



— LONGBOROUGH —
— FESTIVAL OPERA —



Playground Opera Tour

Hansel and Gretel

by Englebert Humperdinck

June 2021

Teachers' Pack

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INTRODUCTION TO 'HANSEL AND GRETEL' THE OPERA

BACKGROUND NOTES

Most pupils will already be familiar with the traditional fairy story but they will find the opera introduces some new characters that you will meet when we come and visit.

It's worth retelling the traditional story and discuss how their story books presented the forest, the children, the witch and the gingerbread house surrounded by sweet delights and gingerbread men. The contents of this pack refer and give ideas for activities that relate to both versions of the story.

BUT... this production has a very different design. The set, the characters, the action are all extremely imaginative but very minimalistic, and the children especially if young, will need to be prepared for the different approach. The music will not be played by an orchestra obviously. Instead an accordion player will play with the keyboard.

- It will be a great project to compare and contrast the two different productions especially after the show is over.
- Some pupils will be happy to write a synopsis of the story, however young.
- This is a great opportunity of stressing the 'Stranger Danger caution'. (The children are lured into the house by the evil witch.)
- Strong warning too of the dangers of eating poisonous berries and toadstools etc is necessary for younger pupils. (Hansel and Gretel eat them during the performance to stave off their hunger.)

WHO CREATED THIS OPERA?

The music of Hansel and Gretel was written by a German composer called Engelbert Humperdinck in 1891-2. The libretto (the words) were written by his sister Adelheid Wette, based on the Grimm Brothers fairy tale. Adelheid was very interested in reading folk tales and writing poetry and every year, she wrote a play for her children to perform at a family celebration.

In 1890, she wrote a version of Hansel and Gretel to be performed as a puppet show, given by her daughters at her husband's birthday celebrations in May. Adelheid wrote to her brother Engelbert asking him to compose music for five of her verses to use in the play. A cock-a-doodle-do song, a dance song, an echo song, a forest song and a lullaby. Englebert responded with beautiful music for 2 voices and a piano, inspired by old folk songs of the area in Germany where they lived. Everyone loved them.

Gradually Engelbert added more songs which were connected by a story told by a narrator. In January 1891, he started to work on a full orchestral version and it was first performed in Weimer on 23rd December 1893 - and to this day it is often performed at Christmas.

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA VERSION OF HANSEL & GRETEL

The Opera story differs slightly from the Traditional one, but its basis is the same.

Once upon a time on the edge of the Forest there lived a family: **Peter** a broom maker and **Gertrude** a washer woman, and their two children **Hansel and Gretel**. There wasn't much work around, so the family were extremely poor, and struggled to keep their cottage warm or provide enough food. Often Hansel and Gretel would have to keep warm by dancing, and they were always hungry.

One evening they were all so hungry that Gertrude sent the two children into the forest to collect blackberries for the family supper. They skipped off happily into the dark and threatening forest. Later their father arrived home after a good day's trade at the market, with a bag full of food, but too late. He asked where his children were and Gertrude told him she'd sent them to find berries for supper. Peter was extremely anxious because of the Wicked Witch who lived in the depths of the forest and who lured children into her cottage, never to be seen again. They both rushed out to find them before it was too late.

Meanwhile, deep in the forest, Hansel and Gretel had been very successful finding blackberries growing there, and had filled their basket. Unfortunately they were so hungry that they sat down and ate them all up. Remembering how cross their mother would be they decided to search for more and went further and further into the depths of the forest to refill their basket. Oh dear, when they tried to return home, they found they couldn't remember the way, however hard they tried. They wandered up and down exhausted and unhappy, when suddenly they saw the strangest man approaching. He told them not to be frightened, and that he was The Sandman, the Bringer of Dream. They were so tired that when he told them to and had sprinkled his magic dust, they sat down on a mossy patch and fell fast asleep, dreaming the sweetest dreams.

At dawn next morning, they were woken by another eerie sensation. It was the dew fairy who appeared and sprinkled her magic to awaken them. After she had disappeared, they felt refreshed but still so hungry, and wandered deeper into the forest looking for food. Further and further they went until they caught sight of the prettiest cottage, and as they approached the more attractive it seemed. The fence was made of gingerbread men all standing in a row, and the walls and roof were made of sweet things; biscuits, chocolate, lollipops and sweets. OH WOW! Immediately of course, Hansel was so hungry that he broke a piece off and was nibbling it when all of a sudden, this strange old lady came out carrying a big net. She angrily caught Hansel in her net and chanting strange words she dragged him into her cottage.

Inside it was dark and scary, and she bundled Hansel into a large iron cage. She picked up a hazel branch spell and cackled a weird magic spell over them both, so that she could keep Hansel in the cage until he was fat enough to EAT! Gretel was to be her slave, feeding Hansel up so that he would get nice and plump for her to bake and eat.

Gretel had a plan. When the witch went off to build up the fire to make the oven very hot, she picked up the hazel branch and waved it over Hansel chanting the same spell but this time releasing Hansel from its power. When the witch returned to feel how fat Hansel's finger was, he held out a bare stick, and when she discovered how disappointingly skinny he was, she stumped off to make up the fire even stronger. Gretel took her chance and asked the witch when she returned to show her how the fire worked. Impatiently the witch bent down by the open oven door, and quickly Gretel and Hansel pushed her hard into the burning fire. They banged the door behind her and as they heard her last screams, they rushed out of the house to make their escape. Hurray!

But what was this? As they ran through the garden, they found that the Gingerbread men had all changed back into the children they had once been before they too had been bewitched.

As they all celebrated that the witch's spells had been broken, they heard voices calling Hansel and Gretel's names, and as if by magic Peter and Gertrude rushed in to be reunited with their beloved children. Their search was over and they all made their way happily back through the forest to the delicious feast awaiting them at home.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES - FORESTS AND TREES

(If possible, this part should be completed before the Longborough visit)

The Forest is an important part of the story, and the class will need to be encouraged to use their imaginations to try and share the fear that Hansel and Gretel will experience lost in a deep, dark and alien environment. It's unlikely you'll be able to visit a forest, but it would be so exciting if you have one near and could. If not, a local wood or copse would be good and if that's not possible, use the trees in your school grounds to study.

NATURAL SCIENCES

Below are listed various activities associated with this experience.

- A class visit to or description of forest environment, the lack of light and trees growing very, tall dense undergrowth etc. Shapes of trees. Dark depths to penetrate.
- The difference between evergreen and deciduous trees.
- The kind of trees that make up our forests
- The important root structure, feeding the tree via trunk and branches. Perhaps they could they lie down and look up at the structure of the trees. Imagine the canopy where the forest meets the sky.
- Mosses and lichens, berries and fungi.
- The importance of the bark. Forest creatures, incl. those that can destroy the bark structure and saplings too.
- Photosynthesis, where appropriate.

CLASS ROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Wall of bread experiment

Allow a couple weeks to complete this experiment. It's a very visual, slightly gruesome experiment that watches mould grow on pieces of bread sealed in plastic bags and hung up as a wall display. Every child can participate in the experiment. Not only will it open their eyes to the different moulds on our hands, breath and everyday objects, it will hone their data reporting, hypothesis, observation and analytical skills. Particularly relevant to 2020. ([worksheet included](#))

ACTIVITIES FOR LITERACY

1. Cautionary Tales

Hansel and Gretel is very much a cautionary tale to explore and discuss.

- Danger of the getting lost in the forest depths.
- Stranger Danger.
- Poisonous plants. (H. and Gr. survive by eating blackberries, stress should be made on the danger of eating unknown berries)
- It would be interesting to compare this cautionary tale with the easily accessed ones by Hillaire Belloc. (Eg 'Matilda', 'Henry King')

2. The Brothers Grimm

- Who were the authors of this story? Interesting investigation into The Brothers Grimm NB. Their stories are all very dark, with violence and evil characters. (Most children can cope with, and even enjoy, such characters, after all they are the basis of many of our well known and loved pantomimes and operas)
- Info on the Brothers Grimm can be found in great detail on Google (but discretion should be used on how much you share with younger pupils). They collected folk tales from all over Europe, and translated the tales into German. The best loved stories were Snow White, Rumpelstiltskin, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, The Pied Piper, along with Hansel & Gretel. All very different in the original writings from the Disney versions.

3. Creative Writing ideas

- Why was the witch so evil? Describe her early life and influences.
- Write your own Cautionary Tale
- 'A Frightening Night' what happened when you were lost in the woods
- 'The Most Evil Witch.' Vocabulary work perhaps leading to a paragraph each. Class could participate in suggesting suitable words to describe the most malevolent witch. Make a 'Scary Witch' concoction of words into a witches' cauldron on the display board .
- Design a Production of Hansel and Gretel yourself. Written description with plan of stage and costumes for characters.
- Poetry - create a spell and explain what it will do.

ACTIVITIES FOR ARTWORK

- **Forest scenes** with numerous close growing trees. Either in groups or individually, with any medium. (Tree and leaf templates on separate sheets)
- **Bark rubbings** using old wax crayons
- **Papercraft skeletons of winter trees** (Ideas included on separate sheet)
- **Leaf pictures.** Drawing round leaves, Group or individual. Montages, leaf patterns
- **Design a Lollipop Tree.** Younger pupils could use crayons or paints. For older pupils we suggest **Collage or Quilling.** (Worksheet on quilling included if more competent pupils would like to try.)

ACTIVITIES FOR DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- **Witches' Mobile.** For more able students, some of whom could possibly work unaided from the sheets. (Worksheet included.)
- **Sweets and Lollipop** shapes to hang from a twig or branch in the classroom. More suited to younger or less able pupils. (Worksheets and templates included.)
- Cut out chain of **linked Gingerbread men** for the young, or Hansel and Gretel for older pupils. (Templates and instructions included.)
- **Fabric collages of washing lines.** (In this production Mother takes in washing to help finances).
- **Plaiting.** Some will be very eager to learn to plait in Gretel's style. Using several strands of wool x 3 for each child
- Make a set of the forest in a shoebox. Suggested on the Competitions page to be done at home with adult support
- Baking and decorating **Gingerbread children** (suggested as a homework project on the Competitions Page) (Template and recipe included.)

ACTIVITIES FOR CREATIVE MOVEMENT

- Game of Statues to music. When the teacher calls Hocus Pocus everyone stands rigidly still in a strange shape.
- Hand Patting. In pairs, children can make a Hand clapping and patting repetitive routine making their own chant to it. The one in the opera goes like this:

Hocus Pocus Witches ground,
Make the victim muscle bound!!
Stand stock still, obey the Witch,
When she points her hazel switch,
Like a stone don't even twitch!

Hocus Pocus, then comes Jokus
Hocus Pocus, get some focus.
Child obey, or you are dead.
Face the front, march straight ahead,
To the place where you'll be fed"

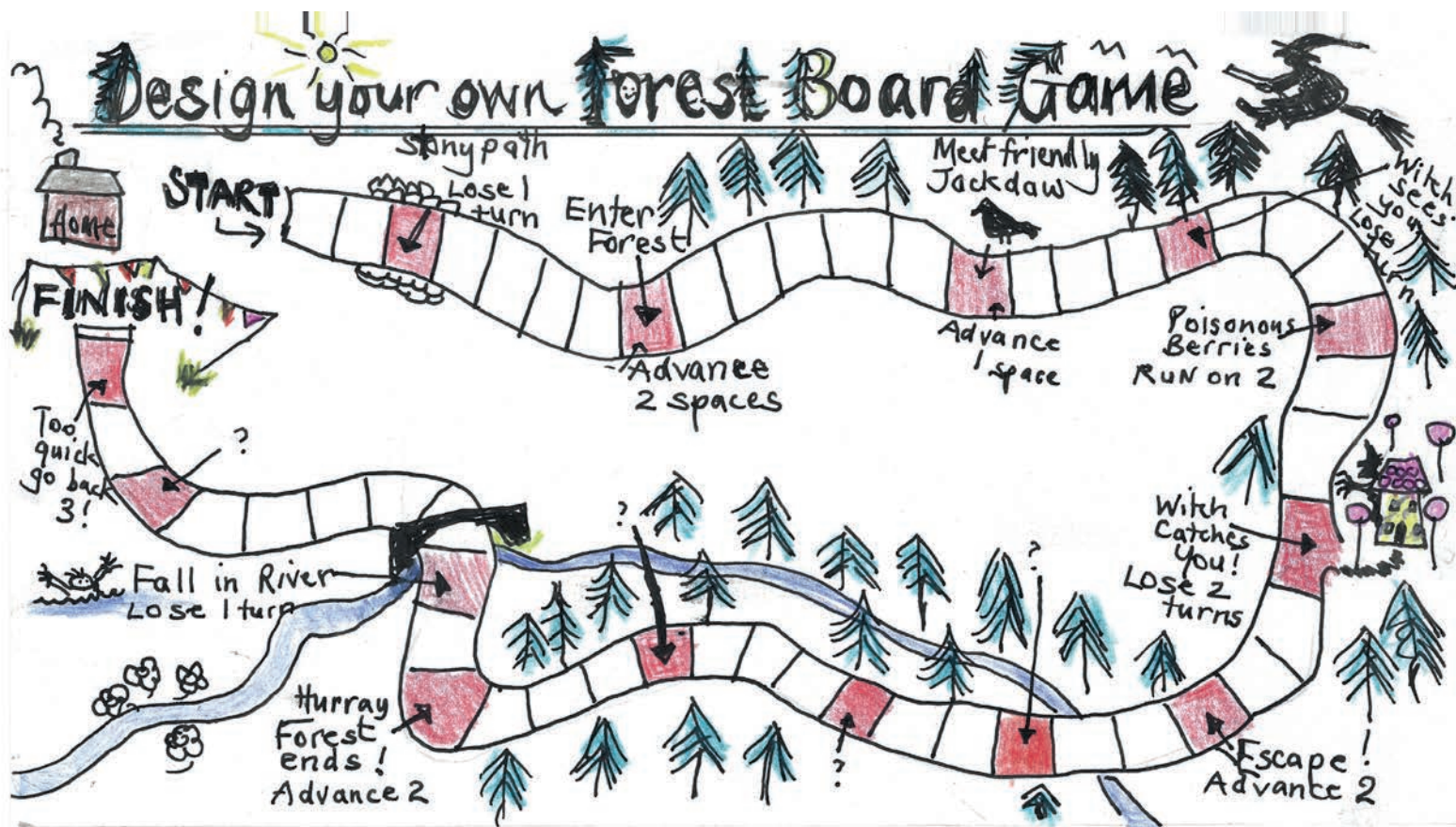
- Tree dance to music. For younger pupils. Half the class act as static trees, the other half twist and dance around and in and out. No bumping or touching the trees as they go.

HOMework PROJECTS

- Board Game using the pitfalls, dangers, strengths and pleasures of the forest. (Large sheets of paper required!) [Worksheet included](#)
- Design a poster
Either...Advertising 'Hansel and Gretel' the Opera
Or...'Lost' (Hansel and Gretel) or 'Wanted Dead or Alive' (The Witch)
[Worksheet Included](#)
- Make and decorate some gingerbread children. ([Templates included](#))
- Create The Forest in a shoe box. (Needs adult help, and a shoe box)
- Older pupils might prefer to design their own set for a production of Hansel and Gretel .
- Create a face out of clay or dough on trunk of a tree. Take a photograph to make a gallery of gargoyle trees. [Ideas sheet provided in pack.](#)

**Please do send any of your creations to us at
Longborough Festival Opera to display over our
forthcoming season.**

Email jess@lfo.org.uk for more details



Design your own Forest Board Game

You will need:

- A large sheet of strong paper (large enough to draw your grid with enough space around it for written instructions and artwork)
- Counters for each player (2 is enough) and a dice.

Method:

1. Draw your grid to wind around your paper, taking players from the START at home to THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE and round back to home to FINISH. You will need about 50-60 squares, each one big enough for a counter.
2. Choose 15-20 squares which are 'special'. Colour these special squares red to stress their importance.
3. Each special square needs an arrowed instruction. E.g 'the witch catches you, lose a turn' or 'poisonous berries - move on 2 turns'. You can imagine anything that might have happened to Hansel and Gretel as they wandered through the woods. Makes sure you have an equal number of rewards and hazards.
4. Draw your scenery around the board - trees, stream, hill, undergrowth. Draw the home at the start and the gingerbread house halfway round.
5. Try playing the game with a friend.

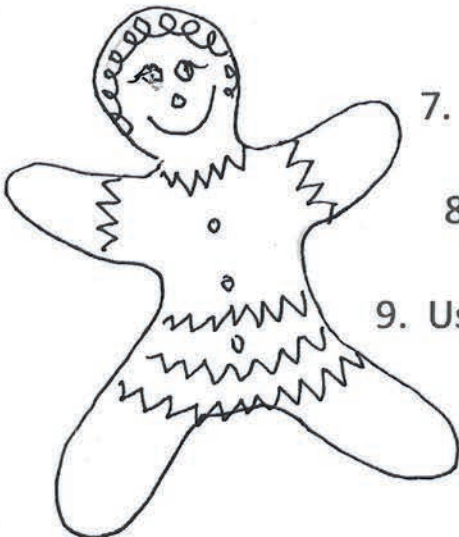
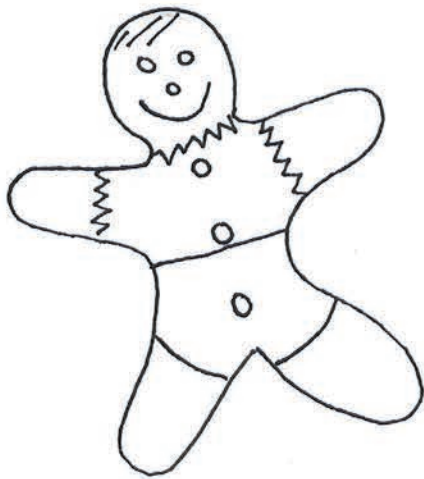
Gingerbread Children Biscuits

Ingredients:

- 225g plain flour,
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 heaped ed tsp. ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cinnamon
- 50g unsalted butter
- 100g soft brown sugar
- 100g golden syrup.
- Icing sugar tubes for decorating

Method:

1. Heat oven to 190C (170C fan) and line a baking tray with baking parchment.
2. Sieve flour, salt and spices and bicarb into a large bowl.
3. Heat gently butter, syrup and sugar in a saucepan until dissolved.
4. When slightly cooler, pour mixture into flour etc and mix with your hand to form a dough. Chill the dough in fridge for 30 mins.
5. Cover your surface with a dusting of flour, and roll out to a $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thickness.
6. Using a template or cutter cut out the gingerbread children shapes, then, re-roll and cut more.
7. Place your shapes on the lined trays, leaving space for them to spread.
8. Cook for 10-15 mins, then remove from the oven and leave to cool.
9. Using your tube of icing pipe decorations on to Gingerbread Children.





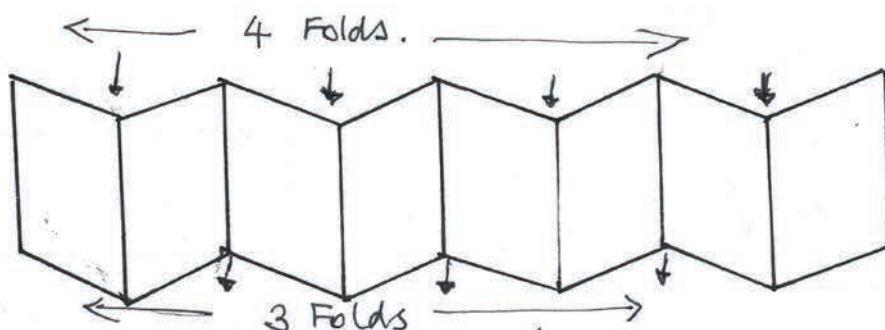
How to make Paper Dolls



You will need: $\frac{1}{2}$ piece A4 Cartridge-type paper (cut longwise)
 Scissors (a good pair, esp. for Hansel & Gretel)

Method:

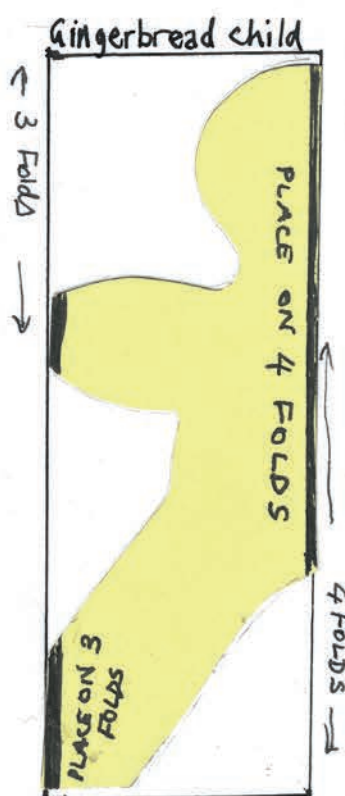
1. Fold your sheet in half. (Be very exact.)
2. Fold each half into 2, and then each of those into 2 (like a concertina.) 4 folds on one side, and 3 folds on the other.



3. When you're sure it's accurately folded, squeeze the folds all along to make them crisp.
4. Fold your concertina up again, & place template on one side of card. Make sure the marked side of template

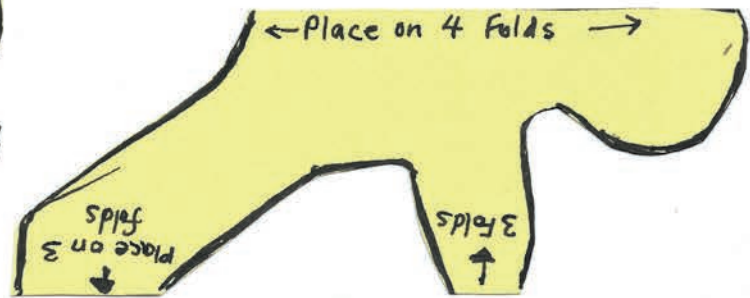
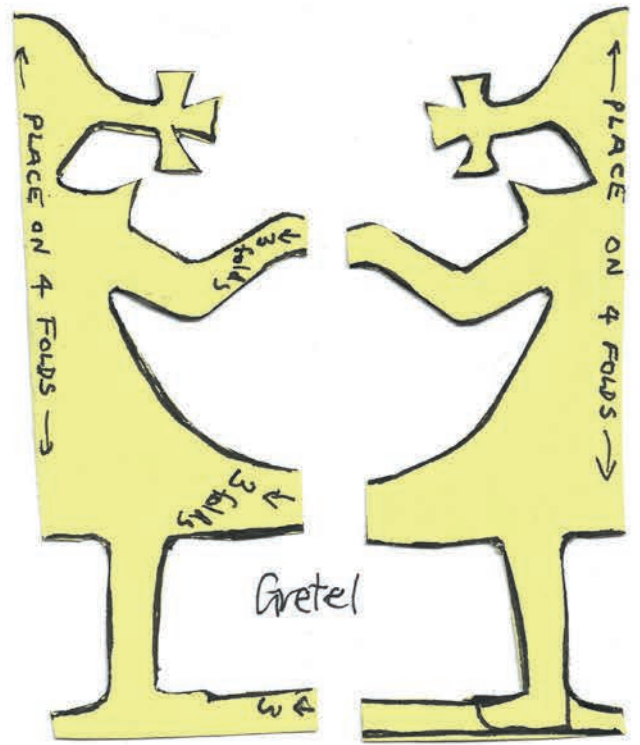
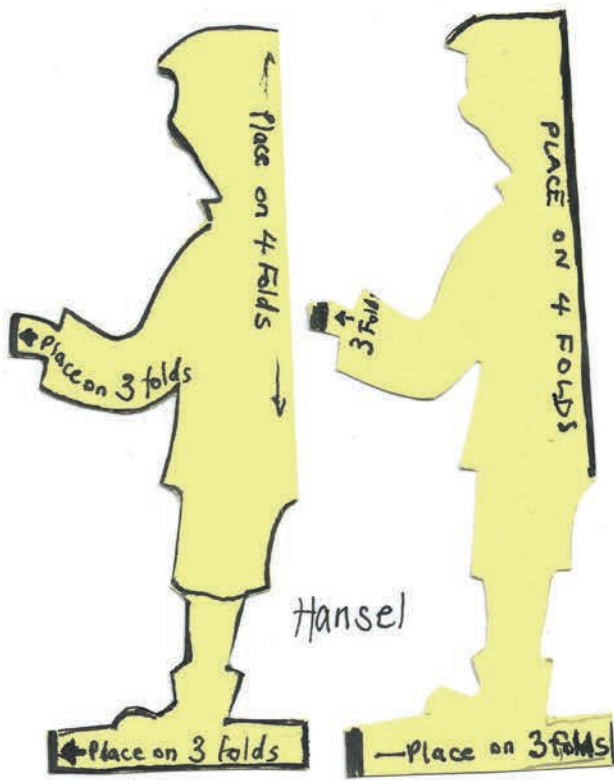
is placed exactly on the fold.

5. Draw round the template v. carefully.
6. Cut it out, remember do not cut along the folds.
7. Open & admire!



N.B. There is also a Hansel template, if you'd like to make him.





↑ ↑ ↑
 Templates for Paper Dolls. Each child only needs one.

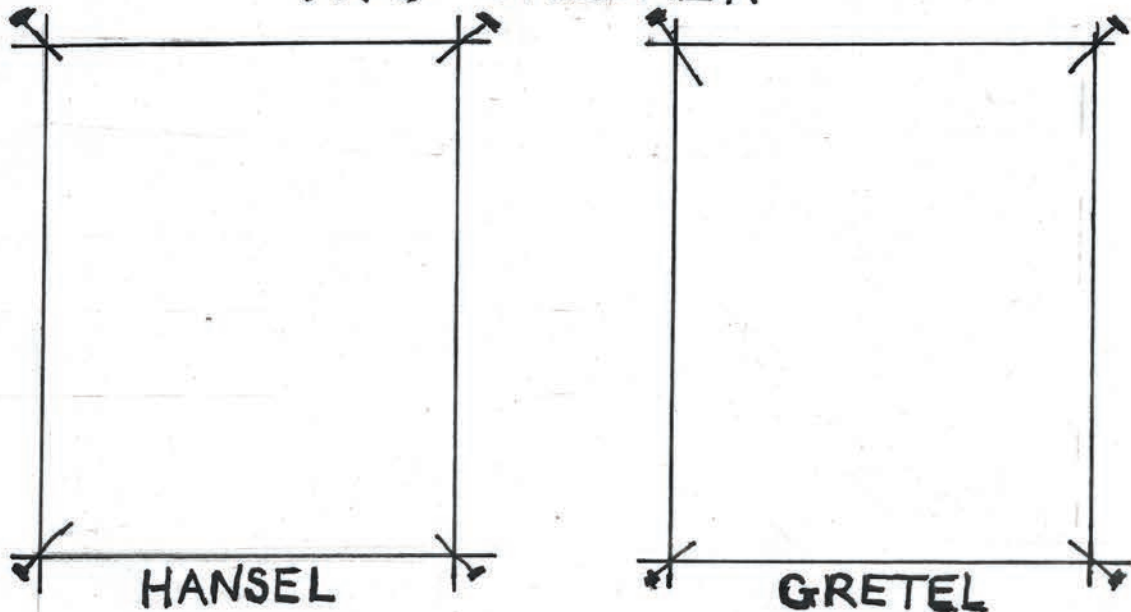
Print on thin card, cut out

↓ →
 Templates for Biscuits



LOST!

TWO CHILDREN



Last seen (where) _____

When? _____

Their appearance: _____

↓
Hansel? _____

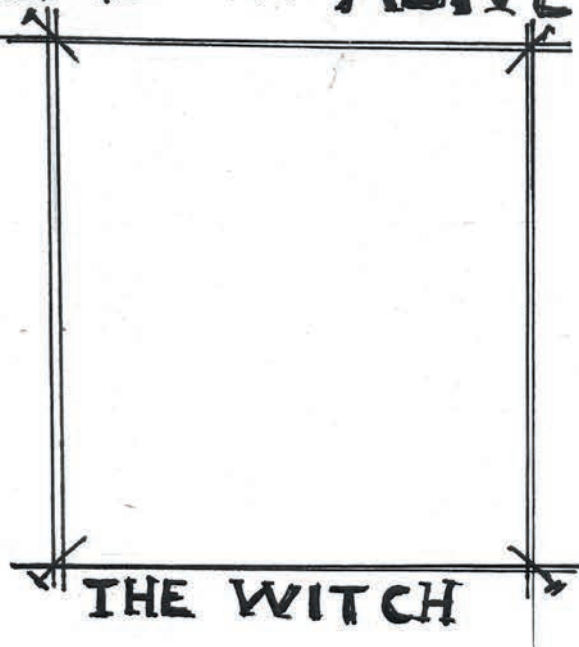
↓
Gretel? _____

Their ages? _____

Who to contact, and their address: _____

REWARD [

WANTED!
DEAD OR ALIVE



REWARD £.....

DESIGN A POSTER TO ADVERTISE

HANSEL AND GRETEL - THE OPERA

Use a piece of A4 paper or card.

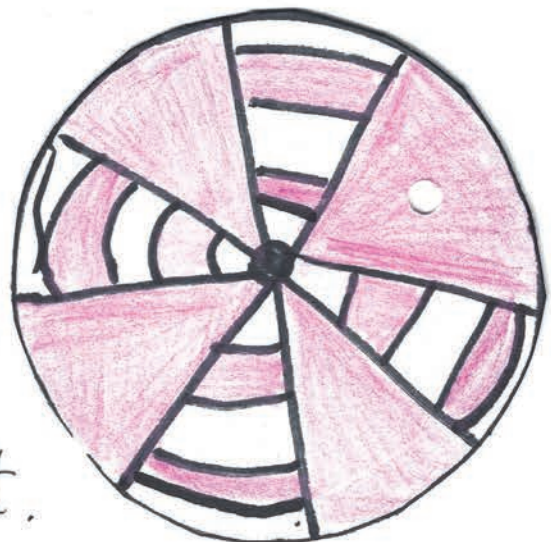
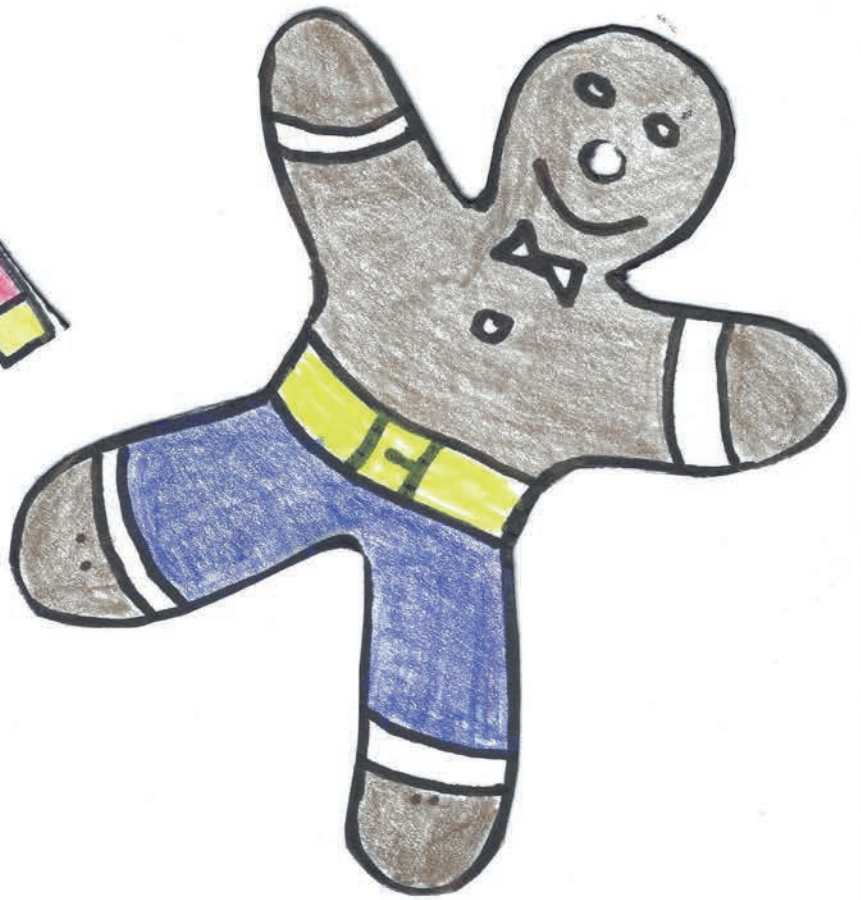
Please include in your poster:

- The name of the show in large striking letters
- The composers name
- Date and time of the performance
- The venue
- Ticket prices
- Box office information - where do they buy tickets from.
- Any other information you think might be useful - e.g who is starring in this opera, some quotes by the press, or awards that it might have won.

GROUP GINGERBREAD HOUSE PICTURE (For younger pupils)

Have prepared a large wall chart picture of the house in the forest, with no decorations. The class will make the decorations to cover the house and roof, with lollipop trees around and a fence of Gingerbread children in the front. Templates are included, but many pupils will want to design and make their own.





Templates (coloured!) for
the Gingerbread House picture,
or for hangers on Tree.
Print on thin card & cut out.



A child's drawing of a Christmas tree. The tree is made of many thin, dark branches radiating from a central trunk, which is planted in a brown, cylindrical pot. The tree is decorated with various colorful ornaments: gingerbread men, ice cream cones, round baubles with different patterns (like stars, dots, and stripes), and pink, cloud-like decorations. The drawing is done in a simple, sketchy style with colored pencils or markers.

A few branches displayed somewhere in the classroom would be the perfect display area for these children's cut outs. The templates are enclosed but they might want to design their own sweets and other confectionary. They will be best made on thin card, decorated and tied with string to the branches. It would help to have a hole punch at hand.

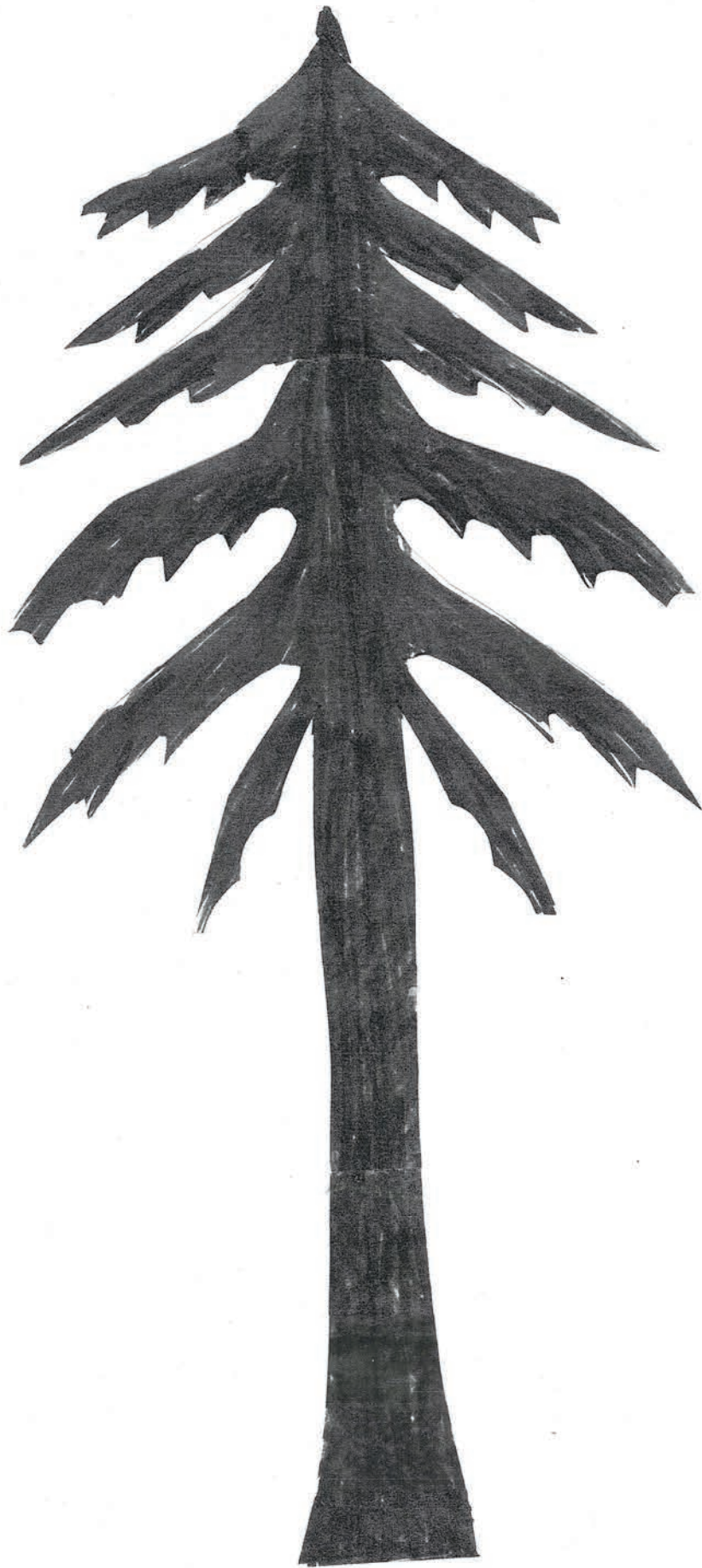
Templates included:

- Lollipop,
- Candy floss,
- Ice cream,
- Sweets, various,
- Gingerbread children

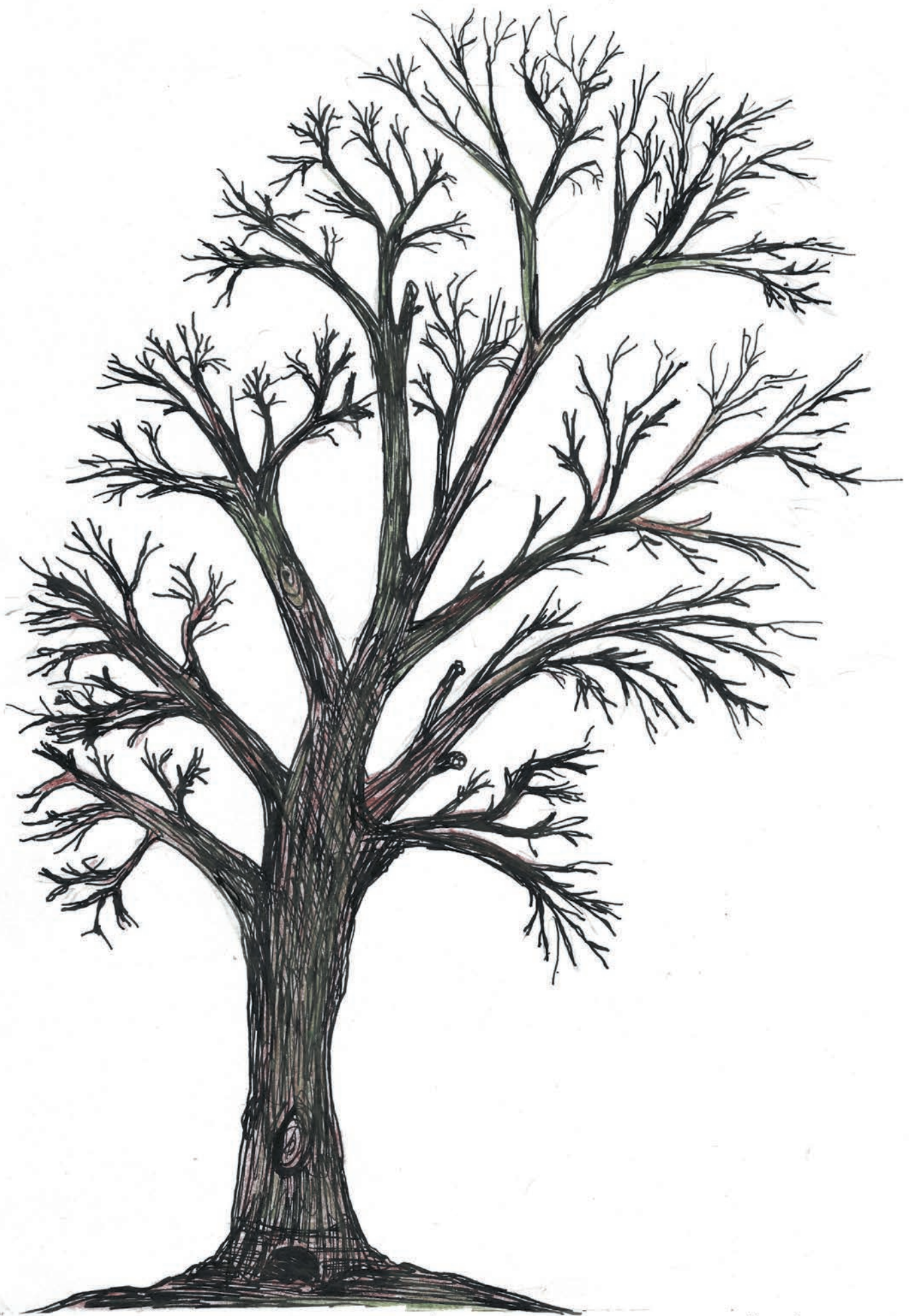
Can you design a tree that
looks like a witch, with gnarled
hands, and with twigs like fingers?











Can you cover the branches of this tree with leaves?
Use crayons, paints, cut-outs of paper, or quilling.



Various leaf templates though
there is nothing like 'the real thing'!

TREE TRUNK FACES

The challenge is to make a comical face on the trunk of a tree in your garden or in a wood nearby.

You can use mud or clay or dough - whatever natural material you can find that will disintegrate happily and not affect the wildlife. You can add sticks or stones, acorns, feather, leaves. Look around under your tree to see what you can find to use. Use your imagination to make a really strange and unnatural creature, which looks in keeping with the tree.

Now, you won't be able to bring the tree into school for us to all see, so please take a photo of your tree face and bring that into school instead.

You get some ideas to get you inspired if you google **Tree Trunk Faces**. But try and not copy too much. It would be better if you create the face yourself.

This is **The Green Man**, an old folklore character that people thought brought good luck. Let's hope your tree face does the same.



Here are a few more ideas. Have fun. Be safe.



HAND HYGIENE EXPERIMENT - the Wall of Bread

What you'll need

1. A slice of white bread per child
2. A resealable bag for each slice of bread (ziploc)

Objective

To understand why hand washing is important.
To observe the growth of mould under different conditions

Instructions

1. Label one of the bags - **CONTROL**.

Place one slice of bread in the "control" bag without touching it. You can use clean tongs, or turn the resealable bag inside out and use it like a glove to get the slice inside. Seal the bag tightly.

2. Ask each child to take a slice of bread. Have each child prepare their piece of bread differently. Be creative and /or disgusting! E.g.

- Wipe the bread with unwashed hands
- Wipe the bread with washed hands
- Wipe the bread with hands washed with hand sanitiser
- Wipe bread on a desk, or chair, wash basin, loo seat?!
- Lick the bread
- Cough on the bread

3. Place the bread in your bag and seal it.

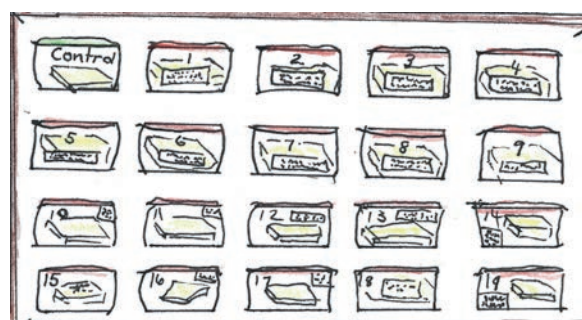
4. **LABEL** each bag with a description of action taken and any important factors that might be helpful when comparing moulds (e.g. health of the lick/cougher/breather.) DO NOT add child's names. Instead, give each bag a **NUMBER**. Take all sealed bags and pin them onto the wall in a frieze and allocate each numbered slice to a child.

5. Ask each student to write a **HYPOTHESIS** for which bread will grow the most/least mould and why.

6. Look at the bread daily and write down the observations. In a few days, mould should start to appear. What slice of bread gets mouldy first? Which grows the most mould? Which grows the least? If mould starts to appear, have the student take a ruler, measure it and record observations. They can even draw a picture of the bread each day, or keep a photo diary by taking pictures of the bread each day to watch the changes over time.

Results and Conclusions

Compare the results with the hypotheses. What conclusions do you draw from this?



Dirty hands!



Clean hands!



Cough!



Lick!



Blow



Loo seat.



Soil.



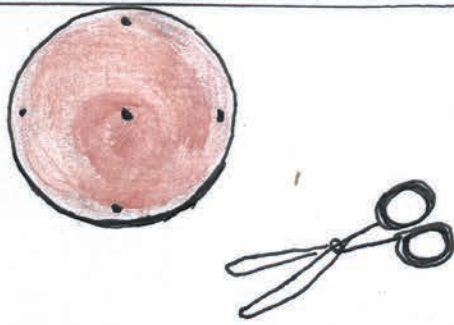
high chair



wash basin

MAKE YOUR OWN WITCHES MOBILE

You will need: some thick card, scissors, pencil and crayons (or paints,) some cotton thread, Some thinner card, (black,) a hole punch if possible, If not a sharp tool, witches templates.



1. Cut out a circle from thick card. Use the template or design your own. Make a central hole, (check that it IS central) Make four more holes 1 cm from edge, at North South East and West



2. Paint your circle making it look like sky. Dark blue for night, with moons and stars. Light blue for daytime with clouds and sunshine. Make sure it's completely dry



3. Cut 4 pieces of cotton to 30cm long. Tie each into the holes round edge of card, Knot them safely. Tie the top ends together



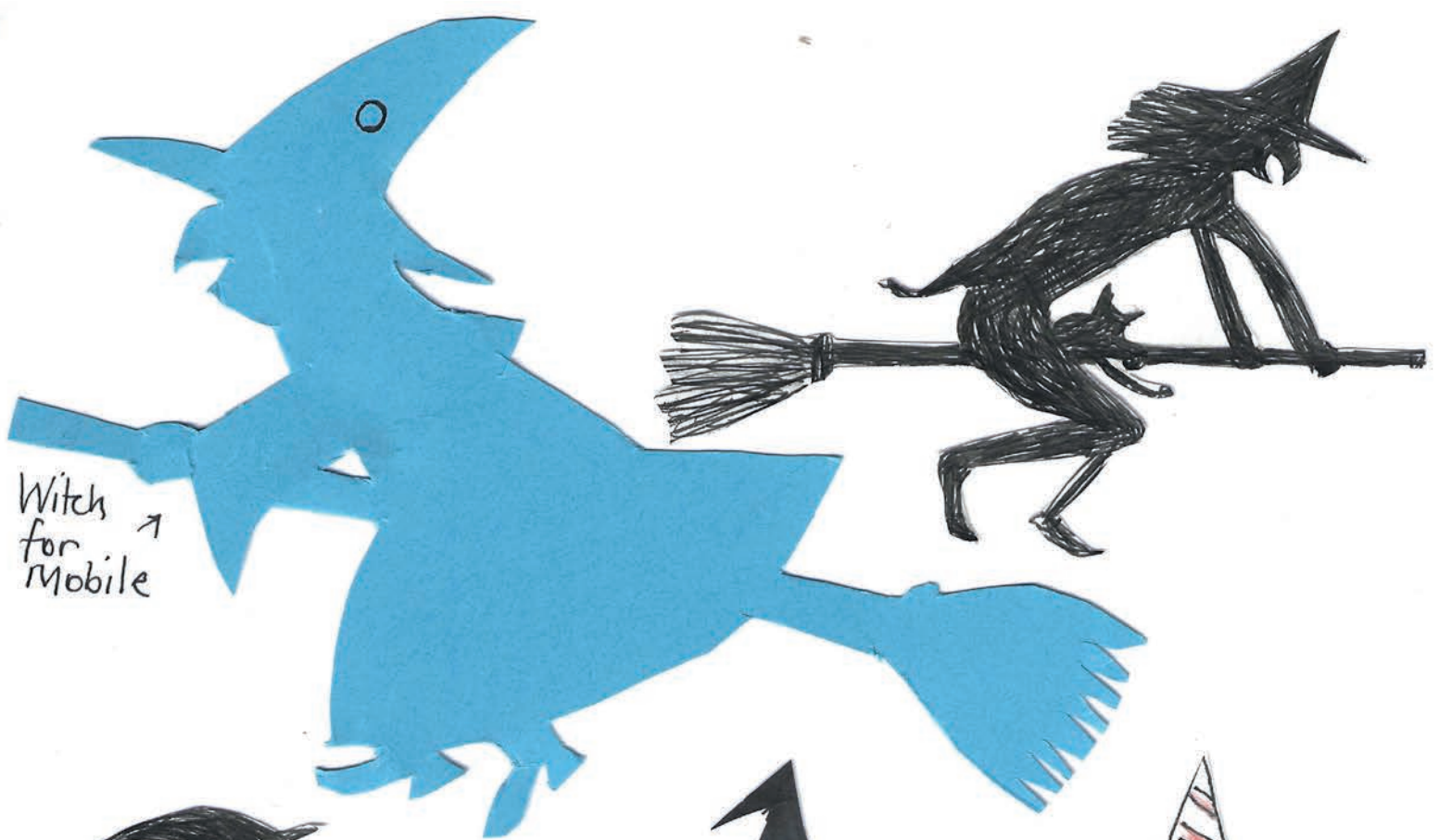
4. Design FOUR witches, or use the template to draw them on to black card. Put a hole into the top of their hats, 1cm from edge.



5. Tie a cotton to each of the witches through the holes. Use different lengths to make them hang separately.



6. Tie each witch string to each of the edge holes of your cardboard circle. Check knots are safe. WELL DONE! Hope your mobile looks good!



Different Witch Templates
for different abilities.
Suggest cut-out on thin
black card...except for
this one!! →