



Practitioners: Kneehigh

A Complete Guide for AS and
A Level Eduqas Drama

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Teacher's Introduction

Since 1980, Kneehigh's work has become known as anarchic, innovative and heartfelt. Their exciting, accessible style means that they are enjoyable both to study and take inspiration from. The easily recognisable elements of their work also mean it is easy for students to identify and choose elements to include in their own work. Their breadth of practice means studying them can lead on to looking at adaptation, outdoor theatre, puppetry, music and movement in theatre and many other styles.

This guide is written primarily to support the 2016 AS and A Level Eduqas specifications. In the **AS** Eduqas specification, Kneehigh can be applied to Component 1: Performance Workshop. In the **A Level** Eduqas specification, they can be used for Component 1: Theatre Workshop, as well as Component 2: Text in Action. The information and activities contained in the resource provide ample support for students studying Kneehigh for any of the above areas of the course.

What's Included in This Resource:

This resource starts by looking at the history of Kneehigh as a company, giving relevant contextual information and getting students to consider how circumstances affected how the company's style developed. This section introduces elements of Kneehigh's style and influences as well as major figures in the company.

The resource then focuses on breaking down the practical elements of Kneehigh's work. After considering their artistic intentions, the pack looks at Kneehigh's rehearsal methods, as well as their performance and production design techniques. This includes practical activities and exercises that get students to consider how Kneehigh create their distinctive style including improvisation, creating ideas, puppetry, music and set design.

The final section of the resource looks at each of the relevant AS and A Level Eduqas components to which Kneehigh can be applied, bringing together the tips and advice given throughout the pack. This section explains what each component requires and includes assessment tips and revision prompts.

How to Use This Resource:

The analysis and activities in this resource may be used as student handouts, or as a prompt for teacher-led sessions. Each activity is labelled as being a **written, practical, research, design or discussion task**, offering a range of learning, assessment and feedback opportunities.

The teacher's notes and answers section of this resource includes short answers to comprehension questions and research activities. For many of the practical activities there are no accompanying notes since there are no right or wrong answers. However, for some practical activities, this section outlines the purposes of the task, and how to draw out key knowledge and understanding from practical work.

This guide offers plenty of pointers on how to use Kneehigh's techniques in the rehearsal room and inspiration for what elements of their performance style could be included in a performance. The guide also offers a range of ways Kneehigh's practice can be talked about in relation to a chosen text.

Tasks in this guide have been split into two categories – Activities and Exercises. Activities are listed consecutively and can be used alongside the written parts of this guide as an introduction to Kneehigh's practice. Exercises can also be used in this way but are presented without numbers, usually on pages of their own, so they can also be used in any combination or order during exploration of extracts or rehearsals for performance. Exercises are generally less specific than activities so they can be used with a range of texts or stimuli, and some have suggestions for how they can be used differently in different contexts.

October 2018

It is vital that the teacher checks any content carefully beforehand to judge its suitability for their class. In particular some of the links may lead to videos that contain strong language. Please ensure that these are viewed, along with any additional content you intend to use, before using them in class.

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Register your email address to receive any future free updates* made to this resource or other Drama resources your school has purchased, and details of any promotions for your subject.

* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

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Specification Overview

Assessment Objectives AS and A Level Drama and Theatre Studies

Assessment Objectives set by Ofqual apply to all AS and A Level Drama and Theatre Studies specifications and are used by all exam boards. Exam and class assessments will determine how successfully students have achieved the following AOs:

- **AO1** – Create and develop ideas + or communicate meaning as part of the theatre-making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice
- **AO2** – Use technical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance
- **AO3** – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre are made
- **AO4** – Analyse and evaluate students' own work and the work of others.

Eduqas AS Drama and Theatre

For Component 1:

Table 1: Weighting of the Assessment Objectives – Eduqas AS Drama and Theatre

| Component | AO1 % | AO2 % | AO3 % | AO4 % |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Component 1: Performance Workshop | 20 | 30 | 0 | 50 |
| Component 2: Text in Context | 0 | 0 | 30 | 70 |
| Total for GCE AS Level | 20% | 30% | 30% | 20% |

Eduqas A Level Drama and Theatre Studies

For Component 1 and Component 2:

Table 2: Weighting of the Assessment Objectives – Eduqas A Level Drama and Theatre Studies

| Component | AO1 % | AO2 % | AO3 % | AO4 % |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Component 1: Theatre Workshop | 10 | 10 | 0 | 80 |
| Component 2: Text in Action | 10 | 20 | 0 | 70 |
| Component 3: Text in Performance | 0 | 0 | 30 | 70 |
| Total for A Level | 20% | 30% | 30% | 20% |

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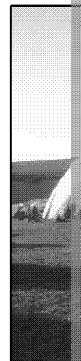
Who are Kneehigh?

Introduction

Kneehigh are a theatre company specialising in exciting, high-energy, anarchic theatre, often adaptations of stories from folk tales to TV shows. Having been referred to as the National Theatre of Cornwall the company are deeply rooted in the county; their administrative headquarters is in Truro and their rehearsal space in Gorran Haven – their work starts with Cornish communities and many of their plays draw on Cornish history or legend from the area.

Kneehigh are best known as a touring company, showing their work around the UK and the world, but in 2010 they created a permanent home – the **Asylum**, a massive tent venue that can seat up to 1,000 audience members, and can be moved and set up in different locations (though in recent years, has mainly lived in the summer at the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall). Alongside their productions, their **Ramble** with local and non-local communities with free tickets, workshops and opportunities.

Some have worried that the success Kneehigh have gained since the early 2000s may lead to an abandonment of their defining early aspects, such as their commitment to local folk and style which rejected the mainstream. However, many commentators believe that rather than altering themselves to fit into the mainstream, Kneehigh have succeeded in changing the shape of the mainstream. With their anarchic style now widely accepted, many young theatre makers taking inspiration from them and critics who previously rejected their work being forced to engage with it on Kneehigh's terms.



Activity 1: Research and Discussion

As a class, watch the videos below:

- zzed.uk/9139-946-tips-trailer
- zzed.uk/9139-rebecca-trailer
- zzed.uk/9139-wild-bride-trailer

Discuss what your initial impressions of Kneehigh's work are. Think about:

- Atmosphere
- Performances
- Movement
- Set
- Music
- Costume

Is there any other theatre you've seen that you could compare to their work? How does it compare to the style? What is similar between the three videos you watched and what is different? Write down your thoughts and keep them for later reference – as you learn more about Kneehigh, look back at your impressions and see which ones you still agree with!

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History

The Beginning

Kneehigh were founded in 1980 by Mike Shepherd. He had grown up in Cornwall after becoming disillusioned with acting in London. He had a job as a school teacher and wrote for Kneehigh in his free time along with many other non-professional theatre makers. Mike was a writer, a farmer, a guitarist and an ex-dancer. During the 1980s, there was a trend towards community theatre – theatre that collaborated with local communities, either working collaboratively with members of the community or responding to the demands of a local audience. This usually involved a movement away from professionalism, away from the idea of the performer as a business as part of a performance, and many were overtly political. As a result, many of the plays that stated strong political opinions (see Artistic Intentions for Kneehigh's politics), they fitted in with the community theatre trend, starting to attract a wider audience for children and families.

The early working practices of the company are part of what gives them their spirit – Shepherd spent a performance of their first show *Awful Knawful* (about a rebellious stuntman) trying to avoid a policeman attempting to arrest him for not getting a licence for the show. Shepherd disliked much mainstream theatre of the time, describing it as boring, and seeing it as too focused on literary texts and key themes. He sees Kneehigh as one of the companies (along with companies such as Complicite, Shunt, Punchdrunk, Clod Ensemble and Frantic Assembly) that have brought interesting forms of theatre into the mainstream in the years since they have been founded. The atmosphere of seriousness.

Much of how Kneehigh worked came from reacting to their circumstances at the time – they worked mainly in non-theatrical spaces because of the two major theatres in Cornwall at the time, the Minack (an impressive, open-air coastal amphitheatre) was too large, and the Falmouth theatre was too small. Their development was also influenced by the Cornish theatre scene at the time. Footsbarn Theatre were a company based in Cornwall that had gained much critical and public acclaim but left the UK in 1984. This meant Kneehigh gained much of their audience but they were also forced to improve their work, being seen negatively to the other company.

The company continued to experiment with different spaces, often staging plays and developing their theatrical style. As well as community theatre, another major trend in the 1980s that Kneehigh responded to was Theatre in Education (often shortened to TIE). TIE companies take work into schools, which often combined educational information with entertainment moments. They had a significant collaboration with Jon Oram – a TIE practitioner who was a performer in their production of *The Jungle Book* and then directed *The Jungle Book* outside of Cornwall, a play based on an infamous Cornwall miser which inspired their work for the first time.

Activity 2: Research

In pairs or groups, research Theatre in Education or community theatre companies (if they were founded in the 1980s!). Note down important and interesting factors about them: what do they use? What content do they focus on?

Present your research back to the class. Discuss what common elements there are between this mind map and as you continue to explore Kneehigh's work, refer back to it to see how it is influenced by these movements.

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Continuing to Develop

Bill Mitchell joined the group to design an outdoor production of *Tregeagle* in 1988, and became deeply embedded in the company, designing, directing and becoming joint Artistic Director with Mike Shepherd in 1995. He was particularly interested in outdoor work and often both designed and directed productions, responding to the environment around them.

In 1987, they created a production of Cornish writer Nick Darke's play *The Dig Mine*. They would go on to perform many of Darke's plays, a collaboration which was greatly successful. During this period, most of their work was either outdoors or productions of Darke's plays.

In 1996, their run of his play *The King of Prussia* at the Donmar Warehouse attracted attention and led to being programmed in the National Theatre with *The Riot* in 1999.

Until the 2000s, Kneehigh had little public funding – they had to rely not only on shows but also educational work and business sponsorship, as well as £40,000 a year from the Arts and Business Allowance Scheme. Although *The Riot* appeared in one of the highest profit theatres in London, it was in large part supported by £20,000 raised for them during Who's Pete Townsend!

When the New Labour government came to power in 1997, Kneehigh gained more funding from the Arts Council, although receiving this funding meant companies had to provide more information and fulfil more requirements than the previous Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

During this period, Kneehigh had gained many frequent collaborators. Some stayed for a short time with the company, such as the playwright John Downie who wrote their 1988 show *Cyborg – A Folk Tale for the Future*. Others became part of the fabric of the company, such as writer Anna Maria Murphy and performers Tristan Sturrock and Emma Rice.

Emma Rice

Emma Rice is an actress from Nottingham who joined the company in 1994 in plays including *The Riot* and *Hell's Mouth*. In her new role she often raised so Mitchell and Shepherd encouraged her to direct a show. Her first show was from *The Changeling* by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley.

Rice proved to be a good director and continued directing shows for Kneehigh. In 1997 she won her the TMA (now the UK Theatre) Award for Best Directed production. *Troilus & Cressida*, proved to be a turning point for the company. It was performed in two specific outdoor productions for a four-week run, it ended at the National Theatre before touring nationally and internationally. During this time other collaborators who came to greatly influence the company's work – Ca

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writes many plays for Kneehigh as well as performing in some, composer and whose musical style became part of Kneehigh's defining characteristics, and actress and violinist who has appeared in many of Kneehigh's shows.

Mitchell left as joint Artistic Director in 2002 to form *Wild Works*, a theatre company for outdoor performance. Shepherd handed over the responsibility of Artistic Director, though he continued to be involved in the company as a performer.

From that point forward many of Kneehigh's shows, often directed by Rice, gained recognition, being produced in London and touring to major venues. Their funding in 2004 followed the Arts Council's Theatre Review 2000, and these larger funding opportunities, along with reputation from successful productions, to allow them to create large-scale works. While critics were initially sceptical of Kneehigh's style, thinking that the energy meant that they couldn't also be meaningful, the shows were hugely popular. The critical consensus started to shift, judging Kneehigh's work on its own terms rather than the expectations of more conventional theatre.

Another step in Kneehigh's rising success was their production of *Brief Encounter*, a classic British film (several times voted the best romantic film of all time) which made extensive and innovative use of projection, and was performed at a cinema in the West End. As well as winning over suspicious critics, it was a massive commercial success, and has been restaged many times since, including touring to Broadway.

In 2010, Kneehigh created their Asylum theatre, a space to perform their own work, as well as touring it. By 2012, Kneehigh's work had been seen by 120,000 people a year, and they made a National Portfolio Organisation with the Arts Council, increasing their funding.

AS Component

Although Kneehigh's use of projection, while noticeable, is not a defining element like their use of music in their performances, it is a specific production element. Kneehigh in your work should focus on the / process and not just the final product, your understanding of theatrical conventions.

Recent Developments

Mike Shepherd became Artistic Director again in 2016 when Rice was hired to direct at the Globe Theatre. Kneehigh became an associate company at the Globe and has been there. Most of the shows since have been directed by Shepherd. After collaborating with Rice in 2014 on *Noye's Fludde*, conductor Charles Hazlewood has become a frequent collaborator. This collaboration has led to the shows he worked on, such as *Dead Dog in a Suit*, which has more focus on music and singing than many of Kneehigh's previous works, moving towards musical and opera.

Kneehigh continue to create a wide range of work, from playful family shows to large-scale works, often with several shows touring (or having long runs at the Asylum) simultaneously.

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Production History

Note: productions before 2002 (shaded in grey in the below table) may be in online records. As much as possible, the timeline shows the original runs of shows. If a show had multiple runs they may appear in the year of one of their restagings. Several dates for their first production – here they have been placed roughly when they were first replacing the year.

| Year | Production | Notes |
|-------------|---|---|
| 1980 |  Awful Knowful | First show. About a stuntman (called to injuries for the actors). Performed by Shepherd during first performance. |
| 198? | Skungpoomery | Developed using musicians play warm audience up. |
| 198? | The Jungle Book | |
| 1982 | Around the World in Eighty Days | |
| 1983 | The Golden Pathway Annual | |
| 1985 | The Three Musketeers | |
| 1985 | Tregeagle | Using masks, theatre sports (a la Johnstone) and musicians integrated the first time. First big success. |
| 1986 | Fool's Paradise | Adapted from the film Les Enfants du Paradis. |
| 1987 | Ting Tang Mine | Performed by Nick Darke, who they collaborated with. Toured nationally. |
| 1988 | Cybora - A Tale for the Future | Adapted from Woyzeck. |
| 1989 |  Last Voyage of Long John Silver | |
| 1980s-1990s | Wild Walks | Multiple outdoor performances to audiences on walks through countryside. |
| 199? | Windfall | At the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Story which later formed A Very Merry Christmas. |
| 1991 | Peer Gynt | Outdoor play that toured nationally. |
| 1992 | Ghost Nets | |
| 1992 | Ship of Fools | |
| 1993 | Scrooge | |
| 1993 | Danger My Ally | |
| 1994 | The Young Man of Curry | |
| 1994 | The Boy in the Woods | |
| 1994/5 | The Fish and the Boy | |
| 1996 |  The King of Prussia | Drew attention during its run at London. |
| 1998 | Strange Cargo | Toured to the National Theatre. |
| 1999 | The Riot | Drew attention during its run at London. Mixed critical reaction. |

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| Year | Production | Notes |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1999 | <i>The Itch</i> | The first play directed by Emma Rice, adapted from <i>The Changeling</i> by Thomas Middleton and William Shakespeare |
| 2000 | <i>Cry Wolf</i> | Collaboration with band, The Baghdaddies |
| 2000 | <i>Hell's Mouth</i> | |
| 2002 | <i>Pandora's Box</i> | Collaboration with Northern Stage |
| 2002 (and 2010) | <i>The Red Shoes</i> | Emma Rice won TMA Award for Best Director |
| 2003 | <i>Tristan & Yseult</i> | Kneehigh's breakthrough. Originally outdoor, went on to tour nationally and internationally |
| 2003 | <i>The Wooden Frock</i> | Collaboration with West Yorkshire Playhouse |
| 2003 | <i>Quick Silver</i> | |
| 2004 | <i>The Barber of Seville</i> | Collaboration with West Yorkshire Playhouse |
| 2005 | <i>Wagstaffe's Wind-Up Boy</i> | Toured village halls |
| 2005 | <i>Nights at the Circus</i> | |
| 2006 | <i>Rapunzel</i> | |
| 2006 | <i>Cymbeline</i> | Commissioned by RSC for Complete Works |
| 2006 | <i>A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings</i> | Collaboration with Little Angel Theatre |
| 2007 | <i>A Matter of Life and Death</i> | Production created for the National Theatre |
| 2008 | <i>Don John</i> | |
| 2008 | <i>Brief Encounter</i> | Transferred to the West End and toured Australia |
| 2009 | <i>Hansel & Gretel</i> | |
| 2010 | <i>BLAST!</i> | |
| 2011 | <i>The Umbrellas of Cherbourg</i> | |
| 2011 | <i>Wah! Wah! Girls</i> | Production with Sadler's Wells and Theatre Royal Stratford East as part of the Cultural Olympiad |
| 2011 | <i>William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus</i> | |
| 2012 | <i>Mia Farrow's Pumpkin</i> | |
| 2013 | <i>Steptoe and Son</i> | |
| 2014 | <i>Noye's Fludde</i> | One-off production bringing together the Orchestra and choirs of schoolchildren to perform Britten's opera |
| 2014 | <i>Dead Dog in a Suitcase (and other love songs)</i> | |
| 2015 | <i>Rebecca</i> | |
| 2016 | <i>The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk</i> | |
| 2016 | <i>FUP: A Modern Fable</i> | |
| 2016 | <i>946: The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips</i> | |
| 2017 | <i>The Tin Drum</i> | |
| 2018 | <i>The Dancing Queen</i> | |
| 2018 | <i>Ka. Loke!</i> | |

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Activity 3: Research

There are many creatives that have been involved in Kneehigh over the years, but only a few have made significant marks on the company. Individually or in pairs, research the figures below and fill in the table. For the fourth, pick someone who has worked with Kneehigh to profile.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Mike Shepherd</i></p> <p>Work/Training before joining Kneehigh</p> <p>Work with Kneehigh</p> <p>Work outside of/after Kneehigh</p> | <p><i>Bill</i></p> <p>Work/Training before</p> <p>Work with Kneehigh</p> <p>Work outside of / after</p> |
| <p><i>Emma Rice</i></p> <p>Work/Training before joining Kneehigh</p> <p>Work with Kneehigh</p> <p>Work outside of/after Kneehigh</p> | <p>.....</p> <p>Work/Training before</p> <p>Work with Kneehigh</p> <p>Work outside of / after</p> |

Activity 4: Research

As a class, create a large timeline showing Kneehigh's development, using the history pack as a starting point and adding to it with your own research. Be creative and add anything you find during your research – for example reviews, production photos or interviews. Add any information and notes on your thoughts about their changing work.

Once the timeline is finished, discuss it as a class – what common threads can you see? What shifts?

As a class, discuss if there are any questions you have about the company's history that you haven't yet known the answer to. Write them up on your timeline and highlight them. As you do your work, write down any answers you find, as well as adding any other interesting or relevant information to the timeline.

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KNEEHIGH'S ARTISTIC INTENT

Kneehigh's intentions for their plays, among other things, include wanting to entertain the audience. As well as the humour and the music and dance, this also means making the meaning clear to the audience. Kneehigh see one of the aims of theatre being excluding the audience by making them feel inferior or stupid. This is achieved from centring practice around texts, especially old-fashioned or complex ones.

Emma Rice talks about Brecht and Brechtelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* about children's fairy tales, discussing how stories are used to try to find meaning with our own lives. Kneehigh's work centres on telling stories for these reasons. Kneehigh will often take epic and grand stories and connect them to emotions and events that the audience will have experienced in their everyday lives – from heartbreak to family conflict. They also often focus on new or overlooked elements of a story – characters who never get to have their say, or themes that are ignored in previous tellings. Kneehigh take the stories from many different sources, and are just as likely to adapt a TV show as an opera, thereby engaging with more modern mythologies created in popular culture as well as classical ones.

Kneehigh believe in making their work uncynical – offering the audience a sense of emotional content of it. In some ways, they see their approach as almost childlike, with open hearts and minds – although the topics they cover are often very serious.

Kneehigh's work is rarely explicitly political, but instead is quietly subversive – it disrupts the status quo as much in how it brings the audience to the same level as the performers as it does in the messages that its plays give. However, Kneehigh's plays often support characters fighting against injustice or oppression. Kneehigh's most recent plays have been even more obviously political – both *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* and *The Tin Drum* are adaptations of very political works, suggesting Kneehigh might move more explicitly revolutionary themes to their work.

A Level

In your production, you must evidence your artistic intent. You must begin with a clear understanding of the audience – how to achieve their expectations.

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Activity 1: DISCUSSION

As a class, discuss what works of fiction you have found enjoyable, exciting and fun to watch; this could be theatre, TV or film. Note down why you enjoyed it: the narrative, the pacing, the characters, humour, emotion, spectacle and any other elements.

When you have collected these ideas first consider how these ideas can be used in a play. Don't suit the form if they were originally in another. Or some ideas only work with a certain audience. About what you know about Kneehigh's work, do any of the ideas you've written down? How do they produce the effect you want in their shows?

Activity 2: DISCUSSION

In groups, discuss what narratives and stories you feel like you have connected to. Are they classic stories or modern ones. Discuss what themes appear in these stories and how they are told. Think about narratives that are often retold or adapted – what elements do people connect to these stories so much? What does each adaptation bring to the table?

Feed back your thoughts to the class.

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KNEEHIGH'S REHEARSAL PROCESS

Process and Collaboration

Kneehigh emphasise collaboration between different artists working on a production. From the costume makers to the lighting designer to the writer and actors. This runs throughout the production process, which means that, unlike most theatre productions, few elements are finalised before the production. The set might be completely finished in another circumstance).

One of the ways that Kneehigh build a sense of ensemble in their company is through conducting most rehearsals, especially early ones, at the barns in Gorran Haven. These barns are quite isolated, with no phone connection, meaning that the group can fully concentrate on the show. As well as this, while there they share responsibility for cooking and caring for the barns, and take runs around the fields together at the start of every day.

However, many rehearsal processes will start far before they get to the barns. Many of the shows are adaptations of existing stories. Work will often begin by working with the writer to build the foundations that the show will be built on; this includes the design of the visual world that the story can inhabit and the composer drawing together the music into a playlist to use in rehearsals. These elements can then be played with the actors in collaboration with the rest of the company.

The writer or writers meet with the director and manager to discuss the basic structure of the show. How much they write before the rehearsals begin, depends on the production; it can range from selections of poetry and prose to a pretty complete script. However, even when they come to rehearsals with a full script this is never set in stone, with the director and actors altering and adding to the dialogue.

In the rehearsal room itself the process is collaborative, but a single director (or co-directors) still hold the control, leading the rehearsals and making the final decision. However, everyone is encouraged to contribute and be open in the rehearsals. Mike Shepherd also notes the importance of using what specialities people in the room have – whether someone is a fantastic musician, writer or flamenco dancer their talents should be made use of if they can, rather than everyone having to have an equal stake in every element of the production.

Activity 1: Discussion

As a class, discuss any of the rehearsal processes you have been involved in. What are the differences between the Kneehigh work?

Discuss how you think the way Kneehigh work affect the work they make; how is it different? How does work originate? How do ideas develop?

Some of how Kneehigh structure their process comes from circumstances that you can adapt to your own. Make a list of what elements can be adapted to a student process, and which cannot.

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Playing

The company often use games both to warm up and get the right atmosphere also to develop material. Mike Shepherd emphasises that games should as to the show that they are currently working on rather than re-using generic several books of exercises that Kneehigh take inspiration from; *Why Is That* and *Impro for Storytellers* by Keith Johnstone. Many of these exercises are accepting the prompts fellow performers are giving you and playing with them adapted from one created by Keith Johnstone.

Activity 2: Prop Game

As a class, in an audience. Two people should stand in the performance space, a simple prompt for example 'I was thinking of having a cup of tea'. The other person by accepting what the first has said, but **over-accepting** it – i.e. creating an exaggerated example above their response could be 'Tea?! You want tea?! And who's going to you've wasted all our money..., etc.' Don't think about the response, just go with it, continue as long as you want it to – try to see how exaggerated you can make it.

When you feel it is coming to an end, make another simple, normal sentence. This to what you were saying, but can be if you like. It should, however, be clearly in contrast you've said before to make the difference clear to your partner. They should then with the same over-reaction as the first response. Continue going backwards and forwards.

After the scene has finished, discuss what elements of it were effective – what did How did the actors switch from normal to over-dramatic? Did the scene change as the same?

In rehearsals, the company usually use the elements created by the creative team, playing and mixing what they have. This includes having a collection of costumes and props in the room to play with, a playlist of music for different scenes to, and using lighting from as early as possible. The company see a sense of connection being built between all their shows by the fact that keeping all of the materials from previous works in the barns means they can be quickly taken and re-purposed for new shows. It also holds with their philosophy of doing something practical rather than over-analysing a character or plot, keeping things full of energy and accessible. For example, when thinking about their characters, actors create a 'shrine' to them through collecting props and pieces of costume that relate to and symbolise the character, helping them to think

For their purpose of reinterpreting and altering a story, Kneehigh often focus on retelling the plot to each other, focusing on what personal connections they can make and what different angles the tale can be seen from. They also look at creating characters, both ones in the story already and those characters that could be included but aren't. Kneehigh's work often focuses on adding perspective from viewpoints that have been neglected in previous texts.

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Using Kneehigh Techniques in Rehearsals

The exercises below will help you incorporate Kneehigh's techniques into your rehearsal process. Some are exercises used by Kneehigh themselves while some are inspired by them. Different exercises may need to be altered to better fit your piece, and may be used through a process, but are ordered below roughly in an order that moves from devising and/or devising process.

Exercise: Telling the Story AS Component 1, A Level

Get into pairs with someone in your group. In your pairs, one person should tell the story of the source material (for your piece in A Level Component 2) or one of your extracts to the other person. Do this completely from memory. Swap around within your group and find new partners. Repeat one person telling the story around as many times as you like, then get back together as a whole group. Discuss what was commonly focused on and what connections were made – how did people's stories

Alternate technique 1 – Two groups complete the exercise together – you should tell the story to a member of the other group and tell each other your own group's story. Swap around within your group you have heard the other group's story several times change the exercise so that you tell the story to your partner's group. This can help you consider what elements of the plot will stay

Alternate technique 2 – In your group, stand in a circle. Go around the circle with one person telling something that happens in the story. Don't go back or correct anyone if something is missed. At the end of the play (or extract), discuss what was or wasn't included; what was focused on

Exercise: BANK OF POST-IT NOTES AS Component 1, A Level

Split a pack of Post-it notes between your group. Either in a rehearsal or in your own time, write as many Post-it notes as possible with ideas for the piece. These could include sketches of scenes, dialogue, ideas for music, songs. Stick all the Post-it notes up in one place and refer to them. You may want to group similar or complementary Post-its together. As you are rehearsing, bring ideas to mind and stick them on something you are devising/rehearsing bring ideas to mind and stick them on something you are devising/rehearsing bring ideas to mind and stick them on something you are devising/rehearsing

Exercise: Creating a Game AS Component 1, A Level

Choose a scene or moment in your performance (or a scene from one of your extracts) which you are having difficulty with. Create a game which responds to the themes and events in the scene. A scene where characters are fighting for dominance could include the performers trying to win on stage. You may find this easiest to do as a group, or with individuals making up their own game for everyone to play. You will probably find this easiest if you base your game on the themes of the scene. One of the easiest ways to connect a moment to a game is by thinking about what is happening in the moment and how that can be shown in a game.

Once you have played the game, discuss if there were any elements of it which you liked or disliked – an energy or a movement or positioning

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Exercise: COMBINATIONS

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

In your group, decide on several categories or elements that you can change in your devised piece or reinterpreted text performance (for example music, location, theme, etc.). For each category, write down as many options as there are members of your group (for example), and put the suggestions for each category into separate piles. Each member of the group chooses a suggestion out of each pile. They should then create a scene, script or idea based on the suggestions. Perform or present your scenes back to the rest of the group. Discuss how you could create into your performance – could it be extended? Several different ideas could be created.

Alternate technique 1 – Rather than creating material individually, you may want to create a combination as a group and create that scene.

Example of combinations for adapting Little Red Riding Hood:

| Character | Form | Moment |
|-----------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Red Riding Hood | Dialogue | Questioning the Wolf |
| The Wolf | Poetry | The Wolf Eating Red Riding Hood |
| The Woodcutter | Movement | The Woodcutter Killing the Wolf |
| Grandma | Song | Red Riding Hood Meeting The Wolf |

Exercise: SHRINES

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

Create a collection of props, images, text and clothing that represent your character they would own or use, or metaphorical representations of their personality. Think of a collection of objects creates of your character and how that would affect how you consider if you can use any of the objects in your shrine in your show.

Exercise: Juxtaposition

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

This exercise should be done with a moment of your piece that you have already trying to improve. As a group, choose one element of the scene that you want to focus on (proxemics, physicality and music). Write down one suggestion for how it could be improved and then write down a suggestion that is as different from the first as possible. Come up with around five suggestions. Run through a different suggestion each time – this way a love scene could be performed to a different song. When you have run through the different options, discuss as a group what is best? Would other elements of the scene need to change to accommodate your focus?

Exercise: UNSEEN ANGLE

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

Read through (one of) your extract(s). In your group, discuss what perspectives are missing from the character who doesn't speak much? Consider the unmentioned bystanders to the scene. Individually, choose one perspective from this list and write a monologue to the extract. Read through the monologue with the group. Discuss what new perspective the extract could have. Change your theatrical interpretation of it – this could be used in your reinterpreted text performance. Remember! For A Level Component 2 your devised piece is a different interpretation to your devised piece. But even if your devised piece is informed by the extract, you can't use these exercises to better understand your extract.

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KNEEHIGH'S PERFORMANCE S

Anarchy

Kneehigh's performances are often described as anarchic – they are full of energy and working together to create a stage alive with action, from props and puppets to music and dance being used to create a carnival atmosphere. However, the elements, the performers alone embody this anarchic spirit. Performances are exaggerated and very physical. David Byrne, an actor and graphic designer, described Kneehigh since its inception as 'the school of physical comedy' – actors were encouraged to fill the space with movement and noise to create a high-energy style. However, Kneehigh have developed (especially since Emma Rice directed) this high-energy style has been combined with moments of darkness, stillness and comedy and tragedy in their work more closely together.

This raucous style that Kneehigh use is often based on the visual images they create onstage. Although Kneehigh are far from being dance theatre, and have used text in almost all of their productions, they use what the audience see to communicate the story just as much as what the audience hear. This is for many reasons; partially influenced by their initial outdoor work, where lines would be harder to hear, partially through their aim to make their work more accessible and exciting by not focusing just on the text. Characters in Kneehigh shows are rarely just stood or sat around chatting, and if they are it's not for long – even when not in a specific piece of movement, actors will often be moving and interacting with the stage to show characterisation. For example, in Kneehigh's *Cymbeline* the stage was filled with metal fencing some of which was drawn across it – in a scene where the Queen tries to woo Imogen, the Duke of Milan, who she had lead, he clambered across it in an attempt to be stuck.



Exercise: Upping the Energy

AS Component 1, A Level

In groups, choose a scene, either from the piece you are devising/rehearsing or from a known play. Perform the scene to an audience using the following rules:

- You are not allowed to stand still for longer than three lines (spoken by anyone in the scene).
- While you are standing still, either your physicality or your vocal performance must be exceptional.
- At any point, anyone in the scene can clap and everyone has to go into a tableau. When the clapping stops, the scene must be in a new position, holding it for two seconds and then continuing.

Discuss with the audience what effect this created for the scene; how did it change the scene? Were there specific moments that it did or didn't work for?

Extension Activity

Return to the scene and consider how you can use it to affect the audience. Write your own rules that would help you create a specific effect. Re-perform the scene to the audience with your new rules and discuss how it changed the scene.

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Magic and Transformation

Kneehigh's early theatre, when they didn't have many resources, used many elements of the style of **poor theatre**. This means that they used limited set and props in creative ways, in combination with a focus on physical expression to create meaning for the audience. Although Kneehigh now have many more resources and create large-scale shows, they retain the sense of imagination and magic which is at the core of poor theatre. One of the ways this is shown is through their innovative use of props and set to symbolise different objects and locations. For instance, in *A Matter of Life and Death*, hospital beds were used throughout the play to represent suspended routes to the afterlife.

Jerzy Grotowski and Poor Theatre

Poor theatre was a concept created by director, actor trainer and theorist Jerzy Grotowski. He developed his ideas in the 1960s and 1970s in his Laboratory Theatre in Opole, Poland. He brought his ideas to America and Italy. His ideas have inspired a wide range of different approaches. Some have followed his ideas strictly while others have taken his ideas and transformed them into their own approaches.

Poor theatre aimed to strip back theatre to its essential elements – using only the actor's body and voice, with sound completely created by the actors themselves. This was a reaction to the ostentatious sets and effects in theatre which Grotowski saw as misguidedly mimicking what could be found in film and TV. Instead, Grotowski wanted to focus on the essential elements of theatre: the physical presence of the actor in the space.

Grotowski created a rigorous system of actor training which drew inspiration from physical theatre to develop an actor's ability to physically express their reactions. Grotowski wanted to strip away movement, signs and extreme physical states to express internal feelings. Unlike Stanislavski, a German director who used physical states to represent characters' social position, he wanted actors to come from the impulses of the performer rather than being cold and calculated.

Constantin Stanislavski, he did not want to encourage perfectly naturalistic acting. Instead, he wanted actors to develop a set of sounds and movements that could bridge the gap between dream and reality, to communicate with the audience.

In order to create meaning without developed sets and technical effects, Grotowski used props along with the actors themselves. Through how the actors handled and moved the props, they could be transformed in the imagination into numerous different objects. These transformations were not replacements of one object with another, but could also contain more symbolic meaning. For example, if two characters are fighting a duel over a love interest, their swords could be transformed into anything.

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Activity 1: Practical

As a class, stand in a circle with a chair in the middle of the space. The first student stands next to the chair so that it becomes something other than a chair. As the student has finished, the next person in the circle should clap, and the student, take the chair and transform it into something else. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a turn in the middle.

Activity 2: Practical

In groups, choose an object which is in the room around you (it should be something that is not a chair). Experiment with what other objects you can turn it into. Create a short sequence with at least three objects. Try to find connections between them; this could either be a story that includes the objects.

Perform your sequence to the rest of the class. Discuss how transformations like this can be used in production.

Comedy and the Audience

Kneehigh's innovative use of props and set can also be used for comic effect in comedy in their work, even adding it to serious plays and scenes. How this is done can range from wordplay to slapstick and is also quite often connected to undercutting about a play or story – this way, they can make the audience laugh while also making something familiar in a different way. For instance, in *Twelfth Night* they often use props to satirise the style – on reading a letter, one character misreads 'strumpet' as 'strump' and the other character to exclaim 'I don't see how you can play the trumpet!'.

Comedy is also created through the company's interactions with the audience. While audience participation itself is rare in Kneehigh's work, they do not always acknowledge them and break the fourth wall, or come out into the auditorium itself, such as Lily running around the audience looking for her cat in *946 – The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*. They see the audience as an accomplice in creating the narrative, as while the performers are the ones acting out what is happening on stage, the audience need to engage their imaginations to make the show work.

Activity 3: Practical

In pairs, devise a short scene responding to one of these stimuli:

- Someone giving a birthday present to their friend
- Two co-workers who don't like each other bumping into each other on the street
- A parent trying to tell their child that their pet fish is dead.

Perform the scene to the audience.

Now get back into your pairs and add in moments where the characters in the scene acknowledge the audience. This could be by making eye contact with them, speaking an aside, going into the audience, or breaking the fourth wall. Consider how you can use these moments to create humour.

Perform the scene to the rest of the class. After everyone has performed, discuss how the scenes are different; how did the audience react to the moments of acknowledgement? What was the overall tone of the scene as a whole?

Activity 4: Research, Discussion and Practical

Individually, find between one and three clips of something that makes you laugh. It could be a stand-up comedian, a moment from a film, or a video of a ridiculous cat. As a class, watch everyone's clips. Discuss what makes these clips funny and what you thought of them.

Get into groups. In your groups, devise a short scene intended to make the audience laugh using the clips that you have watched. This could be an exact recreation of one of the clips, or a mixture of copying and original material.

Perform your scenes to the class. As a class, discuss what elements of the scenes were successful and what were not. What elements of comedy that work best in a theatrical setting and how you can use them in either your revised work or set text.

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Narration, Ensemble and Common Motifs

This connection to the audience is also shown through Kneehigh's use of narration. Their plays is often delivered directly to the audience, and often in a friendly way. Characters are chatting to them rather than relating a grand narrative. This story is narrated by. Kneehigh's work often gives voice to characters sidelined or ignored in their original narrative, such as Brangian the maid in *Tristan & Yseult* or the family's chickens in *Hansel and Gretel*, both of which have scenes explaining their feelings about the events of their stories. The role of narrator is often taken by similar characters, excluded and looking in from the outside. In *Tristan & Yseult*, this was the 'Club of the Unloved' a group of animals wearing, binocular-wielding group of narrators relating a love story they had never experienced.

The sense of ensemble that is built in Kneehigh's rehearsals carries through to a performer's character isn't in a scene, and even if they are not on stage they are engaged and involved in the performance. This could range from operating the set, playing an instrument or helping another actor with a costume change. Swapping in and out helps create the feeling of energy in their plays.

As well as these more general themes in Kneehigh's work, there are also some motifs that are often repeated in their work. One is performers cross-dressing for roles, especially men playing women. They also often use flying, especially images of lovers suspended together above the stage as in *Tristan & Yseult*, *Brief Encounter*, *Rapunzel* and *Matter of Life and Death*. These images are used to show the simultaneous joy and precarity of love. There are many other images or elements that reappear in Kneehigh's work – you may want to keep a list to see if any will be helpful for your interpretations, whichever component you are using the

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Activity 5: Practical

Individually, in pairs or in small groups, decide on a fairy tale or myth that you want to tell. How can you tell it in an informal way – what characters or people would be telling the story? How do they interact with the audience? Create a narration of either the story.

Perform your narration to the rest of the class. After everyone has performed discuss how you created with the audience through the style of the narration, and how it altered the

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Exercise: What's Everyone Doing? AS Component 1, A Level

In groups, choose a scene from your devised piece or from one of your extracts to perform. Work out how you can involve performers who are not currently being used in the scene, and what they can be doing – they could be something onstage (playing music, operating puppets, changing costumes, preparing a set change). Discuss how involving everyone in the scene would create what atmosphere it would create.



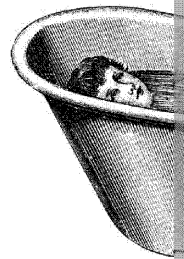
KNEEHIGH'S PRODUCTION DESIGN

Set

Design is very important to Kneehigh's shows. Kneehigh's very visual style is an important element for making meaning for the audience and telling the story. Designers start months before rehearsals begin to begin to start creating a world for the show. They find a central aesthetic responding to the themes of the show and build a world around it. Kneehigh sets almost always have a fixed set (often with several levels) that is ambiguous enough to represent many different locations in a plot, with the help of props. Although the sets Kneehigh use often give the impression of being thoughtless, everything is considered and thought-through – rather than putting on a show to create an atmosphere of chaos, they thoroughly consider what items will be used and how to create the production they are staging.

However, this doesn't mean that the sets are blank slates. The colours, shapes and textures reflect the themes of the play, for example creating rural or industrial atmospheres or different eras. On top of this the different platforms, ladders and sections of the set are created so they can be interacted by actors, introducing innovative and amusing ways of using the set.

The design in Kneehigh's productions often contributes to the big, climactic, visual moments in its plays. In *Tristan & Yseult* this featured as massive white sheets dropping from the back of the stage to symbolise the white sails of approaching ships. In *946*, water spurted up out of the bathtubs bordering the stage to show the city being bombed.



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Exercise: The Base Set

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

In groups, discuss the locations and tone of (one of) your extract(s). Decide on what to tell the audience about these things through the set; what do you want to use as the one location within the play? How will it create the appropriate mood? How will the performers interact with it?

Design a large set for the show, taking inspiration from Kneehigh's. This should be for the whole performance. Sketch and label a diagram. Once you have done this, or you will show two or three different locations in the story on this set; will you use it? How will the performers interact with it?

Present your ideas to the rest of the class. As a class, discuss how the designs present the production and what effect they would create on the audience.

Remember! For A Level Component 2 your extract should be performed in a devised piece. But even if your devised piece is inspired by Kneehigh, this doesn't mean that you can't use the exercises to better understand your own work.

Exercise: Designing Realistically

AS COMPONENT 1, A LEVEL

For the piece you are creating, you will not have the resources available to Kneehigh. Discuss the designs you created for the last exercise and discuss how you could create the same effect with more easily available resources. Think about striking images, interesting combinations of materials, etc.

Designing for Outside

There are many things a designer needs to consider when making a set for outside. In addition to the normal considerations. Unlike inside a theatre, you can't control the elements of your surroundings, and the elements and scenery will change how you can use the space.

When he was first working with Kneehigh, Bill Mitchell found that he needed to be careful not only because the wind and rain could damage or alter props and set, but because they put so much energy and force into what they were doing, they often broke things. So he started mostly using wood and metal to construct his sets – which could withstand the weather and the performers.

Mitchell's outside sets took their inspiration from their surroundings, using the natural elements as the basis of the construction. This could range from hanging props from trees, to building structures through which the audience could see the surrounding countryside.

Mitchell saw one of the key aims of design in outside spaces as drawing and holding the audience's attention, as there is much more for them to look at and be distracted by. Therefore, many of his sets featured large, bold shapes and clear colour distinctions rather than intricate, fussy or multicoloured sets. This way it was much easier to draw the audience's gaze to where it was needed – for example, a red flower stands out much more against an all-white set than one which is lost among other flowers.



Activity: Designing for Outside

In groups, explore an outdoor space that you know well. Discuss and note down all the elements that are interesting or unique; what spaces does it form? Where is your eye drawn in the space? What patterns are in it? Is it enclosed by anything or completely open?

Imagine you were creating a set in this space (you can choose the devised piece of text or a fairy tale). Discuss how you could use the elements you have explored and how you would place the audience and performers. What colours could you use to contrast the space? Could you use different parts of the space to show different locations?

Create a labelled sketch of the set you would use and present it to the class. Once you have finished, discuss how these designs differ from what they would be in an indoor theatre space and how they responded to the characteristics of the space around them.

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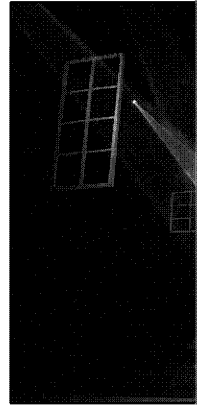
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Lighting

Much like set, lighting is different when working indoors or outside.

Outside, most productions have to start before the sun sets, meaning that the lighting conditions get increasingly darker as the play progresses. This can be helpful thematically – if a play gets darker or more dramatic throughout, the dimming light can bring these elements into focus and draw the audience closer in. The shifting colours also means that a lighting designer has to consider how light will be used.



As lighting cannot be used throughout, approaches such as having different locations are less effective, but it also means that uses of dramatic light more effect towards the end of the play if they haven't been used before.

Inside lighting can be used much more thoroughly to produce different effects. In Kneehigh's non-naturalistic approach they often use vibrantly coloured light and add to the anarchic atmosphere, and in some of their shows (such as *The Suitcase*) almost try to mimic the atmosphere of a rock concert. These bright lights sometimes cover the performers themselves, such as in moments of strong emotion and song, but are also often used as backlight and around the edges of the set, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. This combination means that the impression of emotion and atmosphere is still easily created. Bright colours are used along with angles, textures, or areas of light, to create different spaces (for details on how this is done in a specific production see the case study). They have often also used neon signs spelling out words and locations in their plays.

Activity 2: Design

In groups, choose any four locations (they don't have to be from your play). Discuss what the places have; are they exciting or boring? Scary or comforting?

As a group, design a lighting state for each location which creates an impression of non-naturalistic lighting and bright colours. You may want to think in more detail about the weather? What's the weather like? Create a clear description of each state that you can.

Present your lighting states to the class without saying what location each is representing. Discuss what impressions you got from each state – don't worry if you can't guess about the atmosphere that is created.

Exercise: Making the Moment AS Component 1, A Level

In groups, choose a climactic or important moment in your devised piece or one of your favourite plays. Create two lighting states for the location where the scene takes place, and one for the climactic moment. These will be different and what effect you want them to create on the audience.

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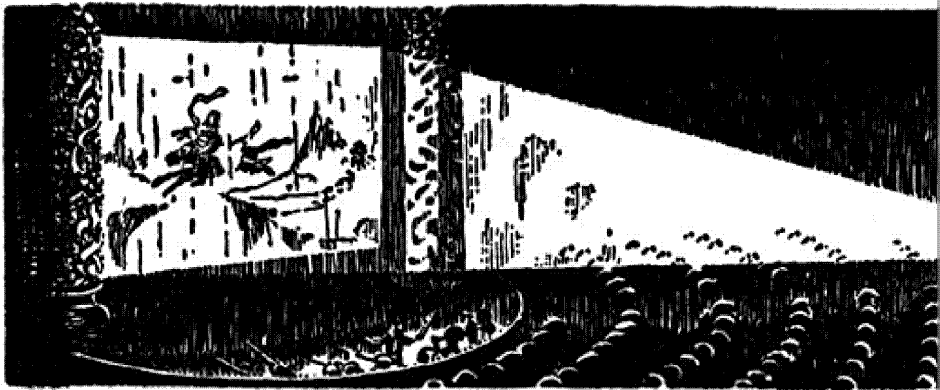
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Projection

Although Kneehigh have used projection in some of their other productions (*and Death*, *Pandora's Box* and *Cry Wolf*), they used it most notably in their *and Death*, so this worksheet will focus on its use in that show.

One of the reasons projection was used so much was as a reference to the combination of forms was emphasised by the location of the play – in a cinema. When the audience entered, they were met by cinema ushers. The play itself was presented as a film (the protagonists of the show arguing in the front row of the auditorium before they walked through the screen at the front of the stage. She then reappeared as a film star. This is exemplified by the combination of theatre and cinema in the play.



Some of the uses of projection in the play were:

- **Scenes not shown onstage** – In particular, the scenes with her husband were shown through projection, perhaps suggesting that her relationship with him made the rest of her life feel more distant.
- **Details of scene** – Close-ups of actors' faces were sometimes used as a help for the audience to get a better impression of their emotions, and particularly to strengthen the feelings.
- **The sky** – A large projection of the sky over the whole back wall was used to give an impression of location and weather.
- **The train** – The two protagonists meet and often return to a train station. An iconic moment in the film. The show created the train using a movable platform across the stage. Whenever a train passed, an actor would run across the platform onto which would be projected a train. Not only was this a practical way of solving the problem of showing a train onstage, it also added to the sense of magic.
- **Advert** – In the interval, fake 1940s adverts which Kneehigh made were projected. This created humour for the audience while emphasising the period setting.

Activity 3: Design and Practical

In groups, discuss the different ways that projection can be used onstage and how it can interact with it. Come up with one idea for how you could use your classroom projector to create an interesting theatrical projection.

Take turns to use the projector to show the class the effect. If your idea is too complicated, then describe it and demonstrate as much as you can.

As a class, discuss how moments like this could be incorporated into a wider show, and how these moments mix with actor-focused moments? Would there be projection throughout the show?

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Costume

Kneehigh's costumes are often bright, colourful and eye-catching. They also mimic vintage styles. Sometimes, these are specific to the play – for example, characters in *Brief Encounter* are clothed in 1940s styles to reflect the period the original film was made. When a specific era isn't being referenced, the costumes often feature a combination of modern (such as T-shirts), 19th-century (such as dresses with small waists and full skirts) and gothic Victorian (such as lace and heeled boots) styles. The style of the costumes can also be used to show the kind of environment the stories are set in – city-set shows often have sharper and dressier costumes, while those set in the countryside are more likely to include flowy dresses, cardigans and tweed.

Bright colours and slightly exaggerated styles are often used in Kneehigh's shows to add to the sense of fun and anarchy. These eye-catching costumes also support Kneehigh's use of multiroling characters. As one performer may be playing multiple characters, or appearing in a chorus alongside their main role, easily recognised and differentiated costumes mean the audience can easily keep up with who they are supposed to be. In a similar way, choruses or groups of characters are often dressed almost identically in order to make them stand out as a group – for example, the anoraks and binoculars of the Unloved in *Tristan and Yseult* or the white and pink wigs of the prostitutes in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*.

Activity 4: Research and Writing

Individually, find images of costumes from Kneehigh plays and choose two to focus on. Describe the items you see in the costume – try to be as exact as possible, using precise terminology. Write this on a piece of paper, separate to the picture of the costume.

Split the class into groups. Each group should mix up their pictures and descriptions with the others. Your task is then to match up the descriptions to the correct picture. The fastest (and correctly!) wins.

As a class, discuss what elements of clothing you noticed frequently in Kneehigh's shows. What do you think you got of the characters from the costumes?

Exercise: Who am I?

AS Component 1, A Level

In small groups, choose a character for each person in the group (one that they don't know or from one of your extracts). Create a mind map for the characteristics of each character. How you could use one piece of costume to show the character – this could be something small (e.g. a hat) or something large (e.g. a dress).

As a class, form an audience. Each group will take it in turns to get up on stage and show their costume (each person saying 'I am...'). The audience then have to guess who they are, with a maximum of three wrong guesses (per group rather than per person), before the group reveals the character.

As a class, discuss the exercise; what was the most difficult part of choosing a costume? What did you learn from the exercise? Were there certain characters who often got confused?

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Puppetry

Kneehigh often use puppetry in their work. Often this is to create animal characters, such as a deer in *Cymbeline* or the rabbits and chickens in *Hansel & Gretel*. Puppetry can be brought to life in appropriate scale to the actors, meaning they can interact with a real animal. The puppets they use are often specially made, or repurposed for production, and are intricate and often beautiful.

However, Kneehigh have also used puppetry to create human (or human-like) characters. This is seen in their more recent works, such as *The Tin Drum* and *A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings* (which was performed with puppet theatre specialists Little Angel Theatre). In both works, the puppets help create uncanny or strange elements of the characters which would be harder to show with an actor. For example, Oskar, the protagonist of *The Tin Drum*, is born with the understanding and reasoning of an adult and stops growing at the age of three – using a puppet both means Oskar's diminutive stature can be shown and that large black eyes can create a sense of strangeness and threat from him.

Having puppets specially made for each production means that they can be made to reflect the style and tone of the production, further adding to the effect that it creates on the audience. For example, whereas puppets reminiscent of vintage Punch and Judy were used for 946 to make those sketches, Punch and Judy puppets were created for *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* to make c

Kneehigh use puppets at many different scales to create different effects on stage. Small puppets can be used to set a location and large-scale action – from soldiers trekking through them in *The Tin Drum* (which further played with scale by having characters who had died in the previous scene form mountains that the soldiers were approaching ships at the end of *Tristan & Yseult*).

When creating puppets, a designer also has to think about how they will be operated – a beautiful puppet is useless if it can't be moved well! One consideration is thinking about how close the actor operating a puppet should be to it. Having a puppet can make the relationship between the actor and puppet closer – as they are embodying the same character. However, with smaller puppets you may use sticks or strings so they are less easily blocked to the audience.

However close an actor is to the puppet, they will have to put a lot of focus on the actor can either choose to keep a completely blank face so that the audience focuses on the puppet rather than them, or to react to things as the puppet would to help create a more realistic performance. Performers need to think carefully about how they move the puppet, making sure it doesn't give the impression of life from it. This includes moving the puppet when walking, moving its head to react to things, and most of all, having the easy way to give the puppet immediate life.



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Activity 5: Practical

Find a space in the classroom and sit on the floor with a piece of newspaper in front of you. Lay the sheet out flat on the floor and put your hands on top of it. Breathe evenly and draw your hands in response to your breath, slightly closing them on the in breaths and moving them out on out breaths – start very gently, with little movement. Slowly build up how much movement you can breathe. As you move the newspaper, it should naturally start crumpling in places. Keep moving your hands (still in the same rhythm with your breath), accentuating these crumples and folding the newspaper into a different shape.

Once your newspaper has a shape, think about how it would move (in addition to the rhythm) – does it have a character? How would it look at something? Would it want to meet someone? Start experimenting with moving your newspaper puppet. Would it be shy? Confident? Puppet think about how it reacts to them – is it shy, confident? Show these without making a noise?

Once you have explored the room and interacted with different puppets, bring your puppet back to the room and to stationary (still moving it as you breathe). Slowly loosen your hold until it is a sheet of paper on the floor again.

As a class, discuss the exercise; when did the puppets feel most alive? What was the most interesting part?

Exercise: Puppet Design

AS Component 1, A Level

In your group, discuss what characters, animals or other parts of the story could be used in your performance, and create a mind map of suggestions.

Individually, choose one of the suggestions and create a puppet for your puppet performance, answering the questions.

What scale would it be?

Sketch



How would it be operated?

Justification:



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Kneehigh have long included live music in their shows, to help set the scene, create a sense of atmosphere and express their characters' emotions. Although there is a lot of music in their plays, and their characters sometimes sing, most of their plays would not be considered musicals (with exceptions such as *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* and *The Tin Drum*). This is because the songs do not form a core part of expressing the plot and characters, but instead support the movement and dialogue which happens throughout the play.



The music in Kneehigh plays is usually played by a live band onstage. This is often done by the actors and brought into the action. Sometimes, this part is a core element of the play. For instance, the band of the Unloved in *Tristan & Yseult*, but other times it is more of a supporting role, making occasional asides to the musicians or sitting among them. The performers are also usually multi-talented and can play instruments – this means both that they can play out of the band when their characters are not in a scene, and that their instrument playing can form a core part of their character, for instance when Widow Goodman's violin playing in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* helps to bring about the cataclysmic ending. Although the songs and music are written before the rehearsal process begins, instrumentation in individual scenes can often be led by which performers are free at the time. However, instrumentation is also used to show characterisation and location in the plays – for example, in 1946: *The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips* a banjo is used in scenes set on the farmyard.

The style of Kneehigh's music varies between shows but often has certain elements. The music will often have a strong beat, helping to create the sense of excitement. Influences will often come from folk music, both from the UK and around Europe. They most regularly use acoustic instruments such as accordions, guitars, drums and fiddles, and use harmonic singing.

Activity 6: Research and Discussion

As a class, listen to the examples of Kneehigh's music below:

- [zzed.uk/9139-tristanyseulttrailer](https://www.zzed.uk/9139-tristanyseulttrailer)
- [zzed.uk/9139-wildbride-rehearsals](https://www.zzed.uk/9139-wildbride-rehearsals) (Kneehigh Cookbook account needed)
- [zzed.uk/9139-greenlands-coast](https://www.zzed.uk/9139-greenlands-coast) (Kneehigh Cookbook account needed)

Discuss what common elements there are between the music and how they affect the overall feature in.

Get into groups. In your groups, research and create a playlist of music that is similar to Kneehigh's music. Discuss how you could use this music like it in a production.

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COLLABORATION AND INFLUENCE

Collaboration

Kneehigh's work is often affected by which individuals are collaborating on it. For instance Bill Mitchell's involvement led to Kneehigh doing a lot of outdoor work and they work with influences the style of the music.

Wah! Wah! Girls

A co-production with Sadler's Wells Theatre and Theatre Royal Stratford East for the 2004 Olympiad.

Kneehigh's sense of cheekiness and not taking itself too seriously was combined with influences in the script, dance, music and costume. This combination created a show which explored the Indian community in London with a vibrant and fun style which influenced Emma Rice (who directed it) as she went on to include Bollywood influences in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Globe (see Influence for more information).

Trailer: zzed.uk/9139-wah-girls-trailer

A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings

A co-production with Little Angel Theatre.

Although Kneehigh's work has often included puppets, they usually have only a couple of puppets in a cast mainly of human performers. However, in this collaboration with Little Angel – a specialist puppet company – the entire cast was made up of over 100 puppets! It used Kneehigh's sense of humour and music along with the puppets (the company had also previously worked with the story as *Windfall* in the 1990s), but the pace and atmosphere was less chaotic and anarchic and more melancholy than many of Kneehigh's shows.

Trailer: zzed.uk/9139-veryoldman-trailer

Activity 1: DISCUSSION

As a class, draw a large circle on a sheet of paper or the board, with room to write outside of it. On it, draw a map of all the collaborations that happen with Kneehigh that happen within the company itself, and on the outside draw collaboration that happen with other companies, artists or organisations. Use your own knowledge, look back through the individual research to create the map (particularly helpful sections may be the History and Rehearsal Process but helpful information can also be found elsewhere).

As well as which collaborations have taken place, note down how these collaborations affected the outcome was for the shows that were produced. Discuss how collaboration affects work when different styles are brought together? How do different artists work together?

Extension Activity

In your groups, choose a performer or company that you know other than Kneehigh with styles different from Kneehigh. Create a short description of what a collaboration between the two performers would look like. Consider:

- What material they would choose to create (i.e. what play/adaptation)
- What elements of each company's style would be kept
- How they would work together

Present your ideas to the rest of class. Discuss how different styles come together.

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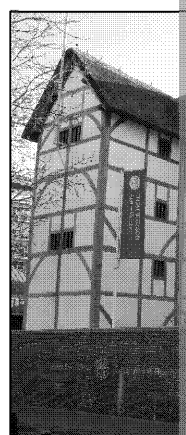
Influence

Members of Kneehigh who have gone on to work elsewhere have been great with the company, with experiences gained and styles developed colouring work includes:

Emma Rice at The Globe

Emma Rice was made artistic director of The Globe theatre in London (a reconstruction of the theatre) in 2016. Notable productions that she directed there include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*.

Similarly to her work with Kneehigh, she treated these texts quite irreverently (though kept more of the original text than Kneehigh's production of *Cymbeline*, which used only 200 lines of Shakespeare's writing). Song and dance were used heavily throughout, along with bright, eye-catching sets and costumes. She also brought a close focus to trying to make sure the audience understood what was happening, placing more emphasis on getting the story across than the poetry of the language.



Wild Works

Bill Mitchell had mainly worked on designing sets for indoor theatres before. During his time at Kneehigh, he became passionate about designing and performing outside. These included Wild Walks, where audiences were led through costumed performances and design along with the story. In 2002, he left Kneehigh to form his own company dedicated to making large-scale outdoor work.

Possibly the most famous production was 2011's *The Passion*, a co-production with Theatre Wales. Taking place in Port Talbot, a Welsh town, between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, it told the story of the last couple of days of Christ's life while weaving in the history of Port Talbot itself. The story responded to local locations and involved around 1,000 people from the community in the production. The climactic crucifixion was witnessed by over 10,000 people.

Activity 2: Research

In groups, research the work of either Wild Works or Emma Rice's productions and try to use interviews with Rice or Mitchell, reviews of their work or the Wild Works and other elements of their work that are the same as what they made at Kneehigh and what they changed.

- The spaces they use
- Who they collaborate with
- What themes or stories they focus on
- What their intentions are for their productions

Present your thoughts to the rest of the class, and note down any elements which you think have influenced their work. How do you think they have brought elements from their time at Kneehigh with other influences? How do you think they have changed or working with the company's practices.

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As well as the artists who have worked within the company itself, Kneehigh companies' styles, including through its use of music, movement and irreverence, pinpoint specific points of influence as so many different theatre companies that saying what work has specifically come from Kneehigh can be unclear, and companies like them use can be clearly seen throughout the theatre world.

One company that has definitely been influenced by Kneehigh is below:

C\$cape

C\$cape are a dance theatre company from Cornwall. Although they originally had a background in circus, Kneehigh helped to inspire their inclusion of narrative and story into their work. Kneehigh, C\$cape often mix the serious and the silly, work outside, and create work inspired by fairy tales and myths.

In 2009, C\$cape collaborated with Kneehigh on their production of *Don Jon* to bring their more formal dance work to creating choreography for the show as dancers.

Activity 3: Research

Individually, find a show by any company from the last few years in which you can see Kneehigh's work – try looking at reviews of shows or at company websites. Make a list of elements of the work remind you of Kneehigh; is it the use of physical theatre and humour? Of music?

Present your findings back to the class. As people are presenting, note down any elements that inspire you. When everyone has presented, discuss these elements around the mind map below, then connect your shows and companies you researched to the mind map (be connected to several). Discuss how these examples have taken inspiration from Kneehigh and how this could influence your own interpretations.



Show

Element

Kneehigh



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Case Studies

Tristan & Yseult

Source Material:

Tristan & Yseult (more commonly written as *Tristan and Isolde*) is a tradition of the twelfth century or earlier. It has been widely adapted and used as source material, perhaps most famously in Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*.

Story:

King Mark, the ruler of Kernow (Cornwall), is at war with Morholt from Ireland. Tristan, a mysterious stranger, helps Mark defeat the Irish forces and kills Morholt. Mark sends Tristan to fetch Yseult, Morholt's sister, to be Mark's wife. As Tristan travels to find Yseult, he suffers from injuries he received during the battle and falls unconscious.

Yseult finds Tristan lying, unconscious and wounded, on a beach and she tends him back to health and starts to fall for him. However, once Tristan is recovered and reveals his identity and mission, Yseult is shocked and saddened. She agrees to return to Kernow to marry King Mark, taking with her a love potion to help with her marriage.

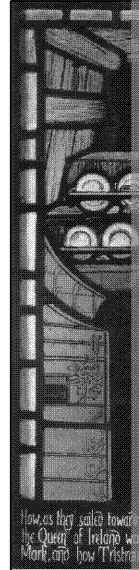
However, on the voyage Tristan and Yseult get drunk together and drink the love and sleeping together. When Yseult arrives in Kernow and marries King Mark, she must take her place at the wedding night.

Although Yseult and Tristan continue an affair, Yseult also falls in love with Frocin, hidden until revealed by Frocin, an aide to the king, and King Mark banishes Yseult. Yseult remain in a nearby forest. One night, King Mark finds them sleeping together and kills them after trying and failing to kill them. When the pair see the knife, they are caused to King Mark and agree to part, promising that they will come to each other.

Yseult returns to King Mark and Tristan ends up marrying another woman, Isolde of Whitehands. Although she loves him, he doesn't return her feelings. As he tells the original Yseult asking her to come to him – if she does she should sail in with white sails, if she refuses she should send a ship with black sails. Although Yseult comes in with white sails, Isolde of Whitehands tells Tristan that she sees black sails. He dies just before Yseult arrives, and when she dies of grief.

Production History:

- Created for Rufford Abbey in Nottinghamshire and Restormel Castle in Cornwall in 2004
- Performed in 2004 at the Minack Theatre and the Eden Project – other venues
- Performed at the National Theatre before a national tour in 2005.
- Toured internationally to Australia and America in 2006.
- 2013 revival for national tour.



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Writing:

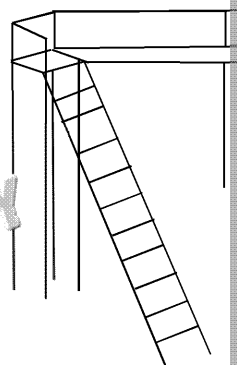
- Written by Carl Grose and Anna Maria Murphy. Grose was responsible for the court and Murphy was responsible for writing the love story.
- Mostly written in poetry – different styles to reflect different characters. King Mark spoke in iambic pentameter to show his formal and regal poise, while Yseult used more childish, limerick-esque rhythms to show the pettiness of the character.
- Grose was inspired by Quentin Tarantino's 'Killing Bill' to have the play end with a gunfight at the end of the story.

Performance:

- In the original production, a red fabric was hung from the central mast, showing the carefree nature of the characters.
- Brangian, Yseult's maid, is played by a man, which at first causes humour but later becomes a touching, heartfelt scene.

Set:

Taking inspiration from the nautical and journeying themes in the play, the stage represented the deck of a ship – the original production even used a real ship's mast and rigging! It featured a central circular platform with the mask rising from the middle, with ropes from which the performers could swing and be suspended. In the original outdoor production, the battlements of the castle were used as a backdrop. When it was moved indoors a raised metal walkway was added to recreate this effect.



These platforms, ropes and fabrics also created a playground for the actors to use as they devised and performed the show. It also created a very malleable space where the audience could imagine different locations, while still providing visual interest.

The indoor production also featured a neon sign for 'The Club of the Unloved', by the platform the musicians sat on, and suspended lampshades above them. This echoed the effect of the costumes and added visual interest.

Music:

The music was written by long-time Kneehigh collaborator Stu Barker. The influences from circus, mambo, salsa and punk to create a melancholy but energetic sound. The production also used music from many other sources. For example, several of Wagner's operas were used to connect the play to previous interpretations of the story. Twentieth-century love songs were also used in scenes like 'The Whitehands' and 'The Unloved'.

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Dead Dog in a Suitcase (and other love songs)

Source:

Dead Dog is an adaptation of *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay (which later became *Threepenny Opera*). The original play mocked many elements of opera and was on stage. It did this using popular songs of the time, but by repurposing other subversive songs. The Kneehigh version combines elements of *The Beggar's Opera* and their own creations.

Story:

Macheath, a criminal and thief, is hired by Mr Peachum, a corrupt businessman. After the act is done, Macheath secretly marries Peachum's daughter Polly. Macheath is arrested and hanged so they can have his money, while Mr Peachum has the intention to run for mayor.

Polly warns Macheath to leave the city in order to escape arrest and he agrees. However, he instead asks his gang to trick Peachum into thinking he left town and goes to The Slammerkin, where he spends time with prostitutes he knows. However, they trick him and allow Mr Peachum to arrest him.

Macheath is taken to a prison run by the corrupt Lockit who is collaborating with Mr Peachum. When Macheath is locked up, Lockit's daughter Lucy enters – Macheath had previously promised to marry her and she is angry about his marriage to Polly. Macheath lies to her, telling her the marriage never took place, but when Lucy arrives the two women fight.

Lucy tricks Macheath and releases Macheath. However, when Macheath returns, Lucy and Polly team up to have him hanged, both having been betrayed by him.

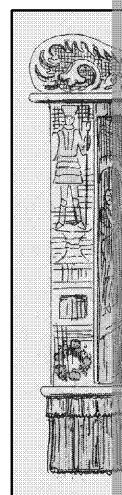
Just before Macheath is to be hanged, he is given a reprieve but at the same time a widow blows up the bank as a protest against the wickedness that she has seen in her husband's death. Chaos breaks loose on stage, eventually culminating in Macheath's death.

Production History:

- June 2014 – Opened at the Liverpool Everyman (with whom the show was produced)
- August 2014 – Performed in The Asylum at the Lost Gardens of Heligan
- Autumn 2015 – National Tour

Writing:

Written by Carl Groves



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Performance:

One of the additions to the original story was three suitcases – one filled with money to bribe the arrest of Macheath, one with Polly's clothes to elope with, and a dog, shot at the same time as him. These were continually switched around throughout the show, creating humour, surprise and intrigue.

The climax of the production was when Macheath was supposed to be hanging. The scene was full of action and song, with confetti falling from the ceiling and banners and placards. The ending of the play was quite ambiguous but also created an exciting atmosphere.

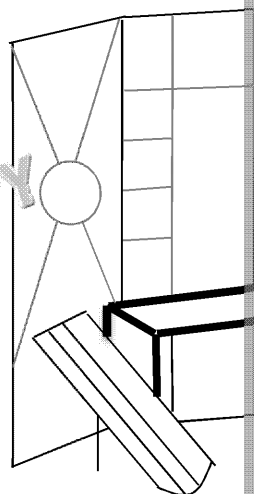
Lighting:



Lighting was used extensively to show different locations in the play, using blue and green light to create threatening outdoor spaces, creating a tight box on the floor to show the police, and using red and blue coloured LEDs to show the extravagance of the Peachums' house and The Sweeney. In the final show, the lights were designed to mimic the lighting of rock concerts as well as to create the sense of rebellion and spectacle that the production wanted.

Set:

The set for *Dead Dog* was backed by panels gridded with metal bars – not only did these give the performers something to clamber and climb but also produced a sense of high-rise city buildings, industrial areas and windows, increasing the sense of claustrophobia and suspicion in the play. In front of these were wooden platforms (including a wooden slide) which could be moved to change the space – performers often entered and exited onto these platforms behind the panels. Many other props and pieces of furniture were added and taken away through the show, including a toilet and a cement mixer. At the centre of the stage for much of the play was a striped Punch and Judy booth, from which the puppets emerged to perform.



Music:

Charles Hazlewood, a composer and conductor, came to Kneehigh with the music for it. He used the same technique as John Gay in using inspiration from the original opera and folk songs, with a modern twist of dubstep. The show contained a higher amount of music than many of Kneehigh's previous shows, with characters using song to express their emotions and situations. The music was often used to bridge scenes between being spoken and sung.

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Activity 1:

In pairs, choose one play from the production history earlier in the pack. Research Cookbook website, reviews and any other sources you can find. Consider:

- Source material
- Story
- Production history
- Writing
- Performance
- Set
- Lighting
- Music
- Costume
- Reception (what the audience thought)

You don't have to look at all of these elements. If you like, choose a smaller number you can go into more depth with them.

Prepare a presentation for the class of what you have researched. Think about how information – do you want to use images? Video clips? Is there a way that you can be creative and engaging?

Present to the class. As the other groups are presenting, note down any ideas which connections you see between different plays.

As a class, discuss how elements of these productions can be used to inspire your own.

Extension Activity

Get into groups. Each group will be assigned two or three of the plays that were discussed. Discuss how you could use ideas from these productions in your own concept of the play. Write down at least three or four ideas on Post-it notes or note cards – these could be for a whole production (for example, costumes, or music) or for a specific moment in the text.

Present your ideas back to the class. As a class, collect the Post-it notes and stick them on a board, grouping and arranging them so that it is easier to see what you do and don't have. You could group with the play going forward, left to right along the board, with rows of different categories (for example, simply split into design/performance or further broken down into movement/interaction/set/costume/puppets). An example of using the Post-it ideas for the story of Little Red Riding Hood below (focusing on puppets and costume design). Discuss which sections and elements you like – if you think of any that fill the gaps, add them!

Copy down ideas that you like onto the worksheet (the horizontal categories have been only suggested so you can use them as you wish).

| | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Red Riding Hood leaving home | Red Riding Hood travelling through the forest | Red Riding Hood meeting the wolf |
| Farm animal puppets from <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> | Miniature people puppets from <i>The Tin Drum</i> | |

| | | Play | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|--|
| | | Beginning | |
| Section/Scene/ Act/Moment | | | |
| Elements: | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

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EXAM Preparation

AS Component 1: Performance Workshop

For this component, you are required to study and practically explore two extracts (one from each of two separate performance texts). You will then prepare:

- A performance from one of the extracts
- A reinterpreted performance of the other extract, using the methodology of the first
- Creative logs for both performances
- An evaluation of the reinterpreted performance

Component 1 is worth 120 marks and accounts for 60% of your total qualification performance. Your creative logs is assessed together, and each piece is marked out of 30. Your performance pieces is marked out of 30 for each piece. The evaluation assesses

The Performances

The length of both performances should be based on the number of people in your group, using the following list:

- 1 actor 2–5 minutes
- 2 actors 5–10 minutes
- 3 actors 7–12 minutes
- 4 actors 9–14 minutes
- 5 actors 11–16 minutes

Both performances can have one designer per group, for any of the following:

- Set designer (including props)
- Costume designer (including hair and make-up)
- Sound designer
- Lighting designer

Students taking on roles should provide sketches and plans of their performance. Each group should have between one and five performers. For the reinterpreted performance, each group should have between two and five performers.

For the reinterpreted text performance you must reinterpret your extract – this can be by changing when and where it is set, adding or changing lines or changing the target audience. You must change the text, 30–70% of your final performance should be lines from the original text.

As Kneehigh's work often focuses on adaptations, they can provide plenty of inspiration for your own creative work. You may especially want to take inspiration from Kneehigh's work to give a new perspective on its themes, and add humour, music, movement and lighting. You want to think about how, in productions such as *Cymbeline*, Kneehigh combine their own words.

Creative Logs

It is recommended that each creative log is between 1,000 and 1,200 words in continuous prose. You can create your log as an audiovisual recording of your performance. Within the log, you can include annotated research, diagrams, photographs, sketches and digital media. However, you should make sure everything you include is appropriate for the demands of the portfolio – hundreds of rehearsal photos will just make it too cluttered. Only the relevant material!

Evaluation

It is recommended that your evaluation is between 1,200 and 1,500 words.

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A Level Component 1: Theatre Workshop

For this component, you are required to study a 10–15-minute extract from a play and create a new interpretation of it based on the methods of your practitioner. You must base your interpretation on your process and decisions.

Component 1 is worth 60 marks and accounts for 20% of your total qualification. Your performance and creative log is assessed together, and is marked out of 30. The performance is marked out of 30.

The Performance

The length of your performance should be based on the number of people in your group, as shown in the following list:

- 2 actors 5–10 minutes
- 3 actors 7–12 minutes
- 4 actors 9–14 minutes
- 5 actors 11–16 minutes

As well as performers, students can take the roles of:

- Set designer (including props)
- Costume designer (including hair and make-up)
- Sound designer
- Lighting designer

There can be a maximum of one designer per role in a group and between two and three designers per role. Students taking on design roles should provide sketches and plans of their designs.

For the reinterpreted text performance, you must reinterpret your extract – you can add, delete, change, or move lines, but you must keep at least 30–70% of your final performance should be lines from the original text.

As Kneehigh's work often focuses on adaptations, they can provide plenty of inspiration for your own work. You may especially want to take inspiration from Kneehigh's work to give a new perspective on its themes, and add humour, music, movement, or other elements. You want to think about how, in productions such as *Cymbeline*, Kneehigh combine their own words with the original text.

The Creative Log

It is recommended that your creative log is between 1,200 and 1,500 words of continuous prose. You can also create your log as an audiovisual recording. Within the log you can use annotated research, diagrams, photographs, sketches, and digital media. However, you should make sure everything you include is relevant to fulfilling the demands of the portfolio – hundreds of rehearsal photos will just be too much for the examiner to find the relevant material!

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A Level Component 2: Text in Action

For this component, you are required to study and practically explore a 10–15-minute performance text, a practitioner and a piece of live theatre. You will then be assessed on your response to these stimuli, inspired by one of these stimuli, you should prepare:

- a devised performance influenced by your theatre practitioner
- a performance from the extract you have studied in a different style to the original
- **one** process and evaluation report for both performances

Component 2 is worth 10 marks and accounts for 40% of your total qualification performance. It is assessed out of 10 for each piece. The AO2 content of your performance is assessed out of 10 and the AO1 content of your process and evaluation report is assessed out of 30.

The Performances

The length of both performances should be based on the number of people in your group, using the following list:

- 2 actors 5–10 minutes
- 3 actors 7–12 minutes
- 4 actors 9–14 minutes

As well as performers, students can take the roles of:

- Set designer (including props)
- Costume designer (including hair and make-up)
- Sound designer
- Lighting designer

There can be a maximum of two designers per group (with each taking a director and four performers). Students taking on design roles should provide sketches and will have to give a 5–10-minute presentation of their ideas to the visiting judges.

As a company which combines devising as an ensemble and new writing, Kneehigh provides a unique source of inspiration for a devised work. When you are creating your piece, think about the stimuli in their rehearsal room.

The Process and Evaluation Report

It is recommended that your report be between 1,300 words and 1,600 words written (although it can contain some visual aids in the first section). The report is in which you will connect theory and practice, analyse and evaluate your process and evaluate your final performances.

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The following exercises will be useful for exploring your extracts and developing your performance.

Complete Performance Concept

One way of exploring an extract is to consider how you would create a concept for the play it is from. This can help you create cohesive ideas as well as apply them to the play.

Exercise: Creating a Concept

A Level

When starting to create a production concept, it is important to ask yourself questions about the play, as your opinions of it will affect how you stage it. As a class choose one extract from the play. Everyone in the class should write down one to three questions related to the extract. (For Component 1 you should pick one extract for the class to focus on) – these can range from the practical (what does the protagonist usually eat for dinner?) to the emotional (should the villain die?) but should always be questions that can't be answered from the text. Write down all the questions people come up with and individually write down your answers. You have done that, answer the three questions below.

What is the most interesting element of the play to you?

How does the story of the play relate to a modern audience?

What do you want the audience to think and feel about the play?

Get into groups and discuss your answers to both these questions and the play specification. Which answers are similar and which are different? Do some answers feel like they relate to the play more than others? Highlight the answers that you find most interesting or exciting. Choose those that are different from other people in your group to help make your ideas.

Write the answers you are most interested in on a piece of paper. Split the paper into two sections: one dedicated to performance and the other to design. Write down ideas on how you would stage the production to show your answers about the play to the audience. For now, don't worry about final ideas, just suggestions. Remember that some elements might fall into both sides (e.g. music are part of design, but (especially due to Kneehigh's ideas about actors controlling the audience) how an actor interacts with these ideas will also change how the audience feels).

Exercise: Creating a Concept (continued): Extension Activity

Prepare a creative presentation for your class about your production concept. You can do this in any of the following ways:

- Write a programme that would be given to the audience who come to see your production.
- Imagine you are marketing your play to potential audience members and create a poster or leaflet that explains what makes your interpretation unique and interesting. This could include flyers for the production or (any of these).
- Create a pitch presentation pitching to a theatre for them to commission you to direct the play. What are you going to do with it?
- In pairs, interview each other about your productions. Ask why certain decisions were made and what ideas came from. (This can also be done individually with one person writing the questions and the other answering).

Deliver your presentation to the class. As a class, discuss what ideas stood out most and what was unclear – note down the feedback from your presentation and improve your concept accordingly.

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The following exercises will be useful for the performance element of AS Component 1 and Component 2.

Exercise: PLANNING a REHEARSAL PERIOD

A Level

It is important that you use your time effectively whether devising a performance. A timeline worksheet, write down how much time you have and then mark on the timeline certain milestones in the process or do certain bits of work for development.

Milestones could include:

- Having a story for the show (Devising)
- Having a first draft of the script (Devising)
- Deciding on the layout of the stage (Devising+Scripted)
- Showing the first run-through of the whole piece to other people (Devising+Scripted)
- Having a finalised list of what design elements need to be prepared for the performance (props, etc.) (Devising+Scripted)

Periods of development could include:

- Researching your key extract
- Developing characters
- Improving completed sections
- Learning lines

These periods of development could overlap or appear more than once in your process. You want to research a time period, develop characters and then do deeper research (into professions / social positions at the time). When you are planning the rehearsal period, look at the pack on how Kneehigh rehearse and consider how you can design a process for your own rehearsal.

Now look at the things you want done and how much time you have. Split up the time on the timeline so you can meet the milestones you have set for yourself. Look at all the factors in all the preparation that you need to make.

Once you have finished your timeline, keep it with you and tick off every session. At the end, check to see if you have achieved everything you wanted to by this point. If not, think about how you can improve next time.

Exercise: INDIVIDUAL REHEARSALS AS COMPONENT 1, A Level

For each rehearsal you have, try filling in a rehearsal report. This includes both how it starts and reflecting on what has been achieved.

Start by identifying what you need to achieve (the rehearsal timeline can help with this). You need to be completed during the rehearsal to help achieve this – try looking through the pack for many are designed for putting Kneehigh's ideas into practice at different stages of the process.

Once you have finished a rehearsal, it is important to record your thoughts before the next one. These reports can help you create your portfolio by analysing how you developed your ideas, and contributed to the process.

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Planning the Rehearsal Process

| Milestones | |
|------------------------|--|
| Periods of Development | |
| Time | |
| Sessions | |

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Rehearsal Report

| Focus (Research, Creation, Improvement, etc.) | | Session No. | |
|---|--|----------------|--|
| Before the Rehearsal | | | |
| What do you want to achieve from this rehearsal? | | | |
| What (Zig Zag Education) inspiration from Kneehigh will you use? | | | |
| Task | | | |
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 5. | | | |
| After the Rehearsal | | | |
| What did you achieve? (Zig Zag Education) | | | |
| How have your ideas for the piece developed? | | | |
| How did you use inspiration from Kneehigh / your key extract / research you have completed? | | | |
| What contributions did you make to the rehearsal? (Zig Zag Education) | | | |
| What needs to be done next? | | | |

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This exercise will be useful for your creative log, evaluation or process and evaluation report.

Exercise: Finding Material

AS Component 1 and A Level Component 1

When it comes to writing your portfolio, it will be easier if you organise all your material in a logical and systematic way. As you are working, collect material and thoughts under the following statements that the specification asks you to answer:

For AS Component 1 Creative Log:

1. How you created and developed your ideas to communicate meaning to the audience.
 - A) How conventions, forms and techniques are used in your piece
 - B) How decisions were made and improved through rehearsal.
2. How your research on your extract and practitioner influenced your piece (context, background, etc.)

For AS Component 1 Evaluation:

1. Analysis and evaluation of rehearsals and development.
 - A) How you used Kneehigh's methods and techniques
 - B) Other techniques and conventions used
2. Analysis and evaluation of final performance/design.
 - A) What performance or design skills were shown
 - B) How you contributed to the performance of the piece

Taken from pages 9-12 AS Eduqas specification - <http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualification/level/Eduqas+AS+Drama+Specification.pdf>

For A Level Component 1 Creative Log:

1. How you created and developed your ideas to communicate meaning to the audience.
 - A) How conventions, forms and techniques are used in your piece
 - B) How decisions were made and improved through rehearsal.
2. How your research on your extract and practitioner influenced your piece (context, background, etc.)

Taken from pages 13-17 A Level Eduqas specification - <http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualification/level/Eduqas+A+level+Drama+-+Specification.pdf>

For A Level Component 2 Process and Evaluation Report:

1. How your practice was informed by theory.
 - A) How you were influenced by Kneehigh and your chosen contrasting style
 - B) How you used the stimulus to devise your performance and interpret the text
2. Analysis and evaluation of rehearsals and development.
 - A) How you used dramatic conventions to create meaning
 - B) How you improved the piece for performance
 - C) How you were influenced by live theatre
3. Analysis and evaluation of final performance/design.
 - A) How effective were your performance or design skills
 - B) How effective was the use of your practitioner and style in performance
 - C) How did you contribute to the success of the piece

Taken from pages 15-17 A Level Eduqas specification - <http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualification/level/Eduqas+A+level+Drama+-+Specification.pdf>

There are many ways to collect material for this – as you may not necessarily know what you need until it's being created, it can be easiest to use a folder with dividers so you can move things around easily. Try to write at least one note for every rehearsal – while you don't have to write a full walkthrough of your rehearsal process, this material will come in useful for answering the questions.

If you collect all your material in this way, then by the time you get to writing your portfolio, you will have together the evidence you have collected to form responses to the given statements.

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Teacher's Notes

For any research activities in this pack, many sources can be used and are in place to start is usually Kneehigh's Cookbook, an online archive of much of which can be created here – zzed.uk/9139-kh-cookbook

Who are Kneehigh?

Activity 1

Suggestions for discussion:

- The themes of *Richard III* and *The Wild Bride* seem darker than 946 but all the time and humour
- Period costumes
- Lots of high-energy movement
- Heavy use of high-tempo music

Activity 2

Examples of companies:

- Welfare State International (community theatre) – founded 1968, created large scale to celebration and ceremony, included community participation, for example *The Tides*
- TIE (community theatre) – founded 1985, collaborating between members of theatre makers to create shows responding to the histories, stories and imaginaries. Recent shows include one examining autism in the Somali community and one during the Second World War
- Big Brum (TIE) – founded 1982, go into schools to perform a show and do work on themes and text of the show, recent work includes *Macbeth*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *World War*.

Suggestions for discussion:

- Outdoor work in keeping with Kneehigh's early work
- Themes and stories from nearby locations and communities used in community theatre
- Work that has been made with members of the community (though many people are professionally trained)
- Kneehigh's shows rarely set out with the intention to cover or explore a particular theme whereas community theatre and TIE might

Activity 3

Suggestions for fourth artist: Tristan Sturrock, Anna Maria Murphy, Charles Hazlewood, Kujawska, Stu Barker, Nick Darke.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Mike Shepherd</p> <p><i>Work/Training before joining Kneehigh</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally trained as a teacher. • Worked for a time as an actor in London and became disillusioned. • Returned to Cornwall and started Kneehigh in 1981 while doing various other jobs. <p><i>Work with Kneehigh</i></p> <p>Involved in some of the most productions since company started.</p> <p><i>Work outside of / after Kneehigh</i></p> <p>Small roles in film.</p> | <p>Bill Mitchell</p> <p><i>Work/Training before joining Kneehigh</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained in art and theatre. • Worked with TIE group and Theatre Centre. <p><i>Work with Kneehigh</i></p> <p>Started by designing shows and then became joint Artist.</p> <p><i>Work outside of / after Kneehigh</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Kneehigh created, focusing on large-scale theatre. • Productions include <i>Passion</i> in Port Talbot. |
|---|---|

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Emma Rice*Work/Training before joining Kneehigh*

- Trained at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.
- Joined Theatre Alibi (community and children's theatre based on storytelling) – including show *Birthday* which formed basis of Kneehigh's later show *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*.
- Trained with Gardzienice in Poland.

Work with Kneehigh

Started as performer then became director and Artistic Director.

Work outside of / after Kneehigh

- Artistic Director of the Globe 2009-2012
- Artistic Director of the new theatre company

**Activity 4**

The timeline can be kept and stuck on a classroom wall to provide a continued reminder of facts for students that they can continue adding to.

Kneehigh's Artistic Intentions**Activity 1**

Suggestions for discussion:

- Pacing that increases through a piece can increase excitement
- Some exciting moments from film and TV (such as an explosion) could not be literally translated but the ways that they are represented could create a different kind of fun and enjoyment
- Kneehigh often use movement, music and humour (especially when any/all of these are used to create enjoyment)

Activity 2

Suggestions for discussion:

- Stories that are commonly adapted often include common emotions or experiences (love, death, etc.) adaptations bringing more context and reference points
- Although they may have common emotions in them, commonly adapted stories are rare, including unusual moments (such as Juliet's sleeping position or Hansel and Gretel's story) which are the most memorable moments of the story

Kneehigh's Rehearsal Process**Activity 1**

Suggestions for discussion:

- Kneehigh work collaboratively but with clear direction – students might be used to producing a single figure, or conversely working in a group with no-one in charge.
- The isolation of Kneehigh's rehearsals helps to create a sense of ensemble and develop a style. This, however, is difficult to recreate in a student rehearsal process.
- Students could copy the rehearsal structure of plotting and structuring a story, creating a script and inspiration and then working on the scenes themselves.

Activity 2

For larger classes, you may want to split the class into two groups so more students can perform after one pair have done the exercise (or the whole class to demonstrate). You may want to pair the instructions with what the audience what they are going to do, in order to get more feedback from the audience.



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Using Kneehigh Techniques in Rehearsal

Most of these exercises are best used for A Level or AS Component 1, and can be used throughout the process. However, a couple would be useful ways of practically exploring scenes in rehearsal.

Exercise – Telling the Story

For a group working on an adaptation from an existing story or taking inspiration from a story, this exercise is most useful early in their process. For a group creating an original story, this exercise is useful throughout the process when they have ideas of what will happen but need to tighten the plot.

Exercise – Bank of Pivotal Moments

This can be used to create scripted moments and dialogue in A Level Component 1 and A Level Component 3 it can also be used to explore themes and associations in rehearsal and design.

Exercise – Creating a Game

Indicative content:

Successful games manage to put the group's intentions for the scene or moment in rehearsal. If they wanted to introduce characters and establish their personalities they could have a game where they perform a certain action when they start to speak.

Exercise – Shrines

This could be created from items students bring in from home or if the school has a collection of props, productions and projects, trying to find appropriate material from that – the restriction of a limited number of items can help creativity. Students could also research and create shrines for their characters.

Kneehigh's Performance Style

Jerzy Grotowski and Poor Theatre

You may want to highlight to students that while Kneehigh take inspiration from Grotowski's practices and do not strictly make 'poor theatre', instead combining elements of it with other techniques to lead into a more modern style. This is a good opportunity for students about taking and adapting ideas from practitioners.

Activity 1

This activity works better the further it is pushed, so that students are forced to use unexpected objects, in order not to repeat what has been done before.

Activity 3

Students should be encouraged to keep their scenes short and to the point to better engage the audience. If students are finding it difficult to devise how to create a scene, they can be encouraged to repeat their scene in front of the audience and give a look towards the audience to discuss with them what effect that created.

Activity 4

Depending on how many students are in the class, you may want to get them to perform in groups of 3 or 4. Limit it to a maximum of 30 seconds. To further limit the amount of time used, you can set a timer or use those below (though allowing students to choose can help them connect to the material).

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1z1z1z1z1z> - horses
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z2z2z2z2z> - cherry-girls (contains strong language)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z3z3z3z3z> - funny-cat-noise

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Kneehigh's Production Design

Exercise – Designing Realistically

Suggestions:

- Items such as ladders, tables or picture frames that can be interacted with can be added to Kneehigh's interactive sets.
- Students should attempt to keep a cohesive sense to their set – not filling it with too many items. An attempt to make it more impressive – a country of many pieces of set could be an eye-catching set.

Activity 2

Indicative costumes:

A bar – Neon lights at the side of the stage. Warm dim lights (large area of light in spotlights and edges).

A forest at night – Gobos to create dappled light. Dim green lights throughout stage corner.

Schoolroom – Bright yellow light from directly overhead. Softer white from side and back.

Submarine – Dark blue wash with darker blue lights moving over stage. Red LEDs at the bottom.

Activity 3

This activity needs a projector, either a digital projector or an OHP.

Suggestions:

- A student could stand in front of the screen and follow the mouse as another student moves the mouse.
- A video of someone talking could be played with a student standing beside the screen and talking back to them.

Activity 4

As this activity helps students with their writing about costume, you may want to give them a dictionary or similar while writing their descriptions – alternatively, after the activity, students could do research to improve their answers with precise terminology.

You may wish to choose a few high costume to give to each student before the lesson. Duplicates of costumes can be already printed out.

Activity 5

This activity can be helped by having gentle music on in the background.

Activity 6

Two clips are taken from Kneehigh's Cookbook, which you need to make a free account to watch. Suggestions for discussion:

- Style: *Tristan & Yseult* mixing influences of opera and Latin American jazz, *The Wild Bride* blues, *Greenland's Coast* inspired by ballads and jazz.
- *Tristan & Yseult* more up-beat and happy, *The Wild Bride* quite dark and foreboding.

Collaboration and Influence

Activity 1

Examples of collaboration within Kneehigh include between director, performers, designers and between several writers (e.g. Carlos and Anna Maria Murphy).

Examples of collaboration outside of Kneehigh: with companies commissioning the buildings where they perform (e.g. the National Theatre), with other companies to perform on Stage, Sadler's Wells), with the audience.

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Activity 2

Indicative content:

- Rice had only once before directed Shakespeare (with a heavily rewritten version) in her style to her Globe productions.
- Wild Works used outdoor spaces like many early Kneehigh works but created a new audience including members of the community.
- Rice saw Shakespeare as foreboding and intimidating. She wanted to use Kneehigh to put the audience on the same level as the work.

Activity 3

Examples of works studied that you could look at:

- [zzed.u](#)  **9-j Shakespeare-play-review** – similar use of set and storytelling as well as costume
- [zzed.u](#)  **Beauty-beast-review** – use of comedy and seeing a traditional story from a new angle

Case Studies

Activity 1

As there is more information on later productions, you may want to encourage students to look at what Kneehigh have produced after 2000. However, to create a more rounded impression of the company, you want to encourage **stronger students** to research earlier plays – perhaps to look at productions that are unlikely to be able to find as much information on each play as the groups looking at.

The case studies and research activity can either be used at the end of studying to consolidate learning or be used at the beginning of study so that students get a general sense of Kneehigh and then look more closely at the different elements of it. Using this activity at the beginning would be starting from absolutely no knowledge of the company.

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