

Resource Pack

My
Dad's a
BIRDMAN

BY DAVID ALMOND

Young
Vic



All illustrations by Polly Dunbar
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Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

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Contents

Section 1- The Play

1.	The Playwright- David Almond	3
2.	Synopsis	6
3.	<i>My Dad's a Birdman</i> The Book	8

Section 2- The Production

4.	Cast and Creative Team	13
5.	<i>My Dad's a Birdman</i> at the Young Vic	14
6.	The Model Box	17
7.	The Actors	22
8.	Rehearsal Diary	28

Section 3- Background

9.	Human Birdmen	32
10.	A History of Human Flight	36
11.	Creatures with Wings	45

Section 4- Drama Games and Activities 56

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Young Vic 2010

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The Young Vic Teachers Programme is supported by:



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SECTION 1- THE PLAY

1. a) The Playwright- David Almond



David Almond is a children's writer from the North East of England. He was born in Newcastle, and grew up in a town called Felling-on-Tyne. His Dad had been in the army and his Mum was a typist. He had four sisters and one brother and lots of relatives in the streets nearby.

Felling was a coal mining town before David moved there. By the time he went to school, all the pits had closed. The river at the foot of the town was lined with warehouses and shipyards. At the summit was a wild area called the Heather Hills where David loved playing football, camping out with his friends, and messing about with his grandfather in his allotment.

David always wanted to be a writer.

" always knew I would be a writer – I wrote stories and stitched them into little books. I had aunts and uncles who could have a room full of folk in fits of laughter and tears with their tales."

His uncle worked for a printers and he used to watch the printed pages coming off the rollers and think about printing his own books. He also loved the library and dreamed of seeing his books on the shelves.

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

His favourite books when he was young were the tales of King Arthur and his knights, the books of T Lobsang Rampa, Hemingway's stories and his sister's Enid Blyton books.

He went to primary school in Felling and Sunderland which he liked. He didn't like secondary school though, so his teachers were surprised when he decided to go to the University of East Anglia to study English and American Literature. After University, he worked as a hotel porter, a postman and a labourer. Then he trained to be a teacher which he did while starting to write his books and stories. *Skellig* was David's first book for children and was published in 1998. It has lots of similar themes to *My Dad's a Birdman*. It is about a boy who finds a strange, grumpy, old man in his garage who he adopts as a friend and introduces to his next door neighbour, a home-schooled girl called Mina. Later on, it seems that this man, Skellig, has wings and even magical powers. When he visits Michael's prematurely born little sister Joy in the hospital, she miraculously recovers. Then Skellig disappears forever. Could he have been an angel? *Skellig* was also made into a play at The Young Vic. It has also been made into an opera. David won the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award for *Skellig*. He has also won the Hans Christian Andersen medals for his books.

David Almond's Other Work

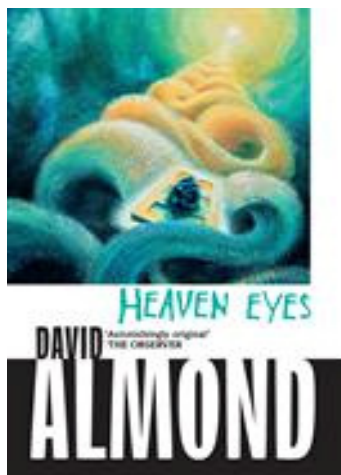
David has written novels for children; a collection of short stories; picture books; and plays for the theatre. He has also written some books and stories for adults

Children's Novels:

- *Kit's Wilderness, Heaven Eyes, Secret Heart, The Fire-Eaters, Clay*
- Collection of stories based on his childhood: *Counting Stars*
- *Kate, the Cat and the Moon*, illustrated by Stephen Lambert

Plays:

- *Wild Girl, Wild Boy* which toured the UK in 2001.
- *Skellig* was produced at The Young Vic in 2003, alongside *My Dad's a Birdman*
- *Heaven Eyes* which was premiered at The Edinburgh Fringe in 2005



Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Now he is a full-time writer and lives with his family in Northumberland. He has a cabin at the bottom of the garden where he writes his books, makes tea, and is visited by the birds.¹

Ten interesting facts about David Almond

1. He once held the school high-jump record - 5 ft 2.5 inches.
2. He has a pet rabbit called Bill who can grunt.
3. He dreams about football.
4. He loves Japanese food - except for the thing he was given once that looked like an alien's brain.
5. He has taken part in three Great North Runs (half-marathons).
6. His favourite place is Upper Swaledale in Yorkshire.
7. He loves bikes, camping and fires.
8. His first TV appearance was as an altar boy in a televised mass when he was eleven.
9. His grandfather was a bookie (he took bets on horse races). His advice to David was 'Never bet' and 'Never read novels. They're all just lies.'
10. His nickname at school was Dai.

¹ From David Almond's biography on www.davidalmond.com

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

2. Synopsis

My Dad's A Birdman is a play about Lizzie Crow, her Dad Jack and her Auntie Doreen. It is set in an ordinary town in the North of England in an ordinary street called Lark Lane. However, something is afoot in Lark Lane...

Since Mum died, Lizzie's dad hasn't been the same. Lizzie has to remind him to get out of bed, and get washed and dressed and she worries that when she is away at school, he won't be able to look after himself. Auntie Doreen tries to make sure everyone is ok, by cooking dumplings for tea and insisting that Lizzie concentrate on her sums and spelling.

And they may well have something to worry about. Behind closed doors, Dad is hatching a plan...

Scene 1:

At the start of the play, Lizzie is worried about Dad, who has been acting very strangely, not eating his breakfast and not getting dressed. As soon as Lizzie leaves for school, Dad spits out his toast, and starts catching flies instead. Dad is turning into the Human Birdman!

As he gets out the wings he has been making, Dad hears Mr Poop parading round the town announcing the Great Human Bird Competition. Dad has found his moment. He enters the competition and believes that with wings and faith, he will be able to fly. He will win the competition and make Lizzie proud of him again.

Lizzie sneaks home from school to check on Dad, and finds him practising leaping off chairs and tables. Auntie Doreen arrives too and is horrified. Human beings can't fly! She thinks Dad's gone potty as a pancake. But Lizzie knows that Dad, like everyone, needs to have a dream.

So, while Auntie Doreen tries to bring him back to earth with the help of her suet dumplings, Lizzie decides she will help Dad. Together, they make tail feathers, caw like real Crows and learn how to treat birds with respect.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Scene 2:

Lizzie and Dad are building a nest in the kitchen and laying imaginary eggs. Mr Poop arrives to collect any final entries for the Great Human Bird Competition and Lizzie decides that she is going to enter the competition with Dad. Even though Mr Poop warns that the water is very wet this time of year, Lizzie - the Human Birdgirl - has her wings and faith like Dad.

Auntie Doreen enlists the help of Lizzie's headteacher, Mr Mint, to try and get Lizzie out of Dad's claws and back to school. But Mr Mint is mesmerised by the Crows' attempts to fly, and decides that rather than stopping them, he is going to enter the competition too!

Scene 3:

Dawn breaks on the day of the Great Human Bird Competition. People have come from all over the world to try and propel themselves across the river to the other side and win one thousand pounds. Woodpecker Wallie crashes into the river, followed swiftly by Elastic Eddie and Lenny the Lop. Can the Crows make it with their wings and faith?

Back at home, sitting down to a lovely dinner of Auntie Doreen's dumplings, the Crows realise that it really doesn't matter if you win or lose. All that matters is that Lizzie, Dad and Auntie Doreen love each other and are proud of each other, and that they are doing it together.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

3. *My Dad's a Birdman* The Book

My Dad's a Birdman started out as a play that was performed at the Young Vic in 2003. The Young Vic were putting on the play of *Skellig*, and David wanted to make something to go alongside, that looked at some of the same ideas and themes, but was for younger children. Later on, he decided to write it down and turn it into a book. He asked Polly Dunbar, who is an illustrator, to do the pictures.

Polly Dunbar lives in Brighton and has written and illustrated her own books as well as illustrating *My Dad's a Birdman*. She says '*My Dad's a Birdman* was great to illustrate. It's so funny and colourful, as well as being poignant'. Polly likes dressing up in her pink frock and painting, and she also likes making puppets.

David's favourite story when he was at school was King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.



What is your favourite story?

In a pair, interview each partner. One of you can be the newspaper reporter and the other the interviewee. Find out 3 interesting facts about your partner. Swap over. Then the whole class can come back together and everyone presents their 3 'facts you never knew' about each person.

The Characters

Lizzie Crow



Lizzie lives with her Dad in Lark Lane. She is an only child, and she worries about her Dad. She often has to remind him to get out of bed, and get washed and dressed. Sometimes, it is a bit like she is the grown up and he is the child. Lizzie likes school, and is really clever: she can add 7 and 3 and 2 and 9, and spell Cat and Czechoslovakia. She is also brave and strong. She helps her Dad find out about birds – she teaches him that it is cruel to try and catch a bird in a bag, and instead teaches him how to be kind to the birds, to watch how their wings work from the window and to listen to their songs.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Jack Crow



Jack Crow is Lizzie's Dad. He used to have a job, but now his main job is being a Human Birdman. He wants to win the Great Human Bird Competition to make Lizzie proud of him: he dreams of Lizzie standing on the banks of the river shouting out to everyone 'That's my Dad up there – the greatest Birdman and the greatest Dad there ever was!' He is good at making things. As well as making his wings and beak and nest, he has made Lizzie all kinds of toys in the past like a puppet theatre and a playhouse in the garden.

Auntie Doreen Doody



Auntie Doreen is Lizzie's aunt. She loves making dumplings out of suet and eggs and flour. She thinks the whole town has gone crackers over the Birdman competition, and thinks Lizzie and Dad are nicompoopy noodleheads for trying to fly. She wants everyone to keep their feet firmly on the ground and for everything just to be normal. She worries about Lizzie and Dad now that Mum is gone – she worries that Lizzie's school work is going to rack and ruin, and she worries that they will hurt themselves in the competition. But in the end she comes to the river to cheer them on because, most of all, she loves them.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Mr Mortimer 'Polo' Mint



Mr Mint is Lizzie's headteacher. His real name is Mortimer Mint, but his mum calls him Polo for short and he definitely doesn't want the children at school to know about that! He is a nice man who feels a bit nervous about sneaking around in the Crows' garden with Auntie Doreen. He also understands that sometimes Lizzie needs to stay home from school to be with her Dad. He gets so excited by Lizzie and Dad's creations that he decides to enter the competition himself. He doesn't normally like dumplings, but finds Auntie Doreen's dumplings delicious.

Mr Poop



Mr Poop is a chubby little man with a big megaphone. He goes around the town calling out for entries for the Great Human Bird Competition and writing them down on his clipboard. On the day of the competition, it is his job to announce everyone, including Benny the Bee Boy and the Human Helicopter Hubert Hall. He also fishes them out of the water when they fall in!

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young Vic



Who is your favourite character in the play?



What do you like about them and what they do in the play?

Across the River Tyne

David Almond was born in North East England, in Northumberland, close to the River Tyne.

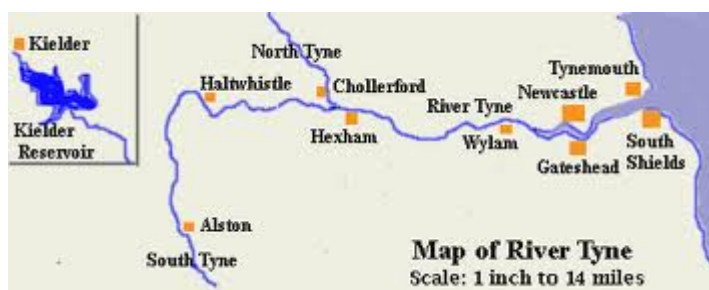
Here's a map:



We're in London. Dad and Lizzie (and David Almond) are near Newcastle Upon Tyne

All of David's books are full of images from the landscape where he was born. In *My Dad's a Birdman*, the river they are trying to cross is the River Tyne. David says this about it:

"I grew up in the south side of the Tyne and came to live on the north side and as a child you're constantly crossing the river on bridges. Maybe that notion of flying across the Tyne was planted a long long time ago when I was a boy going backwards and forwards across the river."



This is a map of the River Tyne



Flying is one way of trying to cross a river. What other ways might there be?

Using a large sheet of blue material, or a large piece of blue paper, you could draw some of your ideas and make a collage for the wall.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Looking After Dad

Lizzie and her Dad have both been very sad since Mum died. But Dad, in particular, is not managing very well. Lizzie has to help him remember to do all the simple daily tasks like eat his breakfast, shave and get dressed.

Dad was just like a little boy standing there.

"What am I going to do with you?" she said.

"Don't know Lizzie," he muttered.

"I don't know if I should leave you on your own."

"Course you should," he said. "You got to go to school..."



It's a bit like Lizzie has become the parent and Dad has become the child that she has to look after.



Lots of children are like Lizzie and have to look after a parent or a relative who is not very well. Fortunately, Lizzie also has Auntie Doreen to help look after Dad. Charlie, the actor who plays Lizzie in the play, said in her interview how much she admires Lizzie. She is strong and brave and kind. Even though she is also sad about her Mum, Lizzie believes in her Dad's dreams and together they heal some of their sadness by dreaming of flying, building their nest, and entering the competition together.

There are some organizations that help children like Lizzie who have to look after their parents. You can find out more about them here: www.barnardos.org.uk, www.youngcarer.com, www.carers.org.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

SECTION 2- THE PRODUCTION

4. The Cast and Creative Team

Cast (alphabetical order)

Dad	David Annen
Mr Mint	Paul Bental
Mr Poop	Sam Cox
Lizzie	Charlie Sanderson
Aunt Doreen	Tracey Wilkinson

Musicians

Keyboards	Philip Bateman
Percussion	Gregory Pringle

Creative Team

Direction	Oliver Mears
Design	Giles Cadle
Light	Giuseppe di Iorio
Music	Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe
Sound	Gregory Clarke
Musical Direction & Arrangement	Philip Bateman
Movement Direction	Anna Morrissey
Assistant Director	Sandra Maturana

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

5. *My Dad's a Birdman* at the Young Vic

How did they put it all together?

The Creative Team

The Creative Team are the people behind the scenes of the play. They choose the setting, the costumes, the music, the sounds and the lights. Here, we meet a few of them...

An Interview with the Director Oliver Mears

You are the director of the show. How would you describe your role on the production?

I think about how all the different elements - acting, set, sound, lighting etc - fit together to make as theatrical an event as possible, I also help get great performances from the actors.

You chose the play, My Dad's a Birdman – why?

Because of its fantastic humour, great characters and really clever and simple use of language.

What are the main themes of the story for you?

Love, family togetherness, the importance of creativity - as well as some quite serious ones like loss.

What would you like your audience to leave the theatre with after seeing the show?

I'd like them to leave with a warm glow.

What has been the best part of the process so far?

So far, the best part has been rehearsing with the actors.

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

Something a bit old fashioned like a Heath Robinson contraption.²

² Heath Robinson was a cartoonist and illustrator. He illustrated children's books, like Polly Dunbar who illustrated *My Dad's a Birdman*. Some of the books Heath Robinson illustrated were: *Arabian Nights*, *Tales from Shakespeare* and *Andersen's Fairy Tales*. He became most well know for his drawings of crazy and complicated machines, powered by things like kettles and pedal power, which were very very complicated. For more information, please visit <http://heathrobinson.org>

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

An Interview with the Movement Director, Anna Morrissey

Can you tell us about your role in the production?

I am the movement director on the production and my work involves exploring movement with the actors and devising and choreographing material.

Can you tell us a bit about the movement for the show?

We've worked on bird movement in this show, particularly focusing on crows. We've also worked from improvisation to discover some of the dance moves.

If you entered The Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

It would have long, strong legs like an emu for a fast run up, big, wide wings to glide as far as possible and a tail like a prawn to swim back once I'd hit the water.



Charlie Sanderson as Lizzie

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

An Interview with the Musical Director, Phil Bateman

Can you describe your role in the production?

The music was written by The Pet Shop Boys before our rehearsal period started. It is their vision for the sound of the show and it is my job was to make all the music work in the rehearsal room.

I had to teach the songs and adapt them to our actors, and the way they then fleshed out the characters and their songs.

How did you work in the rehearsals and what instruments did you use?

The challenge is to make the music seamlessly fit into the script. First this is done with just a piano in rehearsals, then percussion is brought in and finally keyboards.

What is your favourite piece of music in the play?

My favourite piece of music is The Night Song.

If you entered The Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

If I were to enter the competition I'd definitely have an umbrella on my head and a propeller on my bum.



David Annen as Dad

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

An Interview with the Designer Giles Cadle

You are the designer of the show. Can you describe your role?

I work with the director in deciding what the scenery, costumes and props should look like for the show. I work by drawing freehand, technical drawing on the computer and making scale models. I produce scale drawings and a painted model that the theatre can then cost and get built and painted. I provide costume drawings and reference, talk with the actors about their roles and then with a costume department buy or have made the costumes. During rehearsals I adapt the design as required to fit any new demands. I attend the technical and all stage rehearsals where the look of the show and the lighting is finalised.

Can you tell us a bit about how you set about designing the show?

I read the play many times, meet with the director, visit the theatre, do research. I start by making lots of quick sketch models and drawing storyboards (a sort of strip cartoon of the major actions in the play)

What have been the hardest and most exciting parts about designing the show?

The wings.

If you entered The Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

I can't swim and don't like heights so it wouldn't be for me!



David Annen as Dad and Charlie Sanderson as Lizzie

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

6. The Model Box

When the designer has decided what the set is going to look like, he makes a model box – as Giles explained in his interview. It is like a tiny dolls house sized version of the theatre, with all the set and props built in miniature inside it. Here is a picture of the model box that Giles made. You can see he also made a miniature version of Dad to put in the model box!



What does the model box make you think of?



Where do you think the play is set when you look at the picture?

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Here are some more pictures of the model box, with the scenery moved around for the different scenes:



This is the model box for Scene 1 of the play.



This is the model box set for Scene 2 of the play.



What has changed? What can you see? What does it make you think of?

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

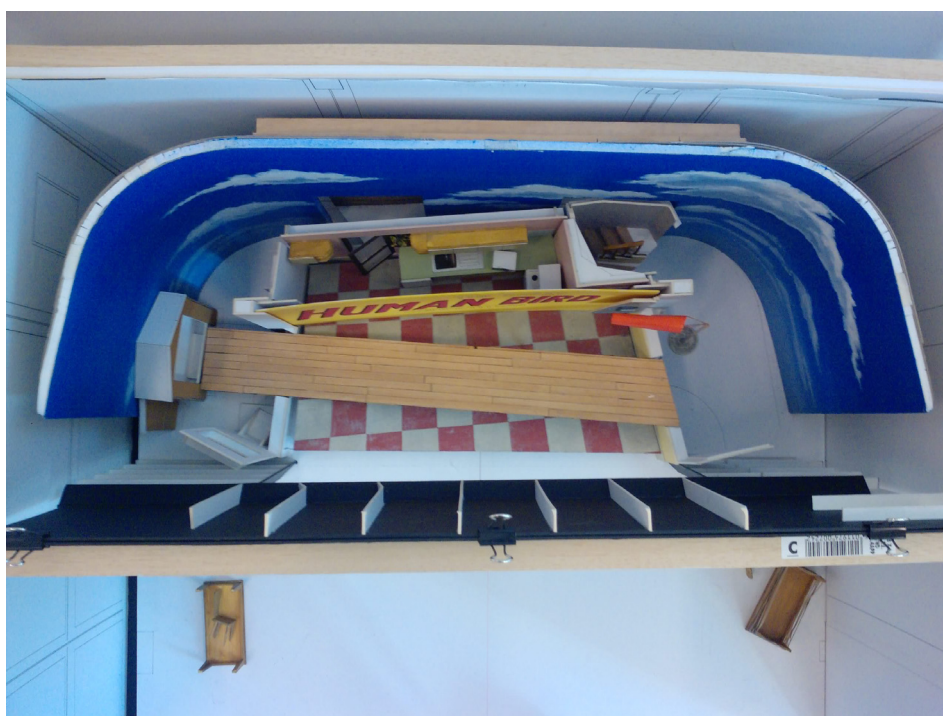
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This is the model box set for Scene 3 of the play.



What can you see? What do you think is happening in this scene?



This is a bird's eye view of the model box.

If a bird were looking down from above onto the stage, this is what it would see...

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



Make your own model box!

Find an empty box (a shoebox would work well) and imagine it is your very own mini theatre. Can you build your own model box for My Dad's a Birdman? Think about which colours you'd like to paint the walls, and use card and other materials to make the furniture and figures. Maybe you'd like lots of birds painted on the walls; maybe you'd like to build a tree from pipe cleaners; or maybe you'd like to build the nest that Lizzie and dad sit in out of twigs from the playground ties together with wool and feathers. You could also use card and colours to make a mini Lizzie or a mini Auntie Doreen.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

7. The Actors

There are five actors in the play. Here they tell us a bit about being in *My Dad's a Birdman*.

LIZZIE



Charlie Sanderson plays Lizzie

What is the best thing about playing Lizzie?

The best thing about playing Lizzie is that I admire her so much. She is going through a very sad time and she really misses her mum. At the same time she is so strong, brave and filled with love, light and energy, she really is an amazing person.

Have you ever won a competition?

I won a packet of polos on sports day when I was in junior school for a three legged race but I think it might have been a consolation prize for not winning!!

Photo Credit: Carly Townsend

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

If I were going to enter the Great Human Bird Competition I would definitely enter on a flying bicycle. It would be ace to ride a bike off the edge of the ramp into the water!!

If you could really fly, where would you go and what would you do?

If I could fly I would want to do it in a suit like in the film *Iron Man* with Robert Downey Junior. I would fly all over the planet, under water, over the seas and mountains and rainforests and I would fly up into space too. Our Planet is really beautiful, if I could fly I would want to see all of it!

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

DAD



Photo Credit: Katie Vandyck

David Annan plays Dad

What is the best thing about playing Dad?

Pretending to eat worms (but perhaps I am not pretending...)

Which is your favourite moment in the show?

Being snuggled up in the nest with Lizzie.

Have you ever won a competition?

Yes, I won free tickets to see *The Mosquito Coast* at the Young Vic (and a crate of Michelob beer!)

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

A flying carpet hover-mat with 50 battery powered hair-driers providing the lift.

If you could really fly, where would you go and what would you do?

I would see what all the places I knew looked like from up there, and wouldn't ever come back down to earth....

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

AUNTIE DOREEN



Tracey Wilkinson plays Auntie Doreen

What is the best thing about playing Auntie Doreen?

The best thing about playing Auntie Doreen is that she gets to be big and loud and sometimes quite bossy!

Which is your favourite moment in the show?

My favorite moment in the show is making dumplings and juggling with them.

Have you ever won a competition?

The only competition I've ever won is a raffle when I was much younger. I won a doll, then gave it to my friend for her little sister.

Photo Credit: Peter Simpkin

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

If I was going to enter the Great Human Bird Competition my invention would look like a cloud with wings.

If you could really fly, where would you go and what would you do?

If I could fly I'd fly EVERYWHERE. I'd fly all around the world stopping in each country to see what the local food was like. Breakfast in Russia, lunch in South America and tea in New Zealand.

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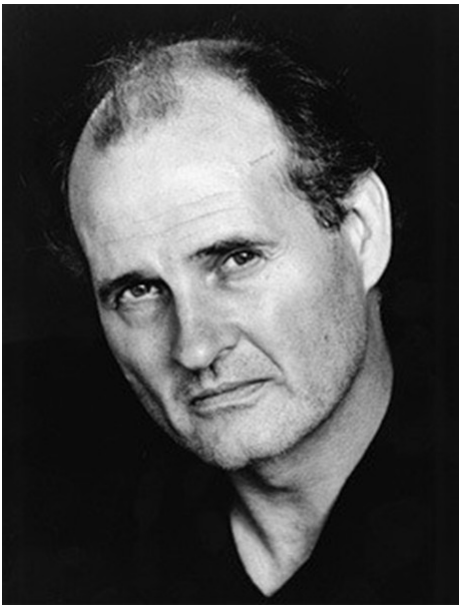
A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

MR MINT



Paul Bental plays Mr Mint

What is the best thing about playing Mr Mint?

The best thing about my character is that he tries to fly!

Which is your favourite moment in the show?

My favourite moment in the show is when Jackie picks Lizzie up and she feels like she is flying.

Have you ever won a competition?

I once won a Mars Bar in a pony riding competition when I was eight.

Photo Credit: Carole Latimer

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

I would make a rocket pack with wings.

If you could really fly, where would you go and what would you do?

I often fly in my sleep and I am always flying over fields watching the other birds and flying with them.

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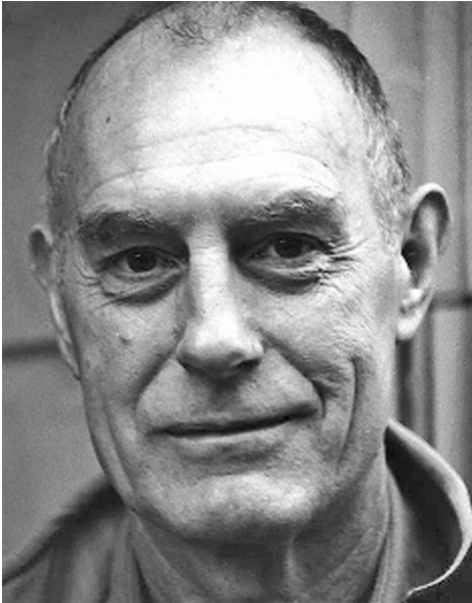
A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

MR POOP



Sam Cox plays Mr Poop

What is the best thing about playing Mr Poop?

Wearing a fat suit and a moustache.

Which is your favourite moment in the show?

Dad discovering the uneaten bit of toast in his mouth.

Have you ever won a competition?

Yes when I was 12, I won a fancy dress competition. I went as a girl using my sister Lucy's cut-off pigtail as part of my costume. The judges thought I *was* a girl and asked me what my 'fancy dress' was. I told them and I won!

If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

I would attach a bungee rope, a really long one, to an asteroid, hold my breath and jump. I would bounce in one place but the earth would slowly turn beneath me you would THINK I was flying.

If you could really fly, where would you go and what would you do?

I would go to Norway and fly up and down the fiords - all of them.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

And now some questions for you...

You could give your answers either by telling a partner, drawing a picture, or acting it out in a group.



If you could fly, where would you go and what would you do?



Have you ever won a competition?



If you entered the Great Human Bird Competition, what would your invention look like?

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

8. Rehearsal Diary

During the rehearsals for *My Dad's a Birdman*, the production's Assistant Director Sandra Maturana wrote a diary of what happened each day. Here are some extracts.

Week 1

Monday 25th November: First Day: Feeling like the first day at school

AM

After introducing ourselves we gather around the model box. The designer (Giles Cadle) and the director (Oliver Mears) share the ideas behind the design of the set. They explain that the space evolves, mirroring Jackie's experience, from an atmosphere of claustrophobia to one of freedom. The cast gets really excited when Oliver and Giles start explaining how the set will suddenly become the Great Human Bird Competition, with the jumpers running across the ramp in an attempt to fly.

Oliver reveals the importance of sound and music in the play and we all discover that a percussionist and a keyboard with an 80's keyboard construction will be in one corner of the stage bringing rhythm and energy to the scenes.



David Annen as Dad and Charlie Sanderson as Lizzie

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Our imagination can't stop flying when we see the costume design, especially the one for the wings.

Then, we have a read through and we listen to the songs and underscore written for the play. After that, David Almond (the writer), explains to the team how this story came to life and how close it is to his heart. He also emphasises that it is not a play about mental illness but one about imagination and artistic venture.

Week 2

Monday 1st November

AM

The most hilarious moment of the morning sees David (playing Dad) being a birdman while drinking tea and eating toast. He has been work-shopping how to eat like a bird, with small pecks, head movements, noises...etc .One of the times the toast has flown all over the rehearsal room and another time he spilt all the water on his trousers. At the end he managed to find a way to drink his tea, get his toast and eat it without using the hands.



Tracey Wilkinson as Auntie Doreen and Charlie Sanderson as Lizzie

Tuesday 2nd November

AM

This is going to be a morning of crashes and splashes. We rehearse with David the part where Dad tries to fly for the first time from the kitchen table. After the hostility of his character

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

towards breakfast, there is a growing excitement. David heads towards the table as if it were a springboard. We see that it is better to try different ways of heading towards the table in order to find Dad's tactics for flying. We establish that, first, he will climb and then he will run. The bird movement repertoire has to be present all the time throughout the scene, so that once he is confident jumping we incorporate some shakes and feather movements in his attempts to fly.

Suddenly Ricky, the Stage Manager³, comes with a bag full of worms. We all gather around to see what David will be eating soon. She managed to create jelly worms, so that he can play with them during the bug chasing scene. Ricky's next task will be to create beetles that crunch, not an easy thing to do. Before leaving she contemplates the possibilities: maybe leek with food colouring? Maybe chocolate and biscuits? She also gives us a very important thing for the day: the dumplings!! Ricky has been trying different ways of making dumplings so that we have the perfect recipe. The rehearsal room starts being filled with big balls of dough. We all get ready for the afternoon session: the dumplings scene!!!!

Week 3

Thursday 11th November

AM

When we arrive to the rehearsal room it looks quite different, there's a huge ramp in the middle of the room and many mats around it. Today is the day of the competition. We have members of the crew in the rehearsal room so that Anna teaches them some movements. We start with a warm up and then we move straight into the jumps. At the beginning they are shy but then they start to jump higher and higher. Anna shows them how to roll to the side after jumping. She also teaches them some movements so that they show their characters' talent while they wait in the competition warm-up area. They start incorporating turns, jumps, and shakes into their vocabulary. Afterwards they try on the costumes; we are all fascinated by them. They are so cute!! We think it might be difficult for them to move properly with the costumes. They roll; jump, run and they manage really well. We are really satisfied with the ramp session.

³ A stage manager is responsible for creating all the props that actors use on stage, and for making sure the show runs smoothly.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Week 4

Saturday 20th November

AM

This will be our last day in the rehearsal room. We sit around the table to share the feedback of yesterday's run and Oliver gives notes to the actors. After the run Anna decided to make some changes to the choreography. As she is not in today she gave me the task to make a couple of changes in the final dance. We want to see more of Mr Mint and Auntie Doreen's relationship through the dance. We want to make stronger the moment when they meet before the tango bit. That way there will be a crescendo and it will be easier to follow Auntie Doreen's journey.

Anna also realised how important it is that the characters look at each other while dancing, we plunge into Night Song with this aim. It definitely looks much better!

We slightly modify the part when Dad rehearses his flight, the important thing is to make each moment as strong as we can and cut superfluous movements. With the same idea in mind we continue working on Poop's scenes.

PM

The rest of the day allows us to add pace to the play. We feel ready for the technical period and the previews.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

SECTION 3- BACKGROUND

9. Human Birdmen

The Human Birdman Competition

The Great Human Birdman Competition that Lizzie, Dad and Mr Mint enter is not made up... it actually happens! And, although there are quite a few places in the world where Birdman Competitions happen, the very first one was held in England! It was held on the South Coast of England in a place called Bognor Regis, where it still happens every summer.

The competition is for **human powered flying machines**. There has been a competition every year since 1971. Competitors run off the end of the pier and try to fly as far as they can out to sea with their fabulous inventions. There is a prize for the person who flies farthest, but lots of people take part in the competition to raise money for charity.⁴



The Great Human Birdman Competition seems a very human thing- because on the one hand it is totally crazy, but on the other it expresses a very human aspiration to go higher and higher.

⁴ There are some great videos on www.worthingbirdman.co.uk

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

There are three classes in the competition:

1. The Leonardo Da Vinci Class

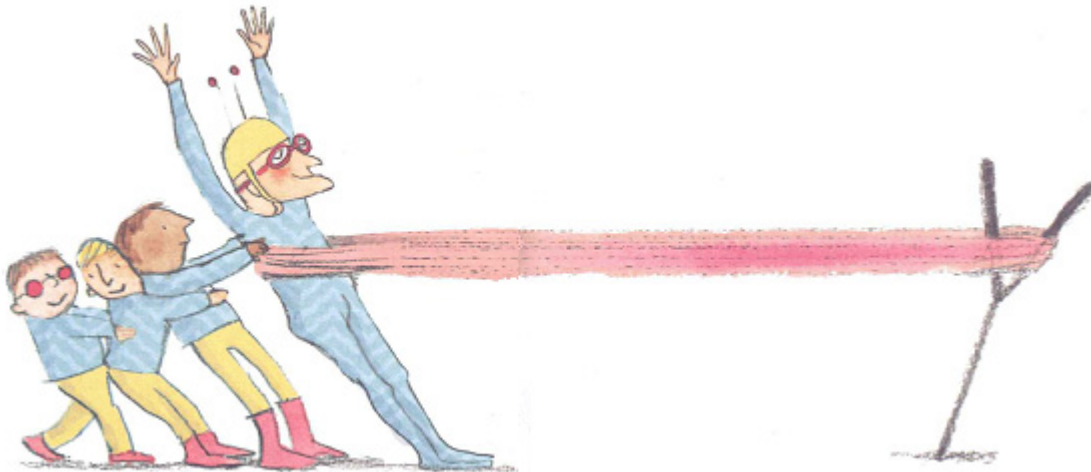
This is for self or team-designed and built machines, just like the ones Leonardo designed!

2. Condor Class

This for modified hang-gliders and similar aircraft.

3. Kingfisher Class

This is for fun flyers and is mostly people raising money for charity. Individuals and teams of two can enter this category. The prizes are not awarded for distance but for the entertainment value of the flight. The public can also vote on this category to crown a people's choice winner.



Some of the characters who have competed in this class are Doctor Who and the Tardis, a giant beetle, flying doughnuts, and Mary Poppins.

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

10 Interesting Facts about the Human Birdman Competition

1. It was originally known as the Birdman Rally.
2. The Competition was first held in Selsey, but in 1978 they were told they could no longer use the pier, so they moved to Bognor Regis.
3. The competition became international in 1981, when teams from Germany and Switzerland began entering.
4. Once they had started entering, the German teams became very good at the competition, and in 1991 German teams took 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.
5. In 1983 two brothers entered dressed as a pantomime horse!
6. In 1989 Eddie "the Eagle" Edwards, who had competed in the Winter Olympics for Britain in the ski jump, entered the Birdman Competition and jumped 11 metres.
7. 30,000 people watched the event in 2003.
8. In 2004, entries included a skateboarding cow and Doctor Who and his Tardis.
9. The longest recorded flight was by Dave Bradshaw, who jumped 89.2 meters in 1992.
10. If you jump over 100 meters you win £25,000!



These are some contestants jumping off the pier at the Human Birdman Competition.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Human Birdmen in Other Cultures

Other cultures around the world have their own versions of the birdmen.

Tangata Manu – The Birdman of Easter Island

Easter Island is a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Many years ago, the religion of the island was called the Cult of the Birdman. They worshipped a god called Make-Make. Every year, there was a competition to find the Human Birdman, who was supposed to be the earthly incarnation of the god Make-Make.



The island of Motu Nui near Easter Island

It was a race to collect the first Sooty Tern's egg of the year and return to Easter Island with the egg intact. But it was a very dangerous race - down the rocky cliff face of the island, into the shark infested waters, and onto the isolated island of Motu Nui. There, the competitors had to wait for the mother Sooty Tern to lay her egg and snatch it from her, before swimming back with it to Easter Island. The winner was a hero, who was given a new name, given a special headdress of human hair and given gifts of food.



A Picture of the Tangata Manu

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

10. A History of Human Flight

Since time began, human beings have wanted to fly like birds. Nowadays, we have aeroplanes that fly us around the world in an instant. But planes are very new inventions that have only been around for the last 100 years. Before then it would have been thought impossible for humans to fly. So, where did flying machines start?

People with Wings



"Ever since time began there have been images and stories of people with wings.

I think it's the craziness of it all and the sense of transcendence and aspiration.

I totally understood the desire to fly. Growing up in the North East the sea was very close to us, so we'd stand on cliffs and look down at the water and wonder, "What if I just stepped off and flapped my arms? What would happen?"

David Almond from Children's Book Trust Website⁵



What would you do and where would you go if you could fly?

⁵ <http://www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk/show/feature/Features%20Interviews/Interview-with-David-Almond-07>

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

The Myths

A myth is a story passed down through generations, often featuring extraordinary things. Myths try to explain something about the world or ourselves.

One of the most famous and oldest stories about people with wings, is the story of Daedalus and Icarus. It is a Greek myth, and is more than 3000 years old.

Icarus⁶

Daedalus was an architect and inventor in the palace of King Minos of Crete. He had one son, Icarus. He built amazing temples, palaces and shrines; but perhaps his most famous invention was the labyrinth, a maze so complex that no one could ever escape it. It was in this labyrinth that the Minotaur – a terrifying monster half man, half bull - lived.



When Daedalus completed the labyrinth, King Minos wanted to make sure no one could find out the secret of how to escape the labyrinth. So he imprisoned Daedalus and Icarus in a tall tower on the coast of Crete.

Now Daedalus and Icarus did not like being prisoners, and so Daedalus began to think about how they could get away. He had managed to sneak into the tower, under his robe, a clump of candles. He lit them with flints

⁶ There is a recording of this story on youtube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-LIRI6yt_E

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

and told his son to catch a pigeon. He studied the pigeon, how it spread its wings, how it lifted and opened and closed them, and he got to work. Out of feathers and wax, he made two pairs of wonderful wings for himself and his son.

Daedalus warned his son to be careful: 'Don't fly too close to the sea. If your wings get wet, their sodden weight will pull you down into the sea. But don't fly too high in the sky. The heat of the sun might melt the wax on your wings, and you will fall down into the sea. Just follow me and ride the gusts that I ride.' Icarus promised his father he would be careful.



So they stood over the edge of the water. They flapped their arms and they stepped off. Freedom! At first everything went well as their wings lifted them into and over the air, the sea and the island of Crete below them. But after a while Icarus got tired of following his father and flying in a straight line. He wanted to try some tricks of his own: he swooped and rose, swooped and rose, he glided up and up, faster and faster right up towards the sun. His father told him to be careful, but Icarus was having far too much fun. He kept on going up, higher and higher and higher. Suddenly, he saw a feather falling and felt something drip on his arm. He realized that the wax was melting and that his wings were breaking apart. He tried to go back down again, but it was too late. The wings fell bit by bit apart as the candle wax melted, and down he fell - down, down, down into the ocean.



Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



What do you think about the story of Icarus and Daedalus?



What do you think it was like for Icarus to want to feel free, but to be in danger at the same time?

Let's Go Fly a Kite...

In Ancient China around 400 BC, people discovered that kites could fly in the air. It got human beings thinking about flying...



Have you ever flown a kite?



You can learn how to make a kite here <http://www.skratch-pad.com/kites/make.html>

Leonardo Da Vinci and his famous Ornithopter

Leonardo was born in Italy in 1452 and was an extraordinarily talented man. You may have heard of him as a painter, as he painted lots of very famous paintings like the Mona Lisa.

But he was also an inventor.

He studied birds and their flight, wrote down theories about flying machines and designed lots of devices.

He designed the parachute:

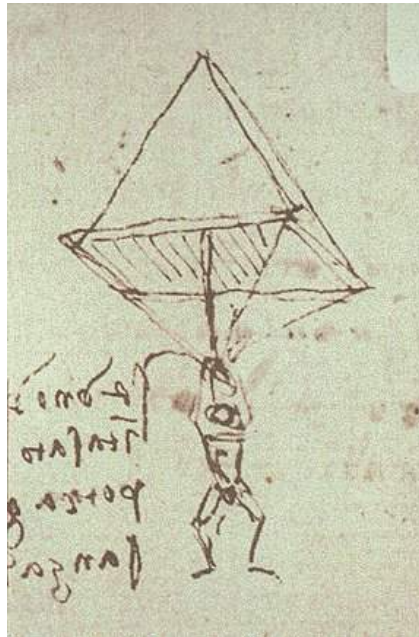
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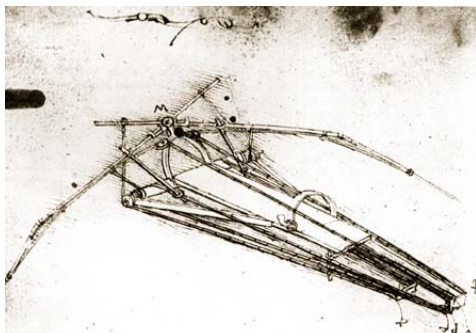
Leonardo's parachute drawing

Leonardo said "with a linen curtain shaped into a pyramid having a base 12 yards (about 7 metres) across and equally deep, if it is stiffly held open, anyone can jump from no matter what height without any risk whatsoever".



Can you make a mini parachute? (Try using a piece of paper, some string and a lego figure.)

He also designed something called an ornithopter, which was like a helicopter powered by a person flapping their arms and legs. The modern day helicopter is actually based on his idea.



Leonardo's Ornithopter



A modern day helicopter



Do you think they look similar? How?

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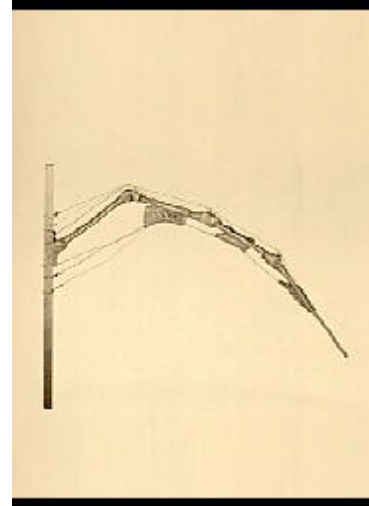
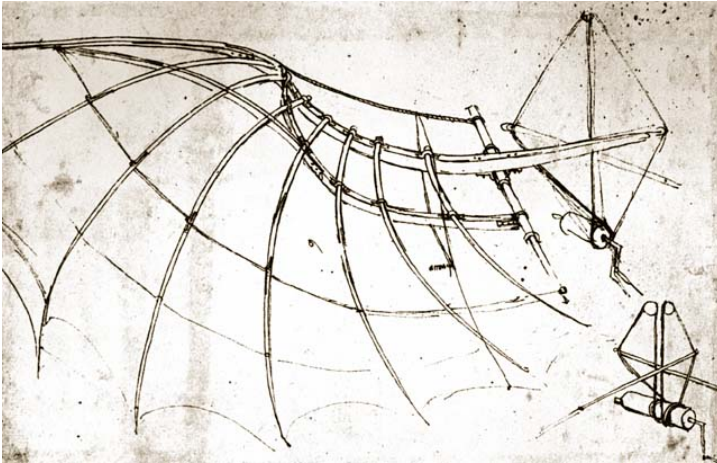
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By David Almond

Young Vic

Here are some of his other designs:

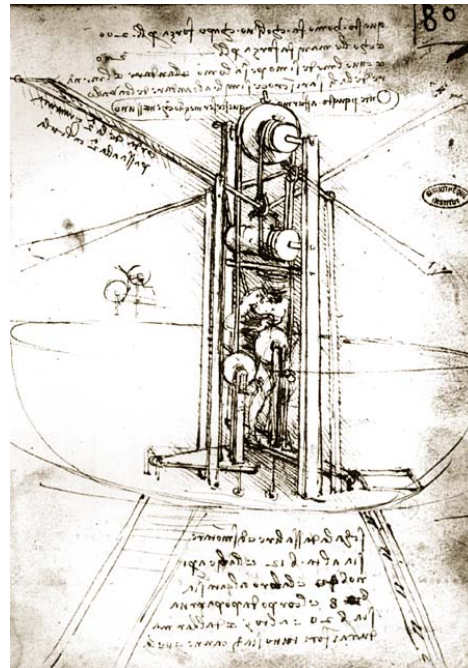
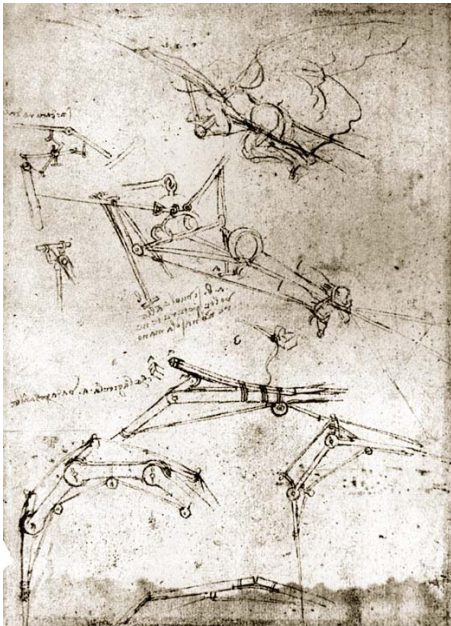


These are studies of a bat wing and a bird wing – he looked at birds to try and work out how human beings could learn to fly too.



Try designing your own wings for a flying competition.

Here are some more of Leonardo's flying machine designs



Can you draw a fantastical design for a flying machine?

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

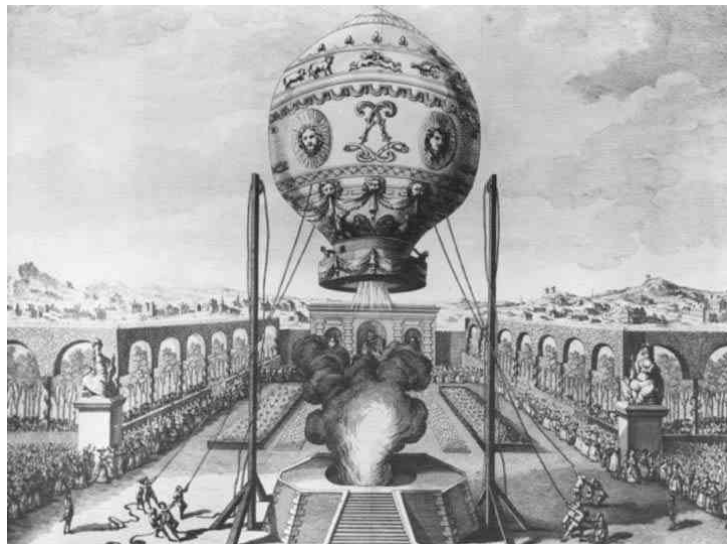
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Hot Air: The Montgolfier Brothers

Joseph and Etienne Montgolfier were two brothers from France. They invented the first hot air balloon. They used smoke from a fire to blow hot air into a giant silk bag. The bag was attached to a basket, and when the hot air rose, the balloon was lighter than air, and the basket lifted off the ground.

The first passengers in the Montgolfiers' balloon went up in 1783. They were a sheep, a duck and a chicken. After all three returned safely, Joseph and Etienne went up themselves.

In France, hot air balloons are still called 'Montgolfiers'.



There are lots of balloon festivals now in England, when people go up in hot air balloons all over the same town.

The Montgolfier's made their balloon out of a very colourful silk bag. Nowadays people write and colour all sorts of things on their hot air balloons.



Have you ever seen a hot air balloon?



Can you design your very own hot air balloon?

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Humans Fly! The Wright Brothers

Orville and Wilbur Wright were two American brothers experimenting with flying machines in around 1900. They invented and built the world's first successful aeroplane, and on 17th December 1903, they flew it. The flight lasted 12 seconds!

It was the first ever powered, manned and sustained human flight. Before this, people had been able to 'fly' only by gliding on the wind, with inventions like parachutes and gliders.



The Wright Brothers' Plane

How did they do it?

The Wright brothers worked in a bicycle repair shop before they invented their flying machine. They noticed that a bicycle by itself is unstable and that falls over easily. But, with practice, you can learn to control and balance it. They thought that the flying machine could be the same. They invented something called the three axis control, which is like the handlebars on a bicycle- this which means you can control and balance an airplane. It is still used in airplanes today!

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

As a result of the Wright Brothers, flying became more and more popular, and lots of people became interested in competitive flying.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh was the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic from USA to England. In 1928, Amelia Earhart was the first woman to do the same. She also tried to be the first person to circumnavigate the globe⁷ in 1937. She set off, but never made it back to land. No one knows what happened.



Amelia Earhart's Plane

Nowadays, we fly often and can easily fly around the globe. However, flying has a large carbon footprint, as it takes a lot of fuel to drive a plane engine, and it creates a lot of pollution.



Have you been in a plane? Write a description of where you flew to and what it was like.



What other kinds of planes can you find out about?

⁷ To circumnavigate the globe means to fly the whole way round.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

11. Creatures with Wings

Birds



As part of their journey to become Human Birdman and Human Birdgirl, Lizzie and Dad studied birds. Dad gets a bit too close when he catches a crow in a plastic bag. The bird gets very frightened, and Lizzie tells Dad to let it go. She says it is cruel to capture a bird.

Birds like to fly free, and Lizzie understands that. She teaches Dad how to be kind, and how to find out about birds without having to trap them. When they watch the birds, free in the garden, they hear the beautiful songs that the birds sing.

You could just watch the birds, Dad. You could look at them in the garden. You could make notes and drawings. You don't really need to catch them do you?

There are probably around 8600 different species of birds in the world today. Here are a few of the ones that Lizzie and Dad see in their garden.

Lizzie and Dad see:



A crow



Sparrows



A wren

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



A pigeon



A magpie



A swallow

The study of birds is called Ornithology and a person who studies birds is called an Ornithologist. It is a bit like what Lizzie and Dad do.



Can you identify these birds that you might see in gardens and parks in London?



I eat worms from your lawn
My song is one of the best you will ever hear
I love to scratch around in autumn leaves
Male ones are black with yellow beaks but female ones are brown

I eat caterpillars, nuts and seeds
Look for me in trees, but not on the ground
I nest in holes in trees, including nest boxes



My black bib and face mask mean that I am male
I like to live near people
My chunky beak is good at cracking seeds open

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

I eat worms
I am usually alone in the garden
I sing in winter as well as in the spring



My red front means that I am a male
I live almost everywhere in the UK
I eat seeds but feed my chicks on insects



Which of these birds have you ever spotted? Can you look out for them next time you are in the playground or the park?



At the back of the pack, you will find some bird masks that you can cut out and make of these birds

Answers:

1. Blackbird, 2. Blue Tit, 3. Sparrow, 4. Robin, 5. Chaffinch

See also the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk/youth

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

12 Interesting Facts About Birds

1. The oldest bird is known as an Archaeopteryx and lived about 150 million years ago. It was the size of a raven, was covered with feathers, and had wings.
2. The most yolks ever found in a single chicken's egg is nine.
3. An ostrich egg needs to be boiled for 2 hours to get a hard-boiled egg.
4. The Royal Albatross' eggs take 79 days to hatch.
5. The egg of the hummingbird is the world's smallest bird's egg; the egg of the ostrich, the world's largest.
6. Lungs may make up 1/5 of the body volume of a bird.
7. A bird's heart beats 400 times per minute while resting and up to 1000 times per minute while flying. A human heart beats somewhere between 55 and 70 times a minute.
8. The world's only bird that still exists that does not have wings is the kiwi of New Zealand.
9. Pigeons can reach speeds up to 100 mph
10. Penguins, ostriches, and dodo birds are all birds that do not fly.
11. The homing pigeon, Cher Ami, lost an eye and a leg while carrying a message in World War I. Cher Ami won the Distinguished Service Cross. Its leg was replaced with a wooden leg.
12. The only known poisonous bird in the world is the hooded pitohui of Papua, New Guinea. The poison is found in its skin and feathers.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

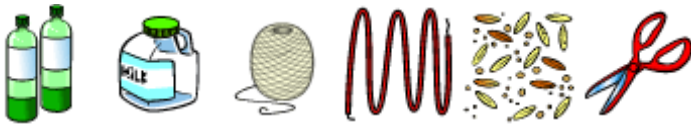
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Helping Birds

Lizzie teaches Dad that birds need to be looked after. Here are two ideas for how you can help look after birds. Especially in the winter when it is cold and there are few things around for the birds to eat, you can help them stay warm and get lots to eat. Make a recycled birdfeeder, or an easy lardcake.

Recycled Bird Feeder

Stuff you need



Plastic drinks bottles, yoghurt pots or milk cartons (make sure they are clean), wire or string, bird seed, scissors.

NB. This will require adult help with cutting and be aware of nut allergies.



Cut a hole in the side large enough to allow a free flow of seeds, but in such a way that it won't all fall out on the ground in the slightest puff of wind, and won't get wet if it rains.



Make a few small holes in the bottom of your feeder to allow any rainwater to drain away.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



Hang it with wire, or even strong string from a tree or your washing line.



If your feeder starts to wear out or the food in it goes mouldy, recycle it and make another one!

Remember to keep your feeders well stocked, especially in winter. Birds come to rely on them and will go hungry if you forget.⁸

⁸ From <http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/makeanddo/activities/birdfeeder.asp?mode=adults>

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

An Easy Birdcake

Stuff you need



Good quality bird seed; raisins; peanuts; grated cheese; suet or lard; yoghurt pots; string; mixing bowl; scissors

NB: Not suitable for children with nut allergies. Note that bird seed, including peanuts bought for birds, is not suitable for human consumption.



Carefully make a small hole in the bottom of a yoghurt pot. Thread string through the hole and tie a knot on the inside. Leave enough string so that you can tie the pot to a tree or your bird table.



Allow the lard to warm up to room temperature, but do not melt it. Then cut it up into small pieces and put it in the mixing bowl.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



Add the other ingredients to the bowl and mix them together with your finger tips. Keep adding the seed, raisin and cheese mixture and squidding it until the fat holds it all together.



Fill your yoghurt pots with bird cake mixture and put them in the fridge to set for an hour or so.



Hang your speedy bird cakes from trees or your bird table. Watch for greenfinches, tits and possibly even great spotted woodpeckers.⁹

There are lots of things to make and do at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/>

⁹ From <http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/makeanddo/activities/birdcake.asp>

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

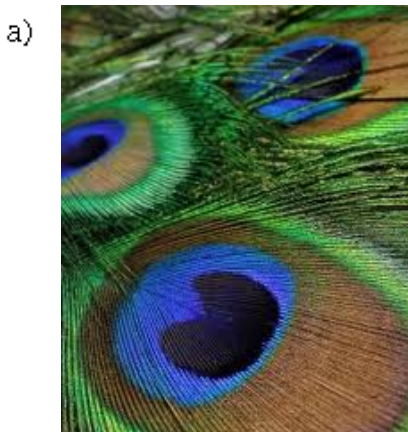
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Feathers



Some bird feathers are extremely distinctive. Can you tell which birds these come from?



Answers:

a) Peacocks feathers b) Ostrich feathers c) Parrot feathers d) Pheasant feathers e) Goose down.

Lizzie and Dad use feathers to make headdresses and tails for their bird costumes, as well as for their fantastic wings. We can also use feathers to make all kinds of everyday things, like: eiderdowns and pillows, feather fans, feather boas, feather dusters, and old fashioned quill pens.



Can you think of some?



You could find some feathers in the park and use them to make a picture, a fan, a quill pen, a headdress, a pair of wings or a tail. Or you could just collect them and put them in a vase like flowers to look at.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

Other Creatures with Wings

Angels

David Almond is very interested in angels. In his other book, *Skellig*, the main character Michael discovers a mysterious old man in his garage – he is part owl, part human, and he has stumps where he might have had wings. With Michael's help, the creature is brought back to health, and we discover that he might have been an angel.

Angels exist in many cultures and religions. They are messengers of god, and they guide and guard human beings. Sometimes they make visits to humans to bring special news – for example in the Christmas story in the Bible, the angel Gabriel comes to earth to tell Mary she is going to have the baby Jesus. In the Islamic tradition, the angel Gabriel is said to have wings that span from the eastern to the western horizon.



This is a carving showing two angels that dates from the 12th century



This is a picture of the prophet Mohammed being visited by Gabriel

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

But other times, angels might make visits to humans in disguised form, perhaps like *Skellig*.

*Let brotherly love continue,
Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*¹⁰

Sometimes, we talk about guardian angels – angels who surround us and make sure we are safe. This is a poem called *Evening Prayer* about guardian angels.

*When at night I go to sleep,
Fourteen angels watch do keep:
Two my head are guarding,
Two my feet are guiding,
Two are on my right hand,
Two are on my left hand,
Two who warmly cover,
Two who o'er me hover,
Two to whom 'tis given to guide my steps to heaven.*

Here are two beautiful stories about human beings being visited by angels. The first one especially is a great story for children.

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

What Men Live By, by Leo Tolstoy

¹⁰ Hebrews 13, v 1-2

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A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic

SECTION 4- DRAMA ACTIVITIES AND GAMES



Imaginary Eggs

While Lizzie and Dad are sitting in their nest, Dad lays an imaginary egg. After concentrating hard, he hatches the egg into a little chick.

He picked up the imaginary chick in his hands and cupped it in his hands and held it to his face. "Hello, little'n," he said. "Isn't he lovely, Lizzie?" "He's just gorgeous," she said, and reached down and touched and stroked the imaginary chick. Then Dad opened his hands and raised them. "Off you go. Fly away!" The imaginary bird flew from them. Dad pointed around the room and they pretended to see the brand new bird flying there.

In a circle, imagine that you are passing around the imaginary egg. You have to hold it so gently, so it does not break and the little chick fall. When you have all held the egg, put the egg down in the centre and watch it crack, open and the imaginary new bird fly out. Then, it is time to follow the imaginary bird. The leader can call out where in the room the new bird is flying, and all the children in the group have to look to where it is.



Imaginary Dumplings

When you have passed the very fragile egg around the circle, you can try turning it into a very heavy dumpling! Does it feel differently to pass around one of Auntie Doreen's suet dumplings?! How?

Once you have tried that, you can try turning throwing the imaginary dumplings across the circle. Can you keep the dumpling moving?

Also, you can turn the imaginary dumpling into an egg as you pass it – from heavy to light, and light to heavy. Then, you could try to turn it into anything you like! A wobbly jelly or a pile of goose down.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

By David Almond

Young
Vic



Auntie Doreen in the Middle

This one involves a real dumpling (although a football or tennis ball will probably work better!) Two players throw a ball to each other while a third tries to intercept it. When you get good, you the players can start using teasing, and deception to try and catch Auntie Doreen out, just like Lizzie and Dad in the story. Make sure you swap over, so everyone gets a go in the middle.



The Nest Egg

As Dad says, birds are very protective of their young, and will do anything to make sure nothing snatches their eggs from the nest.

This game involves the whole group, and develops listening and focus. Everyone sits in a circle, and in the middle is the nesting bird, with a newspaper beak, sitting on his or her egg. This is a child, sitting on a chair, blindfolded, with a ball (or any object that represents the egg) placed under the chair and with a rolled up newspaper in one hand to represent the bird's beak. When the 'bird' is blindfolded, the leader will pick one person to be the egg poacher. They will try to steal up on the nesting bird in the centre and snatch the egg from under the nest. However, the nesting bird, while always staying firmly in the chair, can use her or his beak to attack the poacher. If the poacher gets hit by the newspaper beak, they are out, and it is time for another person to try. Swap over the nesting bird a few times, so different people can practise listening for the poacher.



Tangata Manu Obstacle Race

Tangata Manu is the Easter Island Birdman race, where competitors climb a mountain, scramble down a cliff face, and swim shark infested waters to capture an egg. This is a version of that race.

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There are two teams who work in relay, and a number of obstacles that each member of the team has to complete. Each team will need a name that describes how dedicated, strong and agile they are. First, create the dangerous terrain of Easter Island – the children can help you with this. For example, set up a number of small cones that competitors have to race around, place a skipping rope for each team at the end of the hall that competitors have to skip three times with, and place two magical eggs at the far end of the hall. The competitors have to race back to their teams with the egg between their knees and pass it on to the next competitor, who will then have to carry it during the first two parts of the task, before placing it in between their knees and bringing it home.



Shark Infested Waters

Everyone stands at one end of the room. The obstacles in the race before were real – now they are imaginary. Explain different scenarios and terrain that the competitors need to cross to get to the egg - like a vast and stormy ocean, a sheer rock face, a huge and craggy mountain, an iced over inlet of water, a burning hot sandy beach. All together, the players journey across the room imagining themselves in that scenario. When they reach the end, and collect the imaginary egg, they have to do the same, but this time protecting the egg. Try different ways of holding the egg – for example, balancing it on your head while swimming, holding it both hands while you clamber up a mountain.



Journey Chant

Just like the Easter Island community who sings and dances in celebration of the winner of the birdman competition, you can make up a chant about the terrain you have crossed, and how it felt.

It might start something like:-

*We swam though shark infested waters
Pushing hard with arm and leg,
We scrambled up the craggy mountain
All to fetch the special egg...*

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Making Rhythm Dumplings

David Almond said this about writing *My Dad's a Birdman*.

"One of the things I love about writing for this age group is the rhythms and the beats of language that you can get into."

There are some lovely rhythms in the play; like when Auntie Doreen makes her dumplings:

*Mix them, whack them, roll them out and smack them
Bash them, boil them, bring them out and boil them!*

Use drums or hands to beat out the rhythm of making dumplings, and at the same time, make some actions that show what you are doing to the dumplings. Work in groups to create a dance that you can show back to the whole group.

What is your favourite thing to cook or make in the kitchen? In a group, based on the dumpling song, can you make a chant about how to make that dish? Find the actions too, and make a performance in your group.



Bird Song

Listen to some bird song at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/birdsong.shtml>

Use percussion instruments and your voices to try and make the sounds of the birds.



Feather Dances

If you've managed to collect some feathers from the garden or the playground, here's how you can use them.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

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Think about all the words that describe how a feather moves and write them up on the board. For example, some might be: *glide, soar, turn, tumble, twist*. Now look at your words, and see if you can make up your body do those movements. In groups, you could make a dance that involves three or four of the words. Perform it back to the rest of the group. Another group could accompany you with their birdsong soundtrack, or you could play a piece of music about flying.



Time in your Hands

When they are happy and together in their nest, Dad catches time in his hands. It is almost like he never wants that moment to stop because he is so happy to be with Lizzie. If you could make time stand still for a minute, what would you do and where would you go?



Dad and Lizzie in Snapshots

Dad and Lizzie both feel very sad that Mum is no longer with them. They feel lonely, and especially at the beginning of the story, when Dad is making his wings in secret, they do not feel very connected to each other. However, as they spend time together making wings and trying to fly they realize that they are there for each other and love each other and are happy.

In a group, create a series of snapshots of the emotions of Lizzie and Dad. For example:

1. Dad is a bit depressed, hunched over and unshaven. Lizzie is worried about him.
2. Dad is excited to secretly show Lizzie his wings. Lizzie is surprised.
3. Lizzie and Dad are happy to be sharing their dream together.



I Have a Dream

Auntie Doreen thinks Dad and Lizzie are mad to have such crazy ideas about trying to fly. Sometimes, our dreams seem silly to others, but that does not mean they are not important to us. What do you dream

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about doing, whether it seems silly or not? It is amazing what how believing in yourself can make dreams come true! Write a story that starts, I have a dream that....



Where in the World?

People come from everywhere in the world to try and cross the River Tyne. With a map of the world, pinpoint all the countries and cities that the contestants come from. They come from:

Madagascar

Smolensk

Malta

Cuba

Tashkent

Bikini Atoll

Baton Rouge

Chattanooga

Chateaufort

Danzig

Burrumbidgee

Ellesmere Port

Donegal

Baffin Bay



Methods of Propulsion

They also have titles that are *alliterative* – which means their name, their method of propulsion and the place they come from all start with the same letter.

Can you make up a method of propulsion that alliterates with your name and where you come from? For example, mine might be: Lottie the Longjumper, from Lilford Road.

Resource Pack

A Young Vic production

My Dad's a Birdman

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Young
Vic



Make a bird mask

Use the templates at the end of the pack to make a mask of a blackbird or a blue tit

Some other ideas for stories about birds.

The Ugly Duckling, by HC Andersen

The Nightingale, also by HC Andersen,

The Wild Swans, by the Brothers Grimm

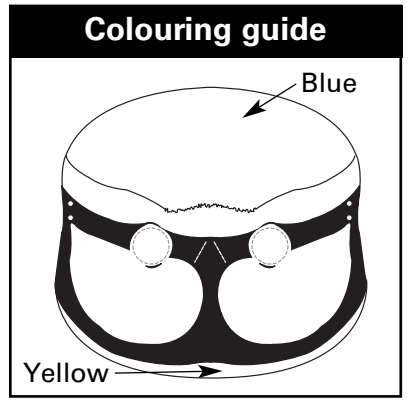
The Conference of the Birds, by Farid al-Din Attar



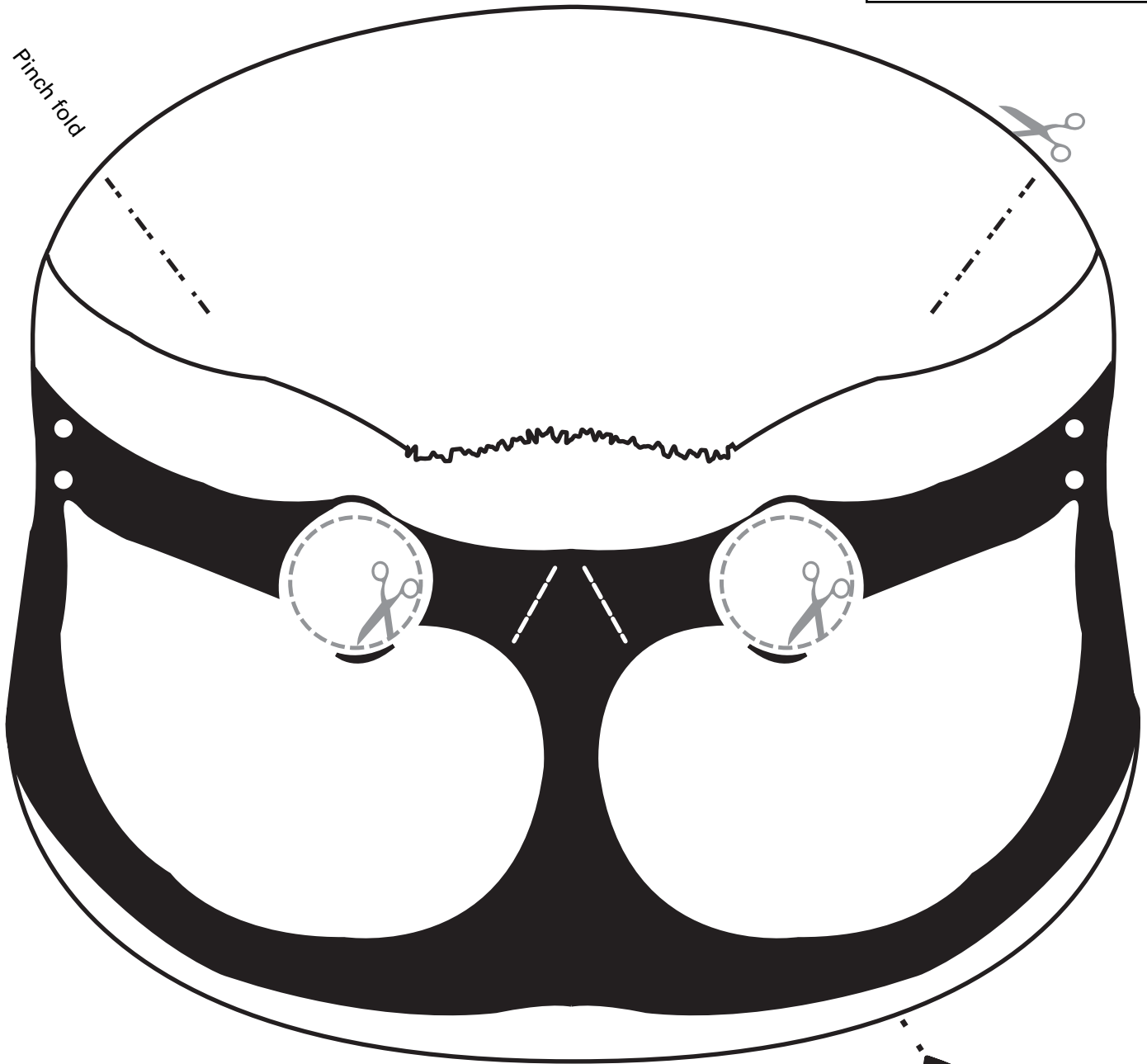
Blue tit

- Colour in this great mask to look like a blue tit.
- Look at the guide to see which colours should go where.
- Where we haven't marked a colour, leave it white.

Turn over for more instructions on how to complete your mask.



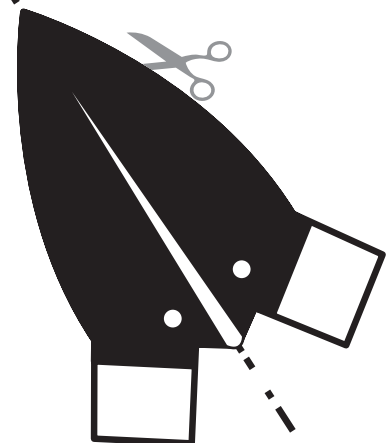
Pinch fold



Fold

- - - - = fold

— — — = cut



What you need:

Blue and yellow
coloured pencils or
felt pens
Scissors
About 50 cm of
shirring elastic
Sticky tape

What to do:

- Colour in your mask, following the guide
- Carefully cut out your mask and the beak, following the thick line marked with scissors.
- Even more carefully, cut out the eyes and cut the two slits between the eyes.
- Ask an adult to help you push out the holes marked (two each side), ready to thread the elastic.
- Fold the mask in half along the dotted lines.
- Crease along the dotted lines on the bird's forehead.
- Fold the beak in half along the dotted lines.
- Push the beak flaps through the slots and stick to the back with sticky tape.
- Thread the elastic through the holes from the back of the mask and stick it to the back with sticky tape. To make it stronger, tie knots in the ends before you stick them down.

Blue tit

Blue tits are small and light, and very good acrobats. This helps them hang upside down on the thinnest twigs to look for food.

Although blue tits often come to gardens to feed and nest, they are really woodland birds. Oak trees are their favourite places because they have plenty of caterpillars and other insects to feed to their chicks.



www.rspb.org.uk/youth

RSPB Wildlife Explorers is the junior membership of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

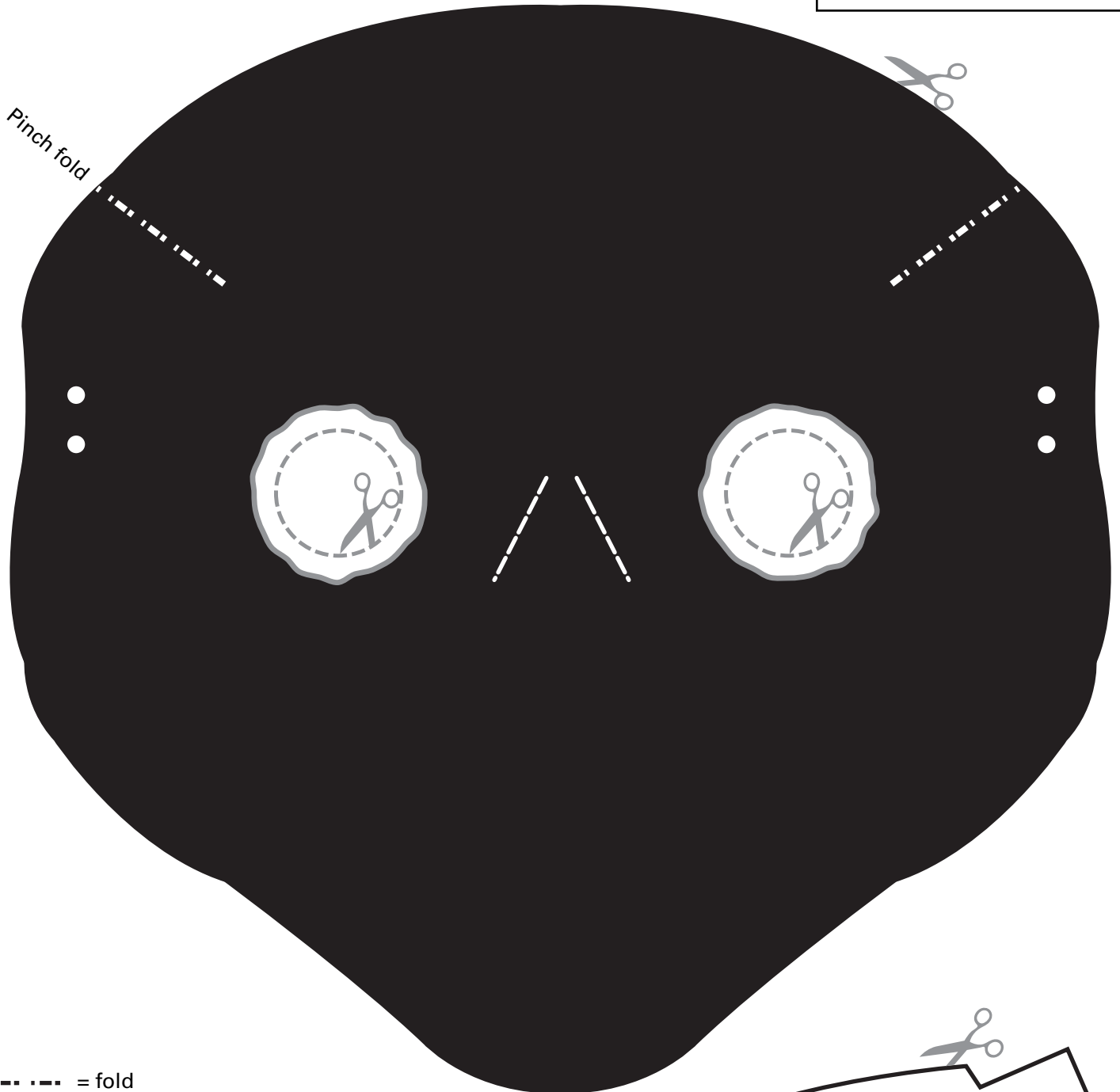
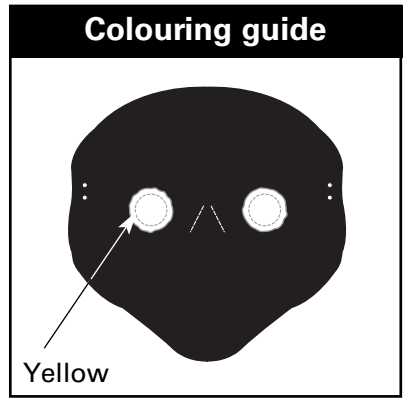
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Blackbird

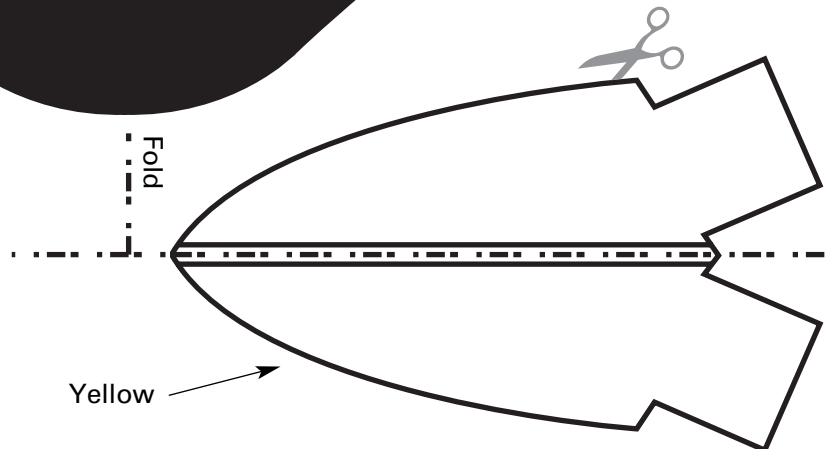
- Colour in this great mask to look like a blackbird.
- Look at the guide to see which colours should go where.
- We have put in the black for you. Where we haven't marked a colour, leave it white.

Turn over for more instructions on how to complete your mask.



- . - . = fold

- - - = cut



What you need:
Yellow coloured pencil or felt pen
Scissors
About 50 cm of shirring elastic
Sticky tape

What to do:

- Colour in your mask, following the guide
- Carefully cut out your mask and the beak, following the thick line marked with scissors.
- Even more carefully, cut out the eyes and cut the two slits between the eyes.
- Ask an adult to help you push out the holes marked (two each side), ready to thread the elastic.
- Fold the mask in half along the dotted lines.
- Crease along the dotted lines on the bird's forehead.
- Fold the beak in half along the dotted lines.
- Push the beak flaps through the slots and stick to the back with sticky tape.
- Thread the elastic through the holes from the back of the mask and stick it to the back with sticky tape. To make it stronger, tie knots in the ends before you stick them down.

Blackbird

If you have a garden or school field, you are likely to see blackbirds hopping about looking for worms or feeding on fruit and berry bushes. In spring and early summer, listen for the male's beautiful loud song – usually from a perch high up in a tree or on a television aerial.

Your mask is a male blackbird. The female is not black at all, but brown!



www.rspb.org.uk/youth

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