

Resource title: The Green Children (Primary)

Source: www.nationaldrama.org.uk

Outline

This KS2 resource provides a drama lesson on “The Green Children”, a twelfth century East Anglian Legend about a green boy and girl from another world, who unexpectedly find themselves near a Suffolk village. Villagers accept them into their community. The boy pines for his homeland and dies. The girl settles, marries a local boy and learns to speak the language of the villagers. A free cartoon film online version of the story is available as well as different published and web versions of the legend. An outline of the story is available on the National Drama website.

The focus of the teaching and learning is on valuing, understanding and accepting cultural similarities and differences and on encouraging empathy with and care of people who are new arrivals to a community or country. The drama brings the feelings and dilemmas alive and supports active, positive, whole class engagement, action and reflection in role.

Drama Strategies and Conventions used include

Teacher in role, Improvisation, Occupational mime, Still Image, Freeze Frame, Thought-Tracking, Conscience Alley, Small group playmaking, Performance carousel, Ritual, Mime and movement, Image theatre.

Links across other subjects within resource

English: Additional storytelling/writing generated by the drama - Reporting as a chronicle - Newspaper report writing (modernising the event) - Scriptwriting dialogue - Old English language- epitaphs

History: Invaders and settlers (Norman England), Feudal system, Castles

Geography: Migration

Science: Natural dyes, Light and Dark (and its impact on the body)

Art and Design: Storyboarding - Using natural dyes for art – Creating a commemorative tapestry, sculpture, statue or stained glass window

Design and Technology: Food and Healthy Eating

Additional support

Websites

<http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/playstory24-the-green-children-of-woolpit.html>

(a cartoon version of the legend with sound)

<http://anomalyinfo.com/articles>

(an historical account)

www.nationaldrama.org.uk - to download the lesson plan

Picture Books: “The Green Children” by Kevin Crossley-Holland and Alan Marks, ISBN 0-19-279958-4. A version written as told by the green girl.

“Maudie and the Green Children” by Adrian Mitchell, ISBN 1-896580-06-8. A version as told by a Suffolk child in local dialect.

Opera score of “The Green Children – in 2 acts” by Nicola Lefanu (Novello)

Published drama schemes of work on “The Green Children”:

“School Improvement Through Drama by Patrice Baldwin. Publisher:

Network Continuum Education (Autumn 2009) Drama Unit 2 ISBN: 9781855394568

“Beginning Drama 11- 14” by Jonathan Neelands. Publisher: David Fulton (1998), ISBN 1-85346-528-3. A year 7 version of the legend is used with the green children being found in modern times.

The Green Children

This unit of drama can be divided into several lessons. You may select from the activities for your own learning and teaching purposes or follow through the activities sequentially.

The drama is based on the monologue of the story as it might have been told by a Woolpit villager.

It is recommended you do the drama lesson first (using parts of the monologue) and do not read the class the whole monologue until afterwards.

Possible key learning objectives:

- *To learn about and engender a sense of collective responsibility towards all people of any cultural origin*
- *To learn that cultural diversity in communities can enrich our lives*
- *To encourage tolerance with and empathy for displaced and/or migrant people in unfamiliar situations and countries*

Resources:

- One or two large green pieces of material and two plain masks coloured green.
- Atmospheric soundtrack music (optional)
- Blank paper word strips or self adhesive notelets
- Felt tip pens
- A PE hoop to represent a spotlight within which you step to read the excerpts of the monologue at the appropriate moments

1. Place the green material/masks centrally and tell them that this represents green children. Tell them that they are harvest workers from the fields and ask them to each enter the space one at a time and place themselves in the scene in relation to the green children. As they freeze they should say aloud what they are wondering, e.g. "I wonder if they are dangerous?", "I wonder where they have come from?" etc. If you have suitable background music it could be used to add atmosphere.

Thought-tracking and tableau.

2. When everyone has entered the scene and is in a still **tableau**, read (or preferably **perform**) the first section of the monologue. You can place a PE hoop on the ground to represent a spot-lit area in which you will stand each time you to read/perform parts of the monologue.

I will remember that day all my life. It was a warm, sunny day and we had almost finished the harvesting, when we found them near the mouth of the wolf pit. Two of them there were and green all over, green faces, hands and everything. They were blinking and sweating and kept covering their eyes. The sunlight was too bright for them and they were too hot I think. They had a sort of green tinge about them, not bright green if you know what I mean, just greenish. I was frightened at first but they were really frightened, bless them! Well they would be, wouldn't they, with all us farm workers gathering around them and pointing and whispering. They didn't understand what we said to them. They just stood there, huddling each other and shaking and making strange noises. They were a sorry sight, poor things. Anyway, when we found them, we didn't know what to think. Well, we thought all sorts. I remember thinking that if we touched them then maybe we would turn green too. My brother said they might bring us bad luck and maybe the devil himself had sent them.

3. Step out of the "Spotlight" hoop. Gather what the children *know* about the two green children so far, i.e. they are greenish, sweating, blinking, appear hot, frightened, huddled, etc. You could write this information on paper word strips or self adhesive labels and place the words near the green

material/masks as a visual organiser/aide memoire. The words could later be transferred after the lesson to a **role on the wall**.

4. What might the farm workers be whispering? Tell the children that at an agreed signal the tableau will come alive for just a minute and they should then whispering about the green children to each other in role as farm workers. (**improvisation**) You can join in too. (**teacher in role**)
5. Freeze the scene (**freeze-frame**) and explain that you will pass by each child in turn and as you pass be each person they will say aloud a snippet (soundbite) of what they were whispering. You are **eavesdropping** but they need to whisper loud enough for all to hear.
6. Join them in role as a farm worker and guide them towards an **"in role" discussion** about what should be done with the children. Encourage them to justify any suggestion, e.g. "We should leave them here because they might bring disease." "We should take them home with us because they are just young children and need to be taken care of," etc. In role after a while you can suggest that you take them to Sir Ralph de Caine (the local knight and landowner). Judge when to freeze the scene, step into the spotlight hoop and read/tell ...

Anyway we had to do something with them, we couldn't just leave them there, so we took them up to show Sir Ralph de Caine at the big hall. He is the richest landowner in this district and a clever man too. We knew he'd know what to do with them.

7. Ask the class to form two long lines facing each other (**conscience alley**). Sir Ralph will be walking between the lines when he enters the big hall. Place the green material/masks a few metres from the end of the line and be ready to enter from the other end in role as Sir Ralph (**teacher in role**). Tell them that while they are waiting with the green children for Sir Ralph to arrive in the hall, they can talk in role as they wait in line (**improvisation**). They might talk about the children and/or be looking around the hall and talking to someone nearby about what they can see there. When Sir Ralph arrives all must be silent until he passes. As Sir Ralph passes each farm worker/villager, they should bow and then speak aloud what their character's private thoughts are at this moment, e.g. "I

wonder what he will do with them.” “I hope he locks them away.” etc. (*thought-tracking*)

8. Using the piece of monologue below as a prompt, **teacher in role** as Sir Ralph tells the assembled villagers that they have collective responsibility for the care and welfare of these unfortunate and vulnerable children. They can stay in his home but all will need to help them settle into the community. As Sir Ralph answer any questions and try to encourage a dialogue but your word is law in the end. Then place and step into the spotlight hoop to become the farm worker again and read or **perform** the next part of the dialogue.

When we got to the Great Hall and we showed Sir Ralph de Caine, he was full of wonder. He didn't say much for a while, he just looked at them and then he said that they could stay with him but we would all be responsible for them and help them settle. Well no-one would dare disagree with Sir Ralph de Caine would they, so that was that! Anyway, we are all good Christian folk and we all know the parable of the good Samaritan and how you should help strangers with no home to go to. Sir Ralph ordered that food be served to them straight away. Poor things must have been hungry but even though the servants brought in all sorts of food for them they wouldn't touch any of it. Not what they were used to I suppose. Anyway, when one of the servants walked by with a basket full of raw beanpods their little eyes lit up and they got excited. They wanted to eat them and started ripping the stalks apart and then started to cry and howl and make that dreadful noise again. They were sobbing and hugging each other and then someone showed them that the beans were in the pods and not in the stalks and they calmed down a bit and then ate their fill.

9. A **drama game** (that fits with the drama). Ask the class to sit in a circle and place the green material/masks in the centre. Ask for two volunteers to be the green children for a few minutes. When you have decided who they will be take them aside and explain this activity to them, out of the earshot of the rest of the class. Explain that they will place the green material around their shoulders and will be brought various foods by the rest of the class (as villagers) but will not speak and will only eat what is green. If a villager presents potatoes they will be disgusted. If they are presented with peas or beans they will be delighted. If

someone presents apples they will mime selecting and eating only one a green one). Invite the class to enter in turn and present the green children with a basket of particular fruit or vegetables, stating aloud to the green children what the fruit/vegetable is. Can the class work out what the green children will eat, i.e. only green fruit/vegetables? Can they without saying what the “rule” is, show when they have worked it out by starting to give only acceptable foods?

10. Place the spotlight hoop, stand in it and read/**perform** the following piece of monologue

They liked green beans and for a long time was the only food they would eat, maybe because it was green. Funny thing is that later, when the girl started trying other food, she started to look less green. Makes you think doesn't it?

Anyway, it didn't matter what the boy ate, he was never happy. Miserable all the time he was. He didn't eat much and soon he started to look ill and right weary. Pining he was. My wife said she used to see him some days wandering around near the wolf pit, trying to find his way back home again. The boy never did settle, even though we all did try to take care of him and make him happy.

11. Ask the children to get into pairs, with a “talking partner”. In role they will talk together about what they might be able to do to help make the green boy happy, e.g. invite him around to play with their children, make him a green cake, etc. (**improvisation**). When they have talked in role for a few minutes bring them all into a class circle. Ask them to imagine that they tries their idea and it did not work. Why not? Now with them all as the villagers together enable them to recount what went wrong. Judge when this has gone on long enough and then place and step into the spotlight hoop and say.

Sad to say, he was often ill and he died in the end. Died of a broken heart we think, because he missed his homeland too much and just couldn't settle with us.

You could elaborate the monologue if you wish, weaving in some of their ideas to make him happy, that failed, e.g. ***Some villagers invited him to play with their children but he just stood alone***

and would not play. Others made him a green cake but he would not eat any of it. Sad to say, he was often ill ...etc.

12. In the spotlight hoop, read/perform:

Now the girl, his sister, she was different. She made sure she settled in and we were pleased to see it. Learned our language she did and then she could tell us all sorts of strange stories, like how she and her brother had come to Suffolk in the first place.

Step out of the hoop and tell the children that they are now going to have the opportunity to ask the girl questions (***hot-seating***). Before they start to talk with the girl ask them what they might want to find out? For example, “Where did you come from?” “What is it like?” “Have you got a mother and father in St. Martin’s Land?” etc. Thinking about their questions first helps them formulate better questions and gives you an idea what you will be asked when you sit on a chair to be hot-seated as the green girl (***teacher in role/hot-seating***). Be sure to include the actual storyline (below) but feel able to improvise and elaborate if you wish (including how you felt arriving in a strange land) or say, “I can’t remember” if you want to not make up storyline, e.g. we don’t know about her parents so she can just not remember or she could make up something authentic sounding (but later separate out with the children what is in the original story and what was not. When the time feels right, step back into the spotlight hoop and read/perform ...

She said they had been looking after sheep and found a cave entrance. Well you know what children are! They went inside and she said they could hear the sound of strange bells and so they kept following the sound of the bells and ended up where we found them that day, near the entrance to the wolf pit. She used to look for the way back to St. Martin’s Land in the early days (that was the name of the place she said they came from), but she gave up looking in the end. Her little brother never did though, until he couldn’t walk anymore. She said they didn’t have sunshine in St. Martin’s Land and that it was twilight all the time there. I don’t think I’d like that but she said it was what she had been used to, so she’d been happy enough with it. She liked sunshine too though. She said they were Christian people in St. Martin’s Land. We’d never heard of green Christians before but then no reason

why there wouldn't be I suppose if God is everywhere. Anyway the girl was baptised here and she really did become one of our community and we all liked her. She got a good job serving a knight, so she did well.

13. Ask the children to get into groups of 4. Tell them that the green girl will probably have had vivid dreams about her past and possible future. In dreams, anything can happen and we remember things symbolically and not always naturalistically. You might want to discuss the nature of dreams/nightmares first and the fact that some are recurring. Then ask the groups to create two still images. One represents her past and the other her possible future. They must move stylistically in slow motion into Image 1 and then from Image 1 to 2 and back to Image 1 and then 2 again, i.e. both images will be rehearsed/presented twice as one flowing piece of movement **performance** (past/future/past/future).

You can use a **performance carousel** to present the dream images. Each group is given a number to establish the sequence of the group performances. Then all groups must be totally still and quiet. Group 1 in slow motion moves into their repeated dream movement sequence (past/future/past/future) and then melts back down to stillness and silence on the ground. Group 2 then moves slowly into their first image, etc. until all groups have performed in a carousel. Ask them before they start the carousel to hold the stillness and silence at the end as you will have something to add at the end of their performance/s.

14. Once the performance carousel finishes place the spotlight hoop somewhere theatrically appropriate and step inside and read/perform .. .

She doesn't live here now of course because in the end she married a boy from Lenna. Went off to live there she did. Although someone else told me she then went afterwards to live in Kings Lynn. I don't know if she had any children or not though. I wonder if they would be born green? Anyway they'd all be welcome back here anytime and that is certain. People still talk about her and her brother and we miss them. They brought a lot to our village that was new and different and I for one liked that.

Some possible cross curricular studies:

PSE:

(aspects including awareness of self and others, empathy, tolerance, acceptance, cultural diversity, inclusion)

- New beginnings
- Changes
- Relationships

English/ICT:

- Elaborate on this monologue and redraft it using what emerged in the drama.
- Tell the story again or write it as a monologue from another character's viewpoint, e.g. the sick boy, Sir Ralph, etc.
- Research different versions and images of the story using the internet and maybe produce your own version for the school website.

Maths/History

- How far is Kings Lynn (Norfolk) from Woolpit (Suffolk) and how would the girl have travelled there in the 12th century? How long might it have taken to travel between these places then and now?

History/English

- The map study and research of local and/or Anglo Saxon place names could be linked to this. Wolf pit became Woolpit. Norfolk was the North Folk and Suffolk the South Folk, etc.
- We know about this legend because it was written down in various books and chronicles (see www.anomolyinfo.com). What sort of people wrote chronicles, why and who do they write them for? Use the internet to search about the sources of the Green Children legend. Can it be true? What would the modern day equivalent of a chronicle be? Can they be trusted?
- Migration

Science

- How are our bodies affected by the different foods we eat? Can the colour of foods we eat affect our skin and/or other aspects of our body? Is there any scientific explanation that could explain green children?

Geography/ICT:

- Find Woolpit in Suffolk on a map or get a satellite image using the internet. Look at Anglo-Saxon place names locally and/or in East Anglia and see if you can work out/research their origins.

Art and Design/Drama (Mantle of the Expert)

- The village sign of Woolpit (originally Wolf Pit) has a wolf and the green children on it. Ask the children to become designers and say you (an external client) are commissioning them to create a new village sign for Woolpit that will still incorporate the wolf and green children but differently (with additions if they wish). They can present their finished design in role as a designer and with you as the client.

Music

- A 2 act opera of “The Green Children” has been written. The children can however create a new song for it or a soundtrack for a possible film.
- The free cartoon film on line could be used silently with the children creating and maybe recording a soundtrack to accompany it.

Author: Patrice Baldwin

www.patricebaldwin.com

CC1 -

The Story of the Green Children

(a monologue of the story as it might have been told by a Woolpit villager)

I will remember that day all my life. It was a warm, sunny day and we had almost finished the harvesting, when we found them near the mouth of the wolf pit. Two of them there were and green all over, green faces, hands and everything. They were blinking and

sweating and kept covering their eyes. The sunlight was too bright for them and they were too hot I think. They had a sort of green tinge about them, not bright green if you know what I mean, just greenish. I was frightened at first but they were *really* frightened, bless them! Well they would be, wouldn't they, with all us farm workers gathering around them and pointing and whispering. They didn't understand what we said to them. They just stood there, huddling each other and shaking and making strange noises. They were a sorry sight, poor things. We found out later that they were brother and sister and had come up from another land where all the folk were green but we knew none of that then, not until the girl learned to speak our language later and could tell us everything.

Anyway, when we found them, we didn't know what to think. Well, we thought all sorts. I remember thinking that if we touched them then maybe we would turn green too. My brother said they might bring us bad luck and maybe the devil himself had sent them. Anyway we had to do something with them, we couldn't just leave them there, so we took them up to show Sir Ralph de Caine at the Great Hall. He is the richest landowner in this district and a clever man too. We knew he'd know what to do with them.

When we got to the Great Hall and we showed Sir Ralph de Caine, he was full of wonder. He didn't say much for a while, he just looked at them and then he said that they could stay with him but we would all be responsible for them and help them settle. Well no-one would dare disagree with Sir Ralph de Caine would they, so that was that! Anyway, we are all good Christian folk and we all know the parable of the good Samaritan and how you should help strangers with no home to go to.

Sir Ralph ordered that food be served to them straight away. Poor things must have been hungry but even though the servants brought in all sorts of food for them they wouldn't touch any of it. Not what they were used to I suppose. Anyway, when one of the servants walked by with a basket full of raw beanpods their little eyes lit up and they got excited. They wanted to eat them and started ripping the stalks apart and then started to cry and howl and make that dreadful noise again. They were sobbing and hugging each other and then someone showed them that the beans were in the pods and not in the stalks and they calmed down a bit and then ate their fill. They liked green beans and for a long time was the only food they would eat, maybe because it was

green. Funny thing is that later, when the girl started trying other food, she started to look less green. Makes you think doesn't it?

Anyway, it didn't matter what the boy ate, he was never happy. Miserable all the time he was. He didn't eat much and soon he started to look ill and right weary. Pining he was. My wife said she used to see him some days wandering around near the wolf pit, trying to find his way back home again. The boy never did settle, even though we all did try to take care of him and make him happy. Sad to say, he was often ill and he died in the end. Died of a broken heart we think, because he missed his homeland too much and just couldn't settle with us.

Now the girl, his sister, she was different. She made sure she settled in and we were pleased to see it. Learned our language she did and then she could tell us all sorts of strange stories, like how she and her brother had come to Suffolk in the first place. She said they had been looking after sheep and found a cave entrance. Well you know what children are! They went inside and she said they could hear the sound of strange bells and so they kept following the sound of the bells and ended up where we found them that day, near the entrance to the wolf pit.

She used to look for the way back to St. Martin's Land in the early days (that was the name of the place she said they came from), but she gave up looking in the end. Her little brother never did though, until he couldn't walk anymore. She said they didn't have sunshine in St. Martin's Land and that it was twilight all the time there. I don't think I'd like that but she said it was what she had been used to, so she'd been happy enough with it. She liked sunshine too though. She said they were Christian people in St. Martin's Land. We'd never heard of green Christians before but then no reason why there wouldn't be I suppose if God is everywhere. Anyway the girl was baptised here and she really did become one of our community and we all liked her. She got a good job serving a knight, so she did well.

She doesn't live here now of course because in the end she married a boy from Lenna. Went off to live there she did. Although someone else told me she then went afterwards to live in Kings Lynn. I don't know if she had any children or not though. I wonder if they would be born green? Anyway they'd all be welcome back here anytime and that is certain. People still talk about her and her brother and we miss them. They brought a lot to our village that was new and different and I for one liked that.

© *Patrice Baldwin* 2009

National Drama

A resource for teachers to use in the classroom – by Patrice Baldwin