

R A P P U N Z E L



NEW VICTORY® School Tool 2007 / 08 Season

a project of the
NEW 42ND ST

RAPUNZEL

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DEAR TEACHERS,

Welcome to the New Vic *School Tool* resource materials for *Rapunzel*. These materials have been designed to expand your students' engagement with Kneehigh's visually bewitching version of a classic children's fairytale. Brimming with humor, music and drama, this production is rich with potential for further exploration in the classroom. After all, who can resist looking beyond "happily ever after?" Further discovery through the performing arts education activities suggested in this guide can enrich your students' experience of the performance itself while also extending their learning across the curriculum. Comments from you and your students are always welcome. We rely on feedback as a crucial component in our efforts to develop and extend our relationship with our audience.

Thank you,

Edie Demas
Director of Education
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THE NEW VICTORY THEATER

The New Victory Theater, a New 42nd Street® project, is New York City's first and only theater for kids and families. The New Victory was also the first historic theater to reopen on 42nd Street (December 11, 1995) and has become one of the city's most respected cultural institutions. With its dynamic mix of theatrical programming, this nonprofit theater "is credited with having pioneered a new, sophisticated vision of children's entertainment" (*Time Out New York*). In addition, The New Victory offers daytime school performances, interactive family workshops and paid apprenticeships for high school and college students.

The New Victory has a rich and varied past that reflects the history of 42nd Street itself. Opened by Oscar Hammerstein in 1900, the theater presented plays for over 30 years, including one of Broadway's longest-running hits, *Abie's Irish Rose* (1923). In 1931, Billy Minsky transformed the theater into Broadway's first burlesque house. A decade later the theater began to show movies, and in 1972 it became 42nd Street's only XXX-rated movie house. In 1990, the Theater became one of seven historic theaters to come under public ownership as part of the City and State's 42nd Street Development Project, and five years later — following a 16-month, \$11.4 million renovation — The New 42nd Street opened the doors of The New Victory Theater.

The New Victory Theater Education Program receives generous support from:

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USING THIS SCHOOL TOOL

This resource includes a range of information, questions, activities and worksheets that can stand alone or work as building blocks toward the creation of a complete unit of classroom work. Inside you will find a series of questions and activities designed to be used **Before the Show** and **After the Show** in order to help focus your students' engagement with the performance and then to foster critical discussion after their experience. Following this section are materials geared around an investigation of the production through the **Themes to Follow**: *Bringing Fairytales to Life*, *Rapunzel Retold* and *Theatre Traditions in Rapunzel*.

Below you will find excerpts from the *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Theater* and the NYS Learning Standards to aid in your planning. Again, these are to be viewed as starting points. Fundamentally, the **School Tools** have been created to be flexible in structure so that you can adapt and combine activities to suit your own needs, the needs of your students and the demands of the curriculum.

Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: Theater

Grades Pre K-12 — New York City Department of Education

Theater Making: Acting, Playwriting/Play Making, Designing and Technical Theater, and Directing

Theater Making provides multiple avenues for active learning. Through the interpretation of dramatic literature and the creation of their own works, students engage as writers, actors, designers, directors and technicians.

Developing Theater Literacy

Theater Literacy provides theater vocabulary when making and responding to a performance, and develops critical, analytical and writing skills through observing, discussing and responding to live theater and dramatic literature. In this strand, dramatic literature is also viewed as a catalyst for production and performance.

Making Connections

Students make connections to theater by developing an understanding of self and others. They respond to theater by identifying personal issues and universal themes in performance and in dramatic text. They investigate theater by examining the integration of other arts into a complex multi-media art form.

Working With Community and Cultural Resources

Community resources that support Theater Making, theater literacy, theater connections and career exploration, expand students' opportunities for learning. Active partnerships that combine school, professional and community resources create rich avenues for student and teacher innovation in the classroom and in production.

Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning

Students develop audience skills and a connection to theater that allows them to value the theater throughout their lives. They explore the scope and variety of theater careers in teaching, production, performance, criticism, design, technical theater and related occupations, and they investigate how these careers align with their personal goals and aspirations.

Excerpt taken from *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Theater Grades Pre K-12*, New York City Department of Education, www.schools.nyc.gov

Curriculum Connections: New York State Learning Standards

Rapunzel School Tool supports learning in the following areas:

ARTS (A)

- Creating, Performing & Participating in the Arts
- Knowing & Using Arts Materials & Resources
- Responding To & Analyzing Works of Art
- Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

MATH, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY (M, S, T)

- Analyze, Inquire and Design to Pose Questions and Develop Solutions
- Understand and Apply Concepts Pertaining to the Living Environment
- Understand Relationships and Themes and Apply to Other Areas of Learning
- Apply Knowledge for Real-Life Problems

SOCIAL STUDIES (Soc)

- History of the US & NY
- World History
- Geography
- Civics, Citizenship & Government

LANGUAGE ARTS (LA)

- Language for Information & Understanding
- Language for Literary Response & Expression
- Language for Critical Analysis & Evaluation
- Language for Social Interaction

NYS LEARNING STANDARDS
..... A, LA

(example)

KEYWORD:
Adaptation—a written work such as a novel that has been reimagined in a new form; for example a film or play.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Kneehigh is one of Britain's most celebrated theater companies. For over 25 years, they have created popular and challenging theater for audiences in England and beyond. Kneehigh is known for adapting traditional and well-known stories, such as *Cymbeline*, *Pandora's Box*, *The Red Shoes*, and, of course, *Rapunzel*, into fresh, original productions which explore common themes and ideas in a whole new way.

Located in Cornwall, which is situated on the Southwest coast of England, the company was created in 1980 by Mark Shepherd, a village school teacher who began to run theater workshops in his spare time. None of the original members of the company were trained actors, but rather people from a wide variety of professions including a musician, an electrician, a farmer and some local students. The company began with a few theater workshops and eventually evolved to produce fully staged plays performed in more traditional halls and theater spaces, as well as "on cliff-tops, in preaching pits and quarries, amongst gunpowder works and arsenic wastes, up trees, down holes, where the river meets the sea and where woodland footpaths end."* Kneehigh's work is often inspired by traditional folktales. They use a unique collaborative devising process of adaptation and improvisation to create a completely original play. They create theater for a broad spectrum of audiences using a wide range of art forms and media to make new and accessible forms of theater.

BEFORE THE SHOW

ABOUT THE SHOW

Kneehigh has brought a new life to their adaptation of the classic fairytale of *Rapunzel* using a mixture of puppetry, music and comedy. Rapunzel's gentle nature and long golden locks have been replaced with a sassy, independent personality and long black dreadlocks. Kneehigh has created a unique adaptation full of loveable rogues, magical pigs, evil brothers and, of course, enduring love. Rapunzel herself is a funny and brave heroine who fights for her independence, whilst her handsome and good-hearted prince has to find hidden depths to win his one true love.

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS
..... LA, A

RAPUNZEL PORTRAIT

The character of Rapunzel in Kneehigh's adaptation is very different from the Rapunzel you may know. Read with your students a version of the story they may traditionally hear and discuss with them what they think Rapunzel looks like. Ask them to consider what she is wearing, the color or style of her hair, and how she would act. Ask your students to draw a picture of what they think Rapunzel looks like.



?? Focus Questions
Help your students gain more from the show by focusing their attention with the following questions.

What fairy tales do you know? Have you seen any other fairy tales brought to life in a movie or on stage?

What are the challenges of bringing the fairytale of Rapunzel to life on stage? How will they create the tower? How do you think the characters will climb up Rapunzel's hair?

AFTER THE SHOW

Suggested Activity..... **NYS LEARNING STANDARDS**
..... **A, LA**

A REVIEW FROM YOU!

This is your opportunity to express your thoughts and opinions about the performance of *Rapunzel* that you saw at The New Victory Theater! Think about your experience and answer the following questions:

1. What do you think *Rapunzel* was about?
2. Who were the main characters? Who were your favorite characters? Why?
3. What did you think of the music in *Rapunzel*?
4. What was your favorite part of the performance? Describe it.
5. Did you have a least favorite part of the performance? Why?
6. Were there any additional aspects of the show that stood out to you (e.g. sets, lighting, costumes and/or music)? What did you like most about those aspects of the show?
7. Did you enjoy being in The New Victory Theater? What did you like about being in the theater?
8. Overall, did you enjoy your experience at The New Victory Theater?



Suggested Activity..... **NYS LEARNING STANDARDS**
..... **LA, A**

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

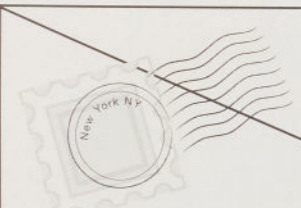
Engage your students in a discussion about the performance they saw at the New Vic. *Was the character of Rapunzel in the show different from what you expected?* Refer to pictures of Rapunzel drawn by the students in the "Before the Show" activity. Encourage your students to draw a picture of the Rapunzel they saw in the show and compare the two images. *What does this tell you about Kneehigh's interpretation of the character?*



Challenge Questions

Discuss these questions with your students to help them remember the show and focus on its themes:

What is the difference between your original idea of Rapunzel and Kneehigh's Rapunzel? Which do you prefer, the new Rapunzel or the old one? What were the differences? The way she dressed? Her hair? Her attitude? Why do you think that Kneehigh changed the character of Rapunzel?



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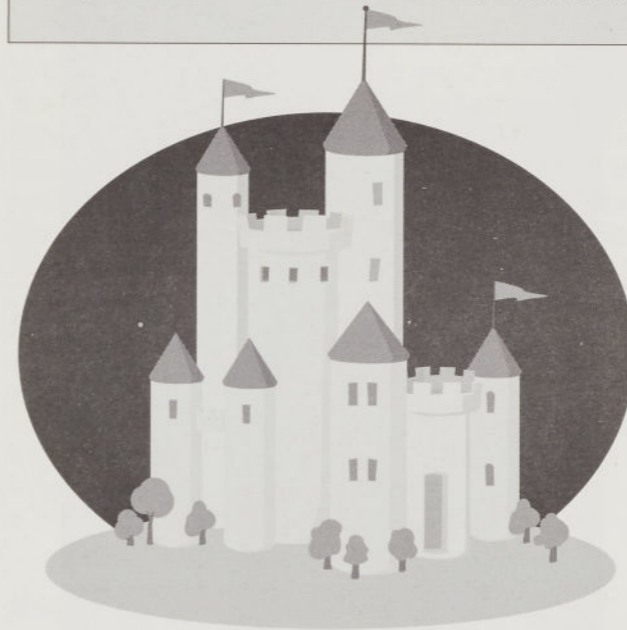
BRINGING FAIRYTALES TO LIFE

Blueprint Focus:

Theater Making: Students recognize and understand the dramatic elements of a story prior to putting pen to page: play writing is preceded by play making.

Students imagine, analyze and understand play making processes by listening, retelling and creating stories and dramas.

Developing Theater Literacy: Students examine theater history to further understand it's social and culture context. Students develop an understanding of dramatic structure and theater traditions. Students connect storytelling and drama, and recognize how oral traditions are related to the written word.



BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF FAIRYTALES

Once upon a time...

European fairytales were not written for children. They were far more gruesome and detailed than the animated versions we see today. Surprisingly, there are much fewer fairies in these tales than the name suggests. The term originates from the German word for fairytales 'Märchen' (pronounced: mehr-khen) which described a folktale characterizing elements of magic or the supernatural.

Many of the well known versions of fairytales were written down in Europe around the 18th and 19th centuries by authors such as Hans Christian Anderson, the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault. However, the origins of these fairytales are far older and wider, coming from around the world, such as Ancient Greece and the Middle East.

Folktales have been written and re-imagined all over the world for thousands of years, and even though the stories have evolved and changed over time, the essence of these tales remains the same. Here is a short history of *Rapunzel*, tracing its ancient origins to the popular classic of today.

300 A.D. **The Legend of Saint Barbara, Turkey**
According to legend, Saint Barbara was the only daughter of a wealthy family. She was beautiful and intelligent and even though her parents loved her dearly, they locked her in a tower to keep her safe from unworthy suitors. This is believed to be the original source of 'maiden in the tower' stories and Saint Barbara is usually represented standing near a tower with three windows.

1637 **Giambattista Basile's Petrosinella, Italy** Basile's tale shares many similarities with the modern version of *Rapunzel*. The heroine is named Petrosinella, which comes from petrosine, the Italian word for parsley. Just as in *Rapunzel*, Petrosinella is named after the garden greenery her mother craved during pregnancy. The major difference between these stories, however, is in their endings. While Petrosinella and her prince are able to secretly elope, the couple in *Rapunzel* must suffer the witch's curses and years of hardship before they finally live happily ever after.

1697 **Charlotte Rose de Caumont de la Force's Persinette, France**
A French aristocrat published her own version of the tale sixty years after Basile. Like the earlier Italian version, the name Persinette also comes from the word for parsley (in French), and this tale is closer in plot to the contemporary *Rapunzel*. However, *Persinette* was written for adults instead of children - as were many of the fairytales written at this time - and includes some gruesome passages detailing the suffering of poor Persinette and her prince along the way to happiness.

1790 **J.C.F. Schulz's Rapunzel, Germany** As the popularity of fairytales spread throughout Europe, J.C.F. Schulz loosely translated la Force's *Persinette* into German and published it in his book, *Kleine Romane*. Schulz is credited as being the first author to use the name Rapunzel, which literally means, "field salad."

1857 **Brothers Grimm Rapunzel, Germany** Taking influence from many of the earlier versions, the Brothers Grimm version of *Rapunzel* was published in a collection of now-familiar fairytales called *Children's and Household Tales*. This, for the most part, is the version of *Rapunzel* that we find in bookstores today.

2006 **The Kneehigh Theatre Company, England**
Kneehigh has taken the familiar story of *Rapunzel* and turned it upside-down and inside out, introducing the audience to a new story, a new adventure and a new Rapunzel. They have not only built a more complex and dramatic storyline out of the once simple fable, but they use it to explore the darker, more complicated sides of human nature. Incorporating original music, creative design and clever humor, Kneehigh's outrageous adaptation opened at the Battersea Arts Centre in London on December 9, 2006, and is currently making its US debut here at The New Victory.

2009 **Walt Disney Pictures** An animated film version of *Rapunzel*, slated to be released in the summer of 2009.

How might the story change again?

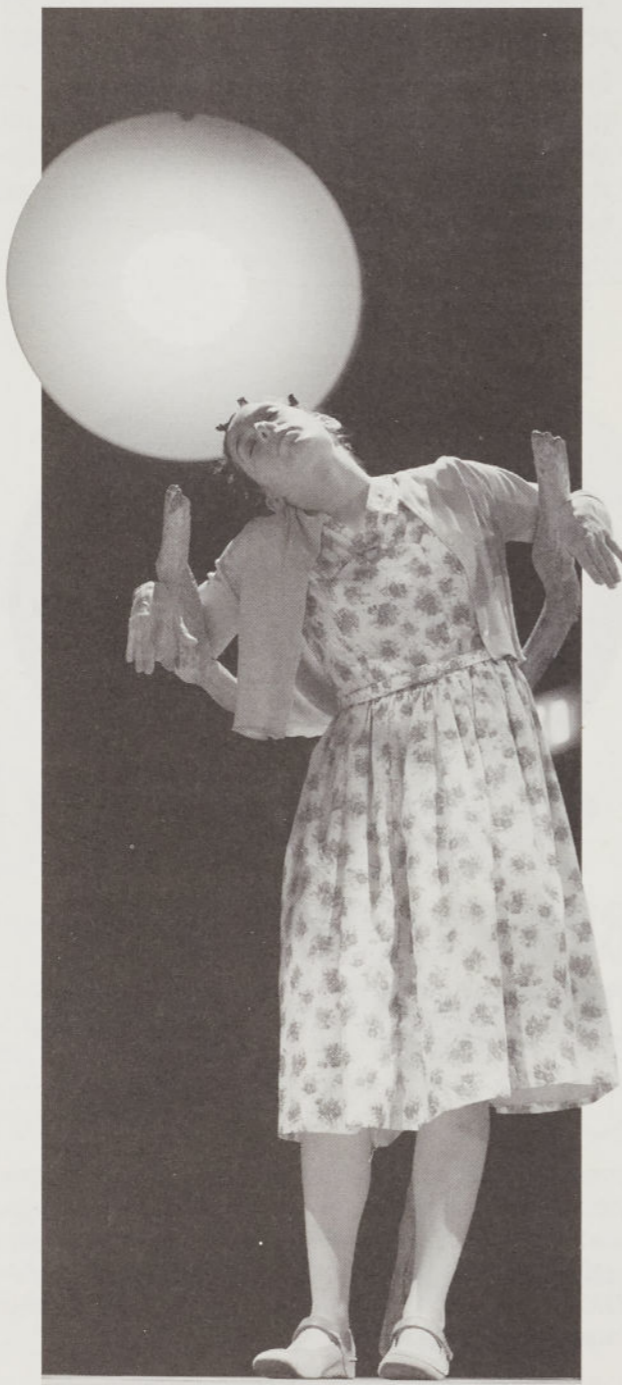
BRINGING FAIRYTALES TO LIFE

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

STORYTELLING CIRCLE

This is a great warm up activity to help your students start thinking creatively using storytelling, by building up a story together as a class.

1. Ask your class to sit together on the floor in a circle.
2. You should begin the story with, "Once upon a time..."
3. The next person in the circle should carry on the first line of the story, however they choose. Remember that they are only allowed to add one new element before the story is continued by the next person. For example "Once upon a time... there was a purple elephant..."
4. The next person adds another line and so on, so the story begins to unfold as it travels around the circle.
5. When the story draws to a conclusion, the last person should conclude their contribution with "The End."



Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

CREATE YOUR OWN FAIRYTALE

The tale of *Rapunzel* has been retold many times from its most popular adaptation written by the Brothers Grimm in 1857. Kneehigh has breathed new life into the old fairytale, replacing the once powerless damsel in distress with a modern independent heroine.

With this in mind have your class create their own modern fairytales following the typical format of a folk tale.

1. Encourage your students to brainstorm answers to the following questions in order to create their fairytale: *Who is the hero or heroine? What challenge must be overcome? What obstacles are presented to prevent the hero from reaching the goal? How are they overcome? Is there an element of magic?*
2. Once they have answered all of the questions and have all of the information they need, they can create their own fairytale.

MODIFICATION

For younger children there is a more simple fairytale template where the students are asked to fill in the blanks:

Once upon a time there was a (noun) _____ who was called (name) _____ who lived in a (noun) _____. One day (name) _____ came across a (noun) _____ who (verb) _____ into a (noun) _____. And they all lived happily ever after.

BRINGING FAIRYTALES TO LIFE

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS MST, A

MAKE A FAIRYTALE FRIEND

Kneehigh Theatre Company uses puppets as a creative device to bring parts of the tale to life. In the performance, puppets represent Rapunzel as well as her magic pig. Puppetry also adds to the imaginative world of Mother Goethel's garden where we see flowers grow and butterflies flutter. Below is a list of instructions for creating a simple hand puppet so that your students can also explore the magic of puppetry. They can create a character from their own fairytale created in the previous activity or a character from *Rapunzel*.

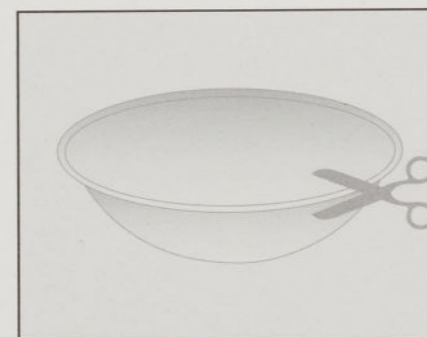
MATERIALS NEEDED:

- 3" x 5" index card or postcard
- Tape
- Two white paper bowls
- Scissors
- Colored markers and other decorating materials

INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE THE PUPPET:

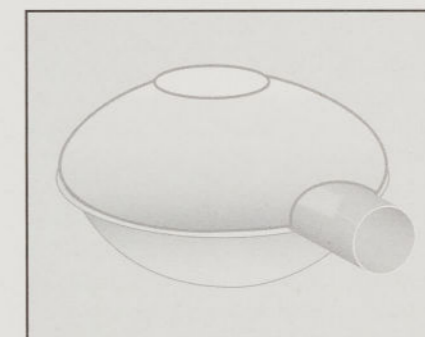


1. Ask your students to roll the index card lengthwise around their finger and then secure the tube with tape.

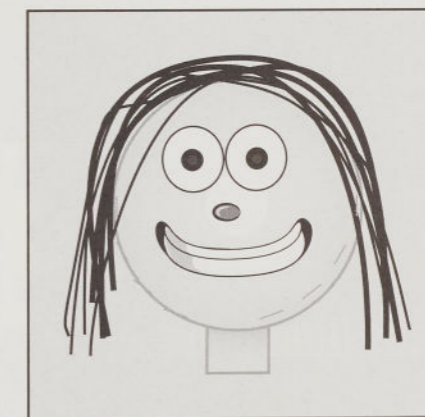


2. Next stack the bowls, one inside the other. With scissors cut a 1" slit through both bowls from the edge of the bowl towards the center.

3. Separate the bowls and place the card tube inside one of the bowls covering the small slit so 1" of the tube is left outside of the bowl.



4. Ask your students to place the second bowl upside down on top of the first bowl and the tube so that the two slits are together.



5. Next ask your students to secure the two paper bowls together with tape or other adhesive material. Ensure your students affix both sides of the finger tube and add tape to make sure its secure. The head of the puppet has now been created and can

be decorated to make a face using colorful markers, and other decorating materials such as a yarn or wool for hair, stickers, feathers and glitter. Now their puppets are ready to go!

Encourage your students to experiment with manipulating the puppets to see what they can do. *Can they nod and shake their heads? Can they look around the room? Can they dance?*

Adapted from *Puppets and Masks - Stagecraft and Storytelling* by Nan Rump



BRINGING FAIRYTALES TO LIFE

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

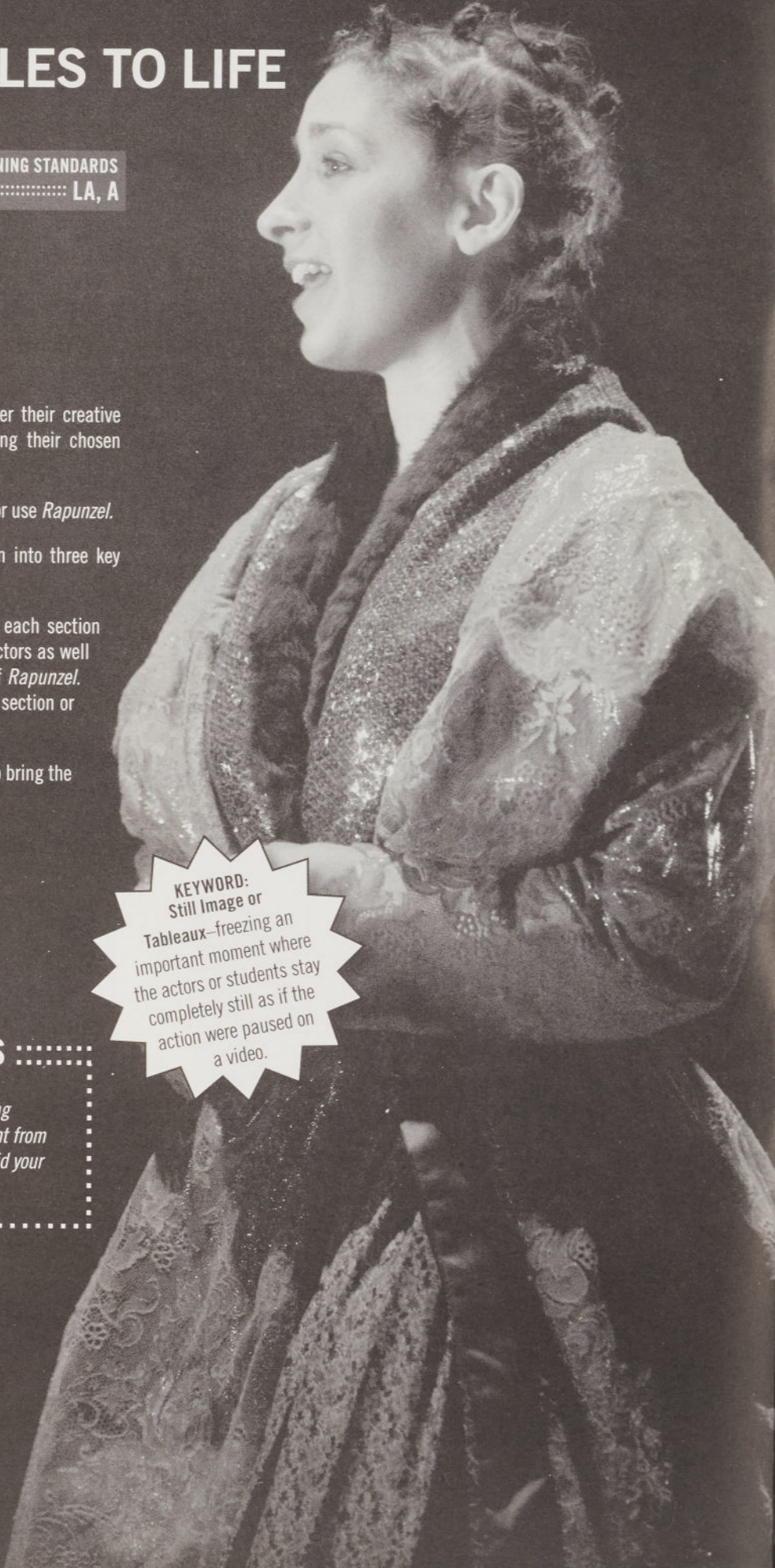
BRING YOUR TALE TO LIFE

This final activity allows your students to put together their creative storytelling with their puppetry skills in order to bring their chosen fairytale to life.

1. Choose one of the fairytales created by the students or use *Rapunzel*.
2. Ask your class to split the story they have chosen into three key sections, a beginning, a middle and an end.
3. Ask one of your groups to create a still image for each section and then activate it! Encourage them to combine actors as well as puppets, as Kneehigh does in their production of *Rapunzel*. This can be done as a whole class working on each section or in groups.
4. Finally put all of the sections together in sequence, to bring the whole fairytale to life!

KEYWORD:
Still Image or Tableaux—freezing an important moment where the actors or students stay completely still as if the action were paused on a video.

Focus Questions
How was using puppets to bring the performance to life different from using just human performers? How did your still image show the story?



Blueprint Focus:

Theater Making: Students imagine, analyze and understand play making processes by listening, retelling and creating stories and dramas.

Students activate and use their imaginations as well as analytical and process skills associated with acting.

Making Connections: Through an exploration of theme and context, students connect personal experience to an understanding of theater.

Rapunzel has been retold throughout history, and each time the storyteller has adapted the plot and characters, portraying them from different points of view.

Traditionally, the characters in *Rapunzel* are well-known archetypes such as the evil witch, the damsel in distress and the handsome prince. These characters are instantly recognizable and can be found in many fairy and folktales.

Kneehigh's retelling of *Rapunzel* goes beyond the traditional story, and looks at it from a unique and exciting contemporary perspective. The evil witch is an herbalist as well as an overbearing mother who loves her daughter so much she refuses to let her go. Rapunzel is far from the damsel in distress. She has become a bold, independent heroine who is more strong willed than her devoted prince, a young man who must work hard for Rapunzel's affections.

The following activities allow your students to put themselves in the characters' shoes and learn how different points of view can affect the story. It shows them how looking at a story from a different point of view can completely alter its meaning.

KEYWORD:
Archetype—an original model of a character on which many other character are based on and fit in the same model.



RAPUNZEL RETOLD

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A, Soc

LETTERS FROM THE TOWER

RAPUNZEL'S P.O.V

Ask your students to put themselves in Rapunzel's shoes. Ask them to consider the following questions: *What would it be like to be kept hidden in a tower away from the rest of the world? What do you think you would miss the most?*

With these questions in mind ask your students to write a letter from the point of view of Rapunzel. The aim of the letter is to persuade the person who reads it to help her get out of the tower.

MOTHER GOETHEL'S P.O.V

Now encourage them to imagine that Rapunzel's letter got into the hands of Mother Goethel. Ask them to write a letter in response. *How did it feel when you read Rapunzel's letter? Were you surprised by what you found in the letter?* An alternative to this might be to improvise a short scene in pairs, between Mother Goethel and Rapunzel where Mother Goethel confronts Rapunzel about the letter, telling Rapunzel her side of the story.

KEYWORD:
Point of View (P.O.V.)—The opinions or belief of a specific person that affect the way they interpret the actions of others.

Challenge Questions
Do you think there could be more than one side of the story in Rapunzel? How do you think the play would change if it was written from the point of view of Mother Goethel? If Rapunzel had a daughter do you think she would treat her differently?
Has there been a time in your life that you have seen more than one side of a story?

RAPUNZEL RETOLD

Suggested Activity..... **NYS LEARNING STANDARDS** LA, A

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

Kneehigh uses character perspective and point of view to create a completely different retelling of *Rapunzel*. This activity allows your students to see how different points of view can affect their own perception of these characters. Brainstorm the three most important moments in *Rapunzel* as a group. Examples might be:

- Moment 1 - Mother Goethel banishes Rapunzel to the tower.
- Moment 2 - The Prince climbing up the tower to see Rapunzel.
- Moment 3 - Rapunzel marries the Prince.

Now divide your class into three groups who will each represent one of the moments above as a still image. Next assign each group with a different point of view: Rapunzel, Mother Goethel and the Prince. The three groups will adapt their original still image to show their assigned viewpoint:

For example:
Mother Goethel banishes Rapunzel to the tower.

- From **Rapunzel's** point of view Mother Goethel might be shown as a wicked witch locking the defiant Rapunzel away, against her will.
- **Mother Goethel** on the other hand may see herself differently. This still image may show an adoring mother embracing Rapunzel in the tower. Rapunzel, in this image, might lovingly oblige.
- The **Prince** may see Rapunzel as defenseless being forced into the Tower by the evil witch, Mother Goethel, who is glaring over her.

What were the differences in the three different images? What surprised you? How has your view of the characters changed? What's your point of view of these characters? Where else may you see these types of characters?



Suggested Activity..... **NYS LEARNING STANDARDS** LA, A

CHARACTER PROFILES

KEYWORD:
Motivation—the wants, needs and beliefs that drives a character's actions.

Now that your students have looked at the characters in *Rapunzel* from different perspectives they can start to think further about the characters and their motivations by creating character profiles.

Using the worksheet provided ask your students, in groups, to create a character profile for the three main characters in *Rapunzel*: Rapunzel, Mother Goethel and the Prince. Inform your students that the profiles must be written from the point of view of their assigned character. All the information must be based on Kneehigh's *Rapunzel* as much as possible. If there is any information they don't know, they should create an answer as a group.

RAPUNZEL RETOLD

PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE!

Character Profile Worksheet

Name: _____

Age: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Interests: _____

Likes: _____

Dislikes: _____

Person they love the most: _____

Worst Enemy: _____

Best Feature: _____

Worst Feature: _____

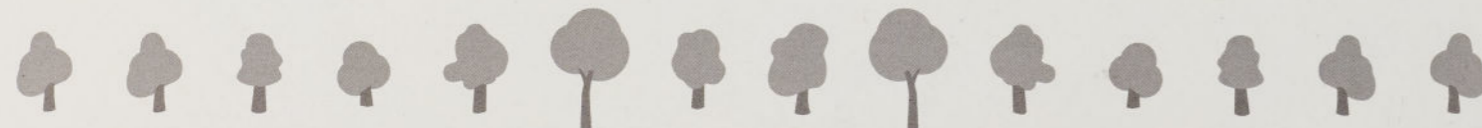
Biggest Challenge: _____

Draw your character!

Focus Questions

Would the other characters in Rapunzel agree with what you have written in the character profile? Why?

Is there anything new you have learned about the story/characters by creating a character profile?



RAPUNZEL RETOLD

Suggested Activity NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A, Soc

TOWN MEETING

This activity allows your students to draw together all the information they have gathered about the characters in *Rapunzel* by defending a character in a debate. This activity challenges your students to think critically about the plot and characters in the play.

Inform your class that a town meeting has been arranged in order to question some of the actions in Kneehigh's *Rapunzel*. Your function as Teacher-In-Role, will be to go into character as the Mayor of the Town Meeting, who will facilitate the debate.

In the same three groups from the previous activity and using the character profiles as a resource, challenge your students to defend the actions of their character to the rest of the town.

Each group will be given time to look over their character's profile and add any additional information they think will be able to help them in the debate. Each group will nominate one person to go into role as their character; the rest of the group will act as advisors.

As the Mayor of the Town Meeting you will invite each group to defend their character's actions against the rest of the townspeople and to maintain order during the meeting. Be sure to allow each group to speak, uninterrupted by the other groups, instead taking questions after the character in question has spoken.

Example questions you could ask:

MOTHER GOETHEL – *Why did you lock Rapunzel in the tower? Why are you so against the Prince?*

RAPUNZEL – *How did it feel to be locked up in the tower? Do you think it was right to deceive your Mother and sneak the Prince into your tower?*

PRINCE – *Why didn't speak to Mother Goethel rather than going behind her back? How do you feel about taking Rapunzel away from her Mother?*

MODIFICATION:

To add another level to this activity, you can ask your students to swap their character profiles with another group. This means that the students will end up defending the other side of the story rather than the one they have already considered. In doing this they can achieve a wider understanding of all of the different points of view and how they effect the portrayal of the story.

KEYWORD:
Teacher-In-Role—the teacher provides a dramatic context by adopting a role in the drama.



Focus Questions

What character do you most agree with and why? Can you identify with any of the three characters? Was it difficult to question the characters? Was it difficult to represent a different character from the one you were prepared to defend?

Blueprint Focus:

Theater Making: Students participate in group activities, including creative play, storytelling, pantomime and improvisation.

Developing Theater Literacy: Students develop an appreciation of the role of theater in various cultures by exploring eras and personages in theater history.

Students use vocabulary that is authentic and integral to theater. Student refine their knowledge of dramatic literature through an examination of a range of scripts.

WHAT IS BRITISH PANTOMIME?

Kneehigh's *Rapunzel* blends traditional theatrical forms, including British Pantomime, with contemporary design elements to create their own interpretation of a traditional art form.

As Kneehigh is a British theater company, they use elements of traditional British Pantomime in their adaptation of *Rapunzel*. British Pantomime, unlike the American use of the word which is interchangeable with "mimed" performance, is a theatrical genre aimed at families, and traditionally performed around the holiday season. It is a form of comedy that includes a strong musical element, familiar songs, dancing, slapstick and audience participation. British Pantomime, known as "Panto," is as much a part of Britain's heritage as fish and chips and Buckingham Palace, and is usually based on well-known fairytales such as *Cinderella*, *Aladdin* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. The conventions of Panto traditionally follow the same formula: a couple overcoming an obstacle and an evil character, leading to a happy ending.



THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

KEYWORD:
Pantomime—a genre of comic theatre traditionally performed in the UK around the holiday season for adults and children.

ORIGINS OF PANTOMIME

The word "pantomime" originates from the Greek word, meaning "imitator of things." The term originally referred to a performer rather than a theatrical style. The performer would silently perform accompanied by music. This is where the American meaning of the word originated.

The tradition of British Pantomime started in the 18th Century and borrows key elements from other art forms such as Commedia Dell'Arte and British Music Hall variety shows. Commedia Dell'Arte introduces the comical element and stock characters, whereas the British Music Hall established the use of stars and celebrities in the show. The Commedia Dell'Art characters first began to appear in English plays around 1660 and were an immediate success. Eventually, these characters emerged on the London stage and the first pantomime was produced in London's Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in 1716. Pantomimes soon started to rival each other for bigger special effects and lavish sets. This created the element of spectacle that has remained in popular pantomime to this day.

THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

KEYWORD:
Stock Character—
characters that appear
in multiple performances
with established
relationships and
histories.

ELEMENTS OF BRITISH PANTOMIME

STOCK CHARACTERS

The Pantomime Dame: She is usually the hero's mother and generally a kind and sympathetic character. The Panto Dame is usually a man dressed as a woman in an elaborate costume. In *Rapunzel*, Mother Goethel is a perfect example of a Pantomime Dame.

The Principal Boy: He is the hero of the story and is usually played by a young woman dressed up as a boy. Even though Rapunzel's character is female, she still has the principle role and has more in common with the hero than the female 'damsel in distress;' this breaks with the traditional pantomime.

The Principal Girl: She is the ingénue, the true love of The Principal Boy and always ends up living "happily ever after." This is another example of how Kneehigh has broken away from the traditional aspects of British Pantomime and created their unique characterization of Rapunzel.

Evil Villians: There is always an evil character present in British Pantomimes. They are greedy and present an obstacle in the way of the leading couple's happiness. You will recognize the evil character by their dark clothing and exaggerated evil laugh.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The audience is very active during a pantomime performance. They shout out phrases to help the principle characters such as 'He's Behind You!' when the evil character is creeping up on them. The characters in return speak directly to the audience and ask them questions. Often, towards the end of the show, a few children are selected to go up onto the stage to help the characters sing the songs.

SLAPSTICK COMEDY

Alongside a humorous script, physical comedy is also a tradition of Panto. There are often exaggerated chase scenes and ridiculous trips and falls. A popular example is when a principle character hits the evil character over the head with a saucepan, which is often accompanied by sound effect to exaggerate the action. In Kneehigh's *Rapunzel* there is a comic chase between the Prince and the magical pig, as well as Rapunzel and the two thieves. Even though slapstick performers appear to suffer physical pain, they are all highly trained and each sequence is skillfully choreographed.



The Pantomime Dame



The Principal Boy

THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

Suggested Activity..... **NYS LEARNING STANDARDS**
LA, A

CHARACTER TRANSFORMATIONS

This activity allows your students to explore the elements of stock characters in pantomime by transforming themselves into some of the pantomime characters.

Ask your class to walk around the room as themselves with their shoulders relaxed and their faces expressionless.

1. Now ask you students to consider how somebody who is older would walk around the space. *Would they walk differently? What mannerisms would they have?*
2. After thinking about the differences tell the students to put them into action. All of the students should be walking around the space as an older person. Ask them to consider: *What character are you creating? Are they your parents/grandparents age or older? Are they friendly or grumpy? What clothes would they wear, would they be tight or flowing? Would they walk with a cane or skip around the room? How would they speak? How would they laugh?*
3. Invite your students to become aware of the other people in the room and to greet them in character and to improvise short dialogue.
4. Now that your students have mastered their characters they can start to think about another of the pantomime stock characters, the evil character.
5. Repeat steps 3 to 5 whilst considering the features of the rest of the stock characters such as principle boy or girl.

KEYWORD:
Slapstick—comedy that
involves exaggerated physical
violence. Originally, a prop
made from two wooden
boards that create a sound
when slapped together.



Evil Villian



The Principal Girl



Focus Questions

How did it feel to embody someone else? What kind of character did you create? What was the main difference between your own mannerisms and the ones of your caricatures? What was comical about your mannerisms? Did any of the characters you created remind you of characters in movies or other plays you may have seen?

THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

ROLE REVERSAL

Using the characterization from the previous activity, your students can now apply their skills to perform a short scene.

Pair up the class and distribute copies of the two *Rapunzel* scenes excerpted on page 17.

Ask students to think back to the characterization in the previous activity and swap characters so that the girls are reading the male parts and the boys are reading the female parts.

What difference did it make to the performance when the gender roles were reversed? Was it more comical? Which version did you prefer? Did you prefer playing the female or the male role?

What did you change in your voice and expression when you were playing the opposite sex? What other films or plays do you know that include gender role reversals? How was this different to or the same as Rapunzel?

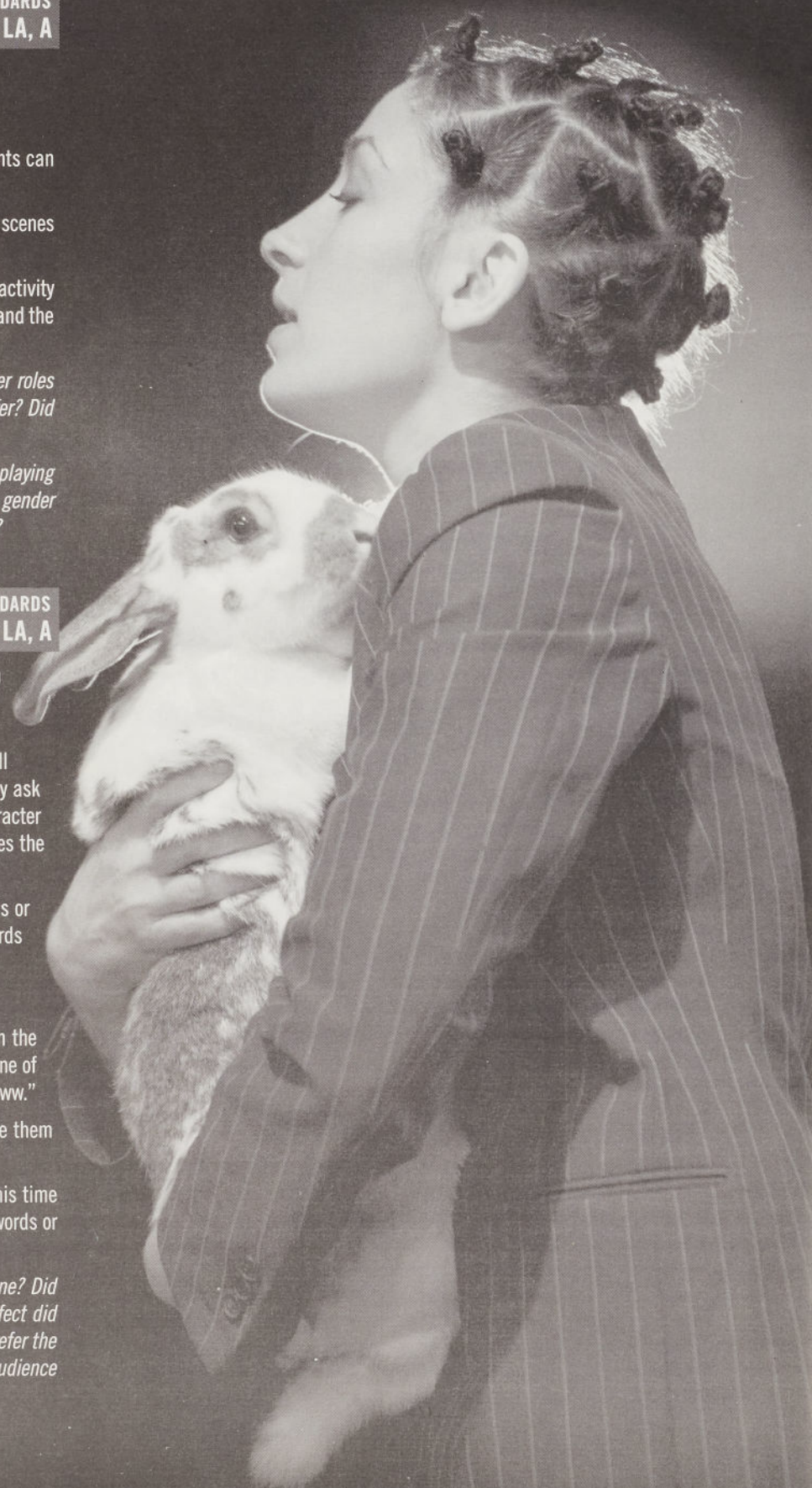
Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

“HE’S BEHIND YOU!”

During a Pantomime it is expected that the audience will participate and shout to the performers on stage. The actors may ask the audience to help them by letting them know when an evil character is approaching by saying “He’s behind you!” This activity explores the use and effects of audience participation on a scene.

1. In this activity your students are going to create a list of words or sounds that the audience can use when certain actions or words are used in the excerpts of *Rapunzel*.
2. Ask two volunteers to act out one of the excerpts of *Rapunzel*.
3. With your whole class brainstorm ideas for words or actions in the scene that the audience can react to. For example every time one of the characters say the word “love” the audience can sigh “aawww.”
4. Pick four of the examples for audience participation and write them clearly on the board.
5. Ask two more volunteers to act out the *Rapunzel* scene but this time the audience will participate by calling out when the chosen words or actions are used.

What difference did the audience participation have on the scene? Did you enjoy the audience participation? If you performed, what effect did the audience participation have on your performance? Did you prefer the scene with or without participation? When and how else are audience members invited to participate?



THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

RAPUNZEL SCRIPT EXCERPT 1:

Patrizio enters Rapunzel's tower

Rapunzel: Oh!

She's completely shocked at the sight of another person and backs off.

Patrizio: It's ok. I mean you no harm.

Rapunzel: Who are you? Why are you here?

Patrizio: I'm Patrizio. I heard your song. It was beautiful.

Rapunzel looks at him mistrustfully and backs away.

Patrizio: No it's true, it's true, I'm Patrizio. I was drawn towards the tower by the sound of your voice. Please forgive me. It's true.

Rapunzel: Really.

Patrizio: Yes.

Rapunzel: I'm Rapunzel. I live in this tower. I don't know when I'm going to get out.

Patrizio: Who is the old woman?

Rapunzel: She is my mother.

Patrizio: Your mother? Why's she locked you away?

Rapunzel: Because she loves me!

Patrizio: That's not love!

RAPUNZEL SCRIPT EXCERPT 2:

Signor Baldosi: Buongiorno Mother Goethel!

Mother Goethel: Hello signor. How is your wife – the lovely Rosa?

Signor Baldosi: Oh she's beautiful!

Mother Goethel: How are the children?

Signor Baldosi: They are very well. In fact there is another one on the way!

Mother Goethel: Number six! Wonderful news!

Signor Baldosi: You have a very talented assistant there Goethel.

Mother Goethel: I know.

Signor Baldosi: I just wanted to ask her for a little tonic, my energy is not what it was!

Mother Goethel: Rapunzel, Rapunzel!!!

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THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL



Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS LA, A

RAPUNZEL NYC

In this activity your students are going to incorporate all the elements of Pantomime they have learned to create their own adaptation of *Rapunzel* by re-setting it in New York City!

Divide your into small groups, each will be assigned one of the three key moments used in the previous theme.

- Mother Goethel putting Rapunzel in the tower.
- The Prince climbing up the tower to Rapunzel
- The Prince getting married

1. Ask your students to recreate the still images for the three moments in Rapunzel. Tell them that they are now going to bring the still images to life by improvising a short scene.
2. The scene must include the elements of Pantomime they learned in the previous activities including stock characters, slapstick comedy and audience participation. Their task is to update *Rapunzel* by setting it in New York City. An example of this is changing Rapunzel's tower to an apartment block or the Empire State Building.
3. In their groups, ask your students to brainstorm on a large sheet of paper ways of adapting *Rapunzel* to make it relevant to New York City. *How could you adapt the location of Rapunzel? Can you think of any stereotypes of people who may live in New York City that remind you of people in Rapunzel? How can you incorporate things that are recognizably from New York City into the story?*
4. Now that your students have generated lots of ideas on how they can adapt *Rapunzel*, ask them to create a short scene by activating one of the still images they created. An effective way of referencing the location is in the dialogue. For example, in the scene with the Prince climbing up Rapunzel's hair, the tower could be a skyscraper with the Prince shouting up to Rapunzel that the elevator is broken so can she let down her hair instead.

What was the most challenging aspect of Pantomime you put in your scene? How did the New York City setting effect the elements of Pantomime? What character did you play, and how did you bring it up to date? How did your character use the elements of Pantomime?

..... THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL



THEATER TRADITIONS IN RAPUNZEL

Suggested Activity..... NYS LEARNING STANDARDS A

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DESIGN YOUR *RAPUNZEL*

Using all of the ideas from the previous activity, ask your students to create a poster advertising their new adaptation of *Rapunzel* called "Rapunzel NYC."

Remind your students that they need to make it clear that their version is being set in New York City by including an illustration of one of the three key moments in the adapted New York setting. For example, Rapunzel looking out the window of an apartment building, or Mother Goethel stuck on the subway.

Teacher Note: We'd love to see your students' adaptations – please send them to us at the New Vic!

SOURCES CONSULTED AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Below are some resources that will help you and your students further explore the ideas within this School Tool. For your convenience, the resources are grouped according to the themes of this packet.

KNEEHIGH COMPANY

www.kneehigh.co.uk
www.cornwalltouristboard.co.uk

STORYTELLING

www.storyconnection.net
Storytelling and the Art of Imagination by Nancy Mellon
Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives by Jack Zipes

FAIRYTALES

www.surlalunefairytales.com/rapunzel/index.html
www.lefavole.org/en/
www.grimmfairytales.com/en/main
www.andersenfairytales.com/en/main
Fairy Tales, Fables, Legends, and Myths: Using Folk Literature in Your Classroom by Bette Bosma

PUPPETRY

www.artistshelpingchildren.org/puppetshandpuppetsfingerpuppetsartscraftsideaskids.html
Puppets and Masks - Stagecraft and Storytelling by Nan Rump
Making Puppets Come Alive by Larry Engler and Carol Fijans

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF RAPUNZEL

Golden by Cameron Dokey
The Tower Room by Adele Geras
The Stone Cage by Nicholas Gray Stuart
Letters from Rapunzel by Sara Holmes
Zel by Donna Jo Napoli

BRITISH PANTOMIME

www.its-behind-you.com/
www.limelightscripts.co.uk/scripts/history.htm





“There

is no formula to
the way we make
theatre. However,
it always starts with
the story. No, it
starts before then.
It starts with an itch,
a need, an instinct.”

—Emma Rice,
Artistic Director