

Teachers' Notes

for

*About Face*

Author

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Illustrators

Monkeystack

## ***About Face***

### **SYNOPSIS**

A child dreams that his nose, eyes, ears and lips run away from his face.

The unleashed facial organs Eyes, Ears, Nose and Lips are keen to experience being alternative senses. Eyes make raspberry pies with Nose, while Lips and Ears dance and fight over a set of earphones.

Eyes' pies catch alight and all must help to extinguish the flames.

Ears hear a noise that sends the organs scurrying back to the face.

The child awakes complaining of sore eyes and ears, a runny nose and cracked lips, and elects to stay in bed to daydream.

### **BACKGROUND TO STORY**

The impetus to write *About Face* grew out of my observations as a teacher of Junior Primary children during drama lessons. Not only did I want to encourage exploration of the senses but to bed down a healthy acceptance of one's face.

I believe if we feel good about the face we show to the world this reflects how we feel inside.

Or is it the other way around?

The fact that all eyes, ears, noses and mouths are different was an important factor for the drama lessons.

I worked with the premise that an acceptance of diversity from an early age lays the foundations for tolerant individuals.

There is no prize for the best eyes, lips, ears or noses in isolation from the boundary and definition of a full face. Indeed there is no prize for a best face.

What is important though is the celebration of difference.

## **DISCUSSING THE TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Why do you think the eyes leave the face first of all and why are the lips last to leave?
2. The illustrators have given the senses legs. Why do you think they did this? Why does Nose have green legs? Should they have arms as well?
3. Which of the senses are the most adventurous?
4. What kind of personalities do you think that each of the senses has? Are they all the same?
5. Out of the four senses in this story is there one which wants to cooperate more than the others?
6. Who do you think the leader is? Why do you think this?
6. If the four senses were to have a race from the bedroom to the kitchen which one would win?
8. Why do you think the illustrators have chosen a deep blue background for the story?
9. The cyclamens in this story are yellow. Most cyclamens are various shades of pink, red and mauve. Can cyclamens be yellow? Why do you think the illustrators chose this colour?
10. Out of Lips, Eyes, Nose and Ears which one is the most thoughtful?
11. Think of all the reasons why the author might have written this story.

## LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

### ORAL

1. Words that rhyme with nose, lips, ears, eyes.
2. Make up titles for stories and extend the ideas with what, who, where and when.

E.g. *Nose Goes on Holidays to Hanky Land.*

3. Get children to contribute to a class poem. Important to feel the power of the rhyming words by clapping the rhythms.
4. Travelling circle story. Each participant furthers the story by adding a word, phrase or sentence.
5. Integrate the above with music so that children can feel and express the rhythm through their bodies. Simple tambours, glockenspiels and other percussive instruments can assist here or any improvisation with piano can help to assist the feel of the beat and rhythm of the words. This is a great opportunity for a partner activity. For those familiar with Kodaly teaching techniques this is ideal organic language and music development.

### WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

1. Travelling stories. Groups of children choose a facial organ. Up to six per group. The group decides on the title for the story. Each writer starts a story. When the word TRAVEL is called out the story is passed on to another member in the group clockwise. Each writer adds to every story until the one they started is returned.
2. Draw a face or any of the organs. Write about the thoughts/feelings/desires of that sensory organ within the boundaries of the sketch.
3. Make a list of titles for stories. Start with oral brainstorm beforehand. This can be done similar to the travelling stories but instead of passing the titles around the group, **the groups move** and contribute to the titles already written.

### **DRAMA/MOVEMENT/MUSIC.**

1. Children identify a personal space preferably in a carpeted hall. Encourage children to remember this space and then give them time to move freely around the room accompanied by music. When the music stops they return to their space as soon as possible.
2. Once the notion of honouring their personal space is understood then build on exploring the space. E.g. now move around the room like a nose, eye etc.
3. This can then develop into partner activities with two people making themselves into any of the facial parts or an entire face.
4. Stimulate creative suggestions with noses and hankies, eyes with glasses, ears with earrings, lips and lipstick. At all times the entire body is used to create the desired shapes.
5. Make different shapes with face parts. Nose hoses; lip whips; eye pies; a glass of ear beer.
6. Allow for fun and exploration and different ideas to emerge and have the shapes that are made move, dance and sing for the rest of the class.
7. As a conclusion I always honour the personal space with a quiet wind down and respect for others' personal spaces.
8. These full bodied experiences become obvious starting points for a range of language activities.

### **ART AND CRAFT**

1. Make individual collages of eyes, noses, and ears etc using pictures from magazines. These can be displayed separately or mounted as a FULL FACE.
2. Use plasticine and clay to make some of the shapes explored through drama. Display these separately or within the confines of a super face.
3. Paper mache life size puppets that can be worn or manipulated externally. This requires a bit of thought and preparation but an artist in residence with extra skills in this area could be considered. Children could then dramatise the story if need be.

### **HEALTH EDUCATION AND VISITS**

1. A subliminal theme throughout this story is **accepting one's self and the face shown to the rest of the world**. At all times allow any activity around this story to reinforce this message.
2. If you can arrange for someone who is visually or hearing impaired to interact with your children do so. Questions about using other senses to compensate usually arise.