



STEPHEN
JOSEPH
THEATRE
SCARBOROUGH

Pantomime

8 – 11 years

Pantomime literally means ‘all kinds’ of ‘mime’ (panto-mime). People have always enjoyed putting on plays and shows to entertain each other, it is generally thought that British pantomime developed from the early masques of the Elizabethan and Stuart days which were very important in the grand houses of Britain.

British pantomimes are usually performed at Christmas. One of the main traditions of pantomime is the **role reversal** of the lead characters. The hero known as the principal boy is played by a girl and the comic figure of the mother known as the Dame, is played by a man.

This may have evolved from the Tudor [‘Feast of Fools’](#), presided over by the Lord of Misrule on Twelfth Night. The feast was an unruly event, involving much drinking, revelry and role reversal. The Lord of Misrule, normally a commoner or servant, was selected to direct the entertainment.

Audience participation is an important part of pantomime tradition - Booing the baddie, ‘He’s behind you!’ and choruses of ‘Oh yes, he is!’ / ‘Oh no, he isn’t!’ at various points in the proceedings. There are songs for the audience to join in with and often sweets are thrown into the audience.

The stories are usually based on fairy tales such as Aladdin or Cinderella but time is always made for **slapstick** comedy such as custard pie throwing or buckets of ‘paint’.

The Stephen Joseph Theatre always puts on a Christmas show aimed at local children. This is often a popular treat for schools to go to a performance. Recent shows have included *Treasure Island* in 2019, *Alice in Wonderland* in 2018, *Pinocchio* in 2017 and *Hansel and Gretel* in 2015. Children’s stories but not traditional tales (apart from Hansel and Gretel).

They are written in the style of a pantomime; clear heroes and villains, good triumphing over evil, audience participation and a good dose of slapstick (who can forget Kenny the seagull in *Treasure Island*?) - they are not traditional pantomime but panto-esque.



Challenge

Choose a children's story that you enjoy (not necessarily a fairy-tale) and turn it into a pantomime.

Remember, you'll need:

A hero to cheer e.g. Batman / Thor / Bilbo Baggins

A villain to boo and hiss e.g. Voldemort / A dalek

A slapstick scene e.g. baking / decorating / mopping a floor

Role reversal a principal boy who is a girl / a dame who is a boy

Songs especially a well-known one with altered words

A happy ever after!

You could re-write *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett or try adapting a David Walliams story or a Roald Dahl favourite such as *George's Marvellous Medicine*.

Hero



George - Hurrah!

Villain



Grandma - Boo, hiss!

Slapstick



George's Dad 'helping' to make more medicine.

Role reversal

George played by a girl?

Grandma played by a boy?

Song

'My Favourite Things' from The Sound of Music:

*'Shampoo and toothpaste and lots of mum's lipstick
Car oil and hair oil and things that stop cow sick
All of it poured in a big metal pan
These are a few things I'd like to give Gran.'*

Happy ever after



Grandma shrinks to nothing!

Example slapstick scene

The wicked stepmother and Buttons redecorating a room in their house.



Props – 2 pots with brushes and 'paint'

Stepmother: Paint that wall pink

Buttons: OK (*he turns and asks audience to help, begins to paint it blue*)

[audience shout out his mistake - he pretends not to understand. Stepmother is stirring other pot.]

Stepmother: I said pink!

Buttons: That is pink.

Audience: 'Oh no it isn't!'

Buttons: 'Oh yes it is!']

Stepmother: Look, this is pink. Watch carefully.

[Stepmother starts to paint wall but Buttons is too close and gets paint splashed on him]

The scene can continue with Buttons getting more confused and the Stepmother getting crosser until they both have to rush off because of the next scene.

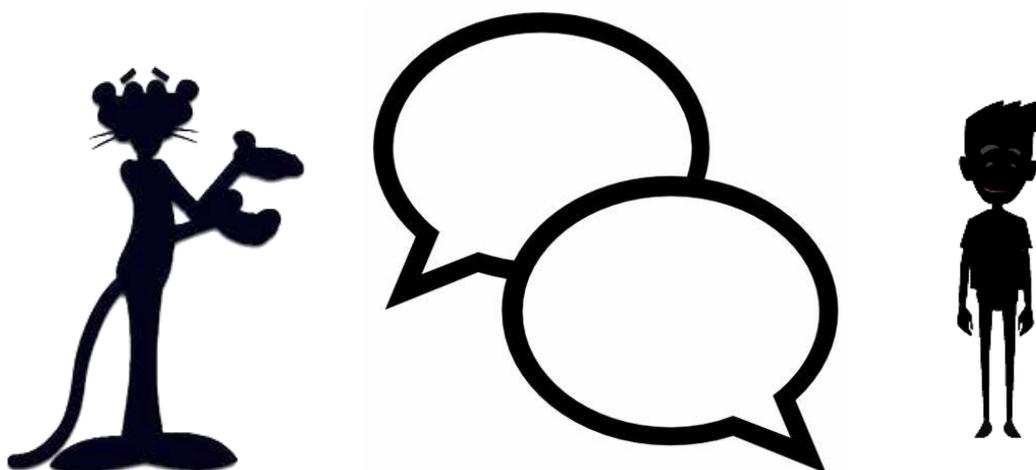
Similar scenes could take place in the garden, planting/gathering , packing/unpacking a suitcase, crossed lines phone call, hanging wet clothes on the line or baking.



Dialogue

Dialogue is very important in any play because it tells the audience what is happening and how the characters feel.

It is good to use speech bubbles to organise dialogue. Choose two characters and create a piece of dialogue. This could be acted out by people or with puppets.



We speak very differently from the way we write. We do not greet someone with ‘The sun rose this morning like a huge red ball of fire.’ If we did they would look at us very strangely. We would say, ‘It’s hot this morning.’

We also use slang when we speak. E.g. ‘We’re gonna ride to the park. You comin’?’ rather than ‘We are going to ride up to the park. Would you like to come with us?’

Listen to people speaking on television then compare to a book.

We’d love to see how you get on – you can tag or message us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram!