

A Tiger's Tale



w6
theatre company

Education Resources

Post Show Questions

- **Which parts did you enjoy the most?**
- Which parts did you find funny?
- **Which parts did you find sad?**
- What other emotions did you feel during the show?
- **How did you feel at the end?**
- The actors played lots of different parts - how many can you remember?
- **What did you like about the music?**
- How many ways was the set used?
- **The story was actually true. How did you feel when you learned this?**

The True Story of Fenella the Holmfirth Tiger



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The Overend family from Holmfirth were circus entertainers and toured South Africa in 1939. During their tour they were offered two newly born tiger cubs to rear and although one of them soon died, they successfully reared the remaining one, Fenella. At the outbreak of World War II, they brought her back with them to live in Holmfirth. After a spell in quarantine, Fenella lived with the family who took her on long walks around Holmfirth. Many people, including the pupils of 'The Nabb' school (Holmfirth J & I), remember meeting her and recall amusing incidents involving her.

Fenella also went on tour briefly in circuses and theatres across Britain. Sadly, she died in 1950 but is still fondly remembered by her family and the people of Holmfirth.

- **The children could research The Holmfirth Tiger on the internet. Ask them to share what they have learned with their classmates.**
- **Are there many differences between the true story and the one the storytellers made up in A Tiger's Tale?**

The Circus: Balances

The family in the story were a balancing act in the circus.

Here are some simple balances for the children to practice in pairs. They could also invent some of their own. Once the children have mastered some balances, ask them to put a short sequence together, and perform them for each other....with a little TA DAH! of course.



Extra special balance



The Circus: Create a Circus



Put the children into small groups in a room where they have space to move around. As a whole class build up a list of circus acts: Tightrope walkers, Clowns, Jugglers, Trapeze, Fire Eaters, Stilt walkers, Acrobats, Knife Throwers etc

Explain to the children that you are going to give them a short while to make up a circus act. They need to practice their act and get it ready to 'perform'. They also need to think of a name for their act! You will be The Ring Master.

Visit each group, and make a note of the name they have chosen. When everyone is ready, play some circus music and lead the children in a parade, to sit in a circle! Doing your very best acting as the ring master, announce each act and invite them to share their performance in the middle of the circle. TA DAH!

The Circus: Super Circus Facts!

- The word "circus" comes from the Latin word meaning circle or ring.
- Joseph Grimalidi is thought to be one of the first circus clowns. He put on his first show in England in 1805. He was known as Joey the Clown. He performed tricks such as tumbling, pratfalls and slapstick.
- Throughout the Middle Ages jesters and fools entertained people like clowns do today. The colourful costumes of clowns are modelled on the costumes of these jesters.
- Circuses used to be in permanent buildings rather than in tents like you see today. Paris used to have lots of these buildings.
- It was by the end of the nineteenth century that we had the "big-top" tents and the circus became very popular.
- In order to perform tricks safely, circus performers have to work as an equal team with no main star of the show. There is therefore a great team spirit amongst the circus community.
- The most basic form of juggling using just 3 objects is called a "3 ball cascade."
- Circuses have many superstitions.
- One circus superstition is that performers must enter the ring on their right foot. They believe that if you don't do this you will get bad luck.
- Once a circus performer's suitcase is set down backstage, it's thought to be bad luck to move it before the circus moves to a different place.
- Popcorn, a popular circus snack, has been around since 400 B.C.

The Circus: Animals in Circus

Fenella was born into a circus back in 1930s. Ask the children to THINK ABOUT and DISCUSS: **Is it right for animals to be a part of circus life?**

Useful Links for teachers: www.bornfree.org.uk / www.wwf.org.uk

These organisations provide a great deal of information & lots of ways to participate in protecting wild animals from exploitation and extinction.

Tigers

Fenella was born in South Africa, had a human family, and grew up and died in Holmfirth, West Yorkshire. She never knew the country of Sumatra, which is where her real tiger parents were from.

Fantastic Facts about Sumatran Tigers!

- Tigers are the largest wild cats in the world. Adults can weigh up to **363kg** - that's about the same as *ten* ten year olds! - and measure up to **3.3m!**
- Tigers are carnivores, eating only meat. They mainly feed on large mammals such as **deer, wild pigs, antelope** and **buffalo**.
- Unlike most members of the cat family, tigers like water. They are good swimmers and often cool off in pools or streams.
- When a tiger wants to be heard, you'll know about it - because their roar can be heard as far as **three kilometres** away.
- They may be big and heavy, but tigers are by no means slow movers. In fact, at full speed they can reach up to **65km/h!**
- These fierce felines have walked the earth for a long time. Fossil remains of tigers found in parts of China are believed to be **2 million years old**. Yikes!
- Every tiger in the world is unique - no two tigers have the same pattern of stripes.
- Today, there are **five** subspecies of tiger: **Bengal, South China, Indochinese, Sumatran** and **Siberian**. Sadly, three subspecies of tiger have become extinct—**Caspian, Bali** and **Javan**.
- Less than **100 years ago**, tigers could be found throughout Asia. Sadly, hunting and habitat loss have put populations at risk, and today their range has been reduced to around **7%** of its former



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Stories

The storytellers made up a brand new story because they had told all the others so many times.

- **Ask the children, which stories they may have been talking about. How many stories are there about princesses and princes? Dragons? Wicked witches?**
- **How many fairy tale stories can the children think of?**
- **In A Tiger's Tale the storytellers made their story up as they went along. Your class could have a go at this.** With no pressure and no 'right or wrongs' begin by sitting in a circle, explain to the children, they are going to have a go at making up a story one sentence at a time. Use an object to pass around the circle, so the children know when to speak. If the children get a bit stuck, they could just pass the object on. As the story approaches the end of the circle remind the children that the story is coming to an end soon!
- Alternatively, they could **tell the story of A Tiger's Tale** one sentence at a time. At the end, in small groups, the children could act out their story.
- In the show, the storytellers talked about 'the rules of the story.' **Can the children remember these rules and are there any more they can think of?**
- **'Something bad has to happen' is one of these rules.** Is this true? What examples can the children think of in other stories?
- A Tiger's Tale is actually based on the real story of the Holmfirth Tiger. **Ask the children if anything has ever happened to them that would make a good story.**
- Ask the children to talk to their family, Grandparents or friends to discover if anything 'surprising' has ever happened to them.
- **Remind the children that 'Everybody has got a Tale' and that extraordinary things can happen to 'ordinary' people.**

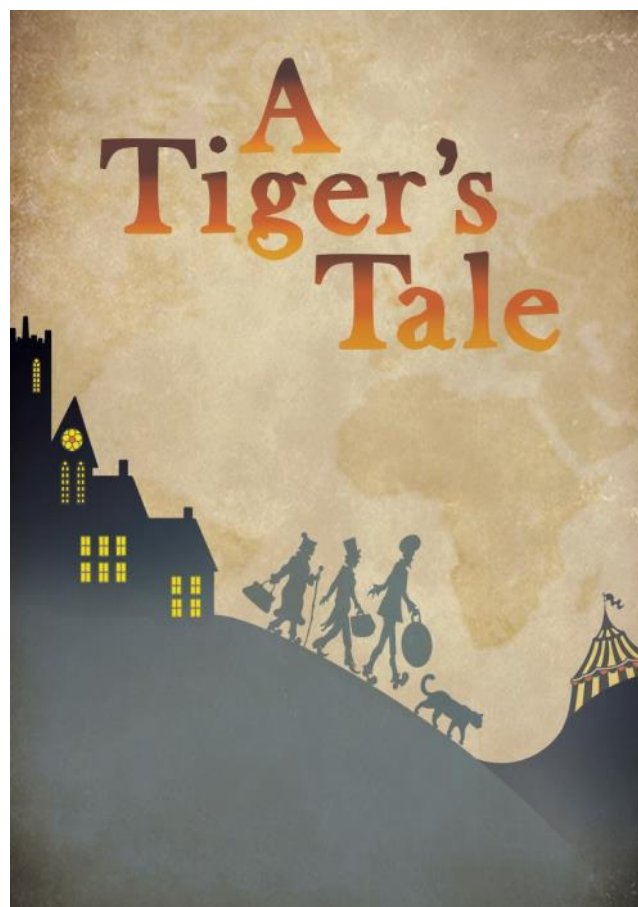
**A
Tiger's
Tale**

Everybody's Got a Tale...

- One of the **songs** from the show is available in MP3 format. You can find it here: www.m6theatre.co.uk/shows/a-tigers-tale/

In the first version, each line is repeated so that you can teach it to your children, and in the second, it just plays for you all to sing along!

- The story of Fenella, The Holmfirth Tiger, lives in a **book** called 'Tiger on a String' by Kassie Overend. Cassie's daughter, Rosamund Hiles, still lives in Holmfirth and is currently republishing the book that tells this amazing true story.
- **Photographs** from the play are available for you to look at and print off for any displays you would like to make with your children here: www.m6theatre.co.uk/shows/a-tigers-tale/



Meet the Tiger's Tale Team!

Mike Kenny – Writer

Mike wrote the play. He worked out the story, deciding what would happen at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. He decided what the characters would say and what they would do.



Gilly Baskeyfield – Director

Gilly worked with the actors and helped them decide how the play would be acted out. Directing a play is a very interesting job. Gilly not only had to help the actors work out how the characters move but also how they feel, and this influences how the actors speak their lines. Emotions affect how we behave, how we speak and how we interact with each other in real life as well as in plays.

Owen Gaynor, Kat Johns–Burke and Nicola Jayne Ingram – Actors

The job of the actors was to read the script, learn the lines by heart and then pretend to be someone else. As well as speaking and singing loudly enough for everyone in the audience to hear, they also have to try and understand why the characters behave the way that they do and then to act in each performance as though the play is really happening.

What did you like about their performances?

Joss Matzen – Designer and Production & Touring Director

Joss has two jobs. As designer, Joss had to decide what the set would look like. The set is where the action of the play takes place. First she draws to try and capture some ideas then makes a small model to see what it will look like.

Joss also drives a big van with the set inside. Together with the actors she unloads everything and then builds the set. Once the set is up, she gets all the sound equipment ready and the hall ready for the audience to arrive. During the show she plays the music. After the show she takes everything down and packs the van up again ready for the next day



What did you like about the set?

James Atherton – Composer

James has written the music for the play. He decided what kind of music should go with the words and when and how it should be played

How did the music and songs make you feel?

TC Howard – Movement Director

TC is a dancer and choreographer. She helps people to move their bodies. She worked with the actors to help them discover how their characters might walk and move. She also choreographed the movement sequences for example the circus show and the 'Balance' song routine.

