

**Teaching
Resources**
compiled by Alyssa O'Connor



Educational
inspirational,
extremely entertaining
theatre

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To the teacher

This resource is designed to be used by you as you plan lessons for your class, leading up to and following the attendance of our performance of **Red Riding Robyn Hood** at your school.

These are some ideas of how you can incorporate the themes of this play into various learning areas (Health, English and The Arts). Please adopt and adapt the suggestions given how ever you see fit to meet the needs of your students.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to know anything more about the play – we are here to help you get as much out of the play as you can!

The NZ Playhouse team

0800 894 500
resources@newzealandplayhouse.co.nz

Did you know...

You can download and print more copies of this resource and posters for the show at www.nzplayhouse.co.nz/resources

Year 1-4

The following Achievement Objectives have been taken from Levels 1 & 2 of the NZ Curriculum.

Literacy

Achievement Objective: Form and express ideas on a range of topics.

Key Competency: Using language, symbols, and texts

Learning Activity: Write a recount

Provide students with the following template to write about their favourite part(s) of the show.

My favourite part of the show was...
I liked this part because...
It looked like this...

Art

Achievement Objective: Investigate and develop visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination.

Key Competency: Thinking

Learning Activity: Design a magical creature

King George wants to build a wall around the enchanted forest to keep out all the scary creatures that live there.

Have students imagine and create their own enchanted forest creatures!

- Inspire them by reading some stories about magical creatures and use the pictures for reference (see here for book examples <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/unicorns-dragons-and-other-magical-creatures#sect-extending>)
- Brainstorm ideas together – what kind of physical characteristics could the creatures have? (E.g wings, scales). Students can then draw their own magical creatures. They should also come up with a name for their creature.
- You could also get students to create 3D versions of their creatures using a variety of materials (e.g., cardboard, colored paper, felt, cloth scraps, popsicle sticks, feathers, fake fur, buttons, or beads).
- Present creatures (2D or 3D) to the class, introducing the creatures by name and explaining their physical features.

Activity adapted from: <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/unicorns-dragons-and-other-magical-creatures#sect-activities>

Extension for older students: Integrate science – students could write an information profile for their creature and identify physical and behavioral characteristics.



Health

Achievement Objective: Identify personal qualities that contribute to a sense of self-worth.
Key Competency: Managing self

Learning Activity: Identify personal qualities and strengths

Red Riding Robyn Hood had lots of strengths and personal qualities that helped her triumph over King George! Remind students that we all have different strengths and qualities that make us who we are.

1. Have students come up with some words to describe *Red Riding Robyn Hood* and record these on the board.

Some examples:

Brave
Heroic
Courageous
Fair

2. Give students a piece of paper each and have them trace around their hand. They should write their name in the centre of the palm then think of some of their own strengths and personal qualities and write one inside each finger. Model an example first and if needed, provide students with a list of words to choose from.

3. Students can then decorate their hands, making sure the words stay visible.

4. Go around the class and have each student share one of their strengths / personal qualities. You might like to stick all the hands on the classroom wall afterwards so that everyone can be reminded of their awesomeness.

Drama

Achievement Objective: Initiate and develop ideas with others to create drama.
Key Competency: Participating and contributing

Learning Activity: Freeze frames

This is a great short activity or warm up idea, using freeze frames to establish a scene from the play!

- Have students stand in a circle, outside or in an open classroom space.
- Choose a student to start – they will stand in the centre of the circle and use their body to create a character or object from the play and then freeze in position. They must tell the others what they are. For example, they could be *Red Riding Robyn Hood* shooting an arrow.
- One by one the other students join in and build up the scene until everyone is included. Encourage them to be creative. Someone could be the target *Red Riding Robyn Hood* is aiming at for example.

Repeat with other scenes from the play. You might like to have a go at creating scenes from traditional fairy tales as well.

Literacy

Achievement Objective: Select and use sources of information, processes, and strategies with some confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.
Key Competency: Using language, symbols and texts

Learning Activity: Write a character description

- Model an example of a character description together using the following template to generate ideas. Then, write a short one paragraph description.
- Students each choose a major character from the play (*Reporter, Red Riding Robyn Hood, King George, Town Crier or the Wolf*). You might want to brainstorm some adjectives together that could be used to describe the various characters.
- Students then complete their own character description templates and short one paragraph descriptions of their chosen characters.
- You could use this as a lead in to students creating their own characters for a narrative writing unit.

See the following link for sample character descriptions:

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson1125/sample.pdf

Character Name:

Appearance: What do they look like?

Characteristics: What kind of person are they?

Actions: What are some of the things they do in the play?

Year 5-8

The following Achievement Objectives have been taken from Level 3 of the NZ Curriculum. They are intended as a guide and these activities could easily be adapted to suit corresponding Level 2 or 4 AO's. Many of them could be adapted for younger students as well.

Literacy

Achievement Objective:

Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

Key Competency: Thinking

Learning Activity: Write a review

Provide students with a range of movie reviews to read. Included is an example review of the movie "The Jungle Book" (2016).

- As a class discuss aspects of the sample review(s) – key elements, structure etc.
- Go through the following template together – discuss each of these terms and share examples from *Red Riding Robyn Hood*.
 - Plot / script
 - Acting
 - Music
 - Sound effects
 - Set
 - Costumes
- Have students fill in the review planning template which they will use to help write their own reviews of the play.
- Go over the general structure of a review together before writing (refer back to the examples to demonstrate).
 - Title of the review
 - Introduction (including the title of what is being reviewed)
 - Plot summary
 - Analysis (your thoughts – what you did / didn't like)
 - Conclusion / evaluation
- Get writing – draft, publish, share! (You may like to model an example first and / or use a template to help students structure their reviews.)
- A more comprehensive lesson plan for review writing and more templates are available here: <http://www.smalltowncritic.com/downloads/>

You could post your reviews to:

New Zealand Playhouse
PO Box 19907
Christchurch 8241
New Zealand

We would love to hear their thoughts!

Use this template to help you plan your review

What was the play about?

What parts did you like / dislike?

Acting

Set

Music

Costumes

Plot / Script

Sound Effects



Review Example

The Jungle Book

By Tre'ana Hickson, KIDS FIRST! Film Critic, age 12

After analyzing this film, I really appreciated it because it is family oriented and explores the relationship of a young man. This film made me wonder if something happened to my parents who would take care of me. I love the fact that the animated jungle animals look so real and talk like human beings. This film blends adventure, drama, fantasy and family in an entertaining story. I enjoyed this film because of the way it takes a classic story and turns it into something amazing. Director Jon Favreau's fantastic adaptation of the story and his devotion to the animals cherish exceeded my expectations. The special effects and 3D portrayal of all the animals are breathtakingly awesome.

The story follows the man-cub Mowgli (Neel Sethi) who departs the jungle after a threat from the tiger, Shere Khan (Idris Elba). The panther Bagheera (Ben Kingsley) serves as his protector and keeps him out of harms way until Baloo the Bear (Bill Murray) comes on board and joins the team. Mowgli embarks on a journey of self-discovery and meets creatures along the way who don't have his best interests at heart. The film shows his innocence and you have to respect and honor him.

I loved the scene when Baloo the Bear and Mowgli go to the lake with Mowgli sitting on Baloo's stomach as they float down the river. I really adored this moment because it is hilarious and it reminded me of a special time I spent with my friends in the pool. A bond is formed that you knew could not be broken.

The message of this film is do not ever hold a grudge against someone because of something that happened in the past. Try to make amends because life is too short and precious. Live each moment to the fullest. That is what Mowgli realizes and does. You should always give someone a chance to fit in.

I recommend this film for ages 7 to 18 because they will definitely be entertained. I give it 5 out of 5 Stars because it is child friendly, hilarious, exciting and enjoyable it even though some terrifying moments exist.

Review from www.kidsfirst.org

Literacy

Achievement Objective: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

Key Competency: Using language, symbols and texts

Learning Activity: Design a movie poster

Create a movie poster for a film adaptation of *Red Riding Robyn Hood*.

- Analyse a range of film posters and identify the design features and target audience. Discuss use of colour, font, layout / composition, negative space.

- Brainstorm what students already know about film posters – record on whiteboard.

- Display an enlarged film poster on the whiteboard as a visual resource. Prompt students to look at the use of colour, layout, text and images and annotate around the poster.

- Discuss the target audience and record key points. Watch the movie trailer for the film poster you have chosen and use this to help establish the target audience.

- Display five film posters around the room, choose a range of quality and poor designs. Divide students into groups and provide a set of challenge questions about the film posters that each group must answer e.g. Who is the target audience and why? What colours have been used? What is appealing about this poster? What shapes and lines have been used? Is the film poster eye-catching? Students spend five minutes at each poster station and record their findings, before reporting back to the class and rating the film posters from best to worst.

- Imagine that *Red Riding Robyn Hood* is being made into a movie. Students will each design a film poster that represents the play and takes into account all of the features that have been discussed.

- Students brainstorm what images from the play they would like to include on their posters. E.g a bow and arrow.

- Students complete a draft poster then share with a partner to give an receive feedback. A final copy is then created taking feedback into account.

- Present posters to the class and discuss.

Literacy

Achievement Objective: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Key Competency: Using language, symbols and texts

Learning Activity: Narrative writing

Red Riding Robyn Hood draws on the characters and plots from *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Robin Hood*. Have students write their own fairytale mash-up based on two (or more) original stories of their choice.

- Read a selection of fairytales with the students and talk about the common elements / characteristics of a fairytale (structure, language, ideas). Brainstorm examples from Little Red Riding Hood and Robin Hood and from the stories you have just read.

Some Ideas

- Include fantasy, supernatural or make-believe aspects.
- Typically incorporate clearly defined good characters and bad characters.
- Involves magic elements, which may be magical people, animals, or objects.
- Focus the plot on a problem or conflict that needs to be solved.
- Usually have happy endings, based on the resolution of the conflict or problem.
- Teach a lesson or demonstrate important values.

Ideas from <http://www.readwritethink.org>

- Discuss structure of a narrative. Use *Red Riding Robyn Hood* as an example and go over the following:

- characters
- setting
- plot
- problem
- solution

- Use hamburger templates to plan stories – model one together first, then students can complete their own. You can find one here: http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/paragraph_hamburger

- Students use their plans to help them write their fairytales.

You could create your own class book of Fairytale Mash-ups!

For a more in-depth fairy tale narrative writing unit, see <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/fairy-tales-from-life-42.html>

Literacy

Achievement Objective: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Key Competency: Using language, symbols and texts

Learning Activity: Write a newspaper article

Have students write their own newspaper article about the events of the play - the King raising the tax rate, *Red Riding Robyn Hood* taking the money back from the tax collectors and returning it to the people it was taken from and then beating the King in the archery contest.

Activity One

1. Divide students into groups of four and give each group an article. (Provide age appropriate articles from a recent newspaper.)
2. Each group will find and record the who, what, where, when, why and how of their news story.
3. Discuss the specific features of a newspaper article with the class. See what the students can come up with by reading through their articles.
4. Give each group a copy of the "key features of a newspaper" handout and get them to identify each feature in their article.

Activity Two

1. Give each student a planning sheet to plan their own article based on the events of the play.
2. Students each write their own articles being sure to include all the key features discussed previously.
3. Proof read / edit articles.
4. Publish articles!

You could also go more in depth and make a whole unit out of this!

See: www.nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/Education-for-Enterprise/Resources/Extra-extra-read-all-about-it

Key Features of a Newspaper Article

Headline – usually only four or five words. It tries to attract the interest of the reader by telling them what the story is about, in a short and interesting way.

By-line – who wrote the article.

Introduction / lead – It will set the scene and summarise the main points of the article: who, what, when, where.

Body – provides more detail about the event, in particular it answers the questions how and why.

Quotes – sometimes articles will include what a person (like an eye-witness or an expert) has said. These will be in speech marks.

Facts – articles are made up of true statements about what happened, rather than opinions.

Photograph and caption – often articles have a photograph, and a sentence explaining the photograph.

Planning Sheet

What happened?
Who was involved?
Where did it happen?
When did it happen?
Why did it happen?
How did it happen?

Drama

Achievement Objective: Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.
Key Competency: Relating to others

Learning Activity: Hot Seating

Hot seating is a great drama technique used to explore characterisation and see things from other people's points of view.

Students will take turns at role-playing some of the characters from *Red Riding Robyn Hood*. Explain that when they are in the hot-seat it means they are no longer acting as themselves, but the chosen character from the story, and they must answer questions how they would answer them.

- One student sits in a chair and answers questions from the audience in character. Depending on age / confidence, they could be encouraged to take on a voice and physicality for the character (the teacher might like to have a go first to demonstrate).
- The student in character is responsible for choosing who asks the next question. Allowing students in the audience to develop their question-asking skills is equally important as giving students a turn in role. Audience members should put their hands up to ask.
- Some questions could be asked by the teacher first, to model the process (see below for some examples).
- Depending on numbers and students' confidence, this could be done as a class or in smaller groups.



Question examples

- What are your likes / dislikes?
- What have you learned from your experiences?
- What motivates or inspires you?
- How would your best friend describe you?

Drama

Achievement Objective: Develop and sustain ideas in drama, based on personal experience and imagination.

Key Competency: Relating to others

Learning Activity: News presentation (role play)

1. Briefly discuss and record the purpose, structure, style etc of a news presentation. View some short news clips on YouTube to generate ideas.
2. Split the class into groups of six. Each group should assign one person to act as a news presenter and the rest will play the various characters in the play. Explain that they will each write, direct, and present their own 2 minute news presentation about the events in *Red Riding Robyn Hood*.
3. Each group will create a story board and write a short script in which the news presenter explains the events of the play, and interviews the characters about their experiences. They should come up with a few questions to ask each of the characters involved.
4. Before rehearsals begin, have students workshop their characters. Have all the news presenters from each group meet (and all the Town Criers etc) and brainstorm their particular character. E.g. how would they stand, move, speak? They can use their own knowledge as well as referring back to the characterisation in the play. See here for some great character development games: www.dramatoolkit.co.uk/drama-games/category/character
5. Students will then rehearse and present their news stories. If you have the time and resources, you could have each group dress up in character when they present to the rest of the class. Each presentation could be filmed as well like a real news presentation!

Other curriculum links: Literacy (writing and oral language), Social Sciences (identity, culture and organisation).



Breaking news! King George has raised the official tax rate to 101%!

Physical Education

Achievement Objective: Develop more complex movement sequences and strategies in a range of situations.

Key Competency: Participating and contributing

Learning Activity: Target Games

Red Riding Robyn Hood and King George are both expert archers! Archery involves using a bow to shoot arrows at a target but there are lots of other target activities that develop similar skills.

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Activity Set-up

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Each pair finds space on a wall in the activity area.
- Each participant within the pair places two pieces of tape on the wall at various heights and level of challenge.
- Pairs set up a throwing line using a skipping rope at a distance determined by the participants for optimal challenge.

Activity Instructions

- Participants take turns throwing the ball at the pieces of tape until both partners have hit all four targets.
- Participant then switch the location of their targets to alter the challenge.
- Ask open-ended questions to help students refine their movement strategies and tactical solutions during the activity. Examples include: When the target is really high on the wall, what kind of throw will help you be successful at hitting the target? When the target is really low, what kind of throw will help you be successful at hitting the target? Describe how you would control the force of your throw when trying to hit the target at the wall.

Bull's Eye

Activity Set-up

- Divide participants into small groups (e.g., two to four).
- Each group creates its own series of targets and point system by setting up circles outside of each other, starting with the middle circle (bull's eye) (e.g., the bull's eye is 0.5 m in diameter and scores 5 points, the next circle outside the middle circle is 1 m in diameter and scores 3 points, the last circle is 1.5 m in diameter and scores 1 point)
- Each participant selects five small objects (e.g., beanbags, pool noodle discs, sponges) that they will throw.

Activity Instructions

- Participants take turns to underhand throw their objects toward the target standing behind a line that's 10 paces from the bull's eye.
- Participants try to score the highest number of points with their five objects.
- For any object that lands on a line, the participant scores the lower number.
- The leader asks open-ended questions to help participants refine their movement strategies and tactical solutions during the activity. Examples include: When sending the object toward the target, describe how you control the force you use so that you are as close to the target as possible? What can you do to prevent your opponent from getting closer to the target than you?

These activities and more from <http://www.playsport.net/skill/target-games>

Social Sciences

Achievement Objective: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities. (Level 4 - for Year 7-8.)

Key Competency: Participating and contributing

Learning Activity 1: Tax education and citizenship

In *Red Riding Robyn Hood*, the King wants to increase the tax rate to 101% in order to build a wall around the enchanted forest. He may be going about it wrong, but taxes are an important part of society!

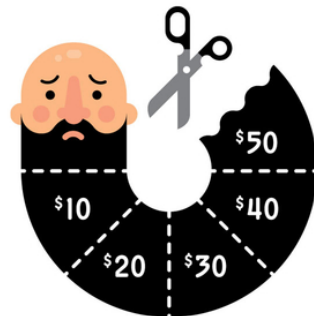
1. Discuss: What is tax and what is it for? As a class, brainstorm and record on the board what students already know about tax and what they want to know about what tax is for in their community.
2. View the animation here: <http://taxcitizenship.tki.org.nz/Level-4-unit/Learning-experience-1-What-is-tax-for/Tax-animation>
3. Provide students with a map of an area of their local community. To familiarise them with this area further, take them on a walk. Ask them to identify features that would be paid for by the Government and/or the local council. Have the students identify these features on their map, using a key.
4. Back in class, share and discuss the maps. Ask the question: "Is there any part of our local community that is not paid for through taxes? Who pays instead?" Ask the students to consider what their local community could be like without the benefit of tax.
5. Discuss: How does tax impact on our school? Consider all the things in the school that have to be paid for and who pays for them. How much is covered by taxes?



Learning Activity 2: Strange taxes

Ask the students to find out about one of the following strange taxes, or any others they may discover. In small groups, get them to create a humorous poster explaining what the tax was for, the country that had the tax, and why it was introduced.

- Window tax (Britain)
- Brick tax (Britain)
- Wallpaper tax (Britain)
- Tax on the use of public space (Czech Republic)
- Pork slaughterhouse tax (Hungary)
- Beard tax (Russia in 1705)
- Hat tax (UK in 1784)
- Bathing tax (Japan)
- Sparkler & novelty tax (US - West Virginia)
- Blueberry tax (US - Maine)
- Cooking oil tax (Egypt during the Pharaohs)



The above info and activities are taken from <http://taxcitizenship.tki.org.nz/Level-4-unit>. Follow the link for more ideas and resources.

You may also like to check out Banqer – a NZ designed financial literacy program for schools. <https://www.banqer.co/>

Social Sciences

Achievement Objective: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities. (Level 4 - for Year 7-8.)

Key Competency: Participating and contributing

Learning Activity: Gender equality and the right to vote

The script for *Red Riding Robyn Hood* was written by Greg Cooper. He was inspired to write about a strong, underestimated female character who defies gender stereotypes, by his previous work on Kate Sheppard and her campaign to win women the right to vote. Much like Kate, Robyn Hood fights for justice and equality for all.

- Determine students' existing understanding and knowledge about how and when women won the right to vote.
1. Show students an image of the New Zealand ten dollar note. Discuss - who is the person commemorated on this note? (Kate Sheppard.) What do you know about her? Why is she a part of world history?
 2. Introduce the concept of suffrage. Ask the students to share what they may already know about the New Zealand suffragist movement. Talk about how New Zealand women were the first women in the world to get the right to vote. Provide info and resources as needed.

Voting role play

1. To have students experience voting exclusion and inequality, separate the class into two groups. Number the groups 1 and 2. Tell them that they are going to vote on something that is important to the class, such as choosing between two sport activities. Give students time to decide how they will vote, then tell them that only the students in group 1 can vote on the issue. Have the group 1 students vote and declare that the majority vote 'wins.'



2. Ask students how fair that is to the members of group 2? How did the group 2 students feel about being excluded from the decision? Ask students if they think it's fair to exclude some people when the decision affects everyone?
3. Repeat the activity allowing everyone to vote. Did the outcome change? Explain that when women got the vote, they could now influence the outcome of elections whereas previously their opinions were ignored.

Additional Drama Activities

Fairytales in a Minute

- *Red Riding Robyn Hood* draws from traditional fairytales to tell a new story. Lets look at the originals! (It doesn't have to just be ones that are included in the play).
- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give each group the name of a different fairy tale. They then have ten minutes to prepare a one-minute performance.
- The group should make sure everyone knows the story, cast the characters, and decide on the key plot points to cover.
- Everything has to fit in to a minute – be strict and use a timer!
- Each group presents their performance to the rest of the class. The class will identify which fairytale the performing group had.

Mix and Match

A variation of the activity above. New Zealand Playhouse love to mix and match different fairytales and characters. It's a great way to add different layers to a story!

- As above but each group will also be given one character from another fairytale as well (not from their assigned fairytale).
- The rest of the class has to guess which fairytale character doesn't belong, who they are and what fairytale they are actually from. The actor will want to draw on their character's original story and characterisation to help the audience figure it out. They can't say their own name.

Who am I?

- Have students pair up (or you could do this as a whole class). One student in each pair chooses (or is given) a fairytale character and their partner (or the rest of the class) must figure out what character they are by asking questions. You could just use characters from *Red Riding Robyn Hood* or include other fairytale characters as well.
- The actor can use their character's voice or accent but can only answer yes or no.
- Swap roles and take turns!
- You might like to try limiting the amount of questions that can be asked or put a time limit on it.

Fairy Tale Tableaux

- Divide the class into small groups and have each group choose a well known fairytale.
- Each group must create three different tableaux (quickly discuss what a tableaux is): Scene 1 is "The Beginning," Scene 2 is "The Middle," and Scene 3 is "The End." They must do three only - this makes the group think of the most important parts of the story. Some groups might choose the same fairy tale, but their scenes will probably look different!
- Each member of the group must be *something* in the scene. If there are not enough characters, they could be a set piece, a piece of furniture, whatever they want!
- Give the groups a time limit to figure out their scenes, then have each group perform for the other groups. Make sure the group holds each tableau for a minimum of 10 seconds. Once the three tableaux are presented, the other groups have to guess what the story is that was just presented.

Adapted from <https://kerryhishon.com/2015/03/20/theatre-fun-games-fairy-tale-tableau/>

Exploring emotions

- This Drama activity is designed to help teach students to show, not tell, characters' emotions while responding to surroundings and events.
- Ask students to come up with some emotions that characters in *Red Riding Robyn Hood* experienced and create a list. Talk about what caused them to feel this way.
- Discuss other situations that could make someone feel these emotions.
- Divide the students into pairs. Each pair receives or picks an emotion and a situation. Give them a few minutes to discuss and rehearse a pantomime with each other.
- Bring the class back together and have each pair perform a pantomime that displays the emotion and situation. E.g Dropping your ice cream + sad.
- Pantomime works best with this exercise. When students rely on the use of words, they are less likely to *show*, and more likely to *tell*.

Adapted from <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/middle-school-lesson-plans-the-arts/13061-teaching-drama-acting-and-emotions/>

Interview with Greg Cooper, Writer and Director of 'Red Riding Robyn Hood.'

Do you remember the first production of a play you had written?

Yes I do. It was probably about twenty or so years ago for the Court Theatre, in Christchurch, New Zealand. The main show on the set in the evening was a show called 'The Farm' so we decided that we'd do an adaptation of 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm' as a school holiday show during the day to utilise the set that was already there. That was the first one that I wrote and was acting in as well I think.

There were three [characters], a sheep dog, a bionic bunny (I don't know why there was a bionic bunny but it was based on Arnold Schwarzenegger) and the bunny was from the rival farmer who wanted to oust Old MacDonald. The bunny would come over and dig lots of holes and try and ruin the farm. So it was up to Jip the sheepdog to save the day.

Tell me a bit about your writing and directing process - how do you get your ideas and how do you start?

Usually with the Playhouse shows, Michael [the Producer] and I just have a good chat with everyone involved in the company to try and get feedback on the show that has just finished. Quite often we get teachers putting in ideas that they think would be good for subjects [themes] as well. But typically for the primary school shows, we've done fairy tales, adaptations of fairy tales or mash-ups where we ram two or three together in one play. I'll just start with a title, like this one's 'Red Riding Robyn Hood' which is just a nice combination of the 'Robin Hood' story and 'Red Riding Hood'. I didn't really have an idea for a story, it was just, "that sounds like a cool title" and I went from there.

How do you reinvent a fairytale and keep it fresh?

I like to add lots of modern references. With audiences these days, the kids are so [up] with the internet and tech and social networking. They're so savvy and exposed to so many more things, so I think it's great to add lots of modern references into these classical stories and sort of bring them into the current time period. But also localise them, so bring in New Zealand references or Australian references.

With 'Red Riding Robyn Hood' we're taking these two stories and bringing them together. With a lot of the traditional stories, the female characters, the princess characters, they're quite passive and things happen to them or they're saved by the prince. That had a time and a place but I think we're living in a different age now so why can't the princess or Rapunzel or Snow White take

control, or in this case Red Riding Robyn Hood. She's the one that saves the day and saves the whole of the Land Far Far Away from this tyrannical King, who previously probably would've been the one making the decisions. So it's good to just take these classical stories and throw them on their heads a bit, it's lots of fun.

What do you enjoy about writing shows for kids / schools?

The first thing I'll say is children in general, as an audience, are brutally honest which is great. Well, it's good and bad 'cause if you're losing them you'll know straight away, they'll just start talking or fidgeting, they're not just gonna sit there and be polite for 50 minutes. If the show's not engaging them it's plainly obvious for all to see. So that honesty is great as a writer and director, you know if you've got it right because when children are engaged and involved and care about the action and the characters, they're in that world. They're not sitting in an assembly hall at school, they're in the Land Far Far Away and they're watching 'Red Riding Robyn Hood' and they're wanting her to win. But if it's not right then they're just not in that world.

With a lot of the actors that we use at Playhouse, this is sort of their first professional job outside of drama school and I just think it's the best form of training. I mean, that's how I learnt my acting, my first professional acting jobs were all children's theatre and it's such a great training ground, you learn so much entertaining children, you really do. And it's genuinely rewarding where as an actor you can just change your wig and instantly that character is a different character in their mind, they just go with it. It's fantastic when you see them all cheering or yelling and calling out spontaneous weird stuff that the actors have to deal with. You just don't get that in adult theatre where everyone just sits there and claps at the end. So it's so much fun, it's just what theatre should be, it's a media, it's interactive which is so exciting. I think for myself as a writer and director and also for the actors, cos you know when you're doing 200 performances of the same show, having the weird stuff that the kids do, that's what keeps in fresh and fun.

Do you like putting jokes in for the teachers as well? What's the best one you've managed to sneak in?

Yeah, I love doing that. I've done that from the very first children's shows that I wrote because half the audience is gonna be mums or dads, aunties, uncles, grandparents so they're sitting there for 45, 50 minutes I want them to enjoy it as well. A lot of times when children see their mum and dad laugh or their grandparents laugh, they'll just laugh as well even though they have no idea what they're laughing at. They pick up if their mum or dad or whatever is having

a good time so I think it's really important. With the school shows there's maybe ten, fifteen teachers there as well and I think, why not slip in some jokes aimed at them. One of the best ones, one of my favourites which I have recycled was, it was a show called 'The Big Sad Wolf' (2013) that we did a few years ago and it's when the wolf's dressed up as grannie and it goes "oh, you look like a wolf" and the grannie says "well I've been called a cougar before, but never a wolf!".

I love music as well so I think we did one where we had the three little pigs and for the straw house they sang "straw, what is good for, building a house made of straw, yeah" [to the tune of Edwin Starr's song 'War' 1970] and then for the wooden one, the sticks it was "come on, come on sticks sticks together, we're gonna build a house" [to the tune of Bryan Ferry's song 'Let's Stick Together' 1976] and then the one from 'Phone a Friend' (2012) "I've built a brick house, it's mighty mighty, never will be blown down" ['Brick House' by The Commodores 1977] like that and so the kids aren't really gonna know those songs but you can see the teachers just cracking up. So I always just try and get a few through which makes me happy, just to see the teachers cracking up.

Red Riding Robyn Hood kind of tackles this idea of feminism and is also a show for kids. How did you find writing that and have you done any other work like this?

Yeah, well myself and a composer/arranger called Luke Di Somma, we did a musical called 'That Bloody Woman' which was about Kate Sheppard who was the leader of the women's suffrage movement back in the late 1800s. She led the movement to get New Zealand women the right to vote, which New Zealand was the first country in the world to achieve. So we created a musical after about five years of various tears and ripping everything up and starting again, which has done very well, it's toured throughout New Zealand and we're hoping to get it over to Australia. It just told the story of this amazing woman, she's on the ten dollar note in New Zealand but a lot of people don't really know anything about her. We didn't want to do a big preachy lecture, history lesson type show, it was just telling a story about what these amazing women achieved.

So with 'Red Riding Robyn Hood' I wanted to do a show where the lead character (and I actually hate the term "a strong female lead" because it sort of means that that's something odd but it shouldn't be odd - we shouldn't even need to talk about that!) is just a great woman character who tries to get these people to help her and no one does. So, she's like "Right, well it's all up to me. I'm the one that's gotta put a stop to this injustice!" and she does. She's real kickass, she just goes out there and does her thing because she's the only one who can do it, which is great. I suppose yes, that is sort of a feminist message but in some ways, I don't really know why we have to do that. Unfortunately a lot of plays and movies

and everything have been written by men, directed by men so it comes from that perspective so getting more women writing plays and directing plays and movies and everything like that, it should just become a norm. It's great, especially for young audiences, to see a female character going out there and just doing it, saving the day.

What advice would you give to young people who are interested in becoming a director or writer?

I think two things. Go and see theatre is the first thing. And then the other one is, I've come from an acting background and that has been so useful because as an actor you get to work with lots of different directors and you see lots of different styles of directing. You get some of these tyrannical directors who just yell and scream, which possibly is called for sometimes, whereas others are much more collaborative. Some come in and say "I want it like this", they've got the whole thing blocked out from the get go. Others are much more like, "let's work on this together". All of these different approaches, I've certainly taken something from all of them. So yeah, get involved in theatre if there's any amateur groups, if there are any kids' theatre groups in your school, you can get involved in theatre. And it can be in any way, even if it's like "oh no, I don't want to be an actor", paint some sets, learn how to record sound, help make costumes. It's such a great way, 'cause theatre's about much more than just acting, it's about how to deal with all these people, it's how you deal with a sound person and a costume person and a lighting person and the set person and the director and the stage managers and the actors. There's a whole lot of personalities and egos and things. You can go to drama school, that's quite good too, but getting that basis, that base of actually working in an environment, you learn so much and you don't even know you're learning it, you're just soaking it all up. So yeah, get involved. That sums it up.



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