Project Workbook

Nights at the Circus

By Eva Bible



Module Information



Module Brief

The purpose of this module is to gain experience in of the dynamics and expectations of working in a small theatrical production company and deliver a design pitch for a given brief. You will be given specific roles within this company and are expected to research, understand and implement this role.

In this project you will need to consider the following -

- How roles and responsibilities impact upon a small production company.
- How your visual research informs the work of you and your colleagues.
- A collective and unified response to the given design brief.
- How do you present your design ideas to industry?

Tasks

You will be asked to complete four tasks for this module:

- **Task 1 -** You will focus on compiling a process workbook – a record of all the areas covered in your lectures along with ideas on how this newfound knowledge contributes to your methodology. This process workbook will take the form of a written and illustrated document (digital or physical) or sketchbook. Your process workbook will outline your journey through the module and reflect on your learning and skills gained. You must use Harvard referencing and create a bibliography for your reading and research. This will be submitted via Turnitin or handed in directly to the lecturer.
- **Task 2 -** As a production company, generate a design pitch for the given script and present it to a panel of industry professionals in order to 'sell' your company's idea -
    - Script - *'Nights at the Circus'* by Tom Morris & Emma Rice. (Adapted from the novel by Angela Carter.)
    - Venue – Y Llwyfan
- **Task 3 -** At the end of the module, as a group, you are to give a design pitch/presentation. The presentation will inform the audience about how you have solved the practical problems demanded by the script and brief, focusing on production technique, methods and problem solving. You will speak for 10 minutes each.
- **Task 4 -** Reflect upon what you have learnt and commit those thoughts and reflections to a five-hundred-word evaluation. This will be at the end of your process workbook.

Role Information

Group Responsibilities

- To create and develop a truly unique sense of style and an artistic vision in response to *'Nights at the Circus'*. As a production company you will analyse the script and create a visual response in each of your own job roles, it is important that what you design and produce in these roles ALWAYS links back to the initial response you have to the script, this will be your anchor.
- Everyone in the group has an equal voice and is expected to have an equal share in the visual impact of what we produce.
- There is a budget of £300 to assist us in producing a final presentation.

Role Responsibilities - Puppetry

- You will need to create puppet designs that complement the group design for the script. You will need to tie in with set and costume to blend your puppets with the other designers.
- You may also want to realise a mock-up of at least one puppet.
- Understanding how the mechanisms will work is critical.

Group Information

My Group

- My group's members consisted of Anne (Props Design,) Cam (Set Design,) and myself (Puppetry.)
- We decided to name our production company A.C.E. Productions after each of our first initials.
- Our logo is 3 ace cards which each of us choosing a different suit to be represented by.
    - Anne is the Ace of Clubs
    - Cam is the Ace of Diamonds
    - I am the Ace of Hearts





Synopsis



Synopsis

Nights at the Circus is about Jack Walser, a skeptical theatre critic from the *New York Times*, and the subject of his latest story- A woman named Fevvers who hatched from an egg and grew wings.

- Act One: Opens with Vesta bringing Jack Walser, a theatre journalist, into the world of Fevvers and Lizzie – a woman with wings and her guardian. Jack is brought back to their past and we learn how Fevvers was found on a doorstep of a brothel and learned to fly.
- Act Two: Jack follows Fevvers and Lizzie to Colonel Kearney's circus, where we meet Buffo the clown, Strongman Samson, the Princess, and Buffo's battered wife Mignon. Tensions build throughout the act until an explosive last performance ends in multiple deaths and Fevvers fighting for her freedom.
- Act Three: Opens in a white void space, uncertain of location and time, the characters reconcile and Jack and Fevvers fly away together.

7 Steps of Design





01

Commitment

I committed.

02

Script Analysis

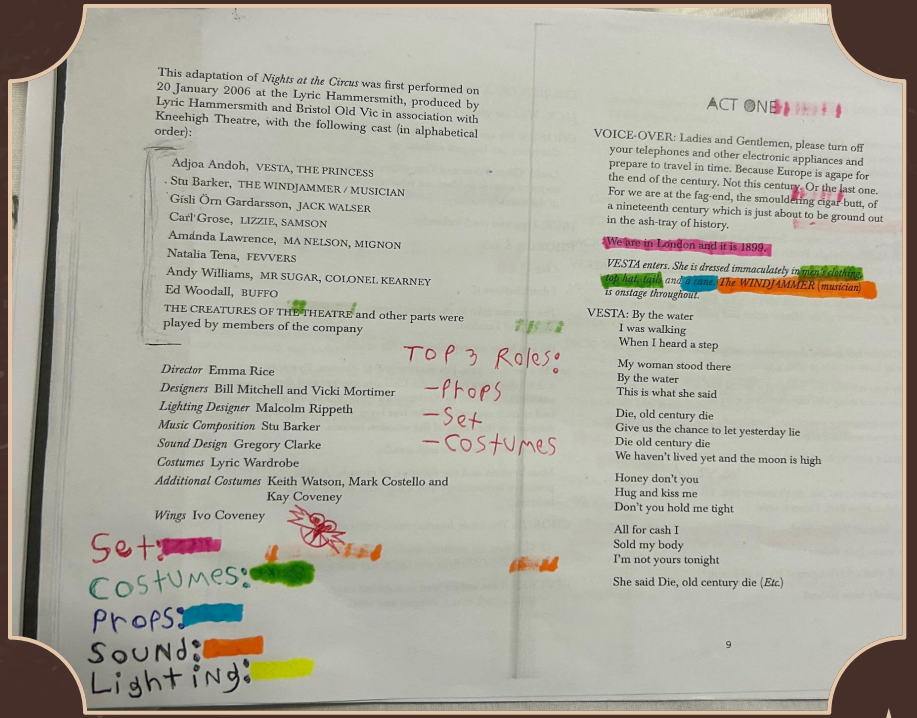




Initial Read Through

First individual read through of the script. During this read through, I:

- Read the entire script start to finish.
- Broke down elements of the script into their corresponding departments. (e.g. Set, Props, Costumes)
- Made basic notes on each character (1 or 2 words.)
- Formed my initial opinions on the story and characters.



This adaptation of *Nights at the Circus* was first performed on 20 January 2006 at the Lyric Hammersmith, produced by Lyric Hammersmith and Bristol Old Vic in association with Kneehigh Theatre, with the following cast (in alphabetical order):

Adjoa Andoh, VESTA, THE PRINCESS
Stu Barker, THE WINDJAMMER / MUSICIAN
Gísli Örn Gardarsson, JACK WALSER
Carl Grose, LIZZIE, SAMSON
Amanda Lawrence, MA NELSON, MIGNON
Natalia Tena, FEVVERS
Andy Williams, MR SUGAR, COLONEL KEARNEY
Ed Woodall, BUFFO

THE CREATURES OF THE THEATRE and other parts were played by members of the company

TOP 3 Roles:
-Props
-Set
-Costumes

Director Emma Rice
Designers Bill Mitchell and Vicki Mortimer
Lighting Designer Malcolm Rippeth
Music Composition Stu Barker
Sound Design Gregory Clarke
Costumes Lyric Wardrobe
Additional Costumes Keith Watson, Mark Costello and Kay Coveney
Wings Ivo Coveney

Set:
Costumes:
Props:
Sound:
Lighting:

ACT ONE

VOICE-OVER: Ladies and Gentlemen, please turn off your telephones and other electronic appliances and prepare to travel in time. Because Europe is agape for the end of the century. Not this century. Or the last one. For we are at the fag-end, the smouldering cigar butt, of a nineteenth century which is just about to be ground out in the ash-tray of history.

We are in London and it is 1899.

VESTA enters. She is dressed immaculately in men's clothing: tail hat, tails and cane. The WINDJAMMER (musician) is onstage throughout.

VESTA: By the water
I was walking
When I heard a step

My woman stood there
By the water
This is what she said

Die, old century die
Give us the chance to let yesterday lie
Die old century die
We haven't lived yet and the moon is high

Honey don't you
Hug and kiss me
Don't you hold me tight

All for cash I
Sold my body
I'm not yours tonight

She said Die, old century die (*Etc.*)

9

Table Read

Second read through with the rest of the class in the style of a table read. During this read through, we:

- Assigned people in the class to read each character's lines/stage directions out loud.
- Saw the script from a new point of view.
- Cleared up confusion we had about the writing.
- Began to think more deeply about the plot, locations, themes and characters.

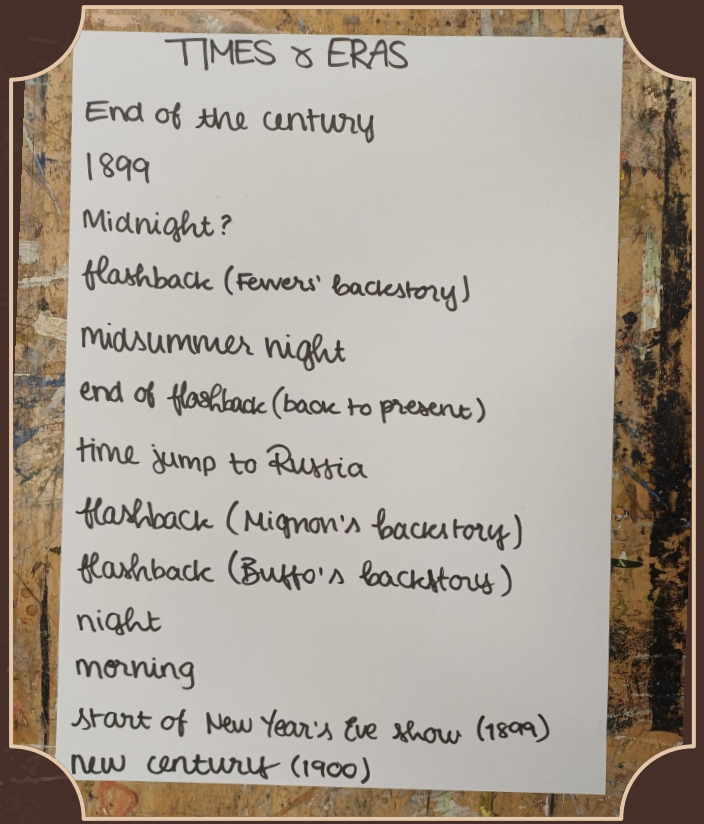


Image courtesy of: Annie Picton

Third Read Through

A third read through of the script done individually. During this read through, I:

- Read with the intent of identifying themes, foreshadowing, and interesting writing techniques.
- Made notes on any further questions I had after the first two read throughs.

After this read through, we met as a class to discuss what we found. During this discussion, we:

- Made lists of every character, location, and theme mentioned in the script.
- Analyzed the most important characters, locations, and themes as a group.

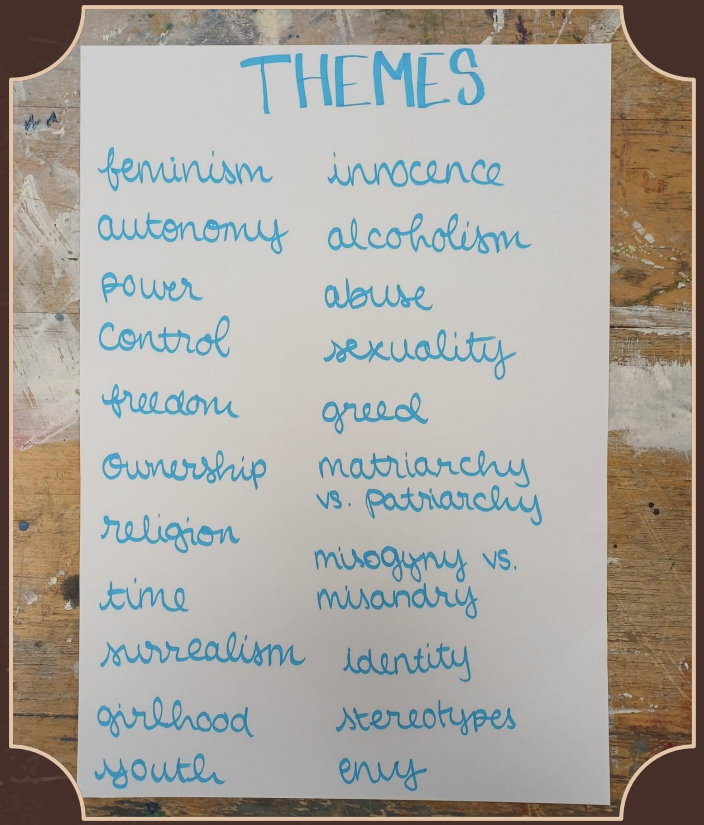


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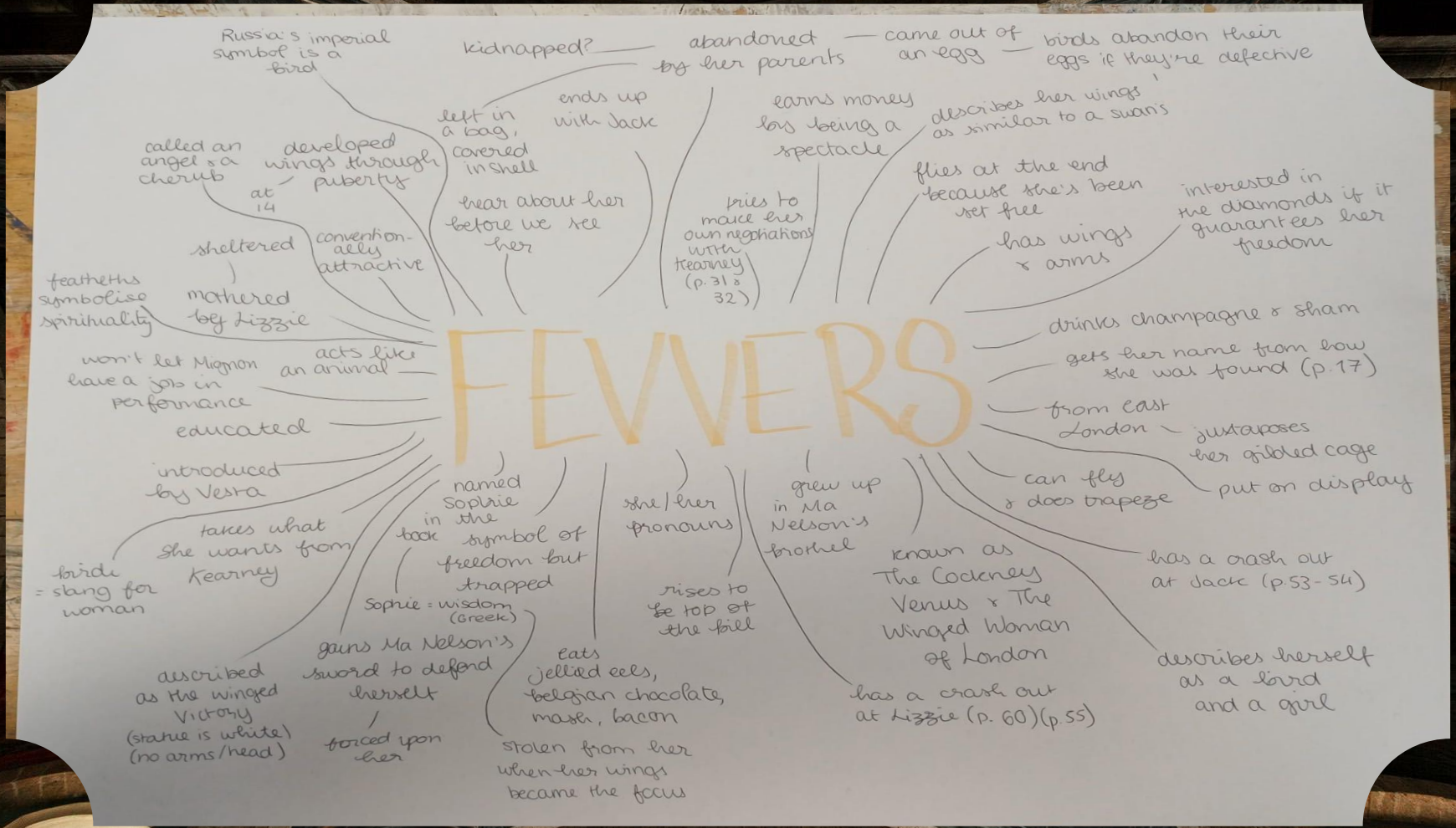
Character Analysis





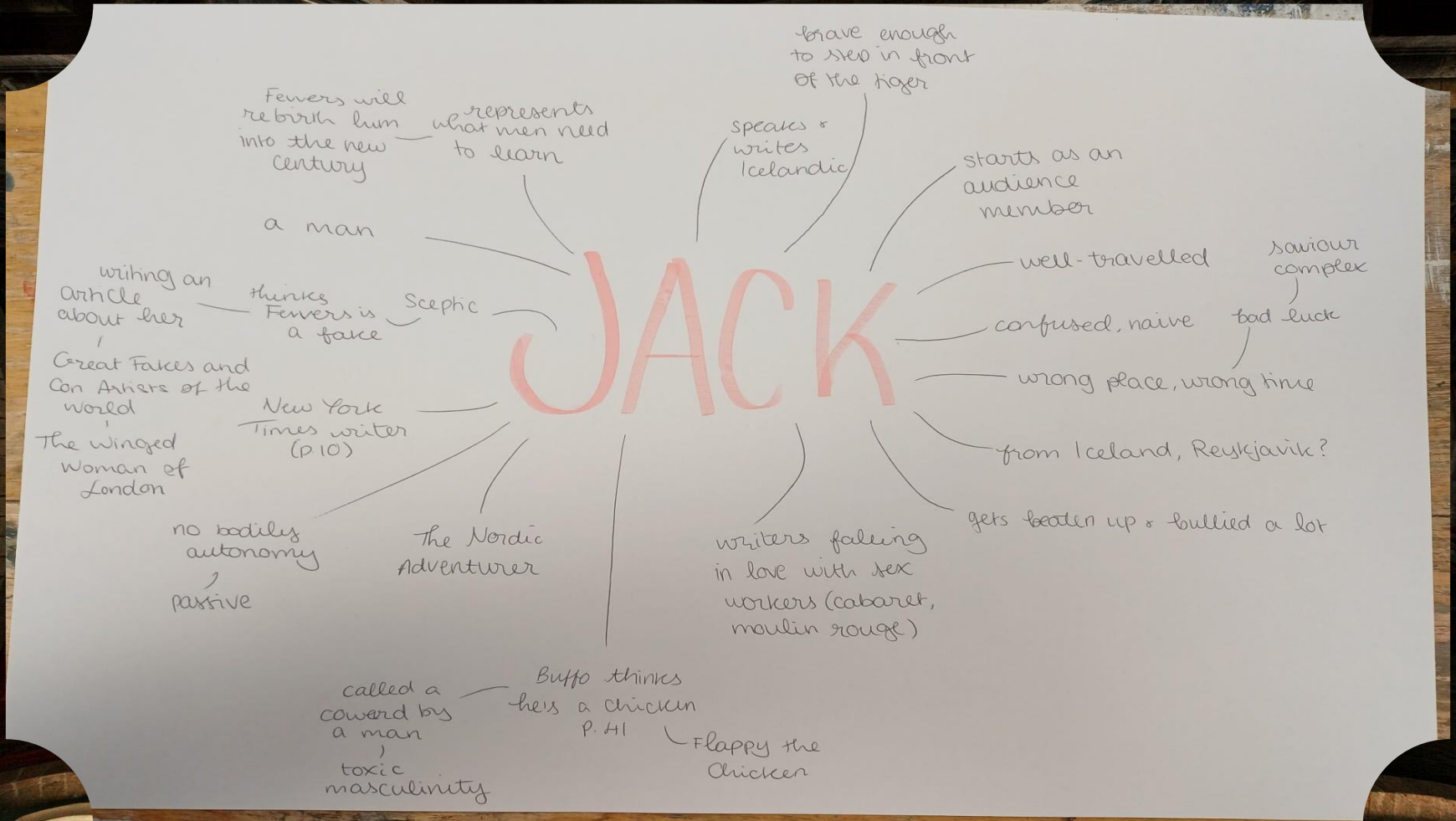
Fevvers

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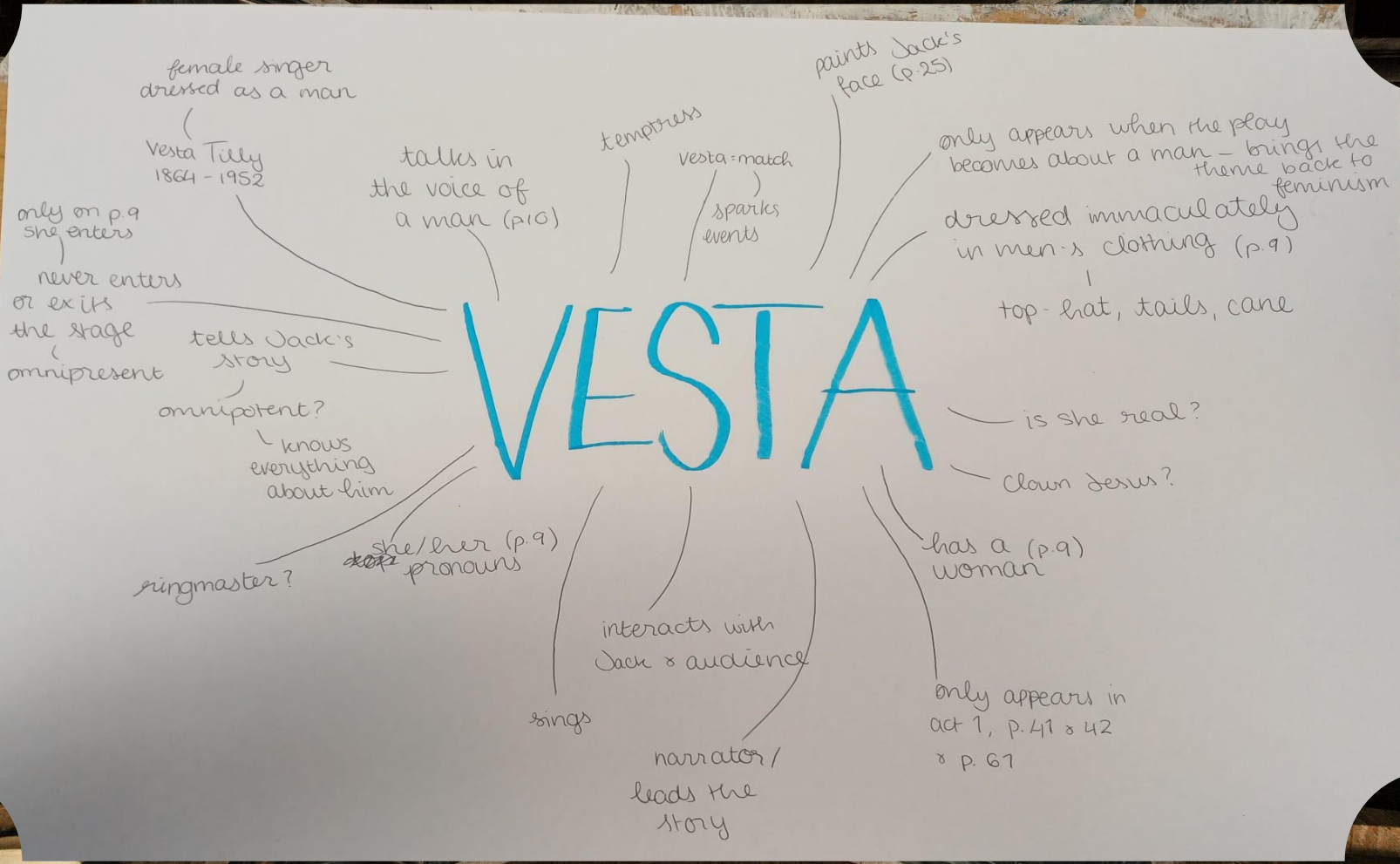
Jack Walser

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



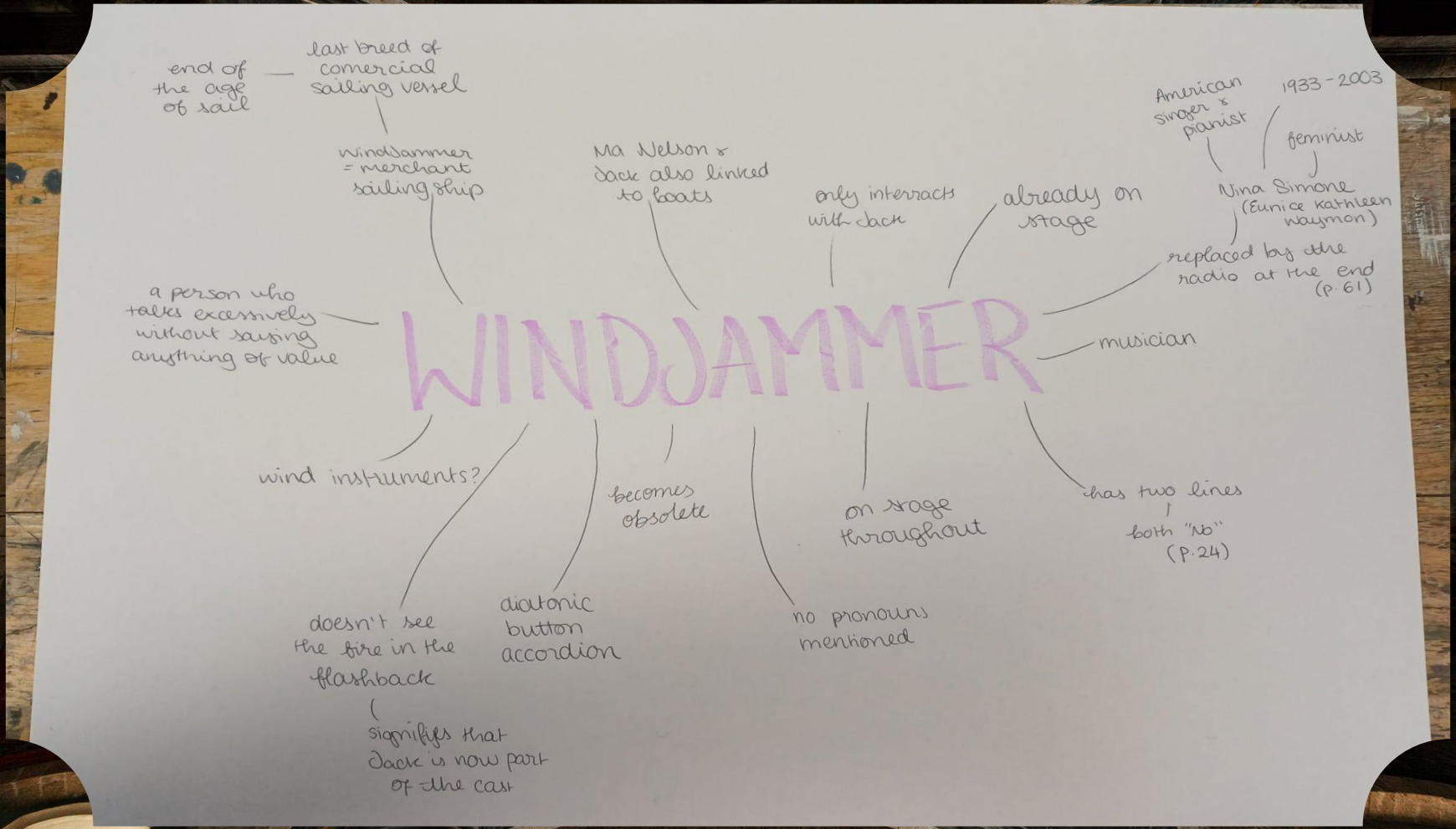
Vesta

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



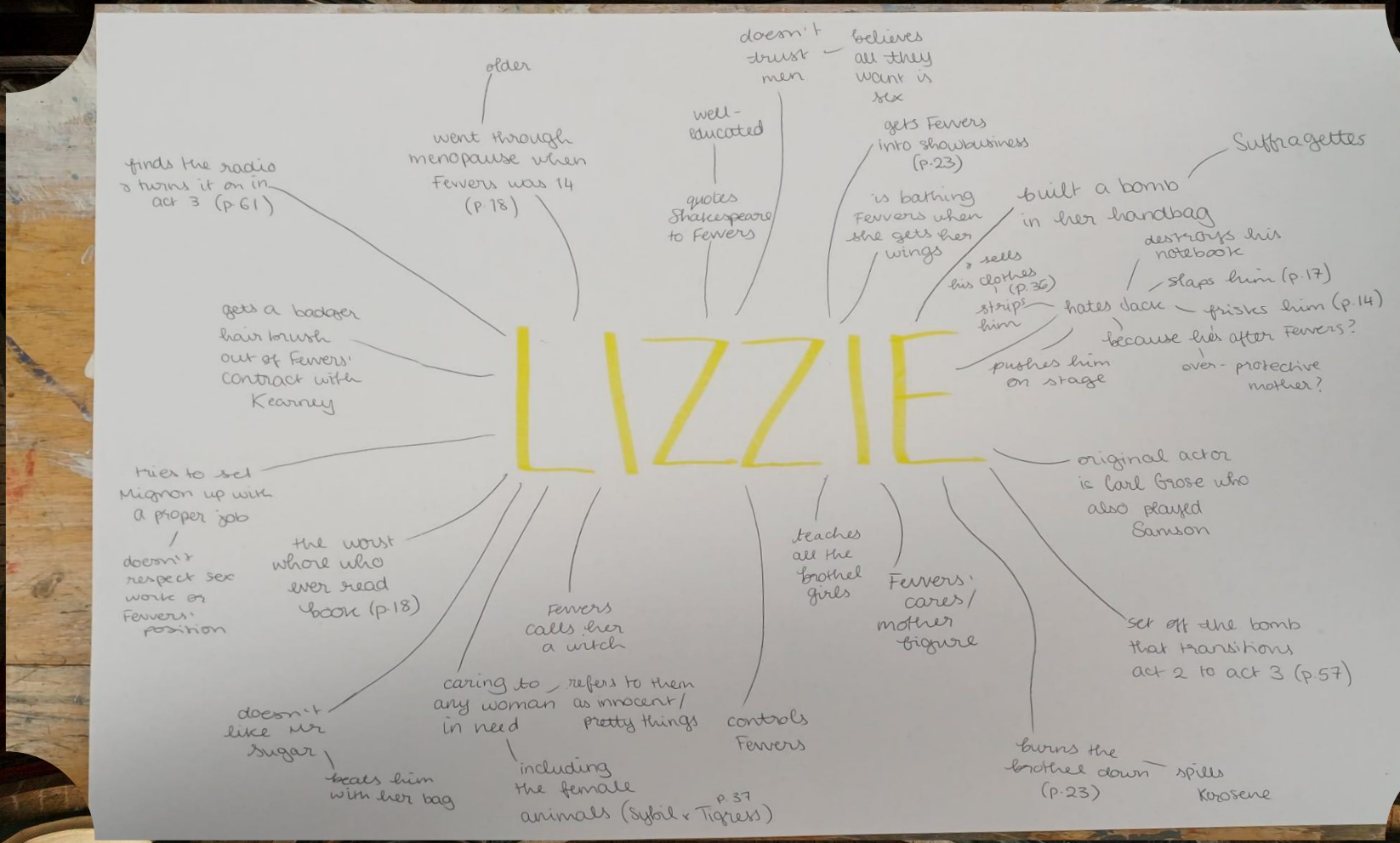
Windjammer

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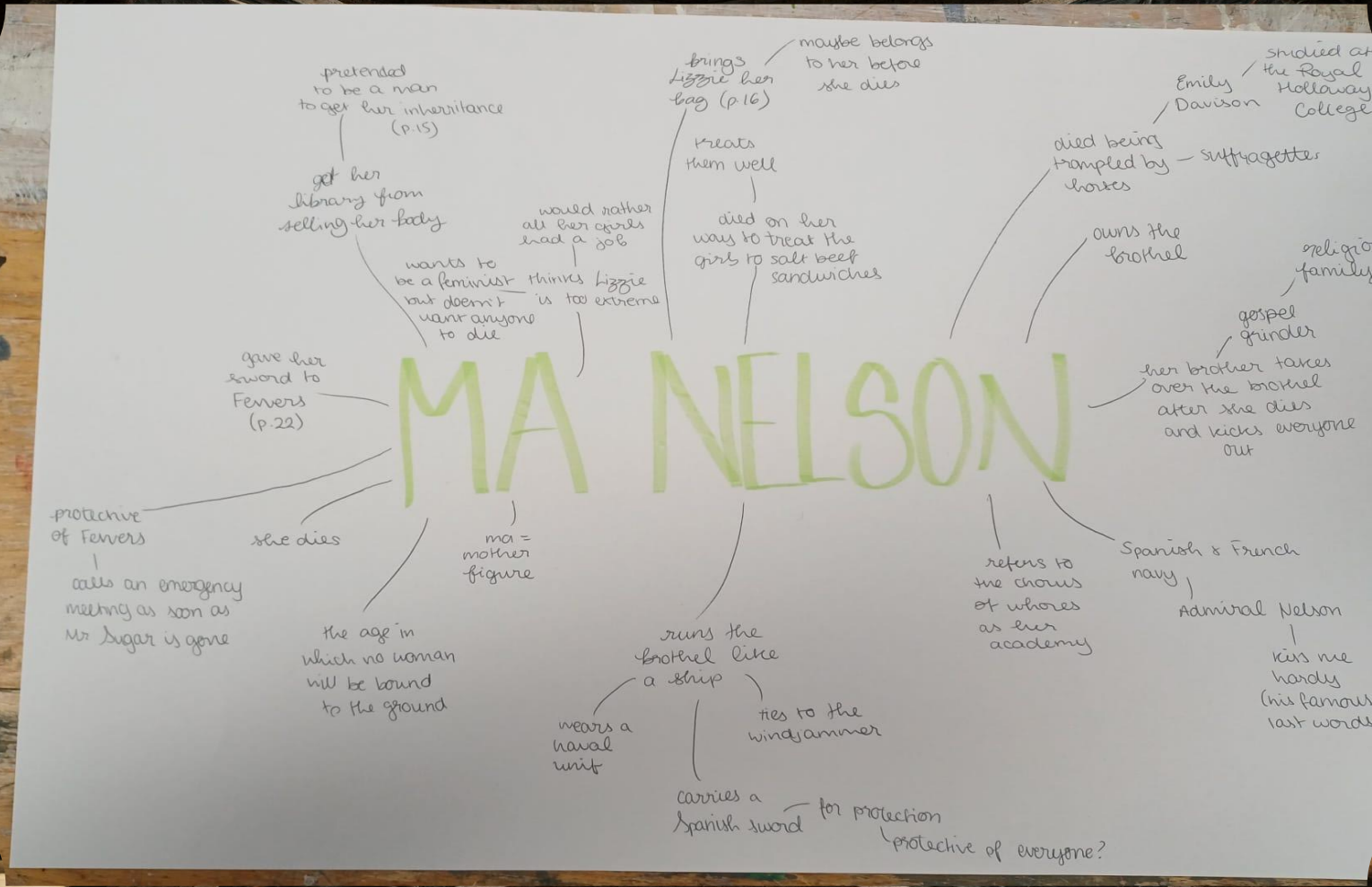
Lizzie

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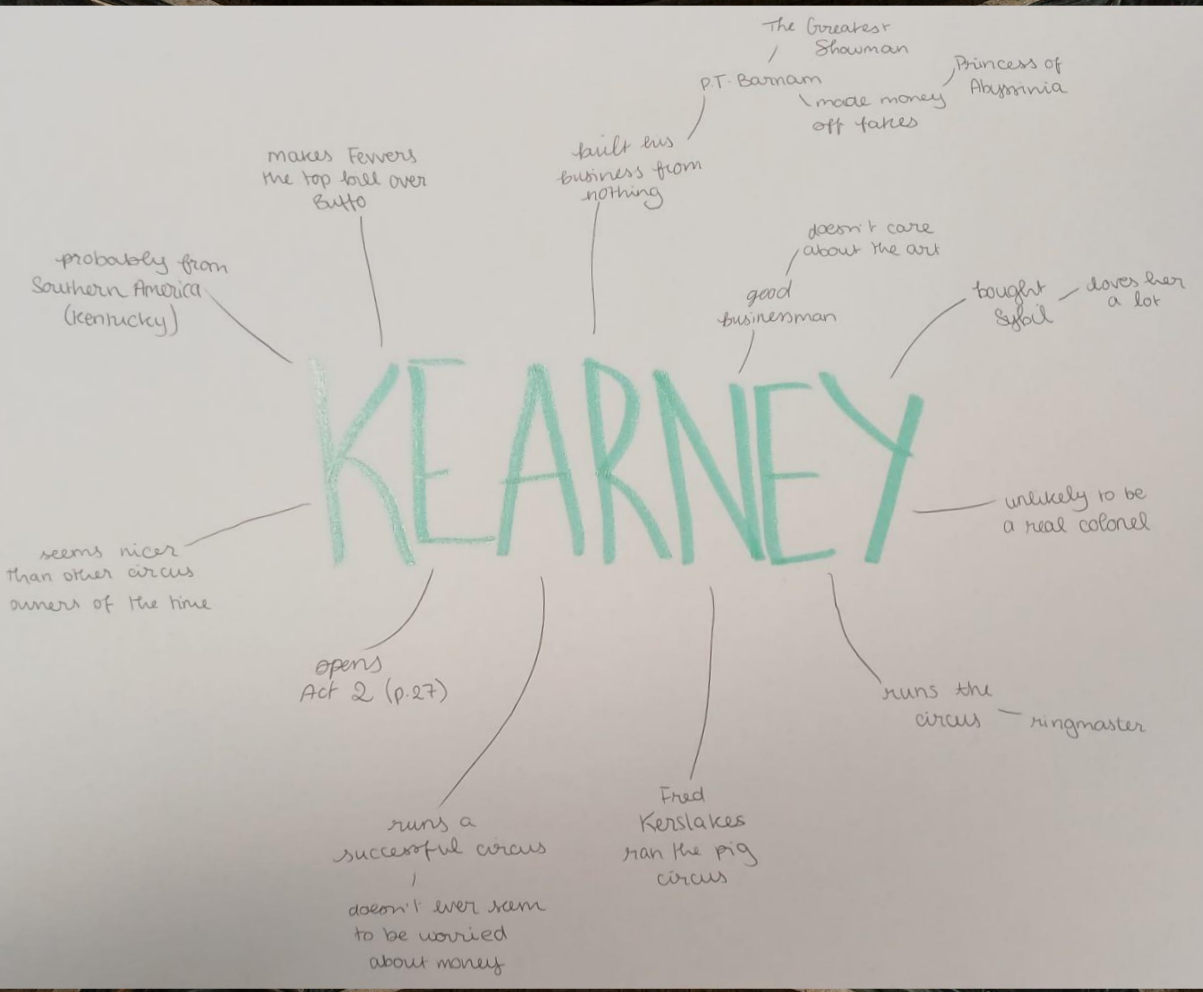
Ma Nelson

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



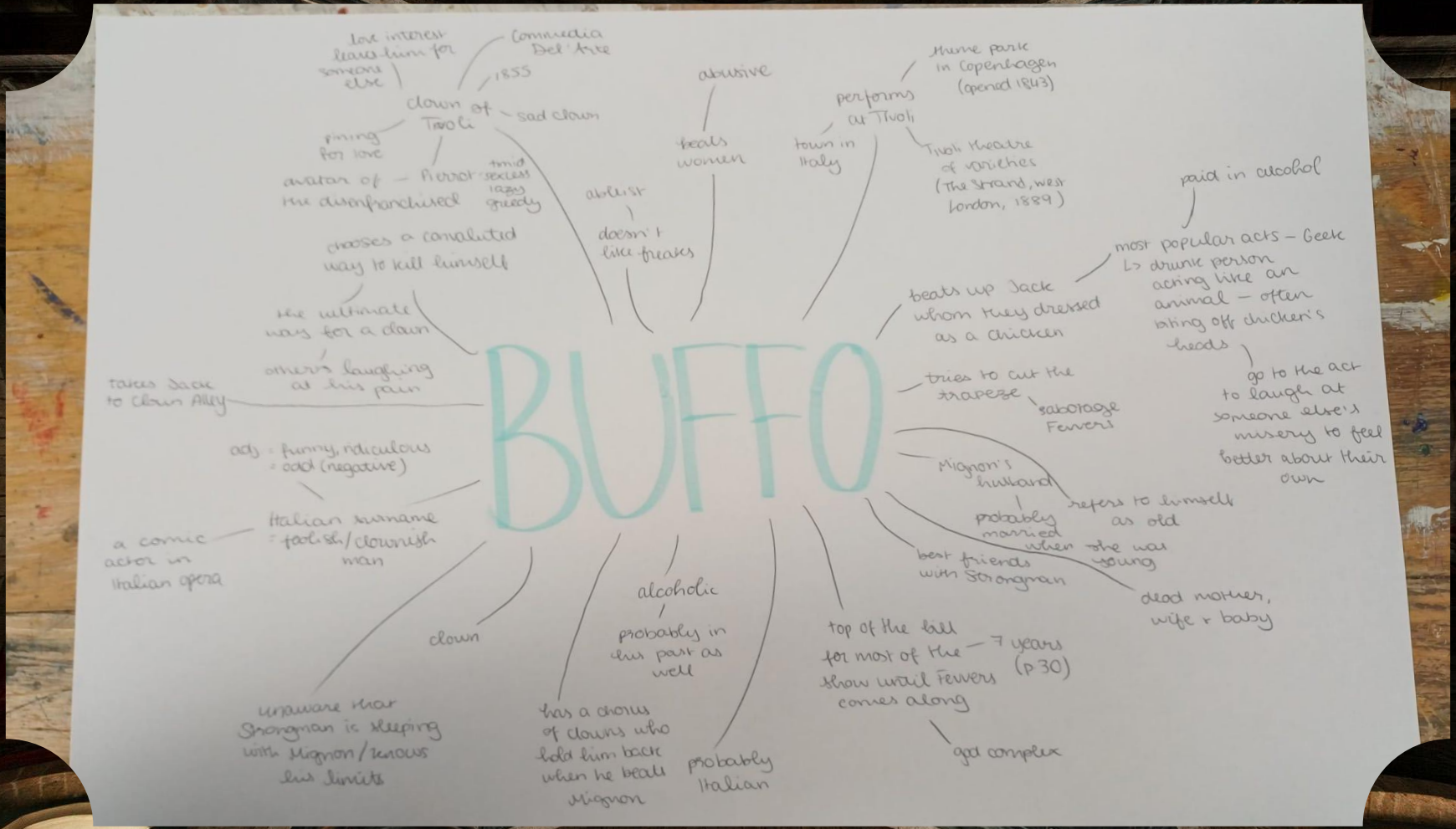
Colonel Kearney

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



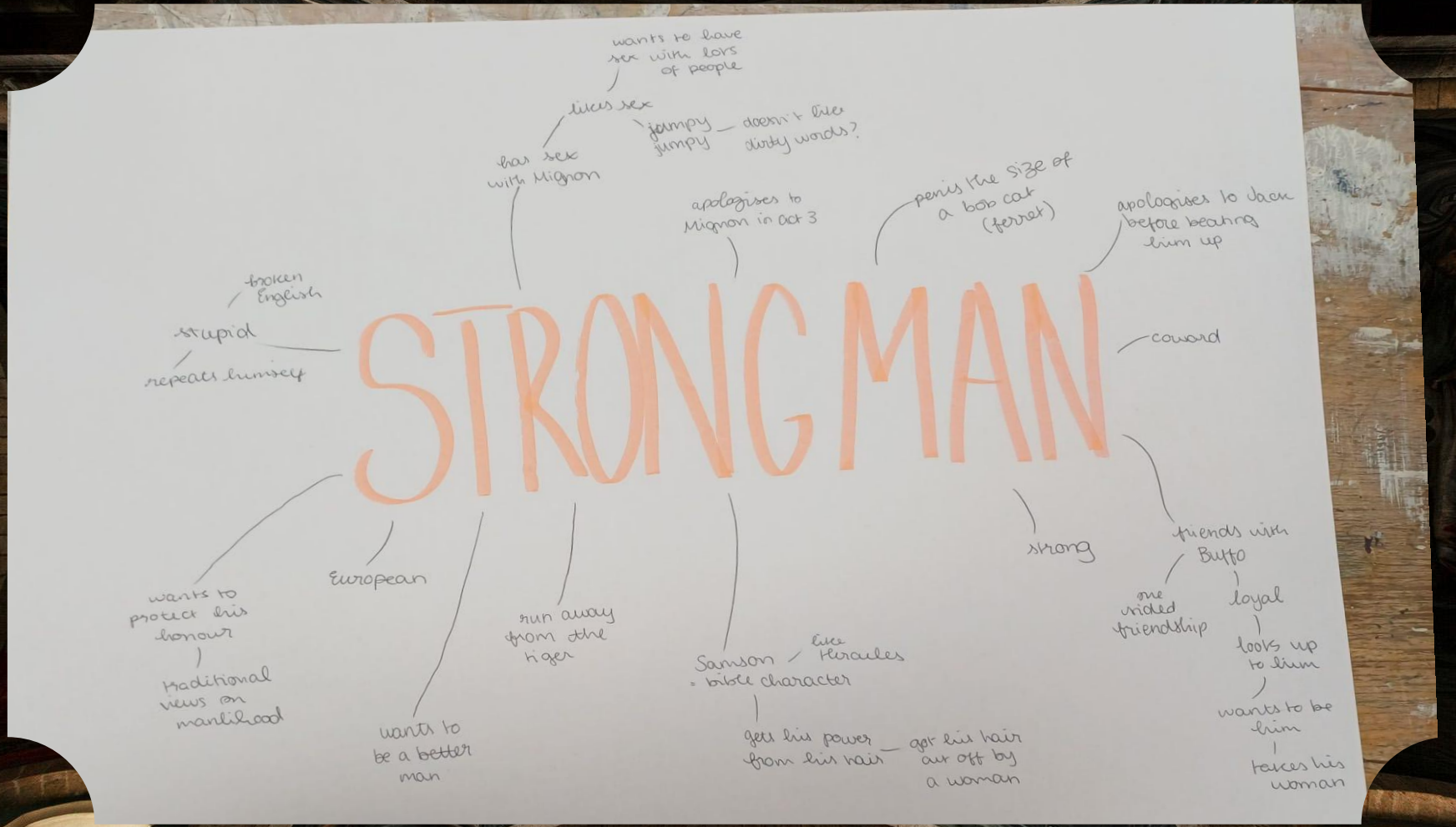
Buffo

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



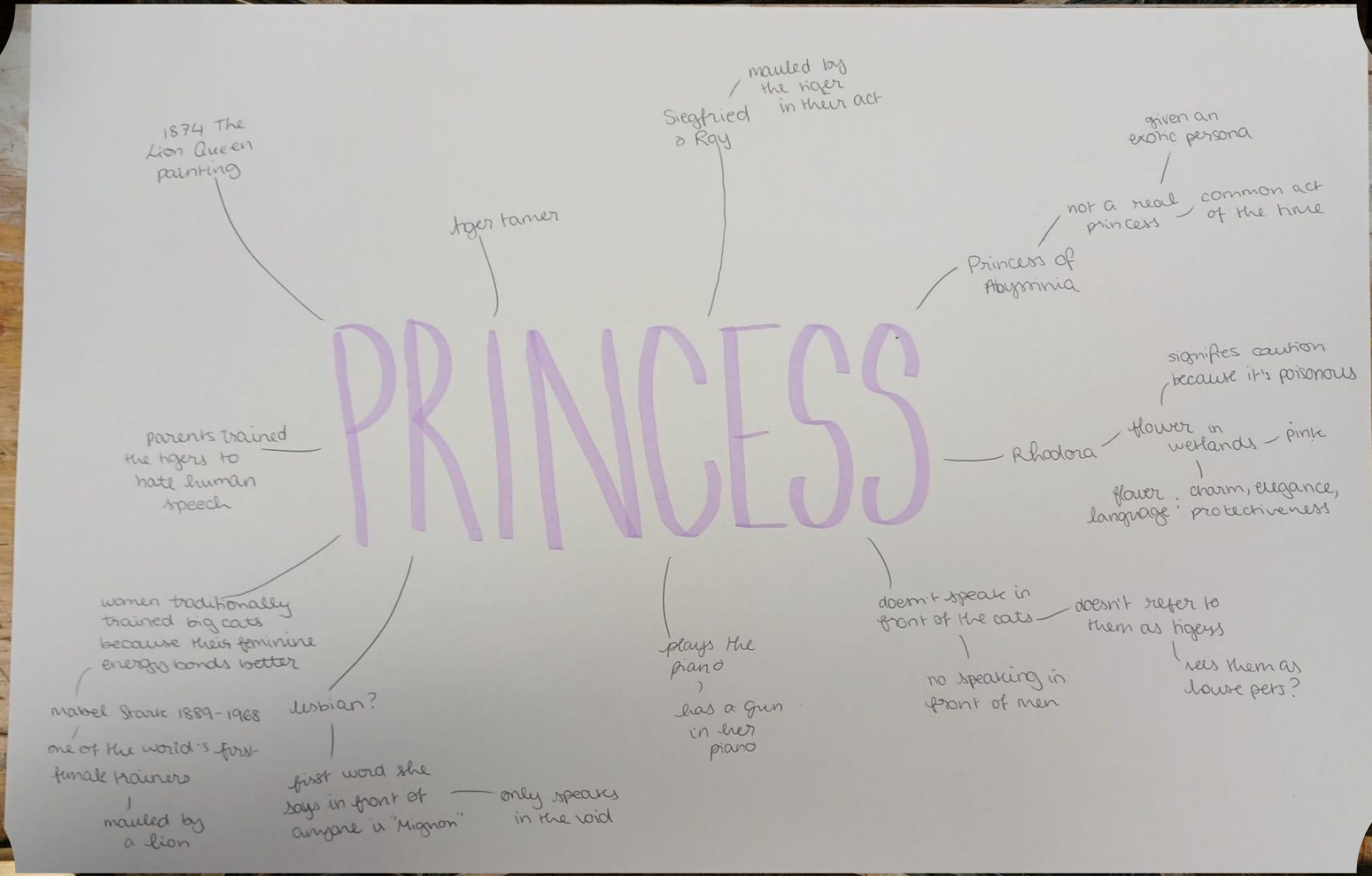
Sampson

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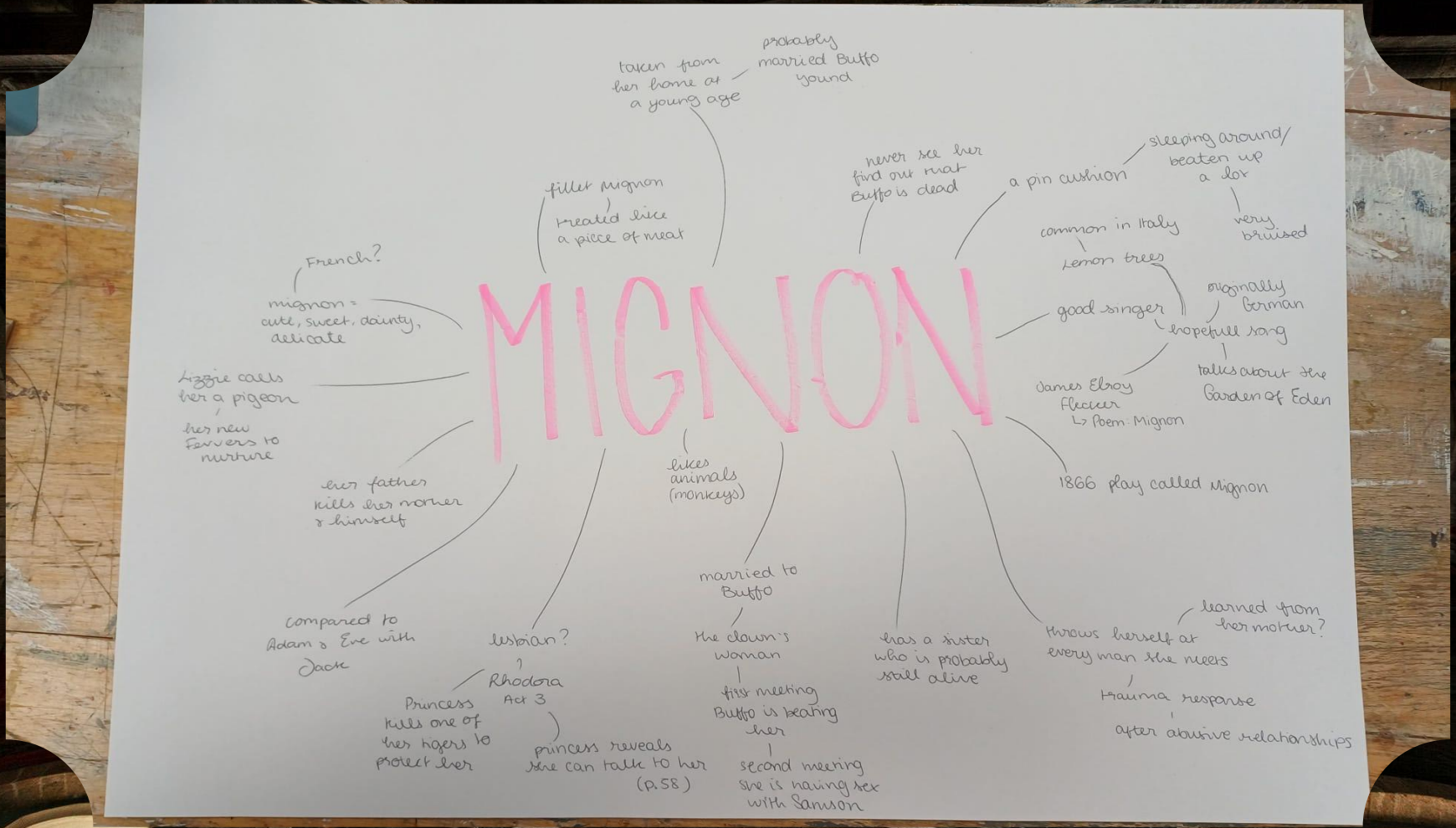

Princess

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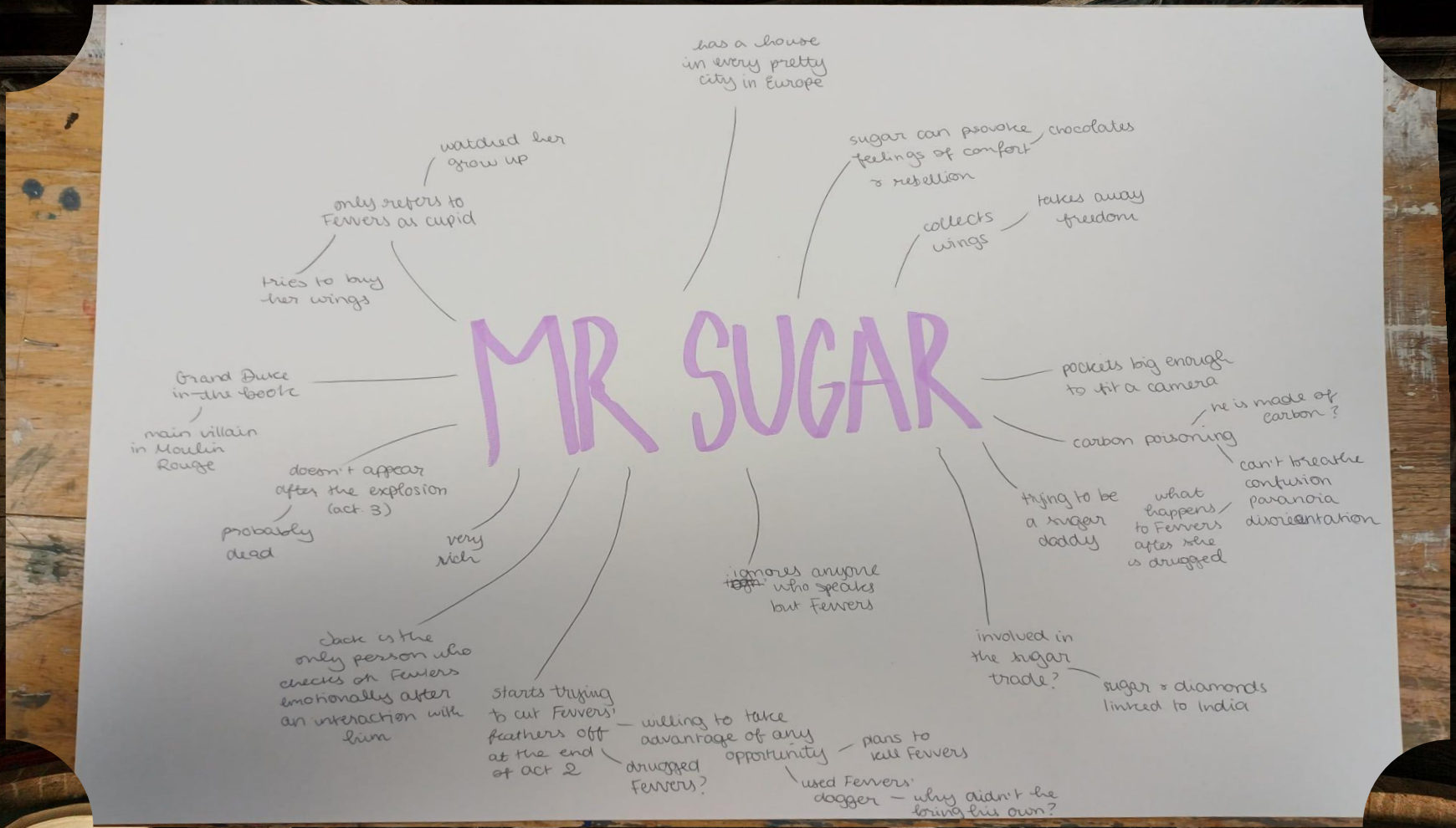
Mignon

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



Mr Sugar

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



Creatures of the Theatre

Chorus
Creatures of the Theatre
- Finger through the curtains?
- Speak as one (either in unison or in turns)
- Knows Icelandic but doesn't recognize what Icelandic looks like
- Gullible
- Buy into fantasys easily
- Cares a lot about the integrety of the show
- Hates critics
- Likes Fevvers' show
- Backup singers/ dancers
- Not human?
- Not real?
- No exit direction

Whores
- Live at Ma Nelson's
- "Crew" of the "Ship" (pg. 15)
- Well educated
- Belly dancers
- "A revolutionary whore house" (pg. 16)
- All Fevvers' Mothers (pg. 17)
- Speak in unison
- Living vicatiously through Fevvers
- See Fevvers' flight as a symbol of the

Chorus of Whores

- Not real?
- No exit direction

Whores

- Live at Ma Nelson's
- "Crew" of the "Ship" (pg. 15)
- Well educated
- Belly dancers
- "A revolutionary whorehouse" (pg. 16)
- All Fevvers' mothers (pg. 17)
- Speak in unison
- Living vicariously through Fevvers
- See Fevvers' flight as a symbol of the freedom they want
- Follows what Ma Nelson, Lizzie and Fevvers say
- Bonded by sisterhood, consider each other family
- Forced together and apart by money
- No exit direction

Clowns

- [redacted] circus ensamble? (pg. 29)
- Do as Buffo says

Chorus of Clowns

consider each other family
- Forced together and apart by money
- No exit direction

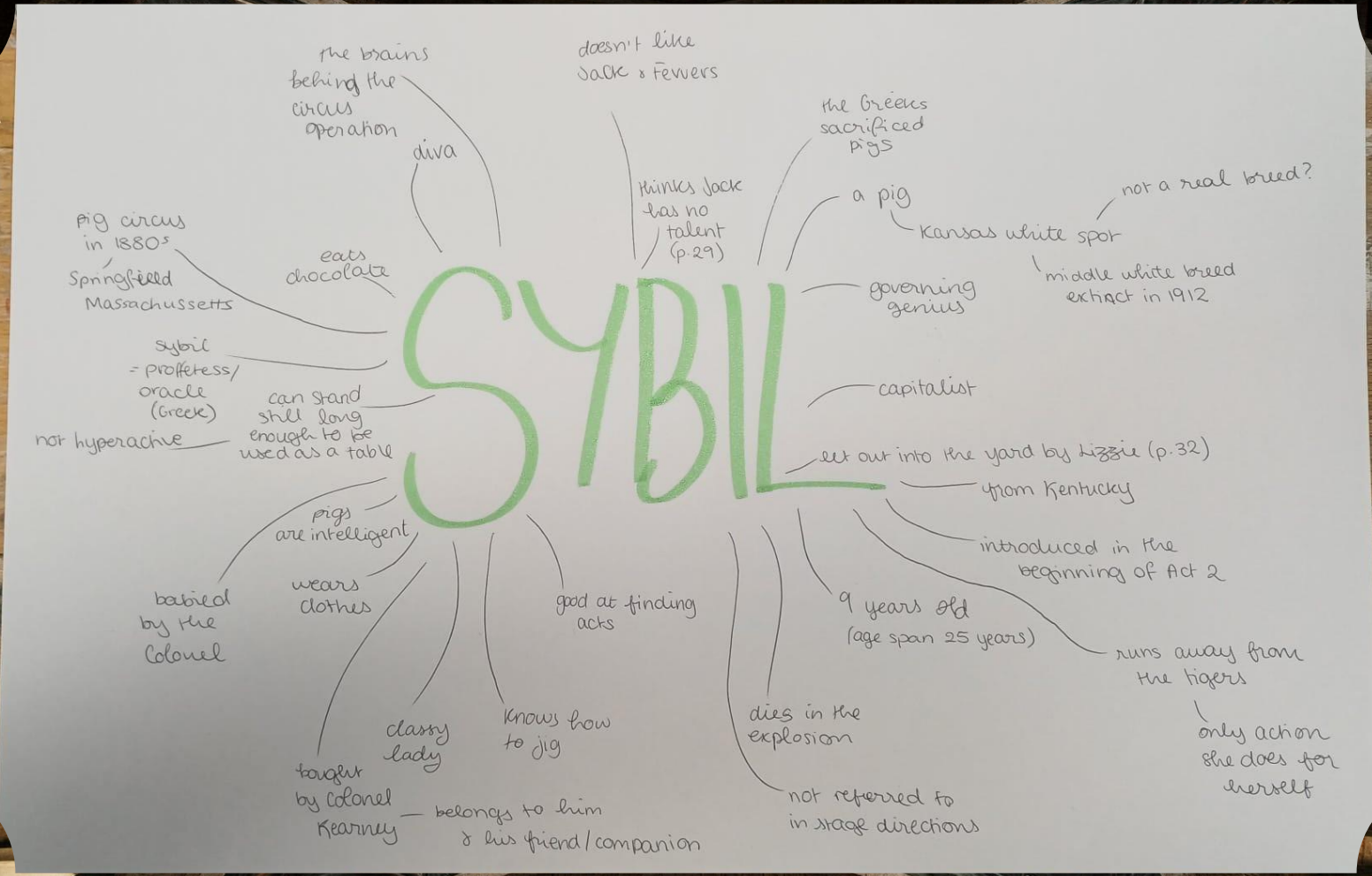
Clowns
- ~~S~~ circus ensamble? (pg. 29)
- Do as Buffo says
- Appear in Clown Alley
- Dress Jack as a chicken
- Hold Jack back so Buffa can beat him and Mignon

- Leave with Buffo

Audience? (pg. 50)
Sings "the land where the lemon trees grow" in the void to close the show
And when Jack + Mignon come up with their act

Sybil

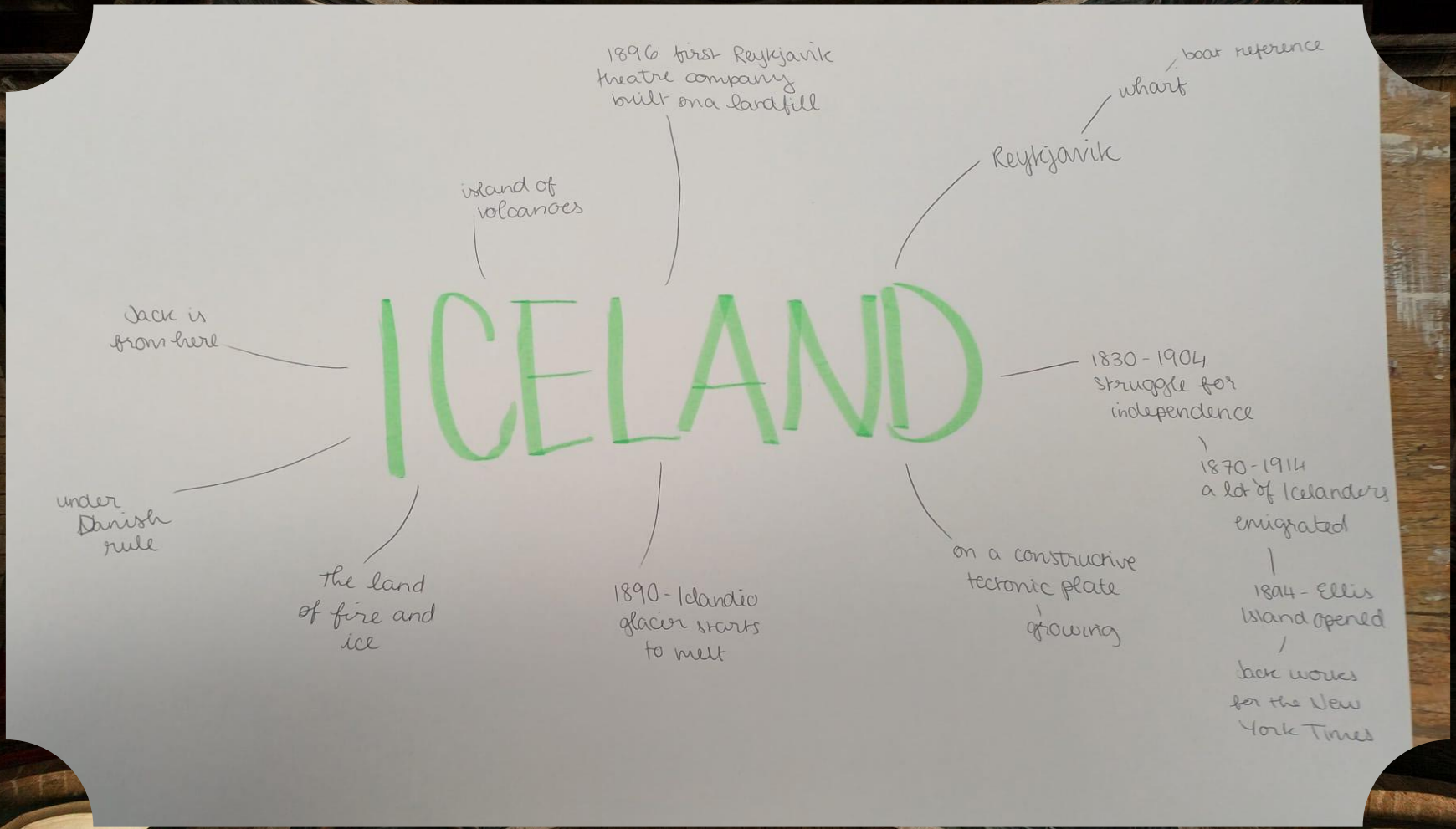
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Location Analysis

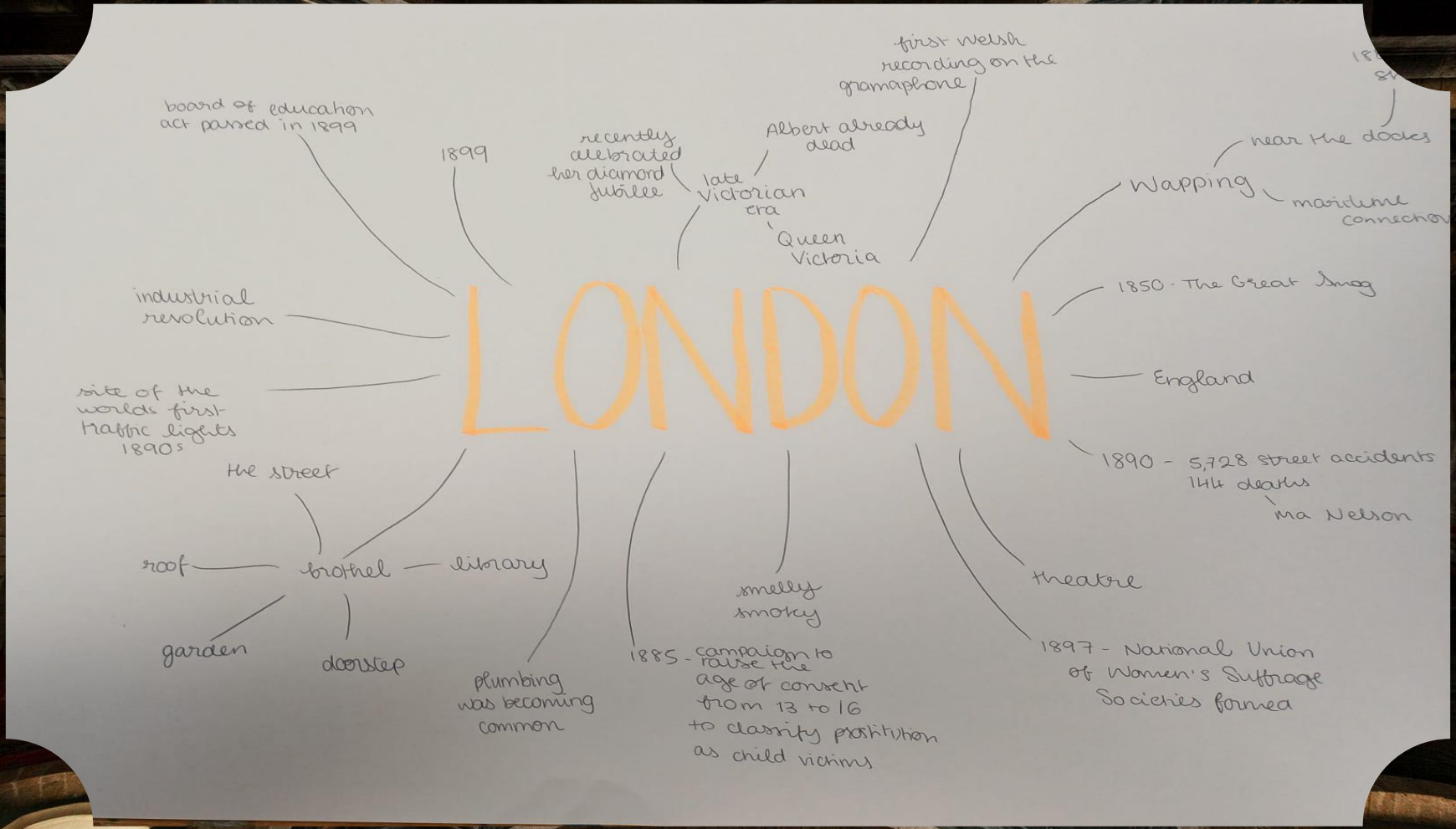
Reykjavik

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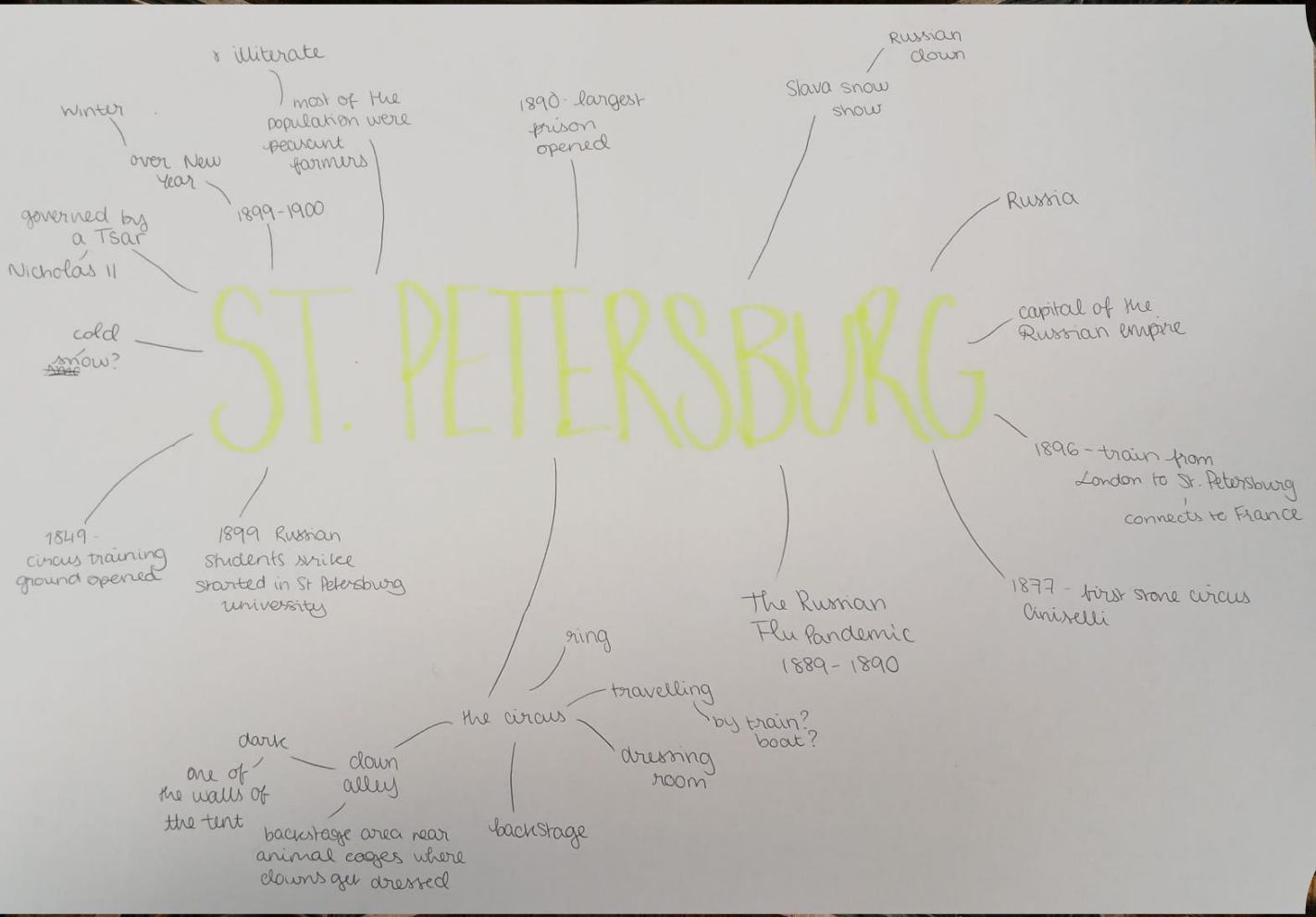
London

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St. Petersburg

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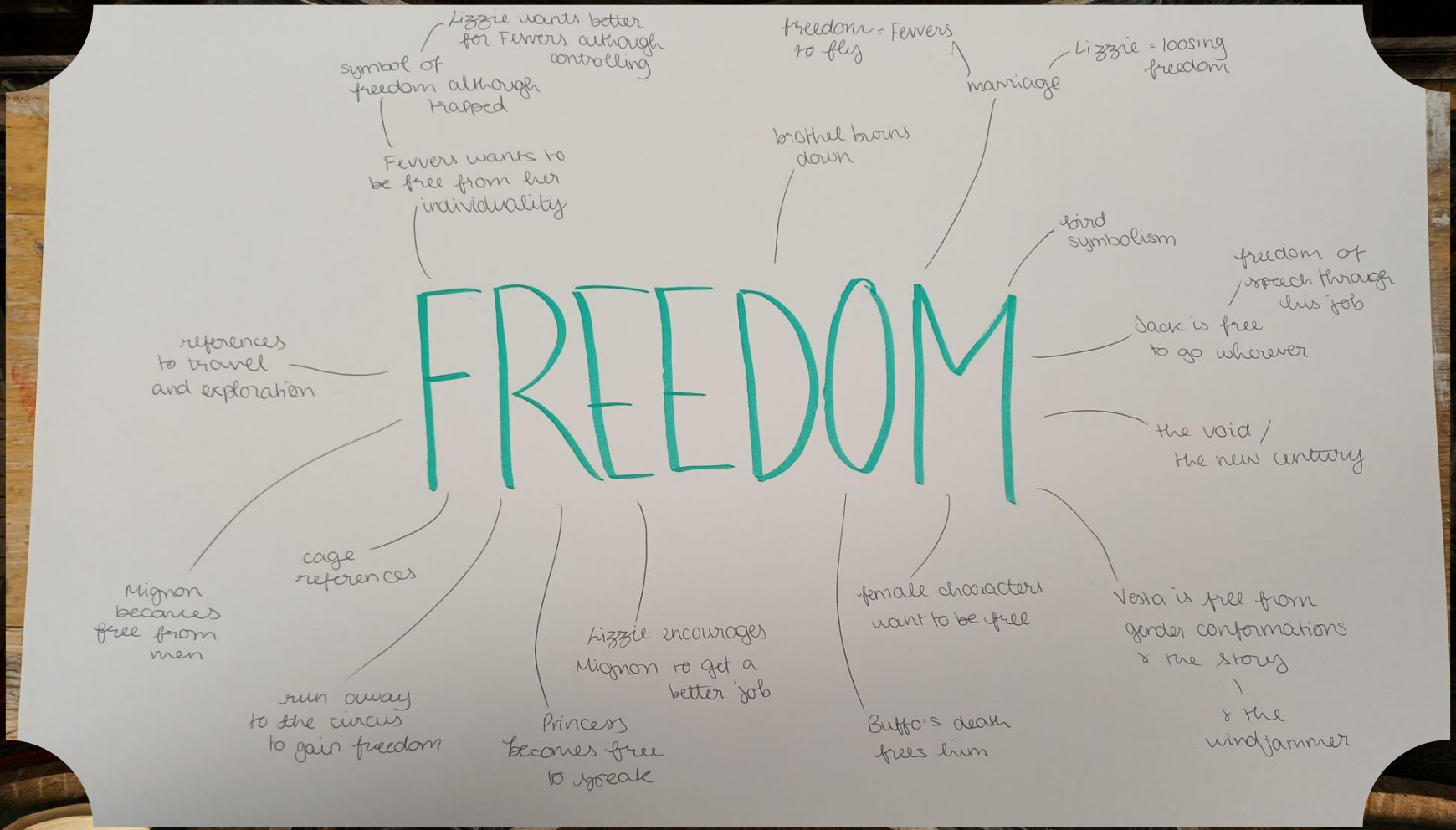


Theme Analysis



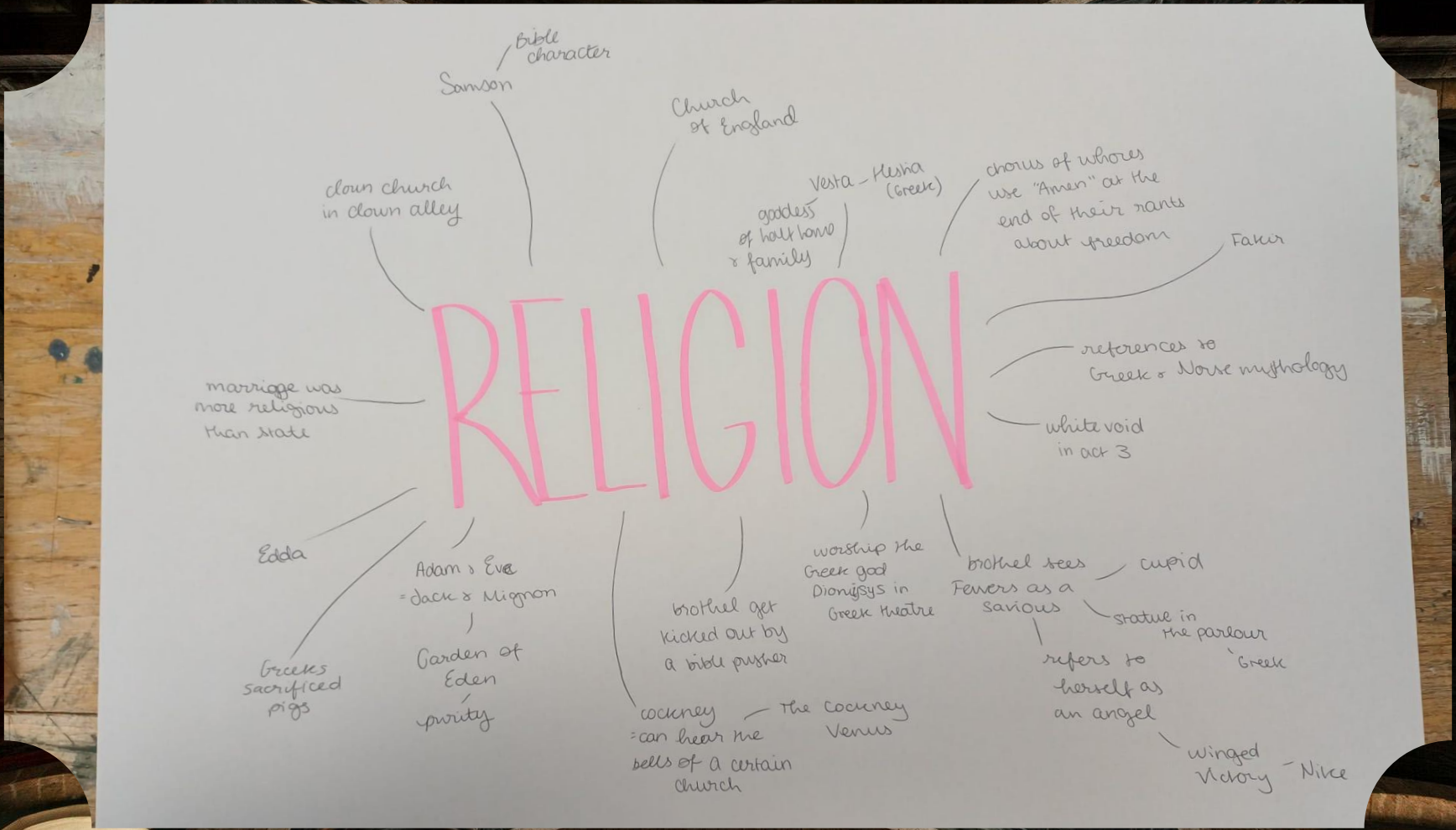
Freedom

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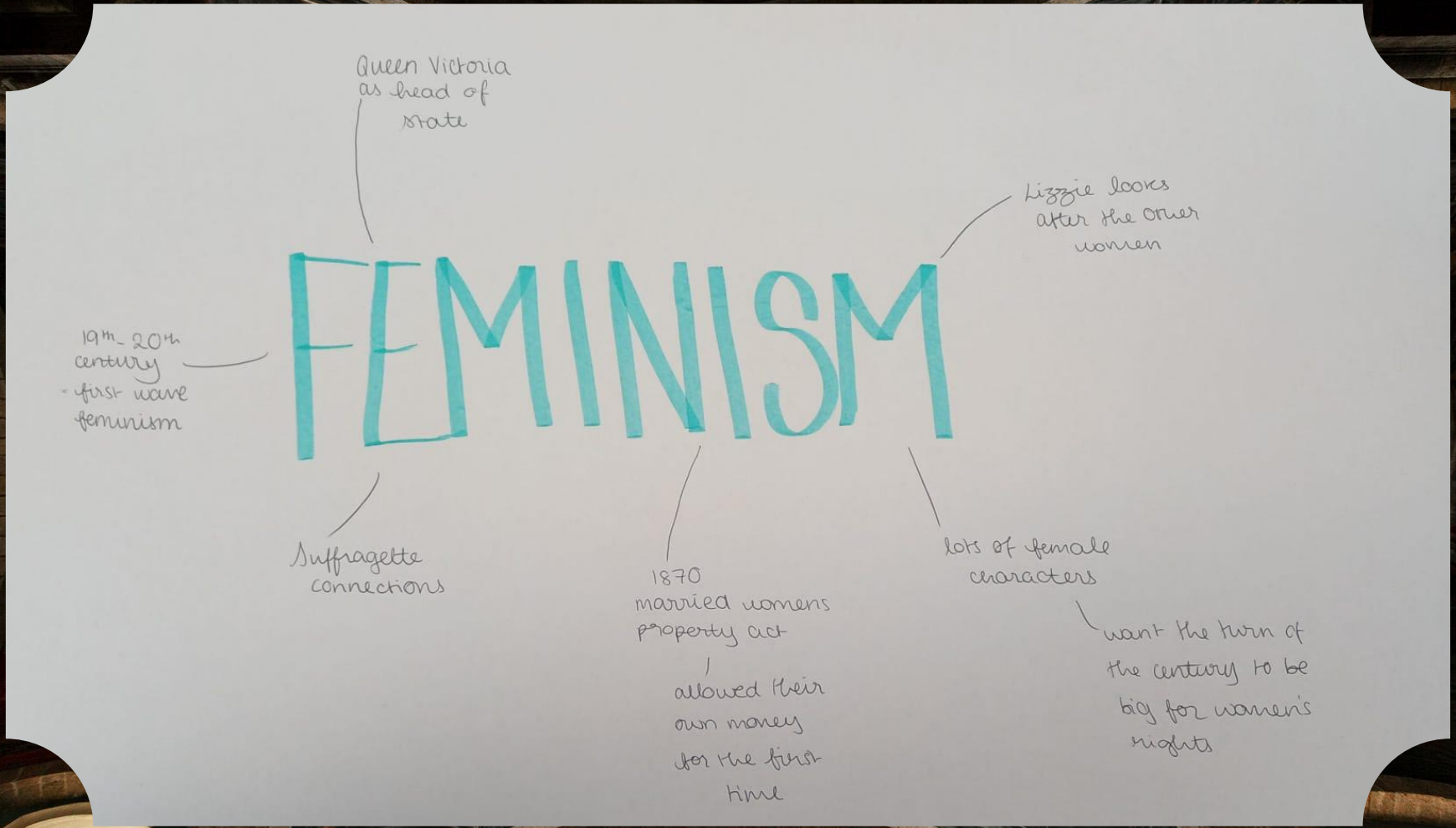
Religion

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



Feminism

Image courtesy of: Annie Picton



Analysis Questions





Analysis Questions

- What is the PLOT? (what is the story about)
  - The plot is about a New York Times journalist named Jack Walser who's writing an article to debunk hoax acts when he meets a winged woman named Fevvers. After learning about her childhood hatching from an egg and growing up in a brothel, he becomes a clown and follows her to a traveling circus to get the rest of her story.
- What is the THEME? (what is the message)
  - The story has many prominent themes, such as freedom, ownership, power, greed, religion, identity, gender roles, and feminism.
- What is the LOGIC? (does the story make sense)
  - The script takes a lot from the surreal magical realism style that the original novel it adapts was written in, so there's not much logic to be found. For example, characters often sing instead of speaking, time moves nonlinearly, and set pieces in the stage directions appear and disappear out of nowhere.

Analysis Questions

- What is the EXPOSITION? (what are the characters doing/thinking)
  - There are 5 scenes of heavy exposition in the script, most being either flashbacks or straight retellings of a character's backstory told through songs/monologues. These expository monologues are used for Jack, Kearney, Mignon, and Buffo's backstories. The only character whose backstory we get to see play out on stage in Fevvers, whose flashback takes up the majority of Act I.
- What is the COMPLICATION? (what is the drama in the story)
  - The drama in the story comes from the relationships between the characters and the conflicts (both personal and interpersonal) that these relationships cause. For example, Lizzie's protective motherly relationship with Fevvers makes Fevvers feel trapped as a symbol of freedom without having any freedom of her own, and Lizzie coming between them is one of the main things that keeps her and Jack from becoming a couple until the end of the play.

Analysis Questions

- What creates the TENSION? (what will happen next)
  - Characters like Lizzie, Buffo, Sampson, and Mr Sugar are the primary creators of tension in the script thanks to their various antagonistic actions. They are also the most responsible for creating conflicts for the other characters to solve.
- What is the MAIN QUESTION? (what problem is to be solved)
  - The two main questions of the story are if Jack and Fevvers will end up together and if Fevvers will find her freedom.
- What is the MAIN ACTION? (what event hooks the audience)
  - The event that hooks the audience is when Vesta and the Creatures of the Theatre bring Jack out of the audience and into the show.
- What is the CAUSE OF THE ACTION? (what happens to the main character)
  - The main plot of the play is set into motion when Jack meets Fevvers in London after her show and decides to follow her to St. Petersburg, where most of the action happens.

Analysis Questions

- What is the RESULTING ACTION? (the answer to the main question)
  - The answer to the main question comes at the end of the show after the new century begins. Fevvers had been rid of Mr Sugar and her responsibilities to the circus, and by standing up to Lizzie and calling out her controlling behavior, she finds her own freedom and both she and Jack are free to fly away together.
- What is the CONCLUSION? (how does the story end)
  - The story ends at the same time as when the main questions are answered.
- Who is the PROTAGONIST? (the main character)
  - The main characters are Jack and Fevvers, with Fevvers being the focus of the story and the script's themes while Jack is the audience surrogate character.
- Who is the ANTAGONIST? (could be one or more characters)
  - The antagonists are Buffo, Sampson, Mr Sugar, and Lizzie. Buffo, Sampson, and Mr Sugar are more traditionally villainous while Lizzie's role as an antagonists comes from how she intentionally and unintentionally keeps Jack and Fevvers from reaching their goals.

Analysis Questions

- Who is the MOST INTERESTING CHARACTER? (not always the main character)
  - I find Lizzie to be one of the most interesting characters because she is definitely the most radically feminist character in the cast, which ties a lot of the script's themes to her. I also find her motivations to be very understandable even if they do push her to go too far. I also found Vesta to be a very interesting character because of how much of an enigma she is.
- Where does the story TAKE PLACE? (location, time period)
  - Act I of the story takes place in a London theatre, Act II takes place at the circus in St Petersburg, and Act III takes place in the blank slate void of the new century.
- What is the INTENT of the scene? (what is the scene used for dramatically)
  - The intent is to immerse the audience into a surreal, dreamlike atmosphere that will get them to ponder the script's deeper and darker themes both during and after the show.

Analysis Questions

- What are the PLOT POINTS? (points that move the story forward)
  - Key plot point include Jack being pulled out of the audience, Jack's first meeting with Fevvers, Jack running away to join the circus as a clown, Jack and Mignon mistakenly appearing to have slept together, Jack tacking Mignon to be taken care of by Fevvers and Lizzie, Mignon and Jack creating their new act with the Princess and her tigers, everything going wrong at the circus' New Years Eve show, Mr Sugar trying to take Fevvers wings and being blown up by Lizzie, and finally Jack and Fevvers getting together in the new century.
- What is the CLIMAX of each scene? (what is the turning point)
  - The climax of Act I is when Jack, Lizzie, and Fevvers each leave London for Colonel Kearney's Circus in St Petersburg. The climax of Act II, Scene 1 is when Fevvers and Kearney leave to negotiate Fevvers' contract and Buffo explains Mignon's tragic backstory to the audience. The climax of Act II, Scene 2 is when Jack is attacked by the tiger and mistaken for sleeping with Mignon while protecting her.

Analysis Questions

- What is the CLIMAX of each scene? (Cont.)
  - The climax of Act II, Scene 3 is when Buffo thinks Jack and Mignon have slept together and beats both of them. The climax of Act II, Scene 4 is when Jack leaves Mignon alone in the hotel and gets beaten up by Sampson because he believes they slept together. The climax of Act II, Scene 5 is when Fevvers and Lizzie push Mignon and Jack into joining the Princess' act. The climax of Act II, Scene 6 is when Buffo's harassment of Jack leads to the Princess being forced to kill one of her tigers and Buffo having Sampson help him kill himself with the Princess' gun. A second climax happens in Act II, Scene 6 when Lizzie sets off her bomb.The climax of Act III happens when Fevvers and Jack finally take off flying together.
- What is the RESOLUTION? (how is the theme resolved)
  - The first main theme of feminism reaches its satisfying resolution when Lizzie blows up Mr Sugar, and the second main theme of freedom reaches its resolution when Jack and Fevvers get together.

Analysis Questions

- What is the CONCLUSION? (how does the scene end)
  - The conclusion of the play ends with the surviving characters (Kearney, Sampson, the Princess, Mignon, Lizzie, Fevvers, and Jack) with the uncertain white void of the new century to shape into their own and Fevvers, as the ideal woman of the new century, with a new lover (Jack) that she can shape into her own version of the ideal man of the new century.
- What are the important LINES OF DIALOGUE? (contain story points)
  - The most important lines of dialogue in the script are probably the songs and monologues, since they carry more of the weight of storytelling and explaining the script's themes than the normal lines of dialogue do. This is likely because of how much time the characters spend singing and/or slam poetry-ing.

Analysis Questions

- Which character CONTROLS the scene? (who pushes the story forward)
  - Vesta is the closest thing to a narrator in the script, but the story is primarily pushed forward by Buffo and Lizzie (who serve as antagonists by creating most of the story's conflicts) and Jack (who serves as a protagonist by most actively trying to solve the problems that the antagonists create.)
- What are the BEATS/UNIT CHANGES? (where does the story change directions)
  - Because the set pieces and locations mentioned in the stage directions are constantly teleporting in and out of existence in ways that defy spatial logic, there aren't any unit changes that can be taken directly from the script into real life. There are at least solidly defined story beats between each act and scene, with the exception of the transition between Act II, Scene 1 and Act II, Scene 2, which in comparison to the others feels like it only exists to keep Scene 1 from getting too long.



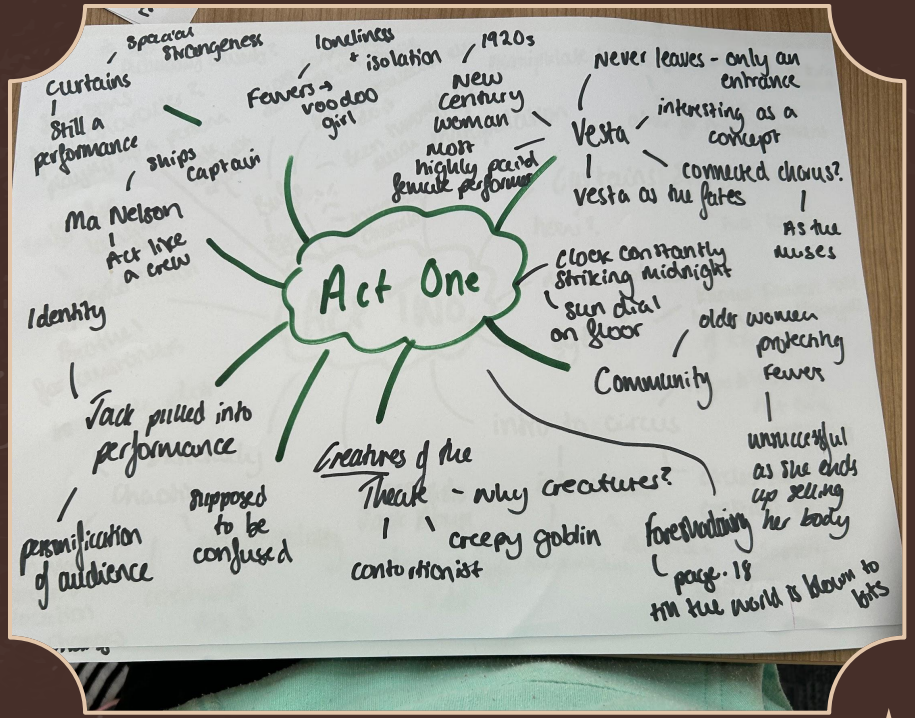
Getting into Groups

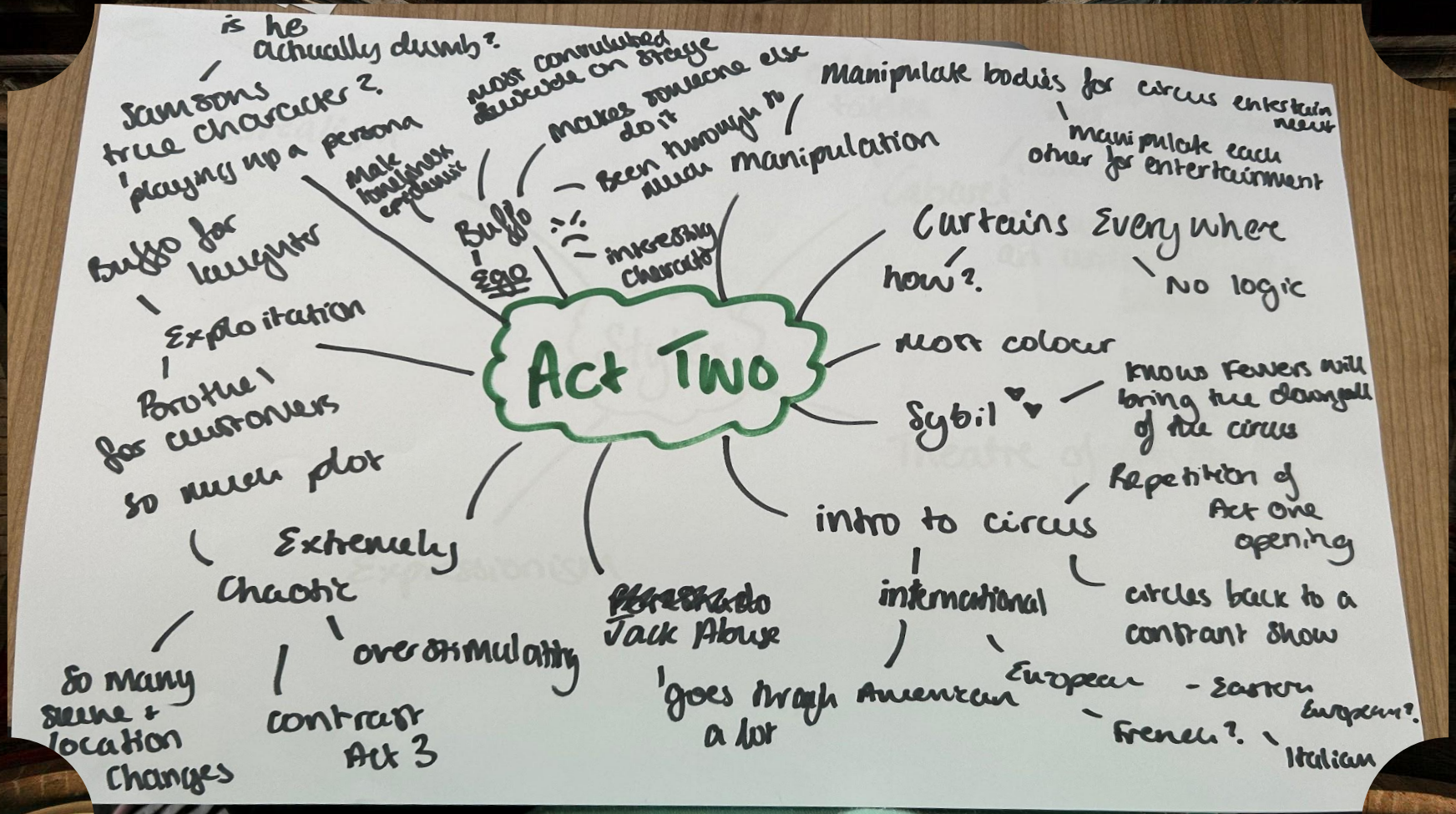


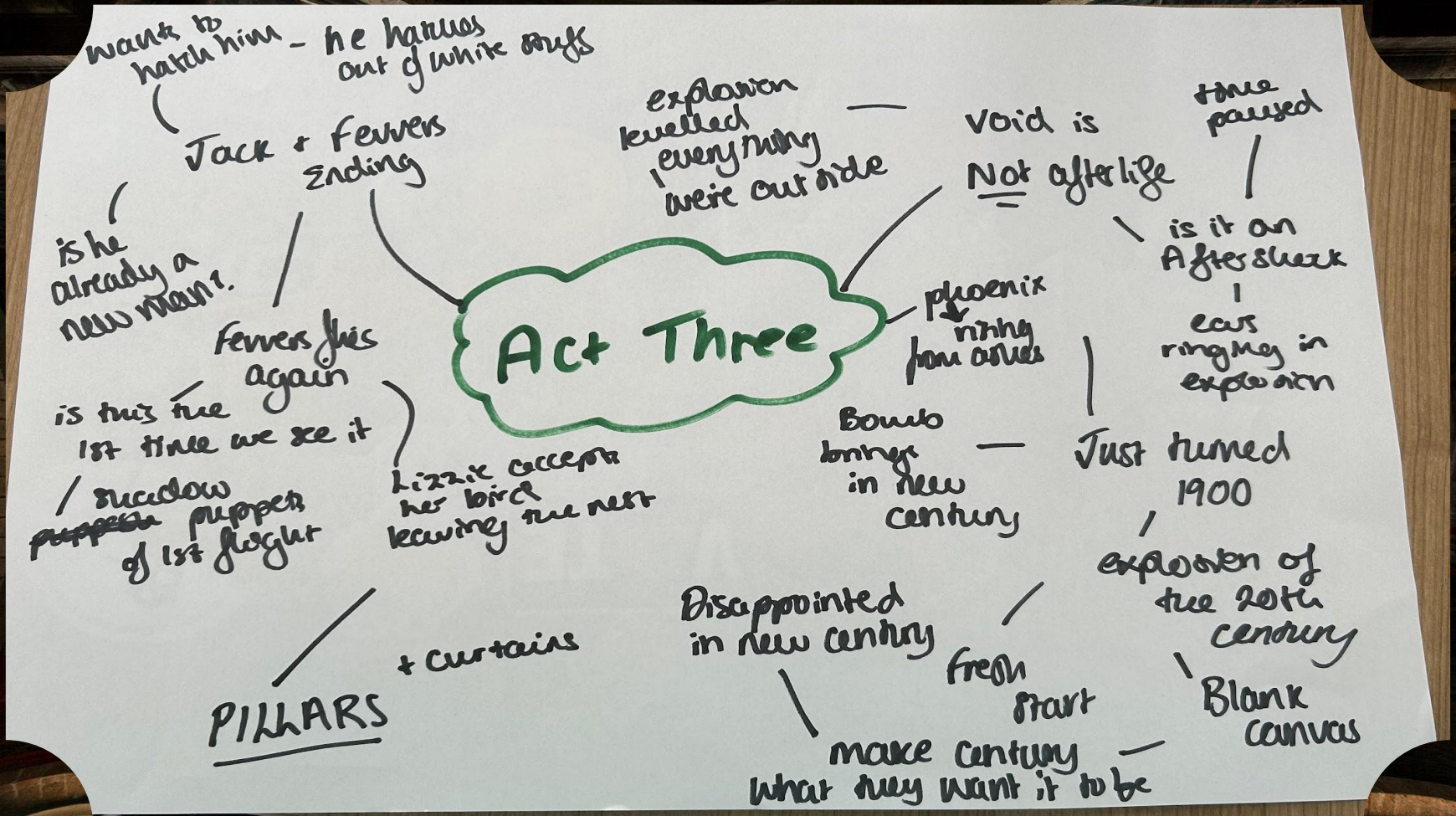
Group Analysis

Once I got into my group with Cam and Anne, we analyzed each act one more time in order to:

- Find any remaining details we missed.
- Begin forming ideas for our group aesthetic based on details that stuck out to us in the script.
- Choose our favorite characters, settings, and themes and explain why they call to us.




Act Two
is he actually dumb?
Samsons true character?
playing up a persona
most convoluted decision on stage
makes someone else do it
been through so much
manipulate bodies for circus entertainment
manipulate each other for entertainment
make loveliness ugliness
Buffo - ego
interesting character
Buffo for laughter
Exploitation
Brutal for customers
so much plot
Curtains Everywhere
how?
No logic
more colour
Sybil
know Fewers will bring the downfall of the circus
Repetition of Act One opening
intro to circus
international
circles back to a constant show
European
- Eastern European?
French?
Italian
American
goes through a lot
Jack Abuse
Extremely Chaotic
so many scene & location changes
overstimulating
contrast Act 3


Act Three
Jack + Fevers Ending
want to hatch him - he hatches out of white stuff
is he already a new villain?
Fevers flies again
is this true 1st time we see it
shadow puppets
puppets of 1st flight
Lizzie accepts her bird knowing true nest
+ curtains
PILLARS
explosion killed everything were outside
Void is
Not afterlife
time passed
is it an Afterstuck
ears ringing in explosion
phoenix rising from ashes
Bomb brings in new century
Just turned 1900
explosion of the 20th century
Blank canvas
Fresh start
Disappointed in new century
make century what they want it to be

Choosing a Role

Why did I choose this Role?

I chose to work on puppetry for this module because I wanted to take advantage of the opportunities I have as an exchange student. Puppetry is not a facet of theatre that I would be given the chance to study back at my home school in the United States unless I were working on very specific shows, so I was excited to get the chance to learn a new skill. I also knew that I wanted a role that would let me fabricate things hands-on instead of working digitally (as I'd probably have to if I chose Lighting or Sound.)

03

Research



Authors & Playwrights



Angela Carter

Nights at the Circus was adapted from a novel of the same name by Angela Carter (1940-1992.)

- Carter was one of the most prolific female authors in British literature in the late 1970s through 1980s and a well established name in the genre of modern feminist literature.
- The feminist themes in her work stem from a life lived constantly trying to break free from the shackles she felt were holding her down as a woman, such as controlling parents, loveless marriages, and a lack of fulfillment to be found in a traditional education and career.
- Due to misogyny within the industry, Carter never received much critical praise or recognition while alive; *Nights at the Circus* is the only of her works to win an award, being the 1984 James Tait Black Memorial Prize winner.



Emma Rice

Nights at the Circus was adapted for the stage by Emma Rice with the help of Tom Morris, her longtime collaborator in the now defunct Kneehigh Theatre Company.

- Rice began her theatre career with a company called Alibi Theatre, performing in touring children's and community shows.
- She has been the Artistic Director at several prominent theatrical companies across the UK, including Kneehigh, Shakespeare's Globe, and her own company Wise Children (now known as the Emma Rice Company.)
- Rice is known for incorporating new and unconventional styles of performance and design into her productions, often introducing music into her productions, and restructuring and reframing classic stories with contemporary feminist themes.



Group Research

Group Research

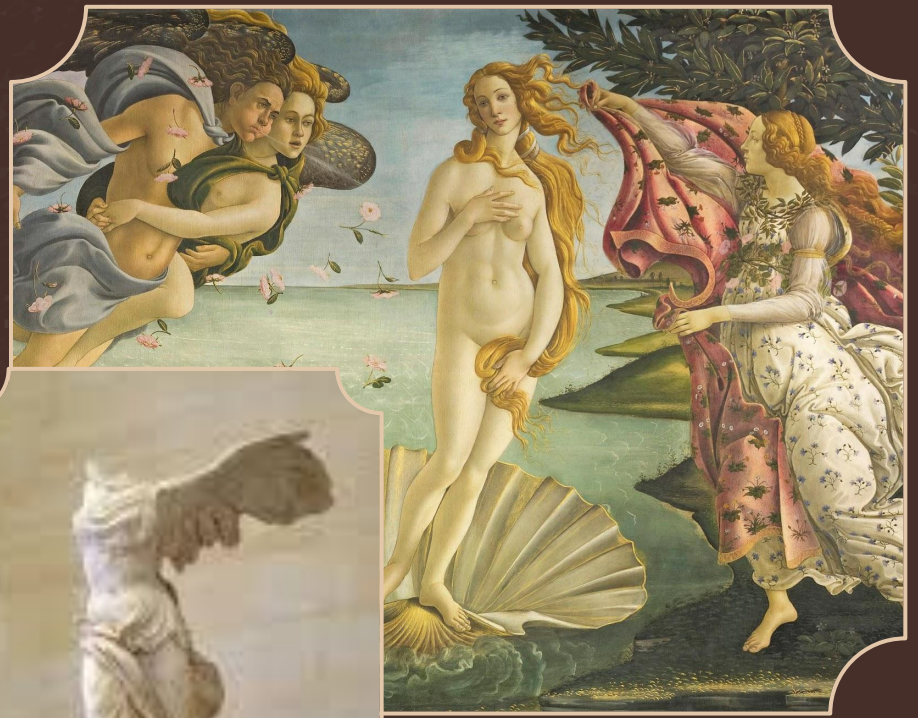
During our first few days together as a group, Anne, Cam, and I decided to split some group research amongst ourselves concerning topics from the script itself and the time period that the show takes place in that we personally found interesting. We also researched styles of theatre to choose a style that we would personally want to design for. These topics would eventually influence our group aesthetic and interpretation of the play.

Mythology

Greek Mythology

Inspired by allusions to Greek mythology within the script, we researched the specific myths the script referenced as well as discovering some other myths that we felt connected thematically.

- **Winged Victory –** When Fevvers' wings are first discovered at the brothel, Ma Nelson has her put on display as the Winged Victory instead of selling her body. This is a reference to the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, a famous statue depicting the Ancient Greek goddess of victory, Nike. She would use her wings to fly over battles and competitions and bless who was destined to win.
- **Venus –** Also known as Aphrodite, she was the Ancient Greek goddess of love, sex, beauty, and fertility, making her one of the most prominent and powerful Olympians. Fevvers takes her name when calling herself "The Cockney Venus."



Greek Mythology

- **Cupid -** Mr. Sugar gives Fevvers the nickname of “Cupid,” who was the son of Aphrodite and Ares in Greek mythology. Usually depicted as a winged cherub, he assists his mother by shooting targets with his bow, whose arrows make whoever they strike fall in love. In the modern day Cupid is the mascot of Valentine’s Day.
- **Helen of Troy -** Fevvers compares herself to Helen of Troy briefly in Act I, who was famously known as “the face that launched a thousand ships.” In mythology, her beauty lead to her being kidnapped by Prince Paris of Troy, enraging her husband, who was a Greek king. This lead directly to the start of the Trojan War.



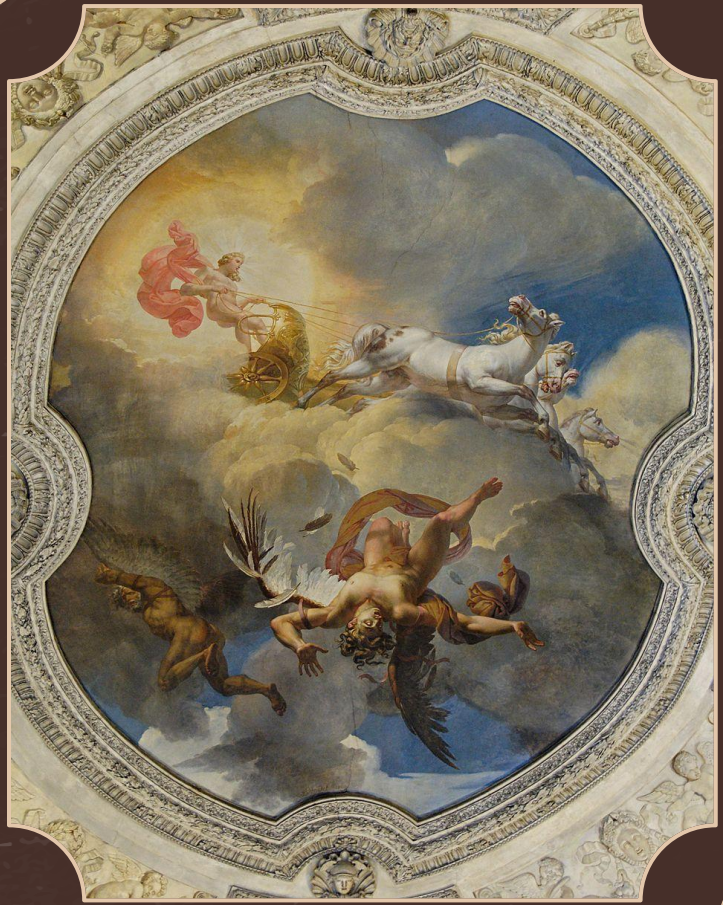
Greek Mythology

- **Leda -** Helen of Troy's mother was a beautiful queen named Leda who caught the eye of Zeus, King of the Gods. To disguise himself, he transformed into a swan and sexually assaulted her, impregnating her with Helen. Fevvers briefly mentions having "the wings of a swan" in Act II, and in the book she is explicitly stated to be part swan, perhaps as an indirect allusion to this myth. We also felt that this myth connected to the feminist themes of the script.
- **Adonis -** Adonis was an orphan boy who Aphrodite discovered as an infant and passed off to Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, because she didn't want to raise him. As an adult, Adonis grew into an incredibly beautiful young man, and Aphrodite fell in love with him. Not wanting to give Adonis away, Persephone killed him so that Aphrodite could never have him. This myth reminded us of the conflict between Lizzie, Jack, and Mr. Sugar as they each fight for control of Fevvers, never asking her what she really wants.



Greek Mythology

- **Icarus -** Icarus was the son of Daedalus, the inventor who built the labyrinth that trapped the Minotaur. When they were imprisoned in a tower, Daedalus built them wings out of feathers and wax so they could fly away. Icarus ignored his father's warnings and flew to close to the sun, whose heat melted his wings. We not only felt this myth was relevant because of the similar imagery it has to the script but also saw similarities between Icarus' and Fevvers' arcs.



Greek Mythology

- **The Furies -** Also known as the Erinyes, the Furies were spirits in Greek mythology who existed to punish and torment wrongdoers, particularly murderers, until they died or were driven mad. My group saw thematic similarities between the Furies and the Chorus, particularly when the Chorus plays the Creatures of the Theatre, which later factored into our personal adaptation of the play.
- **The Fates -** Also known as the Moirai, the Fates were three goddesses who respectively spun the threads of life, wove them together into a tapestry with the lives of everyone they would touch, and cut them short to mark their death. They were respected and feared not only by mortals but also by the other gods thanks to their ability to foresee and create the fate of all things. We saw similarities between the omnipotent Fates and Vesta, who is seemingly omnipotent and already knows everything that will happen in the script.



Norse Mythology

I personally did some research into the mythology from Jack's home that was referenced in the script.

- **The Edda –** Jack is compared to "a hero from the Edda" in Act II after saving Fevvers. The Edda are what we have to thank for our modern understanding of Norse mythology. They are a text split into two parts and recount all of Norse mythology from the creation of the world to the fall of the gods in Ragnarok.
- **Valkyries –** In Norse mythology, Valkyries were female war spirits who would take the souls of warriors who fell honorably in battle to Valhalla, a specialized heaven for mortals who had earned a place in Odin's army. They wore armor, carried weapons like swords, and were often depicted with angelic wings or capes made of swan feathers that allowed them to fly. I saw similarities between this imagery and the image of Fevvers as the Winged Victory.



Foundlings

Foundlings

Inspired by Fevvers' backstory from the script, Anne did research on foundlings.

- Foundlings were orphans who were abandoned on doorsteps during the victorian era by parents who could not financially support them. They were often left with identifying tokens in case their parents were ever able to reunite with them.
- Around the same time, those mothers that didn't want to subject their children to poverty or the mistreatment of orphanages would mercy kill their infants instead. Infanticide rates in London were espescially high at the time.



Styles of Theatre

Surrealism

Surrealism was a genre of theatre that emerged in Paris in the 1920s. Influenced by Dadaism, it was also inspired by Freud's theories on the subconscious mind. Elements of surrealism include:

- Caricatures as characters
- Absurdism
- Satire
- Experimental dialogue
- Anarchic humor
- Vague scenery not assigned to one specific location
- Use of masks
- Symbolism in sets
- Characters played by puppets



Cabaret

Cabaret is a type of performance set in a casual club or restaurant-like setting with the audience seated at round tables.

- Geared towards general audiences
- Usually features musical revues, one-person shows, comedy sets, or other similar small non-narrative shows.
- Made to make the audience feel comfortable and intimate with the performer.



Theatre of Cruelty

Theatre of Cruelty is a style of theatre that sprung off from Surrealism. It was created by Antonin Artaud, one of the original Surrealism movement's most prominent artists.

- Spectacle
- Oversized sets and props
- Sensory overload
- Shock and awe
- Dissolution of the barrier between performers and audience
- Made to strip away repressions and bring out baser instincts



Greek Theatre

Theatre originated in Ancient Greece as a publicized ritual to recount myths and honor Dionysus, a god of revelry, madness, and wine.

- Divided into tragedy, comedy, and satyr plays
- Most plays are lost in the modern day, and many of those that survive are incomplete
- Performed by a large chorus who would sing, dance, chant, narrate the action, and react as the playwright wanted the audience to
- Used masks to hide the identities of the chorus and allow them to play characters of any gender, age, or status



Personal Research





Personal Research

On my own time, I did more specific research into topics that would impact me in my Puppetry role.

Animals

Tigers

- Tigers were one of the many exotic animals that became hot commodities in the Victorian Era
- Big cats were displayed in menageries, zoos, and circuses, taxidermied for preservation and scientific studies, and their pelts and fur were used as decor
- Big cats both living and dead signified the wealth of the person who owned them and the Great British Empire's subjugation of Africa and Asia
- Women were allowed to train lions and tigers to perform as it was believed their "feminine auras" would be naturally calming to the cats
- Captive tigers in zoos and menageries at the time would rarely have adequate food or space to roam
- Tigers would be "trained" to perform tricks in circuses through poor treatment and physical abuse



Pigs

- Despite growing industrialization, pigs were still a staple on farms as livestock and waste management
- Pedigree pig breeding began to take root in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries
- Pigs were seen as symbols of prosperity and fertility in the Victorian Era thanks to their ability to have large litters of piglets
- Pigs were also seen as symbols of good luck in general, especially around New Year's, when they could be seen on greeting cards



Birds

- Birds have held many different symbolic meanings throughout periods and cultures, largely dependent on their species
- Swans symbolize grace, beauty, and love
- Birds also often symbolize freedom thanks to their ability to fly
- In the Victorian Era, exotic birds became a commodity and status symbol thanks to Imperialism
- Birds were kept caged as pets, taxidermied to decorate wealthy households' parlors, and were killed so their feathers and bodies could decorate the hats of wealthy women
- Many species went nearly or completely extinct thanks to overhunting and the overconsumption of feathers



Styles of Puppetry

Rod Puppets

As the name implies, rod puppets are controlled by rods attached to their limbs. They are usually controlled by puppeteers from below (where puppeteers may hide beneath a stage or just below the sight of a camera.) Sub-styles of rod puppets include:

- **Bunraku -** A form of rod puppetry from Japan where life size humanoid figures are controlled by teams of 3 puppeteers. The puppeteers are visible to the audience and may play characters themselves. Otherwise, they usually wear all black to divert attention from themselves.
- **Hand-and-Rod -** Best known as the style used for the Muppets, Hand-and-Rod puppets have rod controlled limbs while the puppeteer's hand controls their mouth movements and facial expressions from inside.



Hand Puppets

These puppets fit over a puppeteer's hand like gloves. A puppeteer can use their fingers to control the limbs, head, or face depending on the puppet's construction. Sub-styles of hand puppets include:

- **Glove Puppets -** These puppets allow a puppeteer to control the limbs with their thumb and pinky fingers while the rest of the fingers control the head and torso. These are the most common puppets used in Punch and Judy shows.
- **Sock Puppets -** These simple puppets use the puppeteer's whole hand to control mouth movement, with limbs being unarticulated and loose hanging. It's also common for these puppets to have no limbs at all.



Marionettes

Marionettes are doll-like puppets with movements that are controlled by strings or wires attached to a horizontal bar. Marionette puppeteering is very difficult to master but can create very subtle and lifelike performances.



Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppets are 2D figures that are used to cast images onto a particularly lit canvas, scrim, or wall. They are very common in traditional puppetry in East Asia, Southeast Asia, India, Greece, and the Middle East. They are usually controlled with rods and can be extremely delicate as they are made of semi-translucent materials like paper.



Inspiring Artists

Invisible Octopus

Invisible Octopus are a 2 person design and fabrication company based out of Wales. Made up of Melissa Pettitt and Ben Gabel, they specialize in large-scale puppets for parades, festivals, and street theatre, as well as scenic carpentry, scenic props, costumes, scenic painting, and fine art.

- **Best Known For -** *Glutz* at Prague Quadrennial, Collaborations with Thingumajig Theatre



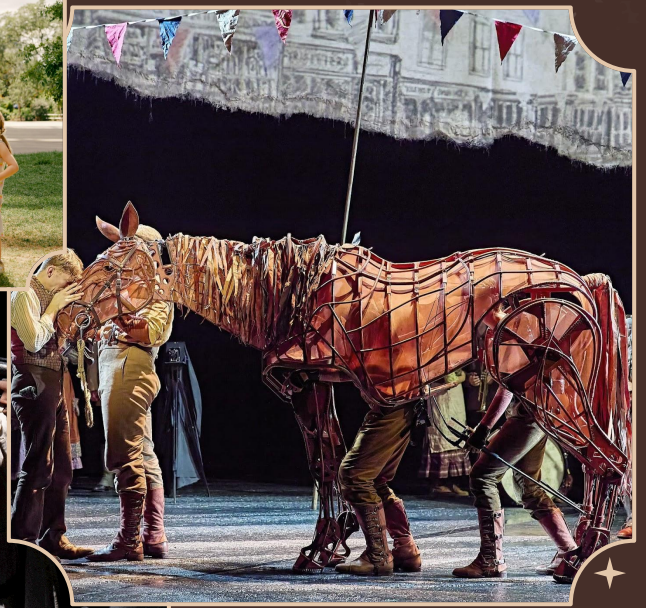


Handspring Puppet Company

Handspring are a puppet company that was founded in South Africa in 1981. They design and fabricate puppets for theatrical work and take a lot of inspiration from traditional forms of puppetry from around the world, such as Bunraku and Bamana puppetry from Mali. They take a lot of pride in adding life and empathy to their puppet characters and breaking down the boundaries between puppets, human actors, and the audience.

- **Best Known For –** *Warhorse, Faustus in Africa!*, Little Amal (*The Walk*)







Michael Curry Design

Michael Curry Design are a design and production company who specialize in creating puppets and large scale scenic props for theatre, live events, and theme parks. Founded in Portland, Oregon, they often combine puppetry with other theatrical mediums such as sets and costumes to bring characters to life in new and innovative ways. They are frequent collaborators with Disney, Universal Studios, the Olympics, and Cirque du Soleil.

Best Known For - *Lion King* on Broadway, *Frozen* on Broadway, *Shrek the Musical*







04

Incubation





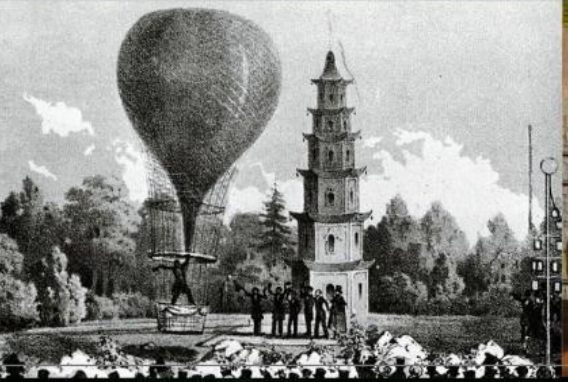
Mood Boards

During the Incubation period, my group gathered our thoughts by making a general mood board for the entire script out of inspiration images we'd found while doing our research. Later on, we would split this initial mood board into 3 mood boards for each act, discovering how distinct we wanted each act's aesthetic to truly be.




SOUTH LONDON PALACE
LONDON ROAD.
FOR TWELVE NIGHTS ONLY.
MONDAY, FEB. 23, 1874

ACT I













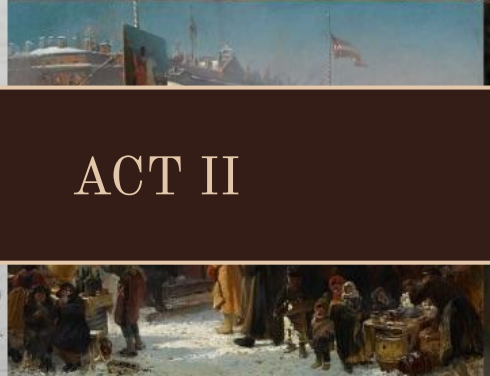




BUFFO picks up the Princess's gun and gives it to STRONG MAN.

BUFFO: Samson. I want you to help me. Imagine we've got a huge audience in front of us. And I say to you 'Please my friend shoot me.'







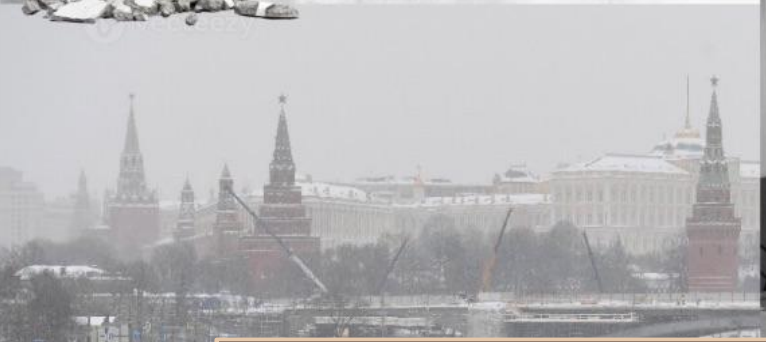
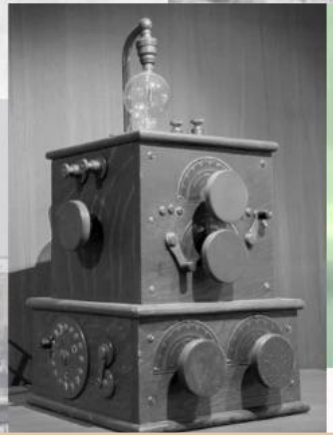
ACT II

SAMSON shoots BUFFO in the side.

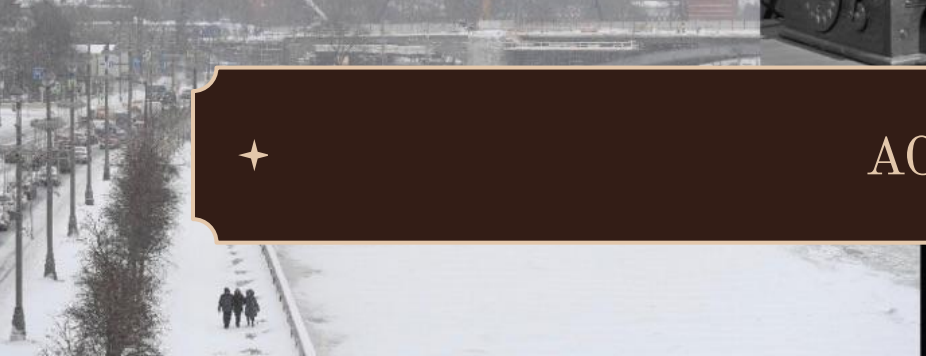
Aaaaaaaargh! (*Etc.*) How could you do that to me? (*Etc.*) Please. One more. In the head. Please.

STRONG MAN: Very good for comedy. The rule of three. Ha ha.



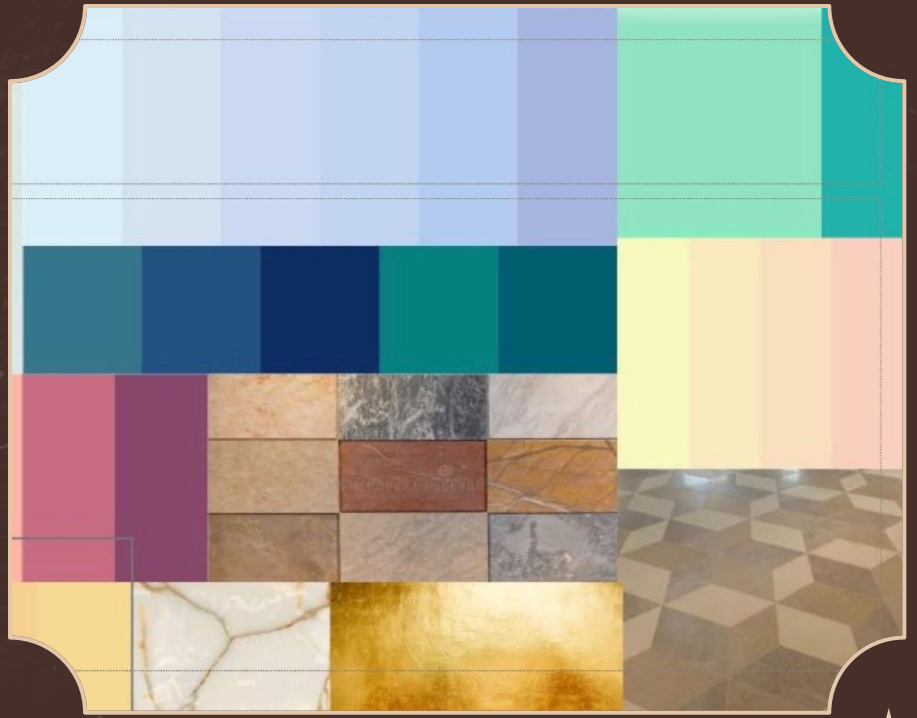





ACT III




Color Palettes

After finishing our mood boards for each act, we created color palettes for each act by picking colors directly from the images we selected.



ACT I



ACT II

ACT III

05

Sifting Process

Our Adaptation

During the Sifting process, my group came to a consensus on what our version of *Nights at the Circus* would be. In our adaptation, it would be revealed that the events of the plot have all played out inside of Lizzie's head. Using Anne's research on Foundlings, we came up with the idea that Fevvers had not actually been abandoned at the brothel's door step but in reality had been mercy killed by her biological mother- Lizzie. In her fantasies, Lizzie sees Fevvers as alive and grown and a symbol of the freedom she had always wanted for herself and her daughter. In our adaptation Jack would not only represent Lizzie's fear and resentment of men as a result of her past trauma but also the dissolving of her fantasy as he eventually takes Fevvers away. We would also work in the themes of mythology by casting Vesta as the omnipotent Fates and having the Chorus be a horde of Furies tormenting Lizzie for the life she took.



06

Implementation

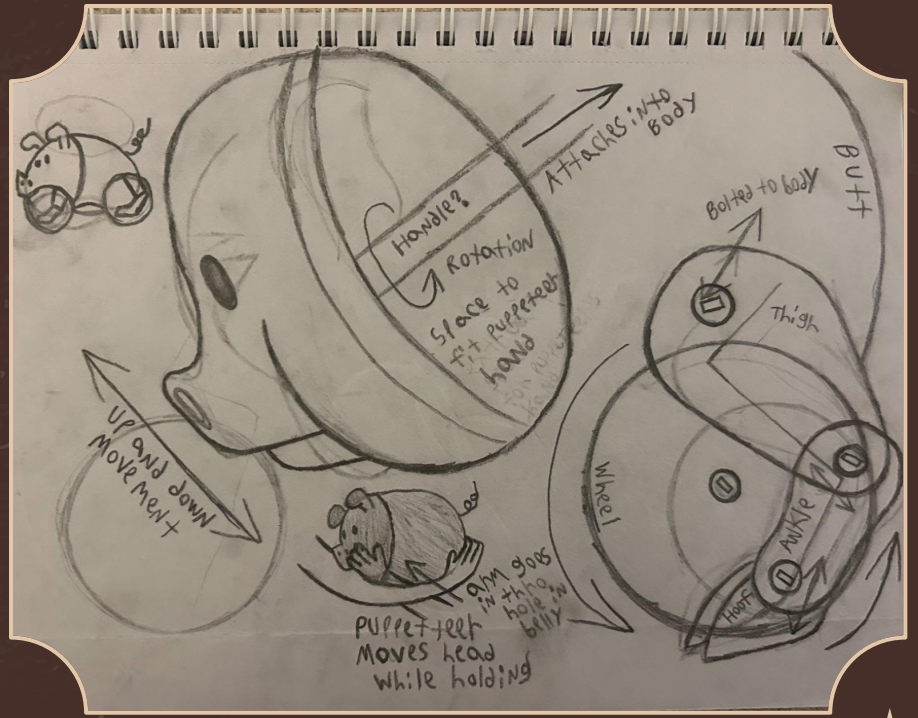




Sketches

I began the Implementation process by sketching designs for each of the characters I envisioned as puppets, which were:

- The Creatures of the Theatre
- The Clowns
- The Tigers
- Sybil the Pig

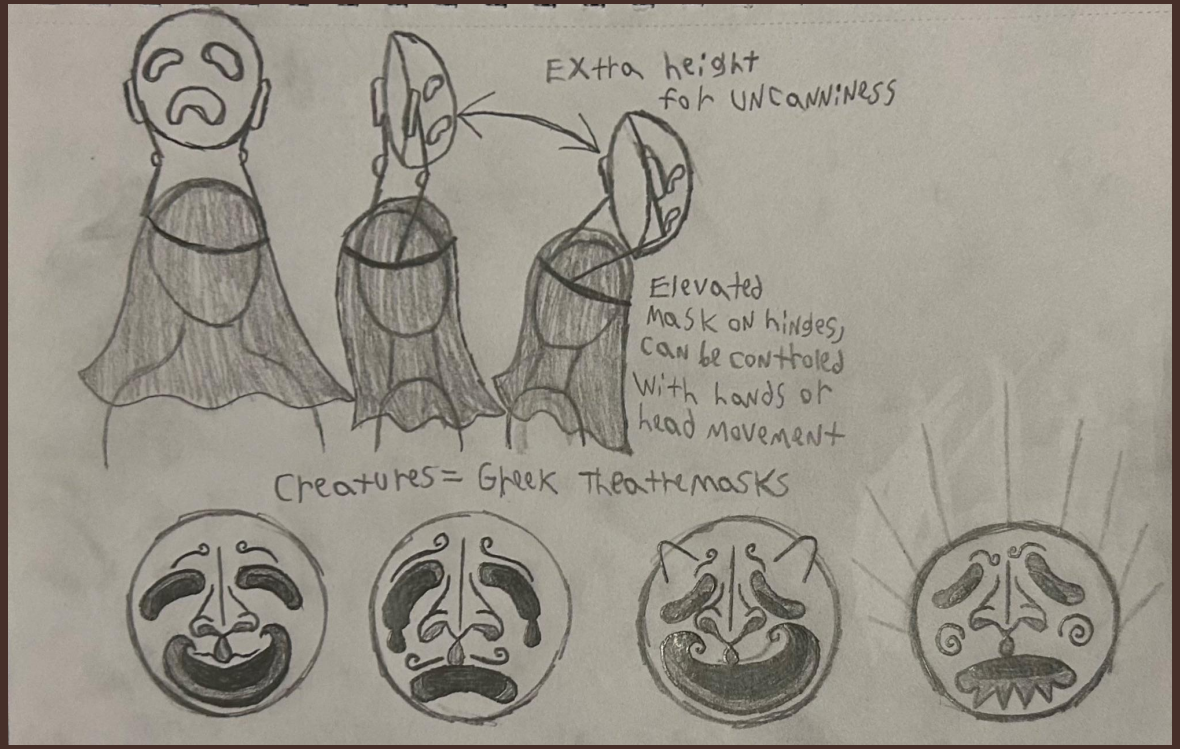


Creatures of the Theatre

The Creatures of the Theatre claim that nothing in the theatre can happen without them. To portray this, I went back to the origins of theatre itself for their designs, giving them faces inspired by Ancient Greek theatre masks. Their human faces would be hidden by veils and their human upper bodies would be obscured by attaching the masks to articulated frames inspired by the lion mask rigs used in *The Lion King*. These would not only give the Creatures extra height but also allow them to lunge and crane their "necks" in inhuman ways, making them truly look like creatures. Every Creature's mask would be unique to represent to endless expressions possible in theatre and the neutral, neither good nor evil role that the Creatures play in the story.







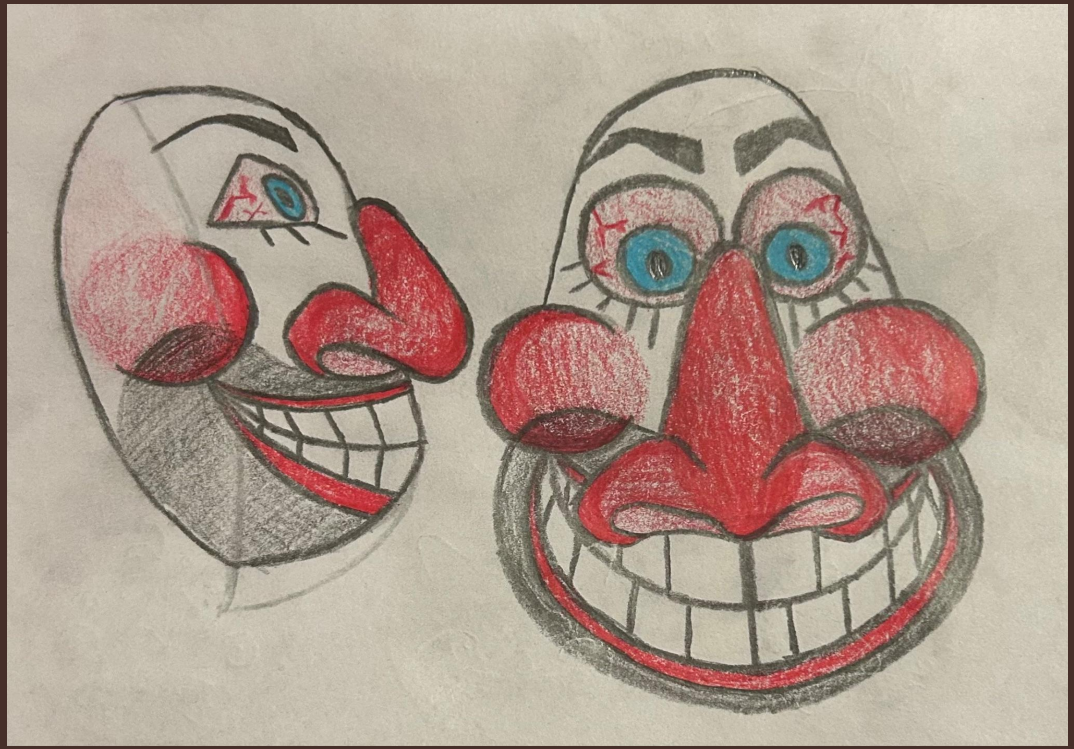
Creatures of the Theatre Design Sketch

Clowns

Since the chorus of Clowns all follow Buffo's command, I designed faces for them to wear that were modeled off of Buffo himself. These would be swapped out with the Creature masks in the transition between Act I and II and would fit onto the same rig. I'd make the clown heads oversized to trick the eye into thinking that they aren't as tall proportionally as the Creatures were, making them more distinct from each other. Also unlike the Creatures, the clowns' faces would NOT be unique at all since Buffo hates being upstaged. For the design of the faces themselves, I took inspiration from classic Punch and Judy puppets since Buffo also loves violence and hates his wife. I kept the facial features pretty much the same since the original puppets are already pretty uncanny, aside from making the cheeks and nose extra red to emulate both clown makeup and the flushed faces of drunks. I reddened the clowns' eyes for the same reason.





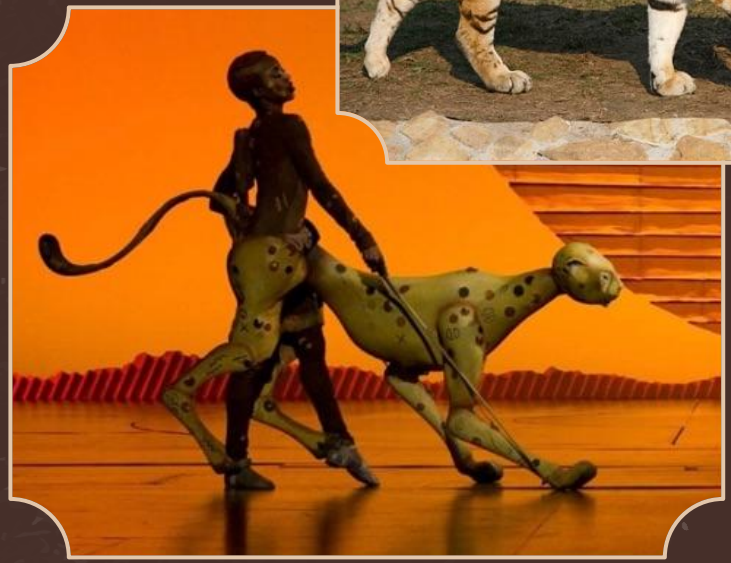


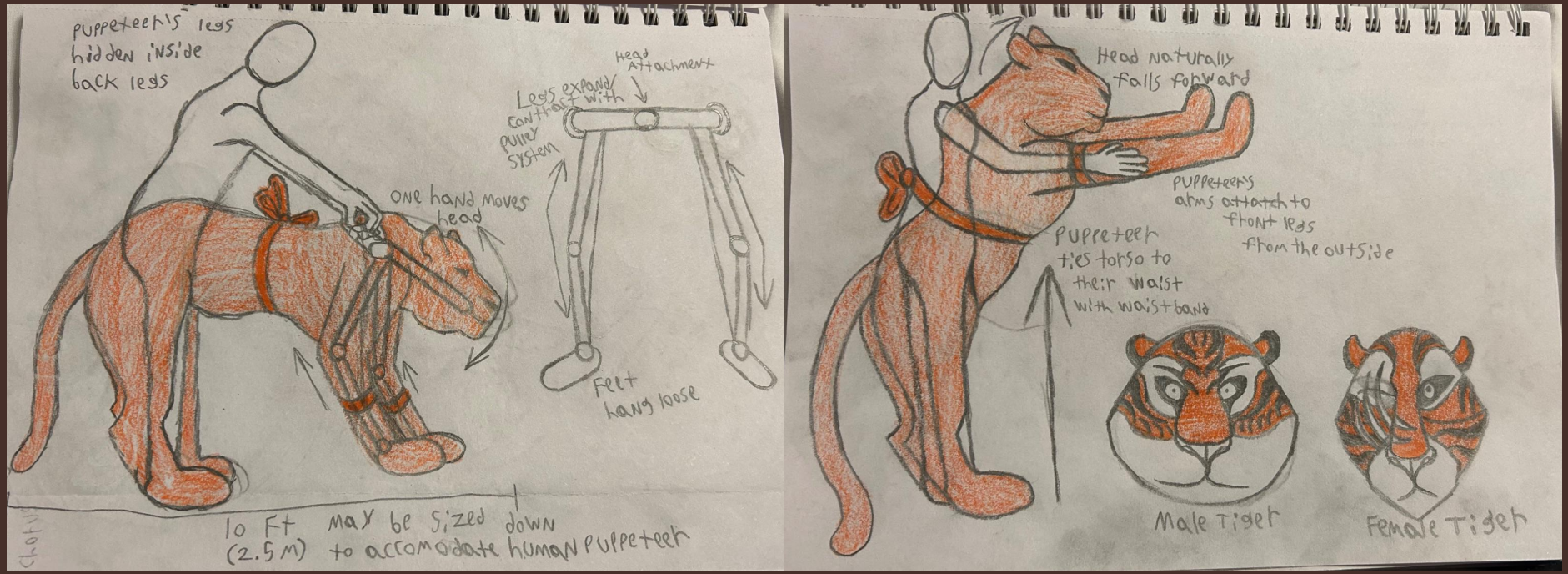
Clown Face Design Sketch

Tigers

For the Tigers I was inspired by the way the cheetahs were performed in *The Lion King*, with the puppeteer wearing the cat's back legs as pants. This idea stood out to me because of the extra freedom it let me think of for how the front legs could be controlled. I also really liked the idea of the front legs being able to be worn as a suit as well so that Tigers would be able to stand and dance on their hind legs like humans. Not only would seeing them go from walking on 4 legs to 2 create a dissonant and uncanny effect on stage, but it would also emphasize how similar these abused and commodified animals are to the female characters who are abused and objectified in the play. To even further draw this connection, I would make the male and female Tigers very distinct from each other, with the female Tiger clearly being more emaciated and having more scars than the male. I could even collaborate with a hypothetical Costumes/Makeup designer by having the female Tiger's scars in similar places as the Princess'.





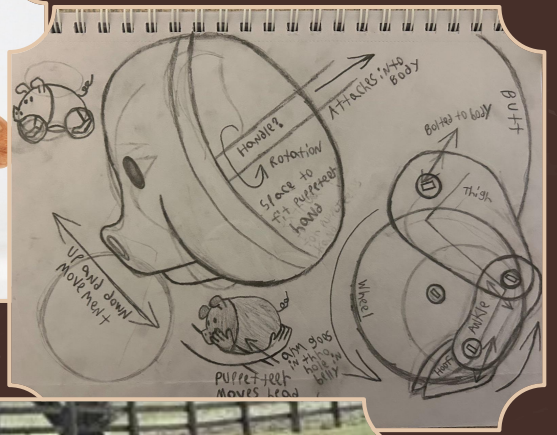


Male and Female Tigers Design Sketches

Sybil

After doing research on real life pig species, I decided to model Sybil off of a fully grown Juliana Miniature Pig since that would keep her at a manageable size for a puppeteer to handle and give her the spots that she's noted to have in the script. Taking inspiration from *Warhorse*, I wanted to create a surreal look by building realistic animal proportions out of found and salvaged materials. I also took inspiration from Invisible Octopus' paper lantern puppets because I thought that would give her a complimentary faux-2D look to match the 2D sets and props. In my original sketch, I envisioned the mechanics of Sybil's legs to be similar to those of toy animals with their legs attached to wheels in a certain way that it looks like they are walking when the wheels roll. I later ended up scrapping this idea due to a lack of time and because I was worried about how cumbersome she'd be for a puppeteer to hold if she had wheels attached to her.







Sybil

I began constructing Sybil by sketching a life size pig template to reference for her proportions. I used this template as a guide to build the skeleton of her face out of cardboard, styrofoam, and upholstery foam. I knew before I started building her that I wanted to use fabric for her outer skin instead of paper for durability. I was able to find several large enough pieces of scrap fabric with interesting patterns, including a transparent cotton fabric that was large enough to cover her entire body. I knew that I wanted her to be monochrome to match the prop prototype Anne was working on, so created patchwork patterns with the other fabrics I found to create visual interest instead.







Sybil Face Process Photos

Sybil

I then created the skeleton of her body with PVC pipe to keep her light enough to carry. I formed the PVC into the right shape with a heat gun, starting by making a “spine” based on the lengthwise cross section of her body. I attached “ribs” of decreasing sizes to her “spine” with rivets to give her belly a natural taper. This was also when I decided to scrap the wheels, so instead I decided to attach the legs directly to the body with nuts, bolts, and rivets at the joints so they could hold stiffer poses. I attached the head to the body with a ball joint so that she could have an up, down, and sideways range of head motion. I then covered the rest of her body with the same translucent cotton fabric I had found for the head and applied the same patchwork patterns to her body. I made sure to leave a nice wide hole in the bottom of her belly for a puppeteer to be able to insert their hand inside so that they could control her head.







Sybil Body Progress Photos

07

Evaluation

Self-Evaluation

If I were to summarize my experience with this module in three words, they would be stressful, informative, and fun. Before I arrived in the UK on exchange, I didn't know that you have one less year of university here than we do in the US, so I didn't expect the modules to be as fast paced as they are. For the first 2 weeks I was definitely overwhelmed by the fast pace of things, but once I got used to it I think I started putting out some work I can be proud of. I'm really grateful for the fact that I had my groupmates to share the workload with and to ask questions about how things are normally done in UK classes, since I definitely had a few moments of culture shock with my US brain. As an introvert, I usually hate being assigned to work in groups, but my groupmates made me feel welcomed and genuinely cared about my ideas and input. I think one mistake I made in this project that I'd like to avoid in the next module is being too granular and focused on one thing. I'm a detail oriented person, so I have a bad habit of becoming hyperfocused on one part of a project and either forgetting to or making myself too burnt out to focus on the rest of what I'm supposed to do. In this module, I think I definitely got too hyperfocused on building my Sybil prototype and neglected the rest of the characters that I wanted to work on. While I like the designs I have for the other puppet characters, I wish I had put more time and energy aside for myself to focus on developing them more. Another mistake I would like to avoid making in the next module is not getting enough sleep. Because of my tendency to hyperfocus on one thing, I got so caught up in working on this project that I didn't follow an organized sleep schedule, which tricked my brain into thinking I was back on US time. I would stay up too long working that by the time I actually wanted to go to sleep my brain wouldn't wind down. A good habit I think I built in this module that I'd like to carry over into the next module is how well my group and I communicated with each other. All three of us had plenty of space to air out our ideas and get honest feedback on them, and we were also good at setting up clear schedules to meet and work with each other. Another good habit I found that I want to take with me into the next module is looking at discarded materials from a different point of view and envisioning how I can use them in a design. Not only is it a sustainable and budget-friendly way to source materials, but it's also a good way to avoid having to track down and order things.

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