MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ELIOT'S POEMS

It is important to be introduced to some of Eliot's poems before seeing **CATS**. This will give you an opportunity to explore the stories, language, rhythms and structure of the poems leading to a familiarity with the songs and characters when you see the show. Four poems have been selected, with linked activities for each one below. Each activity begins with reading the poem and discussing the content, any language you may not be familiar with (Eliot often made up his own words to use in his poems!) and the characters described.

THE NAMING OF CATS

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. The poem explains each cat has three names – the one used by their human owner, one of their own choosing and one secret name that no one ever knows.
3. Discuss as a class why names are so important. Is there anyone who would change their name – to what and why? Does the class think it is a good idea to have three names, especially if you can choose one of them themselves?
4. As a pair, choose one of the cat names from the poem, for example Alonzo, and write a short description together of the cat's appearance and character suggested by the name.
5. Your teacher will ask to read some of the descriptions aloud and display them all with the poem.

THE OLD GUMBIE CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. Describe the two different sides to Jennyanydots' character – by day and by night – as a class.
3. Working in a group of five or six, improvise scenes depicting Jennyanydots' nighttime activities with the mice and cockroaches, or any other creatures you think she might discipline, like spiders or ants. You should think about Jennyanydots' character and how she gets the mice and cockroaches to behave.
4. After a short time, share and discuss the improvisations as a class. How do the depictions of Jennyanydots differ? Read the poem again and decide which is the most accurate.

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. Make a spider diagram of words and phrases on the board or a large sheet of paper that describe Macavity. What do you think about Macavity – is he an exciting character or do you disapprove of him?
3. Make a second spider diagram of words and phrases to describe the character of a detective cat who could track Macavity down and capture him. Think of a name for the detective cat.
4. Using the spider diagram for ideas, write a short story about the detective cat who hunts for Macavity. Use information from the poem about Macavity's crimes, and explain how, eventually, Macavity is caught.
5. Your teacher may read some of the completed stories aloud and display them all with the poem.

GUS: THE THEATRE CAT

1. As a class, read the poem aloud and discuss any unfamiliar language.
2. Discuss the types of roles Gus has played in the theatre, the performances he has seen or been in – and others he may have, such as Puss in Boots – remembering that Gus is a cat from Victorian times. Talk about the differences in theatre a hundred years ago, for example in the sets and lighting.
3. Gus' favourite character that he ever played – and his greatest triumph – was Firefrorefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell. Imagine who or what that character was and do an illustration of Gus as Firefrorefiddle to accompany the poem.
4. Your teacher may display the illustrations with the poem.

CATS