

EXETER PHOENIX AND QUIRK THEATRE PRESENT

Quirk

11-28
DEC
2025

THE FESTIVE
SHOW FOR
ALL THE
FAMILY

ERNIE

AND THE SEA OF ICE

SCHOOL'S PACK

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This pack focuses in on different elements of the show, creating a springboard for in-classroom discussions & activities. We regularly co-create our shows with primary schools and community groups in Devon, and in this pack we share some of the co-creation methods we love to use.

You will also find some drama warm ups and exercises geared towards primary age children. Please get in touch with us if you have any questions or would like to collaborate in the future.
theatrequirk@gmail.com

ABOUT QUIRK THEATRE

At Quirk we make great theatre for all generations. A real treat that will gladden the hearts of all family members. This is our 22nd year creating & performing original theatre in Exeter at Christmastime (& more recently, Torrington).

Quirk shows are often a child's first experience of live theatre and this is a responsibility we take very seriously. Although our shows are silly, anarchic & often ridiculous, we pride ourselves on creating theatre with a social conscience, theatre that deals with big subjects & theatre that has kindness at its core. We are also deeply committed to creating meaningful employment and development opportunities for South West creatives.



ERNIE & THE SEA OF ICE!

The Story of Shackleton's Adventure

Over 100 years ago, in 1914, Ernest Shackleton set sail with his crew on the ship **Endurance**. Shackleton's goal was to be the first person to walk right across Antarctica, the **coldest place on Earth**.

He planned to sail as far as he could into the icy Weddell Sea- a vast sea of floating ice sheets. Once they could sail no further and reached land, they would moor their boat and cross the Antarctic on sleds pulled by their dogs.

But after a long journey South, disaster struck! The ship became trapped and eventually crushed by the ice. The men had to **abandon ship** and set up camp on the frozen ocean and after a long winter the Endurance sank completely.

But Shackleton didn't lose hope. After a long, cold wait, the sea ice opened up enough to allow them to escape in **three lifeboats** across freezing seas. They first landed on Elephant Island- but there were no people there, and nothing to eat. Most of the men were too exhausted to travel any further to get help. So Shackleton took just a few of his most trusted shipmates onwards in one lifeboat, across one of the most dangerous stretches of ocean on the planet- Drake's Passage.

They eventually made it to South Georgia Island where there would be a whaling station, and people to help them. But the challenges still weren't over. Shackleton and a few of his men were forced to make a **dangerous** onwards journey, over unmapped mountains, to get help. Thanks to his **bravery and leadership**, every single one of his men survived and made it home safely. What a story!



MEET THE DOGS!

- Shackleton brought 69 dogs on the expedition, housed in special kennels onboard
- The dogs were bred for strength, endurance and thick, warm coats and weighed on average 100 lbs!
- They were brought along to pull the sleds but they also provided much needed companionship and entertainment to the weary crew.
- Most of the dogs were given names - like Hercules, Samson, Satan, Fluff- even Shakespeare!



Tom Crean with his puppies



The dogs by the sinking ship

THE DOG'S NAMES- WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

Rugby, Upton, Bristol, Millhill, Songster, Sandy, Mack, Mercury, Wolf, Amundsen, Hercules, Hackenschmidt, Samson, Sammy, Skipper, Caruso, Sub, Ulysses, Spotty, Bosun, Slobbers, Sadie, Sue, Sally, Jasper, Tim, Sweep, Martin, Splitlip, Luke, Saint, Satan, Chips, Stumps, Snapper, Painful, Bob, Snowball, Jerry, Judge, Sooty, Rufus, Sidelights, Simeon, Swanker, Chirgwin, Steamer, Peter, Fluffy, Steward, Slippery, Elliott, Roy, Noel, Shakespeare, Jamie, Bummer, Smuts, Luipold, Spider, and Sailor

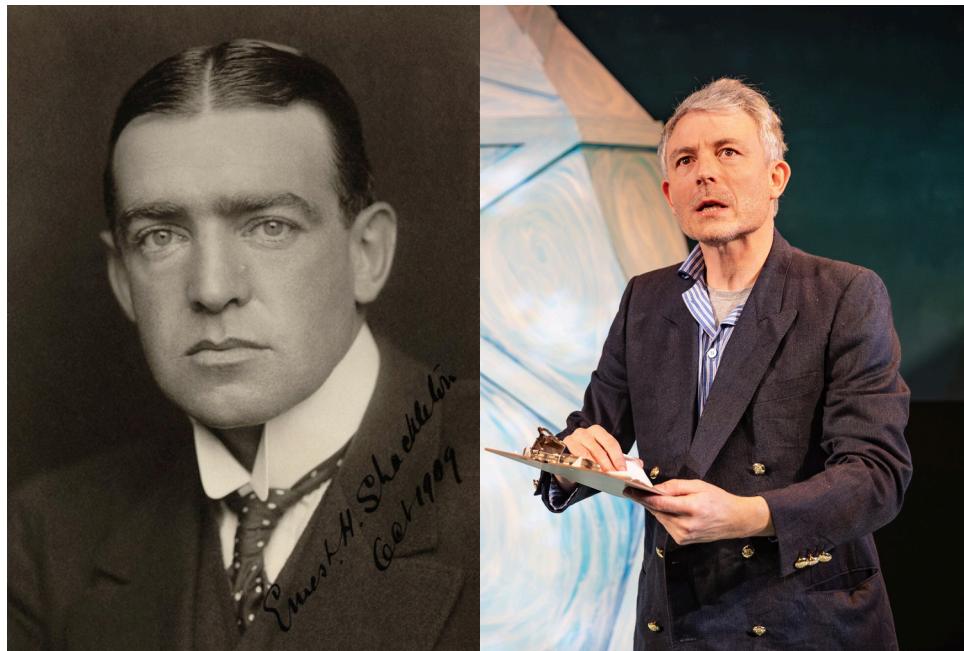
MEET THE CREW!

All the characters that appeared in our show were real members of Shackleton's crew. We made them a lot more silly than they probably were in real life, but Ernest Shackleton really did have 28 crew members on his journey, including an artist, a photographer, a cook and a surgeon! Meet the real people, and our actor's recreating the characters, below!

ERNEST SHACKLETON

Ernest Shackleton is special because he is considered to be one of the most inspirational leaders & explorers of the 20th Century.

While Shackleton failed in his mission to lead the 1st expedition across the South Pole on foot, he is celebrated for getting all his crew home alive in the face of terrible dangers.



- He was an explorer and sailor.
- He was born in Ireland in 1874 and he joined the Merchant Navy at 16.
- He wanted to see places people had never been to before.
- He went on several trips to explore the South Pole, with his expedition on the Endurance being his most famous.
- He died while on an expedition in 1922, and is buried on South Georgia Island

“I believe it is in our nature to explore, to reach out into the unknown. The only true failure would be to not explore at all.”

Shackleton needed to interview potential crew members to make sure they were right for the job. And while the interviews weren't *quite* so silly as they were in our show, they were quite unusual! Shackleton didn't just ask about expedition experience- he also asked them about their teeth (you don't want toothache on a long journey!), their singing ability and their temper. He wanted to make sure his crew could get along and stay positive in the face of danger.

FRANK WORSLEY- CAPTAIN



Frank Worsley was an incredibly skilled sailor, with over 27 years experience behind him when he joined Shackleton's Endurance expedition. In fact, Shackleton really did hire him on the spot, after interviewing him for only a few minutes- just like in our show!

We made Worsley quite a funny and silly character in our show, but in reality he was an incredibly brave and skilled explorer. He was particularly brilliant at navigation, famous for finding his way using the stars (a process called celestial navigation) in freezing conditions when the crew were crossing the stormy seas in tiny lifeboats.

Worsley was one of the two men that Shackleton chose to make the near impossible, 36-hour, 30-mile climb across South Georgia's unmapped mountains to reach help on South Georgia Island. He really was one of Shackleton's most trusted friends. And an incredibly brave one at that.

Frank Worsley was awarded the Silver Polar Medal for his bravery and navigation, which saved the lives of everyone on the expedition.



PERCY BLACKBORROW- STOWAWAY!



In this picture you can see Percy posing with Mrs Chippy, the ship's cat!

Percy Blackborrow was a Welsh sailor and he really **was** a young stowaway on Ernest Shackleton's expedition! A **stowaway** is a person who sneaks onto a boat or other vehicle without permission. And it can be very dangerous to do so, because there might not be enough food or water to go around!

Blackborrow and his friend, William Bakewell, had travelled to Buenos Aires looking for a job. There, Bakewell was given a job as an able seaman by Shackleton, but Blackborow was **not** hired because he was too young. William Bakewell helped Blackborow sneak aboard, and hid him in a locker amongst piles of clothing. On the third day at sea, once there was no possibility of turning back, the stowaway was discovered.

And just like in our show, Ernest Shackleton was not at all happy! Famously, Shackleton said: **“Do you know that on these expeditions we often get very hungry, and if there is a stowaway available, he is the first to be eaten?”**

Despite being initially angry with Percy, Shackleton soon accepted him onto the ship, and Percy became very well-liked and respected amongst the crew.

HENRY McNISH



Henry McNish was born in 1874 and is often referred to by the nickname **Chippy**, because he was the **carpenter** on Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition. He was responsible for lots of the work that ensured the crew's survival after their ship, the Endurance, was destroyed after being trapped in pack ice in the Weddell Sea. He modified the small lifeboat, the James Caird, that allowed Shackleton and five men (including McNish) to make a voyage of 800 hundred miles across the perilous Southern Ocean to fetch help for the rest of the crew.

Mrs Chippy, a tiger-striped tabby, was taken on board the Endurance as a ship's cat. She became very attached to Henry McNish and followed him around everywhere, so they named her Mrs Chippy after him. One month after the ship set sail the crew discovered Mrs Chippy was actually a boy cat, but by then the name had stuck!

Henry McNish and Ernest Shackleton didn't always get along that well and there were a few arguments during the expedition. But McNish was absolutely vital to the expedition.

TOM CREAN- SECOND OFFICER



Tom Crean was an Irish seaman and explorer. He was a very modest and quiet man and he never boasted about his many expeditions. When he finally retired from going on expeditions, he ran a pub called *The South Pole Inn* with his wife and daughters, in County Kerry.

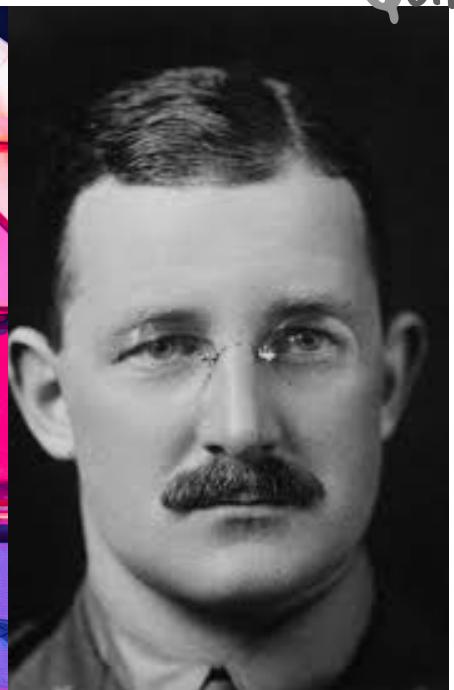
Crean joined Shackleton's expedition as Second Officer with a range of ship's duties. But when the dog-handling expert didn't turn up, Crean took charge of one of the dog-handling teams and he looked after the dogs and puppies born on the journey.

As you saw in our show, it was really important to look after the dogs. The dogs were resilient to the freezing conditions and were to pull the sleds once they had reached land. It's very hard to walk across snow and ice, but the sled dogs were experts at it! Tom Crean really loved the dogs and knew all their names- all **69 of them!**

ALEXANDER MACKLIN -

SURGEON

Macklin was one of two on board doctors on the expedition. He was also put in charge of one of the dog teams. In our show we made him quite a funny character, but in reality he was hardworking and always had a positive attitude- which was very important in the face of danger!



FRANK HURLEY- PHOTOGRAPHER

Although you never see Frank Hurley in our show, you do get a glimpse of his dark room. And it's all true! Frank Hurley was an Australian photographer who joined Shackleton's crew to document the expedition.

Photography and film equipment was very bulky and heavy back then, and it is truly amazing that so many photos survived. When the ship began to sink, Hurley dived head first into icy waters to save as many of his glass plates as he could!

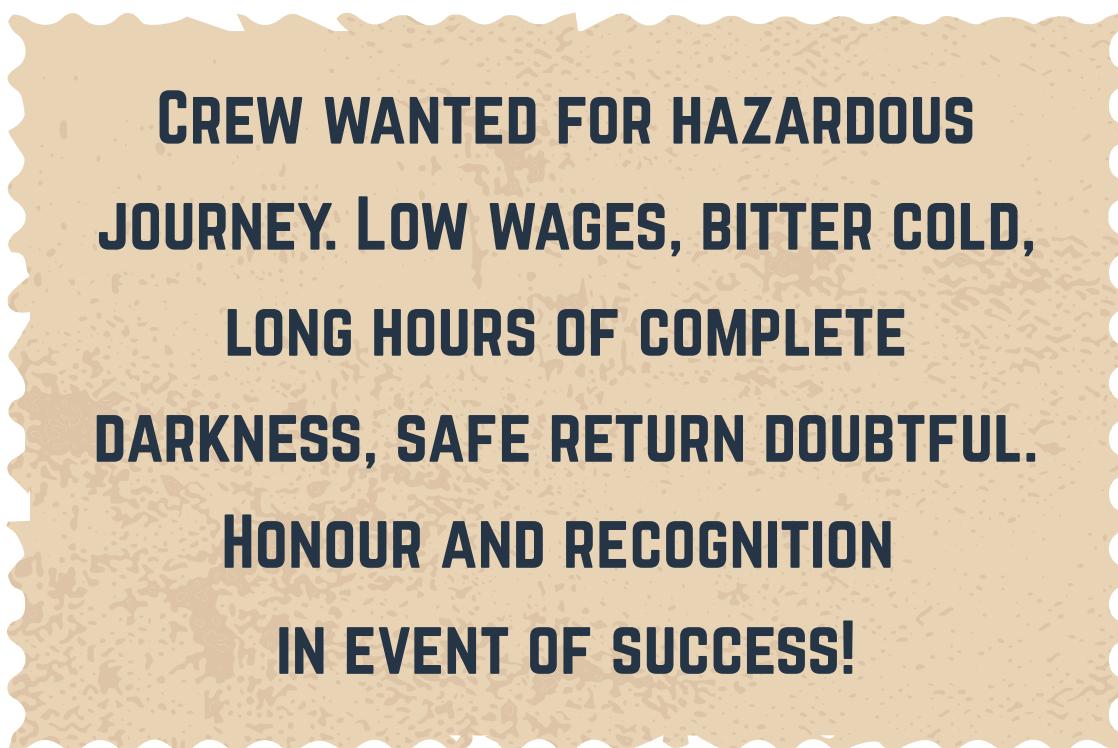
GEORGE MARSTON- ARTIST

There really was an artist on board! Marston joined the expedition to capture paintings and drawings of the voyage and the amazing Antarctic scenery. According to journals and reports from the expedition he was rather moody and missed home a lot.



CREW WANTED!

Whilst no-one can find the original to prove it, lots of people believe that Ernest Shackleton put out an advert to gather a crew for his expedition. We used the words of the advert in our show.



ACTIVITY!

In pairs, take turns to be the interviewer and the person wanting the job. The interviewer should ask questions like:

What are you good at? What skills would you bring? Do you have any special talents? Do you like adventures? Are you brave? Do you like cold weather?

Now that you have lots of ideas, write your own letter to Ernest Shackleton, applying for the job above!

Make sure to include:

- your skills and experience in adventures (big or small)
- your strengths and character traits that would make you great for the job
- any special skills you might have that could be useful if you got trapped on the ice (maybe you play an instrument? Tell great stories? Tap dance?)

Alternatively- you could write an application as one of the characters from the show! How would Worsley apply? How about Percy Blackborrow?

FUN ON THE ICE!

Do you remember the cabaret section of our show? The crew had just found out that they would have to spend the **entire** Antarctic winter stuck in the ice, and Shackleton had decided to throw a party to cheer them up?



Well this really happened! In an attempt to boost morale and keep everyone's spirits up during the long, freezing days trapped on the ice, Ernest encouraged the crew to put on shows. The shipmates would dress up, sing songs, play the banjo and tell jokes! They also played football and had sled races out on the ice!

This is one of the things that really set Shackleton's leadership apart from others. He really understood that having fun with your friends was essential to surviving. Without it, the crew may well have lost hope and given up trying to escape the ice.



If you were part of the trapped crew, what would you do to entertain the others? Perhaps you have a great joke you could tell? A song you could sing together? Maybe you even know a magic trick!



QUIZ TIME!



Circle the correct answer

Who was the leader of the Endurance Expedition?

- a) Robert Scott
- b) Sir Ernest Shackleton
- c) James Cook

How many sled dogs did the explorers bring?

- a) 10
- b) 69
- c) 100

Who was Mrs Chippy?

- a) A dog
- b) A penguin
- c) A cat

What was Shackleton trying to do on his expedition?

- a) Be the 1st person to reach the South Pole
- b) Be the 1st person to cross the Antarctic on foot
- c) Be the fastest person to cross the Antarctic

What was Shackleton's ship called?

- a) Endurance
- b) Adventure
- c) Explorer

What sport did the crew play on the ice?

- a) Football
- b) Ice Hockey
- c) Tennis

How many crew members were onboard the Endurance?

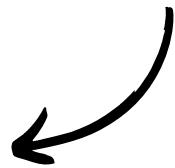
- a) 26
- b) 27
- c) 28

TRUE OR FALSE:
Everyone
made it
home alive

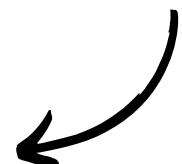
FRANK HURLEY'S PHOTOS



Frank Hurley taking photographs under the bow of The Endurance



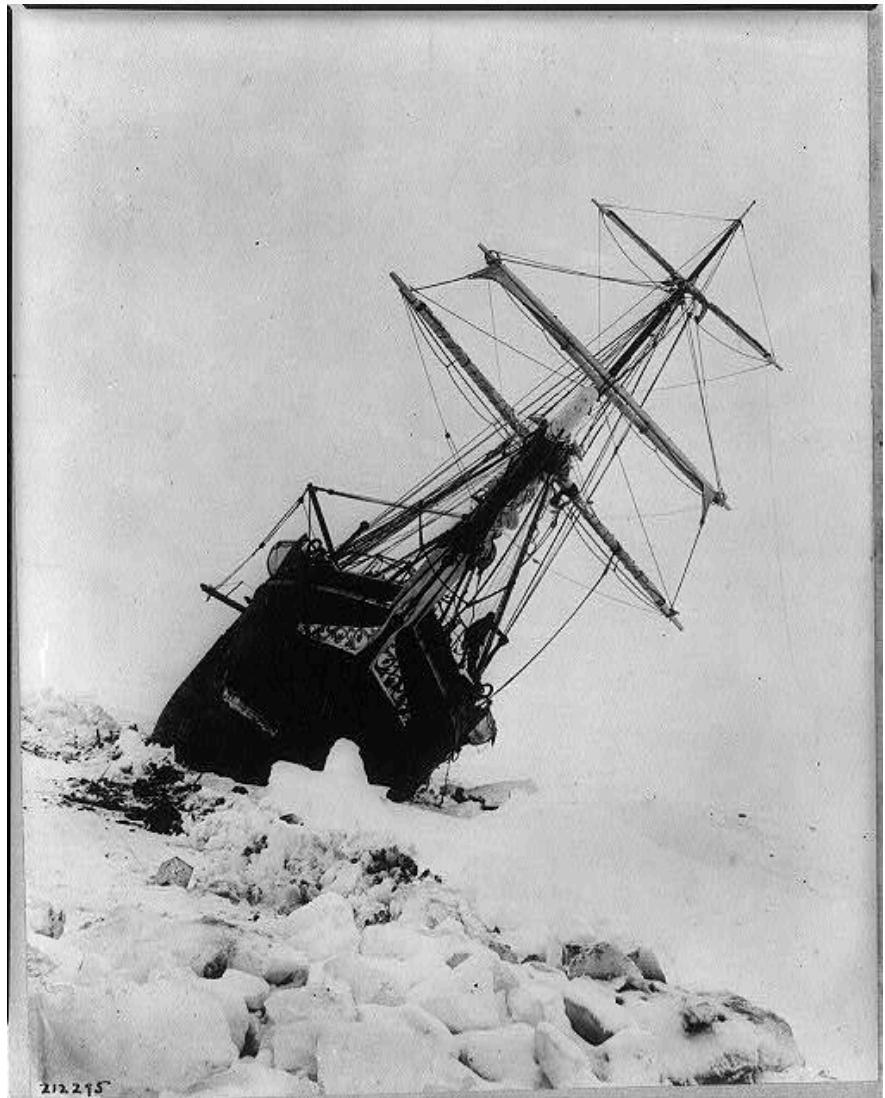
Frank Hurley washing off cinematographic film in the ocean





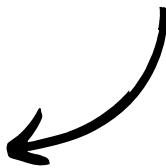
The crew using poles
to push the ice
sheets apart to try
and get the boat
moving again

The Endurance stuck in the
ice and beginning to lean
over. The moving ice sheets
gradually crushed the hull of
the boat and she titled over
to one side.





The boat gradually sunk over many days, leaving the crew (and the dogs) stranded on the ice.



This incredible photo shows the men left behind on Elephant Island waving goodbye to Shackleton & his small crew, as they sailed off to South Georgia to get help



A MODERN ADVENTURE

We set our show in modern times, with Mum, Dad and Ernie dressing up and telling us the Shackleton story. And we wanted to do this because exciting expeditions and incredible adventures are happening all the time!



We were inspired by a very recent expedition called [Antarctic Quest 21](#), which set off from Plymouth in 2021. The expedition followed in Ernest Shackleton's footsteps and continued the work that Shackleton, and other early polar explorers, started over 100 years ago.

Many of the expeditions at that time recorded scientific observations and brought back specimens, which gave scientists incredible insight into the environment. Shackleton didn't know it at the time, but the scientific observations he and his crew made back then are crucial to climate science now!

The Antarctic Quest 21 crew did lots of scientific research on their expedition, like looking at microplastics in the South Pole Ice, measuring snow to see how quickly the climate is changing at the Poles and measuring weather patterns.

MEET- MUM!



In our show, Ernie's mum is a **Scientist and Explorer**. She is inspired by Ernest Shackleton and on Boxing Day, she is off on an expedition of her own- measuring **microplastics** at the South Pole. We based our character of Mum on an Antarctic Quest 21 explorer called **Cat Cameron**!

CAT CAMERON

- Cat Cameron is an explorer and scientist.
- Cat grew up on the edge of The Brecon Beacons in Wales and she loved adventuring as a child.
- Cat has gone on adventures and worked all over the world, from the savannas of East Africa, to the jungles of Borneo and Costa Rica,
- On the Antarctic Quest, Cat led Scientific projects, including looking into the frequency of Microplastics in the South Pole Ice.



You can see updates from the expedition, and [videos of Cat taking samples](#), on the Antarctic Quest [Website](#)!

MAKING A SCRIPT



Every year, we write a new script for our Christmas show. A script is simply the **written version of what the actors will say and do on stage**.

How is a script different to ordinary writing?

- A script is set out in a special way to show which character is speaking
- A script has a lot more **dialogue** than most ordinary writing (dialogue is people speaking) and a lot less **description**
- When there **is** description, a script has **stage directions**- these are descriptions of what will happen on stage

Have a look at the bit of our script extract from this year's show, **Ernie & The Sea Of Ice**, on the next page

Take a Look

Look at the script extract and have a think about these questions:

- How is it different to a story ?
- Why do you think some words are in **bold**?
- Which bits do you think are the *stage directions*?



Script Super Sleuth

A script has lots of clues in it about characters. What they're **doing**, what they're **thinking**, what they're **saying**, **how** they're saying it and how they're **feeling**

Have a go at reading out the script extract in small groups, and then think about these questions:

- How is Ernie feeling?
- How do you **know** that's how he's feeling?
- How might the actor playing Ernie change his **voice** and his **movements** to show the audience how he is feeling?
- What are Mum and Dad trying to do?
- What do you think might happen next?

The lights come up to show a children's bedroom. A boy, Ernie, is lying face down on the pillows with his bottom sticking up in the air. His Mum and Dad are standing either side of the bed, both trying to cheer him up. It's Christmas Eve

MUM

Ernie. Darling. You can't stay like that forever.

Mum reaches over to tickle Ernie's feet. He grumbles and stays face down on the pillows.

DAD

It's Christmas Eve, sausage. If you stay there sulking all night, Santa won't come

ERNIE

I don't want you to go

Ernie says this with his face still in the pillow so we don't really hear the words

MUM

I didn't quite catch that, Ernie

Ernie suddenly sits up in bed

ERNIE

I said, I don't want you to go!

MUM

Oh, we've talked about this, love.

ERNIE

You've totally ruined Christmas!

DAD

Ernest! That's why Mum's not going till Boxing day! So we can all have Christmas day together.

MUM

And I'll be back before you know it and....

ERNIE

But I don't want you to go at all. What if I get one of my tummy aches? I'll be all alone!

I'll probably DIE!

Writing Challenge!

Jot down some ideas about what you think might happen next after Ernie has said that he will be all alone and will probably die. What might Dad say? What might Mum do to try and make Ernie cheer up a bit? Then have a go at making a script

Remember

- Scripts don't need to have "she said" or "he said"
- Write the characters name and then underneath write what they say
- You can put clues in the **way your character speaks** to tell the audience how that character is feeling. Someone who is angry might **use exclamation marks!** Someone who is nervous might not say much at all.
- Don't forget to add some *stage directions!*
- What do you think might happen next? (There is no wrong answer!)

When you've finished- have a go at acting them out!



WORD SEARCH

S	Q	D	Z	A	D	V	E	N	T	U	R	E	H	G
H	Q	N	I	I	H	F	H	A	Q	Z	T	X	E	U
I	N	M	F	C	N	N	I	S	Y	F	I	S	Y	P
P	X	P	L	J	X	F	C	D	E	R	K	O	P	K
X	V	X	N	G	U	I	E	O	N	P	Z	U	M	O
M	W	V	C	U	M	A	U	H	D	E	V	T	J	Y
R	L	D	V	G	E	N	I	S	U	N	R	H	A	V
S	C	U	P	R	O	J	D	J	R	G	X	P	B	D
C	R	P	P	N	G	V	G	Z	A	U	D	O	R	M
H	E	E	B	I	N	H	Q	D	N	I	C	L	T	L
I	W	P	B	D	O	C	J	O	C	N	U	E	Z	F
P	O	G	M	J	L	J	K	G	E	S	Y	I	B	K
P	S	V	Q	A	L	R	D	S	P	L	P	P	B	Y
Y	D	N	Y	R	O	H	A	Z	C	I	B	I	U	J
S	H	A	C	K	L	E	T	O	N	I	Y	A	K	R

Adventure

Dogs

Shackleton

Mrs Chippy

Ice

South Pole

Penguins

Endurance

Ship

Crew





ERNIE

AND THE SEA OF ICE



Drama Games

Quick warm Up Games

Pumpkin Face/ Raisin Face

- Open your whole face as wide as possible and say 'PUMPKIN FACE' in your biggest voice
- Screw your face up as tightly as possible and squeak 'raisin face' in your smallest voice
- Repeat, getting your body involved too!



Pass The Face

- Make an amazing funny face, then turn to the person next to you in the circle
- The next person has to mirror the face as exactly as they can. They then make a new face and send it to the next person.
- Repeat, all the way around, adding sounds for more fun!



Pass The Sound

- The first person in the circle makes a brilliant sound (with an action attached for more fun)
- The next person has to mirror the sound as exactly as they can. They then make a new sound and send it to the next person- try & find variety of pitch, timbre, volume etc
- Repeat, all the way around, ending with a round of applause!



- Warming up the face, voice and body
- Having fun together
- Unlocking playfulness

Rehearsal Room Exercises

Flocking

We use the flocking exercise nearly every rehearsal day, as it's such a great way to tune in to each other & to open up play.

- Gather in small groups (4 or less) and form a diamond shape like this photo
- Move around the space, allowing the person at the front of the diamond to lead the movement
- Everyone else in the group tries to move in exactly the same way
- Whenever the group turns & a new person is at the front, they become the new leader
- Try and move together, mirroring what the leader is doing .

It's best to keep movements slow and small to begin with, allowing things to speed up as everyone tunes in



Aims

Group focus / Play / Cooperation / Physical Warm Up

Development

- Starting with breath, encourage participants to add sound as a group, letting sounds come out of the physicality.
- Invite flocking groups to 'meet' each other in the space & see what games develop