hasn’t got a care.

Queen: Mirror, mirror, on the wall Who is the fairest of them all?

Mirror: You what?

Narrator: The mirror says to Queenie,

Mirror: Don’t talk to me, you vicious meanie!

Queen: Look, tell me what I want to know, At once, you hear, and then I’ll go.

Mirror: Well Wicked Queen, you know it’s true, That beauty doesn’t lie on you, For, lovely as you know you are, Snow White is prettier by far!

Queen: Snow White! Snow White! Oh, who is she? She can’t be prettier than me?

Mirror: The kitchen maid, I think you’ll find, But Queen why should you ever mind? She’s only in the kitchen here, Cooking food and serving beer, She’s always in a frantic hurry, Surely there is no need to worry.

Queen: I will not rest until she’s dead, I will not heed what you have said, Servant, servant, come to me, I want a job done painfully. (enter Pigswill the servant)

Narrator: Now Pigswill was her servant true, He did what he was told to do.

Pigswill: I have to run about this place, To serve the Queen, to show good grace. What is it, that I have to do? Please don’t request, I clean the loo.

Queen: Go to the kitchen, find Snow White, Make sure somehow, she dies tonight. (exit Queen)

Pigswill: I can’t let Queenie kill this wench, If she should die, there’d be a stench, Of scandal in this pantomime, When this should be a happy time. I’ll yell her she must go away, Follow the path, and never stray, Until she’s hidden in the wood, This plan of mine sounds really good. (exit Pigswill)

Narrator: So Pigswill goes and warns Snow White And off she flies into the night, She has to hide from Wicked Queen, But knows that she cannot be seen, By people from the castle grey, She lives to fight another day. At last she saw upon the track, A house, quite small, no turning back, She looks and see’s there’s food inside, The door was also open wide, She walked right in, and smelt the food, But decided that it might be rude, To help herself, to food, and eat, Then heard the noise of trampling feet.
Bringing the Script to Life

How can the text be put onto stage with maximum audience involvement?

What skills are going to be needed for the actors to be successful?

In groups of 4, create your own version of the scene, either using the text if you want to, or using your own words to tell the same story.
Group Work

Now join together with another group.

Watch each others work and then feedback constructively on what you think was good and what could have been improved.

Remember to feedback kindly – use ‘2 stars and a wish’ if it’s helpful.

What techniques did they use that were successful?

Can you think of any ways that they could have brought more interaction or more humour to their performance?

You will be asked to report your ideas back to the class at the end of this task.
Plenary

What drama techniques did you see in action today that you thought were particularly successful?

What acting style is needed in pantomime?

How successful were we in achieving this in today’s lesson?

What did you learn about the narrator in today’s lesson?
Lesson 3: Your Pantomime

Learning Objectives

• To create pantomime characters from a text

• To develop character detail through the use of Role-on-the-Wall
The Challenge

Over the next few lessons, you are going to develop your own pantomime for performance to the rest of the class.

You will be given a basic script, which you should adapt, develop and add-to, to make it into a pantomime.

You will be assessed on your pantomime performance.

We are looking at your skill in developing the script and in creating exaggerated pantomime characters.
Tasks

1. Read through your script
2. Allocate the parts
3. Start to work out how you can adapt your script to make it into a pantomime.

It's very important to make sure that everyone has plenty to do, so that everyone has the same chance to get good marks in the assessment.

Consider:
Adding characters or scenes if one of your actors needs a bit more ‘stage-time’.
Characters
Consider your characters...

How do they talk?
What sort of vocal expression do they have?
How do they move?
What sort of physical expression do they have?
How do you make them different to you?
How do you make them stereotypical?
How do you make them exaggerated?
Role-on-the-Wall

Red: Facts
Blue: Opinions

Who is he?
What is he like?
What sort of personality does he have?
What might he say about himself?
What would an audience think about him?
How old is he?
Who are his friends?
What is his style?
What else could be added about Matilda?
Plenary

As a group, what do you all need to do between now and the next lesson?

What drama techniques could we consider using in our final pieces?

How do we add to the scripts to make them successfully into pantomimes?
Lesson 4: Audience Participation

Learning Objectives

• Develop confidence when using a script to aid performance work

• To develop **audience interaction** from the script.
2 Minute Talk – Recap

You have 2 minutes to discuss

The plot of your Pantomime so far

The characters you are playing

Skills you have learnt so far

What exaggerated acting skills (facial expressions, Voice, body language) your character will have.
2 Minute Talk

What do you know?

You have 2 minutes to discuss these questions, in pairs...

- What do you already know about pantomime?
- What stories are told in the form of a pantomime?
- What is different about how these stories are told when they become pantomimes?
- What pantomime characters can you name?
- How is the audience for a pantomime different to most other theatre shows?
- When do pantomimes traditionally take place?

Audience Participation

- Are there any moments, in your script, where you could add in the lines “Can they?” or “Does it?” or another simple question in order to get the audience to say Yes or No?
- If so, try to add it in and then begin the classic argument with the audience stating “Oh no it doesn’t” or “Oh yes it does”
Audience Participation

Experiment with the following:

Does it matter who argues with the audience? Heroes / Villains?

Does it matter how many times you respond? (Can you do it too many times? What is the best number?)

How can you encourage the audience to respond?

Hand gestures can sometimes encourage the audience to speak the lines.

Explore all opportunities for audience participation with your script.
Plenary

When was audience participation particularly successful?

What questions had the best response in pantomime?

How successful were we in achieving this in today’s lesson?
Lesson 5: Developing Your Pantomime

Learning Objectives

• To develop confidence when using a script to aid performance work
• To complete blocking of the text for performance
Rehearsals

In your groups:

• Recap your plot and characters

• Start ‘blocking’ your scene

• Pay close attention to the stage directions to help you, but also use your imagination to help to make sure that the scenes aren’t boring to watch

• If you are not on stage, watch the action and act as a ‘critical friend’ to those who are. Make suggestions too if you can

Prepare a section of your pantomime to show at the end of this lesson...
Blocking is a way of structuring entrances / exits and Movement of people and props around the stage. Blocking helps to make sure that the audience sees what / who you want them to see at the right time.

What would it look like if a performance wasn’t blocked?
As a group, what do you all need to do between now and the next lesson?

Can you arrange to get together to rehearse outside of class?

How can you make sure that you’ve learnt your lines in time for next week?
Lesson 6: Your Performance

Learning Objectives

• To perform a suitable role / roles as part of a cast of a pantomime for assessment

• To have confidently learnt character lines and be able to follow the guidelines of a selected script
Criteria

To achieve success in this assessment, you must have demonstrated, as a minimum:

• The creation and presentation of an appropriate role
• The appropriate use of language and vocal skills

You must also have:

• Learnt your lines
• Worked effectively in a team
• Contributed to the creative process of putting on your pantomime
What do you think of the performances that you’ve seen today?
Can you specifically say who did well and why you think they did well?
Whose characterization was effective?
Which group was most successful in incorporating the pantomime elements?