PUSS IN GUMBOOTS

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Teaching Resources

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Introduction

Dear Teacher,

As I write this, we're busy putting together Puss in Gumboots – which will be our 24th production! Each year we enjoy writing a brand new play for you, producing and rehearsing the show, and then getting in our tour vans to come and visit literally hundreds of schools right across the motu over terms 2 and 3.

New Zealand Playhouse delivers educational, inspirational, extremely entertaining theatre to over 450 schools across New Zealand. Our formula is to bring the best actors and creative forces in Aotearoa together to create a play that is funny, educational and inspiring – and many schools have told us our shows are the best theatre experience their students have had.

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 Puss in Gumboots at your school.

This resource includes ideas of how you can incorporate some themes from the show and the experience of watching a theatre show into various learning areas (English, Drama, Mathematics, Social Studies, Health, Technology, PE and Art)

Please feel free to adapt, change, steal anything and everything from any activity for any level.

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 this experience as you can!

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The Plot (spoilers ahead!)

Act One: Trouble in McDonaldtown

The play opens with a big, cheerful number celebrating life in McDonaldtown, a once-bustling community that suddenly becomes deserted mid-song. Young McDonald, the local optometrist, finds themself alone as even the town's buildings have mysteriously vanished. With only their optometry clinic left standing, they try to stay positive and involve the audience in a playful "eye test" singalong based on Old McDonald Had a Farm.

Just as Young McDonald thinks business might pick up, they receive an alert on their phone from none other than tech-billionaire Jiff Buckerzusk, a parody of real-world tech moguls. Jiff appears - complete with ridiculous AI glasses and an infomercial-like pitch - trying to buy up McDonaldtown to build a high-tech utopia. When Young McDonald refuses to sell, Jiff threatens to have their shop airlifted away by drone.

Act Two: Farms, Farewells, and Furry New Friends

Young McDonald turns to their father, Old McDonald, for advice. The pair share a wonderfully silly father-son reunion filled with puns and "Watties Sauce fight." However, the news is bad! Old McDonald has sold the family farm to the same tech-bro, enticed by free "AI Augmented Undies." Singing his way to an African safari, Old McDonald leaves town, but not before gifting his son something mysterious.

That gift turns out to be a talking cat, Puss in Gumboots, a clever feline who fancies themselves as a "large language moggy" with "an extraordinary set of skills." Puss bursts onto the scene quickly convincing Young McDonald that they must follow the villain's drones to discover his secret base.

Act Three: The Tech-Bro's Trap

Puss and Young McDonald track Jiff Buckerzusk to his secret lair, where he boasts of replacing the town with his futuristic metropolis, powered by robots and drones. He introduces his clunky assistant, the singing-and-dancing Tradiebot 3000. Puss confronts Jiff, delivering a speech about how communities aren't made of glass towers, but of people, homes, and heart. When Jiff commands the Tradiebot to capture Puss, the cat uses quick thinking, chaos, and audience participation to escape.

Eavesdropping, Puss learns of Jiff's grander plan: to take over all of Aotearoa and rename it "New Jiffland". The scene erupts into playful chase sequence, music, and jokes with the audience as Puss vows to save McDonaldtown.

Act Four: Making a Spectacle (and Saving the Day)

Back in the empty town square, Young McDonald and Puss reunite as Jiff sends his drones to finish the demolition. But one drone, Drone Collins, rebels against its programming after Puss "talks" to it in fluent drone-speak. Together, they hatch a plan to lure Jiff into an optometry "eye test."

When Jiff arrives, still hunting for Puss, Young McDonald tricks him into taking off his all-controlling AI/VR glasses. The drone swoops in and steals the glasses, cutting Jiff off from his technology. Puss reappears wearing the headset, hacking into Jiff's system and taking command not of his robots or drones but his Augmented Undies.

Jiff is forced into ridiculous dance moves as Puss uses the moment to negotiate peace: Rebuild McDonaldtown, return everyone's homes, free all robots and drones, and never build another "totes-tech-town-u-bro-pia" again. Jiff finally agrees, realising the real world looks better through his brand new ordinary glasses than through a virtual one.

Act Five: A Purr-fect Ending

At last McDonaldtown is restored and Jiff is redeemed. Jiff even offers to add a monorail to the town - a gift that Young McDonald accepts with heartfelt enthusiasm. With the crisis resolved, Puss finally gets to perform their full, triumphant theme song - "Puss in Gumboots" - bringing the play to an end.

Activities: English

Classroom Discussion

- What was your favourite moment from the show?
- Who was your favourite character? Why?
- What did you learn? Does the play teach us any lessons?
- Does anyone know the original story of Puss in Boots?
- What twists did this version put on the story?

Write A Review Of The Show

Get the students to fill out the following review template. Send it to us!

Puss in Gumboots Review

Written by _____

What were your 3 favourite moments in the show and why?	**Who was your favourite character and why?**
What did you like about the set and props?	**What was the story of the show? Can you sum it up in as few words as possible?**

Is there anything you would do differently in the show?	**What did the actors do to play multiple characters? Think about what they did with their voice, body, costume.**
What twists were made from the original story?	**Who is the target audience for this show? What sort of person would enjoy it the most?**

Creative Writing

Write a Missing Scene

Get students to write a missing scene from Puss in Gumboots

Ideas:

- A scene showing Puss planning the heist
- A drone support group complaining about Jiff
- Young McDonald as a child on the farm
- Jiff's backstory

Puss in Gumboots Word Search

F P H Y E Z F I O X X A S K
D L A N O D C M P J R F C C
O P X X Q P M Y A U A O D G
P C T D M P N W G A S X C E
T D K O G U M B O O T S V Y
O G S K B D G I L O K M M X
M L O U P E R L M Q V S X G
E A F M E A I E Q F F G H C
T S C D F V R D T F F Z D I
R S T A J D W J A D L I H N
I E S C E V A H R R D C J U
S S H Q Y C Q O N W T P D T
T O W N Y K N O R Q A B W D
A F Q I B E J H L V N Z O K

Find these words:

PUSS, GUMBOOTS, DRONE, MCDONALD, JIFF, TRADIEBOT, TOWN, OPTOMETRIST, GLASSES, SAFARI

Activities: Drama

Recreate a Scene

In this activity, students work in small groups to bring a short scene from Puss in Gumboots. Read the following excerpt from the play, assign roles and rehearse then perform the scenes. Encourage big bold storytelling and loud, clear voices.

Extensions on this activity

- Perform the scene as slapstick comedy
- Perform it as a superhero movie trailer
- Perform it in slow motion
- Perform it without words (movement only)

Roles

- Puss in Gumboots
- Young McDonald
- Drone (movement-based role)
- Optional: Narrator or sound effects performer

Script Excerpt (From Puss in Gumboots)

Scene: The moment Puss reveals the plan to follow the drone instead of stopping it.

YOUNG MCDONALD:
Are you going to stop it?

PUSS IN GUMBOOTS:
No.

YOUNG MCDONALD:
I thought you were going to help me save McDonald Town!

PUSS IN GUMBOOTS:
I am.

(The drone lifts the shop up, up and away.)

YOUNG MCDONALD:
You don't look like you're saving McDonald Town.

PUSS IN GUMBOOTS:
Stopping this drone won't save McDonald Town, but following it to find out where this tech-bro's secret lair is will.

YOUNG MCDONALD:
Wowsers! That's clever!

PUSS IN GUMBOOTS:
I know. And if there's one thing we cats like doing, it's chasing fast-flying objects. Watch out Young McDonald, I'm in the zone, to chase a drone!

Picture Postcard

Picture Postcard is a drama game focused on using physicality to create characters and environments.

Choose an environment or moment to explore. You might begin with settings from the show, then invite student suggestions.

Example environments:

- McDonaldTown
- Billionaire's Lair
- McDonaldtown disappearing
- Drone stealing the shop
- Puss confronting Jiff
- The augmented undies moment
- A Farm
- Under the Sea
- A Forest
- A Castle

One at a time, students step onto the stage and add a frozen image to build the environment. They can become a person, animal, or object. For example, a farm might include sheep, a farmer, grass, a fence, or even sheep poo. Each student contributes a frozen pose, gradually creating a complete "postcard" of the setting.

Once the full image is formed, take a moment to observe the frozen scene — or even take a photo. Then, unfreeze the group and allow the environment to come to life.

To increase challenge, students can keep their role secret while the class guesses what or who they are.

Encourage students to be bold with their physicality and use clear facial expressions to communicate their ideas.

Speed Charades

Speed Charades is a fast-paced team game where groups of students race to act out (charade) a list of objects, movies, TV shows, songs - whatever you choose.

Create a list of 10–15 items for students to act out. You might take inspiration from the show or make your own original list.

Example list themes:

- Characters, props, and locations from Puss in Gumboots
- Animated movies
- Kids'TV shows

Split the class into groups of 3 - 6. Give each group time to discuss how they will work together to charade the list. It can help to agree on key signals for names, places, starting letters, or "sounds like."

Cover the list with paper so only the top item is visible.

Each team selects a player to go first. On "3, 2, 1, go," the first player reads the top item, returns to their group, and acts it out without talking.

When a team guesses correctly, they run up, say the answer, and receive the next item on the list.

The winning team is the one that completes the list first. You can stop the game there or allow all teams to finish.

Reflection:
Discuss the game afterwards. What did it teach about teamwork? What strategies worked well?

Make Your Own Show

Split the class into groups of 4–6.

In their groups, students have 10–15 minutes to create a short (maximum 2 minutes) performance of a fairytale. They can choose a classic story such as Cinderella, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, or The Three Little Pigs, or select their own. Every student must have an acting role.

Each fairytale must include the following elements (write these on the board for reference):

- A twist ending - students create their own original ending
- A line of dialogue: _____ (decide this as a class before starting)
- An object: _____ (chosen by the class before starting)
- Extension for advanced groups: include a specific song

After each performance, provide feedback as a class. Ask: What were the audience's favourite moments? Encourage feedback that is specific and positive.

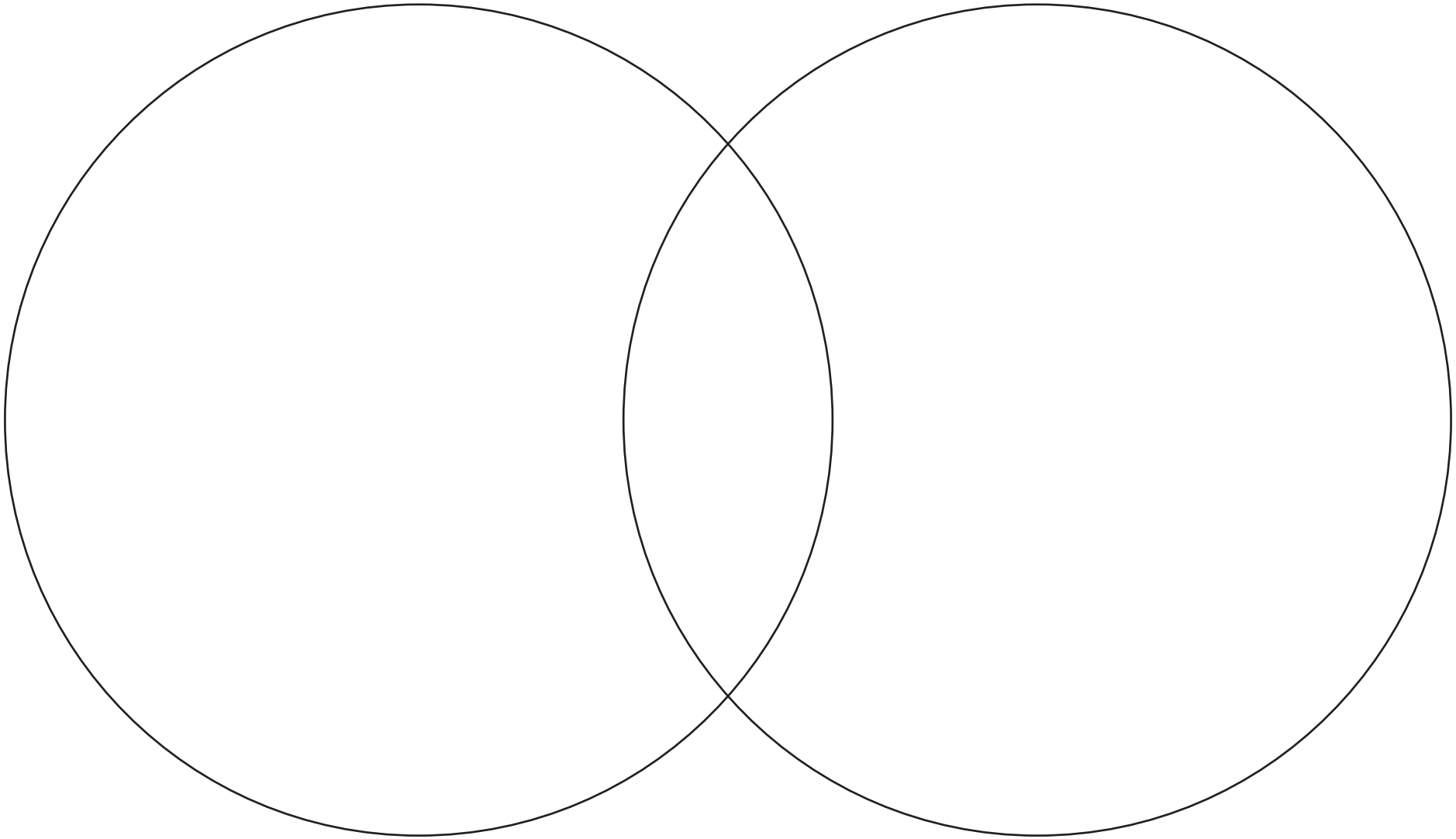
Activity extensions:

1. After feedback, give groups 5 minutes to improve their scene based on what they heard. Emphasise that applying feedback is as important as receiving it.
2. Challenge groups to perform the same scene again - but without talking. They must rely on physical storytelling. You may wish to play music during the performances.
3. Repeat the scene in half the time (1 minute). Ask groups to identify the key moments they must keep and what can be removed. Continue reducing the time to 30 seconds, 15 seconds, and finally 5 seconds. Use a timer and stop performances exactly on time.

Activities: Health and PE

Compare and Contrast Character Qualities

Use the venn diagram below to compare and contrast the character qualities of either



Cat and Mouse

Cat and Mouse is a fast-paced chasing game that develops speed, awareness, and teamwork.

Select a small group of students to be cats. The rest of the class are mice, each with a "tail" (such as a bib or ribbon tucked into their waistband).

On "go," the cats chase the mice and try to remove their tails. If a mouse loses their tail, they are caught and move to the den (a designated area on the side).

Mice can be rescued if a teammate brings them a new tail and tags them back into the game.

Rotate the cats regularly so everyone has a turn in each role.

Encourage students to move safely, stay aware of space, and work together to rescue teammates.

Stage Directions Game

The Stage Directions Game is a theatre-themed version of the classic movement game, Captain's Coming. It helps students learn stage directions while building focus, listening skills, and quick reactions. The game can be played indoors or outdoors and requires no equipment.

Students begin in the centre of the space while the teacher stands where the audience would be. Introduce and point out the key stage positions:

- Stage Left
- Stage Right
- Upstage
- Downstage
- Centre Stage

Call out these positions and have students move quickly to the correct area. Spend time practising with just these commands first.

Once students are confident, add extra instructions. For example:

- **Trap door** - students jump or crouch as if falling through
- **Director's coming** - freeze or act busy rehearsing
- **Spotlight** - step into the space and strike a pose

After practising, introduce elimination. The last student to reach the correct position or complete the action is out. Keep eliminated students engaged by assigning them as judges to help spot timing and accuracy.

Activities: Mathematics and Social Sciences

Drone Rescue Problems

In Puss in Gumboots, drones fly around McDonaldtown lifting buildings and delivering them to different places. In this maths activity, students become drone controllers and solve real-world maths problems to help return homes and shops to McDonaldtown.

Problem 1 — Distance Travelled

A drone carries Young McDonald's shop 3 km away and then flies 3 km back.

Question:
How far did the drone travel altogether?

Problem 2 — Rebuilding McDonaldtown

Tradiebot 3000 rebuilds:

- 6 houses
- 3 shops
- 2 community buildings

Question:
How many buildings were rebuilt in total?

Extension:
If each building takes 2 hours to rebuild, how many hours altogether?

Problem 3 — Drone Timing

A drone takes 5 minutes to deliver one building.

There are 8 buildings to return.

Question:
How long will it take in total?

Extension:
How long if two drones work together?

Problem 4 — Gumboot Tracking (Measurement)

Puss throws a gumboot that travels about 4 metres.

Students:

- Estimate 4 metres in the classroom/playground
- Measure it using metre rulers or trundle wheels

Discussion:
Was your estimate close?

Student Debate

"Jiff Buckerzusk is helping McDonaldtown."
Students debate:

- PRO: Innovation, jobs, development
- CON: Loss of community, displacement, identity

Gentrification Study

Gentrification
In Puss in Gumboots Jeff Buckerzusk attempts to gentrify McDonaldTown. This activity explores gentrification through discussion and critical thinking. Use the show as an example to explain gentrification.

What is Gentrification?
Gentrification happens when a neighbourhood becomes more modern or expensive. New businesses and wealthier residents move in, property values rise, and the area changes. While this can improve buildings and services, it can also push out long-time residents who can no longer afford to live there.

Classroom Discussion
Write these questions on the board and explore them as a class, as a discussion or as a written task.

- What is gentrification in your own words?
- Is gentrification a good thing, a bad thing, or both? Why?
- Who benefits from gentrification?
- Who might be negatively affected?
- Can you think of examples locally? (For example, changes in parts of Christchurch since the earthquakes.)
- How could communities manage or control gentrification so it is fairer?
- What makes a town "beautiful"?
- Can technology improve communities without harming them?
- Who owns a town's future?

Encourage students to consider multiple perspectives: business owners, families renting homes, property developers, artists, and local councils.

Linking to Puss in Gumboots

Puss in Gumboots and the original, Puss in Boots both contain themes of wealth, power and gentrification.

Discuss:

- Who has power at the beginning of the play?
- Who gains power by the end?
- How does wealth change relationships?
- Are there moments where status or land ownership shifts in a way that mirrors gentrification?

Extension Questions

- Can gentrification ever be done responsibly?
- What rules or protections could help keep communities balanced? (e.g., rent controls, community housing, protecting local businesses.)
- If you were in charge of your town, what would you prioritise?

Encourage students to think critically: social change is complex, and most issues have more than one side.

Activities: Science and Technology

Cat's Eyes Experiment - Light and Reflection

What it is:
A simple science activity to show how light can reflect off a surface, similar to how a cat's eyes appear to shine in the dark.

What you need:
- Empty tin can
- Tin foil
- Card and blu-tac
- Plastic sheet (like a bin bag)
- Elastic band
- Torch (flashlight)

How it works:
1. Put a circle of card secured with blu-tac at the bottom of the can and cover the open end with a plastic sheet. Shine a torch through a cut-out "eye" in the plastic — nothing much happens.
2. Replace the card with shiny tin foil at the bottom of the can and shine the torch again. The light now reflects back because the shiny surface bounces it.

What it teaches:
- Light can reflect off a shiny surface, just like a mirror.
- A real cat's eye reflects light because of a special layer behind the retina called the tapetum lucidum, which helps cats see in dim light by bouncing light back into their eye.

Real-world connection:
This same reflection idea is used in cat's eyes on roads — reflective markers that shine back car headlights to help drivers see at night

Questions for the class:
What happened when the light shone through the can with the card at the bottom?

What happened when the light shone through the can with tin foil at the bottom?

Why do you think the tin foil made a difference?

A real cat's eye reflects light because of a special layer behind the retina. What is this layer called?

Can you think of any real-life examples of reflective surfaces like a cat's eye?

Why do reflective surfaces help us in everyday life?

Drones: Flying Into the Future

1. What is a Drone?

A drone is an unmanned flying vehicle that can be controlled remotely or fly automatically. Drones come in many sizes and are used for different purposes:

- Photography & Film: Take photos and videos from the sky
- Delivery: Carry packages or medical supplies
- Research & Conservation: Monitor wildlife, track storms, or survey land
- Agriculture: Check crops and water fields
- Emergency Services: Search and rescue or deliver help in hard-to-reach places

2. Questions to Think About

1. Which of the drone uses above do you find most interesting? Why?
2. How might drones help people in your local community?
3. Can drones be dangerous or have negative effects? How?
4. If you could invent a new use for drones, what would it be?

3. Research Questions

Work in pairs or groups to research drones. Try to answer some of these questions:

1. How do drones fly? What parts make them work?
2. What rules do people need to follow to fly drones safely?
3. Can drones help scientists or farmers? Give an example.
4. Are drones used in New Zealand? Where and for what purpose?
5. What might drones be used for in the future?

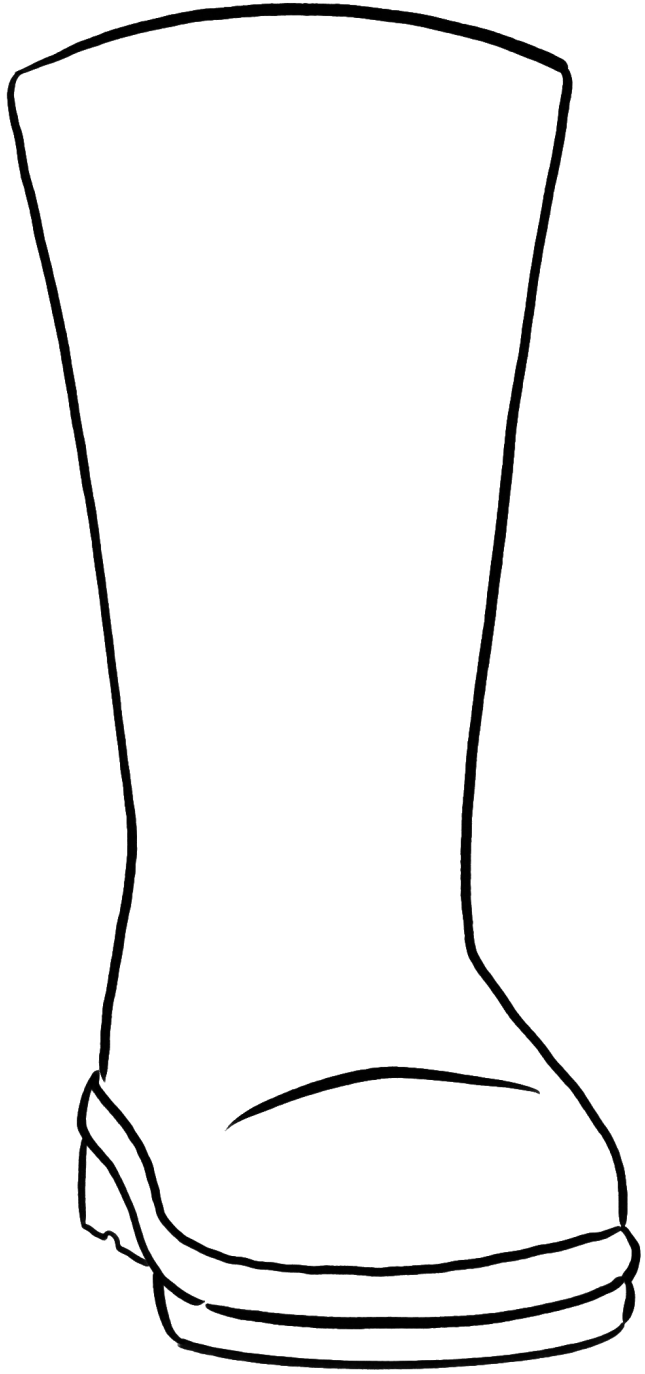
4. Bonus Challenge

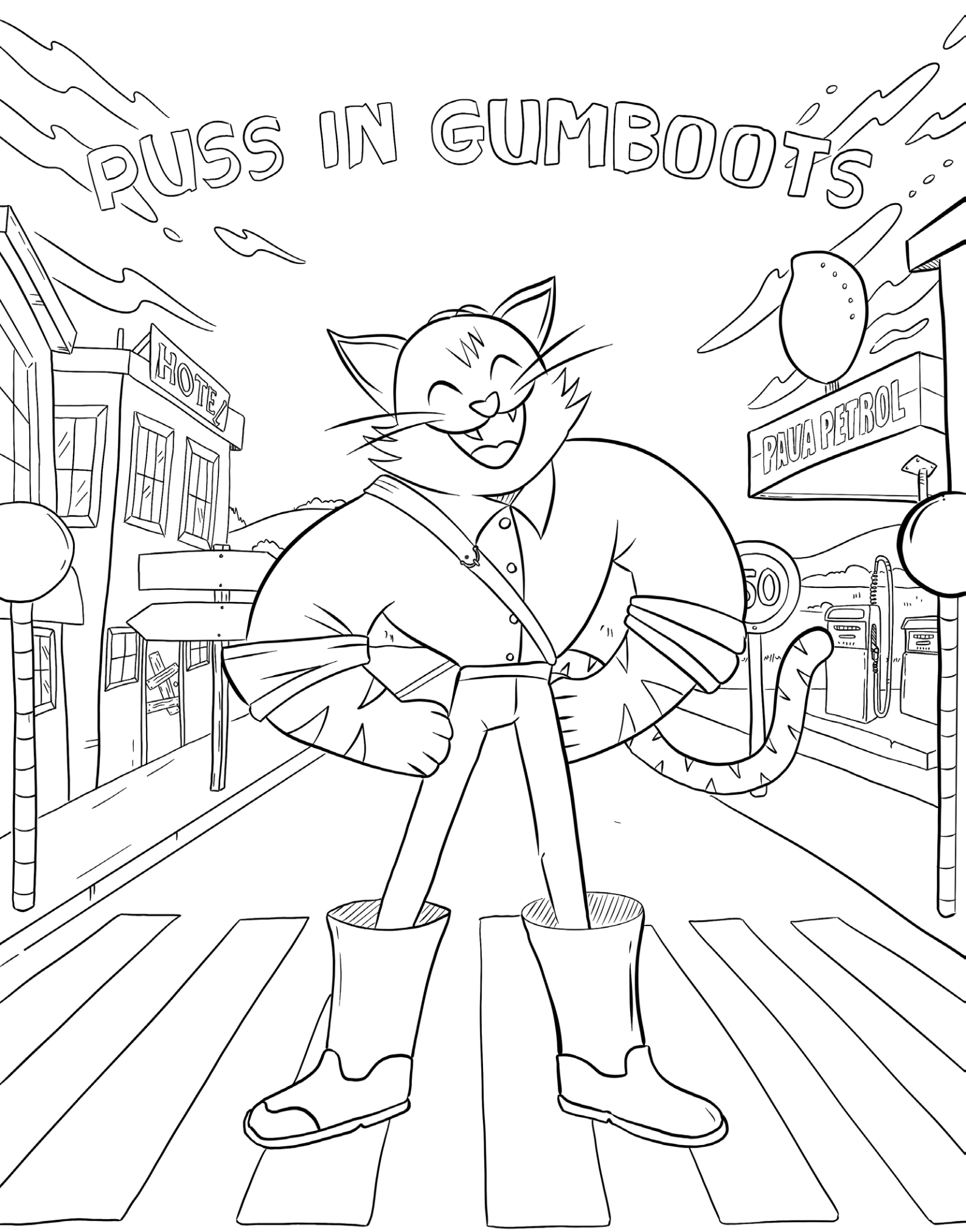
- Draw a picture of a drone you would design. Label its parts and show what it can do.
- Write a short paragraph explaining your drone and why it is useful.

Activities: Art

Design a Character in Gumboots

Design Your Dream Gumboots





Colouring In