

MERCURY

Aladdin



Teacher's Resource Pack

Contents



Page 3: Synopsis

Page 4: Key Themes

Pages 5: Origins of Aladdin

Page 6: Brief history of panto

Page 7: The Dame

Pages 8: The Baffoon

Pages 9: Say hello to our Dame

Page 10: Meet the cast

Pages 11: Meet the creative team

Page 12/13: In rehearsals

Page 14/15/16: Costume designs

Pages 17 - 21:
Primary School exercises

Page 22 - 28:
Secondary School exercises

Page 29:
Book a panto workshop

Page 30:
Book the show!

Synopsis



Aladdin Synopsis

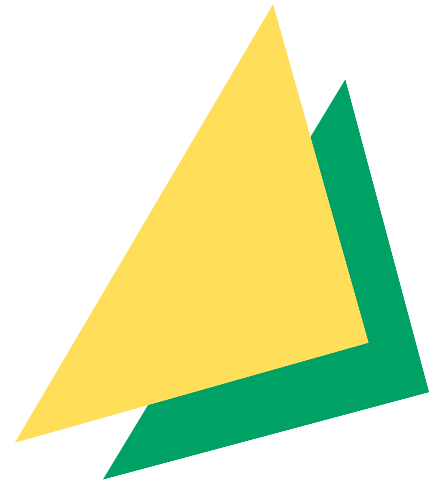
Aladdin is a young boy living in poverty. One day, a Sorceress; Fabra Cadabra, approaches Aladdin, claiming to be his aunt. She convinces Aladdin to work with her, telling Aladdin that if he does what she tells him, the boy will grow up to be rich. The Sorceress leads Aladdin down into a cave, telling the boy to fetch an oil lamp found inside.

The Sorceress gives Aladdin a magic ring that will protect him while he searches for it, but when he finds the Oil Lamp and a Magic Carpet, Aladdin refuses to pass it up to the Sorceress before he is out of the cave, so the Sorceress seals Aladdin inside the Cave of Wonders with the lamp.

Trapped inside the Cave of Wonders, Aladdin rubs the lamp and meets the Genie who lives inside it. The Genie grants Aladdin three wishes. Aladdin tricks the Genie into freeing them all from the cave without using a wish, then uses his first wish to become a prince to woo Princess Jasmine, and promises to use his third wish to free the Genie from servitude.

As Aladdin, the Genie and the rebellious Princess Jasmine start to become friends, they must embark on a dangerous mission to stop the evil Sorceress from seizing the Oil Lamp and using the Genie's power to overthrow the kingdom.

Key Themes



Power and Desire

One of the main themes in *Aladdin* is power and desire, and the consequences of fulfilling one's heart's desire when all your wishes can come true. The Sorceress wishes to obtain the Oil Lamp for megalomaniacal reasons, so that she can use the Genie's power to grant wishes to become all powerful and overthrow the kingdom.

Meanwhile, Aladdin wants to use the lamp to become wealthy, woo Princess Jasmine and free the Genie from captivity. Although Aladdin's aims are more noble than the Sorcerer, both characters learn that even when wishes do come true, they do not always manifest themselves in the way that we expect.

Truth

Throughout the story of *Aladdin*, characters make promises only to then break them or tell lies about who they are in order to achieve their aims and objectives. Aladdin initially breaks his promise to free the Genie when he thinks doing so may cost him his relationship with Princess Jasmine, though he eventually makes amends for this decision.

We can also see how characters lie to manipulate others in the character of The Sorceress, who tricks Aladdin into believing she is the boy's aunt in order to obtain the lamp. We can also see how characters conceal the truth to cover up who they really are out of fear, in the moment when Aladdin tries to conceal his impoverished background from Princess Jasmine.

Society and Class

In the world of *Aladdin*, society is made up of the haves and the have nots. Aladdin lives in poverty whereas Princess Jasmine is from a royal family, so their love crosses class divides and this is a source of dramatic conflict in the story. Both Aladdin and Jasmine romanticize what life must be like for people in other social classes, but they eventually come to realize their shared humanity, one that transcends societal differences.

When Aladdin is eventually granted a regal title by the story's end, we are left to consider whether his background as an impoverished person will help him rule the kingdom in a more humane way.

Origins of Aladdin

The tale of Aladdin is found in 'The Arabian Nights' or 'One Thousand and One Nights'. This collection of fairy tales was originally of Middle Eastern origin and was first introduced to Europe in 1704, via a French translation by Antoine Galland. However, Antoine Galland first came across this story in Paris when it was told to him by the Syrian storyteller, Hanna Diab, who is named in Galland's personal diaries from the time.

Antoine Galland added the fairy tale 'Aladdin and his Magic Lamp' to the Arabic translation of 'One Thousand and One Nights', along with other stories that have since become popular, including 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' and 'The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor'. 'Aladdin and His Magic Lamp' has been translated and adapted many times since and continues to be re-told today in theatre and film.

The original story of 'Aladdin' is set in China and in the earliest versions of the story, the character is Chinese. In this version, he is not an orphaned street urchin but a boy who lives at home with his mother. Some scenes of the story take place in North Africa, but we remain in China for the majority of the story. What's more, Agrabah, 'the city of mystery and enchantment' is, in fact, a fictional city imagined solely for Disney's Aladdin film (1992). The creators drew inspiration from the city of Baghdad in Iraq and then gave the city a fictional name. Disney also drew on the Indian city of Agra's Taj Mahal for the setting of the story's royal palace.



Brief History of Panto

Pantomime originated in 'Commedia dell'Arte' - a 16th-century Italian entertainment which included dance, music, acrobatics and mischievous characters. The most important of these characters was the Harlequin, a clown. The Harlequin was a witty, trickster type character who wore a mask and dressed in a brightly coloured chequered costume.

Later in the 17th century, pantomimes took the form of improvised comic stories that involved singing and dancing, and toured across Europe. By the early 18th century, Pantomime characters began to appear on the London stage in performances based on classical stories, usually set to music but without characters' speaking dialogue.

With the rise in popularity of scenery, stage effects and fairy-tales, the pantomime developed into a more popular and spectacular style of performance. Characters now spoke using silly puns, word-play and audience participation, and included mime, chase scenes and spectacular costumes. Favourite fairy-tale characters, magical animals and pantomime dames all became part of the mix, with the pantomime now combining nonsense tales with social commentary.

By the late 19th century, it became customary for pantomimes to open on Boxing Day and this linked it with the festive season and family entertainment. Many of today's popular pantomime stories are based on surprising sources. For example, Dick Whittington was based on the life of a real mayor of London who died in 1423, whereas other stories have been inspired by European, Middle Eastern and Asian folk tales.



The Dame



Gender switching and roleplay was quickly established as a convention in Victorian pantomime, and this laid the groundwork for the archetype of the Pantomime Dame. The Dame was a larger-than-life matriarchal character who was performed by a male actor in female costume and make-up.

However, the convention of male actors performing as female characters on stage was not a new one by this time; in actual fact, boy players had become accustomed to playing women's roles for centuries in England, due to a longstanding ban on female stage performers that was eventually lifted by King Charles II after the Restoration in 1660.

Pantomime drew on this convention in order to create Dames that sparked humour through caricature and slapstick. While modern pantomimes often embrace the artistry of 'drag' to create richer and more sympathetic portrayals of Pantomime Dames, it was routine in the 18th-19th century to treat the Dame characters as the butt of cruel jokes or characterise them as overtly sinister and frightening.

Male actors who took on the role of Pantomime Dames did not seek to disappear into the role and convincingly portray female characters. Despite their feminine disguise, the male actor sought to draw the audience's attention to their overbearingly masculine habits in order to generate laughter or land a gag.

Female impersonators from the world of Music Hall often appeared as dames. For example, one of the most legendary Dame's was played by Music Hall star Dan Leno, who took on the role of the wicked aunt in *Babes in the Wood* at Drury Lane in 1888, and he would continue to play the Christmas Pantomime season at Drury Lane Theatre for the next 15 years.



The Buffoon

Pantos often have a character who is a buffoon such as 'Wishee Washee' in Aladdin or 'Simon' in Jack and the Beanstalk. This character is usually the Dame's son and provides comic relief throughout the performance by combining jokes and physical slapstick routines. The origins of this character can also be traced back to 16th Century Italy in 'Commedia dell'Arte'.

There are three main stock roles in 'Commedia dell'Arte': servant, master, and innamorati (Lovers), and the servants or the clowns were referred to as the Zanni, which is where the word zany comes from. Like its namesake would suggest, Zanni's were outlandish characters with quirky appearances and an unusual sense of humour. There were two distinct types of Zanni: one was the silly servant and the other was the cunning servant.

In pantomime, the buffoon character is influenced by the silly servant character. They are often depicted as being foolish, clumsy and ridiculous. However, despite their absurd appearance and foolish manner, the purpose of the Zanni was that they were the most sympathetic characters and it was their responsibility to interact with the audience and ensure that they were following the plot.

In pantomime, the Buffoon character fulfils exactly the same role; they often encourage the audience to actively participate in the performance by shouting out phrases at key points in the pantomime. They adopt a "master-of-ceremonies" type role, in which they establish a call-and-response relationship with the live audience and reveal to us that they are also in on the joke.

Say hello to our Dame

Antony Stuart-Hicks



What's the best thing about playing the Dame?

Playing Dame is so much fun! It's hard work on the feet and back because of the heels, my skin because of the VERY thick make-up but it's all worth it to hear the laughter.

What role does the Dame play in a panto and why is this important?

I see my role as driving the comedy throughout and engaging in a lot of chatting directly to the audience, whether through participation or interjections. Also, I get the opportunity to be more cheeky or naughty because of my direct relationship with the audience and it is such an important element to heighten the comedy value and also keep the adults laughing as much as the children.

What special skill do you need to play a Dame?

You need to be a good judge of character in regards to an audience. Read the room, ripple the laughter so that it becomes infectious throughout the entire auditorium. This also means I have to be a good listener- keeping tabs on which parts of the crowd may be more relaxed and ready to join in and others that need a bit of a boost.

Why do you think Panto's are important piece of entertainment?

For many children (as it was for me) Panto is the first experience of a live theatre show. The cultivation of the 'next generation' of theatre-lovers is the primary goal of that engagement. Come to the panto, love it, return to the theatre or even go into the profession. Panto is also a showcase of multi skilled performers - we have to do multiple disciplines; singing, dancing, pathos, comedy, magic, acting through song. It's a tough gig but very rewarding.

If you could have three wishes what would they be?

- 1) That I had my own Pamper Parlour like Twankey, so I could relax.
- 2) A never ending supply of pork pies (I love 'em)
- 3) To still be making people laugh for another 25 years

Lastly, what's your favourite panto gag?

I have soooooo many and most you cant print here, so:

"This is an educational show this ya know! Oh yes, you'll get out of 'ere and think.... well, that taught me a lesson!

Meet the Cast

MERCURY

Aladdin



David Djemal
Constable Naw



James Hameed
Aladdin



Marisa Harris
Sergeant Nee



Danielle Kassaraté
Princess Jasmine



Sasha Latoya
Genie of the Lamp

Sat 27 Nov
- Sun 16 Jan



Minal Patel
The Emperor of Colchestaria



Leonie Spilsbury
Fabra Cadabra



Antony Stuart-Hicks
Widow Twankey



Dale Superville
Humphrey the Camel

Meet the creative team

Writer - Andrew Pollard
Director - Ryan McBryde
Lighting Designer - David W Kidd
Sound Designer - Ed Clarke
Musical Director - Nick Barstow
Choreographer - Donna Berlin
Magic Advisor - Michael J Fitch
Casting Director - Marc Frankum CDG
Assistant Director - Michael Cottrell

Panto Chorus Genius Genies

Polly Clarke
Ellie Donaldson
Mea Ferrari
Lucie Henderson
Albie Keeble
Saanvi Kumar
Annabel Nottage
Olivia Osborne

Aladdin Allstars

David A Adekanle
Amy Bennett
Sasha Buxton
Niamh Butcher
Jonny Ford
Maddison Hawes
Isaac Lock
Sophie Parton

In rehearsals



Photo credit: Pamela Raith

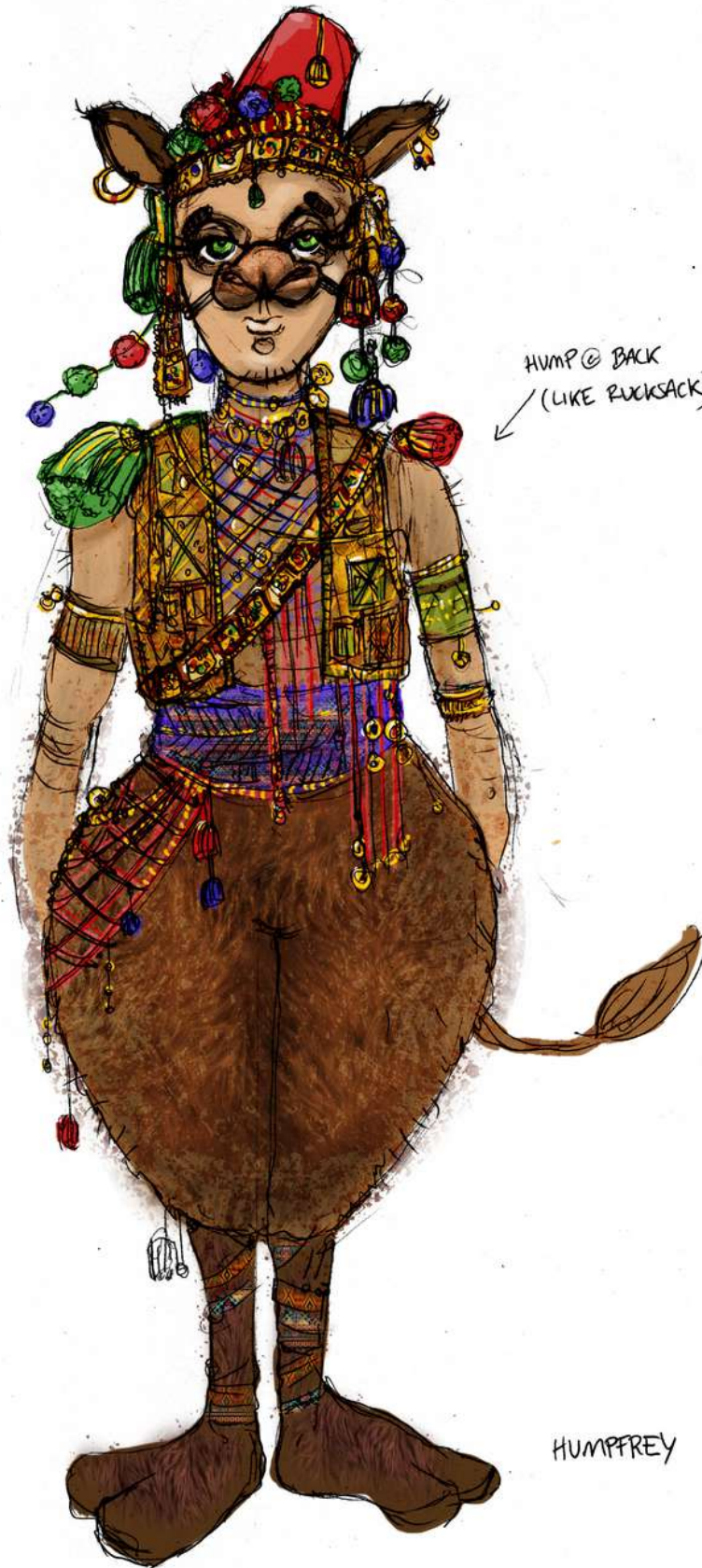


Costume Designs





ALADDIN ①



HUMP @ BACK
(LIKE RUCKSACK)

HUMPFREY

Primary Activities



Exercise #1: Pantomime Tug-o-War

Objective:

To explore the conventions of mime, failure, slapstick and physical comedy through group performances.

In Pantomime, the audience who watch the performance are asked to suspend their disbelief and believe in actions or events that would seem ridiculous or unbelievable in the real world.

Much of the joy that we experience when watching pantomimes stems from the fact we're being asked to imagine silly and absurd situations to be happening, and the humour comes from the spectacle of watching actors try - and often fail - to perform these actions in front of us.

In this exercise, two groups will "mime" a Tug-O-War and one group will lose the struggle in spectacular fashion.

The idea is that the "losing" group can glory in their failure by making a spectacular display when the game finishes. Both sides should illustrate the enormity of the struggle by deliberately exaggerating their physical, vocal and facial characterisations as the Tug-O-War progresses.

Steps:

- Divide the group into 2 smaller groups and have them mime a Tug-O-War fight.
- Have each group choose heads or tails and then flip a coin. Decide based on the coin flip which group will eventually "win" and which group will "lose" the Tug-O-War.
- Create a dividing line in the middle of the two groups using tape. When the losing group is eventually dragged past this line, the winning group emerges victorious from the Tug-o-War.
- There should be no physical rope for the group members to hold; the focus in this exercise is on recreating the illusion of a physical struggle through "mime" and make-believe.
- It's important that the "miming" does not stretch or shrink the imaginary rope too much; both groups need to try and convince the audience that the rope is really there and the struggle is real.
- Set a timer of 3 minutes and choose some music to underscore the struggle.

Curriculum Links: Drama, English Literature

Time: 30 minutes

Exercise #2 Emotional Charades



Objective: To explore the conventions of physical characterisation, emotional caricature and farce in Pantomime through tableau.

In Pantomime, the actors always embrace caricature and farce when performing as their characters. Acting in pantomime is not about creating realistic characters; instead, it is about creating heightened versions of these characters that seem larger-than-life to the audience who are watching.

Caricature means to exaggerate by distorting some of a characters' mannerisms and characteristics. It is meant to provoke laughter.

In this exercise, two groups will adopt various characters in tableau while the other group watches as the audience, with each tableau being inspired by an 'emotional charade' that is called out by the teacher.

Steps:

- Divide the groups into 2 groups - one as the audience and the other as the actors on stage.
- Have the performing group walk around the space in front of the audience. They are not performing or trying to be funny at this point - they are simply walking.
- Randomly choose one of the 'Emotional Charade' instructions from the list and read it out aloud to the group.
- Each person in the performing group must then freeze, adopt a characterisation inspired by that charade in tableau ("frozen picture") and present it to the seated group who are watching.
- Each person creating a tableau in the performing group should seek to create an exaggerated and highly caricatured version of that character and emotion, using their physicality and facial expressions.
- You can prepare a list of your own 'Emotional Charades' in advance of the exercise, and these can be linked to the story or Pantomime you are studying. For example, with Aladdin, some of these could include instructions like:
 - Genie escapes from the Lamp Aladdin discovers the Magic Carpet.
 - Prince Jasmine flees the Palace Sorcerer gets trapped inside the Lamp.
- Each of the 'Emotional Charades' should describe a playable action that enables the young actor to create a heightened emotional state for that character that they can then present in tableau form.
- Finally, swap the groups over and repeat.

Curriculum Links: Drama, English Literature

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Paper, Pens, art supplies

Exercise #3: Design your own costume

Objective: To encourage pupils to create their own character designs inspired by the visually spectacular elements of Pantomime and the emphasis on stock character types.

In pantomime, the actors are often dressed in very bright, colourful and spectacular costumes that make a strong visual impact on the audience. The characters are designed in a very extravagant manner in order to quickly and clearly communicate who they are (principal boy, buffoon, dame), their status in the overall story (e.g. royalty or street-urchin) and the stock role that they're playing (e.g. hero, villain, sidekick).

Pantomime's emphasis on spectacle and bold visual display is meant to astonish, entertain and tickle the audience. However, the choice of costume design also tells the audience how they ought to feel about the character they're watching. In other words, the costume design tells us whether they are being treated as a figure of ridicule or someone to be feared.

In this design exercise, pupils will create their own costumes inspired by a particular character from the pantomime that you are studying, in this case, Aladdin.

Steps:

- Divide the group into pairs and supply them with coloured pens, pencils and A3 paper.
- Give each pair a 'brief' for their character design. A 'brief' is a simple outline of who the character is and what they represent in the story. It should be straightforward and easy to understand. You can either use the same brief for each pair or a different brief for each pair.
- Here is an example brief for The Genie from Aladdin: 'The Genie is a magical spirit that lives inside an oil lamp. They are powerful and have a cheeky sense of humour'.

Exercise #3: Design your own costume cont'd

- Tell each pair to design a fantastic outfit for their character. Encourage them to think about their character's personality when they are designing them on the page. Here are some questions you can prompt them with to get them thinking imaginatively about their options:
 - Are they happy or sad?
 - Young or old?
 - Brave or shy?
 - Serious or silly?
 - Good or evil?
 - Weak or strong?
 - Rich or poor?
- Asking these sorts of questions can help each pair decide on colours and types of clothing a character might wear.
- After 10-minutes, have each pair share their design with the rest of the class and explain their choices.

Share your great work with us!

We would love to see your designs and share them on social media to celebrate your pupils imaginations!

Please feel free to send photo's of the costume designs to taking.part@mercurytheatre.co.uk or tag us on



@mercurytheatre



@MercuryTheatre



@mercurytheatrecolchester

Secondary Activities



**Curriculum Links: Drama, English Literature,
Critical Thinking**
Time: 1 hour
Materials: Paper

Exercise #1: Three wishes improvisation

Objective: To examine the theme of wishes in Aladdin from a modern perspective and improvise short scenes inspired by pupil's own wishes.

In Aladdin, one of the most prominent themes is that of wish fulfillment and the ability to get what your heart most desires by having your wishes granted. However, as the story of Aladdin reveals to us, sometimes when our wishes come true they do not manifest themselves in the way that we first expect. In other words, we may come to regret what we originally desired or it might turn out different to how we imagined it.

In this exercise, students will each write down three of their own wishes on scraps of paper and then different groups will devise silent performances that dramatise one of these wishes coming true.

Steps:

- Have the whole group sit in a large circle with the playing space in the middle.
- Give each pupil 3 scraps of paper.
- Give the group 5-minutes for each pupil to write down 3 wishes on each scrap of paper, without adding their name to it.
- Once they have done so, the pupils should add the pieces of paper to pile in the middle of the playing space.
- Have different pairs of pupils enter the playing space and choose one scrap of paper at random from the pile.
- Each pair should read the wish they have chosen to themselves, without sharing it with the rest of the group, and then improvise a scene without dialogue which brings this moment to life.
- For example, if the piece of paper reads “I wish I would win the lottery”, the pair might choose to bring this moment to life by miming them scratching away the numbers of a lottery card while the numbers are announced on television.

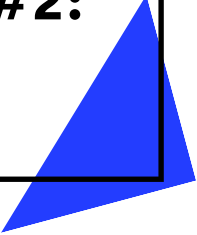


**Exercise #1:
Three wishes
improvisation
cont'd**

- Once they have finished the improvisation, the group who are watching should try and guess the wish that was written down on the paper.
- After the group has successfully guessed the Wish, they can then add new ideas to the improvisation to make the situation more interesting, by asking the question: what could go wrong? The pair can then perform the improvisation one more time with this new conflict.
- For example, using “I wish I would win the lottery”, the group might decide that this could go wrong if the pair get into a heated argument over how to split the money or end up tearing the lottery card into pieces as they fight over it. How would the scene then play out with this new conflict added to it?
- Repeat this exercise until every pupil has been able to improvise a scene at least twice.

Curriculum Links: Drama
Critical Thinking
Time: 40 minutes
Resources: Open space, A3 Paper and Pens

Exercise #2: Story boards



Objective: To retell the story of Aladdin and analyse how individual scenes works in the context of the overall narrative.

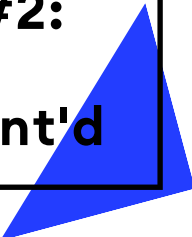
A storyboard is a way of telling a story through pictures and words. Film makers often use storyboards to show the action planned in a film, but you will be using them to show how each scene and pivotal moment in the tale of Aladdin work together to tell the overall story.

You should choose FIVE crucial scenes or moments from the Aladdin story. These moments should be high stakes moments in which key characters are making decisions and moving the plot forward.

The idea for this exercise is to have pupils work in smaller groups to analyse the following aspects to whichever scene they have been assigned.

1. **Characters:** who are the characters, what is motivating them and what do they represent in the overall story?
2. **Setting:** where does the scene take place and what role does the environment play in the overall story?
3. **Dramatic Action:** what happens in the scene, how would you describe the key conflict and what is at stake for the characters?
4. **Themes:** what is the idea, moral or message to this scene?
5. **Symbolism:** identify the images and/or motifs and consider what they represent?

Exercise #2: Story boards cont'd



Steps:

- Divide the group into 5 smaller groups.
- Give each group A3 paper and pens so they can create spider diagrams, mind-map OR even draw their ideas.
- Allocate one of the following scenes from the story of Aladdin to each group (there may be other scenes you wish to explore instead, so feel free to choose your own if you wish):
- The Genie grants Aladdin three wishes and Aladdin tricks the Genie into freeing them all from the cave without using a wish.
- Princess Jasmine decides she wants to marry for love so she flees the palace and meets Aladdin.
- Aladdin and Princess Jasmine take a ride on the Magic Carpet and she deduces Aladdin's true identity.
- The Sorcerer becomes the Genie's new master and uses his first two wishes to become more powerful.
- The Sorcerer learns of Aladdin's nobility and changes the law to allow Jasmine to marry who she chooses.
- Give each group 10 minutes to discuss their scene and answer the FIVE questions listed above (character, setting, dramatic action, themes, symbolism).
- After 10-minutes, have each group present their analysis and interpretations back to the rest of the class.

Curriculum Links: Drama

Time: 1 hour

Materials: Open Space, Paper and Pens.



**Exercise #3:
Devise your
own panto**

Objective: To identify and re-create the archetypal elements that comprise a classic pantomime.

Firstly, facilitate a classroom discussion with the entire group in which you identify and break down the various story ingredients that are needed to create an archetypal pantomime. You can draw upon your existing knowledge of Aladdin, as well as making reference to other pantomimes you and your class may be familiar with.

Capture your knowledge on a whiteboard or have the individual pupils take notes for themselves if this is easier.

Some of these conventions include, but are not limited to:

- Comedy routine, e.g. slapstick, improvisation, puns, farce.
- Narratives based on folk-tales, legends and myths.
- Audience interaction, e.g. call-and-response, “it’s behind you”, sly social commentary.
- Gender switching and roleplay, e.g. the Pantomime Dame.
- Stock characters and caricature, e.g. The Buffoon, The Dame, The Principal Boy

Once you have an exhaustive list of all the various ingredients that go into making a classic Pantomime, you can then divide the class up into smaller groups of 4-5 and have each group devise their own panto using these elements.

Exercise #3: Devise your own panto cont'd

Steps:

- Each devising group will imagine that they are working for a Tourist Board. Their task is to devise a presentation which explains what pantomime is to a tourist who has never even heard of pantomime.
- Each group has 10-15 minutes to devise their piece; everybody should contribute to the devising and performing of the presentation.
- The purpose of the devised presentation is educational, but it can be as fun, frivolous and theatrical as the group wishes. It should feel like a mini-pantomime in its own right.
- Ideas for the presentation could include interviewing a dame, acting out short scenes from their favourite pantos with 'directors commentary', or prepare a song to encourage visitors to come over and enjoy the spectacle!
- After 10-15 minutes, have each group perform the scenes back to each other and decide as a class if you would visit these places and pantomimes.



Aladdin Panto Workshop

£150 + VAT

Location: In school or at the Theatre

Timings: Lesson length

Classroom size up to 30

suitable for Key Stage 1+

Journey with us to distant shores where the penniless Aladdin dreams of winning the heart of the rebellious Princess Jasmine.

Make your schools visit to the pantomime even more enriching with our fun workshop exploring character archetypes, fairy tales and conventional storylines.

This practical storytelling workshop is the perfect Christmas treat for a group before or after they've seen the show.

This package includes:

- A workshop with a Drama Facilitator (delivered at your school)
- A section of the pantomime script
- Pantomime Education & Enrichment pack

To book contact: taking.part@mercurytheatre.co.uk



Saturday 27 November – Sunday 16 January

Make all your Christmas wishes come true with a trip to the Mercury's magical pantomime, Aladdin!

Journey with us to distant shores where the penniless Aladdin dreams of winning the heart of the rebellious Princess Jasmine.

When he is tempted by an evil sorcerer with the promise of untold riches, our young hero finds himself trapped in the Cave of Wonders with nothing but his wits and a battered old lamp. Little does he know that its contents will change his life for ever.

Will Aladdin defeat the wicked sorceress? Will the Princess Jasmine ever notice him? And will the Genie of the Lamp make all of his wishes come true?

You'll be thrilled to hear our Great British Pantomime award-winning ugly sisters, Antony Stuart-Hicks and Dale Superville (Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White) will be unleashed on Colchester once again, and after a year off they're chomping at the bit to release even more panto madness on unsuspecting audiences!

So hop aboard your magic carpet and join us for a hilarious, fun-packed adventure full of song, dance and all the usual Mercury magical mayhem!

www.mercurytheatre.co.uk