

THE MAGIC OF PANTO

Here's a game to play. If you ever meet an American, try to explain to them what pantomime is all about. It's a uniquely British tradition, so chances are, they won't have seen one and won't have a clue what you're talking about.

So you'll tell them pantomimes are based on popular children's stories, but they're enjoyed by the grown-ups just as much as the kids.

You'll describe how the lead character, known as the dame, is an outrageously over-the-top character played by a man in woman's clothing.

If they look puzzled at this point, you can add that in very traditional shows, the principal boy is an attractive young woman in figure-hugging costume with a habit of slapping her thighs.

Next, you'll explain that the audience loves nothing more than to hear the man in the dress rattle out corny jokes they have heard a hundred times before. You'll mention that the baddie can barely get his words out because of the volume of hissing and booing from the auditorium. And you'll say that when the hero gets into trouble, we all yell, "He's behind you," like our lives depended on it.

Then you'll add that, as well as the dancers, speciality acts and all-round razzmatazz onstage, the audience can't wait to get on their feet and join in with a spot of competitive song and dance of their own. The more ridiculous it gets, the better.

By now, your American friend is looking very puzzled; so puzzled, indeed, that the only way to explain things will be to show them a pantomime first hand.

That way, they'll experience the infectious air of spontaneity, subversion and raucousness for themselves. They'll start to understand the nature of a show where the audience is as much part of the event as the performers. And they'll get a taste of the traditions we all embrace with such gusto, even though - or perhaps because - they make no rational sense.

If they're observant, they will also realise that behind the apparent anarchy lies tremendous stagecraft. In the biggest pantos, the performers can be giving their all up to eight times a week. In any one audience, there's likely to be a boy or girl making their first trip to the theatre. The performers know this could be the most extraordinary experience of their young lives. To make that possible, the dancers, singers, comedians and actors have to give total commitment, regardless of whether it's a glitzy first night or a midweek matinee.

Purists may sneer, but to see a top dame or a leading panto comic work their magic over audience after audience, night after night, is to watch an artist at the top of their game.

Audiences love it because the performers look us in the eye and acknowledge we're all in the same room together. They tell us jokes about our town, sometimes even our very theatre, reinforcing the sense of a unique event happening right before us. Tomorrow, a different audience will have a different experience and will love it just the same.

One reason for the continued success of panto is its ability to adapt to the times. The episodic format makes it easy to throw into the mix the things that are exciting people. Whether it's hit pop songs, amazing juggling troupes or high-tech 3D effects, the pantomime can always find space for the latest craze.

It's a mongrel form, combining echoes of music hall, variety, commedia dell'arte, hit TV shows, medieval morality plays, silent movies, musicals, stand-up comedy, fairy stories, circus and the legitimate theatre. This mixture is what makes it special.

We talk about 'traditional' pantomime, but it is a style of theatre that is always reinventing itself. As audiences, we love the familiarity of the lavish sets, the over-the-top costumes and the much-loved routines, but we are also delighted by the freshly minted jokes, the topical comedy, and the songs we've been hearing on the radio.

On the one hand, we love to see the age-old chaos caused in the great panto set pieces. That might mean Wishee Washee trying to help out Widow Twankey in the laundry, only to end up burning a hole through the emperor's underpants, getting squeezed through a mangle, or being turned upside down in a washing machine. It might mean the Ugly Sisters (invariably played by men) bickering between themselves about who is the most beautiful. Or it might mean the crazy slapstick scene in *Jack and the Beanstalk* when someone tries to milk Daisy the Cow and everything - milk, pail, stool, cow - is scattered across the stage.

On the other hand, we love to see well-known faces of today making wisecracks about the town council, the local football team and people we've all been watching on TV. It's this blend of familiarity and freshness that keeps panto alive. Oh yes it does!

Mark Fisher
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THE PANTO SURVIVAL GUIDE

Top tips
for getting
through
your panto!

The person in the row in front of me has HUGE hair and is blocking my view. Do you have any advice?

This one takes a bit of forward planning, so make sure you've brought a pair of shears with you. Then all you do is sneeze really loudly and at the exact same moment lop off the offending tufts*. The person will think you have sneezed off their hair! If you're really smart, take along a pair of small scissors as well and offer to tidy it up a bit - that way, everyone's a winner!

* If your parents are worried about you using shears (they probably will be), get THEM to do it - adults sneeze louder anyway.

My sister's gone to buy sweeties. How can I save her seat?
I'm not really sure why you'd want to, but if you insist. Simply paint your face green, turn to the person who wants to sit there and say: "I think I'm going to be sick."
Note: This does NOT work on doctors.

I'm so busy texting my GF/BF/BFF that I'm concerned I might miss the audience participation bit. Can you help?

I can, but I really don't see why I should. You ought to be paying attention to those poor, hard-working folk up there on the stage. They've got children of their own to feed, you know. Has nobody ever told you it's rude to text while someone's talking to you? Hello? Are you listening to me?

My doctor tells me I suffer from baddie-phobia. How will I cope at a panto?

You won't. But you're here now, so you'll just have to get over it. I suggest you sit on the left-hand side, as the baddie traditionally appears on the right of the stage. There - educational as well as entertaining. Better still, find a seat facing the opposite way entirely and laugh at the rest of the audience instead.

I've got a rather squeaky voice and don't think I'll be heard when I shout "He's behind you". What can I do?

There are a number of things you can try. Vocal exercises might beef up your voice, or you could bring along a megaphone. Personally, I find setting a boxful of large, hairy spiders free across the floor of the stalls just before the show starts makes quite a difference to the volume of the screaming.

I'm worried I might lose my seat while I go to the loo/get ice cream/do stuff onstage.

My first recommendation is that you do NOT attempt to do all these things simultaneously. If you must leave your seat, make sure you have a handy life-size cardboard cut-out of yourself, which you should tape securely to the chair. It's even better if your eyes are closed in the cut-out photo because people will think you're asleep and won't want to disturb you.

WRITE YOUR OWN PANTO

Ever wanted to invent your own traditional panto? Use this handy multiple-choice guide to create your very own panto story.

Once upon a time, in...



A a land far, far away



B a small village near Milton Keynes



C a dark and scary corner of my mind

there lived a...



A beautiful maiden



B brave prince

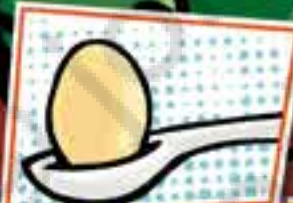


C strange troll-like creature with unusually large kneecaps

who had always wanted to...



A run away to the circus



B win the egg-and-spoon race at school sports day



C kill the fire-breathing dragon that threatened the kingdom

So one day, they went to see their...



A best friend in the world



B toothless old granny



C dentist

and told them all about their...



A secret crush on the headteacher



B pet rabbit with the funny ear



C burning desire to go on a quest

Without even stopping to pick up a...



A sandwich for lunch



B Penguin



C passing hitchhiker

they set off immediately for



A the adventure of a lifetime



B Clacton-on-Sea



C the castle on the hill

But they had barely set out on their journey when they encountered...



A a terrifying monster with bad breath and dodgy hair



B the wicked queen



C a giant goldfish

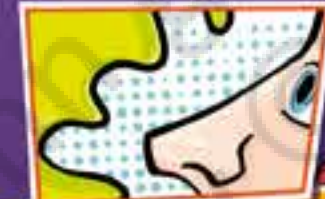
In spite of their terror, with one blow of their...



A trumpet



B axe



C nose

they reduced their hideous opponent to...



A a quivering wreck



B tears



C the size of a small tomato

and they all lived...



A happily ever after.



B in a yellow submarine.



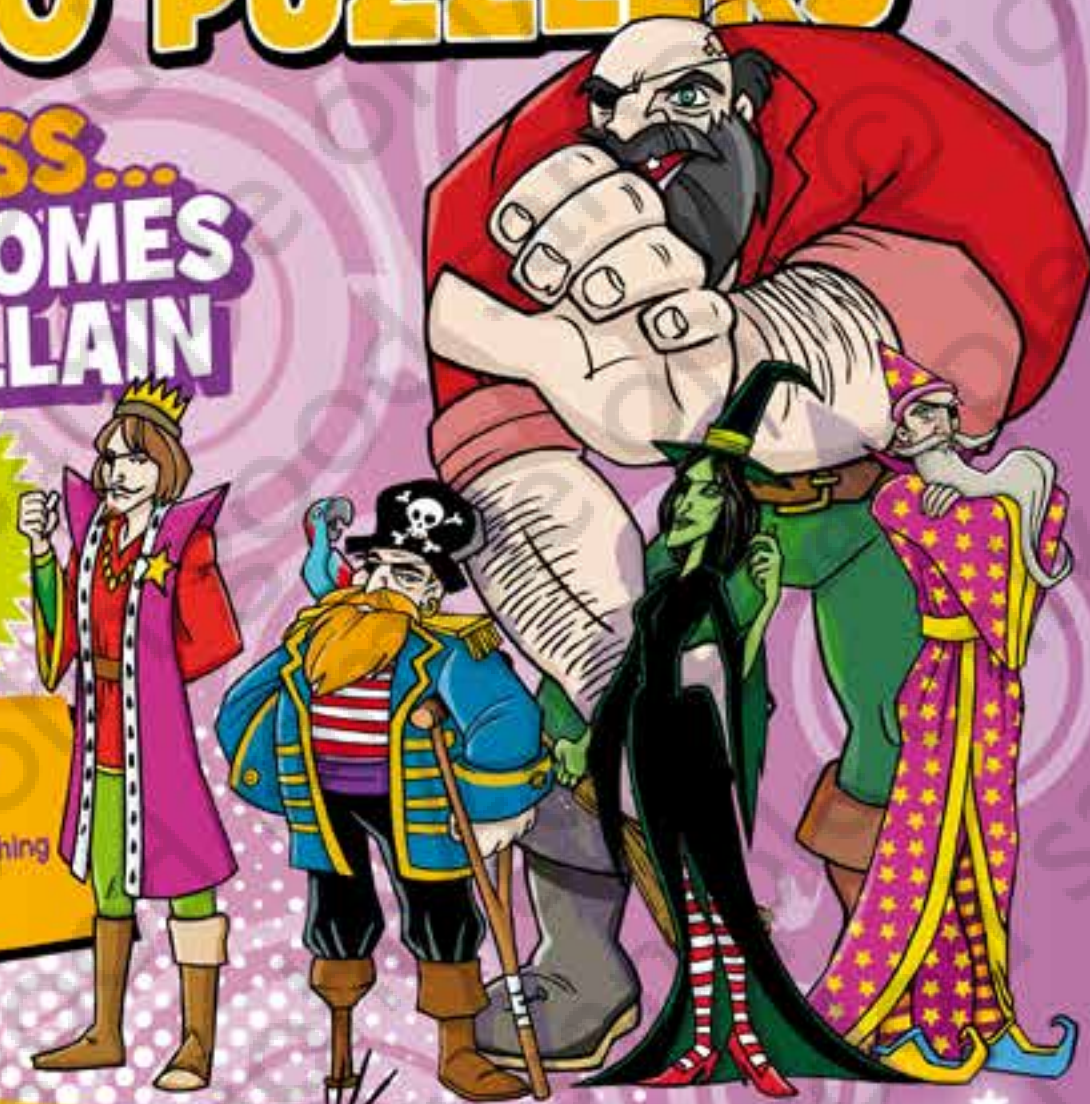
C in a shoe, where they were looked after by a woman who had so many children she didn't know what to do.

PANTO PUZZLERS

**BOO HISS...
HERE COMES
THE VILLAIN**

Which panto villain
will be the
star of the show?
Use the clues below
to find out...

- Has black or grey hair
- Wears odd shoes
- Has a green item of clothing
- Wears an eyepatch



WHERE'S MY WAND?

Help the Fairy Godmother find a way through
the star maze to find her wand.



WICKED TONGUE TWISTER!

WHICH WICKED
WITCH WISHED
WHICH WICKED WISH

See how quickly
you can say this
without getting
muddled!

PANTOMANIA!

Unscramble
the titles to discover
some of our favourite
pantomimes!



FIRST KISS

Or just an illusion?

Relax your eyes and
stare at the space between
Cinderella and the Prince.

Slowly bring the page
towards your face and see
them share their first kiss!



Try again
if it doesn't work
the first time.

PIRATES' CODEBUSTER!

Crack the code to work out where the
pirates have stashed their loot

A	skull	J	bomb	S	skull and crossbones
B	telescope	K	moon	T	gemstone
C	palm tree	L	knife	U	treasure chest
D	compass	M	drum	V	mountain
E	pirate hat	N	map	W	wooden plank
F	beer mug	O	cat	X	mouse
G	bell	P	wine glass	Y	candle
H	boot	Q	parrot	Z	sandwich
I	anchor	R	compass rose		

Secret message:



There are 4 apples,
3 magic wands and
3 lamps hidden on
these pages.
Can you find them?



SPY!

PANTO INSANITY

THE WORLD'S HARDEST DOT-TO-DOT!!!!

The Fairy Godmother is blundering around in the dark looking for her magic wand! Can you join up the dots to find the wand? Shut your eyes, though (it's DARK, remember!)

8# Scaredy

9# Stripey

DWARFS THAT NEVER MADE IT

DID YOU KNOW...

the average panto has 2,000 calories (that's as much as four big hamburgers, or 22 glasses of orange juice)?

Low-fat pantos include Aladdin (genies are all gas) and Jack and the Beanstalk (beans are healthy for you). Snow White has the most calories at a whopping 36,000 calories per show! (apparently a whole dwarf is 5,000 calories - they're hi-ho in fat and there's seven of 'em!)

10# Smelly

12# Jeff

11# Snotty

AMAZING FAIRY TALE FACT #720...

The Giant in Jack and the Beanstalk didn't always live in a castle in the sky. He spent many years in a bungalow in Eastbourne before he applied to go on the popular daytime TV show Find Me a Massive Property That Defies the Laws of Gravity.

EPIC PANTO FAIL... Goldfish and the three penguins

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

Answer: The time is wrong - it's not 11.15pm, it's 11.

AMAZING FAIRYTALE FACT #563...

Widow Twankey once worked as a glamorous assistant to a magician. Everything was going brilliantly until an unfortunate incident in the 'sawing a lady in half' trick left her half the man she used to be.

AMAZING FAIRYTALE FACT #147...

Rumpelstiltskin is worth 28 points in Scrabble, unless you put it on a triple word score three times, in which case it's worth a whopping 756 points!

AMAZING FAIRYTALE FACT #304...

The Beast from Beauty and the Beast is the only panto character who hasn't been on the front cover of Panto Life Today magazine. They've tried to take his picture several times but the photographer always faints when he tries to take his picture!

PANTO CRICKET

Enjoy the performance all the more by playing Panto Cricket. Every time you hear the words "He's behind you!", you score a run. Whenever someone says "Oh no he isn't!", you lose a wicket. Divide your party into teams and play one half of the panto each.

The very very first pantos have been captured in 35,000-year-old cave paintings! They include Og and his Amazing Rock, Ug-Ug and the Seven Pebbles and the great favourite, Thog and the Enormous Tree...

THE GREAT ESCAPE

START

Can you help the princess get to the taxi on time while avoiding the palace guards?

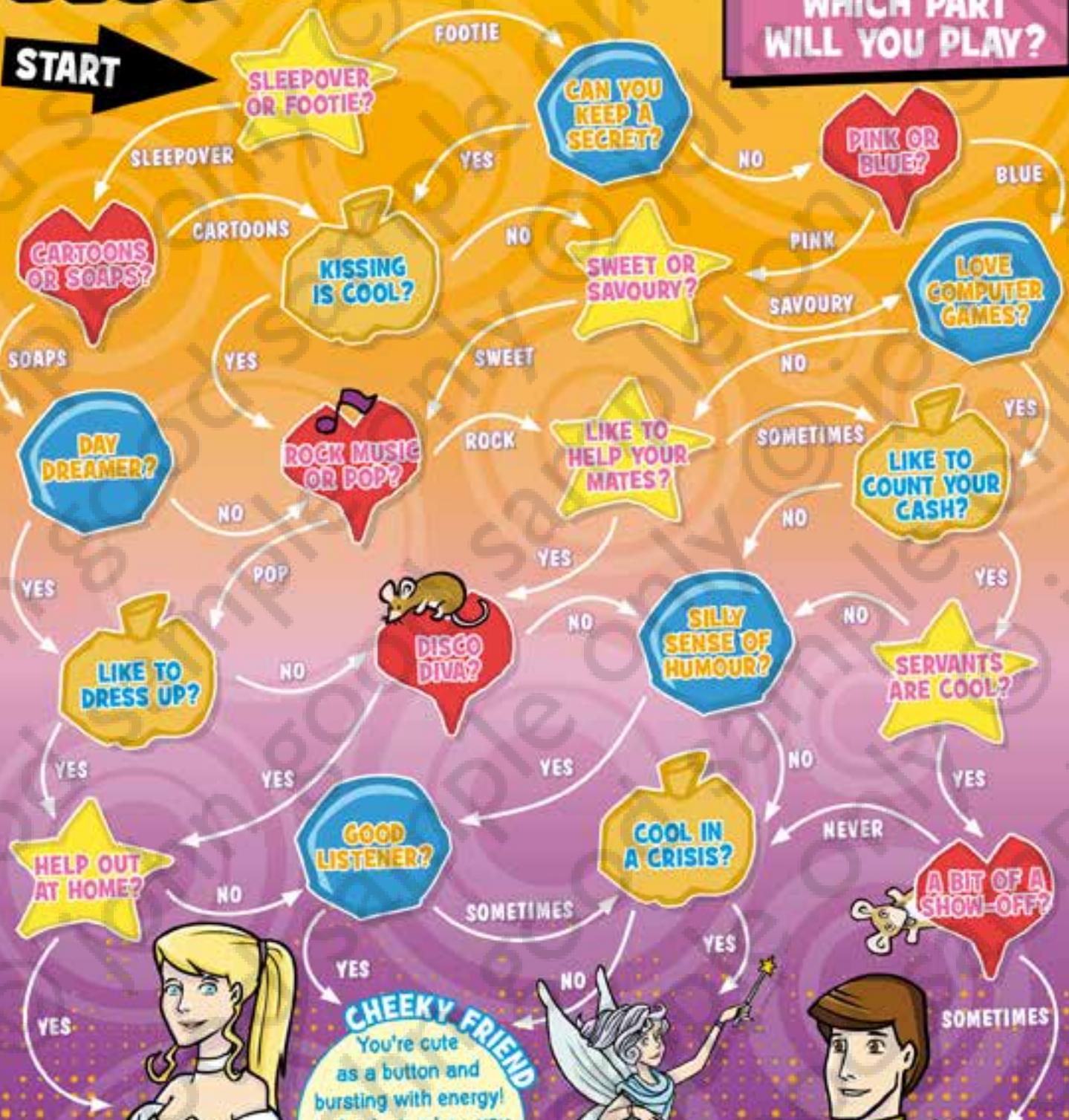




AUDITION TIME!

WHICH PART
WILL YOU PLAY?

START



PARTY PRINCESS
Charming, gentle and helpful, you enchant your friends. You love to party and dance. You're cool too – you have your eye on the main part!

CHEEKY FRIEND
You're cute as a button and bursting with energy! A cheeky tomboy, you like to hang out with your mates and have fun.

FUN FAIRY
Full of surprises and with heaps of energy, you are reliable and supercool under pressure. Your heart of gold means everyone loves you!

COOL PRINCE
Wow! You're cool and confident and expect nothing but the best for you and your friends! Fun-loving and competitive, you're a high-flier!

COLOUR
US IN!

PANTOLAN



CATTY CODEWORD

Dick Whittington's cat and two of Cinderella's mice have found this piece of paper with a message on it - something you **MUST ALWAYS DO** when watching a pantomime. The only problem is - it's in code! Can you crack the code and find out what it is you have to do?



Secret message:



THE GREAT ESCAPE

The Princess has spent a busy afternoon doing her favourite hobby - potholing - but she needs to get back to the palace for a ball. The only problem is - a group of bears have moved in! Can you get our princess back above ground, avoiding bears on the way?



COLOUR
US IN!



MARKET MAYHEM!

It's a typical busy day in the Panto Land market, and, as usual, things are getting lost!

Can you find:

- 10** mice
- 7** dwarfs
- 6** cats
- 4** pigeons

After all that, try and find:

- Jack's bag of beans
- Cinderella's pumpkin
- Aladdin's lamp
- Dick Whittington's bundle
- Sleeping Beauty's alarm clock
- Snow White's apple

WHO ARE YOU?

Answer all five questions and add up your score to find out which panto character you are.

What would be your ideal home?

- A swish (rat-free) pad in Chelsea (1 point)
- A swanky palace with a spotlessly clean kitchen (2 points)
- A huge stone castle with giant-sized rooms (3 points)
- A cosy cottage in a lush green forest (4 points)
- An island far away (5 points)

What would be the ideal present to get you?

- An A-Z map of London (1 point)
- A really gorgeous evening gown (2 points)
- A really sharp chopping axe (3 points)
- A voucher for a kiss from a prince (4 points)
- A clock (that smells a bit fishy) (5 points)

Who would you never like to run into?

- An enormous rat wearing a crown (1 point)
- Two really ugly girls (2 points)
- The local giant-sized bully (3 points)
- A really horrid old lady who insists on selling you apples (4 points)
- A pirate with only one hand (5 points)

What's your favourite food?

- Ratatouille (1 point)
- Pumpkin pie (2 points)
- Three-bean salad (3 points)
- A fruits of the forest fruit salad (4 points)
- Fairy cakes (5 points)

What's your favourite way to unwind?

- Go on a cruise to the Med (1 point)
- Washing the dishes (2 points)
- Climbing large plants (3 points)
- Flying through the air (4 points)
- Hanging out with seven little friends (5 points)



5 points
Dick Whittington

You're a very ambitious person who knows what you want (you may even be mayor one day). Nothing can come between you and your pet cat.

6-10 points
Cinderella

You're a real rags-to-riches story. Remember to be nice to your godmother - she may make your wishes come true!

11-15 points
Jack

You love a good bargain and you're not afraid to stand up to bad guys - even if they are a LOT bigger than you.

16-20 points
Peter Pan

You're a carefree spirit who doesn't ever want to grow up. You're protective of your friends (and yes, you DO believe in fairies).

21-25 points
Snow White

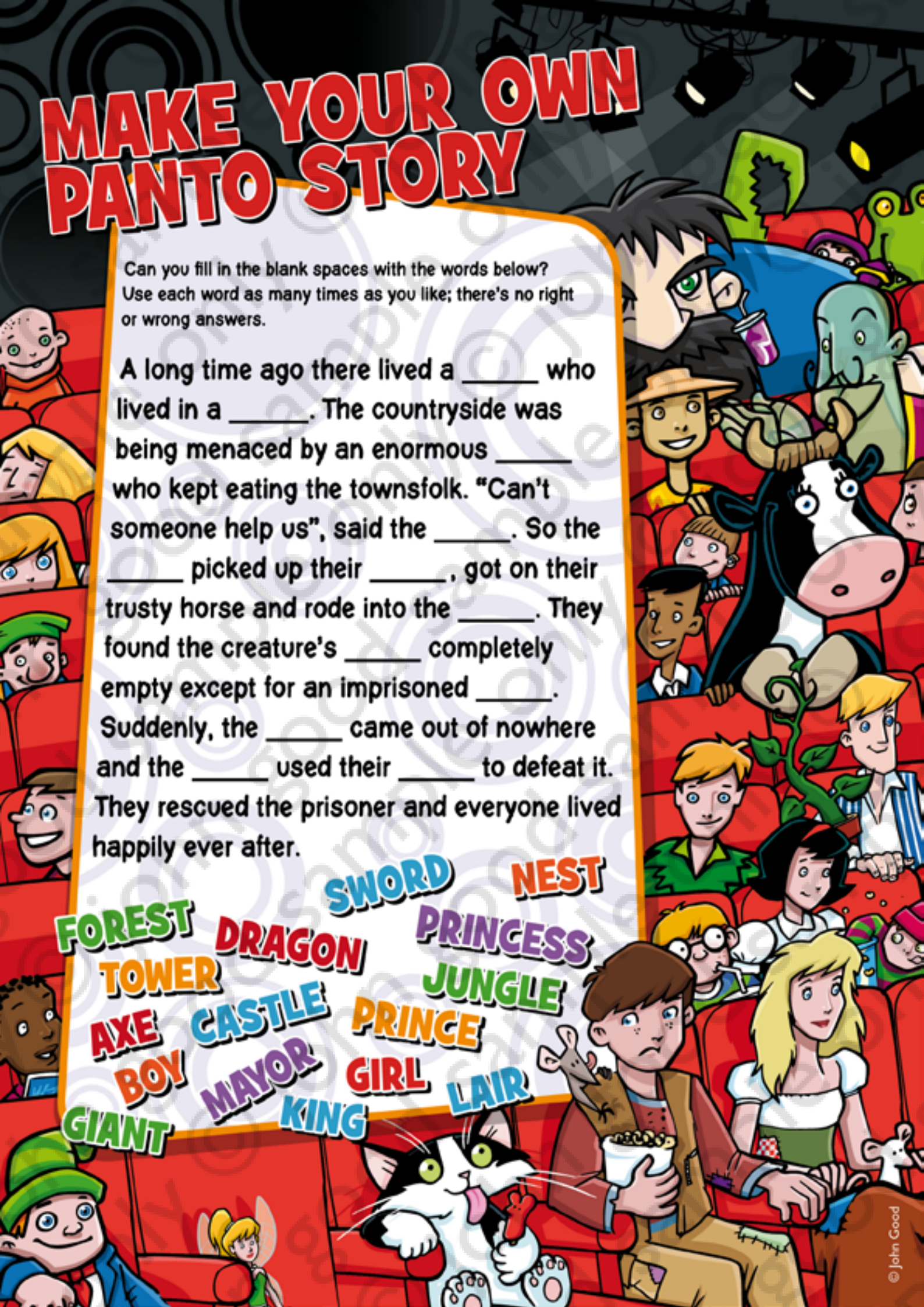
You like the simple life - hanging out in a cottage in the forest with animals and a group of small friends for company.

MAKE YOUR OWN PANTO STORY

Can you fill in the blank spaces with the words below?
Use each word as many times as you like; there's no right or wrong answers.

A long time ago there lived a _____ who lived in a _____. The countryside was being menaced by an enormous _____ who kept eating the townsfolk. "Can't someone help us", said the _____. So the _____ picked up their _____, got on their trusty horse and rode into the _____. They found the creature's _____ completely empty except for an imprisoned _____. Suddenly, the _____ came out of nowhere and the _____ used their _____ to defeat it. They rescued the prisoner and everyone lived happily ever after.

FOREST
TOWER
AXE
BOY
GIANT
SWORD
DRAGON
CASTLE
MAYOR
KING
PRINCESS
JUNGLE
PRINCE
GIRL
LAIR
NEST

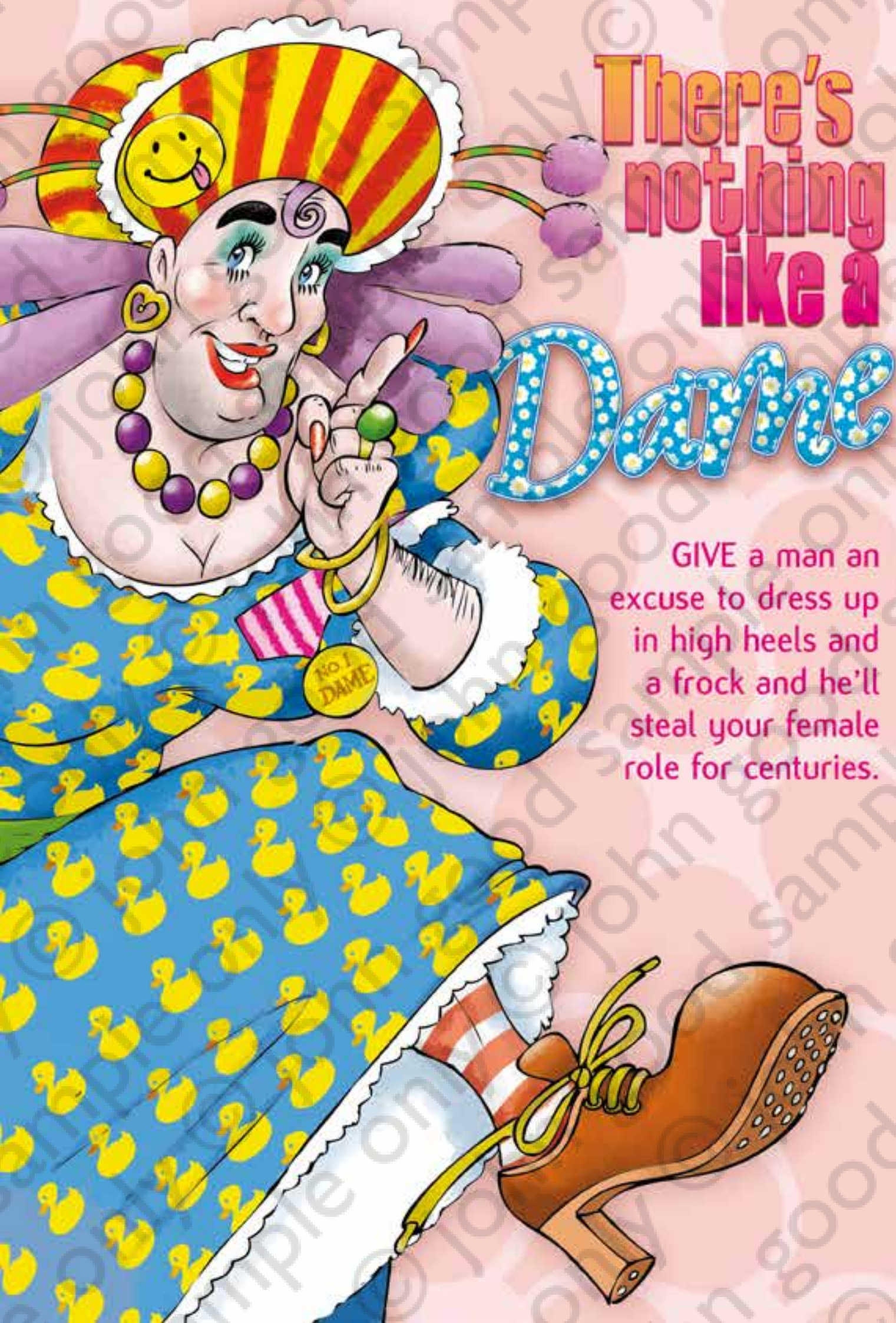




A collage of five cartoon characters. In the top left is a green, muscular alien with a large head and a small body. Below it is a boy with brown hair, wearing a red jacket, a green vest, and a grey cap, running towards the right. To the right of him is a boy with red hair, wearing a green hat with a red feather and a green outfit, flying or jumping. Below the boy in the red jacket is a boy with a large white beard, wearing a blue hat and a green shirt, running towards the right. To the right of the boy with the beard is a girl with blonde hair, wearing a white dress, running towards the right. The background is a light yellow with a faint, repeating pattern of the word 'Cartoon' in a stylized font.

All these traditions we have come to know and love, together with the freshness of topical jokes, the pleasure of being a part of it all, and the knowledge that we can go home knowing everything has been happily resolved, makes a winning combination that never fails to please.





There's nothing like a Dame

GIVE a man an excuse to dress up in high heels and a frock and he'll steal your female role for centuries.

Yes, it's true:

men have been nicking arguably the best parts and certainly the best gags in annual pantos since...well, since before they were even called pantos. Up until the Restoration in the late 17th century, female roles in the theatre were played by men - or more usually adolescent boys - because it was considered immoral for women to appear onstage. But even when this convention was relaxed, there were some female parts that were still firmly grasped by the male actors (if you'll pardon the expression). And although the girls grabbed the principal boy roles in return, that trend has begun to wane in recent years. What seems to be here to stay is the good old pantomime dame.



Pantomime itself can be claimed to date back to the ancient Greeks and there is a strong link to the 16th century European tradition of *commedia dell'arte*. In England, there are records of an 1814 *Dick Whittington* and even an 1804 *Cinderella*, but the modern panto as we know it today

- complete with topical gags, cross-dressing, slapstick and mild innuendo - really got going in the Victorian era. One of the earliest great dames was James Rogers, whose 1861 performance at the Strand Theatre was also the first ever outing for the name Widow Twankey in *Aladdin* - named after the Chinese province of Tuan Kay, home to a particularly popular green tea of the time. Now be honest, you never expected this amount of education at the panto, did you? Oh no you didn't.

While we're on the subject of famous dames, many of the earliest came from the traditions of the music hall, and the habit lingered on through the variety acts of the 20th century and right up to the television stars of today. So while the Victorians loved Dan Leno and Sir George Robey (the first dame ever to be knighted!), later audiences lapped up the turns offered by Old Mother Riley (Arthur Lucan), Norman Evans (said to have inspired Les Dawson's Ada character) and Arthur Askey. In recent years, household names such as Danny La Rue, Paul O'Grady and Julian Clary have all eagerly stepped into the high heels. Even classical knight Sir Ian McKellen has dragged up in *Aladdin* at The Old Vic, prompting *The Guardian's* critic Michael Billington to joke: "At least we can tell our grandchildren that we saw McKellen's Twankey and it was huge."

There also seems to be a particular tradition of longevity with dames. Some of the most popular have been doing it for years. Douglas Byng (1893-1988) appeared in more than 50 pantomimes, designing his own glamorous costumes along the way, while George Lacy - widely regarded as the greatest of his generation - played more than 60 dames from 1923, when he was 19, to 1984. Kenneth Alan

Taylor gave Nottingham Playhouse its dame for more than 25 years until 2009. And Christopher Biggins's 38-year run of pantos (though not always as a dame) only came to an end with his winning stint on *I'm a Celebrity...* in 2007: he returned to panto the following year as Buttons.

The current dame record-holder (unless, of course, you know different) is York Theatre Royal's Berwick Kaler, who has notched up more than 30 continuous years in the frock, as well as writing and directing many of the productions. For the record, *The Daily Telegraph* lists three of his top gags here...

My late husband had a glass eye. I didn't notice it at first - it just came out in conversation...

Do you like the frock? I bought it for a ridiculous figure...

My tongue sandwiches speak for themselves!

Of course, there are dames and there are dames. On the one hand, there are the ageing, man-hungry mothers of the hero (Widow Twankey, Dame Trott) or helpful old dears (Sarah the Cook), while on the other are the more grotesque figures of villainy, such as the Ugly Sisters, whose names are changed according to the current fashion or whoever's in the media spotlight this year.

While all of them, in pantos across the nation, are played by men, there is a wide variety of styles and personalities behind them. Some, like Paul O'Grady or Danny La Rue, have been genuine drag acts, bringing their particular brand of cross-dressing humour to the roles. Others, like Les Dawson or Terry Scott, relied on their very masculine qualities and appearance to create comedy from the incongruity of their alter egos.

But whether you like your dames glamorous and glitzy or homely and hunky, there's just no escaping those blokes in frocks who are determined to brighten up your festive season with a bit of old-fashioned innuendo. Oh no there isn't...

Michael Davies
© John Good



Christmas Crackers!

Did you know...?

Santa Claus is known by different names around the world, including Father Christmas here in the UK, Père Noël in France, Weihnachtsmann in Germany, Ded Moroz in Russia and Hoteiosho in Japan. He is also known as Kris Kringle in the film *Miracle on 34th Street*.



A goose was customary Christmas fare until Henry VIII took it upon himself to tuck into a turkey. Mince pies were once shaped like mangers and are thought to date back to the sweetmeats formerly presented to the Vatican on Christmas Eve.



Famous people born on Christmas Day include: Princess Alexandra (1936), Charlie Chaplin (1889), Alice Cooper (1945), Annie Lennox (1954) and Dido (1971).



December 26 was traditionally known as St Stephen's Day, but it is now more commonly known as Boxing Day. This expression came about because money was collected in alms boxes placed in churches during the festive season. This money was then distributed to the poor and needy after Christmas.

In 1907, Oklahoma became the last US state to declare Christmas a legal holiday.



The use of a Christmas wreath as a decoration on your front door, mantel or bay window symbolises a sign of welcome and long life to all who enter.



The largest Christmas cracker was 45.72 metres long and 3.04 metres in diameter, which begs the question: how big were the paper hats and how long were the jokes?



In 1932, King George V made the first live broadcast from Sandringham on Christmas Day at 3pm. His daughter, Queen Elizabeth II, made the first televised Queen's Speech in 1957. In 1993, Channel 4 started televising an alternative Christmas message, which has been given by people such as Ali G, Jamie Oliver, Katie Piper, Marge Simpson and the President of Iran!



The most popular Christmas Day TV show of the last 10 years is the 2001 edition of *Only Fools and Horses*, which was watched by 21.4 million people, whilst a record 30.10 million people watched the 1986 Christmas Day edition of *EastEnders* to see Dirty Den serve divorce papers on his wife, Angie. How very festive!



The biggest Christmas tree in the world is on Mount Ingino near the Italian city of Gubbio, measuring 650m high and 350m wide. It is not a real tree, rather a light illumination shaped like a tree, which means no pine needles to clean up afterwards but months spent beforehand stringing up over 700 lights!

From 2005 to 2010, five out of six UK Christmas number ones came from the winners of ITV's *The X Factor*. The only exception was in 2009, when a Facebook campaign to get an old Rage Against the Machine song to number one relegated Joe McElderry's single, 'The Climb', to number two. (However, Joe's aptly named single 'climbed' to number one the following week!)

Christmas Day 2010 gave Britons a rare white Christmas and was the coldest Christmas since records began, with temperatures in some parts of the country reaching as low as minus 18C. Brrr!



Edgbaston 2



PURITAN CHRISTMAS

- NO EATING
- NO DRINKING
- NO SINGING
- NO CARDS
- NO LAUGHING
- NO WHISTLING
- NO CRACKERS
- NO TURKEY
- NO CHARADES
- NO PARTY HATS
- NO XMAS TREES
- NO JOKES
- NO FAMILY GET-TOGETHER
- NO PUDDING
- NO QUEEN'S SPEECH
- NO 'CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE'
- NO MISTLETOE
- NO SNOWMAN
- NO BOOZE
- NO 'RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER'
- NO CHRISTMAS NUMBER ONE
- NO CHOCOLATE

It is the season to be jolly

Pantomime has a long and fascinating history. First used to describe a theatrical event about 300 years ago, it was hardly the spectacle we think of today. The characters were modelled on those from the Italian travelling street theatre of the sixteenth century. The plot was always the same:

boy meets girl, they fall in love, various obstacles are put in their way, but ultimately love triumphs. Sound familiar?

That's still the basic plot of pantomime today, but with a few more complications along the way...

Pantomimes were only short pieces and often played together with a serious play to give a bit of light relief and send people off home with a smile on their face. By Victorian times, there were full-length pantomimes aimed at children with plenty of fun involved but, more often than not, with a serious message or useful lesson. Take this one for instance: *This Is the House That Jack Built*; or, *Harlequin Pussycat Where Have You Been*; the *Little Wee Dog* and the *Good Child's History of England* - imagine trying to get all that on a poster!

Since then subjects for pantomimes have tended to concentrate on fairy tales such as *Cinderella* (from a French story), *Aladdin* (from the *Arabian Nights*) and *Dick Whittington* (based on the story of a real mayor of London), *Peter*

Pan was a story written by J M Barrie just over a hundred years ago. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island* are both based on novels, and fairy stories such as *Snow White* and *Beauty and the Beast* have also become firm favourites.

But whichever pantomime you see, there are certain elements you always expect to find. You will usually find that the hero or principal boy is not a boy at all, but a girl dressed as a boy! And when you meet 'his' mother, whether she is Widow Twankey or Sarah the Cook, 'she' will be a 'he', and increasingly outrageously dressed! The idea of cross-dressing goes way back at least to the Romans, who used to celebrate their feast of Saturnalia at the same time as we now celebrate Christmas. During this feast the whole world went topsy-turvy, men dressed as women and vice versa, and people dressed as animals too - that should remind you of, say, Daisy the cow in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, or *Mother Goose* perhaps? There is a long line of famous (or infamous!) pantomime dames, reaching from Dan Leno through Danny La Rue to Les Dawson and Christopher Biggins. In *Cinderella*, of course, we get a double helping of dames in the guise of the Ugly Sisters.

When it comes to the heroine of the panto, there is much less confusion. She is played by a girl and usually the prettiest girl in the theatre company, although in more modern times she has become a little more feisty than of yore.

We still have goodies and baddies, led by the Good Fairy and the Demon King respectively, or their various character equivalents. It is traditional for the baddie to come onstage first followed by the goodie. The baddie usually enters from stage left and the goodie from stage right, because in the medieval plays based on bible stories, left was always Hell and right was Heaven!

Pantomime is also full of spectacle. There are routines by gorgeously costumed dancers and much robust singing. The transformations scenes used to be called 'tab' scenes because they were played out in front of the tabs or curtains, while a flurry of scene-changing was going on behind them. But these scenes have now become an art form in their own right. With the wonders of modern lighting, lasers and other technical wizardry, we all 'ooh' and 'aah' as we are transported to an underwater grotto or a glittering cave or some other out-of-this-world location.

Then there are the scenes which need no scenery special effects - the slapstick. These clever comedy scenes sometimes involve verbal tongue-twisting and bizarre logic, but can equally well be purely visual humour. They really

hark back to pantomime's origins and in fact slapstick was the actual stick carried by Harlequin, a sword or bat that was something between a weapon and a magic wand, and reputedly having magical powers, with a hinged flap that created a slapping noise when hit against scenery (or other characters!).

The last and perhaps most important ingredient in pantomime, in times gone by and today too, is us, the audience. We have to be here to cheer the goodies and boo the baddies, to help the plot along by shouting "He's behind you!" or make it perfectly clear that we all believe in fairies. Pantomimes in towns and cities up and down the country have always included local references and jokes, and nowadays many of our favourite performers from television and the worlds of music and sport get involved in the seasonal spree - everyone loves to do panto! All these traditions we have come to know and love, together with the freshness of topical jokes, the pleasure of being a part of it all, and the knowledge that we can go home knowing everything has been happily resolved, makes a winning combination that never fails to please.

Elaine Peake
© John Good





PANTO A-Z

A is for **A**dventure, **A**laddin's maybe,
B stands for **B**eauty, her **B**east, and a **B**all,
Cinderella and **C**astles and **C**ats come with **C**,
D brings us **D**ick, **D**ames, **D**warts, **D**aisy and all!

From villains so **E**vil and **E**ggs made of gold,
We wind up in **F**orests with **F**airies to find,
Of **G**iants, **G**lass Slippers and **G**enies we're told,
While **H**ansel and Gretel have been left behind!

In the **I**nterval **I**ce cream is lovely to eat,
Then back to the exploits of **J**ack, and the **J**okes,
In the **K**itchens of **K**ings with a **K**iss as a treat,
Of **L**ove in the **L**aundry and **L**aughing at folks.

M conjures **M**agic, **M**usic and **M**ice,
N flies us off to **N**ever-land far,
O for "**O**h yes it is, oh no it isn't" (twice)
P for **P**inocchio to wish on a star.

Q is the **Q**uest that might lead to a **Q**ueen,
R could be **R**obbers, or brave **R**obin Hood,
Stepmothers often use **S**pells that are mean,
You may find the **T**reasure, if only you're good!

The **U**gly Sisters try to **U**pstage the Prince,
The **V**illains should get rotten **V**eg thrown their way,
The **W**icked **W**itch might make our hero **W**ince,
But his **W**ish will come true on his own **W**edding day.

Xmas is when the panto comes round,
Y is for **Y**ou without whom there's no show,
Zzzzz comes from Sleeping Beauty so sound -
And now that you've read our panto **A-Z**
There's almost nothing that you don't know!

Carole Singer
©John Good

Greetings!

Trigger, the pantomime horse, loves to say "Hello" to children from all over the world. See if you can help him by working out which greeting on the left matches the language on the right.

Hola!

Guten Tag!

Konichiwa!

Witaj!

Bonjour!

Buon Giorno!

Namaste!

Al-salaam A'alaykum!

Zdarveite!

German

Arabic

Russian

Japanese

Italian

Hindi

Spanish

Polish

French



Mobile Mania!

Crack these text codes! They show the order of keys that were pressed. Look at the letters of each key and work out which pantos they are (there's a letter in each one to help you).

1. 2523D46
2. 24N3373552
3. 7669 9H483
4. 73T37 726
5. 3425 944T8464866

PANTO PUZZLERS!

Where's My Star?

This fairy has knocked the star off the end of her magic wand. Can you help her find it in the star maze?



What do you call a smelly fairy?
Sinkerbelle!

Artful Alchemy!

Arthur the artful alchemist is trying to turn lead into gold! Help him by changing just one letter at a time on each line!

LEAD

GOLD



Pirate Poser!

These two pesky pirates may look the same at first, but there are eight differences between them! Can you spot them all?



Why does it take pirates so long to learn the alphabet? /C is such puddy hugg asneecg

Why was Cinderella rubbish at playing football? /42000 0 101 uyydum e pey eys

Tongue Twister!

Try saying this six times fast!

SURELY SISTERS SHOULD SHARE SUCH SHOCKING SECRETS?!

First Kiss!

(or just an illusion?)

Relax your eyes and stare at the space between the prince and princess. Slowly bring the page towards your face and see them share their first kiss! (Try again if it doesn't work first time...)



Crafty Codebuster!

One-eyed Jake, the pilfering pirate, has a message for you - in pirate code! Can you work out what he is saying?

A	Apple	N	Nose
B	Banana	O	Owl
C	Cat	P	Pie
D	Dog	Q	Queen
E	Egg	R	Rain
F	Frog	S	Shoe
G	Gum	T	Tail
H	Hand	U	Umbrella
I	Eye	V	Viper
J	Jump	W	Wool
K	Kiss	X	X-ray
L	Love	Y	Yo-yo
M	Mouth	Z	Zebra

The message is...



Now you've got that, can you find all the dubloons (a type of coin) on these pages?



WINTER WONDERLAND!

IT'S MIDWINTER, AND SOME OF THE ANIMALS ARE SLEEPING IN THE TREES! CAN YOU FIND THEM ALL?

SPOT THE SNOWMEN!
HOW MANY SNOWMEN ARE THERE IN THE FOREST? (look really carefully - it's harder than you think!)

FATHER CHRISTMAS
FANCIES A CHANGE OF STYLE? CAN YOU DRAW IN SOME NEW SNAZZY WINTER WOOLIES FOR HIM TO WEAR?

WHICH ANIMAL DOESN'T BELONG IN A COLD CLIMATE?

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT...

IN THE SKY ARE THREE WINTER CONSTELLATIONS... ONE IS THE PLOUGH, ONE IS ORION THE HUNTER, AND ONE IS QUEEN CASSIOPEIA!

WHICH ONE IS WHICH?

GROOVY GLACIER!

FIND OUT WHO IS FROZEN IN THIS GLACIER BY COLOURING IN ALL THE SPACES CONTAINING A DOT!

PAWS FOR THOUGHT...

REINDEER RUMPUUS!

TWO OF THESE REINDEER HAVE IDENTICAL ANTLEERS! CAN YOU SPOT THEM?

WHAT MYTHICAL CREATURE AM I?



...have you got it yet?

POTTY PATCHWORK!

COLOUR IN THE BLANK SQUARES AND MAKE YOUR OWN PATTERNS! HOW MANY OF EACH PATTERN CAN YOU FIND?



WHICH PART WILL YOU PLAY?



Charming, gentle
and helpful, you
enchant your friends.
You love to party and dance
You're cool, too –
you have your eye on
the main part!

BEST FRIEND!

You're everybody's best friend, and bursting with energy! A cheeky tomboy, you like to hang out with your mates and have fun.

FAIRY GODMOTHER!

Full of surprises and with heaps of energy, you are reliable and super cool under pressure. Your heart of gold means that everybody loves you!

PERFECT PRINCE!

Wow! You're cool and confident and expect nothing but the best for you and your friends! Fun-loving and competitive, you're a real high-flier!

Santa's Personality Test!

When Santa delivers all his presents, he likes to know which presents will suit each of the boys and girls. But how does he do it?

Santa will show you how!

Pick the **LAST** number of your day, month and year of birth and then read out your description.

For example, if your birthday is on 17.03.2008, Santa's Personality Test would say you are a Mischievous Cool Musician!

Number	Day	Month	Year
0	Quiet	Shy	Explorer
1	Creative	Furry	Artist
2	Secretive	Smooth	Scientist
3	Excitable	Cool	Historian
4	Jolly	Squeaky	Soccer player
5	Hardworking	Smart	Gymnast
6	Happy	Waddling	Mathematician
7	Mischievous	Trendy	Bookworm
8	Generous	Skinny	Musician
9	Friendly	Hungry	Chef

I'M A HAPPY
SQUEAKY
GYMNAST!



Colour Me In!





Fairytale Wordsearch

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

Find the Fairytale Words in the grid below.
 The words can be read horizontally, vertically and diagonally.
 The words may also be read backwards and forwards.

ALADDIN
 BEANSTALK
 CASTLE
 CINDERELLA
 DWARF
 ELF
 FAIRY
 GENIE
 GIANT
 GRETEL

HANSEL
 HAPPY EVER AFTER
 JACK
 KING
 LAMP
 LOVE
 MAGIC
 OGRE
 ONCE UPON A TIME
 PETER PAN
 PRINCE

PRINCESS
 PUMPKIN
 QUEEN
 RAPUNZEL
 ROBIN
 SLIPPER
 SNOW WHITE
 WAND
 WITCH
 WIZARD

ANSWERS

PANTOMANIA!



THE GREAT ESCAPE



PIRATES' CODEBUSTER!

Answer:
UNDER THE PALM TREE

BOO HISS... HERE COMES THE VILLAIN



WHERE'S MY WAND?



ANSWERS

CATTY CODEWORD

DON'T FORGET
TO SHOUT IT'S
BEHIND YOU



MARKET MAYHEM!



ANSWERS

WHERE'S MY WAND?



PANTOMANIA!



© John Good

**BOO HISS...
HERE COMES
THE VILLAIN**



**THE GREAT
ESCAPE**



**PIRATES'
CODEBUSTER!**

Answer:
UNDER THE PALM TREE

Fairytale Wordsearch answer

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

WINTER WONDERLAND ANSWERS!

STAR LIGHT,
STAR BRIGHT...

CASSIOPEIA

ORION

THE PLOUGH

THE KANGAROO
IS THE ANIMAL
WHO DOESN'T
BELONG IN A
COLD CLIMATE



WHAT MYTHICAL
CREATURE AM I?



A BOMB-IN-A-BULL SNOWMAN
(ABOMINABLE) (also known as the YETI)

REINDEER
RUMPUUS!



GROOVY
GLACIER!

JACK FROST
IS HIDING
IN THE
GLACIER!



PAIRS FOR THOUGHT...



THERE ARE SIX ANIMALS AND SIX
SNOWMEN HIDDEN IN THE PICTURE!



© John Good

PANTO PUZZLERS ANSWERS!

Greetings!

Hola!
Guten Tag!
Konichiwa!
Witaj!
Bonjour!
Buon Giorno!
Namaste!
Al-salaam A'alaykum!
Zdarveite!

Spanish
German
Japanese
Polish
French
Italian
Hindi
Arabic
Russian

Artful
Alchemy!

There is more
than one way
to solve this -
here's one
of them...

LEAD
BEAD
BEND
BOND
BOLD
GOLD

Mobile
Mania!

1. ALADDIN
2. CINDERELLA
3. SNOW WHITE
4. PETER PAN
5. DICK WHITTINGTON

Dubloons!

There are a total
of 25 dubloons
on the pages!

Crafty
Codebuster!

Where's
My Star?



Whoops!

There are 4 frogs
and the cat is behind
the fairy!

Pirate Poser!



SHIVER
ME TIMBERS! WHERE'S
ALL THE TREASURE
GONE?



© John Good