

Bristol Old Vic Engagement

THE LITTLE MATCHGIRL

AND OTHER HAPPIER TALES

Student Pack

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Introduction

'Struggling to keep warm on the freezing winter streets, our impoverished heroine begins to strike her dwindling stock of matches. Each match she strikes conjures a new story, and while it burns she escapes into an enchanting world of magic and mystery.....'

Can you remember your favourite childhood story? It may have been read to you snuggled up in a bed with the lights turned down low or maybe cuddled on a sofa while you looked at the familiar pictures? You probably asked for it to be read over and over again until you knew the words off by heart and, each time, the page was turned you shouted them out at the same time as your storyteller read them!

That's what good stories do.

They make us want to listen to them again and again...

From a scientific perspective, hearing the same story retold helps a small child grasp new vocabulary and word repetition helps a growing brain develop. Humans are also fond creatures of habit; the hypnotic rhythm of hearing the same story is comforting to us and we are instantly transported to another time and place whenever we hear them, long past childhood. Those familiar stories are so much more than that though! They have the power to take us to a place in our imagination which is filled with wonder, possibility and magic. A place where the rules of the real world are suspended, animals can talk, humans can fly and mythical creatures really do exist.

Humans are natural storytellers. The urge to tell stories and share our collective experience begins from the moment we are placed in the arms of our caregivers and this season marks itself as a both special and magical one for storytelling in our part of the globe. From the Greeks who performed plays during late winter and early spring to the villagers performing elaborate Mummers plays in Britain and Ireland during the Winter Solstice, from the creation of the first Nativity scene (credited to St Francis in Italy, circa 1223, by the way!) to every primary school child in the land retelling the story of the season in some form or another. This is a unique time for performing plays and telling stories!

We hope this guide supports your enjoyment of *The Little Matchgirl and Other Happier Tales* and gives a few insights and sneaky peeks into the process of making the show and the journey that the creative team embarked upon to bring you the performance you are about to watch!

Your thoughts are welcome – you are part of the journey of this show too! Whether you would like to tell us what you thought, tweet us a picture of your Grandad playing some of the parlour games or share your favourite story, we would love to hear from you!

We wish you a wonderful season and hope you enjoy the show as much as we enjoyed making it for you!

Angie Athay-Hunt

Angie Athay-Hunt, Bristol Old Vic Practitioner

Contents

- 2 Introducing The Little Matchgirl**
- 3 Synopsis and timeline of Hans Christian Andersen**
- 4 Rehearsal images**
- 5 An interview with Emma Rice**
- 7 An interview with Edie Edmundson**
- 8 Production images**
- 9 Interview on youth homelessness**
- 10 Activities**
- 12 Try this with your family at Christmas**



Introducing

tale (n.) a fictitious or true narrative or story, especially one that is imaginatively recounted

How I love the nights drawing in. I always have. I struggle with the sharp heat of summer, but feel my shoulders drop when the autumn sun begins to lower and soften.

And as the planet relaxes a little, new thoughts and feelings find space to pop up and our dreams take on a slightly different colour. We lock the doors, batten down the hatches and let ourselves go to the wonderful, warming and sometimes scary 'darksides'.

I knew I wanted to adapt Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Matchgirl* for my first production in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse as it catapulted my love of folk tales straight to the heart of my first year at Shakespeare's Globe. And where else could the strike of a match create such beautiful magic?

'But it is such a sad story,' I thought.

'Is this what people want at Christmas?'

'Yes,' my soul answered.

It is exactly what we want and exactly what we need. We want to think of others at Christmas, we want to share stories and take time to imagine the lives of others and maybe even consider what we can or might do to help. And whilst theatre cannot give answers, it can give us windows into other worlds and it can certainly give us hope.

I added some other Happier Tales to make this a theatrical Christmas pudding of many flavours - we all need some fun, romance and silliness in our lives, especially in the darker months.

So snuggle up and enjoy the wonderful and meaningful stories we have chosen to tell you. And, as you watch and listen, remember that child poverty is not consigned to the story books. It is all around us, it is knocking at our borders and at our hearts. If only this were just a story.

Emma Rice, Director



Synopsis

Struggling to keep warm on the freezing winter streets, our impoverished heroine begins to strike her dwindling stock of matches. Each match she strikes conjures a new story, and while it burns she escapes into an enchanting world of magic and mystery. Inspired by the beautiful Hans Christian Andersen tales, we follow her through the spell-binding stories of *The Princess and the Pea*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Thumbelina*.

Timeline of Hans Christian Andersen

- 1805** Hans Christian Andersen born in Odense, the son of Hans, a cobbler, and Anne Marie, a washerwoman. His grandmother helps to bring him up and tells him folktales.
- 1816** His father dies.
- 1818** His mother marries again. The Royal Theatre from Copenhagen gives him a small part in a production at Odense. His fine singing voice earns him the nickname 'the little Nightingale of Fyn.'
- 1819-22** Seeks his fortune in Copenhagen, supported by benefactors. Acts with the Royal Theatre and writes plays that are not produced. His grandmother dies.
- 1822-27** Attends grammar school in Slagelse.
- 1827** Returns to Copenhagen to study. Publishes *The Dying Child*, his first work in print.
- 1829** First book, a comic fantasy, published. First play produced.
- 1831** Visits Germany, meets literary figures and publishes account of his journey.
- 1832** Writes first autobiography (not for publication).
- 1833-34** Visits Paris, Switzerland and Italy. His mother dies.
- 1835-37** Publishes first novel (which includes *The Princess on the Pea*) and second (which includes *Thumbelina*) parts of *Fairy Tales, Told for Children*. Avoids wedding of Edvard Collin. Publishes third part of *Fairy Tales* (containing *The Emperor's New Clothes*). Publishes autobiographical novel, *Only a Fiddler*.
- 1838** An annual pension granted by the King of Denmark allows him to concentrate on the writing of fairy tales.
- 1840** His play *The Mulatto*, opens at the Royal Theatre.
- 1843** Publishes the first part of *New Fairy Tales*.
- 1844-46** Publishes the second part of *New Fairy Tales*.
- 1845** Writes *The Little Matchgirl*, 18 November.
- 1846** His tales are translated into English.
- 1852** Publishes *Stories*, a new collection of fairy tales.
- 1855** Publishes third version of his autobiography.
- 1857** Returns to England and stays (too long) with Dickens.
- 1858-59** Publishes *New Tales and Stories* in four parts.
- 1872** Last volume of stories. Health begins to decline.
- 1875** Celebrates his 70th birthday with a banquet. Dies on 4 August.



Rehearsals



An interview with Emma

So the first question is how did you get the job of doing *The Little Matchgirl*? What is the process - do you come up with the idea or does someone approach you with it?

The Little Matchgirl was the first thing I thought about directing when I knew I was going to work in the candlelit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. So much of my work has been based on folklore stories - wonder tales as I like to call them - including *The Red Shoes*, *The Wooden Frock*, *The Wild Bride*, so I've been immersed in this world of story for such a long time. And *The Little Matchgirl* is a fantastic story that is very relevant, so I didn't really have to think about it - it was the first thing I knew I wanted to do and I did it. Nine times out of ten I come up with the ideas as I make the work I want to make.

So the space inspired you to do it?

Yes it did! I'm not like most directors, I don't work from scripts and historically I've devised more than I've directed plays and I thought it was a really nice opportunity to bring my style of work to The Globe and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Using the story as a starting point is really where I'm at my most comfortable, I wanted to do a devised piece in the theatre where the most unique element is the candlelight, and the key image in *The Little Matchgirl* is the flames so it felt really perfect.

What was it that inspired you in the first place to become a director?

I had a really slow transition from being an actor to a director so I don't think I ever had a particular inspiration. I trained to be an actor at drama school - I went to the Guildhall and I think something was always a bit unsettled in me. I then trained in Poland where I trained with the Gardzienice Theatre Association, which really changed my practice into much more physical and vocal work. I then started singing and moving - I'd always loved moving and basically that moved me into choreography so I started choreographing a little bit which is hilarious because I'm not a dancer but I've always been able to see shapes and movement. And then I was doing a lot of devised work with Theatre Alibi, Kneehigh Theatre and Katie Mitchell and I was doing a lot of work as an actor putting in ideas. So I think it was quite a small leap for me when Kneehigh suggested I should direct a play for them. It was a very slow transition but a brilliant one because I'm a much better director than I ever was actor or choreographer but it all happened very slowly and very naturally. And, of course, I'd built up a lot of skills over my time as a performer so actually I had an awful lot at my fingertips.

Tell us about you. What were you like at school and how were you as a teenager?

I've been thinking a lot about this because I was just 50 and my Mum and Dad were reminiscing about the past. I was very average at school I think, I was very careful not to stand out - I never put my hand up and I was quiet, but I worked hard enough to get to Sixth Form College where I had a fantastic time once I started to mix with people who liked the same things as I did. My Mum would say that I was never a revolutionary - I just did what I wanted! I was always very nice - I never fell out with my parents but I did, as the door was closing say, 'See you in a few days' and shut the door and go off to a festival. I think I've always been quite independent and quite adventurous, and managed to do it without falling out with anybody.



An interview with Emma



Did you know then that you wanted to be a performer?

Yeah, I always knew I wanted to be a performer but I never did it at school because I didn't want to show off even though I knew I wanted to act eventually! I eventually did do a drama course at FE College and then I went to drama school.

So what would you say to those young people who are interested in a career in the Arts?

Do it. The great thing about the Arts is that it's about being creative and communicating, and about imagining. And you never know where a path will take you but a path in the Arts will always take you somewhere. I never thought I'd direct - it was other people who realised I could direct but it was the creative life that took me to that place. I couldn't have sat down and done an office job as I wouldn't have concentrated enough. Do it - if you're interested, do it and it will take you somewhere. It gives you confidence, it gives you community, it gives you friendship and it gives you possibilities.

If you could say something to your 13 year old self, what would it be?

Don't be boring, don't be sacred and it's all going to be alright.

Which is your favourite story within *The Little Matchgirl*?

I love them all so much! It can't be *The Little Matchgirl* because it's just too sad. It's brilliant but it's too sad to be a favourite one. It can't be *The Emperor's New Clothes* because it's too funny. If I had to choose my favourite would have to come down to *The Princess and the Pea* or *Thumbelina*. I loved working on *Thumbelina* because I didn't really know it and it's an amazing story of self-discovery with lots of political elements about what it is to be tiny and, of course, that's a brilliant metaphor because we all feel tiny in our lives in some way. In fact, in the show we actually say 'imagine you're tiny' which of course we all know what it's like to imagine you're tiny and to feel it. So I love *Thumbelina* but I'm going to choose *The Princess and the Pea* because it was my favourite Ladybird Book when I was little and I just loved the image of the mattresses all stacked up! Also there is something elemental about her as she comes in from a storm which makes her story very exciting! It is a complex story - the fact that the Prince - somebody who should listen and understand - chooses to test her and to test what her vulnerabilities and sensitivities are makes us question traditional gender roles too- is it really fair that he does this? Is it moral?

What would you like the audience to do when they leave the theatre in terms of issues within the play?

I hope that they leave the theatre feeling very connected to themselves, their families, those they love but also the world. I think it's very much a story about being a global citizen and reaching out to humanity. I hope that people might do a good deed.



An interview with Edie

What is your role within the production?

I'm the Little Matchgirl's Puppeteer.

How did you get the job?

I was actually recommended for the role by my mentor, Sarah Wright, who is also the Puppetry Director of the show. It was a very surprising and exciting text message!

What inspired you to become a Puppeteer?

Years ago, I saw a production of *His Dark Materials* (one of my favourite books!) which used life sized animal puppets for the daemon characters. I'd never seen puppets used in this way before, as actual characters on a stage interacting with humans. I was amazed by how quickly you forgot about the puppeteers, even though they were running around the stage and speaking!

Was it an easy path to this profession?

I've known what I wanted to do for a long time, which made things easier, and I have been very lucky. Having said that though, I have worked very hard to get this far, and I'm still just starting out - there's a long way to go.

Can you tell us a little about the journey?

I've always loved telling stories, whether that meant writing them down or dressing up and performing them. I did a lot of drama at school and in after-school clubs. The funny thing is, I've always been a bit shy and awkward standing up and speaking in front of people - at school I used to hate giving presentations, I'd get so nervous! When I discovered puppetry, I started doing it whenever I could. I felt a lot safer with a puppet to hide behind! I did a Performing Arts BTEC then studied Drama at university, where I learned that if I wanted to perform and tell stories, there were other options besides being an actor. After university I contacted some old friends of my parents who I had never really met, but who I knew ran a puppet theatre on a boat in London. Luckily, one day they had someone drop out of a show so I was thrown in at the deep end (not literally, thankfully!). That was it, I'd caught the puppetry bug! I signed up to the Curious School of Puppetry, run by Sarah Wright, and from there it's been a bit of a whirlwind... Doing that course completely launched my career. Without it I wouldn't have got this job!

What were you like at school?

I was always a goody two shoes....I loved English, Drama, Art and Music, but I was terrible at things like Maths and IT. I really tried very hard - but everyone has different strengths and those just aren't mine!

What would you say to young people today who are interested in a career in the Arts?

Don't feel like you need to wait for permission to make your own work! If you want to work on a show but no-one is calling you, then make your own show! It doesn't have to be anything big, but it helps you gain confidence and experience - and more people will see your work! Make lots of friends, and don't be scared to contact people who you admire for advice. They all started somewhere. Not always, but often, those people can be the ones who help you to make the next step in your career.

If you could say something to yourself as a 13 year old what would it be?

Have confidence in yourself, and stand up to the people who put you down - things will get better! And don't worry, your spots will clear up!

Tell us a Christmas memory from your childhood.

My Mum's family is German, so we always do presents on Christmas Eve. One year, we were living in a little cottage on the edge of Dartmoor. It had an open fire and we were opening our presents and roasting chestnuts while the rain poured outside. Very cosy! Suddenly, we realised that water was pouring in through the back door! All the rain water was running off the moors and straight into our living room. We had to gather up all the presents and run upstairs - the whole ground floor of the house was flooded, but at least we managed to save the presents. And the chestnuts!

Which is your favourite story in *The Little Matchgirl* and why?

Ooh, it's really hard to pick one! I think *The Princess and the Pea* is beautiful, and says a lot about the way we test each other when really we're insecure in ourselves. Plus the music is great, and I love how the Princess gets her own back at the end. She becomes the most powerful person in the story, instead of the Prince who thought he could get away with anything.

What would you like the audience to do when they leave the theatre in terms of the issues within the play?

I would like people to think a bit about what they can do to help those in trouble, whether that's refugees fleeing a war-torn country, people who are homeless, or even someone you know who is having a difficult time. Sometimes even the smallest gesture can make the biggest difference!



Production Images



Interview on Youth Homelessness

What if?

What if you are young and living in a home that isn't safe for you?

What if relationships with family members are so difficult that you can't stay there any longer?

What if your family are living in poverty and just can't afford to meet your basic needs?

What if you are living in temporary accommodation and you don't know where you will be going next?

ALL of these scenarios are actual situations that young people **living in Britain** find themselves in through no fault of their own.

Exact figures are difficult to find with regard to youth homelessness as they are difficult to record. Often young people can be 'hidden homeless' which means they don't show up on any official figures.

Youth homelessness in Britain

- **Shelter**, one of the leading charities in England supporting homeless persons, report that **150 families a day** become homeless
- In 2016, **Shelter** also reported that **more than 120,000 children** across Britain face spending Christmas **homeless** and in **temporary accommodation**
- **Centrepont**, a specialist charity for young homeless persons, supports more than **9,200** young people a year - almost a **third** of those are **under the age of 18**
- A recent report conducted by the London Assembly Housing Committee suggests that almost a **quarter of a million under-25's** in London have stayed in an **unsafe place** because they have **nowhere to call home**

Mason's Story

'My family wasn't a nice place to grow up in. There was a lot of shouting and fighting. My Stepdad didn't like me much and we were all scared of him when we were kids. I used to see other parents in town especially around Christmas smiling and laughing with their kids. I wished my family were like that. 'Home' was often where we ended up when something went wrong which it did all the time. There were times when we got put in temporary accommodation or a hostel which was pretty rank. I never really felt like I 'fitted in' or belonged anywhere really. School was pretty rubbish when you were the kid wearing supermarket trainers with the front hanging off. I was pretty mouthy and aggressive to cover up how I was feeling and got excluded. By the time I got to 19 I was on my own and generally crashing where I could, trying not to outstay my welcome on people's sofas. Sometimes I didn't have anywhere to go so slept rough in doorways and parks. I am at college now. Life is good and a local charity is helping me. I still worry I could end up back in that place. I hope not.'

Mason, aged 23, Weston-super-Mare

What is 'homelessness'?

The definition of homelessness means not having a home. You don't have to be living on the street to be homeless - even if you have a roof over your head you can still be without a home. This may be because you don't have any rights to stay where you live or your home is unsuitable for you.

You might be defined as homeless if you are:

- sleeping on the streets
- staying with friends or family
- staying in a hostel or bed and breakfast hotel
- living in overcrowded conditions
- at risk of violence in your home
- living in poor conditions that affect your health
- living in a house that is not suitable for you because you are sick or disabled

Who is affected by homelessness?

Homelessness affects a wide variety of people. Some groups of people are more likely to become homeless because they have fewer rights, particular needs or are less able to cope by themselves. These include:

- young people
- old people
- people with children
- people with physical or mental health problems
- people on benefits or low incomes
- people leaving care
- ex-armed forces personnel
- ex-prisoners
- asylum seekers and refugees

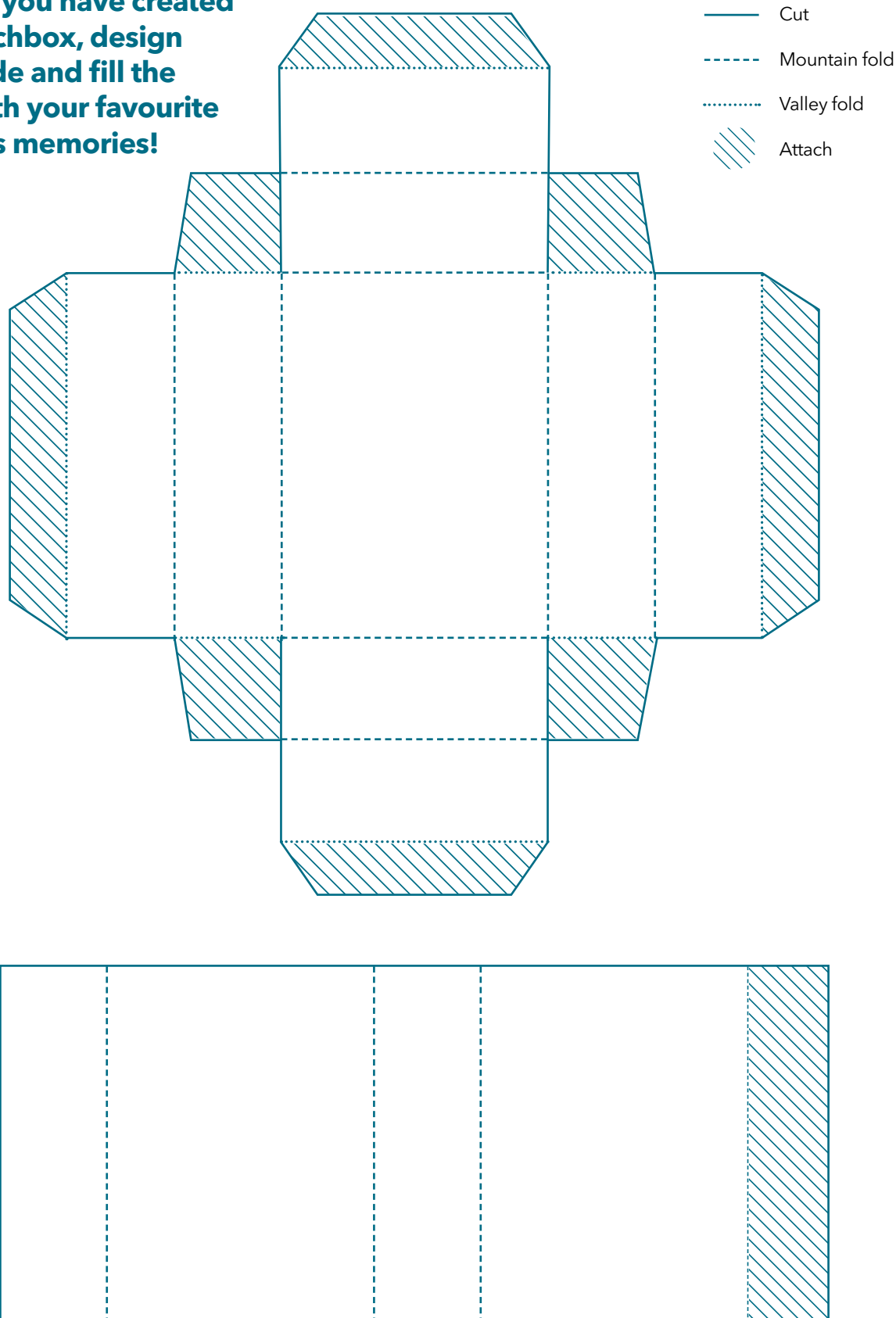
What can you do?

Obviously this is a big and difficult issue but there are things that we can all to help:

- **Talk about it** - understanding the issue is a huge step in the right direction! Charities such as Centrepont (www.centrepont.org.uk) and Shelter (www.shelter.org.uk) have lots of information on their websites and are a good place to start.
- **Contact your MP** - you could email your local MP (Member of Parliament) and ask how they are supporting local young homeless persons in your area. To find your MP - www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps.
- **Donate** - local shelters and organisations ask for specific donations. There is often a need for warm blankets or sleeping bags, hats, gloves and coats during the colder months for rough sleepers. Supermarkets also collect for local foodbanks too. You could ask whoever does the shopping in your house to buy an extra item to donate.

Activity: Origami

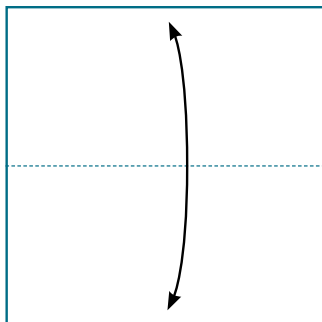
Trace this design onto a colourful piece of paper and once you have created your matchbox, design the outside and fill the inside with your favourite Christmas memories!



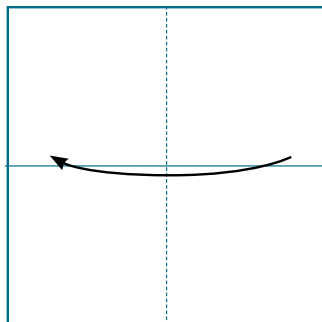
Activity: Frog Race

Have a frog race with your friends!

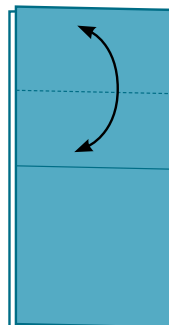
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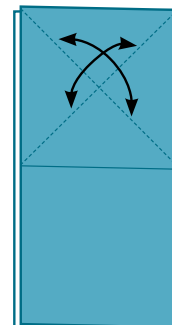
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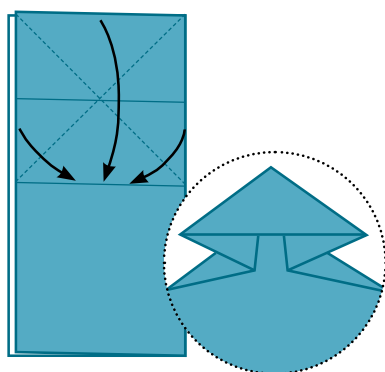
3 Fold to make crease and fold back



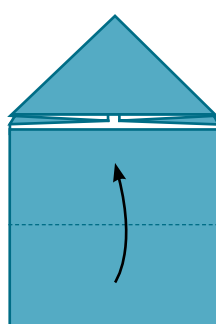
4 Fold to make crease and fold back



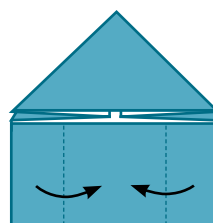
5 Fold in the lines



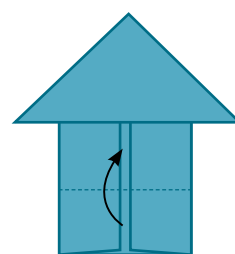
6 Fold in the dotted lines



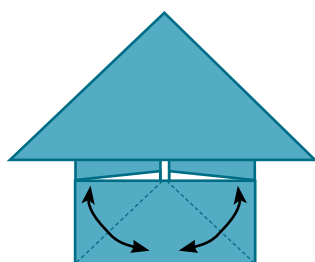
7 Fold in the dotted lines to meet in the center



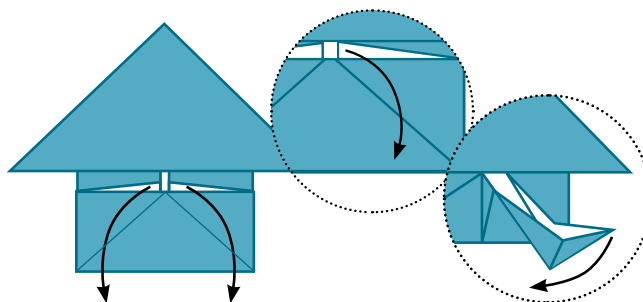
8 Fold in the dotted lines



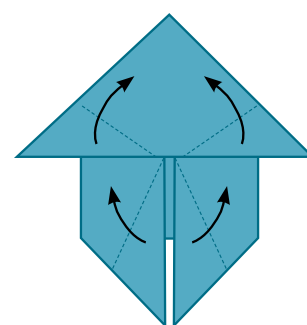
9 Fold in the dotted line and fold back



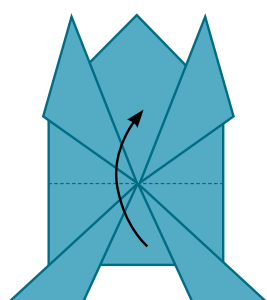
10 Pull out the corners



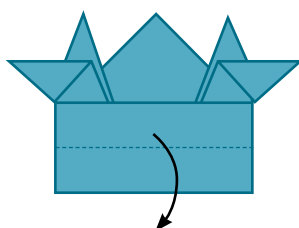
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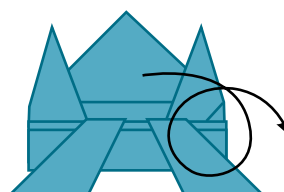
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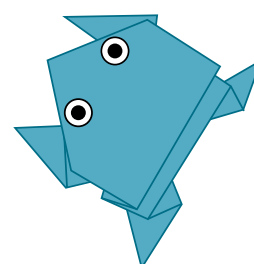
13 Fold in the dotted line



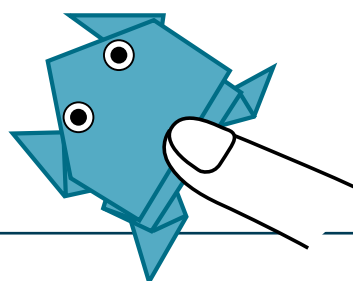
14 Turn over



15 Draw the eyes



16 Hold with a finger and release to jump



Why not try this with your family over Christmas?

***"Everything you look at can become a fairy tale
and you can get a story from everything you touch."***

Hans Christian Andersen

The Little Matchgirl and Other Happier Tales is a production packed to the brim with magic, music and wonder set against a picturesque Edwardian fantasy world. A show that can be enjoyed by families together from 9-109!

Why not whisk your friends and family back in time and challenge them to put down their phones, controllers and tablets by giving some of these traditional Parlour Games a go? You could even split into teams and create a basket of 'forfeits' that each team must choose from when one of their players loses a game. Pick of the festive chocolate for the winning team is a must! All parlour games differed slightly depending on who was playing them so feel free to add your own family rules and twists to each game!

Look-a-bout

One player (the 'Hider') chooses an item from the room. It needs to be fairly small so that it isn't too easy to find!

The Hider shows the item to everyone and then instructs all other players to leave the room or shut their eyes. No peaking whilst it is hidden.

Everyone then searches for the item until they spot it. They are then to sit down without telling anyone else where the item is. The last one to 'spot' loses (and chooses a forfeit for their team, if you are playing in teams). You can decide how the next 'hider' is selected for the next round!

You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile

Choose a player to be 'it' (this player can volunteer or be volunteered by the rest of the group!). This player is the only one in the room who is allowed to smile or laugh during the game.

Everyone else sits or stands in the room looking at the player who is 'on it' at all times.

He or she can do anything they want to try and get someone to laugh or smile (even a flicker counts!). They can sing, dance, do an impression, anything goes! The only thing they can't do is physically touch their 'target' (no tickling!).

If any player smiles then he or she becomes 'it'. The person who smiles the least number of times is declared the overall winner!

Pass the Slipper

One player chooses an object from the room (the 'slipper').

Another player stands in the centre of room and everyone else creates a circle around them.

The player in the centre of the circle must close their eyes while the 'slipper' is passed from player to player behind their backs.

The player in the centre can choose to open their eyes whenever they want to, the passing must immediately stop and he/she must make a guess as to who holds the 'slipper.'

If they are correct, they trade places. If they are wrong, they close their eyes and the passing begins again or you could make them choose a forfeit (which is much more fun!).

Squeak Piggy Squeak!

This is a parlour game classic and has been played by generations of adults and children alike! Choose your own variation as to the sound and animal, if you prefer (Moo Cow Moo, Roar Lion Roar, Cluck Hen Cluck – or a combination!).

One player is blindfolded, given a cushion to hold and then turned around a few times (or as many as you like!).

The other players scramble to sit on the chairs which have been placed in a circle around the room.

Players attempt to sit as silently as possible while the blindfolded player tries to find someone. If the blindfolded player is looking like they might bump into something other players can help them out with a 'squeak' to help them change direction! Once the blindfolded player has found someone they sit on their lap with the cushion and call out 'Squeak piggy, squeak'.

The player makes a piggy noise and the blindfolded player then has to guess whose lap they are sitting on.

If the blindfolded player correctly guesses, they change places and the game begins again. If they are wrong, there is always the forfeit basket!

Remember to change seats before starting the game again!

And finally...

No list of Parlour Games would be complete without a group storytelling session...

Sit everyone in a circle and dim the lights (candlelight, fairy lights or torches from mobile phones create a good theatrical, storytelling effect).

Agree on a theme or dramatic opening line to begin the story, allowing each player in turn to create the next part of the story. Only let each player speak for 20 seconds or so and make sure each part of the story is left on a 'cliff-hanger moment' (for example, 'and then she saw a...').

And, in true Parlour Game style, make one a Victorian Ghost Story...