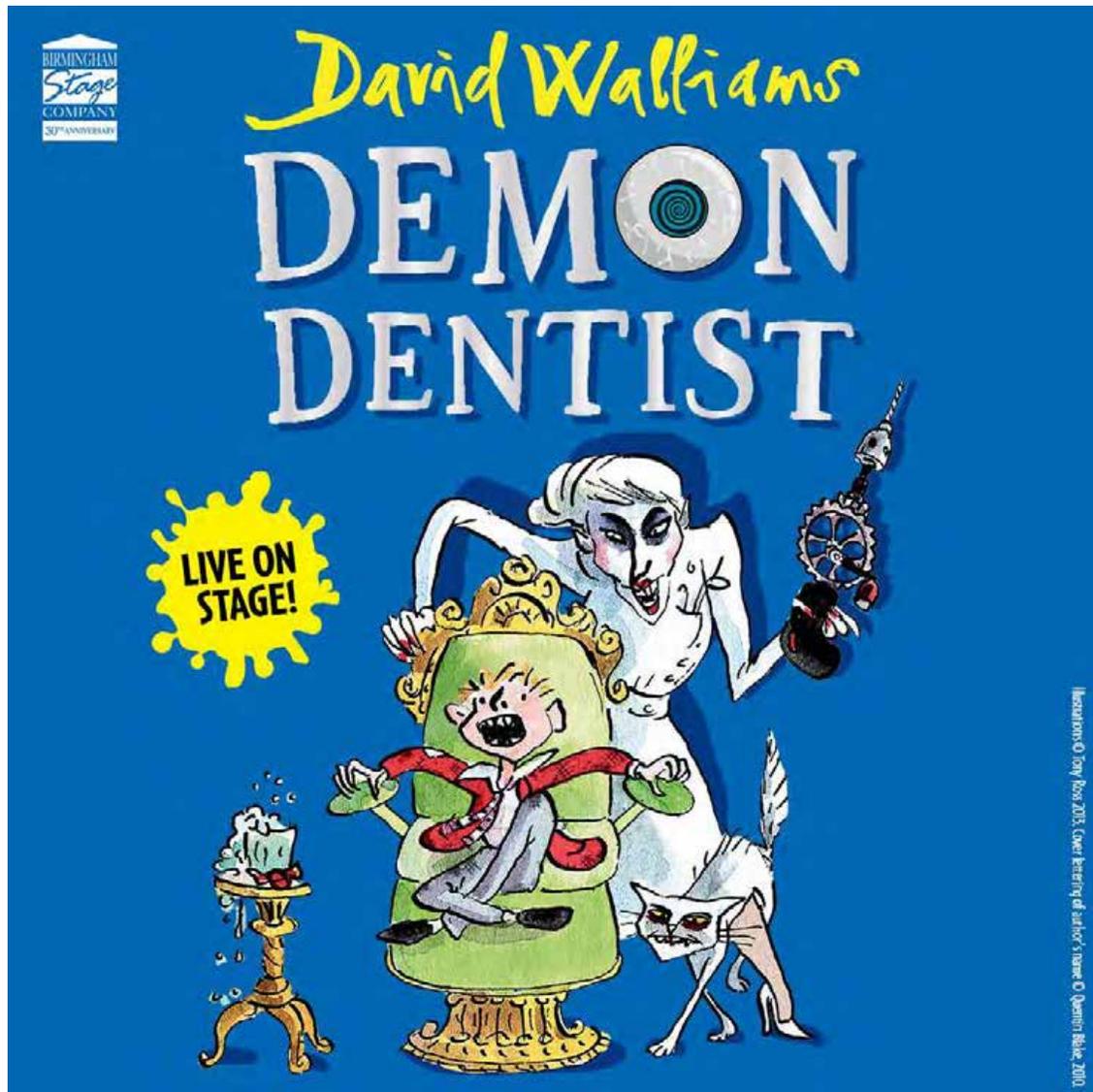


EDUCATION PACK

To support

Birmingham Stage Company's adaptation of



birminghamstage.com/education

'Close your eyes and believe.....'



Illustration – Tony Ross

“All you have to do is close your eyes and believe”....and from their little bungalow, Dad would take his son on all sorts of adventures...This was the world of imagination - anything was possible....’ *Dad – Demon Dentist – David Walliams*

Alfie and his father entertain themselves by creating wild imaginary adventures: riding on magic carpets, diving under oceans, even driving stakes through the hearts of vampires.

Storytelling Exercise – ‘Yes, ...and

The idea of this exercise is for the participants to start actively building imaginative stories which they could then continue to expand on paper. By working in pairs they can feed off each others’ imaginations. Starting sentences with **Yes..and** makes it a positive, inclusive exercise forcing them to accommodate each others’ ideas. It doesn’t matter if the stories do not reach a conclusion within the time period.

- Divide the class into pairs – one is **Alfie** and the other **Dad.** (in a 3, one could be Winnie or Raj)
- Explain that each pair is going to create a story of an imaginary adventure together on a given topic e.g. a journey to an old haunted castle
- They will take it in turns – one sentence each and act the story out together
- **Dad** begins the story with one sentence initiating an activity – e.g.: *'We walked towards the big door...'*
- **Alfie** then develops the activity by adding: **Yes... and ...**- e.g.: *Yes, and we pushed it open.*
- **Dad** then continues with **yes...and...** e.g.: *Yes, and it creaked loudly...*
- They continue to build the story, acting it out for five minutes until the teacher calls **FREEZE**
- They then change partners and begin the process again with a different topic.
- Each participant can then take their favourite story and develop it into a piece of writing.

TOPIC IDEAS

Fishing in Scotland and meeting the Loch Ness Monster

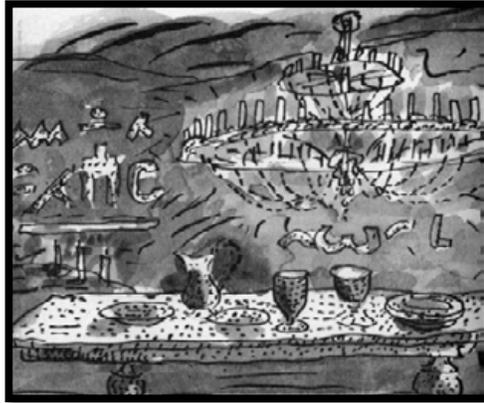
Climbing the Himalayan Mountains – looking for a Yeti

Sailors waking up to find themselves aboard a Pirate Ship

Building a rocket at home and making a journey into Space.

Being stranded on a misty moor at night – knowing there are werewolves nearby

The Cathedral of Teeth



A group exercise encouraging co-operation and use of persuasive language.

- Ask the class to 'Close their eyes and imagine' as you read the description of the Demon Dentists' *'Cathedral of Teeth'* :

'The tunnel opened out into a well-lit cave. It was vast; it seemed to go on forever. Thousands and thousands of candles illuminated the space'.... 'Dominating the cave was an impossibly long table, but there were no chairs around it. It was white and looked more like an altar you would see in a church. A plate and a number of goblets adorned the table. All of them white. There was a huge white chandelier hanging down from the ceiling. It held hundreds upon hundreds of candles.'... 'On one side of the cave sat a huge imposing throne. This again was white. The throne looked big enough for a giant. It was so tall it reached the ceiling of the cavern.'

- Divide the class into groups of five or six – make sure they have some space
- Keeping the description in their minds, tell them they are going to use their bodies to physically re-create some of the aspects of the cave.

- They will be working together as a group to make one object in two minutes
- Call out the object – they have two minutes to create it as a still picture.

The long table – A goblet – The chandelier- The throne.

Persuasion

- Ask each group to choose their favourite object that they have created.
- Give them five minutes to discuss the details of it e.g.: size, weight, what it is made of , its financial value, how it can be used, etc
- Ask them to imagine that the object is in a shop window.
- One member of the group will be the salesperson, while the rest make the object.
- Tell them to imagine that they are at a trade show.
- The teacher assumes the role of a rich customer who wants to buy a unique piece for their mansion.
- Taking it in turns, each group shows their object while their salesperson tries to persuade the customer to buy it.
- (The teacher could choose one object as the ‘winner’ or maybe decide to buy them all!)

Written Work

- Using the ideas they have developed, the participants then write their own persuasive sales pitch for their object and illustrate it with a picture.

Development – creating a spooky atmosphere

- Explain that the class is going to create their own ‘cathedral of teeth’ featuring their objects
- To add atmosphere, ask them to think about what sounds you might hear in the cave.
- Assign each group a different sound. Tell them you want to create the sort of creepy atmosphere Alfie encountered when he entered it.
- Ask them to consider how the dynamics of the sound affect atmosphere: Is it creepier to be loud or soft?
- Mark out an area in the room to be the cave.
- One at a time, the groups re-create their frozen object in the space and freeze until they are all involved.
- At a given signal they all make their sound.
- Ask for two volunteers to play Alfie and Gabz
- Alfie and Gabz walk slowly through the cave – examining each object, listening to the sounds.
- After a minute the teacher calls **Change** and new Alfie and Gabz are chosen.
- Continue until everyone has had a go.
- Ask the participants for suggestions of single words that describe their experience of walking through the cave.

Written work

- Ask the class to imagine they are either Alfie or Gabz writing a diary entry describing their experience of walking into the cave. They must use as many descriptive words as they can to create a ‘spooky’ atmosphere.

Historical Dentistry

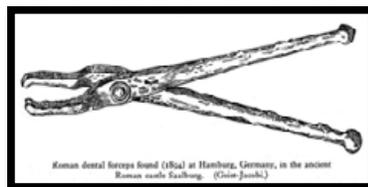


The term *Dentist*, to describe a medical practitioner who deals solely with ailments of the teeth, was first used in 1728 by a French physician, Pierre Fauchard. Before that time, tooth problems were treated by a variety of different practitioners...

The earliest recorded evidence of dentistry was in Ancient Egypt. Research has indicated that the ancient Egyptian diet involved a lot of raw fruit and vegetables as well as starchy bread, and was hard on the teeth. Doctors would treat many different oral ailments. Not only would they extract rotten teeth, but they would fill cavities with herbal mixtures and provide mouthwashes to freshen breath. They would also perform more drastic surgical procedures such as removing abscesses and jawbone realignments.

Ancient Chinese doctors would use acupuncture to treat toothache, which involved inserting very thin needles into particular places in the head, to relieve pain.

Roman army doctors would carry large forceps to rip out any soldiers' teeth.



In medieval Europe, the tooth treatment you got would very much depend on where you lived and how much money you had. Rich city dwellers could call on the services of a Doctor or Physician. However, poorer people or those living in the countryside had to rely on the local Blacksmith for tooth extractions, or wait for the arrival of the travelling 'Tooth Puller' at the village fair where large crowds would gather to watch teeth being pulled. Often a drum would be played as part of the show, to drown out the patients screams!



Writing Exercise 1

- Look at the picture above.
- Observe the different characters – what are they doing?
- Ask yourself questions about them – e.g.: what is in the bottle that the man on the far left is holding? What is the man bending down saying to the patient in the chair? What is the dog looking at etc?
- Imagine you are one of the people in the scene
- It is the day of the village fair and the Tooth Puller has arrived.
- Write a paragraph about that day describing who you are, what you saw and how you felt about it.

Writing Exercise 2

- Imagine you are a travelling Tooth Puller.
- Design yourself a publicity leaflet to publicise what you do and sell your services.
- Include details of the services you offer, your prices and customer reviews.

Barber Surgeons



Another historical option for sorting out tooth problems was to visit the Barber – Surgeon.

Monks were traditional practitioners of medicine and surgery, but in the late twelfth century, the Pope decreed that all persons in holy orders were prohibited from spilling blood. Monasteries all employed barbers to shave the Monks heads, and as they were so skilled with sharp instruments, the barbers began to undertake minor surgical procedures as well. Soon ‘Barber- Surgeons’ became well established in towns and villages everywhere. Not only did they cut hair and shave beards but they could amputate limbs, set broken bones and extract teeth. Their premises would be marked by a red and white pole – the red signifying blood and the white signifying bandages.

This practise continued in Britain until 1800 when the Royal College of Surgeons was established and Barbers were restricted solely to cutting hair.

Design Exercise

- Imagine you are a new Barber-Surgeon setting up in a town.
- You are facing a lot of competition from others in your trade.
- Apart from your red and white pole, you need a shop sign showing all the different services you offer
- Few people in the town can read so the sign must be picture based

Dentists

By the middle of the nineteenth century, tooth care was also being provided by 'Operators of Teeth' or 'Dentists'. These were practitioners who had spent years studying medicine and science in one of the new dental schools. They not only performed extractions but provided other services as well such as cleaning and polishing or fitting false teeth. In 1816, a French dentist had invented amalgam (silver mixed with mercury) which could be used to fill cavities in teeth and repair rather than just extracting them. These services were very expensive and despite the use of rudimentary anaesthetics, often very painful. Equipment was still very basic with implements such as the tooth key which acted like a corkscrew to twist out teeth,



Tooth Keys

Or 'Pelicans', used to lever the tooth out of the gum.



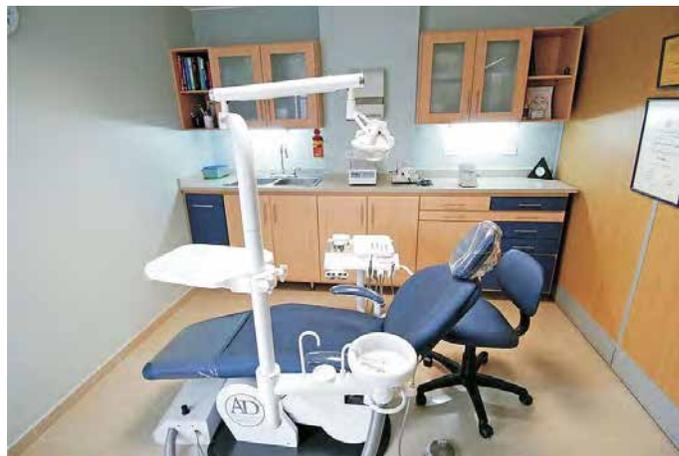
Pelicans

In 1878 the 'Dentists Act' was passed by the British parliament which required all dentists to be registered which meant standards of treatment began to rise significantly. But dentistry was still expensive; so many poor people were left relying on local blacksmiths or home treatments. By the beginning of the twentieth century, dentist training was well established and new equipment and procedures were being used to make treatment less painful.



Exercise

- Examine the picture of an early 20th century dental surgery above.
- Look at the dentist's drill? (to the left of the chair) In an age before electricity, how do you think it was powered?
- What do you think the lever at the back of the chair is for?
- What would a patient use to rinse out their mouth?
- There are some grey implements on top of the cupboard – what do you think they might be used for?
- Compare the picture above with the picture of a modern dentist's surgery below.
- What similarities/ differences can you spot?



Dental Phobia

Despite modern developments, many people are still very scared of visiting a dentist. This can have many causes, but for some, like Alfie, it can be due to a bad experience in the past:

'The dentist yanked and yanked and yanked with his huge steel forceps. But the tooth wouldn't come. Mr Erstwhile even rested his foot up on the chair by Alfie's head to lever himself against it to help wrench the wretched tooth out. Still it wouldn't come.' **Demon Dentist by David Walliams.**

Alfie's fear stopped him visiting a dentist for six years leading to his teeth rotting. For others, dental phobia can be caused by a fear of needles or by hearing of someone else's bad experiences, the sound of the drill or maybe an anxiety of strangers.

In the words of one dental student: *'Having someone work in close proximity to your face can be intimidating'*.

These days, dentists are trained in strategies to help nervous patients overcome their anxieties. These include;

- Encouraging the patient to visit the surgery before their appointment so the space becomes familiar
- Talking to the patient and encouraging them to vocalise their worries
- Agreeing on a signal that the patient will make if they need the procedure to stop
- Distractions like a television screen on the ceiling that the patient can watch
- Allowing the patient to take a friend along for moral support.
- Rewarding child patients with a sticker!

Drama Exercise

- Divide the class into groups of four or five
- Explain that they are going to imagine they are dental students learning about how to cope with anxious patients.
- Their task is to come up with a presentation demonstrating ideas for helping nervous patients come to the dentist.

- Each group shows their presentation in turn
- The class then discuss all the different ideas presented and decide on the best five strategies for helping to tackle dental phobia.
- Each person designs a poster illustrating these, that to help other students.

Teeth



Like many other mammals, humans will have two sets of teeth over their lifetime.

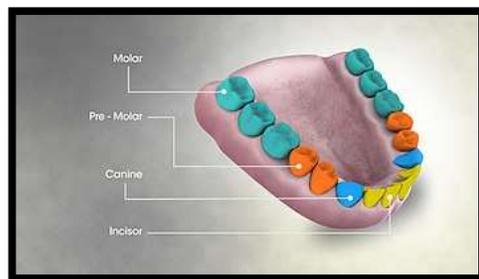
The very first 'primary' teeth start forming even before a baby is born and by about six months, they will start pushing through the gums – usually the bottom centre teeth first.

It takes about two years for the rest of the teeth to appear. Most children have twenty primary or 'milk' teeth. The second set of permanent teeth will begin to grow around age six and continue until around age thirteen.

The last four adult teeth are known as the 'Wisdom teeth' which appear between ages seventeen and twenty one. In total, an adult mouth will have thirty two teeth.

The main reason we have teeth is to process the food we eat. They chop, grind, chomp, crush, and chew everything into pieces that are small enough to swallow. When our teeth crush food, saliva starts to break it down so that our bodies can use the nourishment it contains.

There are four main types of permanent teeth. Different teeth have different jobs:



Incisors (8): At the front of the mouth. Flat with sharp edges for cutting and nibbling.

Canines (4): Fang shaped and pointed. For stabbing and gripping.

Pre- Molars (8): With rounded points. Good for chewing and crunching

Molars (12 – Including wisdom teeth): Big and flat. Used for grinding.

Exercise 1

- In pairs, examine each others' teeth.
- How many of each type of tooth can you see?

Exercise 2

- Label the different teeth on this picture.



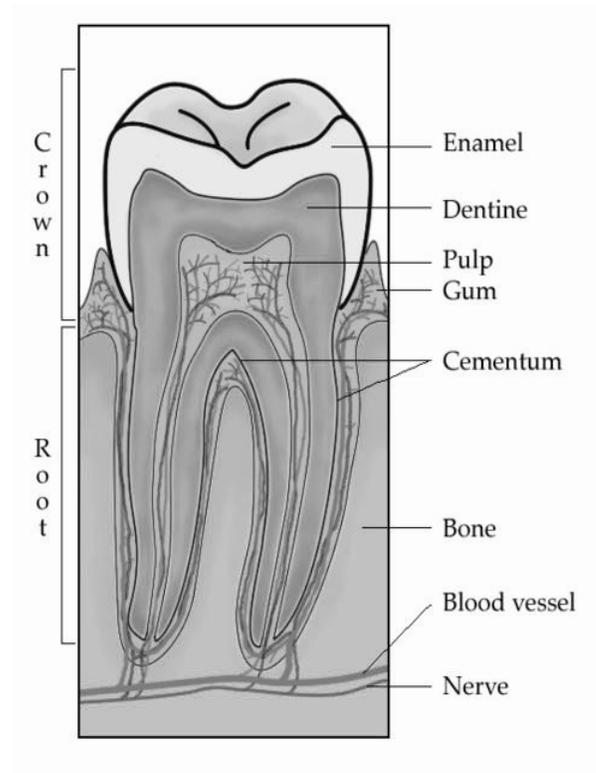
Exercise 3:

- Below is a list of different foods.
- Identify which type of teeth would be most useful for eating each one.

**Spinach – Apples- Roast Beef- Peanut Butter – Raw Carrot – Cabbage –
Banana – Fish Finger – Corn Flakes – Ice Lolly – Bread - Burger.**

Tooth Problems

This is a diagram of a healthy adult tooth.



Crown: Top part of the tooth above the gum

Root: Bottom part of the tooth that holds it in the jawbone

Enamel: The outer covering. It's as hard as a rock!

Dentine: The layer under the enamel that protects the soft inside of the tooth

Pulp: The soft inside of the tooth containing nerves and blood vessels

Gum: The soft tissue around the tooth that holds it in place

Cementum: Holds the roots in place in the jaw

Bone: Jaw bone

Nerves: Lets you feel when you bite

Blood Vessels: Supply blood to the tooth to keep it alive

Teeth are tough. Tooth enamel is the hardest substance in the human body. But they can still be damaged in many different ways:

Cavities – holes in the enamel caused by acids in food and drink.

Chips – caused by injury or biting something hard.

Thin Enamel – where the enamel has been worn away by gritty food.

Cracks – caused by an injury or an accident.

Plaque – a sticky layer of bacteria that can form on tooth surface

Tooth decay – when germs in the plaque on the surface of a tooth cause it to rot.

Gum Disease – where germs rot the gums surrounding a tooth.

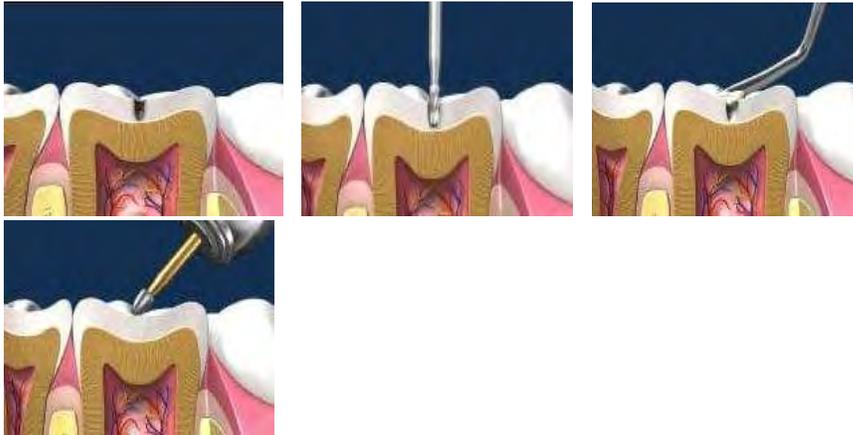
Cavities and Fillings



The most common cause of a trip to the dentist today is to have a cavity filled. In the early days of dentistry, the cause of cavities was a mystery. Repairing rotten teeth was almost impossible and the only solution was extraction. It wasn't until 1750 that the link between sugar and tooth decay was established by a French dentist, Pierre Fouchard. Through his studies, he discovered that sugar produces acid in the mouth, causing plaque to form on the tooth's surface which then attacks the tooth enamel, and causes a cavity to develop. Around 1816, another French dentist, Auguste Taveau, invented amalgam (silver mixed with mercury), which could be used to fill the hole and was tough enough to last a lifetime. Later gold and porcelain were used as well but amalgam has remained the most common substance, and is still sometimes used in dentistry today.

Stages for filling a tooth

1. The dentist applies a local anaesthetic to numb the gums around the tooth so the patient won't feel any pain. This is usually a gel that is rubbed on to the area, but sometimes it is done by injection.
2. The dentist uses a drill to remove the decayed area of the tooth.
3. An antiseptic gel is applied to kill any remaining bacteria
4. The filling substance is inserted in the hole
5. The filling is polished and adjusted so the patients bite feels normal.



Drama Exercise

Divide the class into groups of three.

Tell them they are going to enact a scene where a newly qualified dentist is filling the tooth of a very nervous patient.

One actor will be the patient, one the dentist and the third will be playing the dentist's 'mind' – vocalising what the dentist is really thinking.

The scene starts with the patient entering the room.

The dentist will then act out the filling procedure listed above, all the time informing the patient of what is being done and answering any questions that arise. He/She must appear to the patient to be as confident and reassuring as possible. However, after each line, the actor playing the 'mind' tells the audience what the dentist is really thinking.

Follow on writing Exercise

Ask the whole class to imagine they are the dentist. They have been asked to keep a journal detailing their first days of professional work.

They must write an entry describing filling the tooth of the nervous patient including details of what they did, how they calmed the nerves of the patient and how they felt about it all.

Looking After Your Teeth

From an early age, children are taught how to look after their teeth. This includes:



Brushing – most important! Brushing with a small amount of toothpaste cleans away food and plaque that sticks to your teeth and can cause decay. Small, round strokes is most effective.



Flossing- Using dental floss between the teeth removes anything trapped there.



Healthy Eating – eating healthy foods with lots of vitamins and minerals in them can make teeth strong and help fight off decay.



Less Sugar! – When germs in the plaque on a tooth feed on sugar, acid forms. Acid causes tooth decay.

Art Exercise

- Design a simple poster for very young children to help them learn to look after their teeth.
- Take one of the suggestions above.
- Use pictures rather than words.

Drama Exercise

- Divide the class into groups of four or five.
- Ask them to imagine they are actors working on project to promote healthy teeth to Reception class children. They must prepare a simple presentation that informs but doesn't worry their audience.
- Share the presentations with the rest of the class as Reception children.

Historical Toothache



These days we know what causes toothache and how to deal with it, but in the past this was not the case:

Some ancient civilisations believed that toothache was caused by a tiny worm that ate away at the inside of the tooth causing a lot of pain. The only cure was to pull the tooth out. The Ancient Egyptians believed that a freshly dead mouse held against the painful tooth would cure it. Some Romans believed that to cure an aching tooth you must go to the garden at midnight, when the moon is full and find a frog. You pick it up, open its mouth, and spit into it. Then ask the frog to take your pain away. In Europe in the Middle Ages, many people believed that kissing a donkey could relieve toothache. In Scotland there was a belief that sucking on a caterpillar would take the pain away whereas the Aztecs believed in biting on a really hot chilli would relieve it.

Drama Exercise

- Divide the group into pairs or threes

- Ask them to imagine they are ancient Apothecaries, and have been asked to come up with a cure for the King's toothache which they must present at court.
- Working together, each pair has ten minutes to devise a procedure and present it to the King and Court (Teacher and the rest of the class)
- They can use any of the above cures or invent one of their own.

Writing Extension

Each participant writes a formal letter to the King describing their cure and what he must do. The letter must include all the details and a description of how the King will feel afterwards.

OH, I WISH I'D LOOKED AFTER MY TEETH

By Pam Ayres

Oh, I wish I'd looked after me teeth,
And spotted the perils beneath,
All the toffees I chewed,
And the sweet sticky food,
Oh, I wish I'd looked after me teeth.

I wish I'd been that much more willin'
When I had more tooth there than fillin'
To pass up gobstoppers,
From respect to me choppers
And to buy something else with me shillin'.

When I think of the lollies I licked,
And the liquorice allsorts I picked,
Sherbet dabs, big and little,
All that hard peanut brittle,
My conscience gets horribly pricked.

My Mother, she told me no end,
"If you got a tooth, you got a friend"
I was young then, and careless,
My toothbrush was hairless,
I never had much time to spend.

Oh I showed them the toothpaste all right,
I flashed it about late at night,
But up-and-down brushin'
And pokin' and fussin'
Didn't seem worth the time... I could bite!

If I'd known I was paving the way,
To cavities, caps and decay,
The murder of fillin's
Injections and drillin's
I'd have thrown all me sherbet away.

So I lay in the old dentist's chair,

And I gaze up his nose in despair,
And his drill it do whine,
In these molars of mine,
"Two amalgum," he'll say, "for in there."

How I laughed at my Mother's false teeth,
As they foamed in the waters beneath,
But now comes the reckonin'
It's me they are beckonin'
Oh, I wish I'd looked after me teeth!

Text Exercise

Read out the above poem to the class and discuss it.

- Ask for their opinions on the following:
- How the poet is feeling about how she treated her teeth when she was younger?
- What the phrase '*my conscience gets horribly pricked*' means?
- What was the poets' attitude to her mother when she was younger and which lines show it?
- Consider if it is a comic poem? a serious poem? or both?
- What effect do the 'misspellings' ('*willin*', '*fillin*', '*brushin*', '*fussin*' etc) have on the poem?

Divide the class into eight groups of four

- Each group is responsible for one verse of the poem.
- Ask each group member to take one line of each verse as their own (If there are less than 32 in the class, the teacher could fill in)
- Ask them to read out their own line
- Ask them to decide which is the most important word in their line and to say it out loud
- On a count of three, everyone says their word out loud whilst making a movement, a statue or a gesture that matches it
- Each group of four then share their words/gestures with the rest of the class following the line order of the poem.
- Ask the class to suggest words that describe the overall mood / atmosphere/ feeling that comes across from these important words?
- Give everyone a few minutes to learn their individual line.
- Ask each group of four to find a way to present their verse as if they are the poet trying to encourage young children to look after their teeth.

- Ask them to think about a location that their verse could be set in e.g. Sweetshop, playground, kitchen, Dentist's surgery etc.
- Who else might be in the scene/
- Encourage them to think about how the speaker is feeling and how they could speak their line to show it. Present the verses in order.

Design Exercise – 'The Sweetshop of Dreams'

- Ask the class to imagine they are the poet remembering being in a sweetshop as a child
- Draw a picture of the shop, making it as idyllic and tempting as possible like the images below



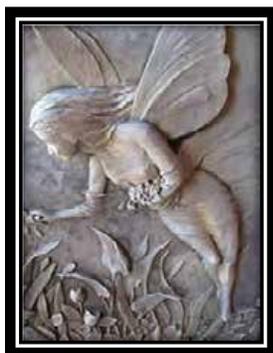
Extension – Writing Exercise



- Ask the class to look at the picture above of an old fashioned sweet shop.
- Ask them to focus on the boy with the dog and the lady he is talking to.
- What is he buying? – What is the next thing he is asking for? – Is the shop assistant offering recommendations?
- The dog is observing everything

- Ask the class to imagine that the dog is very wise and knows what might happen to the boy's teeth if he doesn't take care of them and eats too many sweets.
- Each person writes a short monologue – as the dog is trying to explain the consequences of too much sugar to the boy and persuade him not to buy any more sweets.

Tooth Fairies



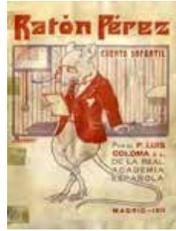
The Demon Dentist stage show begins with children all over the town, discovering not money but horrible things under their pillows supposedly left there by the tooth fairy.

Whether you are a believer or not, the idea of the tooth fairy, who takes baby teeth in exchange for a gift is well rooted in western folklore. In Britain, the USA, Canada and many other parts of Europe, the 'fairy' can be either male or female but usually resembles a human.

In France the tooth fairy is a mouse known as '*La Petite Souris*', who is believed to take the teeth to build a palace or sometimes to use them to repair the teeth of other animals.

In Spain there is '*El Ratoncito Perez*', a mouse who lives with his wife in a box of sugar biscuits. When he hears the sound of a tooth falling, he sets out to exchange it for a gift. In Scotland, there is a similar belief only he takes the form of a white rat.

The Irish equivalent is '*Anna Bogle*', a naughty leprechaun girl who supposedly lost a front tooth when playing in the forest and took a child's tooth to replace it, leaving a piece of leprechaun gold in exchange.



The 'Tooth fairy' is a relatively modern invention, but it has its origins in the ancient Norse tradition of '*Tand-Fe*' (*Tooth Fee*). It is believed that when a child lost a baby tooth, they would be given money. The tooth would be buried in the ground to spare that child from hardships in the next life.

Design / Writing Exercise

Create your own Tooth fairy/faery character.

The word 'fairy' is usually used to describe a magical being who uses their powers for good. A 'faery' however, is more likely to be mischievous, and uses their magic to play tricks and sometimes cause harm.

- Decide what sort of creature you are going to create.
- Write two lists of words describing their good characteristics (friendly, honest etc), and their bad ones (mean, greedy etc)
- Decide what magical powers your character has.
- Write a list of words describing what they look like on the outside
- Draw a picture of your character
- Decide on his/ her name
- What do they do when they visit a house to take a child's tooth from under its pillow?
- Imagine that your character is writing a letter to their cousin in another country telling them about their 'tooth-taking adventure' the night before.



Tooth Traditions

The Tooth Fairy is a mainly Western tradition, but cultures all over the world have different customs and rituals to celebrate the loss of baby teeth:

- The Ancient Britons would throw a tooth into the fire. This was to prevent it being used in witchcraft.
- The Vikings believed baby teeth brought good luck and would string them into necklaces to wear into battle.

Here are some examples of ancient rituals that are still enacted today:

- In Japan, if the tooth is from the upper set, it is thrown to the ground. If it is from the lower set, it is thrown onto the roof. This is to ensure that incoming teeth grow straight.
- Some native American tribes put the tooth into a piece of meat and feed it to the dog saying: *'make my tooth strong'*.
- In Turkey there is an ancient belief that baby teeth can predict a child's future job. The parents will bury a tooth in a place that has a connection with their hopes for the child's future. E.g. near a sports ground for an athlete, or near a university for a scholar.
- In some countries baby teeth are thrown towards the sun, asking it to send the child new, and healthy teeth.
- In Afghanistan the tooth is thrown into a mouse or rat hole in the hope the new one will be as strong as a rodents'.

- In the Native American Yellowknife tribe, the child gives its tooth to their Grandmother who places it in a tree. The family then dance around the tree to encourage the new tooth to grow as straight as the trunk.

Make your own 'Tooth Ritual'

- Ask the class to imagine that they are elders of an ancient tribe.
- Explain that sadly the sacred tribal books that contained instructions for the rituals surrounding losing a first baby tooth, have been destroyed in a flood.
- It is up to them to devise a new ritual for children and parents to perform to make a new tooth grow healthy, straight and strong.
- What words would they need to include?
- What actions might help?
- Divide the class into groups of four or five
- Explain that the ritual must include the words agreed, a series of movements, and that everyone in the group must enact it.
- When ready, each group performs their ritual to the rest of the class, one at a time.
- Discuss any similarities/ differences, between the rituals. Ask what was most effective?
- In a circle, devise a new ritual for the whole class using the same words and most effective elements from all the others.

Villains

'..I am evil. Pure unadulterated evil...' Miss Root, *Demon Dentist* by David Walliams



Every great children's story has a villain: The Wicked Queen in *Snow White*, *Red Riding Hood's* Big Bad Wolf, Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda*, Count Olaf in *A series of Unfortunate Events* or Ursula, the sea witch from *The Little Mermaid*.



Villains spice up the narrative, add tension and drama to the story and their defeat can make the protagonist into a hero. *'They teach children important lessons about coping with evil in our world'*. Melissa Taylor – Literacy Trainer.

Villains come in all guises. They may be sinister like Cruella De Vil in Dodie Smith's *101 Dalmatians*, funny like Mr Gum in Andy Stanton's books or truly terrifying like Lord Voldemort in JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

Miss Root is a marvellous villain, sinister yet somewhat comical. She is a Tooth Witch – the evil opposite of a Tooth Fairy. Rather than leaving money, when she takes a child's tooth, she leaves something horrible under the pillow: a giant scab, an eyeball or a snail with its shell pulled off.

She hates children and the fact that these days they don't believe in magic:

'..Years ago, witches like me were caught and drowned in rivers or burned at the stake. But children nowadays don't believe in magic. They are forever

watching TV and playing computer games. They never look to the skies anymore. If they did, they would see my cat and me flying about the town at night...' Miss Root – Demon Dentist – David Walliams

For centuries she has been collecting children's teeth, to build her witches lair. As she says in her song in the stage show:

*.....I need more each day
To build my collection
My cave of delight
Look how they sparkle
How they glint in the light.....'*

Villains in children's books often share the same characteristics:

- They hate children and want to make them suffer
- They steal or kidnap
- They often try to kill the protagonist (main character)
- They want to prevent people being happy
- They operate with dogged determination to achieve their own goals at any expense.
- They are bullies.

Exercise – Create your own fictional villain.

Use these questions to help create a new villainous children's book character:

- Your Villain's name? (or names if they are twins/ siblings etc!)
- Age?
- Occupation? Or Obsession?
- Do they have any special powers?
- Where do they live? What is their 'lair' lie?
- What was their childhood like?
- What is their goal in life?
- What evil plans do they have for achieving it?
- Do they have any associates or do they work alone?

- Who is preventing them from getting what they want? (Usually a child character or characters)
- What are they going to do to overcome the problem?

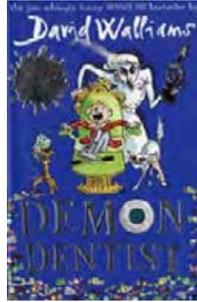
Draw a picture of your new villain wearing their favourite clothes.

Design their favourite room in their villain's lair.

Drama Extension Exercise

- Using the character studies above, ask the students to use their bodies to create a statue of their villain.
- Ask them to begin to walk around the room as their character, silently, as if they are alone.
- On a given signal, they freeze. Repeat several times until they are all confident with their character walks.
- Now ask them to notice the other villains in the room and greet them as they pass by.(They must always keep a distance between one another)
- All villains need a villainous laugh. As they walk, tell them that their character is thinking about something mildly amusing. Ask them to let their character giggle a little.
- Tell them that whatever it was that made them giggle now seems much funnier. Their character is building up their evil laugh.
- Ask the villains to imagine they are at an International Villain's convention where evil people from all over the world are assembling.
- There is a competition for 'Super Villains of the Year' that they are all entering.
- 'Hot Seat' three or four villains at a time with the rest of the class acting as the judges (The teacher being the chief judge)
- Take a poll to decide on the top four 'Super Villains '.

From Page to Stage



'It's wonderful to adapt books by David Walliams because he has such a theatrical way of writing. This is no surprise given David's long history of writing and appearing in theatre and television productions. In fact, before he became well known, David had spent much longer than people appreciate writing scripts for all sorts of much loved comedy programmes. So all his books lend themselves beautifully to theatrical adaptation.'

David is also an expert in structuring his stories, so just when you think that you know how the story is going to go, he takes a sharp left hand turn and heads down another road you didn't see coming. This makes adapting his books very exciting because he gives you such a strong skeleton on which to base the play.

The stories always contain a lot of humour and I have loved bringing his characters and situations onto the stage where you can really develop the comedy. The characters are always fun to bring to life and it's fascinating giving them dialogue in scenes where David has only described a situation but not told you exactly what the characters are saying.

My only other experience of writing plays has been the series of productions we have done with Horrible Histories, which are all based on facts. So it's great to allow your imagination to create all sorts of fictional scenarios which don't have to be true but are really good fun to bring to life.'

Neal Foster, adapter and director of Demon Dentist.

Script writing exercise

Below is an example of how Neal has taken an excerpt from the book and turned it into a stage script;

Book Excerpt

Alfie watched the newsagent for a while. Eventually he said, "Raj..?"

"yes?"

"Aren't you forgetting something..?"

"No, I don't think so," replied Raj, a little too quickly. "I don't want to keep you, so..."

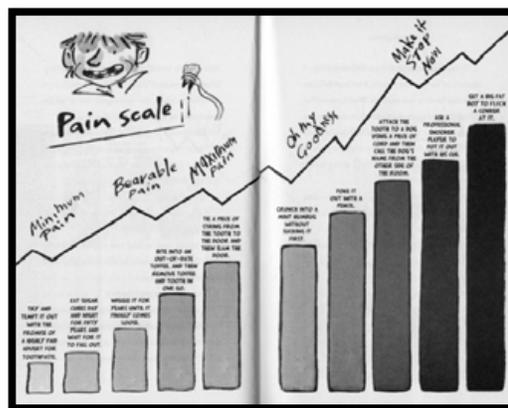
Raj looked more than a little panicked, and slowly approached Alfie.

"I would love to lend you one of my teeth; well I suppose it would be more of a gift," said the shopkeeper. "But..."

"But...?" prompted the boy.

"I am scared taking it out is going to hurt."

Alfie's brain had been processing different ways they could remove one of Raj's teeth. There seemed to be a sliding scale of pain:



Tying the tooth to a door and slamming it seemed by far the best option. Not least because it would be over in a second. What's more, Raj sold string in his shop. It was of course kept underneath the body-building magazines.

Reluctantly, Raj went along with the plan.

First, Alfie tied one end of the string to the newsagent's tooth.

Nest, he carefully measured out the distance from Raj, who he had stand behind his counter, to the open door.

Then, with just a tiny bit of slack, he tied the other end of the string to the open door's handle.

"All right Raj, stay very still, and I will count down from three. On One, I will slam the door..." pronounced Alfie. "Ok?"

Raj had screwed up his face in anticipation of the pain. "Yes..." he said, the tears already forming in his eyes.

Alfie slowly began the countdown.

"Three...two..."

Before he could say one, a little old lady came in through the open door and pushed it shut behind her.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!"

Screamed Raj as his tooth shot across the shop hitting the poor old dear on her head.

"You said one! You said you would slam the door on one!" the shopkeeper protested.

Alfie rushed over to the old lady who was rubbing her forehead and looking utterly dazed and confused.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "Yes I think so, dear. I only came in for a scratch card and a bag of bonbons."

Script

ALFIE Raj?

RAJ Yes?

ALFIE Aren't you forgetting something?

RAJ Er. No, I don't think so. Hurry along now.

ALFIE But Raj - your tooth.

RAJ My dearest boy, I'd love to lend you my tooth. But I'm scared it will hurt taking it out.

ALFIE There must be less painful ways of removing it.

RAJ Like what?

ALFIE We could poke it out with a pencil?

RAJ No, no.

ALFIE Knock it out with a conker?

RAJ That would hurt a lot.

ALFIE Have you got any string?

RAJ Of course. This is a newsagents. Under the Doctor Who magazines.

ALFIE OK, let's tie your tooth to the door with a piece of string and then slam the door shut.

RAJ I guess it's the best way. *GIVES HIM STRING* Here you are.

ALFIE And I'll need some scissors.

RAJ You can't cut it out!

ALFIE No, I need to cut a piece of string.

RAJ Ah, yes, of course.

ALFIE There we go. *CUTS STRING* Then I'm tying it to your tooth.

RAJ Ow, that tickles.

ALFIE Now I'll tie it to the door.

RAJ Bye, bye, dear tooth. I'll miss you, my friend.

ALFIE And then here goes. I'll be as gentle as I can. One, two –

MRS MORRISSEY Hello Raj, it's nippy out, isn't it *SHE SLAMS THE DOOR AND HIS TOOTH POPS OUT*

RAJ Arghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

ALFIE *RUNS TO THE LADY* I'm so sorry, are you alright?

MRS MORRISSEY I think so, dear. I only came in for a scratch card and a bag of bonbons.

Drama Exercise

- Read the extract from the book above.
- Divide the class into fours.
- Give each group copies of the scripted scene
- One person to take on the role of Director whilst the others play Alfie, Raj and Mrs Morrissey.
- The group must decide how the stage would be laid out :
Where the counter and the door be etc
- Try acting it out. The director can decide how the actors speak the lines and move about the stage.
- Try it several times changing the director/ actors around.

Writing Exercise

Turn the following book excerpt into a piece of script.

Think about how the characters can describe what they can see to the audience

Don't forget to write in any stage directions.

Night time, Alfie's house. Dad, Alfie and Raj are in Alfie's bedroom. They have spotted something scary under Alfies' bed.

"Sssshhhhhhh!" shushed Dad, and with his eyes, he pointed to the bed. Raj pointed to himself and assumed an expression which said, 'Me?' Dad nodded, with an expression which said, 'Yes! You!' The newsagent shook his head. He put his hands together in prayer, begging Dad for it not to have to be him.

Alfie rolled his eyes. He stepped forward and gently pushed the cowardly newsagent aside. Pulling up the sheet, Alfie bent down with the candle in his hand to look underneath the bed. It was dark under there, and even with the candlelight he squinted as he tried to make anything out in the shadows. Like most boys, Alfie never bothered to clean under his bed. So there were long-forgotten pieces of Lego and a pair of dirty old underpants loitering there. All looked ghostly grey, smothered in a thick covering of dust. Alfie sighed. Again there seemed to be nothing evil hiding there.....

Then. Under the bed. Out of the darkness. Two eyes opened. And fixed the boy with a deathly black stare. "AAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh!!!!" cried Alfie.

The owner of those eyes then blew Alfie's candle out. Now the room was all but pitch black. A shadowy figure rose from under the bed. Without stopping to unlock the window, it flew straight through it with a deafening roar. It moved at such speed that shards of smashed glass exploded out of the room.

Alfie hurried to the window frame. He needed to catch a glimpse of whoever or whatever had been hiding under his bed. The boy looked out into the dark night. Something rocketed down the road and then soared up and up into the sky. Higher and higher it rose until it flew through the clouds. Soon all that was left behind was a trail of black smoke. Alfie closed his eyes. Surely they were deceiving him?

Demon Designs

Staging Dilemmas

Adapting a book into a stage play can present many challenges. When you read a book, your imagination takes over. Pictures form in your head. But when it comes to putting those pictures on a stage with real human actors, it can be quite a challenge.

'When David writes a novel he obviously isn't thinking about how it might be adapted for television or the stage but we always enjoy the challenge of trying to fully adapt the story for the theatre without losing any of the epic moments that make his books so exciting to read. In this case, the climax of the book takes place down an old mine and even involves a train. So Jackie and I have set about recreating this scene to fully embrace the drama and fun of being down a mine, hurtling to the bottom in a caged lift, and bringing a life-sized steam train crashing onto the stage! It's these kind of scenes which present the most difficulties but also the most rewards, if we can successfully take the audience down under the earth with us and startle them with fantastic effects like the train'. Neal Foster – Demon Dentist adapter/ director.

Designing a life sized train that can be safely brought on and off a stage with actors in it, is quite a feat. The Designer has to think about how it moves, what materials it needs to be made from, what special effects might need to be used to make it look realistic as well as where it can be stored backstage so it's not seen until the crucial moment. The Director has to think about how the actors can make the scene as dramatic as possible and what lighting and sound effects might be needed. Long before rehearsals for a production start, the Director, Designers, Lighting Designers and Stage Managers, get together to plan how different elements of the story can be brought to life on a stage.

Exercise

This is how David Walliams describes the train entering the cave to save Alfie and Gabz in the 'Demon Dentist' book:

*'The train sped through the entrance of the cave, and careered along its tracks heading straight for the witch. Just as the evil duo had managed to release Alfie's bonds, there was a huge... **CRASH BANG WALLOP**. The locomotive ploughed right into the throne. The Tooth Witch lost her balance and she and her feline beast plunged into the Mummy's special toothpaste. Within moments both had sunk below the surface, the thick yellow goo drowning out their scream*

- Divide the group into pairs/threes.
- Ask each pair to imagine they are both designers for the Demon Dentist stage show.
- Read the excerpt above and discuss how they might decide to bring the scene to life on stage.
- Ask them to consider what theatrical devices might be helpful:
Puppets, Projection/Film, Sound Effects, Lighting Effects, Smoke Machines, Trap Doors, Pre-recorded Voices, Music.
- Ask each pair to write a brief description of their idea.
- Each pair then presents their idea to the rest of the group as a sales pitch with the Teacher acting as the Theatre Executive who will be mounting the production
- Discuss as a class the practicalities (or otherwise) of the various ideas.
- As a group decide on a singular course of action using as many ideas from different pairs as possible.
- Ask each participant to draw a 'Storyboard' of the six or eight key points of the scene.

Costumes

Designing the costumes for the characters is another important aspect of the Designers job. Everything an actor wears tells the audience about their character. Costumes can alter a character's physical appearance: padding can make an actor look fatter, wigs can make them look older or younger, built up shoes can make them look taller. Yet at the same time a costume must also be comfortable to be worn for several hours at a time, well made so it doesn't fall apart and able to withstand many washes.

David Walliams often describes detail of the appearance of his characters, which can be a very useful starting point for the costume designer.

Alfie *'Alfie sat himself right in the back row in his bedraggled school uniform. His shirt was once white but had long since gone grey. His jumper was full of holes. His blazer was torn in several places. His trousers were too small for him.'*

Mr Grey the Headmaster *'His shoes, his socks, his trousers, his belt, his shirt, his tie, his jacket, his hair, even his eyes were all shades of grey.'*

Raj *'He was a big, soft, marshmallow of a man, and although he liked selling sweets, he loved eating them even more....'*

Miss Root *'Miss Root's hair was white-blond, and arranged in a perfectly lacquered 'do', usually only spotted on the heads of Queens or Prime Ministers. The 'do' was shaped much like a Mr whippy ice cream, minus the flake of course. In a certain light she looked very old. Her features were narrow and pointy and her skin pale as snow. However, the dentist had painstakingly painted on so much make-up that it was impossible to tell how old she really was.'*

Winnie *'A flamboyantly dressed lady had plonked herself down in the living room with Dad. Her ample frame was taking up more than one place on the worn and torn sofa. The riot of colour in her mismatched outfit (yellow scarf, pink stripy leggings, green top and electric blue shiny plastic coat) looked decidedly out of place in the small, grey room.'*

Gabz *'Slumped next to Alfie was the only kid in the school shorter than him. A very little girl called Gabz. Seemingly shy, no one had heard her speak, despite her having been at the school now for a whole term. Most of the time Gabz hid behind her curtain of dreadlocks, not making eye contact with anyone.'*

Dad *'For many years, Dad had been unwell, and had of late become confined to a wheelchair. Before ill health forced him out of work, Dad was a coal miner. A great big bear of a man, he had loved working down the pit providing for his beloved son. However, all those years he spent down the mine took a terrible toll on his lungs....'*

Exercise

- Imagine you are the costume designer for the 'Demon Dentist' stage show.
- Choose one of the characters above and draw a costume design for them.
- Make sure the drawing is large enough for your ideas to be shown clearly.
- Think about colours, fabric types, styles, shoes, hats, wigs etc.
- Label all the relevant parts so they are clear for the costume maker.

Extension

- Imagine you are the actor playing that part, trying on your costume for the first time.
- Write a letter to your friend describing how the costume made you feel and how it will help you play the character.

David Williams

DEMON DENTIST

WORD SEARCH

Can you find all of the words below in this grid? Words can be spelled forwards, backwards, up and down or diagonally.

DEMON DENTIST ALFIE GABZ TEETH RAJ

SNOOD SWEETS WINNIE

Well done if you can find all of them!

D	E	M	O	N	S	E
O	E	A	R	N	W	I
N	W	N	Z	J	E	N
T	E	E	T	H	E	N
Z	B	A	G	I	T	I
S	N	O	O	D	S	W
T	E	I	F	L	A	T



Education Pack written by
LIZ FOST

If you have any feedback on
this Education Pack, please email
office@birminghamstage.com

Additional resources may be found at
worldofdavidwalliams.com/activities