

PIG HEART BOY CLASSROOM REFLECTION



ABOUT THIS STAGE ADAPTATION

First published in 1997, Malorie Blackman's much loved story centres on Cameron, a boy with a serious heart condition and his decision to undergo groundbreaking surgery. Whilst Malorie Blackman first wrote this story a long time ago, the dilemmas still resonate today.

This new production of Pig Heart Boy is adapted for stage by Winsome Pinnock and directed by Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu. To find out more about the importance of this story, we interviewed the author Malorie Blackman and the director of our stage adaptation Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu. You can watch the interview with Malorie [here](#) and with Tristan [here](#).

This short resource for schools offers some quick and easy activities to reflect on the play in class, If your pupils have studied the book, or you would like to explore it in more depth, you might like to use the longer pack from the Children's Theatre Partnership [here](#).

The play is relevant to the following KS2 areas:

Biology- the Circulatory system Morality & Ethical Decisions Mental Health
Friendships Shared responsibilities Respecting self & others



THEMES



Whilst Pig Heart Boy is a play full of joy and hope, there are also more complex themes. We've include some information here to help you prepare - if you need any more information please contact schools@unicorntheatre.com

FRIENDSHIPS & FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships and family relationships are a key part of this story. Cameron has to cope with his friends opinions about his heart transplant, and later had to manage difficult emotions when he feels betrayed by his friends. Cameron's parents relationship feels fractured as they are in conflict about his transplant, and we hear about his friend Marilyn who describes how her family is going through a tough time. The play does not shy away from depicting family arguments, as this is a real part of many people's lives. Through the story we are able to see how these conflicts in our friendships and family relationships can be navigated.

MORALS AND ETHICAL DECISIONS- MEDICAL RESEARCH AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

At the centre of this play are moral and ethical dilemmas around using animals in medical research and procedures. When Cameron chooses to meet the pig who will be his donor there is a moment of startling reflection when he imagines that the pig herself might not want this. Ultimately, he honours that the animal is giving its life, in order for him to survive. There are animal rights protest groups who do not agree with Cameron's procedure, and at one point one of the protestors covers Cameron in fake blood. The different viewpoints of medical professionals about the morality and ethical decisions are referenced throughout the story.

LOSS AND GRIEF

Cameron's Nan passes away towards the end of the play. The grief that the family feel is sad but held gently and is balanced with the joyful anticipation that Cameron feels towards the imminent arrival of his new sibling. In addition, there are themes of loss in relation to the loss of 'normal' childhood experiences that Cameron is excluded from and we hear about how he feels about this.

HOPE, JOY, IMAGINATION

These are themes the director is keen to explore in the play. Hope that Cameron will respond positively to the second transplant, hope for the birth of Cameron's sibling, and hope that he will be able to return to activities that he used to enjoy. There are also moments of joy and imagination as we are immersed into Cameron's wild imagination and the moments of joy he experiences with his friends. Despite how tough Cameron's world sometimes feels, there is always a glimmer of light, and moments that represent hope.

PRIVACY

Personal privacy is sometimes a point of conflict between characters. Cameron's friend leaks his procedure to the national press. The family also have to cope with an invasion of their privacy when the press hound them. There is scope to broaden this theme out to a class discussion about the importance of trust and privacy in the context of the stories we tell online/social media and the consequences of sharing information about ourselves.



SIMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

TIME: 20 minutes (approx) **SUBJECT AREAS:** Drama, English, Speaking & Listening

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the play adding depth to understanding

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the activity, pupils will be able to:

- Articulate their response to the play
- Consider different responses from their peers
- Begin to think about the purpose of theatre

Choose all or just a few of the following questions to explore with the class:

- What was your favourite moment in the play?
- Did anything feel unclear about the story? If you were the writer or director, how would you make it clearer?
- What do you remember about the design? This could be what you saw on stage or the sound and light. How did it help to create the world of the story?
- How do you think Cameron felt at the beginning of the play? Does this change by the end of the play? Why?
- Many of the actors in this play are playing more than one character. How did the actors use their bodies and voices to play different characters during the course of the play?
- Why might Cameron feel excluded, angry or lonely at times during the play? If you were his friend, how would you help him feel better?
- In the play, we see different opinions that people have about animals being used in medical research & procedures? As a class, think of three reasons people might agree and three reasons they might disagree with this.



CREATIVE SESSION: JOY, HOPE AND IMAGINATION

- TIME:** 50 minutes - optional extra time to write poems
- LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** To develop creative expression, group cohesion and physical communication. Develop poetry writing in response to a theme.
- LEARNING OUTCOMES:** By the end of the activity, pupils will be able to:
- Express a given theme using their bodies
 - Articulate a response to key themes in the play
 - Apply creative learning to a written poetry task
- WHAT YOU NEED:** A clear space, pushing desks to the sides or using a hall, Ability to play audio poems on YouTube

Throughout the play the main characters face challenges but they also experience hope, feel joy and imagine a better future for themselves and each other. We worked with Great Ormond Street in the development of this production. and collaborated with children to create a series of poems in response to some of the key themes of the story. You can find the recordings of the poems and more information here:

www.unicorntheatre.com/news/pigheartboy-poetry

Explain to the class that the director of Pig Heart Boy was interested in how the play explores the themes of hope, joy and imagination and that you'll explore these themes as a class.

Part 1 - Listening to poems (15 mins)

- Play 2-3 of the poems (link above). You can explain how they were created by professional poets and children in hospital.
- Brief discussion:
 - How did the poems make you feel?
 - Was there anything you really liked?
 - How might the themes of Joy, Hope and Imagination connect with the play?
 - Why might these themes be important to the director?

Part 2 - Creating images (15 mins)

- Put the class in groups of 3-5.
- Give them 1 minute to create a frozen image that represents the theme of Hope.
- Ask each group to freeze and then spotlight one or two of the groups for everyone to take a look at. Ask how they think the group has represented Hope in their image.
- Repeat for the theme of Joy and again for Imagination. Pick different groups to spotlight each time.
- Next, ask each group to return to their own frozen images and think of one line of dialogue to represent each image.
- Choose 2-3 groups (or all if you have time) to share back their three images in sequence including the line of dialogue. It helps to call out each theme to signal when they change image.

Part 3 - Write you own poems (20 mins - you may chose to continue this in another lesson)

- Students find a comfortable place with a pen and paper (If extending this exercise you may decide to return to desks)
- Ask them to choose one of the themes and write a short poem. You can guide this based on what they have learnt in class. If time is limited we suggest they write an acrostic poem for Joy or Hope.

Please send poems to us at creativehub@unicorntheatre.com and we will share some of them online!