



**Forest Forge Theatre Company & The Nuffield Theatre**

present

The  
**Phoenix**  
and the  
**Carpet**

**By E. Nesbit**

Adapted for stage by Russ Tunney  
Directed by Kirstie Davis

**EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK**

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# Introduction

Welcome to The Phoenix and the Carpet Education Resource Pack. This pack is designed to enhance your visit to the production of The Phoenix and the Carpet. It is intended to support study leading up to and after you see the performance.

The aim of this pack is to supply thoughts and facts that can serve as discussion starters, handouts and practical activity ideas. It also aims to provide an introduction to our theatrical approach and to the story. It is intended to give you and your students an understanding of the creative considerations the team has undertaken throughout the rehearsal process.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this pack or would like to book a workshop with us please contact Tim Ford at The Nuffield Theatre on 02380 315500 ext 231.

We hope you enjoy the pack and the production!



## About Forest Forge Theatre Company

Forest Forge Theatre Company is one of the UK's leading rural touring theatre companies and has recently celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Every year thousands of people gather in theatres, village halls, schools and arts centres to be inspired, excited and, above all, entertained by our work.

Forest Forge creates professional touring productions, including commissioning new writing inspired by the New Forest and the surrounding region.

The company runs a large Creative Learning programme, working with young people, hospice patients, hard to reach groups and the elderly. A large part of this work sees Forest Forge work in schools and colleges throughout the region, delivering workshops for all ages and INSET days for teachers.

The company is based in a purpose-built theatre centre in Ringwood, on the edge of the New Forest National Park and is an important part of the New Forest community. It is funded by Arts Council, Engalnd, Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council.

Find out more at [www.forestforge.co.uk](http://www.forestforge.co.uk)

For further information about Forest Forge's work with schools please contact

Lucy Phillips, Creative Learning Director at [lucy@forestforge.co.uk](mailto:lucy@forestforge.co.uk)



## **About The Nuffield Theatre**

The Nuffield Theatre Company produces award-winning work for adults and children that play in our main house, studio and on tour - Nationally and Internationally - to theatres, schools and other non-theatre spaces.

The Nuffield has become a vital artistic resource for Southampton and the surrounding area, and invests in developing new artists and productions and provides a full and varied education and participatory programme. The Nuffield also runs a highly acclaimed writers group for aspiring playwrights and is home to Hampshire Youth Theatre.

For more information, contact our Touring and Projects Administrator on: 023 831 5500 ext 232

## **An Introduction to The Phoenix and the Carpet**

The Phoenix and the Carpet is a fantasy novel for children, written in 1904 by E. Nesbit. It is the second in a trilogy of novels that began with *Five Children and It* (1902), and follows the adventures of five children – Cyril, Anthea, Robert, Jane and the Lamb. The children buy a new carpet to replace the one from the nursery that was destroyed in an accidental fire. The children find an egg in the carpet which hatches into a talking Phoenix. The Phoenix explains that the carpet is a magical one that will grant them three wishes per day. The five children go on many adventures which eventually wears out the carpet. The adventures of the children are continued and conclude in the third book of the trilogy, *The Story of the Amulet* (1906).

### **Brief Synopsis of the Story**

The story begins shortly before November 5<sup>th</sup>. The four children have accumulated a small hoard of fireworks but are too impatient to wait until November 5<sup>th</sup> to light them, so they set off a few samples in the girls' bedroom. This results in a fire that destroys the carpet.

They purchase a second-hand carpet which, upon arrival, is found to contain an egg that emits a weird phosphorescent glow. The children place this egg near the fire: it hatches, revealing a golden Phoenix who speaks perfect English.

It turns out that the carpet is a magical carpet, which can transport the children to anywhere they wish in the present time.

The children go on their first adventure with the carpet and the Phoenix and end up in a topless tower where they discover treasure and also learn the limitations of the carpet.

Next the children go on an adventure but take along their cook by accident. Once at the sunny seaside, the Cook is thought to be a Queen by the natives and is content to be left behind. The children's third adventure is to India where the children look for items for their

mother's friend to sell in her Bazaar, although matters are briefly complicated when the carpet is sold as well. The fourth adventure sees the Phoenix asking them to take him to one of his temples. At the "temple," the children and the phoenix are honored guests at a ceremony to celebrate the Phoenix, yet once they leave all the gentlemen believe it to have been a dream.

On the fifth adventure the carpet takes the children abroad to do a good deed, they meet a sad French woman and return her family treasure to her from the topless tower. Next the children embark on a trip to their aunt's house, they arrange to meet her at the station but unfortunately Robert forgets to send his mother's instructions for the aunt to meet them. The children go home alone and break into their own home. The carpet wants to visit its homeland, so the children let it go but the carpet brings back 199 Persian cats. The carpet then provides brings a cow, for milking. Jane confronts a burglar, she finds him kind and gives him the cats to sell and they take him to the island where he falls in love with the Cook and marries her.

Despite the damaged state of the carpet, the children desire to go on one more adventure before their mother returns. So, the children go to the theatre with the Phoenix. The Phoenix flies around the theatre and starts a fire. The carpet brings the children home safely and then the Phoenix and the Carpet must go away, which is both sad—and a relief!—for the children.

## The Characters

**Cyril** - the oldest of the five children. He is nicknamed Squirrel. Cyril often takes on the role of leader and is sensible and level headed. He is also the main decision maker for the children - though his decisions are sometimes challenged he often has the final say in what the children do. Between the boys, Cyril is more considerate of morals when making decisions.

**Anthea** - the second oldest of the children. She takes on the role of the mother figure among the children. She is rational and also considers morals when helping to make decisions. Anthea is polite, considerate, and well mannered. She is the one who has the sewing skills to fix the carpet and shows the most compassion and remorse for the carpet.

**Robert** - the third oldest of the five children. He is the one that the Phoenix is most attached to because he originally dropped the egg into the fire. Though Robert is one of the younger children he represents an adult voice in the story - he recollects and tells the other children 'facts.' Robert is also the one child that thinks to bring candles on the adventure after experiencing the dark tower/cave on the first carpet trip. He often takes on the role of protector of his sisters and the Phoenix.

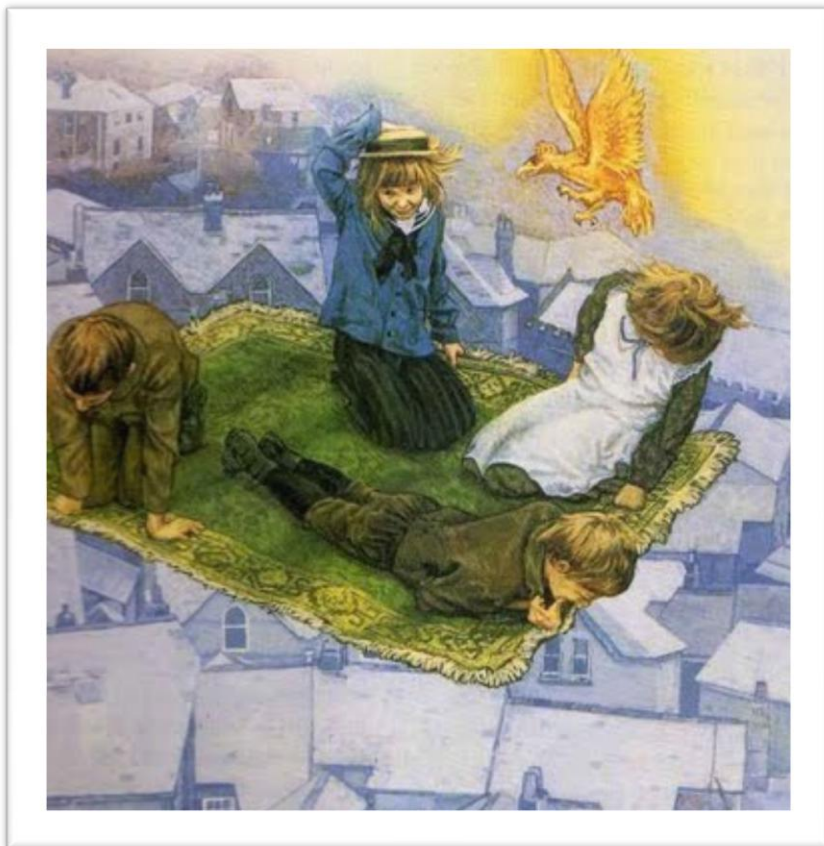
**Jane** - the fourth child in the family. She is a sometimes stereotypical representation of a nineteenth century 'girl' child - afraid, needs male protection, and innocent. But, Jane is also the one who persuades the burglar to milk the cow instead of rob the house.

**Lamb/Hilary** - the baby and youngest of the children. His name is given in the book *Five Children and It*. The nickname given to him is Lamb. He

is curious and reliant on others. Lamb also takes on the role of childhood innocence.

**Phoenix** - The Phoenix is vain and arrogant and, until they're in trouble, hides the fact that he cares for the children. As well, he is lonely and in constant search of praise. The Phoenix becomes a main decision maker and rescuer for the children when they cannot agree on where to go or how to get out of a situation. He is the only one that understands the carpet.

**Carpet** - The carpet is a silent figure in the story and yet one of the most important characters. It cannot think for itself; it is obedient, noble, and it takes the abuse of the children. The carpet places the children in bad situations, however, it is also the instrument often used to get them out of those situations.



# Themes

There are many exciting and relevant themes within *The Phoenix* and the *Carpet* for students to explore and examine further, these include Magic Carpets, Phoenix, Intrusion Fantasy and Social Class. We hope that the next few pages will offer you and your students some interesting starting points to help bring the story to life.

## MAGIC CARPETS

Magic Carpets have appeared in the folklore, legends and religions of many cultures

- King Solomon's flying carpet was reportedly made of green silk with a golden weft, sixty miles long and sixty miles wide and he could command the winds to make it fly. It's mentioned in Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious texts.
- In Russian folk tales, Baba Yaga (which means witch like woman!) supplies Ivan the Fool (a very simple-minded, but nevertheless lucky young man) with a flying carpet This magical rug helps the hero to find his way "beyond thrice-nine lands, in the thrice-ten kingdom."
- Probably the most famous flying carpet appears in *One Thousand and One Nights*. In these tales Scherezade tells of the magic carpet of Tangu, also called "Prince Housain's carpet" was a seemingly worthless carpet from Tangu in Persia that acted as a magic carpet and carried him through many adventures.

### Could it really happen?

A team of scientists at the University of St Andrews worked out a way of reversing a natural phenomenon, known as the Casimir force, so that it repels instead of attracts. They say that, in principle at least, the same effect could be used to levitate bigger objects too, even a person

The key to levitating a carpet is to create uplift by making ripples that push against air close to a horizontal surface, such as a floor. The undulating movements create a high pressure in the gap between the carpet and the floor.

The magical part comes from the discovery that, as well as lifting it, the ripples can drive the carpet forward because they make the carpet tilt slightly, moving towards the raised edge. It would be similar to the way skates and rays skim over the ocean floor

To stay afloat in air, a sheet measuring about four inches long and 0.1 millimetres thick would need to vibrate at about ten times per second with an amplitude of about 0.25 millimetres, he estimates.

Making a heavier carpet 'fly' is not forbidden by the laws of physics. But the engine driving the necessary vibrations would need to be incredibly powerful, and the carpet would have to be woven out of ultra-light materials. So it's probably going to stay legendary for quite a while!

### Questions for your students:

1. Try and imagine a world where magic carpets really did exist, where would you like it to take you? Think of the kind of adventures you would go on. Would you do similar things to the children in the story?
2. What kind of adventures do the children go on in the story? What are the differences?
3. In the story the carpet can grant wishes to the children, what kind of things would you wish for?

### Suggested activities:

1. Try writing your own adventure story where you took a trip on a magic wishing flying carpet set in a different time period to today. Now try bringing it to life? Make some still images of the key moments in your adventure and then think of some words or thoughts that sum up that image.
2. Imagine if you discovered a magic carpet, what would it look like? Try drawing or painting your own magic carpet.

## PHOENIX

A phoenix is a mythical bird which has appeared in folklore and myth since the Ancient Egyptians! Always as a symbol of power, resurrection, immortality, light, rebirth and fire.

It is an exotic bird with a colorful plumage and a tail of gold and scarlet (or purple, blue, and green according to some legends). It has a 500 to 1000 year life-cycle, near the end of which it builds itself a nest of twigs that then ignites; both nest and bird burn fiercely and are reduced to ashes, from which a new, young phoenix or phoenix egg arises, reborn anew to live again. In some stories, the new phoenix embalms the ashes of its old self in an egg made of myrrh and deposits it in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis (literally "sun-city" in Greek). It is said that the bird's cry is that of a beautiful song:

- The Egyptians described it as a stork or heron-like bird called a *benu*, one of the sacred symbols of worship at Heliopolis, closely associated with the rising sun and the Egyptian sun-god Ra.
- The Greeks subsequently pictured the bird more like a peacock or an eagle and identified it with their own word *phoenix*, meaning the color purple-red or crimson. According to the Greek mythology the phoenix lived in Phoenicia next to a well. At dawn, it bathed in the water of the well, and the Greek sun-god Helios stopped his chariot (the sun) in order to listen to its song.
- In Islamic mythology the phoenix was identified with the *anqā*, a huge mysterious bird (probably a heron) that was originally created by God with all perfections but thereafter became a plague and was killed.

Wherever it is found, the phoenix is associated with resurrection, immortality, triumph over adversity, and that which rises out of the ashes. The phoenix was compared to undying Rome, and it appears on the coinage of the late Roman Empire as a symbol of the Eternal City. It became a favorite symbol on early Christian tombstones. In chapters 25-26 of his letter to the Corinthians, St. Clement, Bishop of Rome, upheld the legendary phoenix as an evidence of Christ's ability to accomplish the resurrection of the faithful. He quotes Job as saying, "Thou shalt raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things."

In numerous ways, the phoenix was used to be a symbol of Christ. During the Middle Ages, it was believed to rise from the dead after three days.

### Questions for your students:

1. Try and imagine a world where Phoenix's really did exist, what would you do if you found a golden egg in your house?
2. What happens to the Phoenix in the story? What might he be a symbol of?

### Suggested activities:

1. Try and imagine that you discovered a phoenix in your bedroom, what would you say to it? Try acting out the story with a partner.
2. What is the phoenix like in the play? How would you play the phoenix if you were one of the actors? Try moving around the room and talking to others as the phoenix. Describe his character to a partner.
3. Try making or painting your own phoenix.

## **INTRUSION FANTASY**

*The Phoenix and the Carpet* is an intrusion fantasy because it includes marvelous creatures (like the Phoenix), magical objects (like the flying carpet), and fantastic events (like cruising on the carpet), that intrude into the realistic world in which the protagonists live. Normally, characters from intrusion fantasy are surprised by the fantastic elements that enter their world. However, the children in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* are not surprised because they have encountered fantastic elements in *The Five Children and It*. Adults within the novel are in disbelief of the fantastic elements because they try to rationalize the fantastic as a dream, or insanity.

### Questions for your students:

1. What are the magical elements within the story?
2. Think about the old man at the start of the play, can you remember all the magical objects he was selling? What stories do they appear in?
3. What other magical elements would you like to add to the story?

### Suggested activities:

1. Start by thinking about a very mundane story where nothing wonderful or magical happens; now try acting out the story with a partner. Now think about adding a magical element or object to the story like a magic wishing carpet. Try acting out the story, how has it changed?
2. Find a collection of old props and objects that look very ordinary and boring like an old carpet. Now place the objects in the center of the room and ask the students to imagine a story for each of the objects. Suppose that each object is really very magical and can do very magical things. Encourage the students to try showing how to use the magical items and what happens when they do.

### **SOCIAL CLASS**

E. Nesbit wrote for a middle-class audience and this novel contains some stereotypes of both the upper and lower classes. The cook, a lower-class character, does not always use correct grammar. For instance, she says "There's that their new carpet in their room" (Chapter 3). The upper class on the other hand, have money, status, education, and leisure time to pursue such activities as theatergoing. The children's mother often leaves them behind in order to attend her protest marches.

### Questions for your students:

1. Think about all the characters that the children meet in the story and how the kind of things they say. How are they different to each other and how are they different to you?
2. What kind of things can we discover about people from the things they say?
3. How are the lives of the children different to yours?

### Suggested activities:

1. Try creating a scene with a partner that has two very different types of people from very different backgrounds, how are they different? How do they meet?

## The Victorians

The Phoenix and The Carpet is set in a period very much like the 1900's, the next few pages aims to offer you a very brief insight into what life was like during this period of time.

### *Who were the Victorians?*

The Victorians lived over one hundred and fifty years ago during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 to 1901) it was a time of enormous change in this country. In 1837 most people lived in villages and worked on the land; by 1901, most lived in towns and worked in offices, shops and factories.

### *What was life like living during the Victorian times?*

The quality of life depended on whether you were rich or poor. If you were rich you could have a good and easy life, but if you were poor you could have a rough and hard life, often ending up in the workhouse or early death.

Victorian homes were maintained by the women but were controlled by

the men. Homes were seen as the heart of domestic bliss - a safe haven - where people could show their wealth through their home décor. Most upper and middle class families lived in large and comfortable houses. However, this was not the reality for the poor living in the slums of the developing towns and cities. There was overcrowding and poor sanitation which caused unhealthy conditions and the spread of disease. Well-off families would employ at least one servant. In poorer families, the children would help.

Most families were very large: the average couple would have at least seven children. This did start to decrease and the average number was five by 1900.

There was no central heating or electric lights in Victorian times. Houses had open fires and Candles were used for lighting. Most homes had gas lighting by the end of the Victorian era, which gave better lighting and allowed people to stay up later into the evenings.



## Edith Nesbit

Edith Nesbit (married name **Edith Bland**; 15 August 1858 – 4 May 1924) was an English author and poet whose children's works were published under the name of **E. Nesbit**. She wrote or collaborated on over 60 books of fiction for children, several of which have been adapted for film and television. She was also a political activist and co-founded the Fabian Society, a precursor to the modern Labour Party.



Edith Nesbit was born in 1858 at 38 Lower Kennington Lane in Kennington, Surrey, the daughter of an agricultural chemist, John Collis Nesbit, who died in March 1862, before her fourth birthday. Her sister Mary's ill health meant that the family moved around constantly for some years, living variously in Brighton, Buckinghamshire, France, Spain and Germany, before settling for three years at Halstead Hall in Halstead in north-west Kent, a location which later inspired *The Railway Children*.

A follower of William Morris, 19-year-old Nesbit met bank clerk Hubert Bland in 1877. Seven months pregnant, she married Bland on 22 April 1880, though she did not immediately live with him, as Bland initially continued to live with his mother. Their marriage was a *ménage à trois*: Bland also continued an affair with Alice Hoatson which produced two children (Rosamund in 1886 and John in 1899), both of whom Nesbit raised as her own. Her own children were Paul Bland (1880–1940), to whom *The Railway Children* was dedicated; Iris Bland (1881-1950s); and Fabian Bland (1885–1900), who died aged 15 after a tonsil operation, and to whom she dedicated *Five Children And It* and its sequels, as well as *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* and its sequels.

Edith Nesbit and Bland were among the founders of the Fabian Society in 1884. Their son Fabian was named after the society. They also jointly edited the Society's journal *Today*. Hoatson was the Society's assistant secretary. Nesbit and Bland also dallied briefly with the Social Democratic Federation, but rejected it as too radical. Nesbit was an

active lecturer and prolific writer on socialism during the 1880s. Nesbit also wrote with her husband under the name "Fabian Bland", though this activity dwindled as her success as a children's author grew.

Nesbit lived from 1899 to 1920 in Well Hall House, Eltham, Kent, which appears in fictional guise in several of her books, especially *The Red House*. On 20 February 1917, some three years after Bland died, Nesbit married Thomas "the Skipper" Tucker, a ship's engineer on the Woolwich Ferry. She was a guest speaker at the London School of Economics, which had been founded by other Fabian Society members.

Towards the end of her life she moved to a house called "Crowlink" in Friston, East Sussex, and later to St Mary's Bay in Romney Marsh, East Kent. Suffering from lung cancer, she died in 1924 at New Romney, Kent, and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary in the Marsh.

E. Nesbit published approximately 40 books for children, including novels, collections of stories and picture books. Collaborating with others, she published almost as many more.

# About The Production

## THOUGHTS FROM THE WRITER

*The Phoenix and the Carpet* by E Nesbit is a wonderful book – a surreal and fantastical adventure in which four headstrong children take on the world with the help of magic and imagination. It is a classic in its genre – taking its place rightly alongside books such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *the Harry Potter series*, *Percy Jackson*, *Matilda*, *The Narnia Books*, *Swallows and Amazons* etc. What makes these books so special is that they *seem* to depict real life – the real life that you and I lead - before veering off into the world of make believe. We are all secretly entranced by the thought that there is a world running parallel to the one we live in – one in which unicorns exist, carpets fly, the greek gods live on, there are schools for wizardry, there is a world behind the mirror, the dusty cupboard in your uncle’s house is a secret portal to a snow filled land of witches and talking animals. We all want this to be true. These books allow us to live in these worlds.

When starting out to adapt Phoenix my first decision was to try and make the children as distinct and interesting as possible. We would, after all, be spending two hours in their company so I sought to exaggerate what I found in the books. Robert become more clumsy and accident prone (which makes him even more adorable), Anthea became a little more ‘Bonham Carter’ – eccentric and loopy – a diva before her time, languishing in flowers and drama. Cyril became the prototype boy scout – full of useful and sensible ideas and plans (most of which must backfire). And Little Jane, little feisty Jane, became the most headstrong of them all. No-one listens to her which must mean that she is the first to see the truth of any scenario. We must love these children – this is essentially a story of children whose parents are absent (this is true of most great children’s adventure stories) and they are left to fend for themselves and leave their stamp on the world. The most difficult thing in the world is growing up and having to put your imagination on a shelf. These children are defiantly trying not to.

The other issue one always has with stories like this is how not to make the whole thing feel very episodic. I have tried to show that with magic comes responsibility which led to the invention of the Junk Man

character. In the book the children get the carpet from a shop and there is no great detail. I saw an opportunity to create a framing device that would allow the audience to know more than the characters do. We know that the Junk Man is at least 3000 years old and has for sale the Holy Grail, Excaliber, Cinderella's slipper etc but the children only see a tramp. This sets up a sense of danger and magic that can resurface where necessary to guide the children. This character is a returning feature of stories such as this – he turns up in James and the Giant Peach for example – and really helps to set up the mood.

Lastly and hopefully most importantly, I wanted this play to be fun to watch and fun to be in. I wanted it to be eccentrically British (it really does poke fun at ideas of how the British take on the world) and I wanted it to be a fast romp. My favourite character in it is the Carpet, who really does have a mind of its own. My own little special moment in the book is when the carpet lets it be known that it wants its own adventure. I hope that we all feel like that – desperate to get on a carpet and sail away into the moonlit night to a faraway place of exotic and mysterious intrigue. I'll be on the prow of a pirate ship in the West Indies a couple of hundred years ago waving my cutlass. Hope to see you there!

Russ Tunney

*I hope that you have enjoyed the piece and would love any thoughts that you have regarding the play or writing for young audiences, or even copies of written work that children have created in reaction to the play would be gratefully received. My e mail address is [russ.tunney@nuffieldtheatre.co.uk](mailto:russ.tunney@nuffieldtheatre.co.uk)*

## THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

The novel was written in 1904 as a sequel to Five Children and It. Once again we are introduced to those adventurous and unruly children as they find a mystical bird and a magical carpet in their midst. Off they go, with no thoughts of the danger, as they fly to India, a Desert Island, a tower in France and meet the most extraordinary people and push the magic carpet to its limits.

Russ has done a wonderful job of capturing the spirit of the book as well as a wry nod at the present. Carl Davies has designed a very clever set, which evokes both home and magic- he is also the one behind the gorgeous puppets that you will see. Music has been a vital part of the process and we have been working with Ivan Stott on the songs and underscoring, which allows us to take the leaps of imagination that are needed. John Thompson, our choreographer has been working hard going from tap dancing lobsters to Insurance Morris Men.

We have had a lot of fun in the rehearsal room: The WI stomp and the Fire Insurance Office are two of my particular favourite moments of madness! Throughout rehearsal we played with ideas and had support from Tim Ford in terms of keeping the puppets alive and having character.

Each of the children are very strong characters and we have made sure that they are very clear in their attitude to events. Similarly so it has been vital to find a character for the carpet and the Phoenix as well. The children do not realize the potential danger that they find themselves in as the Phoenix is egomaniacal and the carpet is wearing out. The story is very episodic and so it has been important to find the through line of danger.

It was important to find a company of actors who would play together, embrace the madness and bring ideas into the rehearsal room. We have laughed a lot. I hope you enjoy watching the show as much as we have enjoyed making it.

You can read my Director's blog on [www.forestforge.co.uk](http://www.forestforge.co.uk)

Kirstie Davis

Artistic Director of Forest Forge

## The Design

The set and costumes have been designed by Carl Davies. After the initial drawings have been finalized with the director a model box of the set was made to scale.

### Questions for your students:

What impressions of the story and the play do you get from the set?  
How does the set support the story?  
What do you think are the practice considerations that were made in the design of the set?



# Further Classroom Activities

## 1. Theatre critic

### **Task: Write a review of the production**

Preparation:

Read the book before coming to watch the play. Bring a notebook and make notes on key themes, design, music and presentation of the characters.

Writing the review:

Begin the review with an introduction that provides a synopsis of the play (but don't give too much away!)

Discuss the following production elements:

- The Acting
- The Directing
- The Design (Set/Costume/Lighting/Sound)
- The actor/audience relationship
- Does the production fulfill your expectations?
- Would you recommend the production?

## 2. Theatre design

### **Task: Design your own set and create your own model box**

Tips: Consider the many different locations of the story, how would you put these elements into your design? What are the places? How would you reveal the secret passages? What colours would you use?

How would you design the set differently for different kinds of spaces: Theatre in The Round, Traverse, Thrust.

### 3. Direct a scene

#### Task: Direct a section of the play yourself

Using the script extract try directing a section of the play yourself.

## Script Extract One

*Enter an old man pushing a cart laden with all kinds of things, some worthless, some beyond priceless. He is looking for custom.*

JUNK MAN                      Trinkets, baubles, shiny things...

   Trinkets, baubles, Ruby rings...

   Trinkets, baubles, made for kings...

   Welcome here, in Old Kentish town  
   To my second-hand emporium!  
   Odds and sods, and bric-a-brac  
   Lost in a crematorium.  
   Junk, old trunks and a rotting sack  
   A skull from the Globe's auditorium!  
   Dusty lamps, rusty clamps, Merlin's gown  
   Treasures so vast, we'll hold a moratorium...

   Treasures old and ancient,  
   Twinkle in the breeze.  
   A star plucked from the firmament,  
   And here the Golden Fleece.  
   This little cup so worthless -  
   Hard to find a sale  
   But look closely and you will see  
   It is the Holy Grail.

   I'll sell 'em all to you  
   I'll sell 'em without fail  
   Ladies, gents and *imbetweens*  
   Come see my bill of sale

   Aladdin's lamp, with one wish left  
   Discovered in a nifty theft;  
   Excalibur, make no mistake,  
   Acquired from some distant lake;

Medusa's head, Achilles' Heel  
Come on up and have a feel.  
A picture of Dorian Gray,  
From a house-sale, up Hampstead way.

A bottle here, watch it swirl  
Clearly labelled clearly "Drink me"  
I got it from a little girl  
Could be poison, could be Chablis....

Buy them now, they're going fast  
At this rate they'll never last  
A customer, please, don't just pass  
All my treasures, I've amassed...

Trinkets, baubles, Shiny things

Trinkets, baubles, shiny things,

Trinkets, baubles, sh...

*Stops singing. He is alone.*

Oh never mind.

*Looks at his pocket watch. A whisper of wind floats past.*

Almost the fifth of November. There's a chill in the air, and a  
whisper in the wind. A change is coming. And a child.

## Script Extract Two

*Song – OUT IN THE WILDERNESS*

*Wonderful eastern mysterious music. The Phoenix flies into Robert's arms.*

Thousands of years I lived  
Out in the Wilderness,  
Life was so glorious,  
But predictable, I profess.

For thousands of years I burnt  
Out in the Wilderness,  
Life was splendiferous!  
And repetitive I must stress!

Until such a time that came to pass  
When to face another birth just like the last  
My eternal life had lost its gloss  
Filled me with dread, and made me cross  
And as that day came nearer and nearer  
The price of immortality became clearer and clearer

Sitting on a carpet, it's a long time since,  
I awoke by a fire with a princess and a prince  
And to cut to the chase, to cut the story short  
This couple had escaped from the Royal Court  
They only had eyes for one another  
This Prince of the East, and his beautiful lover

They wanted to escape  
From the company of men  
Away from all the intrigue  
Time and time again

And they plotted  
And they schemed  
And made a plan  
With the aid of an enchanter,

A wise old man...

He gave them a carpet – a wishing carpet  
And it whisked them away, just as they desired  
As the moon rose high, under a violet sky

These flowers of the desert, on the sands did lie.

And I glided down, and when their wonder was abated  
The effect I had upon them cannot be understated  
Our meeting, it seemed, had been fated,  
And for the first time in years, I felt elated!

And they gave me their carpet  
For which they had no further use  
I laid my egg upon it -  
And the next you will deduce -

Thousands of years ago!  
Out in the wilderness

I made a wish simple and clear  
I wanted away, away from there!  
Away from there! I wanted away,  
I wanted away, far away from there.

I wanted next to wake  
In a thousand years' time,  
Upon some distant altar  
In a distant land.  
And the carpet gave a shudder, and a shake,  
And into the air it began to climb,  
Below I could see the rock of Gibraltor  
I knew then the carpet had followed my command...

Thousands of years ago!  
Out in the wilderness!

# Links

[www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk](http://www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk)

[www.forestforge.co.uk](http://www.forestforge.co.uk)

[www.edithnesbit.co.uk](http://www.edithnesbit.co.uk)

