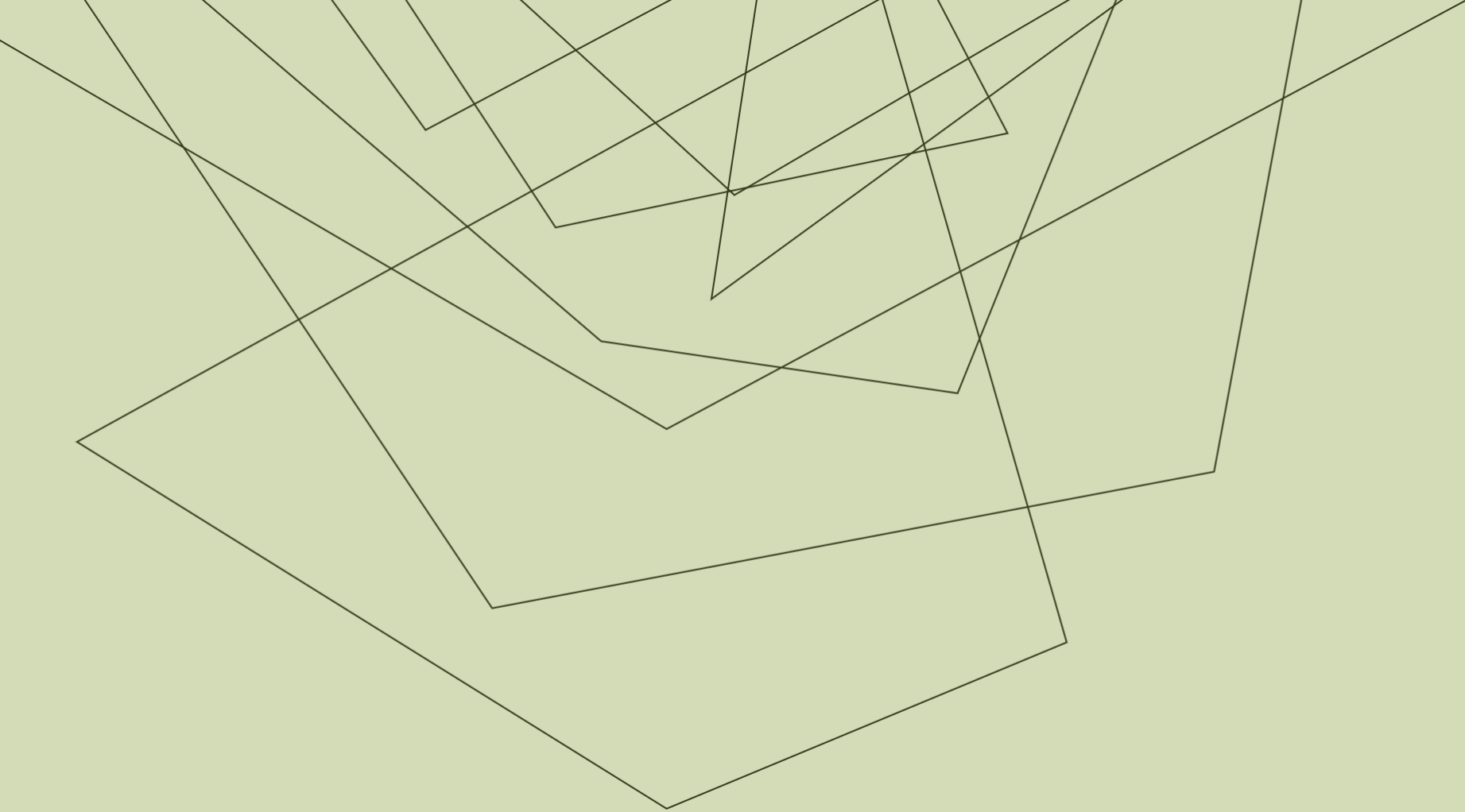
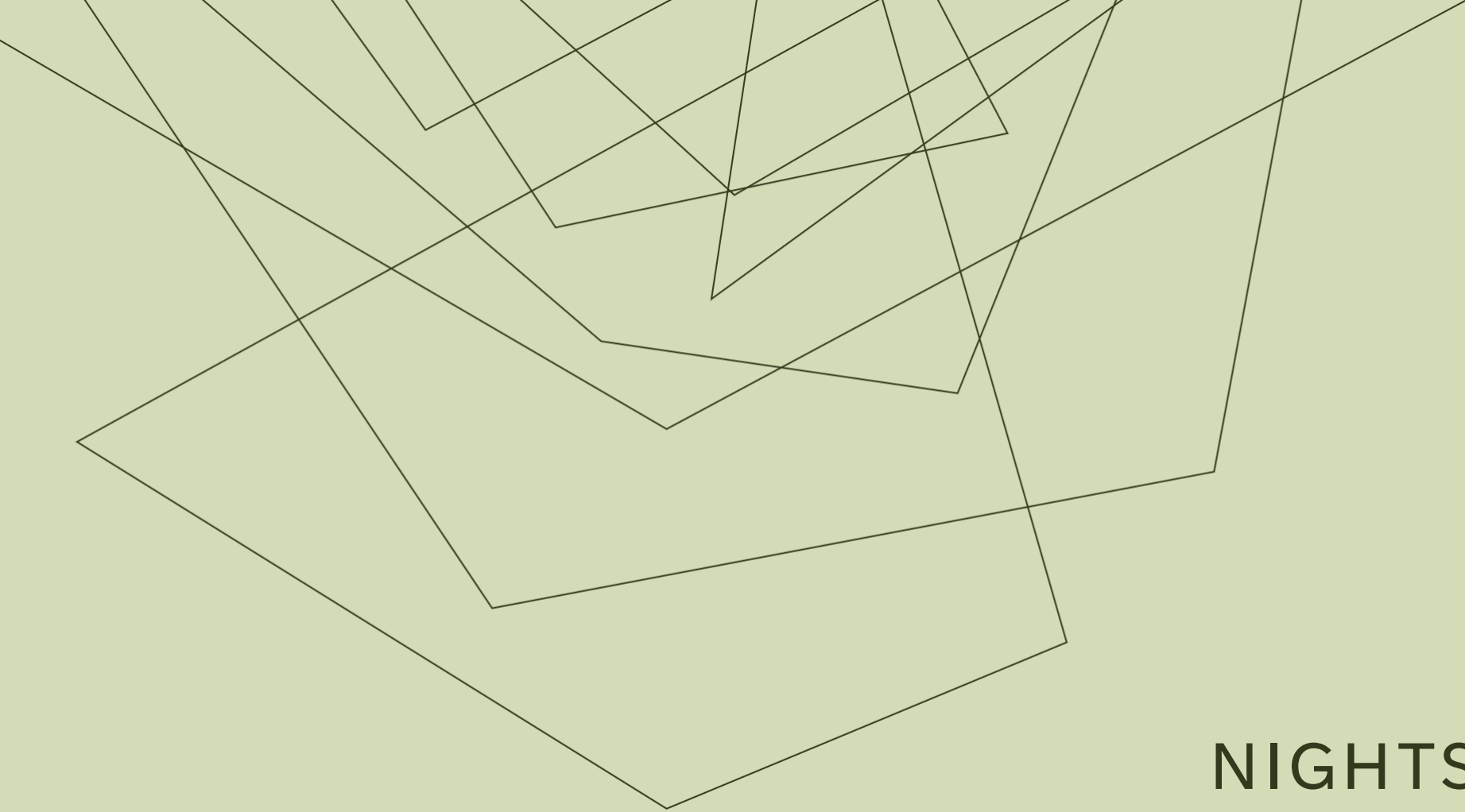




DESIGN PROCESS

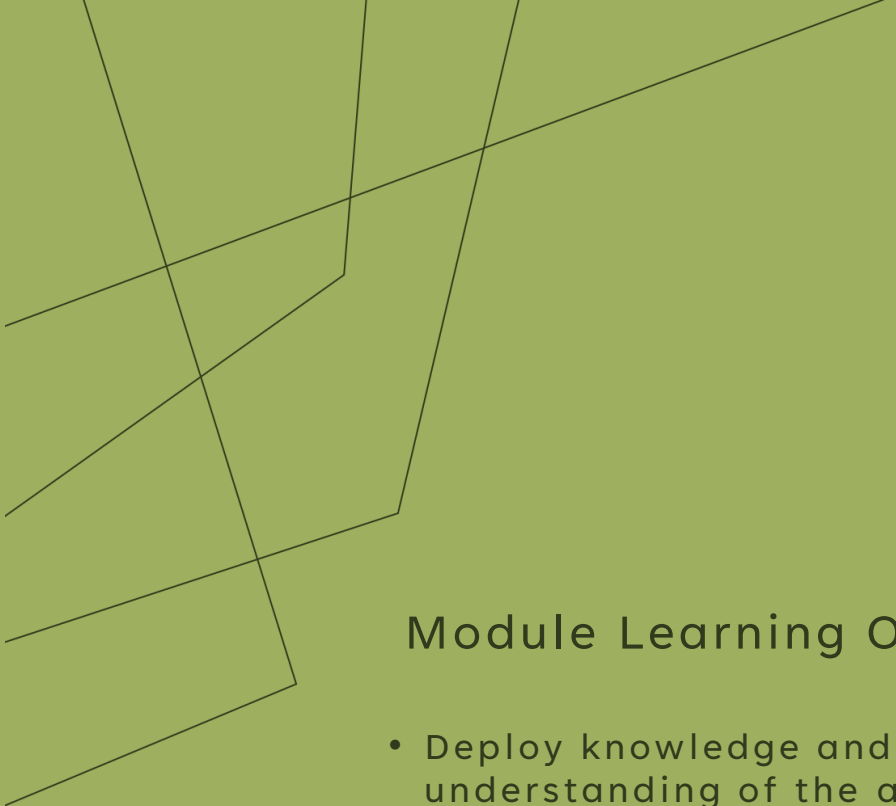
By Anne Hyde 2416801



NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS



SECTION 1: MODULE INFORMATION

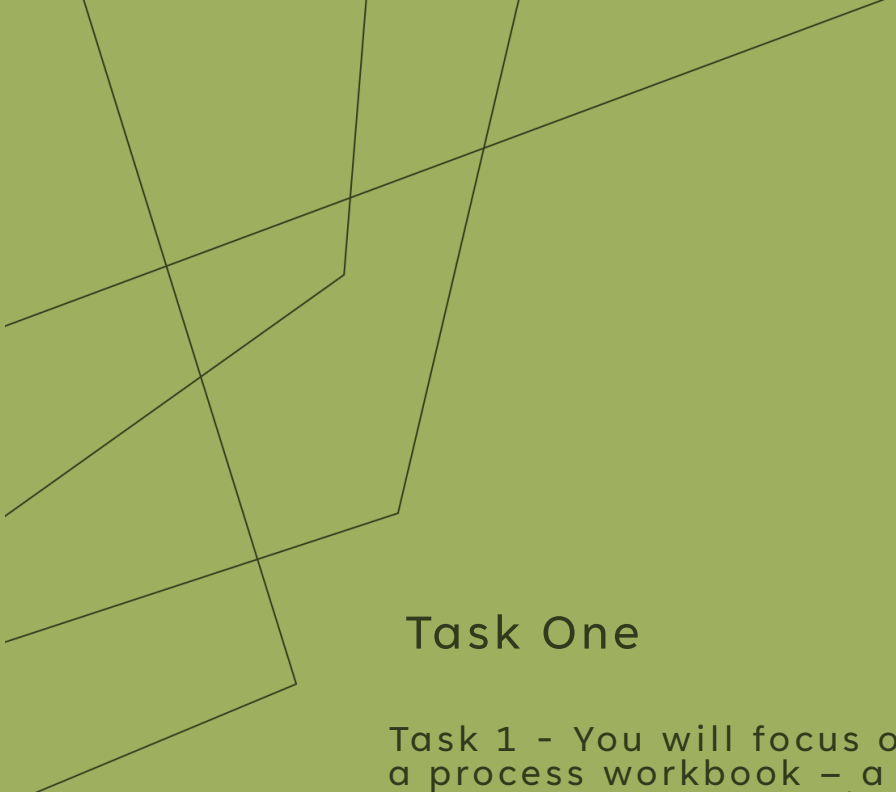


Module Learning Outcomes

- Deploy knowledge and understanding of the application of design within specialised roles such as set, costume, props, lighting, sound and AV
- Critically analyse the role of the designer/maker in the process of creating design ideas for stage or screen
- Apply design, production and technical practices as appropriate to each design area

AI statement

To the best of my knowledge, I haven't used any AI other than Grammarly, which I have been provided by the Disabled Student Allowance due to my dyslexia.



MODULE TASKS

Task One

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.

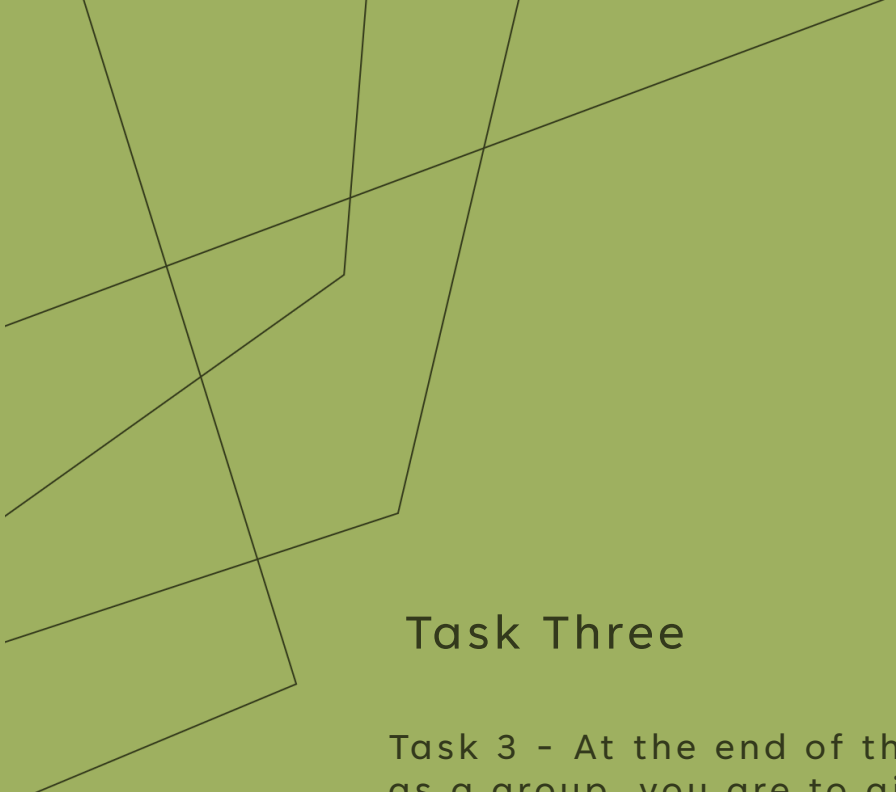
Task Two

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 Llwfan



MODULE TASKS

Task Three

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 Four

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.

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SECTION 2: SCRIPT ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW - ACT ONE

- Introduces us to the main characters, Fevvers and Jack.
- Explores Fevvers' past.
- She was raised by Lizzie in Ma Nelson's brothel after being left there.
- Fevvers grew wings and learnt how to fly.
- Mr Sugar tries to take Fevver's wings.
- The brothel gets taken over by Ma Nelson's brother, who kicks everyone out.
- Lizzie burns down the brothel
- Lizzie and Fevvers join Colonel Kearney's circus



INITIAL THOUGHTS - ACT ONE

- A bit confusing at first.
- Good look into Fevvers' past, which helps you understand why she can be defensive, especially around men, and also why she sticks with Lizzie.
 - She sticks with Lizzie because Lizzie took a big part in raising her.

Mood board done by
Cameron, Eva and me



The photos in order of appearance from top left to right (Anon., 1897) (Anon., n.d.) (Turner, 2005) (Hugo, 1857) (Whistler, 1861) (Mitoraj, 2025) (Anon., 1874) (Anon., 2022) (Rau, 1900) (Dore, 2014) (Hugo, 1837) (Chapman, 2010) (Argento, 1977)

OVERVIEW - ACT TWO

- Starts in Colonel Kearney's circus with Jack requesting to join.
- Buffo's girlfriend, Mignon, is having an affair with Samson.
- Jack gets attacked by a tiger.
- Jack and Mignon get beaten up when Buffo thinks they're having an affair.
- Mignon sings and dances with the Princess's tigers.
- Buffo is mad at Kearney for replacing him with Fevvers as the main act.
- Buffo and Samson try to cut Fevvers' trapeze rope.
- Buffo gets mad at Jack for no longer being one of the clowns and instead moving to the tiger act.



OVERVIEW - ACT TWO

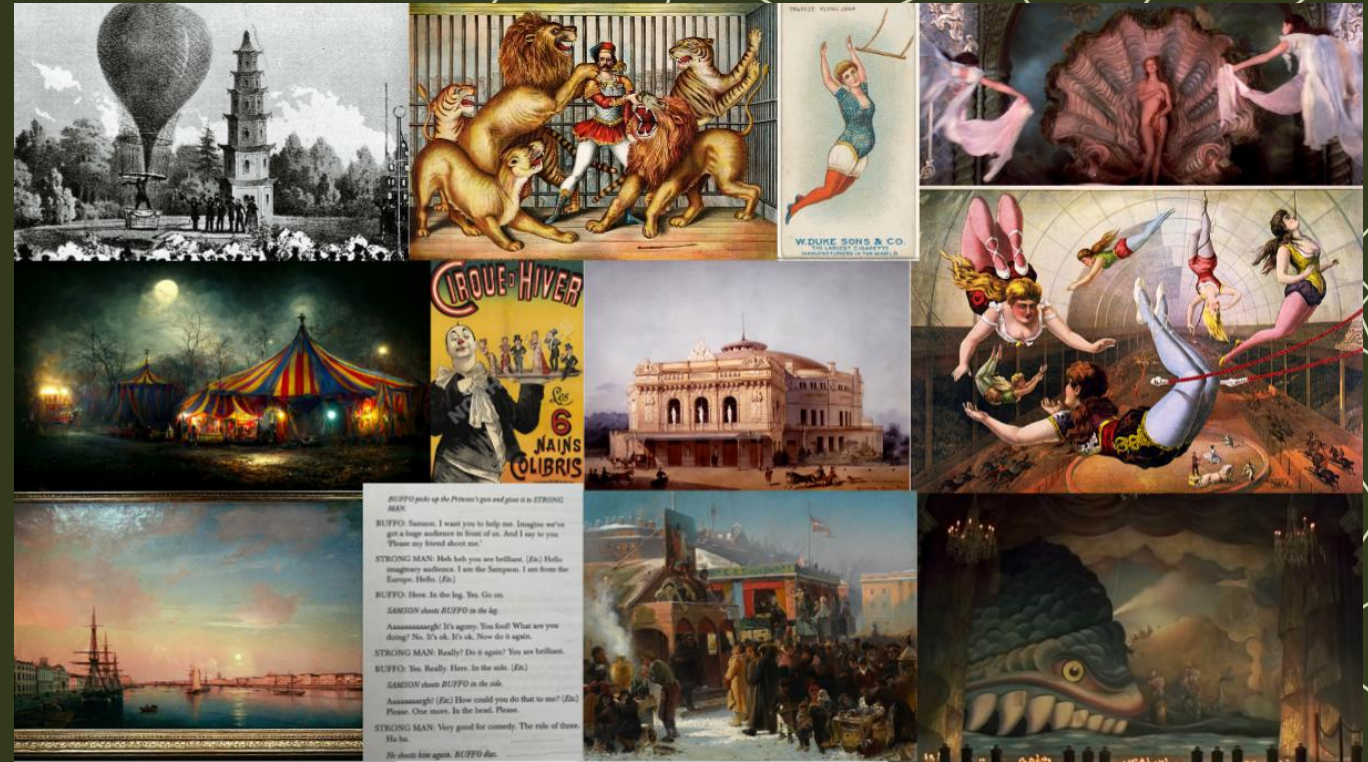
- The tiger performance starts without Jack, and as he isn't there, one of the tigers has to be killed.
- Buffo then turns to Samson and gets him to shoot him until he dies.
- Fevvers is sent on stage to win back the crowd, but the rope breaks and she's left hanging over the stage.
- Jack helps Fevvers and helps save the show, but Fevvers says she doesn't need his help.
- Mr Sugar comes back and tries to cut off Fevvers' wings, but Lizzie saves her and blows up both Mr Sugar and the circus



INITIAL THOUGHTS - ACT TWO

Mood board done by
Cameron, Eva and me

- A lot more happens in Act Two than in either of the other acts.
- This means there is a big change of pace from the first act to the second.
 - Where the first act concentrated on background and character, this one picks up the pace and there is more action.
- There is a lot more drama and a lot more development in the main characters' relationship.
- Although the characterisations are set up in the first act, these are nuanced by the writing in the second act where Jack follows Fevvers to the circus and tries to help her with the trapeze when it breaks.



The photos in order of appearance from top left to right (Timm, 1852) (Anon., 1873) (Anon., 1887) (Anon., 1988) (noahimages, 2025) (Kenel, 1877) (Anon., 1890) (Aivazovsky, 1850) (Morris & Rice, 2006) (Makovsky, 1869) (creepvibes, 2025)

OVERVIEW - ACT THREE

- Starts in a bare, white landscape right after the explosion.
- Kearney is talking to his pig, Sybil, about what they are going to do from now on.
- It is revealed that Princess can speak, is from Marseilles, not Abyssinia and is called Rhodora.
- Fevvers tries to find Jack and make sure he's okay.
- Lizzie doesn't approve of Fevvers' having feelings for Jack and tries to convince her to leave him.
- Jack admits he likes Fevvers, and they fly away together.



INITIAL THOUGHTS - ACT THREE

Mood board done by
Cameron, Eva and me

- It is definitely an interesting conclusion.
- I like the reveal that the bomb that went off in Act Two brought in the new century.
 - This explosion helps clear the decks, which helps symbolise the way we think that the new year and new centuries give everyone a fresh start.
- This is shown through the symbolism of the stage direction of the completely white set. It has become a blank canvas.
- I especially like how it is reflected in the way the characters look towards the new age and what is in store for them, be it good or bad, rather than looking into the past. It's a more positive way to end what had otherwise been a play with quite dark themes.



The photos in order of appearance from top left to right
(Phakhunthod, 2025) (Anon., n.d.) (Zemlianichenko, 2023) (Becket,
n.d.) (Anon., 2021) (Votpuske, 2023) (Anon., 2016) (YokoDesign, 2017)

INITIAL THOUGHTS – FULL PLAY

Mood board done by
Cameron, Eva and me

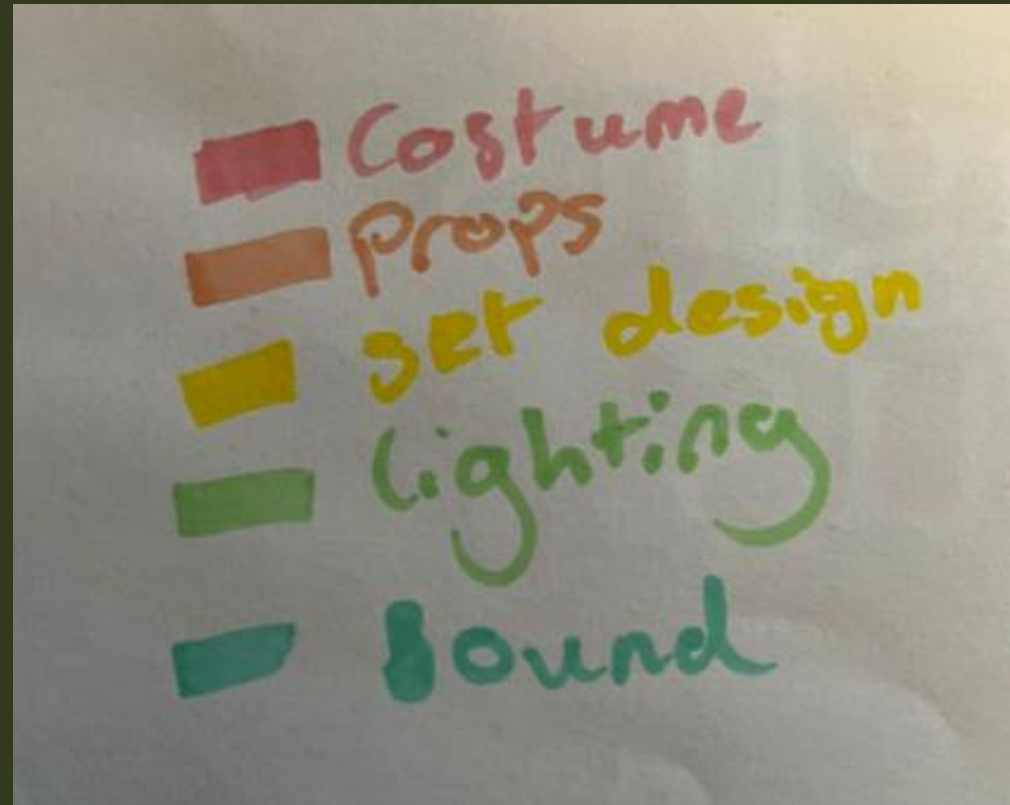
- I like how the play is split into past, present and future.
- I do think some of the relationships could have been explored a bit more, especially Jack and Fevvers, as they seem to be the main characters, and yet it feels a little bit forced when they end up together.
- I also like how nothing is drawn out longer than it needs to be – such as Buffo's death.
- There's a lot of room for interpretation, as most of the staging is left very vague, which makes it quite fun to think about all of the possibilities.



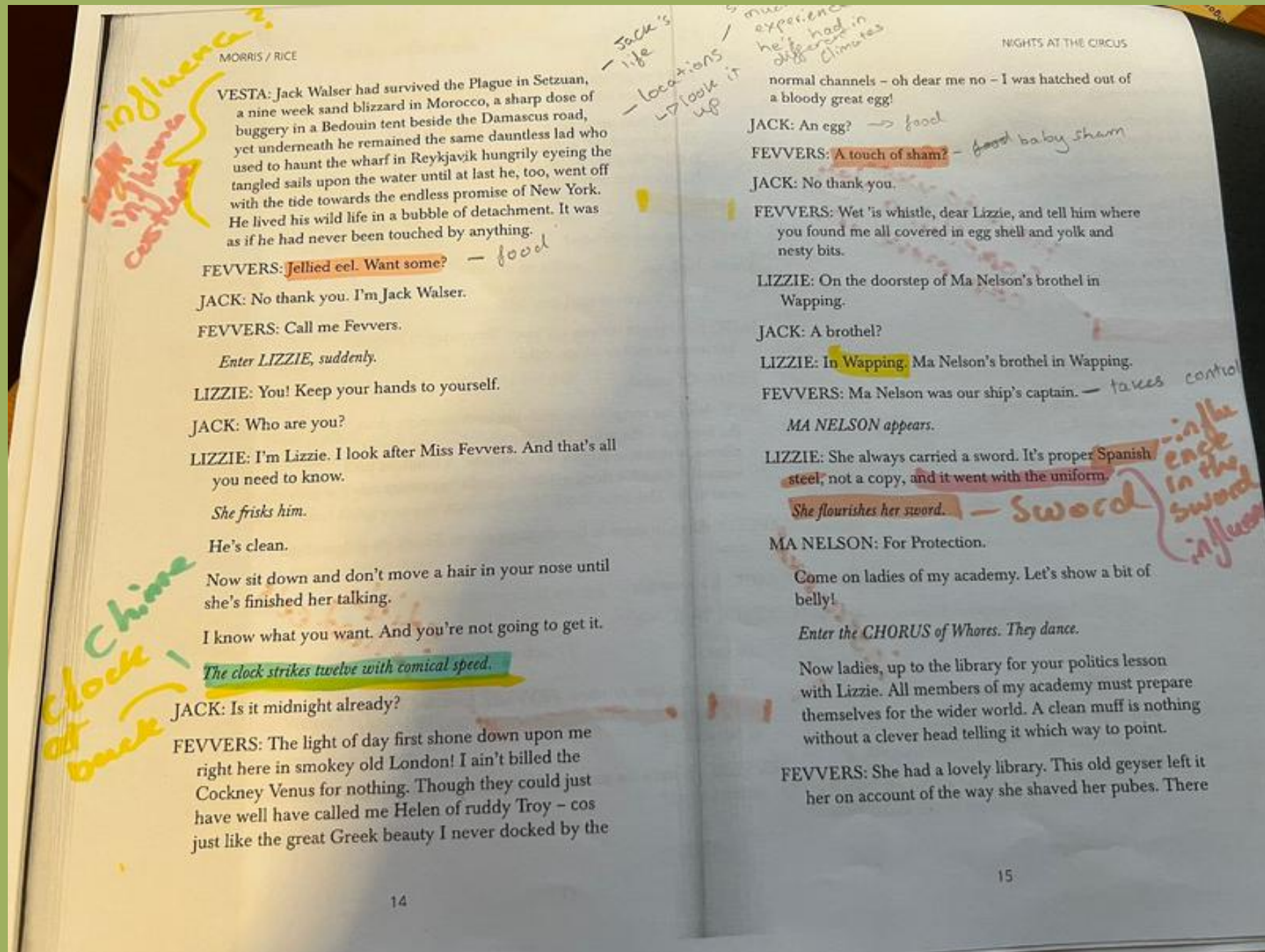
The photos in order of appearance from top left to right (Anon., 2022) (Botticelli, 1485) (Anon., n.d.) (Mitoraj, 2025) (Anon., n.d.) (Bixio, 1844) (creepvibes, 2025) (Svankmajer, 2020) (Assael, 2021) (Moreau, 1864) (Blondel, 1819) (Anon., 480 BC) (noahimages, 2025) (Whistler, 1861) (Anon., 2016) (Anon., 5th century BC) (Anon., 1888) (cogdogblog, 2010)

MY THIRD READ THROUGH

After the table read, Charlie and I re-read it, highlighting any costumes, props, set design, lighting, and sound mentioned in the play.



It was very interesting to find how many of the items would need more than one role to make them work. Such as the clock needing both a set designer and a lighting designer to show the full effect.



I am really interested in looking into types of Spanish swords from the right time period if I am working on props and Spanish naval outfits if I do costume.

CHORUS: Not to the bodies of men

MA NELSON: Fevvers is not for sale
She shall be dressed as the Winged Victory
Posing as a statue in our parlour
And overseeing our trade.

She will be powdered white with chalk
Her hair tied in a ribbon
And as a symbol of her freedom
From the trade of this house
She will carry my sword.

CHORUS: She will carry Ma Nelson's sword.

MA NELSON: Which I now present to you Fevvers
Our Winged Victory
You are the pure child of the century
The New Age in which no woman will be bound to
the ground.

ALL: By any means necessary, we will be free. Amen.

Clock strikes midnight again.

JACK: What have you done to that clock?

LIZZIE: We could have stayed forever in that little heaven
on the Wapping High Street.

FEVVERS: But it was not to be. Ma Nelson met her end
with terrible suddenness. She was on her way to Blooms
to treat us all to salt beef sandwiches

MA says 'See you later' to the ladies of the Academy.

when she slipped on some foreign matter

LIZZIE: skin of a fruit or turd of a dog

FEVVERS: and fell beneath the oncoming hooves and
wheels of a brewer's drey and was mangled to a pulp in
a trice.

LIZZIE: Dead on arrival at the London hospital. No chance
for even so much as a kiss me hardy.

And dear Ma Nelson had died intestate so the old place
was inherited by her brother, a gospel grinder would you
believe, who flung us out on the street without a penny.

FEVVERS: What are we going to do Lizzie?

LIZZIE: Nature has made you a spectacle people will pay
good money to see. And all you can do to earn a living
is make a show of yourself. You're doomed to that.

CHORUS: One last look at the old place.

LIZZIE: Let's remember Ma Nelson. The necessity that
first united us – the universal need for cash, nosh and
a roof over our heads – must now drive us apart. But
the invisible bonds of our sisterhood will always knit us
wherever we roam.

By any means necessary...

CHORUS: ...we will be free. Amen.

They light their fags.

LIZZIE: I'll miss the place.

CHORUS: We all will.

LIZZIE: I'm sorry. I'm not myself today

FEVVERS: Fags away girls.

They throw them.

LIZZIE: and I seem to have spilt an awful lot of kerosene
on the way out.

The brothel burns. JACK tries to put the fire out.

JACK: Help! Fire! (Etc.)

Cigarettes had been becoming more and more popular over the twenty years prior to when the play is set. Only 7 years before, the cigarette company, Wills, had gained the rights to the Bohl cigarette machine, which mass-produced about 300 cigarettes per minute. Although the machine was less reliable than handmade cigarettes, they wanted to keep the machine so that none of their rival companies could use it (Hilton, 2000).

Lizzie makes Ma Nelson's death sound anticlimactic and disgusting. It sounds so real, like it could have happened

The Winged Victory is a Greek statue of the Greek goddess of victory, Nike. The statue no longer has a head or arms, but she does have wings. The base of the statue is in the shape of the bow of a ship, which also adds to a lot of the nautical imagery throughout the play. In 1883, the statue had been moved to the upper landing of the Daru staircase in the Louvre, but people complained at the time, as the mosaics that decorated the domes above her made her look too much like a 'music hall star', which they thought shouldn't be the case for a statue of a goddess. (Anon, [n.d.]). I think this is a really interesting piece of imagery for Fevvers from Ma Nelson, as Ma Nelson wants Fevvers to be free to chart her own course.

MA NELSON: Fevvers is not for sale
She shall be dressed as the Winged Victory
Posing as a statue in our parlour
And overseeing our trade.

She will be powdered white with chalk
Her hair tied in a ribbon
And as a symbol of her freedom
From the trade of this house
She will carry my sword.

1.



2.



If I were to design Fevvers' costume, I would love to add some nods to the statue.

1. Titled 'The Winged Victory of Samothrace' (Anon, The Winged Victory of Samothrace, [n.d.])
2. Titled 'View of the Daru Staircase with the Winged Victory of Samothrace, 1932' (Anon, [n.d.])

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SECTION 3: PERIOD RESEARCH

PERIOD RESEARCH

Act One - Victorian London



Image shows Travel Bath - Metal, Green, circa 1852 (Augier, 2007)

- The play is set at the end of the Victorian era, 1899 to be specific.
- The pollution levels had been rising as coal production created soot, ash and gases, steam engines produced smoke, slaughterhouses would wash animal blood and guts onto the street and cesspits, bucket privies and dung carts were how human excrement was disposed of (Grigg, n.d.).
- Cleanliness was really important in Victorian England, and it showed in the social hierarchy. The lower classes would have to wash their clothes in urine, while the middle and upper classes could afford soap. It made the distinction between the classes more obvious (Grigg, n.d.). The upper class would even take travel baths with them to ensure their cleanliness.
- In 1899, the Board of Education Act, was passed, which, among other things, put into place inspections of secondary schools to see if the teaching was up to the correct standard (Board of Education Act 1899).

PERIOD RESEARCH

Act One - Victorian London



image shows "Victorian architecture in Spital Street" (Traynor, 2011)

- Victorian architecture was steadily improving as, due to the better modes of transport, architects could get new building materials. This also meant that they could make more complicated designs. Commonly used materials were arm red brick and terracotta. Architects would also take a lot of inspiration from Medieval cathedrals, but would refine them to be used on churches and town halls (Jackson & Tucker, 2025).
- In the 1880s and 1890s, there were more terrace houses that were connected to clean water and drains (English Heritage, n.d.).
- Every major town had theatres, art galleries, libraries and music halls by 1900 (English Heritage, n.d.). This was a push from the upper classes to educate and improve the working class in hopes that they would stop using pubs as much.

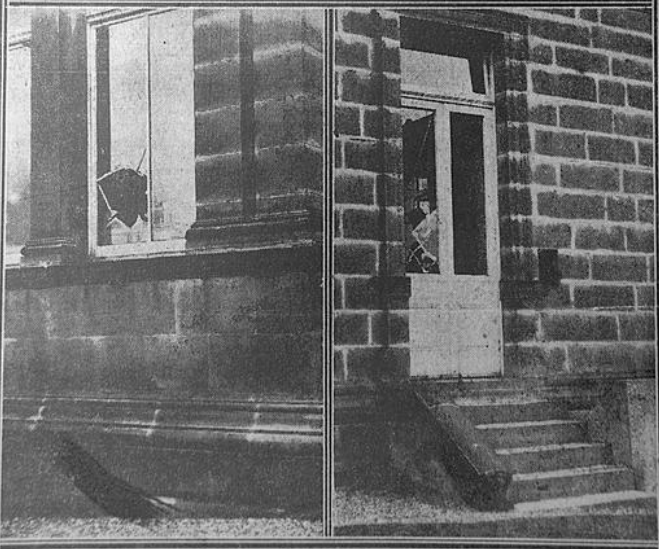
PERIOD RESEARCH

Act One - Victorian London

- Not everyone who worked in a brothel had a choice. Many of the women who worked there would have been trafficked and trapped there. There were also many women who believed it was their only choice due to poverty. There was advocacy for new laws to be put in place around 1881 to try and protect young women (Boudoir, 2016). Despite that, there could still have been things like that happening around the time when the play is set; however, Ma Nelson's brothel is run by a woman who seems to want her workers to live well-educated lives.
- Girls could be paid 20-30 pounds a week at a brothel. Those who worked in music halls and theatres, however, would only get 10-20 pounds a week (Mayhew, n.d.).

EVENING NEWS, WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 1913.

THE SUFFRAGETTE OUTRAGE AT BLACKFORD OBSERVATORY.



The large picture shows the police in conference at the Observatory this morning. They who first discovered the damage. Below this are standing amongst the soap smeared glass and on the left is an illustration of the window which was removed by the midnight visitors. through which the culprits first tried to enter.

(“Evening News” Photos.)

Photo of the Evening News report on the bombing at the Royal Observatory 1913 (Davies & Goldschmidt, n.d.)

PERIOD RESEARCH

Act One - Victorian London

- Suffragists – suffragists were around at the time the play was set, unlike the suffragettes. The suffragists advocated for women's rights peacefully and wanted to gain the right to vote through constitutional means (anon, 2025). They came about due to the frustrations women felt after the Representation of the People Act was passed in 1832. This was because the act allowed more men to participate in the voting process. This act, however, defined a voter as male, and so women still couldn't vote at all (Berry-Waite, n.d.). Berry-Waite also states that the formal women's suffrage movement didn't start until the 1860s. This was important to note, as in the play, none of the female characters would have been able to vote, and the suffragist movement would have been well into fruition at the time the play is set.
- Militant suffragettes – although the suffragette movement didn't start until after the play is set, there are some definite nods to the suffragettes throughout the play, such as Ma Nelson getting trampled by a horse, like Emily Davison (BBC, 2014) (Women's Suffrage, N.D) and Lizzie bombing Mr Sugar using a bomb she built in her handbag. This seems like a nod to the bombing of the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh (BBC, 2013), where a handbag was found at the crime scene.

PERIOD RESEARCH

Act One - Victorian London

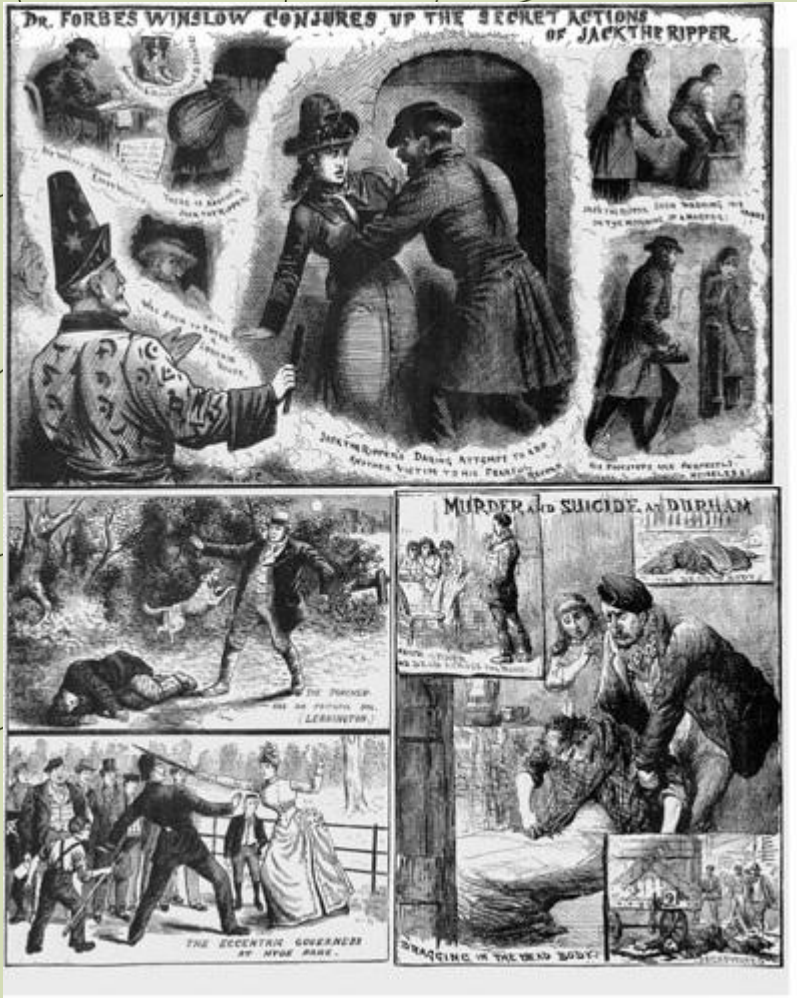


Photo of image from *Illustrated Police News*, 28 September 1889 (Winslow, 1889)

- Jack the Ripper was a serial killer who roamed the streets of London in 1888. He's also known as the Whitechapel Murderer due to the location of his victims' bodies when they were found being in or near the Whitechapel district. There are believed to be five victims of Jack the Ripper, but as the identity of Jack the Ripper was never found, we don't know for sure, as there were other bodies found in the right timeframe that also had no known killer (Jones, 2025). The killers' victims were all women who worked as prostitutes and they were all mutilated except Elizabeth Stride (BBC, 2014). There was already a lot of hatred for prostitutes at the time and this just made things worse. It also caused prostitutes to be fearful as they worried they could be next. This wasn't helped by the amount of sensational press coverage (Rubenhold, 2019).

PERIOD RESEARCH

Act Two – St Petersburg

- At the time of the play, Russia was an autocracy, ruled by one person, the Tsar. Russia was one of only three European countries that did not have a parliament. In 1890, the Tsar was Alexander III who ruled with the assistance of his large army, secret police, personally chosen ministers and the support from the Orthodox Church. Some kind of democracy, however, did exist as local government councils were set up in 1864 to control health and education (Farmer, 2000).
- In 1890, Russia was the largest country as it was a sixth of the world's land surface. There were about 129 million people in the Russian Empire at the beginning of 1900. This meant that communication was extremely difficult, especially to the remote corners of the empire. Less than half of the people in the Russian Empire considered themselves Russian; some nationalities sought their independence. Between 1877 and 1917, the population of Russia had increased by 50 per cent. They started to industrialise as there wasn't enough land to go around all the peasants and they had a famine in 1891-2. As the industries developed, it became a lot like every other industrialised country, where workers would work long hours for low wages, and the living conditions in the growing towns were dreadful (Farmer, 2000). This could be part of the reason Fevvers and Lizzie went to Russia, as it would have felt almost the same as their home, as it was becoming similar to the rest of Europe. Both England and Russia, at the time the play is set, had a rise in socialism, pushing for workers' rights and better conditions for the working classes. Because of this, there is a sense that the old order is coming to an end as power based on social status is being challenged by political movements that are pushing for better conditions for working people (Gilbert & Large, 2009).
- Russia also had a lot of circuses at the time so if they were looking for one, St Petersburg would have been a good place to start (Zakharova, n.d.).

PERIOD RESEARCH

1984 - London- When the original book was written.

- Margaret Thatcher was the first female UK Prime Minister who tried to get rid of the unions and close down the pits.
 - This is important because at the end of the 19th century, there was a big push towards the labour movement, and Margaret Thatcher was trying to destroy the credibility of the unions which were closely linked to Labour and socialism (Gilbert & Large, 2009).
 - This is also interesting, as when the play is set, the unions are just coming together. I wonder if this was one of the things that made Angela Carter choose the late 1890s as the period the play is set.
- Margaret Thatcher also doubled the number of unemployed people in her first two years as prime minister. This was because she introduced budget cuts in public housing, teaching and national health. She also sold off state-run industries, lowered inheritance taxes and raised the threshold for capital gains tax. Additionally, she closed factories that offered higher wages to their staff, which resulted in a loss of profits. This measure did reduce inflation, but it also led to a dramatic rise in the unemployment rate (Gilbert & Large, 2009).

TIMES AND ERAS

TIMES & ERAS

End of the century

1899

Midnight?

flashback (Fewers' backstory)

midsummer night

end of flashback (back to present)

time jump to Russia

flashback (Mignon's backstory)

flashback (Buffo's backstory)

night

morning

start of New Year's Eve show (1899)

new century (1900)

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ANNIE FOR THE CLASS

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SECTION 4: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER LIST

Voice-over

The Windjammer
(musician)

Vesta

Jack Walser

Chorus/Creatures

Fever

Lizzie

Ma Nelson

Chorus/whores

Mr Sugar

Colonel Kearney

Sybil

Ma Nelson's brother

Strong man (Samson)

Princess (Rhodora)

Buffo (The Clown)

Tiger 1 (Lady)

Tiger 2

Mignon

Mignon's mother

Mignon's father

Buffo's ex-wife

Buffo's stillborn child

Buffo's mother

Mignon's sister

Buffo's monkey

Chorus/clowns

Jesus

Adam

Eve

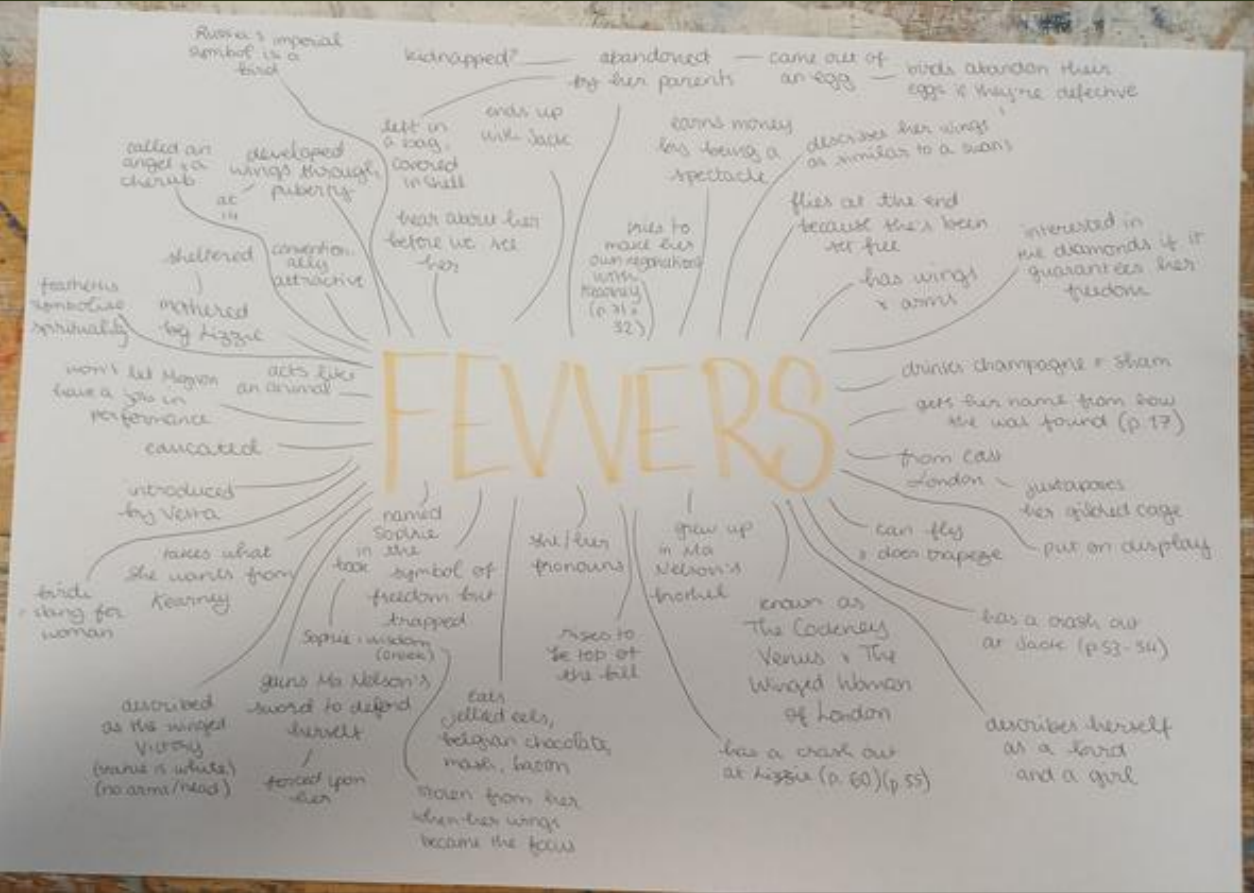
~~Curtain through~~

Finger through curtain

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CHARACTER ANALYSIS - FEVVERS

Fevvers is a foundling (a child who's abandoned as a baby/infant). Foundlings were not usually orphans; they were infants whose mothers were unable to keep them. This was often due to a child being born out of wedlock, as the stigma around unmarried mothers having children was strong. This was made worse by the 1834 New Poor Law Act, which limited the amount of help and financial support that an unmarried mother could seek from the child's father. In late 19th-century London in particular, rising levels of infanticide caused significant concern among reformers, the medical profession and philanthropists (Higginbotham, 1989). This means that Fevvers could have been very lucky that she wasn't killed as a baby. Institutions such as the Foundling Hospital cared for these abandoned babies (The National Archives, n.d.).





Token: for King's Experimental Philosophy lecture
A ticket to a witness some spectacular science.



Token: Black hand amulet
An amulet worn for protection against evil.



Token: Sir Isaac Newton halved medallion
The symbol of divided halves is still used in jewellery expressing love and friendship today.



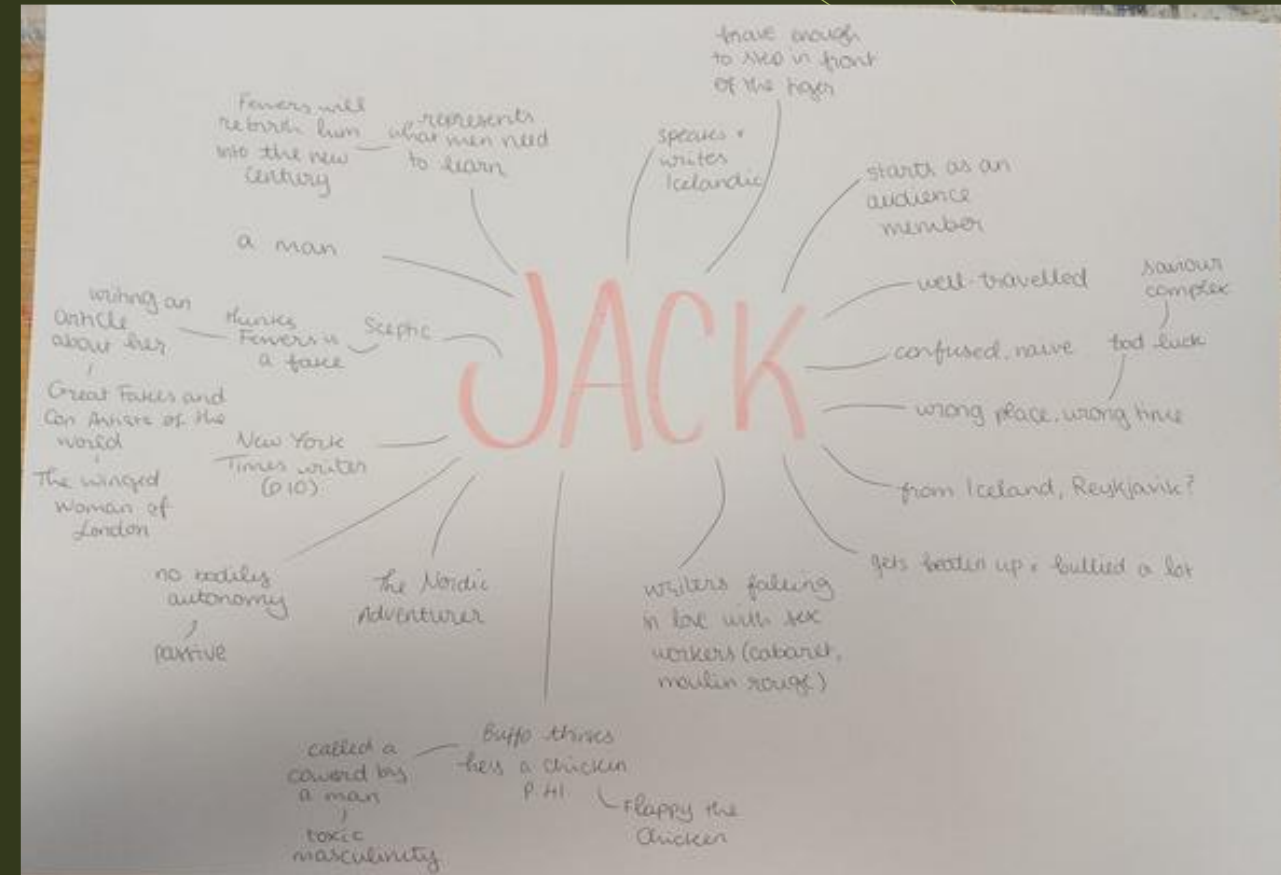
Token: Engraved mother-of-pearl
Was his father still in Jamaica, or even still alive?...

Image of tokens given to foundlings to help the parent identify them from the foundling museum (Anon., 2025)

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CHARACTER ANALYSIS - JACK

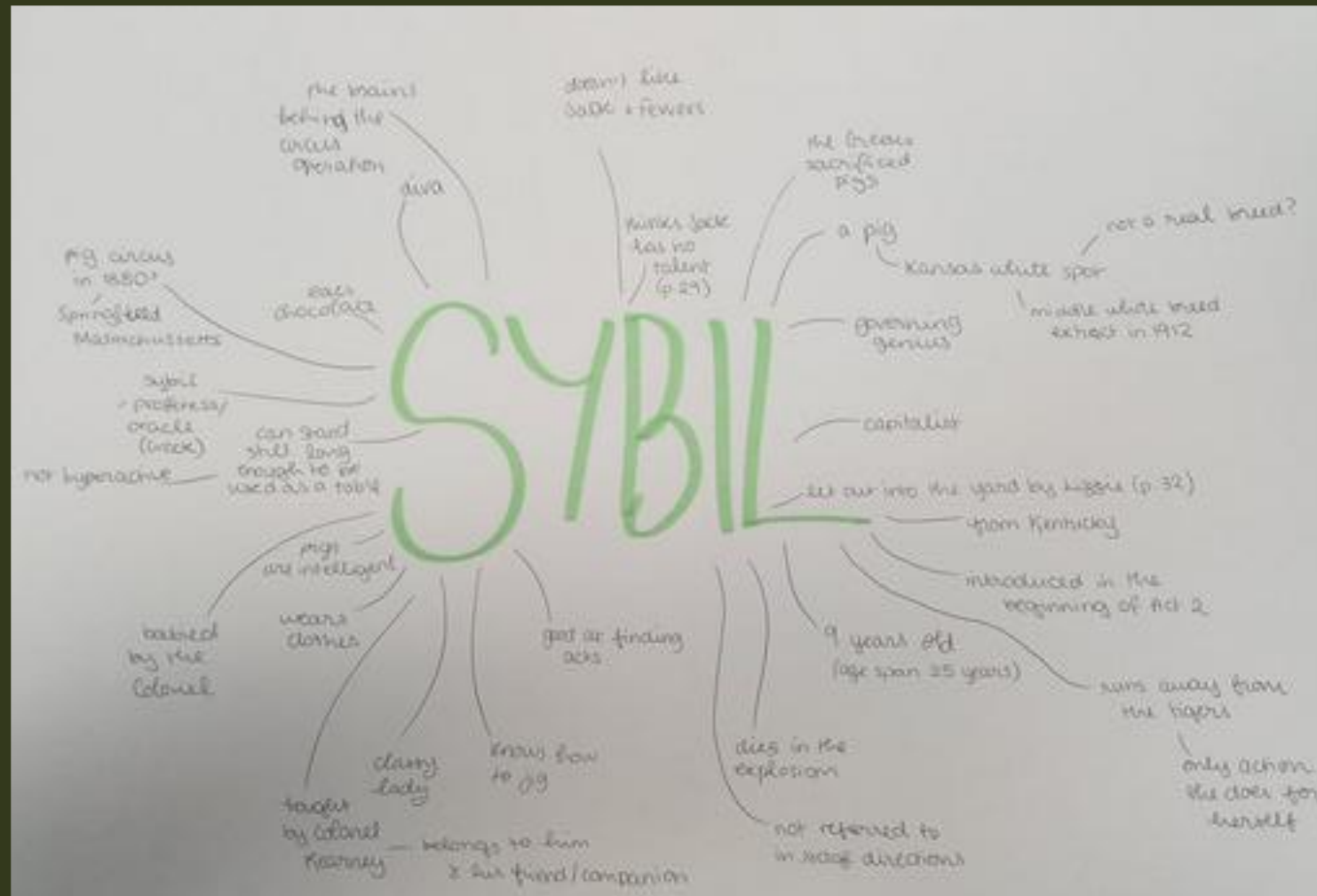
Newspapers in the late 1800s were beginning to cater to a bigger audience as there were more people who could read. This meant that there was a bigger demand for journalists who knew exactly what the public would want to know about. The Sunday-only papers had become the most popular, which began to create the press as we know it. Certain journalists had become very popular as they were very good at knowing what the public wanted to hear about. Before 1868, these tended to be things that some would think were unappealing, such as very in-depth reports of crime, court reports and executions. The *Illustrated Police News* had also become popular as this was very socially conscious and showed support for things like universal suffrage and proper housing for the working class. Jack the Ripper was, at the time, the biggest story for many months and the gory details of the murders were published for everyone to read about. Also around this time, things like the rotary press made it quicker and much easier for copies of newspapers to be printed. This was also around the time that more exaggerated, dramatic headlines and personal stories became normal for newspapers – something which became known as the 'New Journalism' (Kirby, 2024).



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This shows that it makes sense for Jack to do a report on Fovvers as she is unusual and so would make a very exciting story for anyone who has never seen her before.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS - SYBIL



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CHARACTER ANALYSIS - WINDJAMMER

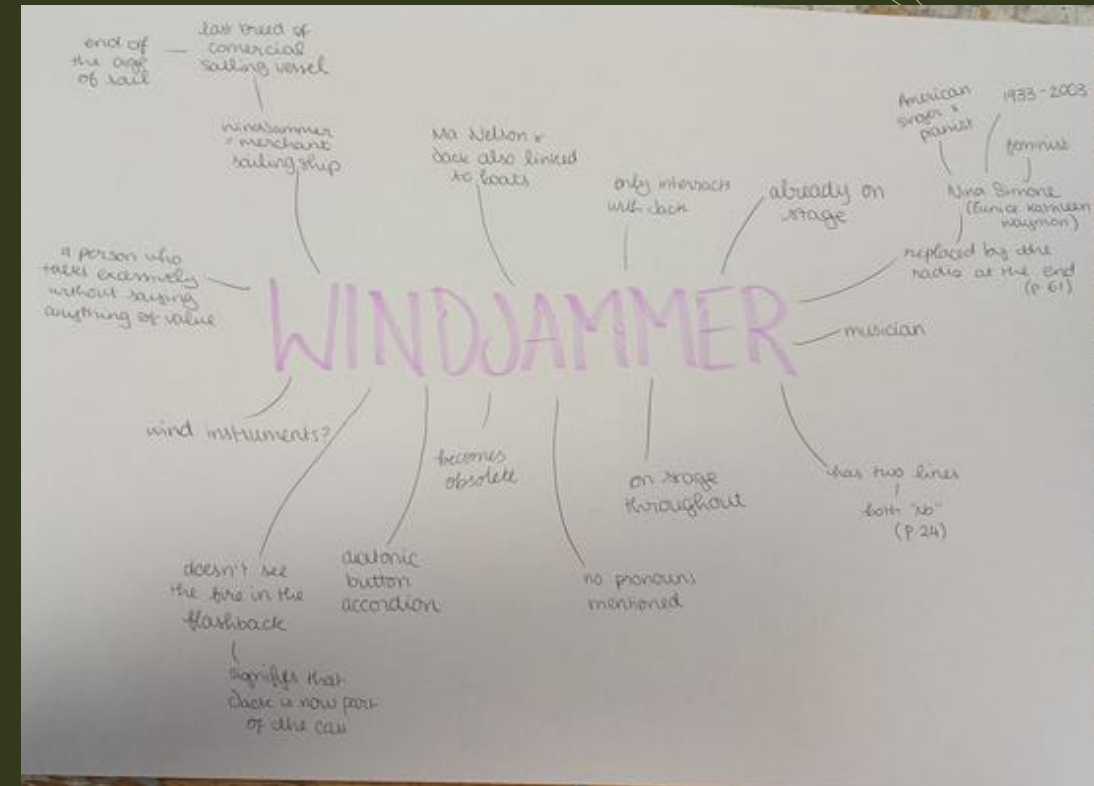
The name "windjammer" could be a reference to several things. The Oxford English Dictionary (anon, 2025) describes a windjammer as:

- “A merchant sailing vessel”
- “A musician who plays a wind instrument”
- “A person who talks excessively, esp. without saying anything of interest, substance, or value.”

The stage directions indicate that the windjammer plays an instrument throughout the play, which makes the second point very accurate. The fact that a windjammer can also be a sailing vessel is also interesting, though, due to the amount of nautical references throughout the play. The third option is less accurate as the windjammer only says two words the entire play. This, however, could be taken as irony.



Image showing the windjammer Admiral Karpfanger moored at Port Germein jetty in South Australia (anon, 1938)



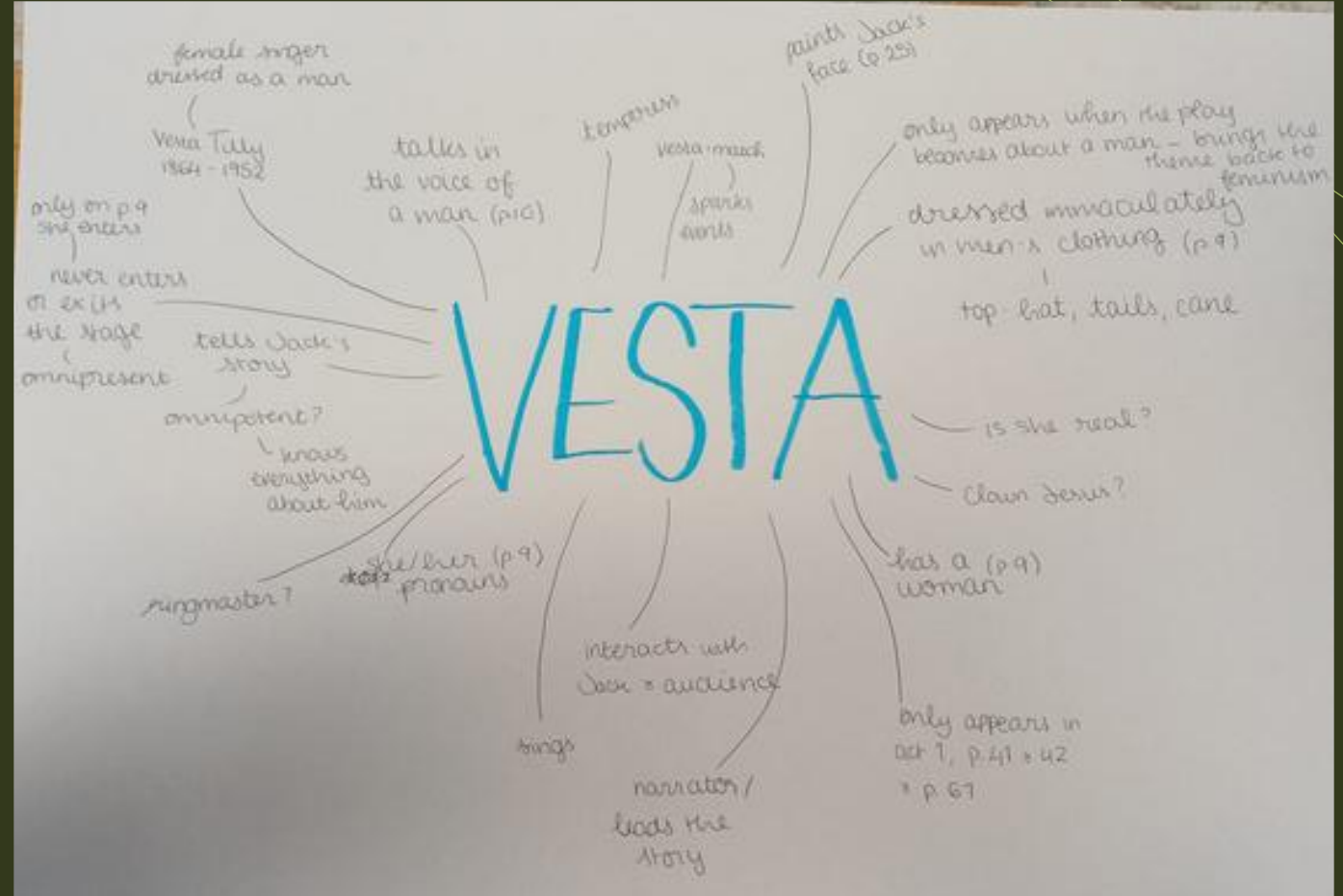
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ANNIE FOR THE CLASS

CHARACTER ANALYSIS - VESTA

I like how Vesta is named after and based on a real person from the time: Vesta Tilley. Tilley performed at Brighton's Hippodrome, the Theatre Royal and the Edwardian music halls. She was well known for her acts where she dressed as different male characters. Before the First World War, she was the most highly paid female British stage entertainer (Peskett, 2022). This is interesting as it suggests that, as money is power, Vesta is one of the most powerful characters in the play.



Photo of a bromide postcard print of Vesta Tilley found in the National Portrait Gallery, London (Vesta Tilley, 1900s).



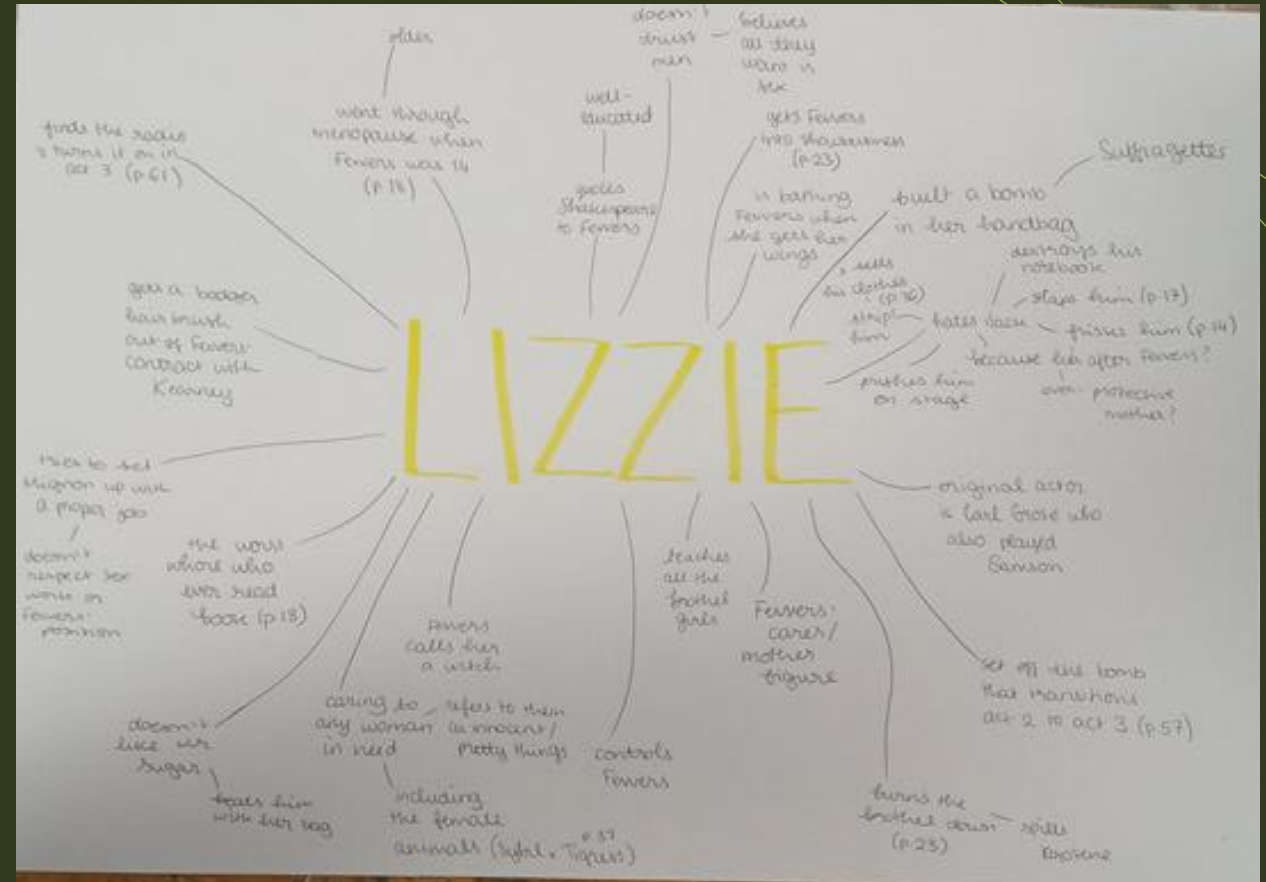
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS - LIZZIE

Lizzie's movements are compared to Zorro in the stage directions, which is interesting as he is a vigilante who defends the poor with a sword and a mask to conceal his identity. He is from Spain and is known for his sword fighting. He was created in 1919 by Johnston McCulley (Sanderson, n.d.). He was a very popular character throughout the 1900s, and so audiences might have been able to recognise some of his moves. It also makes sense to have Lizzie described as him, as in that moment, she might also see herself as protecting the needy. Lizzie's choice of weapon, however, was a bomb, which was a weapon the Suffragettes often used while fighting for women's rights.



The Return of Zorro (to the small screen at least) (McCardell, 2021)



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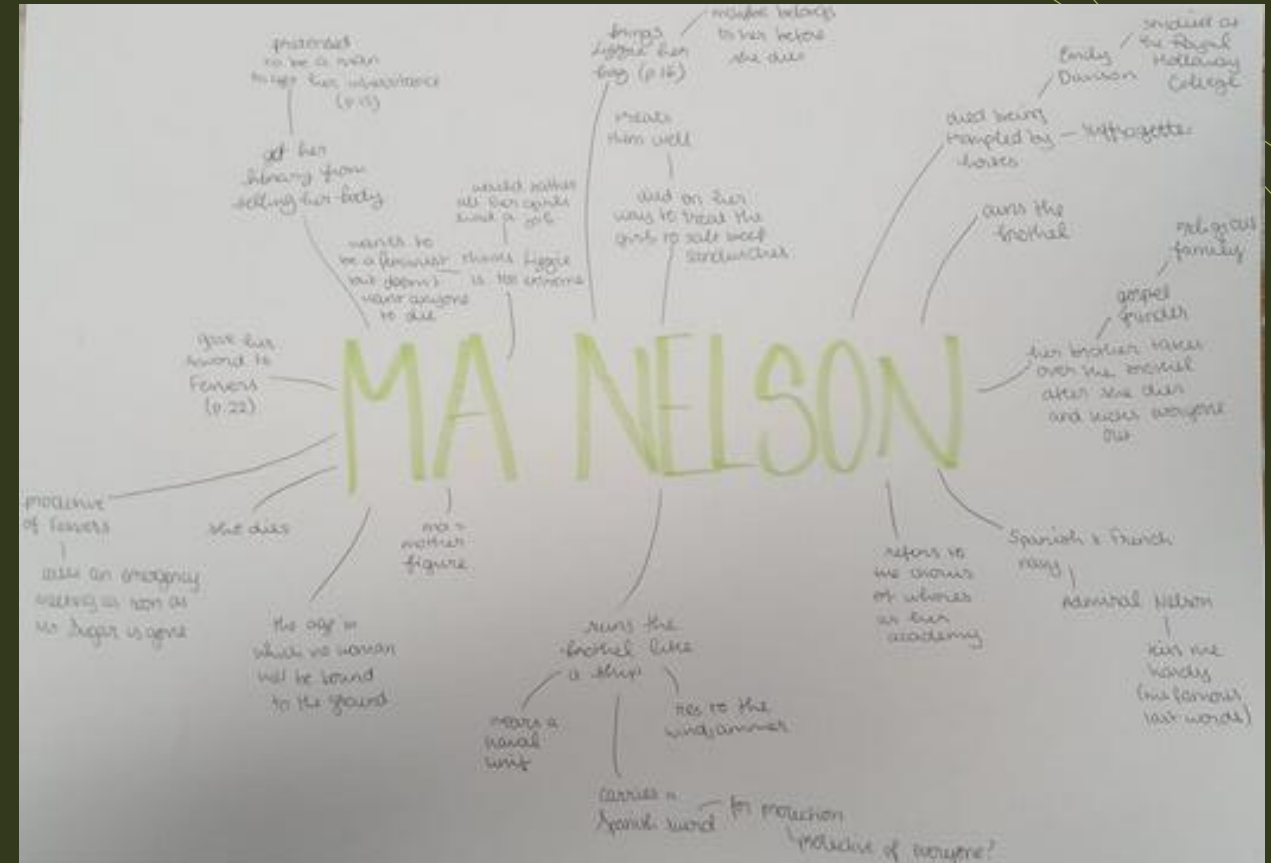
Sources found by Cameron for the group

CHARACTER ANALYSIS – MA NELSON

Admiral Nelson was a British naval commander who used unusual tactics. He was a very charismatic leader. He was born in 1758 and died in 1805 in the Battle of Trafalgar, where he beat Napoleon. Napoleon was the leader of France after the French Revolution, and they were planning on invading Britain. Nelson was outnumbered by French and Spanish ships at Trafalgar. He's got a statue on a column in Trafalgar Square in London that was completed in 1843 (Rodger, 2009).



Oil painting of Admiral Nelson (Abbott, 1797)



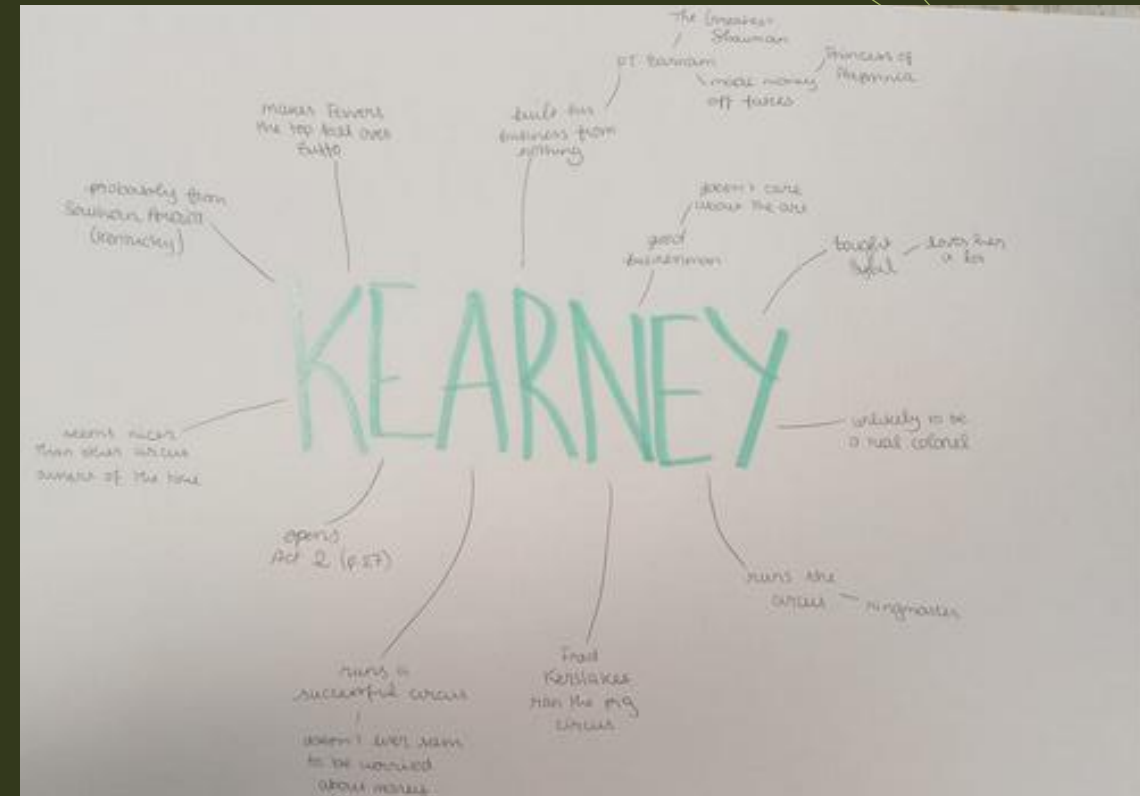
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – COLONEL KEARNEY

The first permanent stone circus in Russia was built in 1877 and was called the Ciniselli Circus. It had a spherical dome on top, which was installed without supporting columns. Ciniselli expected his audience to be the rich and famous and furnished the place to meet their expectations, with gilding, carpets, a royal box and velvet (Zakharova, n.d.). This is interesting to note when thinking about Colonel Kearney, as this could mean that his circus could have been in a building, not a tent, which is how most people picture circuses. I can also see Kearney expecting his audience to be the rich and famous.

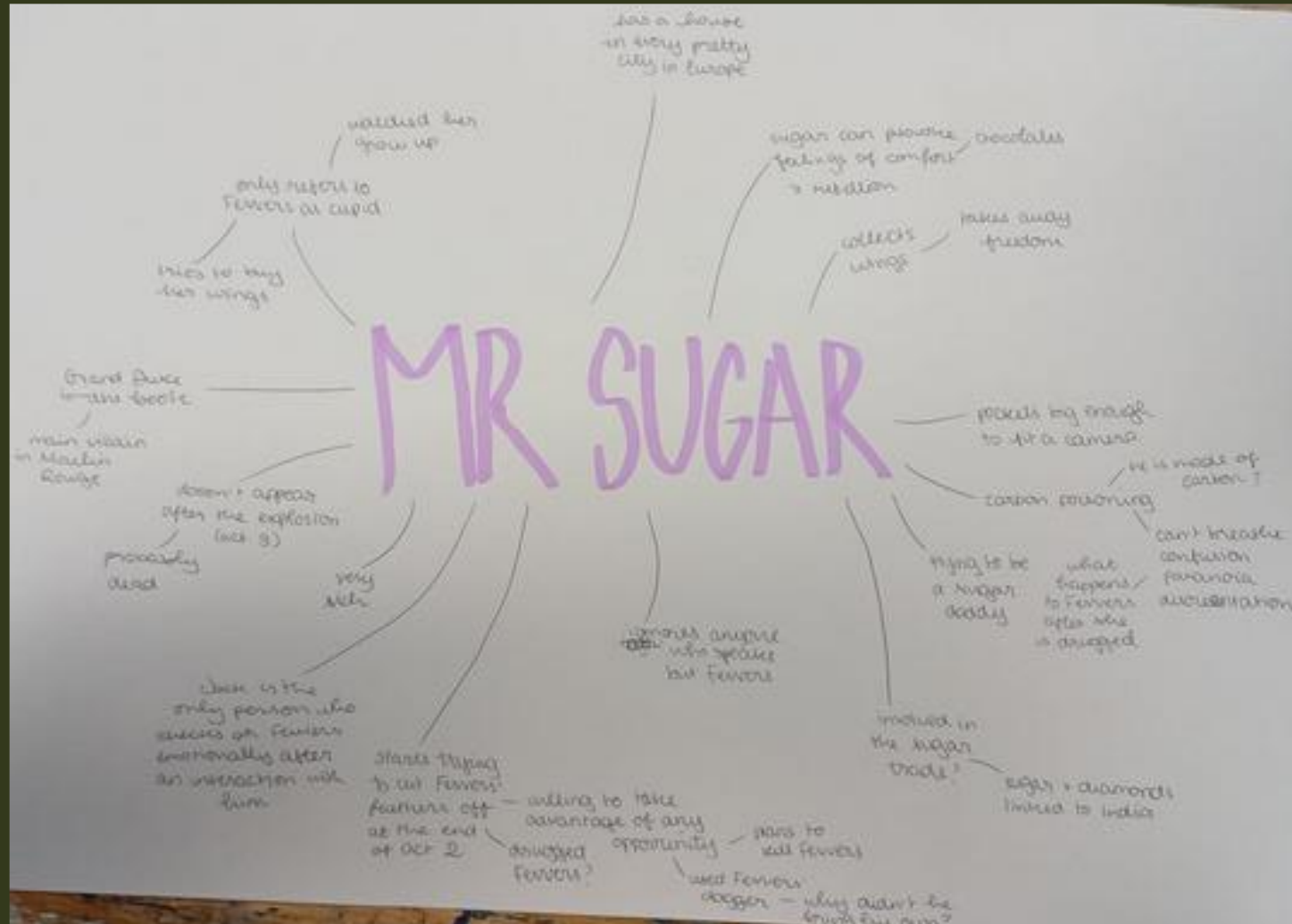


Circus Ciniselli 1877
(Kenel, 1877)



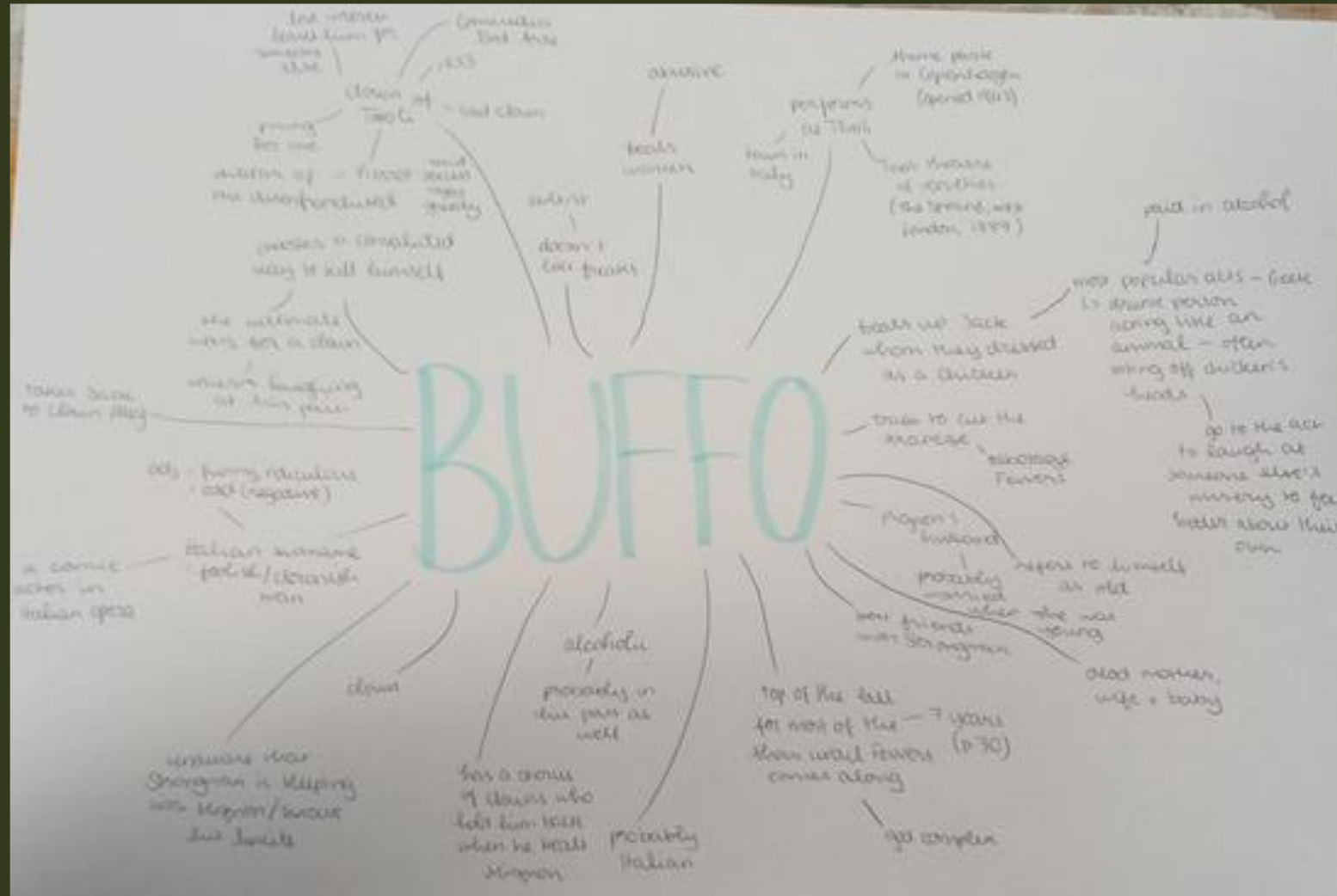
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – MR SUGAR



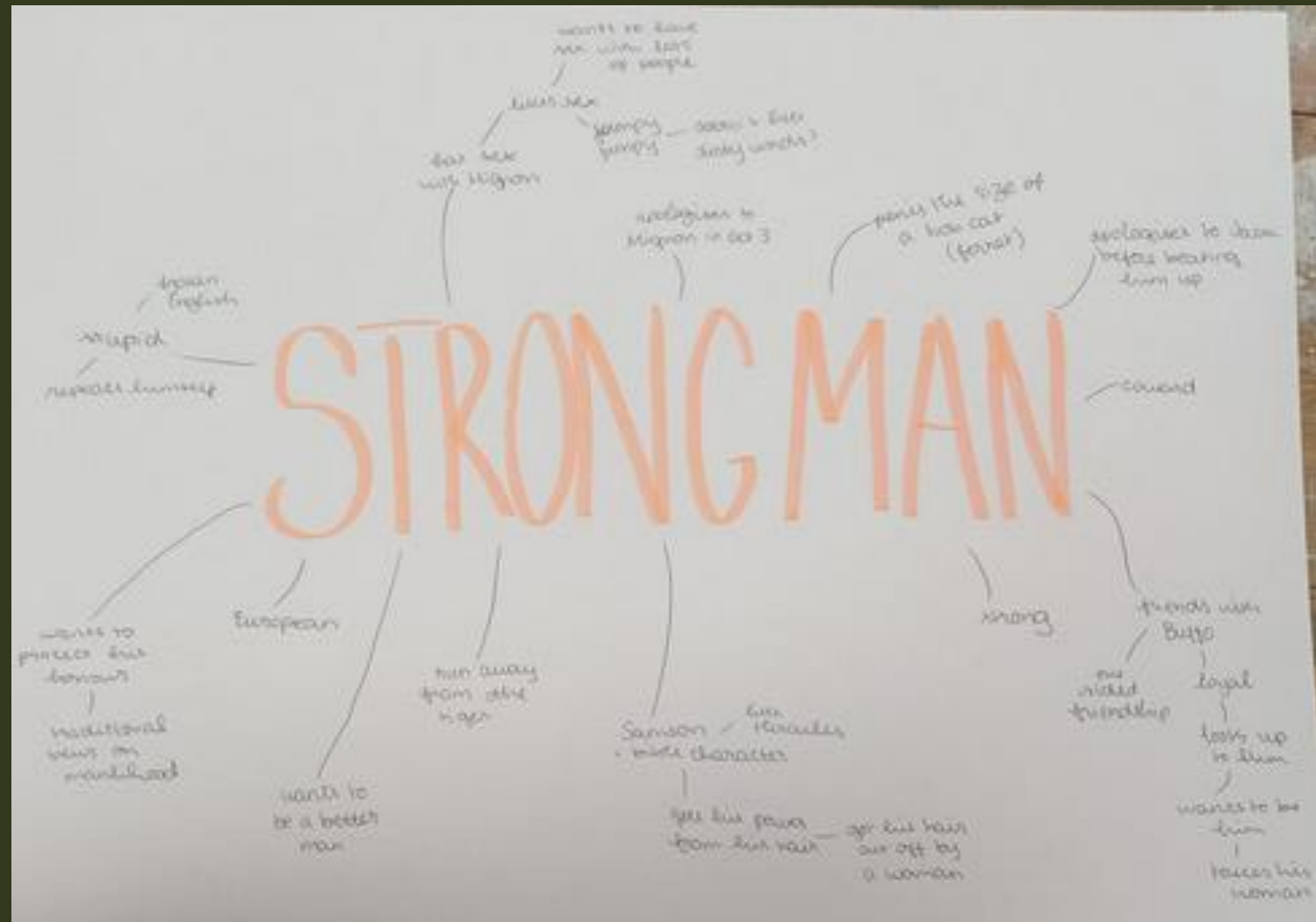
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – BUFFO



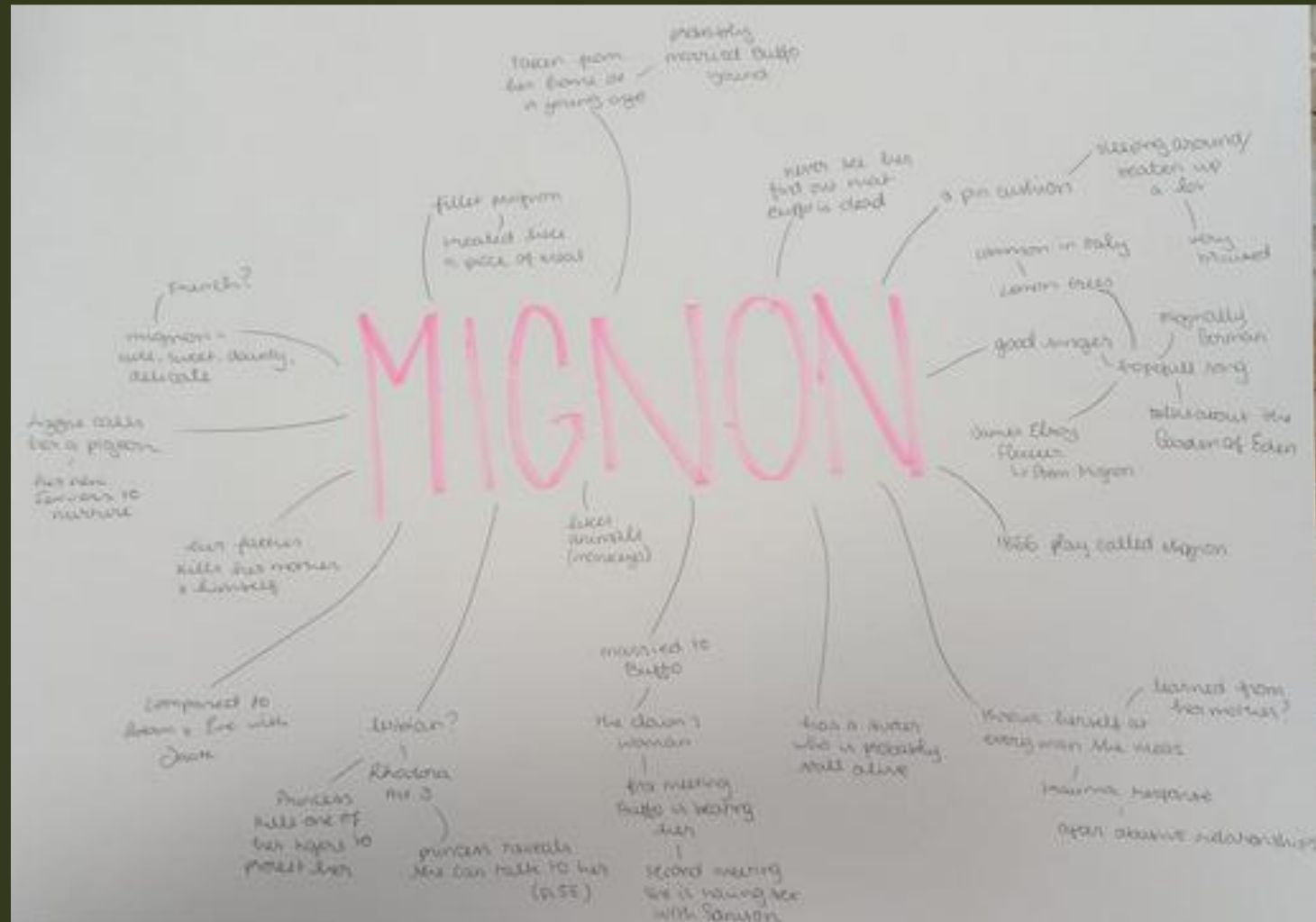
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – STRONG MAN



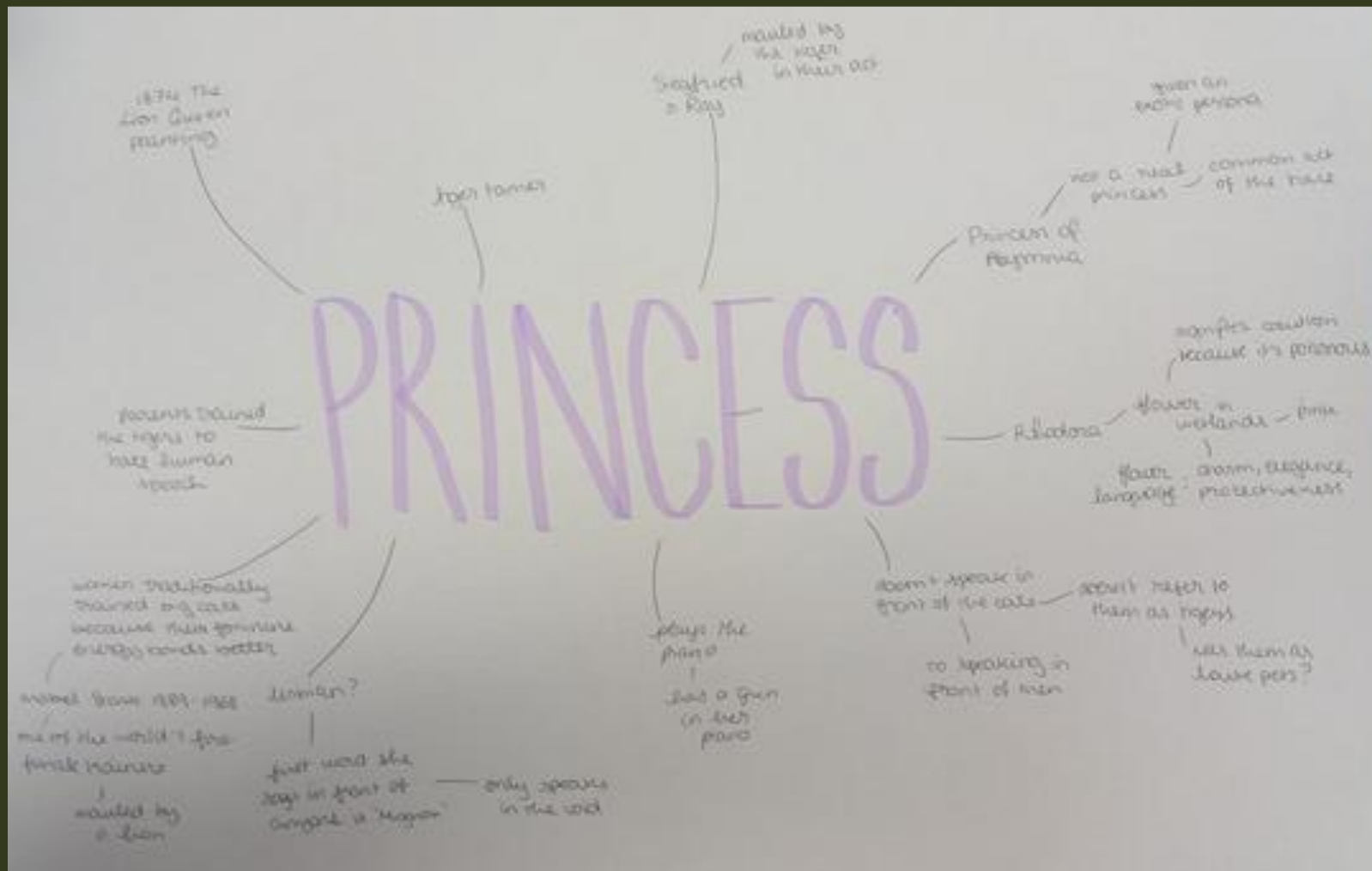
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – MIGNON



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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – PRINCESS



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CHARACTER ANALYSIS – THE CHORUS

Seen as:

- The Creatures of the Theatre
- The Whores
- The Clowns

Pick on Jack

Dance a lot – would
need costumes they
can move in because
of this

No description
of appearances

“Nothing in this room
can happen without
us”

They repeat a lot
of words. They
especially repeat
their own words
and phrases a lot

The Cambridge dictionary definition of chorus defines it as

1. “A part of a song that is repeated several times, usually after each verse”
2. “A piece of music written to be sung by a choir”
3. “A group of people who are trained to sing together”
4. “A group of performers who, as a team, sing or dance in a show”
5. “A group of actors in ancient Greek plays who explained or gave opinions on what was happening in the play using music, poetry, and dance”
6. “Many people speaking together or saying a similar thing at the same time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)

These are all really accurate descriptions of the chorus in the play, as they all comment on the play together and often repeat a lot of what they say, therefore I do think they are supposed to be a Greek chorus.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

The reason I decided to explore one aspect of some of the characters was that I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of them. Some of the characters, such as the windjammer, I wanted to explore further, as we don't learn much about this character from reading the play alone.

In exploring Fevvers being a foundling, my group decided to use this in our version of the play. Without me looking into this, we wouldn't have found such an interesting way to connect everything we wanted to in the play.

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SECTION 5: THEME ANALYSIS

THEMES

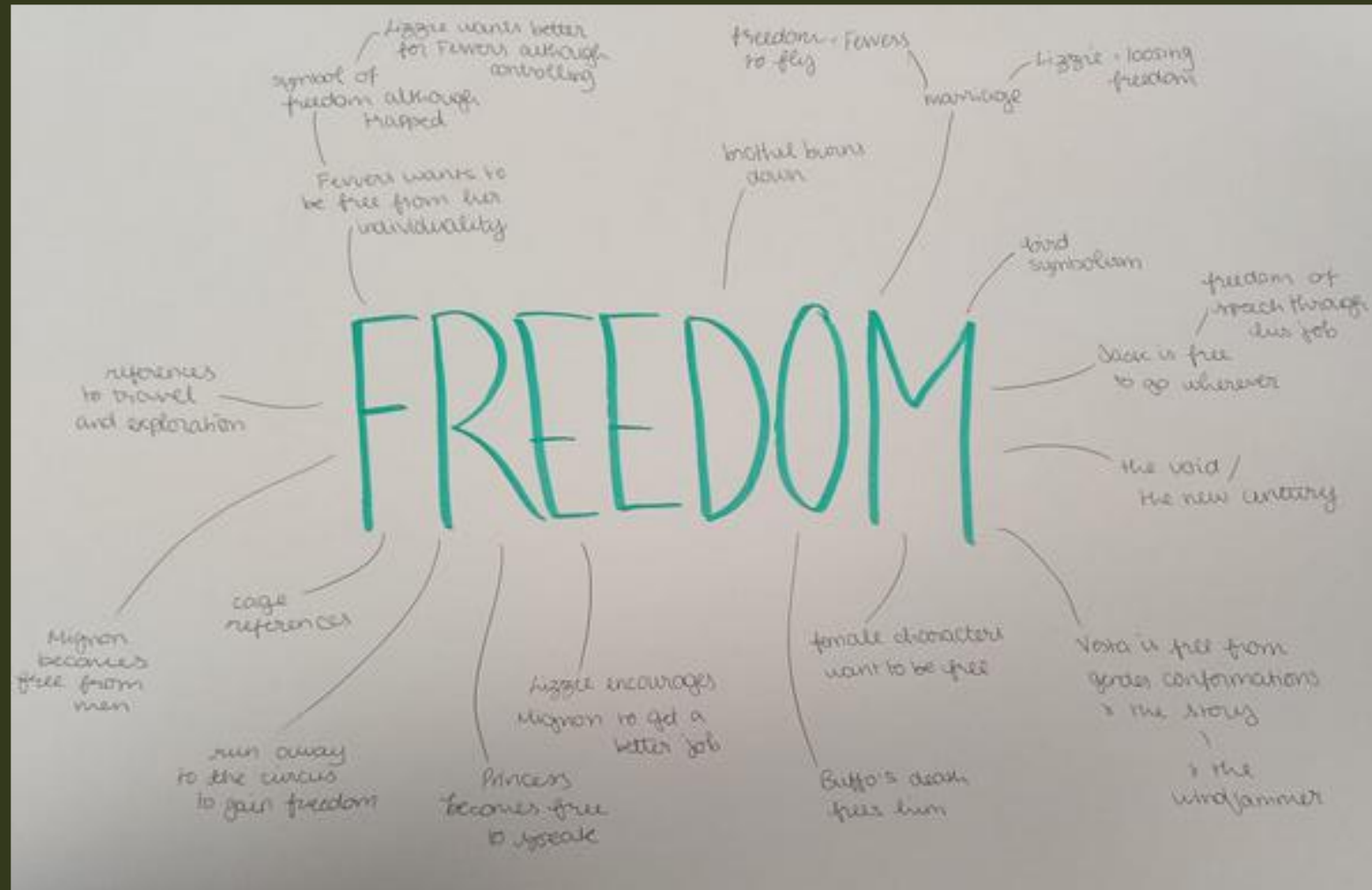
THEMES

feminism	innocence
autonomy	alcoholism
power	abuse
control	sexuality
freedom	greed
ownership	matriarchy vs. patriarchy
religion	misogyny vs. misandry
time	identity
surrealism	stereotypes
girlhood	envy
youth	

sex	friendship
vulnerability	kinship
love	greek mythology
death	animal cruelty
violence	sin
ornithological imagery (birds)	journey
perversion	exploration
new beginnings	voyeurism
sisterhood	social pressure
good & evil	circus culture
war	class divide
new vs. old	money
progress	job security
	career

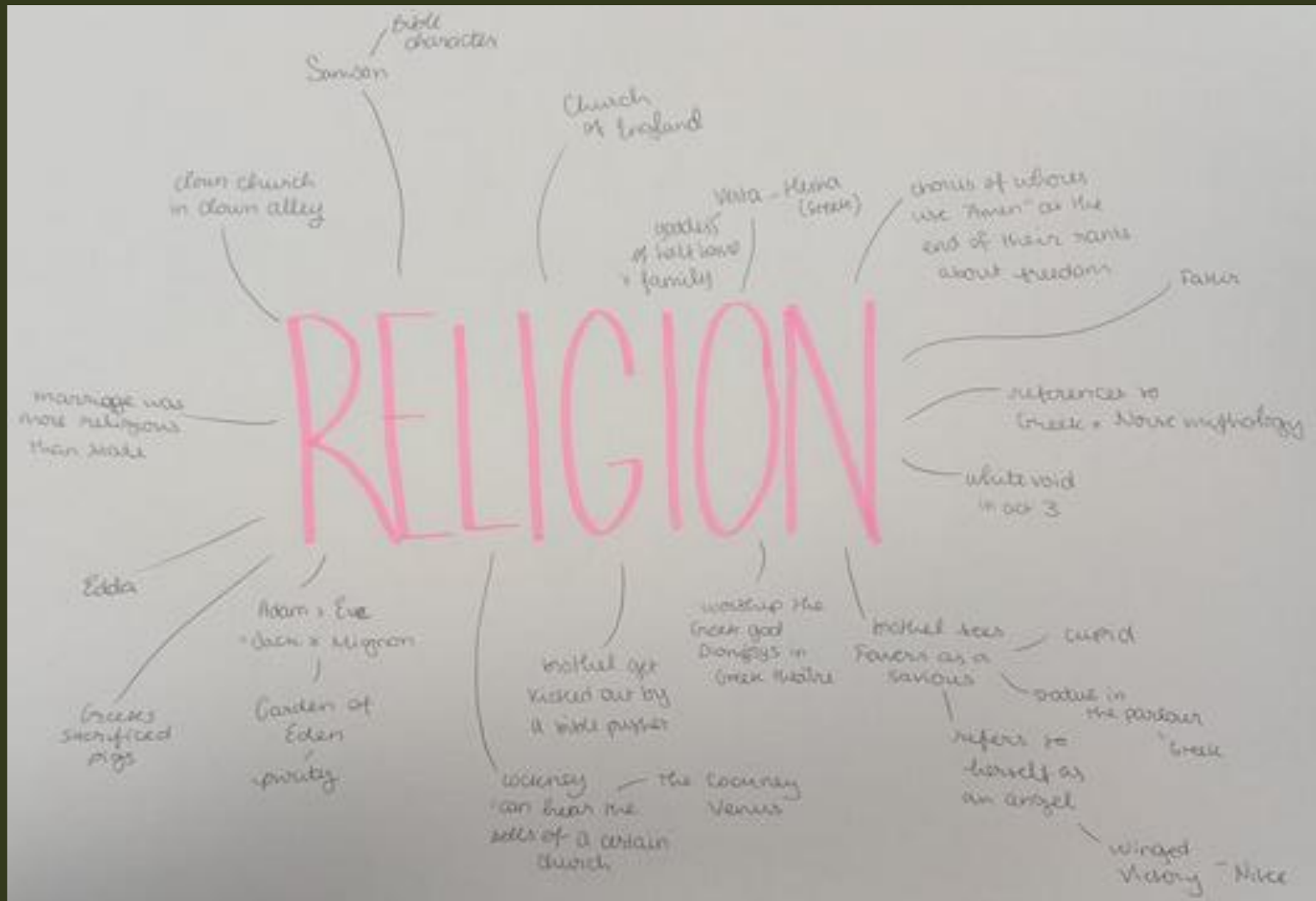
gender
conforming
appearance
reality
fight or flight

THEME ANALYSIS – FREEDOM



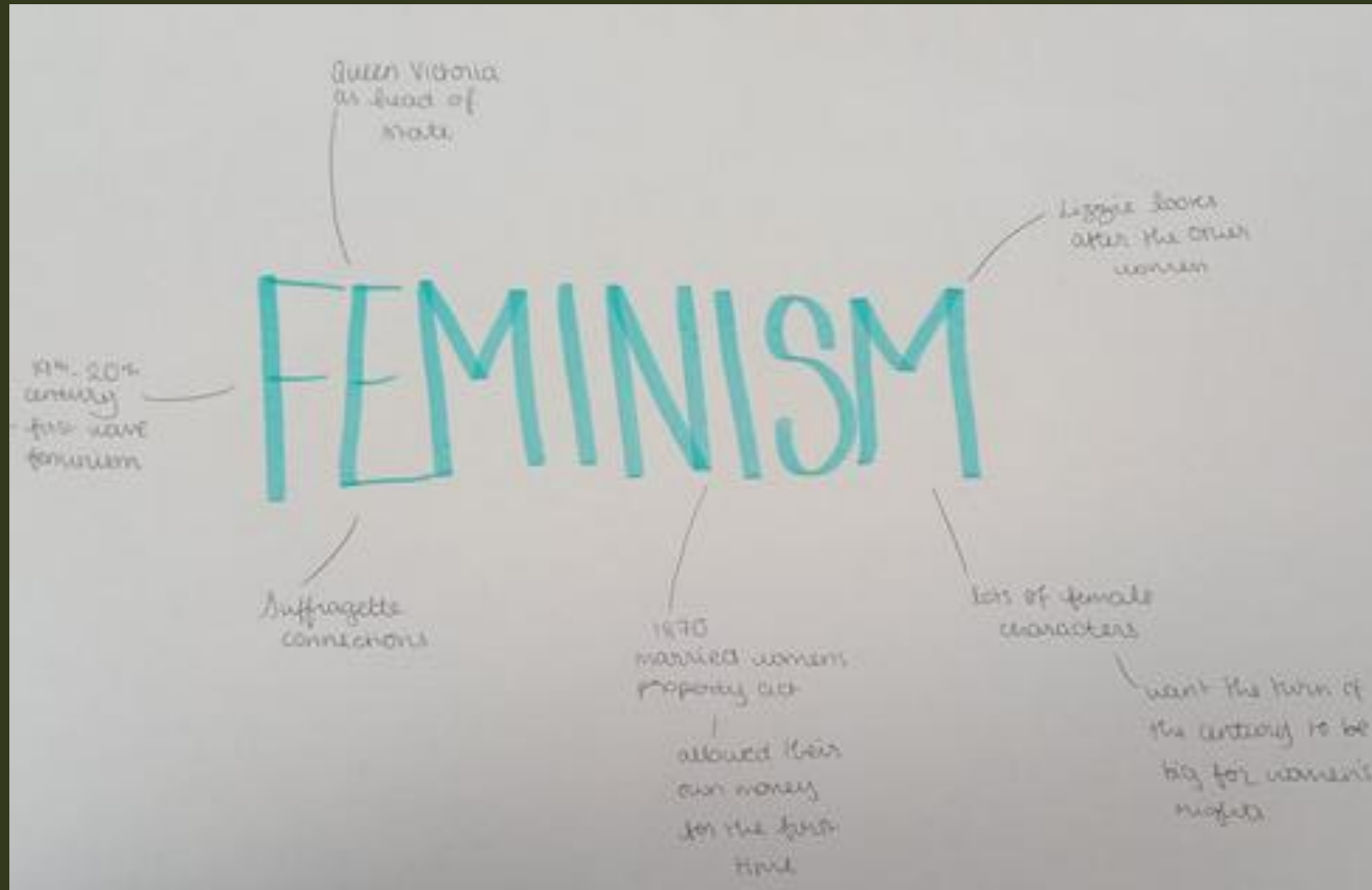
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THEME ANALYSIS – RELIGION



WRITTEN AND
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THEME ANALYSIS – FEMINISM



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THEME ANALYSIS – DEATH

Characters who die:

- Ma Nelson
- The tigress
- Buffo

Gruesome

The deaths are all realistic. There isn't anything unnatural or supernatural about the way anyone dies. Even Buffo's death is realistic; although it's over-the-top and performative, it's still a realistic way to die.

Murder? Suicide?

Theres not a lot of emotion shown to most of the dead. The most emotion shown to a death seems to be Kearny grieving Sybil the pig.

Unflattering

Characters we can infer are dead:

- Sybil
- The second tiger

Do they all die at the end and go to heaven?

Personally, I don't think so, as I think Sybil the pig dies and although it could be argued that as she's an animal, she wouldn't have gone to heaven, I, personally, would assume that she is the only character that is dead

THEME ANALYSIS – CONTROL

Buffo controls Mignon

The theme of control is shown many times throughout the play. This ranges from very obvious controlling, such as Buffo controlling Mignon, to Lizzie telling Fevvers she can't be with Jack, to Kearney being in charge of the circus but being unable to control what happens there.

Lizzie controls Fevvers

Fevvers feels like she is constantly trying to be controlled by other people.

Vesta says that nothing would happen without her and the chorus, therefore, they are in control of everything that happens.

At the end of the play, Lizzie loses all control she has over Fevvers as she flies away with Jack.

Buffo appears to have control over all of the other clowns, as they do everything he says.

LOCATIONS

LOCATIONS

Europe
London
Reykjavik
Iceland
Calcutta Market
Kathmandu
Theatre
Dressing room
Setzuan

Russia
Circus stage (ring)
Lexington, Kentucky
Kearney's school
Kearney's home
Abyssinia
Abyssinian jungle
Ireland
bridal suite hotel Europe
libraries
museums

Morocco
Bedouin tent
Damascus road
Reykjavik wharf
New York
Ma Nelson's brothel
Wapping
Brothel library
Brothel doorstep
Brothel roof

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LOCATIONS

Tivoli

bar

thickest part of the town

heaven

foyer of Fevers' hotel

ice cream parlour

brassworks

The Land where the Lemon Trees
Grow

Eden

ring door curtains (upstage, backstage)

offstage (on stage)

Brothel garden

Fevers' room

Wapping high street

Blooms

London hospital

parlour

the street (brothel)

music halls of Europe

Cabarets of Europe

Colonel Kearney's circus

St. Petersburg

Fosters in Wapping

the yard

café

Buffo's home

the street (café)

the square

Mignon's home

the town

the pond

Clown Alley

Copenhagen

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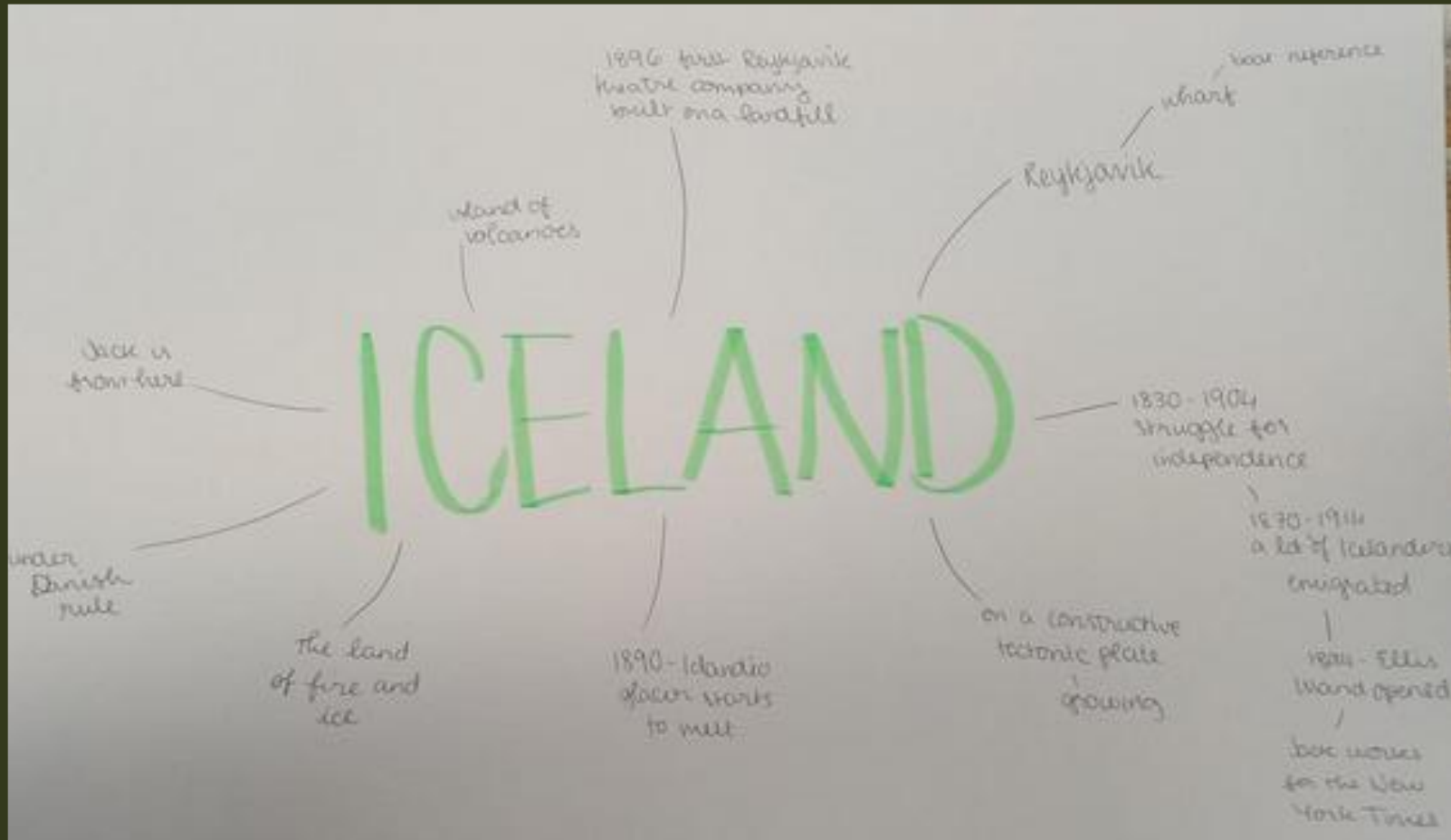
SECTION 6: LOCATION ANALYSIS

LOCATIONS

bare. white landscape
Marseille

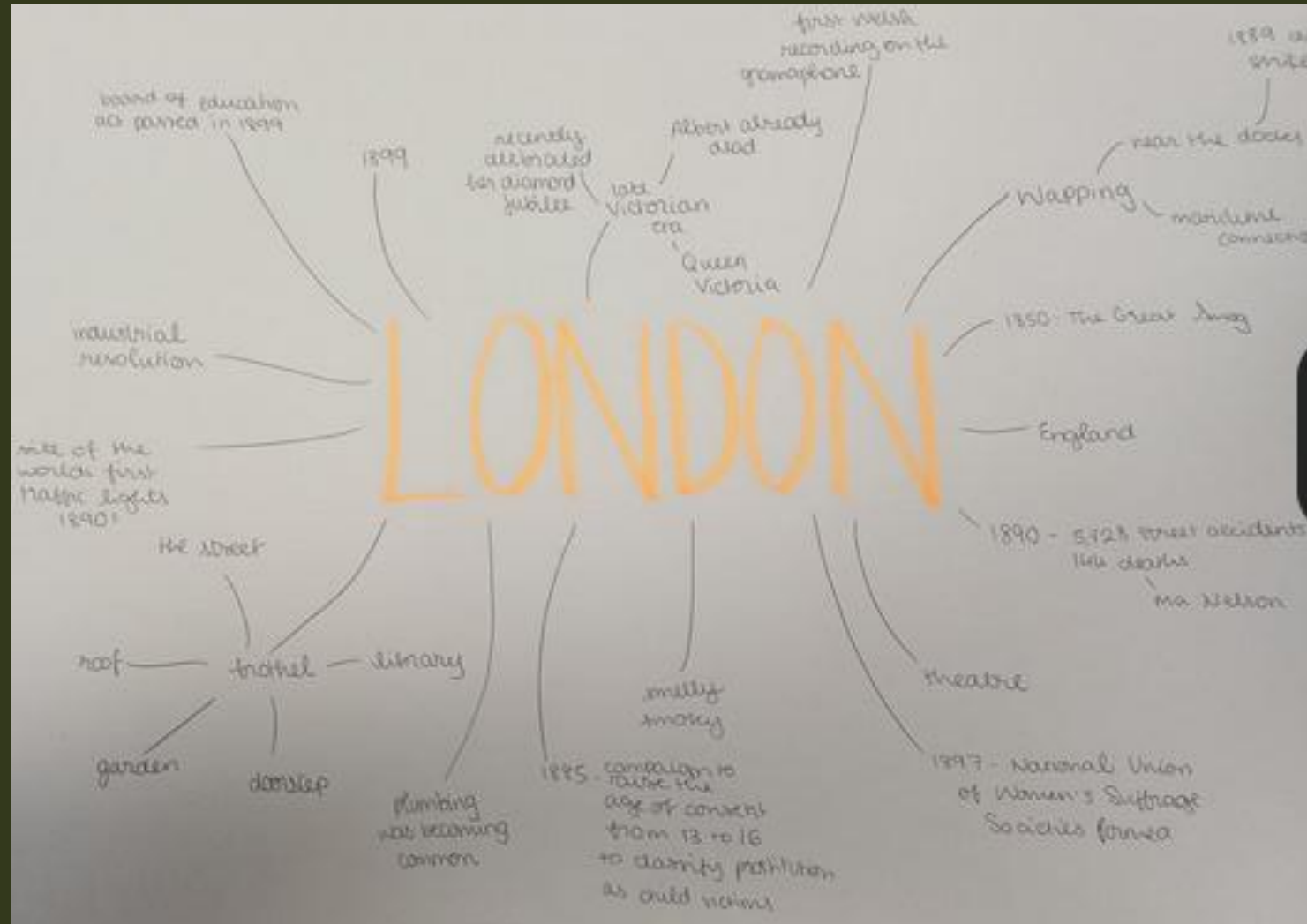
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LOCATION ANALYSIS – ICELAND



WRITTEN AND
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LOCATION ANALYSIS – LONDON



WRITTEN AND
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LOCATION ANALYSIS – ST PETERSBURG



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SECTION 7: ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

1. What is the plot?

The plot of *Nights at the Circus* is the story of a girl with bird wings who always feels caged in one way or another. She meets a journalist called Jack and tells him about her past. They separately join the circus, and Jack ends up getting on Buffo the clown's bad side as Buffo thinks he's sleeping with his girl. In the meantime, Fevvers keeps getting found by a man named Mr Sugar who wants to take her wings for himself. Jack tries to help Mignon and brings her to Lizzie and Fevvers to get her help. During the last circus performance of the year, Buffo attempts to sabotage Fevvers, who has replaced him as the starring act, by cutting her trapeze rope. Buffo finds out Jack is no longer a clown and is instead in the tiger act, and argues with him, so he misses his entrance, which leads to one of the tigers getting shot. Buffo then gets Samson to kill Buffo. Fevvers goes to perform on her trapeze when the rope breaks, and Jack steps in to try to help. Fevvers gets mad as she feels like he was trying to steal the limelight from her and tells him to leave. Mr Sugar comes back, and at first, she denies him, but Mr Sugar almost ends up getting her wings. He doesn't manage to, however, as Lizzie, Fevvers' mother figure, fights him off, which ends up with Lizzie blowing up the whole circus with a bomb. The characters who survive the events of the play end up in a plain white expanse where they all look towards the future as it has just become the start of the new century.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

2. What is the theme?

There are many themes shown throughout the play, but I would consider the main one to be new beginnings. This is because it is shown many times throughout the play. For example, Fevvers and Lizzie find a new beginning in joining the circus. Fevvers is also seen to want a fresh start throughout the play. It is also shown explicitly at the end of the play, where most of the main characters have found their freedom in one way or another. Buffo found freedom in death, Princess was free to use her voice, and Fevvers is finally able to fly freely.

3. What is the logic?

The play is quite hard to follow, especially at first, as it can be difficult to discern when someone is singing, how the passage of time works, and when things have become a flashback. Despite this, I think the content of the story now makes sense to me, having read the play many times. But despite everything being a bit confusing for someone reading it for the first time, I do also think that the overall plot is clear.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

4. What is the exposition?

Jack spends most of the play following after Fevvers and trying to help other characters.

Fevvers spends her time thinking about freedom.

Buffo, throughout the play, spends a lot of his time trying to hurt other characters

Mr Sugar is trying to get Fevvers' wings for his collection.

Lizzie spends her time trying to protect Fevvers and hating men.

5. What is the complication?

The complication is caused when Fevvers has to make a choice between having Mr Sugar take her wings or denying him every time. You can tell throughout the play that part of her wants to say yes and she gets closer to saying yes every time she's asked.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

6. What creates the tension?

The tension is created in the story mostly through Buffo and Mr Sugar.

Buffo creates the most tension throughout the play as he physically abuses Mignon and Jack and tries to murder them and Fevvers. Mr Sugar also creates tension as you don't know if Fevvers will let him take her wings.

7. What is the main question?

The main problem to be solved is Fevvers trying to find her freedom. Fevvers wants her freedom more than anything else, and its interesting to see how much she would give up to get what she wants.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

8. What is the main action?

The main hook for the audience is when Jack goes up to the stage from the audience and starts joining in. This is a clever way to make the audience feel immersed in the story. They can also follow along with Jack as he becomes part of the circus and falls in love with Fevvers.

9. What is the cause of action?

Fevvers grows up in a brothel. She becomes the brothel's feature image. Mr Sugar tries to take her wings. When she gets kicked out of the brothel, she joins a circus. She becomes the main act for the circus, which makes Buffo jealous. Mr Sugar comes back and almost succeeds in taking her wings, but Lizzie saves her. She flies away with Jack.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

10. What is the resulting action?

The bomb exploding and destroying the circus as they move into the new age helps Fevvers find her freedom. This is because she no longer feels caged in by the expectations of men. Jack helps her by offering her this freedom.

11. What is the conclusion?

The story ends with everyone looking forward to the new beginnings and opportunities the new century holds. The set reflects this as it becomes a blank slate.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

12. Who is the protagonist?

I would argue there are two main characters. Fevvers, as she is the main focus of the story, is the character who drives most of the plot forward, and Jack, as he is the reason the audience can relate to the other characters. He also helps the audience feel like they aren't the only characters who don't know what exactly is going on.

13. Who is the antagonist?

The main antagonist of the story is Buffo. He abuses Mignon throughout the play, bullies and abuses Jack, manipulates Samson and tries to kill Fevvers. The secondary antagonist is Mr Sugar as he spends the entire play trying to take Fevvers wings.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

14. Who is the most interesting character?

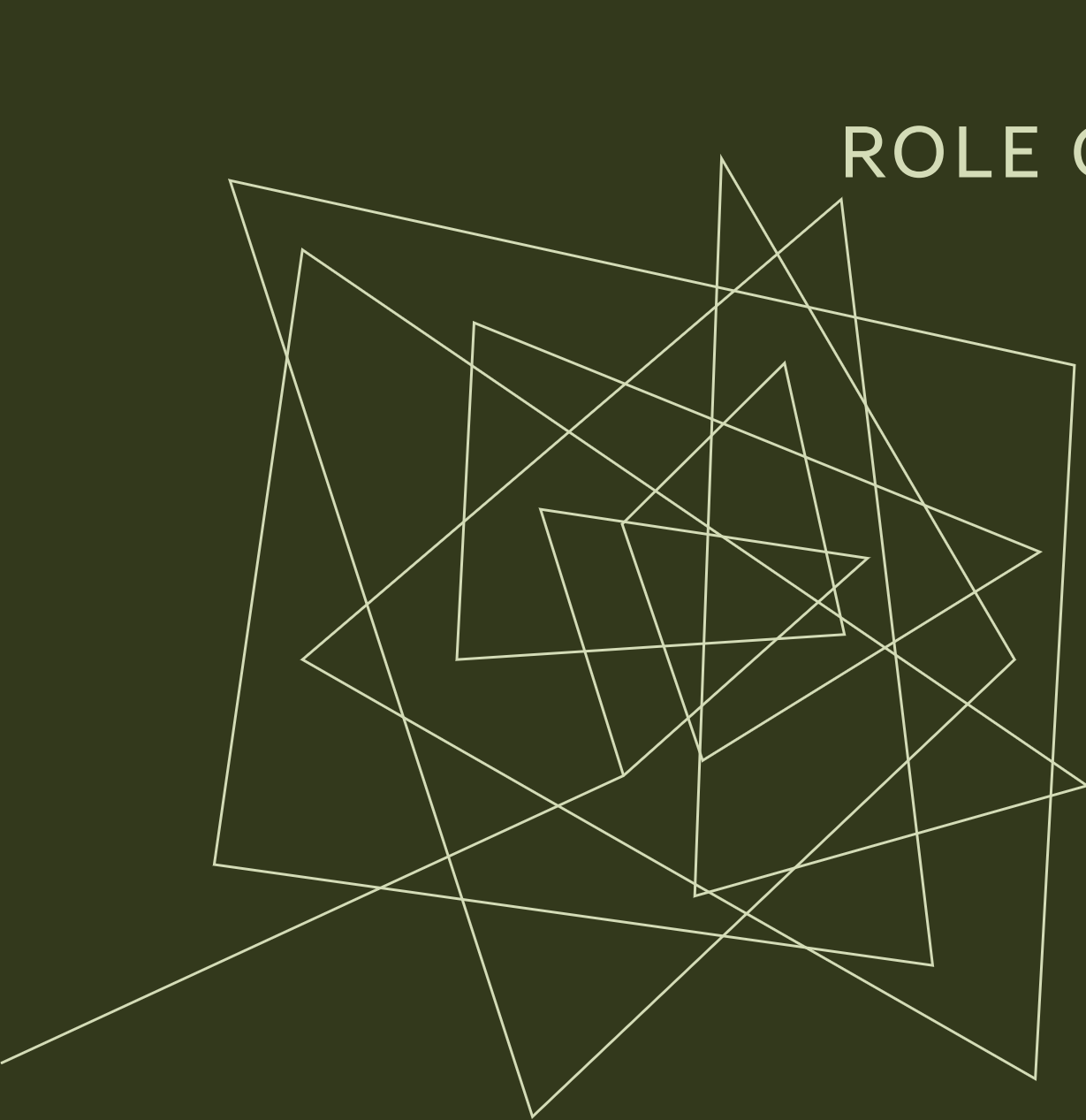
The most interesting character to me is Vesta. I really like how she is based on a real person, Vesta Tilley. I also find it interesting that Vesta only interacts with Jack and somehow seems to know everything about him. I am also curious to know what she spends her time doing when she's not singing, as she never seems to exit or enter the stage after the first time she walks on.

15. Where does the story take place?

The story takes place over a variety of places and times. This, however, is mostly due to flashbacks. The main locations it takes place in are London, specifically Wapping, and St Petersburg, in the circus. The main time period is the year 1899 and New Year's Eve of the new century.

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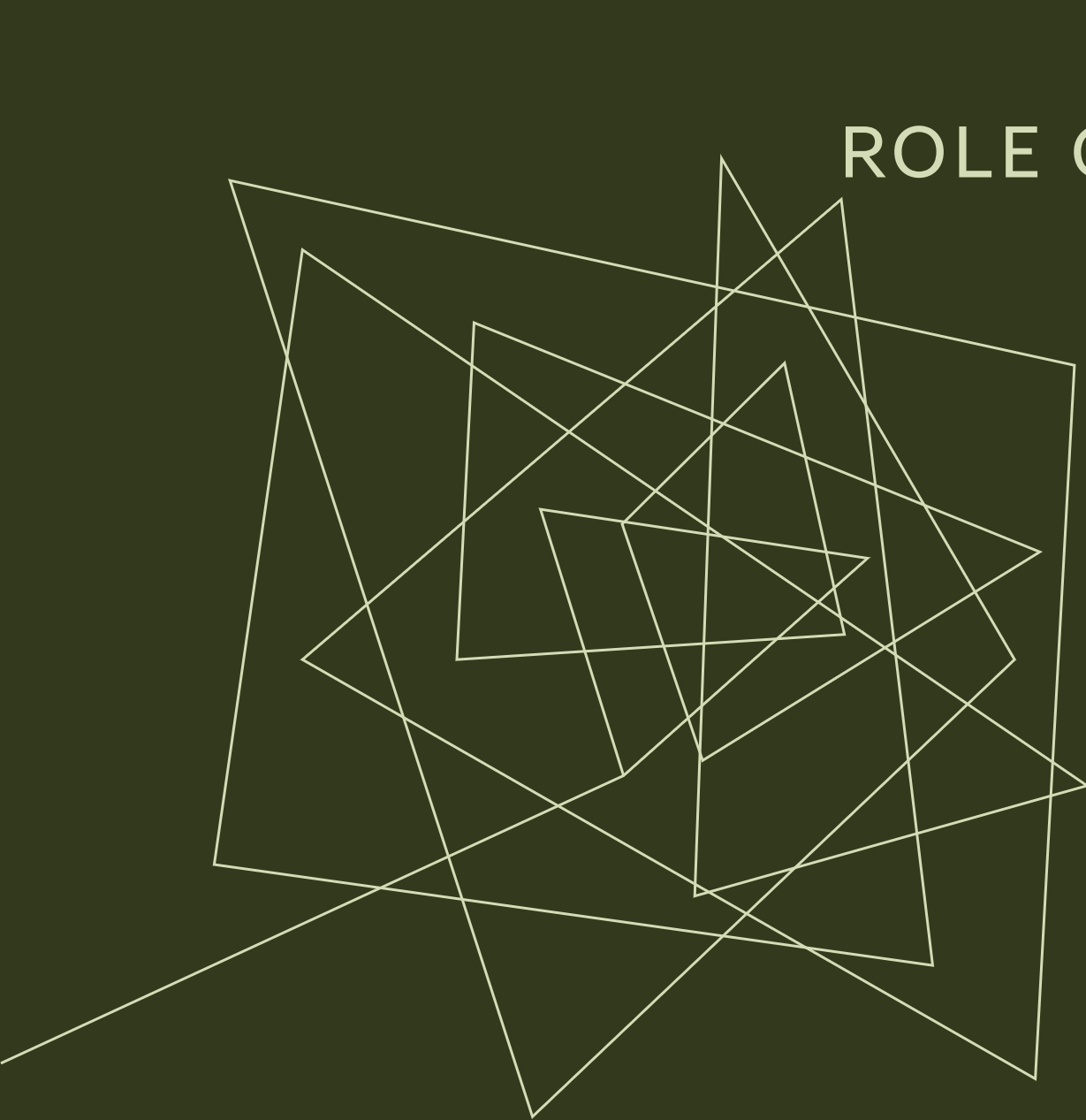
SECTION 8: ROLE APPLICATIONS



ROLE CHOICES

The roles I chose to look into are props, costume and puppetry.

I'm interested in props as I haven't done many outside of the course, and it is something I am really interested in experimenting with, using new materials and techniques. I would also really like to have the opportunity to try to make Ma Nelson's sword. I have 3d printed a couple of fake weapons before, but I would like the opportunity to make something that is truly my own design out of a softer material. Additionally, I have a lot of interest in weaponry, and I would really like to seize the opportunity to make the sword and design some of the other weapons for my CV. Props help a performance feel complete and help the audience get immersed in the world.

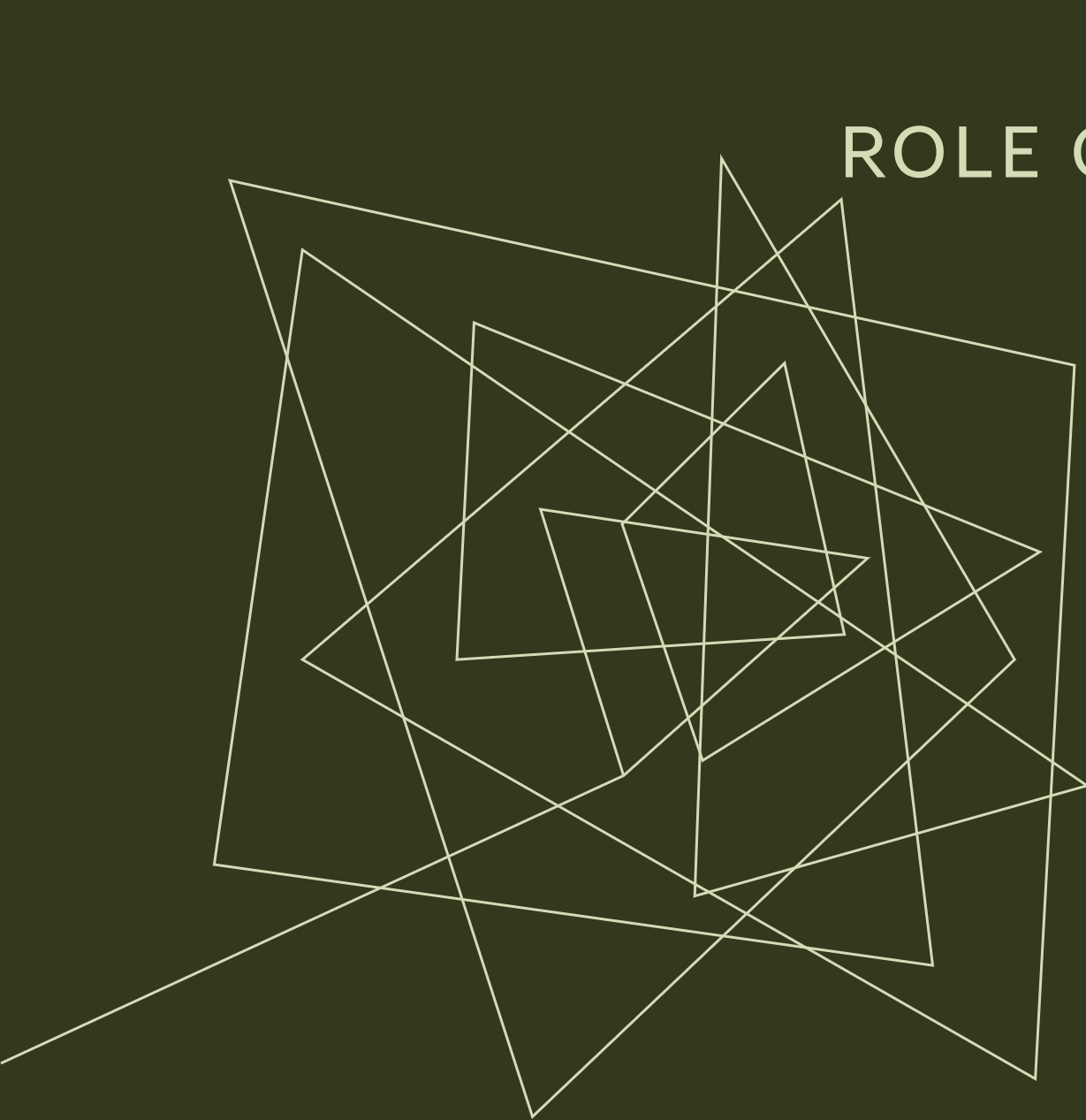


ROLE CHOICES

I chose costume because I would be very interested in designing costumes for some of the characters. I have quite a bit of experience in making costumes, and I appreciate the fact that there are so many opportunities for creativity in this script. Some characters that I would be interested in designing costumes for are;

- Vesta
- The Chorus
- Fevvers
- Ma Nelson

I appreciate the way that costumes can help pull the whole play together in different ways depending on the choices made by the costume designer.

An abstract geometric drawing on the left side of the slide. It consists of several overlapping rectangles and lines of varying lengths and orientations, creating a complex, layered pattern. The lines are thin and black, set against a dark olive green background.

ROLE CHOICES

As I have never done puppetry before, I would be very interested in having a go and looking into the way different types of puppets are made. I was thinking of making Fevvers' wings be able to unfurl in times she shows high levels of emotion, as I think this would help display the animalistic qualities we are shown she has in the play. I also like the idea of looking into how to make a puppet for a quadrupedal animal like Sybil or the tigers.

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SECTION 9: TEAMWORK PLANNING

TEAM ACE

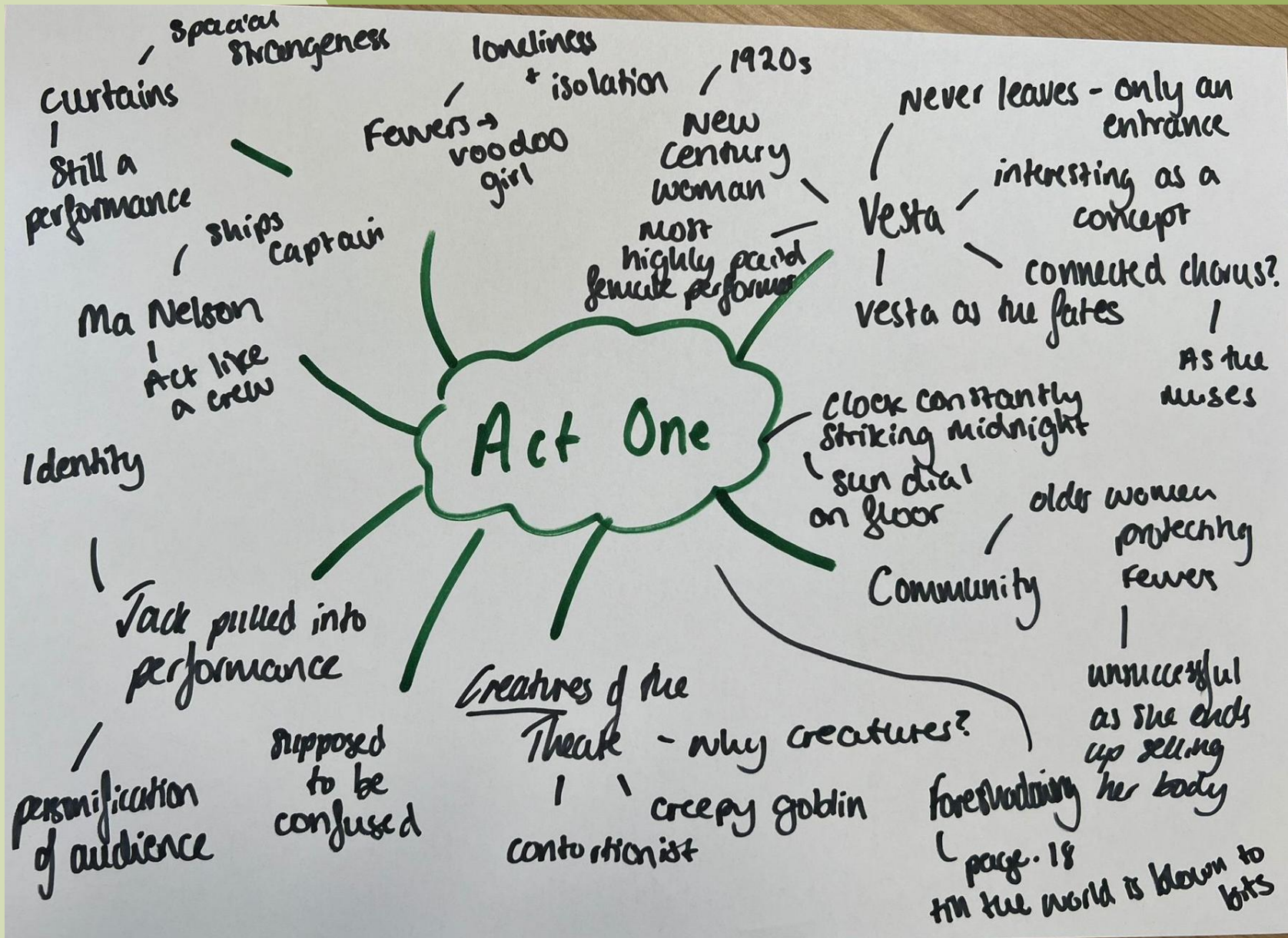


Set Design – Cameron Hobby
Props – Anne Hyde
Puppetry – Eva Bible

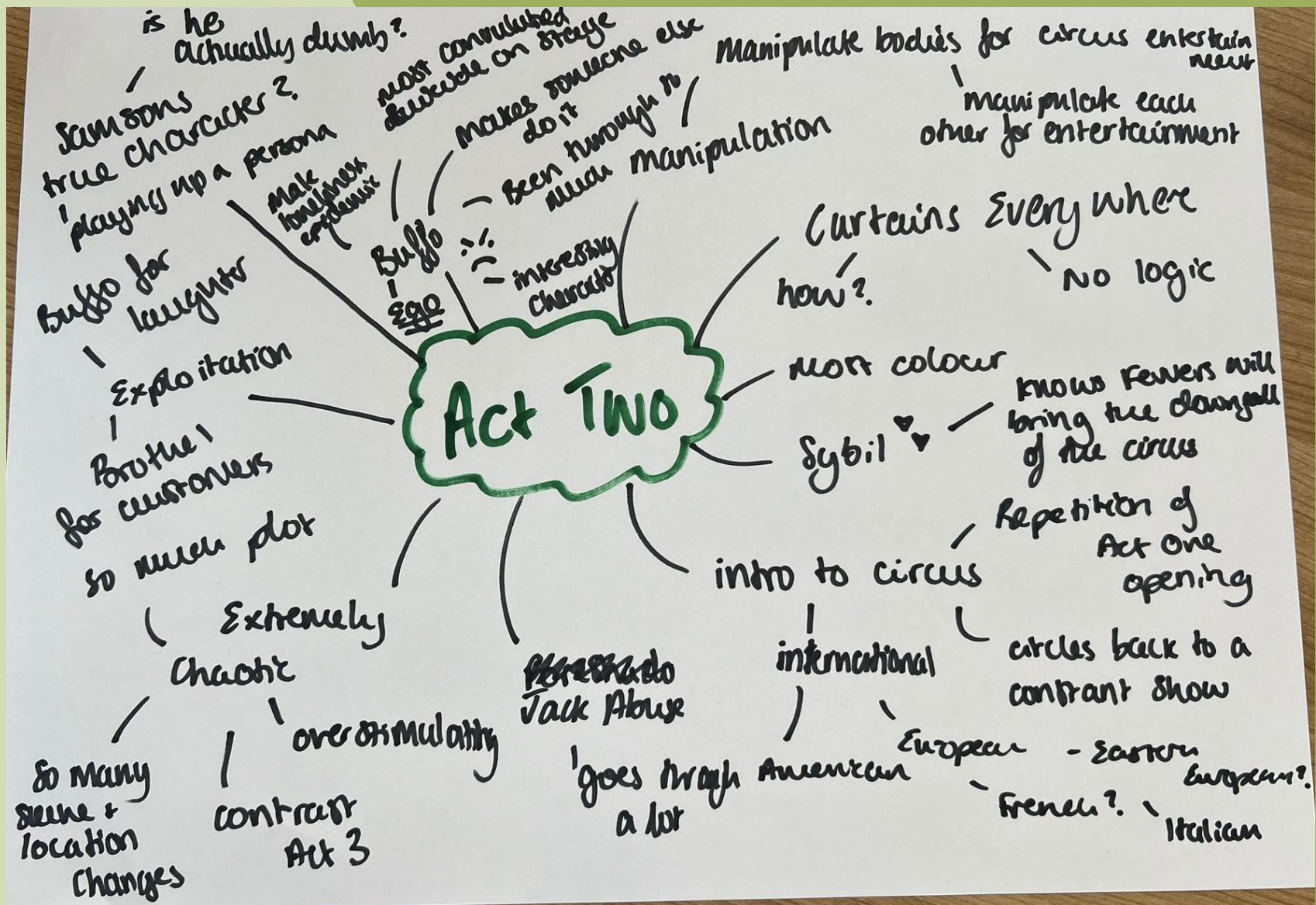
We are called team ACE, as the letters are the first letters of our names. Our logo is made up of our favourite playing card suits.

Timeline of events – with Cam and Eva

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
29 Sep 9:00 AH [In-person]	30	1 Oct	02 + 12:30 Organise + 7 Steps of	03 10:00 Research	04 10:00 Research + Incubation	05
06 10:00 Sifting Process + Dave	07 10:00 Sifting + Begin Decisi	08 10:00 Start Doing (indepenc	09 10:00 Discussions + Update:	10 13:00 AH [In-person]	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 10:00 Powerpoint Work	18 10:00 Work on Presentation	19
20 10:00 Practice Presentation	21 10:00 Rehearsal Presentation	22 10:00 Presentation Improve	23 10:00 Final Presentations	24	25	26



Brief look through the acts in the new group to work out what we are interested in



Brief look through the acts in the new group to work out what we are interested in

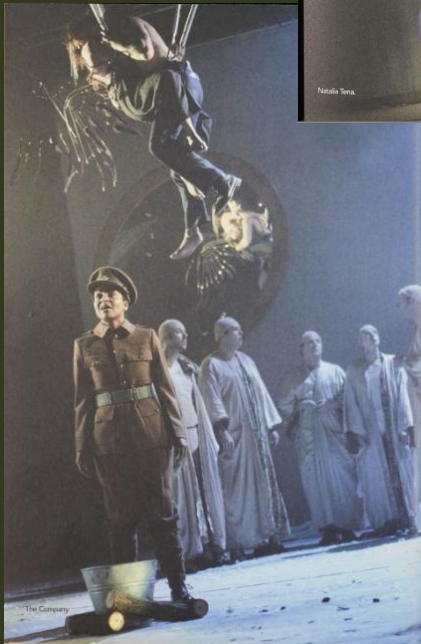
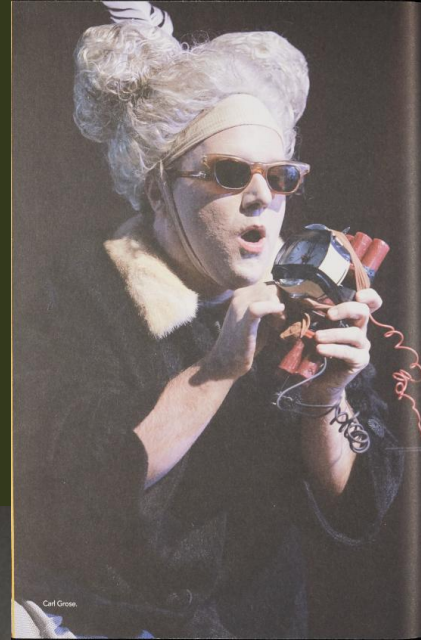


Brief look through the acts in the new group to work out what we are interested in

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SECTION 10: GROUP RESEARCH

GROUP RESEARCH – ADAPTATIONS OF THE PLAY



We wanted to look at some of the previous performances and adaptations of the play.

The first one I found was that it was performed at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre (Billington, 2006). This adaptation was performed in 2006 and was directed by Emma Rice, who had also directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Little Matchgirl*, amongst other things (Bristol Old Vic, 2025). From the photos, I can infer that this performance was done as the play was written. This makes sense as it was the first and only production, that I can find, of this script.

IMAGES TAKEN FROM THE
PROGRAMME OF THE
PERFORMANCE (Bristol Old Vic,
2006).

RESEARCHED BY ME FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

GROUP RESEARCH – ADAPTATIONS OF THE PLAY

There don't seem to be any other direct adaptations of this play, but there is another adaptation of the book that was done on stage. This was done for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and it was adapted by Steven Green and Sarah-Jane Moloney. This stage production also included the section of the novel where they travel through Siberia. It also included three pieces of stop motion, which were projected behind the actors (Rodham, 2012).

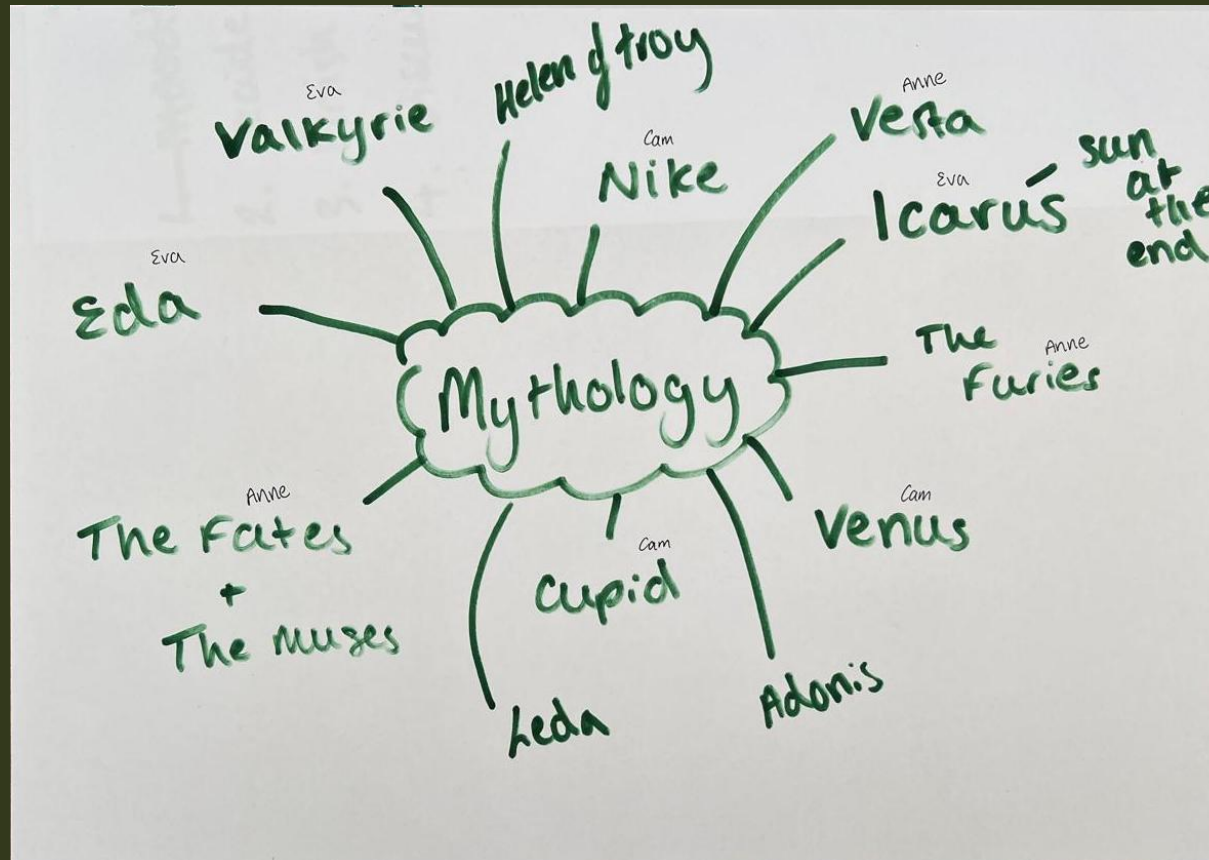


IMAGE TAKEN FROM WHATS ON
STAGE ARTICLE (Coveney, 2012)

RESEARCHED BY CAM
FOR THE WHOLE GROUP

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY

One thing my group keep coming back to is the aspects of mythology shown throughout the play. Because of it, we decided it would be a good idea to split up the research we wanted to do on it between the group so we could cover more ground effectively.



GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – VESTA

Vesta is the Roman goddess of the hearth and home. She symbolised faith and family. She was often called Mater, which translates to mother, and she was seen as one of the purest of the Roman deities. She was based on the Greek goddess Hestia, and so they have a lot of similar characteristics. Vesta was usually depicted as a hearth rather than in human form. Only women were allowed in her temple in the Roman Forum. She was also the patron to millers and bakers, which made her patron animal the donkey, as it would turn the millstone. She was also rarely part of any of the drama that most of the rest of the pantheon got into, which means she wasn't in a lot of the mythology. Vesta's priestesses, the Vestales, were sworn to virginity and tended the Temple of Vesta to maintain the eternal flame (Apel, 2022).

RESEARCHED BY ME
FOR THE WHOLE
GROUP



IMAGE SHOWS A STATUE OF
HESTIA (shakko, 2020)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – THE FATES

The Fates, otherwise known as Moirai, are three sister goddesses who determine the fate of every human. They are known as Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. The goddesses spun and cut the skein of life (Garry & El-Shamy, 2004). The lifespan of each human was represented by a thread which was made by Clotho, spun by Lachesis and cut by Atropos. When the thread was cut, the person it represented died. They were often depicted as old, hideous deities who were lame. When they were in Hades, they wore dark robes, and when they were in Olympus, they wore bright clothes with crowns on their heads (Able, 2009).

RESEARCHED BY ME FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

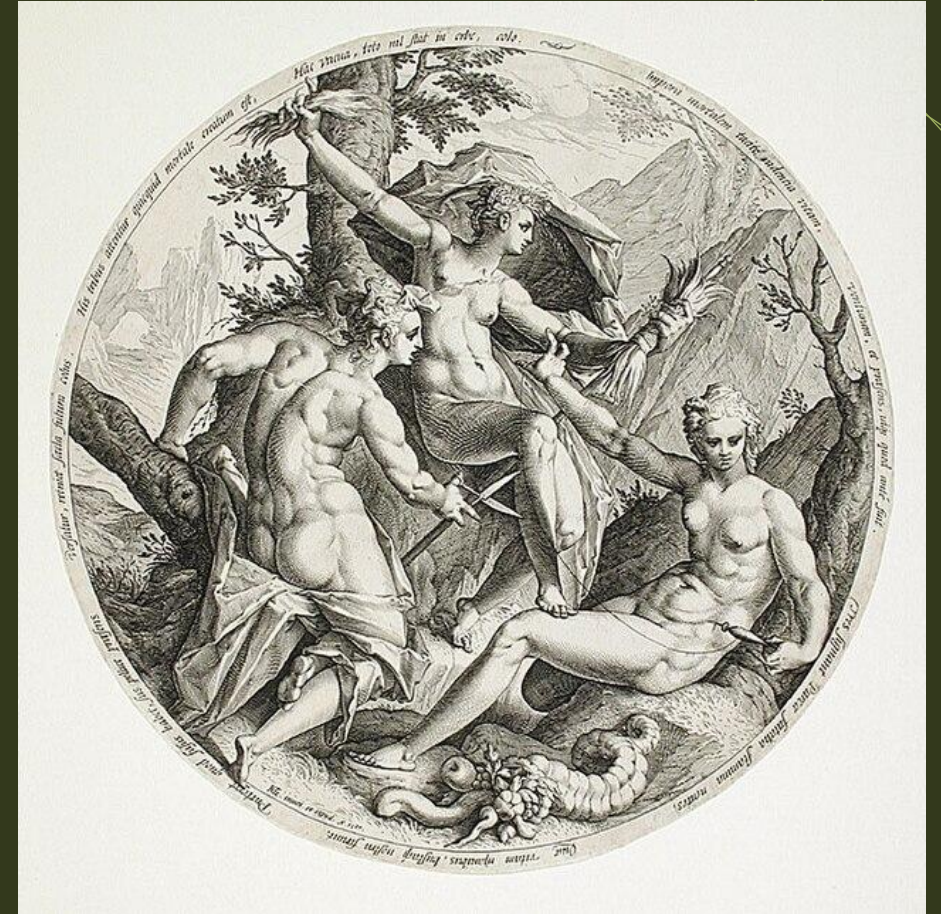


IMAGE OF A PRINT ENGRAVING
THE THREE FATES (Matham,
1587)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – THE MUSES

The muses are minor deities in Greek mythology who looked after the arts and sciences. They were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. They were called;

- Clio – History
- Euterpe – lyric poetry
- Thalia – comedy
- Melpomene – tragedy
- Terpsichore – choral dance
- Erato – erotic poetry and mime
 - Polymnia – hymn
 - Calliope – epic poetry
 - Urania – astronomy

They were believed to live on Mount Helicon and were honoured with offerings of milk and honey (Laing, 1982).

RESEARCHED BY ME FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP



IMAGES OF THE NINE MUSES AND
MNEMOSYNE SYMBOLS DISC FROM
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF
ELIS, GREECE (ANON., 2020)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – THE FURIES

The Furies were spirits that followed wrongdoers and drove them to madness. They especially picked on murderers (Laing, 1982).

They were known as Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone. They were often depicted as having snakes in their hair, wings that enabled them to fly and black bodies. They were also often depicted as carrying daggers, whips, torches or snakes. They punished people who committed crimes such as murder, perjury and disrespect towards the elderly (Able, 2009).



RESEARCHED BY ME FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

IMAGE OF A PAINTING OF
ORESTES PURSUED BY THE
FURIES (ADOLPHE, 1862)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – VENUS

Venus was the Roman goddess of love and beauty (Merriam-Webster, 2025). She is the Roman version of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Venus wasn't worshipped in Rome in the earlier days; however, the Latins had built her two temples, where festivals were held. Venus became associated with femininity and was charged with the protection of women's and girls' chastity. She was also the mother of Cupid, the minor god of love (Britannica, 2025). The Latins also saw her as a patroness of vegetable gardens (Laing, 1982).

RESEARCHED BY CAM FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

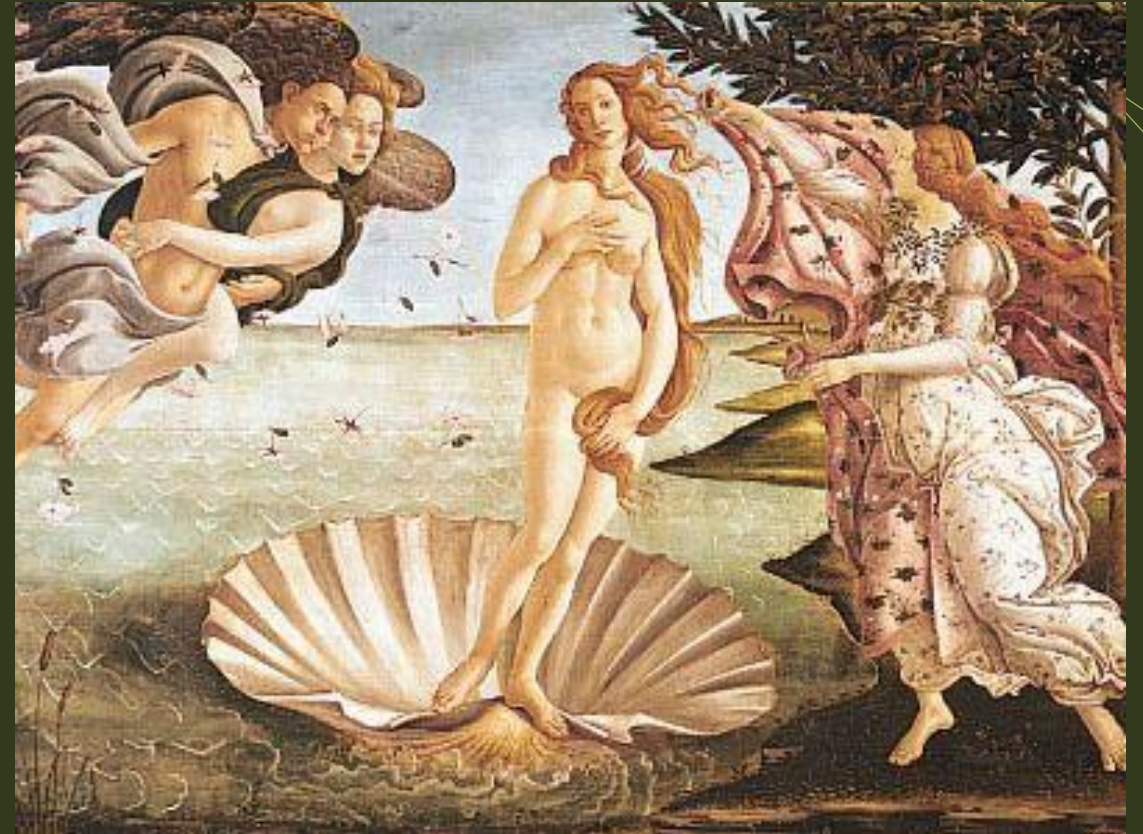


IMAGE OF A PAINTING OF THE
BIRTH OF VENUS (Botticelli, 1485)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – NIKE

Nike is the winged goddess of victory. Nike was often depicted as carrying a laurel wreath or a palm branch, which were seen as symbols of victory (Kidd, n.d.). She is the goddess of both victory in war and victory in peaceful competition. Nike was also closely identified with the goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war (Theoi, 2017).

RESEARCHED BY CAM FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP



IMAGE OF A FIGURINE OF THE
GODDESS NIKE (Anon., 1st-3rd CE)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – CUPID

Cupid was the Roman god of all types of love. Cupid was the son of Venus and Mercury. He was often depicted as an infant with wings and carrying a bow and quiver. The arrows Cupid shoots would inspire the victim with love or passion. He was also seen as mischievous in his matchmaking. Cupid fell in love with Psyche and made her his immortal wife (Britannica, 2025).



RESEARCHED BY CAM FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

IMAGE OF CUPID AND PSYCHE
(Davis, 1817)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – ICARUS

Icarus was the son of Daedalus. They were locked up in a tower that overlooked the ocean because Daedalus had tried to leave Crete, but the king, Minos, didn't want him to leave. This could have been from his part in the creation of the minotaur or because Minos wanted to keep the labyrinth a secret. Daedalus wanted to escape and created two pairs of wings made of wax and feathers that they would use to fly away from the tower. Daedalus warned Icarus that flying too high would make the sun melt his wings and that flying too low would cause the moisture to weigh the wings down. Icarus, however, being arrogant, flew higher and higher until the sun melted the wax and the wings gave way, and he fell to his death in the sea (Chaliakopoulos, 2021).

RESEARCHED BY EVA FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP



IMAGE OF LANDSCAPE WITH THE
FALL OF ICARUS (Haklai, 2023)

GROUP RESEARCH – MYTHOLOGY – VALKYRIES

The Valkyries were the shieldmaidens of Odin. They would help him pick out the bravest fallen warriors to dwell in Valhalla, a hall in Asgard. Valkyries were beautiful, bloodthirsty women who revelled in the gore of battles. They would also take part in a battle if they wanted to ensure a specific outcome and would even eat dead bodies and bathe in the blood of the dead. Depictions of Valkyries from the Viking Age showed them wearing chain mail, helmets, and cloaks made of swan feathers, which were believed to aid them in flight. They would also wield round shields and spears (Suess, 2024).



RESEARCHED BY EVA FOR
THE WHOLE GROUP

IMAGE OF A VALKYRIE TAKING A
WARRIOR TO VALHALLA
(Hentschel, 1895)

MY RESEARCH – ARMOURERS

An armourer, also known as a weapons master, is someone who supervises the use of weapons and provides instruction to actors on how to use them safely and properly on a film, TV or stage production. The weapons they deal with can range from edged weapons, such as swords and knives, to firearms. An armourer can work at any time of day or night and any day of the year. Whenever a weapon is used, an armourer must be present to oversee it. Sometimes, this can mean that on a show with a lot of fighting, they will be shooting with weapons a lot of the time, and so will need an armourer to be present the whole time. To become an armourer, you would have to be an apprentice to learn the necessary skills. Apprentices would work for a Master Armourer for about a year before they could take up their own job at a company. The apprentice would have to learn the protocol for both edged weapons and firearms of different eras. Armourers should know what type of weapon was used in what time period to make sure they aren't using weapons that had gone out of style or hadn't been made yet. Armourers would also need to have good social skills to make sure they can gain strong professional connections with other people (Careers in Film, 2025). Larry Zanoff tells us a bit about the range of the types of firearms an armourer might have to work with, including guns that shoot blanks, guns that have to look futuristic for sci-fi, guns that existed in history and rubber guns (Brownells, Inc, 2019).

MY RESEARCH – ARMOURERS

Theatrical Armoury Services supply theatrical weapons and pyrotechnics for both stage and screen. This includes rifles, swords, daggers, pistols, cannon fire effects and simulated destructive charges. They will also always send out their own armourer to look over their weapons. All of their firearms are deactivated to the British Home Office specifications, and all of their bladed weapons have dull edges and are blunt. They do training with the use of the theatrical weapons and also do fight choreography. Their Head Armourer is called Stuart Archibald (Theatrical Armoury Services, 2019).

History in the Making is a registered firearms dealer for Theatre, film and TV. They provide licensed and insured armourers for the production. They also supply swords that are fight-ready which they have designed themselves (History in the Making, n.d.).



MY RESEARCH – ARMOURERS

Prop guns

As a gun is fired multiple times throughout the play, I decided to look into fake guns and the process of firing guns with blanks. Bryan Carpenter on the Go Creative Show YouTube channel talks about the process of using a fireable fake gun on a TV set. When a prop gun is chosen for use in a movie, it is shipped from the prop house to the armourer/prop master, and it must be checked to ensure it is safe. The weapons are then put inside a safe and will stay there until they are needed on set. The morning before the scene is shot, the armourer would have to check over the gun again, and the blanks would be put into a separate bag. The gun would not have left the safe before this moment, as a rubber or plastic gun that doesn't fire would have been used in rehearsals. The gun(s) are then loaded up into the armourer's cart, and the armourer then has to watch over them all the time. If, for any reason, the armourer has to step away for a minute, either they would leave a responsible party from the props department who had been trained as an armourer to watch over them, or the guns would have to be locked up. Just before they start rolling, the gun is then taken by the armourer to be looked over by themselves, and a person of authority on the set has to be shown that there are no obstructions in the barrel, it's not loaded right now and that the armourer is going to load it with blanks that are also checked over. When it's been checked, the armourer will load the blanks and give the gun over to the actor (who would have been talked to to make sure they know how to be safe with the gun, such as not pointing it at anyone), and the armourer will then watch the entire scene to make sure the proper protocol is being followed (Go Creative Show, 2021).

MY RESEARCH – ARMOURERS

Prop guns

Kevin Inouye also points out that not only do you have the actors to worry about, but as an armourer, you also have to make sure the props and equipment you are using don't get broken. If you are firing any blanks near a camera, you should invest in a camera cover and protective lens to minimise the damage to the expensive equipment. You should also invest in safety equipment for the crew, as they will at the very least need some earplugs. They also might need a shield, depending on the union rules, if the firing is done in an enclosed space or within close proximity to the crew. If fired in a theatre, you also have to think about the safety of the audience. A good option to use if you have to throw, hit someone with or drop the firearm from a height is custom casting a replica of the gun. This means the weapon will look the same to the audience but not be as heavy, so it won't injure someone and also won't damage the more expensive gun. In short, you need to ensure the budget covers all of the aspects of safety when firing a gun (Inouye, 2014).

MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

A prop maker is someone who creates objects needed for films, TV, and theatre. A prop maker would work with the production staff to figure out what props are needed for the production, make plans from their ideas, create rough sketches, and research props to ensure the props would fit with the time period of the production. If the prop maker can find the right prop for hire or to buy, they would have to manage their budget to make sure they could buy/hire it. If they can't find the right prop anywhere, they would then have to work with the necessary materials, e.g. metal, wood, fibreglass and/or textiles, and necessary tools to create the prop. They will work closely with the props team, prop master, and set decorators to ensure the prop they create fits in with the rest of the play. Prop makers also have to repair and maintain existing props that are in the props store to ensure they can still be used (National Careers Service, n.d.).

MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

One of my favourite prop masters, whom I've been following on Instagram for years, is Scott Reeder. He explains how certain props work. One of the most recent is of a plastic scalpel with an eye dropper behind it filled with fake blood, so that in a surgery scene, it appears as though the scalpel is actually cutting into the skin (scottpropandroll, 2025).



MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

We can see this scalpel trick in action in Grey's Anatomy. In this episode from Season 5, a close up of the scalpel shows that you can actually see the blood running down the scalpel blade before meeting the body it is supposed to be coming out of (*Grey's Anatomy*, 2009).



MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

Scott Reeder also does a lot of edible and breakaway props. Some of his edible props include;

1. Using red velvet cake with white icing through a clean meat grinder to make fake raw meat (scottpropandroll, 2025).
2. Fake soap using silicone putty to create a mould of the soap, melt white chocolate with food colouring, insert it into the mould, let it set and then de-mould it (scottpropandroll, 2025).

And some of his breakaway props include;

1. A breakaway baseball bat using a foam baseball bat, which is cut with an exacto knife in a way that makes it look like an uneven break. It is then fitted with balsa wood dowels in the middle, which have been scored so they break in the right place (scottpropandroll, 2025).
2. A foam cinderblock, which was cut into parts and then had divots cut in it to help hide the magnets. The magnets would then be glued in and painted over to help them look real to turn it into a breakaway cinderblock (scottpropandroll, 2024).

MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS



(scottpropandroll, 2025)

(scottpropandroll, 2025)

MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS



(scottpropandroll, 2025)



(scottpropandroll, 2024)

MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

There are a huge number of props on the set of Hamilton. Adam Savage visited with the prop master of Hamilton, Mike Eickmeyer, to discuss what his job entails. He goes through some of the props that are used on stage, including champagne glasses that have resin with glitter in them that look like champagne with bubbles to the audience (they are also attached to a tray with magnets so they don't fall), the paper that Eliza burns on stage, of which the paper types were tested to find the paper that burns for the right amount of time and some sets of carts covered in candles which are wheeled on stage on a track. They also talk about the guns used in the performance and how they aren't foam as that would be too noticeable for the audience as they wouldn't have the correct weight to them (Adam Savage's Tested, 2020).



MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

They also talk about some of the fixes he's had to do to some of the props. The first thing they talk about is the Renold pamphlet, which they re-print once a month when the pages are worn. The next thing they talk about is a chair that had to be repaired after the leg split. This was repaired with fibre fix, which is an air-dry repairing solution. There is also a block that a lot of the characters stand on throughout the musical, which gets a lot of wear and tear because of it. This means it has to be sanded down a lot to ensure there are no splinters and then re-painted. The box itself also has to be light enough to be carried by the actors, yet strong enough for it to be stood on. This box is a wooden frame filled with foam, so there is no room for compression (Adam Savage's Tested, 2020).



MY RESEARCH – PROP MAKERS

Prop makers Mary Creede, Zoe Morsette and John Jerard say that prop making is all about problem-solving, as you have to work out how to make everything from scratch. Mary Creede has a background in both art and theatre, and used to think that they were two separate things, but she found that props linked both things together, and she enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of making props. One thing she has worked on is the candles from Hamilton. She replaces the electronics when they give out. She also mentions that a speciality prop has a use other than to be looked at. Fake food becomes a speciality prop when it has to be eaten. She has also worked on an animatronic fish (American Theatre Wing, 2019).



PROPS LIST

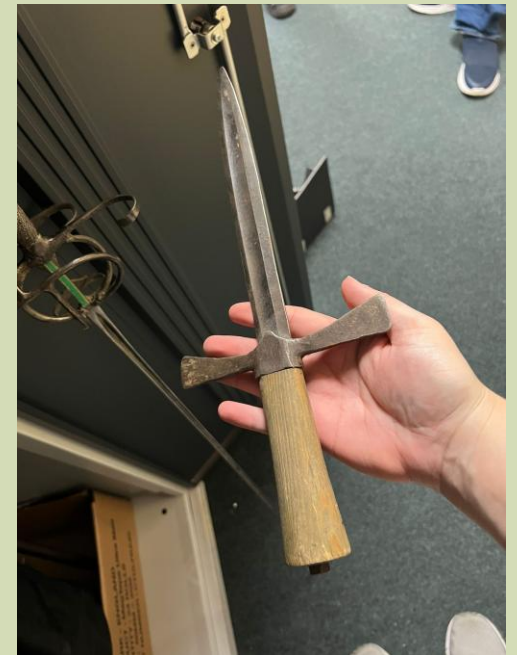
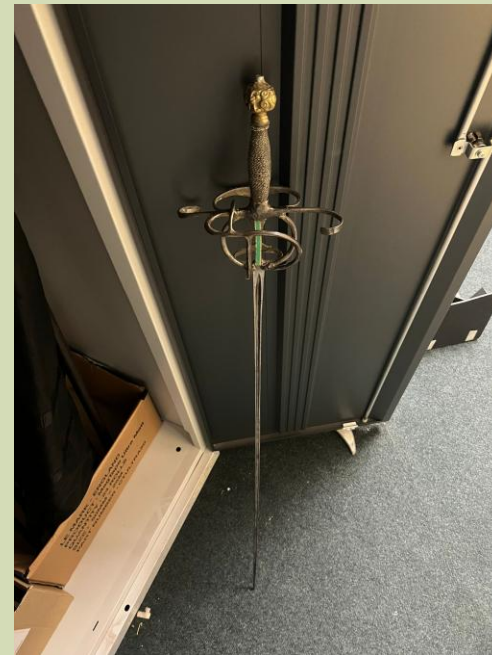
1	Prop	Character	Where it First Appears	
2	Instrument	Windjammer	Act 1 - Page 9	
3	Notebook and Pen	Jack	Act 1 - Page 10	
4	Piano	Fewers	Act 1 - Page 13	
5	Jellied Eels	Fewers	Act 1 - Page 13	
6	Champagne	Fewers	Act 1 - Page 15	
7	Sword	Ma Nelson	Act 1 - Page 15	
8	Bag	Lizzie	Act 1 - Page 16	
9	Rum	Ma Nelson	Act 1 - Page 20	
10	Fake Cigarettes	Chorus	Act 1 - Page 23	
11	Bottle of Alcohol	Kearney	Act 2 - Page 30	
12	Gun	Princess	Act 2 - Page 30	
13	Paper and Pen	Lizzie	Act 2 - Page 31	
14	Chocolate	Lizzie	Act 2 - Page 32	
15	Bomb	Lizzie	Act 2 - Page 34	
16	Hose	Princess	Act 2 - Page 37	
17	Rag	Lizzie	Act 2 - Page 38	
18	Alcohol	Fewers	Act 2 - Page 38	
19	Flowers	Mr Sugar	Act 2 - Page 42	
20	Camera	Mr Sugar	Act 2 - Page 42	
21	Box of Chocolates	Lizzie	Act 2 - Page 43	
22	Flower	Jack	Act 2 - Page 45	
23	Knife	Buffo	Act 2 - Page 50	
24	Drink	Mr Sugar	Act 2 - Page 56	
25	Gag	Mr Sugar	Act 2 - Page 57	
26	Pile of Wood	Samson	Act 3 - Page 58	
27	Radio	Lizzie	Act 3 - Page 61	

PROPS LIST – WHERE TO BUY/SOURCE THEM



- Radio
- flowers
- Gun
- Sword
- Knife

Some items, like the radio and flowers, we do have in the props cupboard. This would then be the first place I would look to source these props, as this wouldn't cost any money if they had the right kind of props. I would also look for items like the gun, sword and knife in the weapons cupboard and only look elsewhere if I didn't find anything I wanted.



PROPS LIST – WHERE TO BUY/SOURCE THEM

The Royal Shakespeare Company

- Champagne
- Rum
- Bottle of alcohol given to Buffo
- Flowers Mr Sugar gives to Fevvers
- Flower Jack leaves with Mignon (from blazer pocket?)
- Drink Mr Sugar gives to Fevvers
- Radio

We can see that in the Royal Shakespeare Company's store, there is an abundance of various fake flowers, bottles of alcohol that could be filled with fake alcohol, and old radios (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2025).



PROPS LIST – WHERE TO BUY/SOURCE THEM

Celtic Prop Hire

- Instruments – piano and accordion
- Hose
- Princesses gun
- Ma Nelson's sword
- Buffo's knife

Celtic Prop Hire has a huge range of props that you can rent. They have a lot of instruments, which would make it a good place to look for the piano and the accordion. They also have a collection of gardening-related objects which would make them a good choice to look for a hose. They also have a lot of prop guns and swords (Celtic Prop Hire, 2025).



PROPS LIST – WHERE TO BUY/SOURCE THEM

Bapty

- Ma Nelson's sword
- Buffo's knife

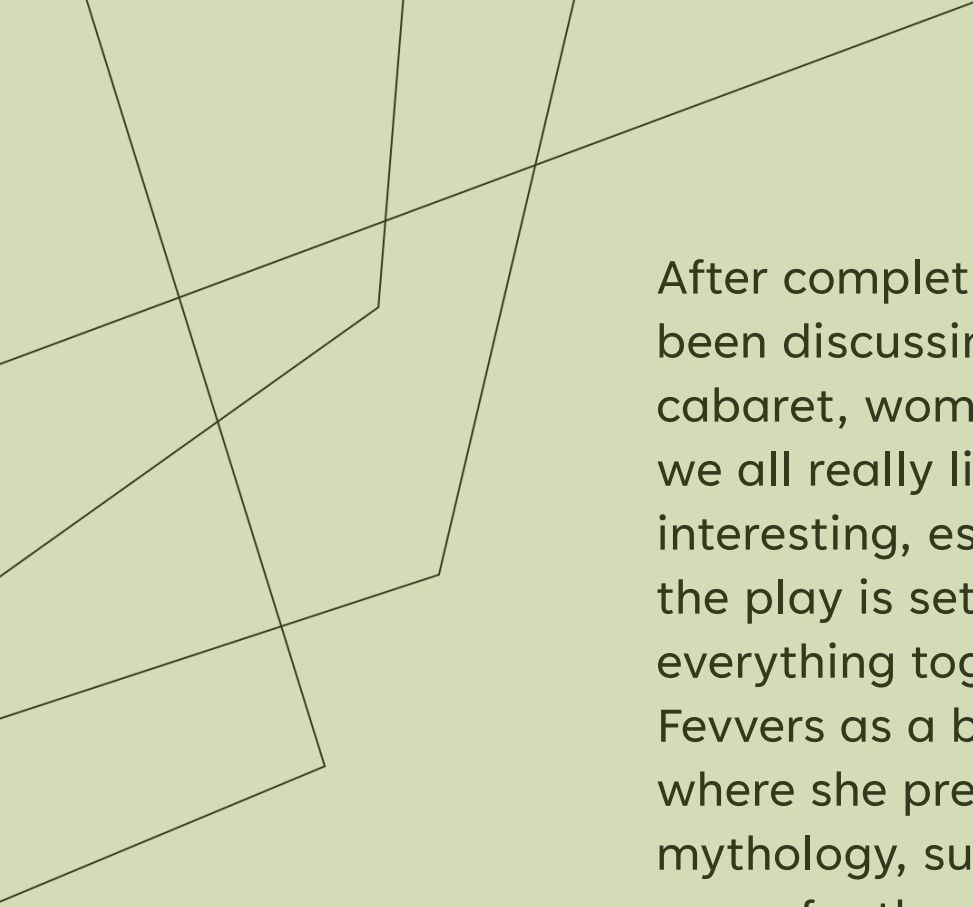
Another option for prop weapons would be Bapty. They have a wider range than Celtic Prop Hire, as they have a lot of different prop swords and daggers. They also have an armoury, where weapons can only be hired if one of their armourers accompanies the weapon to look after it and ensure it is used properly (Bapty, 2020).



PROPS LIST – WHERE TO BUY/SOURCE THEM

- Cigarettes
- Notebook and pen
- Lizzie's bag
- Rag to be put in Jacks mouth

Items like fake cigarettes can be purchased from places such as joke shops and Amazon which are useful as they actually release a puff of 'smoke' when you blow into them (Jokeshop, 2021) (Amazon, 2025). You could also look around charity shops for things like, old pens, notebooks, bags and cheap material to be used as a rag. You would just need to do some research to ensure it comes from the right period, because items like man-made fabrics, such as polyester, wouldn't have existed.



SIFTING THROUGH THE RESEARCH

After completing the group research, we reviewed all the topics we had been discussing and realised that we kept coming back to mythology, cabaret, women's rights, surrealism, and Theatre of Cruelty. One other thing we all really liked was the idea of foundlings. We thought this was really interesting, especially with the rising rates of infanticide during the period the play is set. We also realised that this could be a good way of linking everything together if we had Lizzie be Fevvers' birth mother, who killed Fevvers as a baby. That way, the play could be a manifestation of her grief, where she pretends Fevvers is still alive, and we can incorporate elements of mythology, surrealism, and cabaret without making it feel like the wrong genre for the play. This would be a good way to set it in the original time period of the play, while incorporating all the unusual elements, because it would all be inside Lizzie's head. The mythology links with this idea really well, as the Furies are tormentors of murderers. We thought that having the chorus be the Furies would be interesting and also help link everything nicely to the theatre of cruelty. Cam also decided to create colour palettes for each act based on what we've been looking at for the moodboards.

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SECTION 11: COLOUR PALETTES

ACT ONE COLOUR PALETTE



Sources found by
Cam for the group

The photos in order of appearance from top left to right (4evrmia, 2025) (Teo, n.d.) (123alanna321, 2025) (Anon., 2025) (Anon., n.d.) (ColorHex, 2025) (Anon., 2025) (tarabreslin, 2025) (Oat_Phawat, 2023) (Anon., n.d.)

ACT TWO COLOUR PALETTE



Sources found by
Cam for the group

The photos in order of appearance from top left to right (Seymour, 1965) (Anon., n.d.) (Anon., 2024) (Anon., 2025) (Anon., 2025) (honestabe, 2025) (Anon., 2025) (Baloncici, 2025) (serena, 2025) (Shah, 2013) (Oat_Phawat, 2023) (AthenaStonecare, 2025)

ACT THREE COLOUR PALETTE



Sources found by
Cam for the group

(Kliaphuangphit, 2025)

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SECTION 13: THE RADIO

DESIGNING THE RADIO

Research

As the radio plays Nina Simone's music, we decided that the radio should be from just before her first album, which was released in 1959. We thought this would be a good way of symbolising that the play was all in Lizzie's mind, as the radio is the most modern item in the entire play by a long shot. We decided it would be the item that helps Lizzie realise it's all in her head and that Fevvers is still dead. A good place to get the prop radio would be Electro Props, as they have a large range of old-fashioned radios (Electro Props, 2025).



The image shows a 1933 battery-powered radio that you can hire from Electro Props (Electro Props, 1933).

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SECTION 14: BOMB IN A BAG

DESIGNING LIZZIE'S HANDBAG + BOMB

Research

There are many types of bags used throughout the 1800s, including mesh bags, beaded bags, types of purses and carpet bags.

I am thinking Lizzie would have a large carpet bag, as the bag in which she is building the bomb. This is because I feel that Lizzie would have all the essentials for herself and Fevvers in the bag, in case they have to leave suddenly. I feel like Lizzie would have learnt from them getting kicked out of the brothel, and be ready to leave with their essentials at a moment's notice. Carpet bags are great for travel as they offer a lot of storage space to carry with you due to the wide bottom. They were also very cheap, and all classes used them. They had become recognisable as a travel bag (Vintage Dancer, 2025).



The image shows a carpet bag (Hovey, 1865)

DESIGNING LIZZIE'S HANDBAG + BOMB



Where to buy

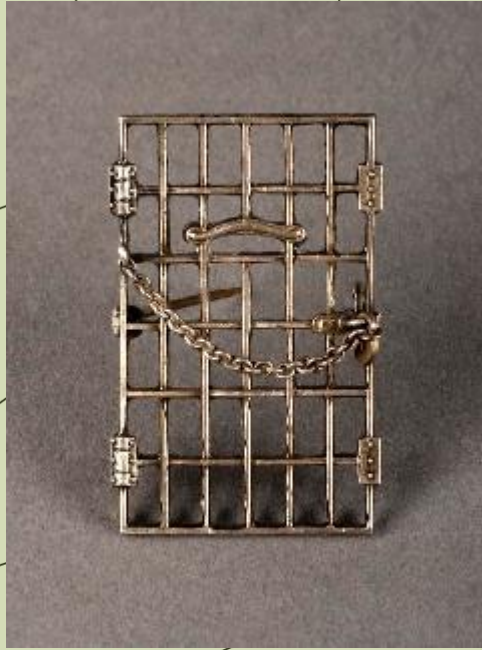
Vintage Dancer says that carpet bags made in the 1800s “were made from scraps of rolled silk carpet (often used/pre-owned) with a wide bottom, and collapsed at the top with two short leather or wood handles” (Vintage Dancer, 2025).

There are carpet bags that closely match this description for sale on eBay, such as the red one from the user caho23 (caho23, 2025). This carpet bag is being sold for £42.07.

There are also a couple of these bags being sold on Vinted that look like they could be from the correct time period. This includes the white and gold one from 2002lucy (2002lucy, n.d.), although this one would need the handle to be painted to resemble real leather. It is only about £9.10. This bag, however, is a bit small for what I would need, so I’d probably go with the first one.



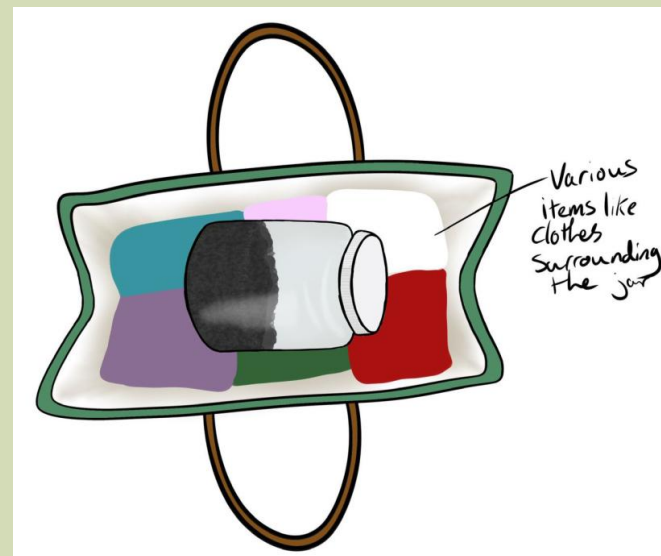
The images show Jailed for Freedom pin (left) (Allender, 1917) and Holloway Brooch (right) (Anon., 2012)



DESIGNING LIZZIE'S HANDBAG + BOMB

Research

I thought it could be interesting to have some more nods to women's suffragists surrounding Lizzie's character, and so I decided to look into suffragist symbols and use them for the pattern on the bag. I also decided to use green and purple for the outside of the bag, and use white for the inside as another nod to the suffragettes, as these were the colours they used to symbolise their movement (Anne, et al., 2021). I also took inspiration from the chains on the Jailed for Freedom pin and the Holloway Brooch (ContentEngine LLC, 2023), and also took the four-by-four grid from the Holloway Brooch.



DESIGNING LIZZIE'S HANDBAG + BOMB

Research



Taking influence from my research into the suffragette bombing of the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, I was thinking of having the bomb be gunpowder in a glass jar that, when the bag is thrown at Mr Sugar, breaks and catches fire, resulting in an explosion. To do this, Lizzie would have to pretend to set the bag on fire.

The glass jar would actually be a plastic jar, so it wouldn't actually break and hurt anyone. The gunpowder could be some painted scatter material, as it wouldn't be seen by the audience at more than a glance. The explosion would be done offstage using lighting and sound. The idea my group had was that as Lizzie was hitting Mr Sugar with her handbag, he would back away offstage and then she would throw it at him in the wings. This way we could have the sound of an explosion and flashes of bright red, orange and white lighting.

The image shows a pile of gunpowder (Halicki, 2023)

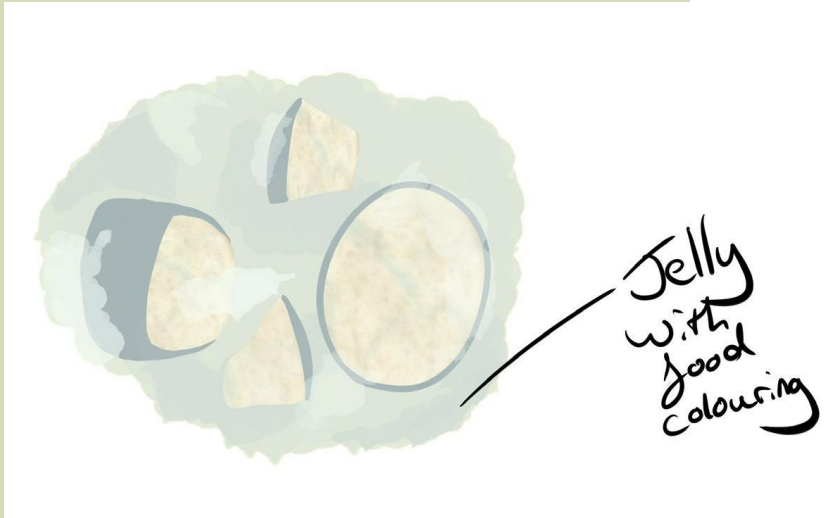
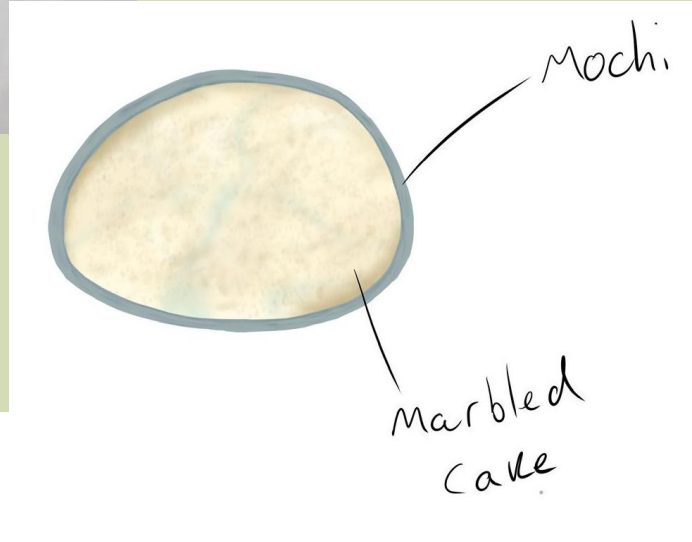
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SECTION 15: JELLIED EELS

DESIGNING EDIBLE JELLIED EELS



The image shows a plate of jellied eels (JanesDaddy, 2006)

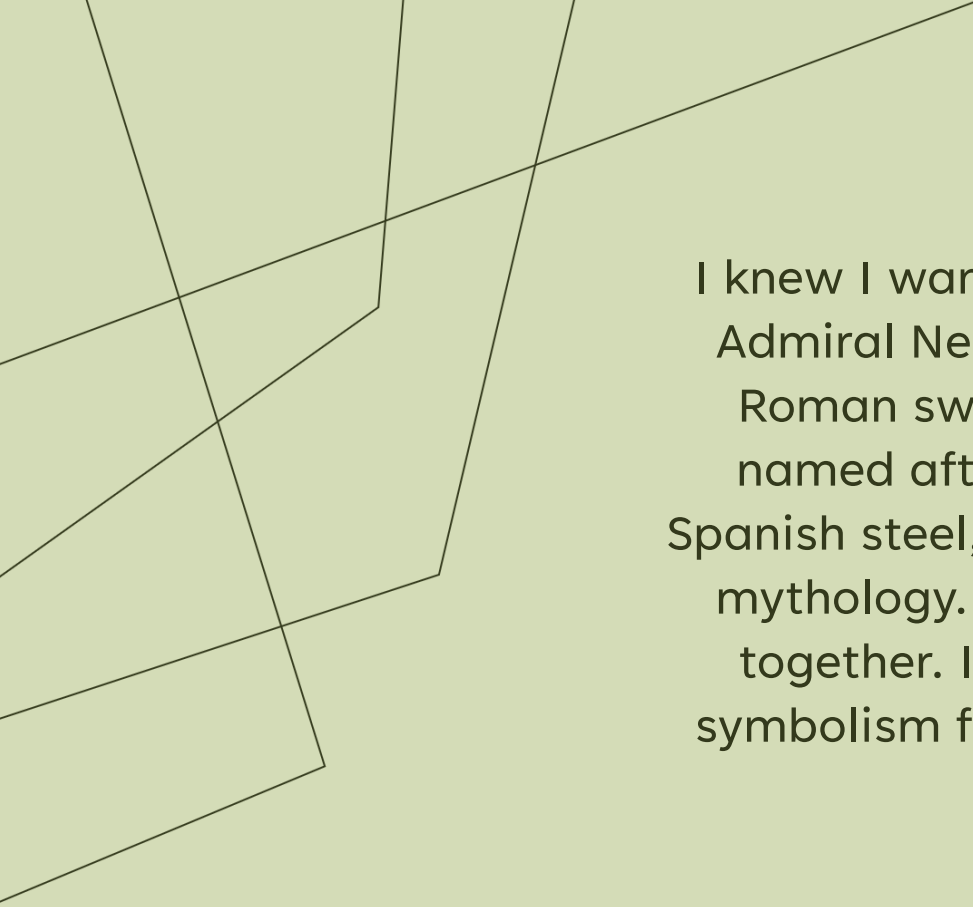


Research

When looking at jellied eels, the first thing I knew I needed to do was look at what they looked like. My first thought with this was to have the jelly be actual clear jelly. To make the slices of eels, I would make some daifuku mochi filled with either cake or cold custard. I think the cake could look better colour-wise, as the cake can be marbled to give the impression of the textures on the inside of the eel slices. The custard, however, would have a similar-looking form to the eels as it would also wobble. But either way, making the outside out of mochi would work well as mochi can be different colours. It also has a very similar-looking texture to the eel skin. The mochi balls would then be cut up into slices that look like slices of eel and placed inside the jelly. I think this would be a great way to make fake, edible jellied eels, as it would be sweet and it would taste nice (Lau, 2022). Cake is also a good choice when it comes to allergies and intolerances, as there are cake recipes for almost any dietary requirement.

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SECTION 16: MA NELSON'S SWORD



DESIGNING MA NELSONS SWORD

I knew I wanted to make Ma Nelson's sword, so I drew inspiration from Admiral Nelson's sword, Spanish swords of the period, and Greek and Roman swords. This is because Admiral Nelson is who Ma Nelson is named after, it's mentioned in the play that the blade is made from Spanish steel, and we are taking a lot of influence from Greek and Roman mythology. I thought this would be a good way to connect everything together. I also explored bird iconography to help tie in some of the symbolism for freedom found throughout the play, as well as patterns I discovered on Greek pottery and metalwork.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Admiral Nelson's Swords

Admiral Nelson had a few different swords, one of which was given to him by the Sultan of Turkey in 1798 after the Battle of the Nile. The Presentation Sword is supposedly a replica of this sword. It has a crocodile, which is the grip of the sword (Royal Museums Greenwich, n.d.).

The sword he was carrying when he died was the 1805 Royal Navy Sword. This had a straight blade and a cavalry-style stirrup hilt. All naval officers would have carried one with exactly the same style at the time Nelson did (Access Heritage, 2023).



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Spanish Swords



The official Spanish Navy Saber Model was used around 1844-1857. It was the Spanish Navy's officers' sword, and it became the standard in 1857. It was 880mm long, with a blade length of 740mm and a blade width of 24mm (Medieval-Shop, 2025). Although this would have been a bit of an old blade for the time the play is set, I think it could work quite well, as it could have been passed down to Ma Nelson or gifted to her by someone she slept with meaning it wouldn't necessarily be a new blade.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Spanish Swords

The stage directions mention that Ma Nelson's sword is made out of Spanish steel. A Toledo-made steel sword is a type of sword that shows excellent workmanship, as it combines two types of steel with differing carbon contents. These steels are hot forged together. Some examples of these types of blades are the Iberian Falcata and the Gladius Hispanensis. They were some of the most sought-after blades in the 19th century (Ruiz, et al., 2006).



Iberian Falcatas were about 40-60cm long (Tait, 2025). Image shows a replica Falcata made by Dorieo (Dorieo, 2011).



Gladius Hispanensis were Roman short swords which were about 60-68cm long (Tait, 2025). Image shows a replica Gladius (Rama, 2009)

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Greek Swords



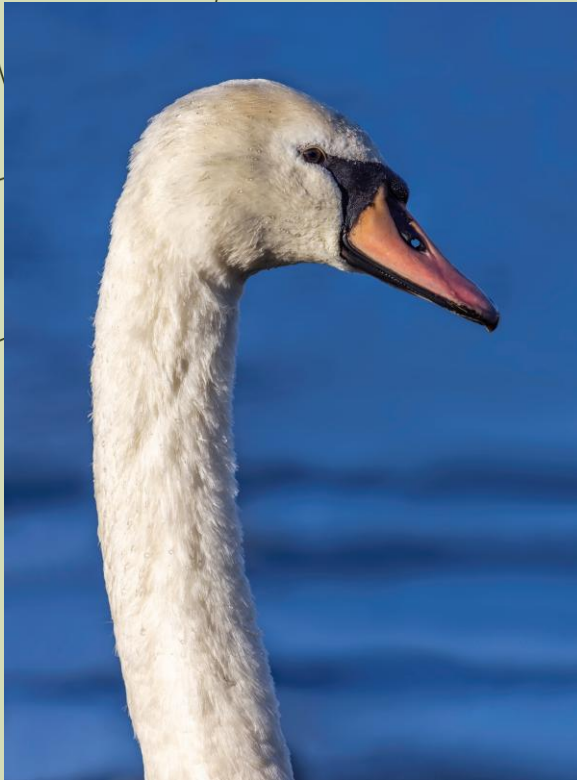
A common weapon used by the Greeks was called the xiphos. It was a double-edged short sword used by the ancient Greek warriors. The blade was primarily used when the phalanx formation was broken and the spear was no longer useful. Xiphos blades were once decorated and inscribed to show status. It was also often used as part of burial offerings for fallen warriors and for sacrificial ceremonies. Xiphos are about 45-60cm long. Xiphos blades originally started as bronze but were slowly changed to iron during the Iron Age (Pahl, 2024).

The images show replicas of xiphos swords (Pahl, 2024).

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Extra design influence

I decided to add some bird iconography as a reference to both Fevvers and the symbolism of freedom and letting go. Also, because in the book, she is part swan.



The image shows a mute swan
(Klajban, 2019)



The image shows a white feather
(Freitas, 2004)



The image shows a mourning
dove wing (bansidhe, 2006)

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Extra design influence

I also decided to add some Greek patterns to help link the sword to the mythology themes we have decided on.



The image shows a piece of Greek pottery (ArchaiOptix, 2014)



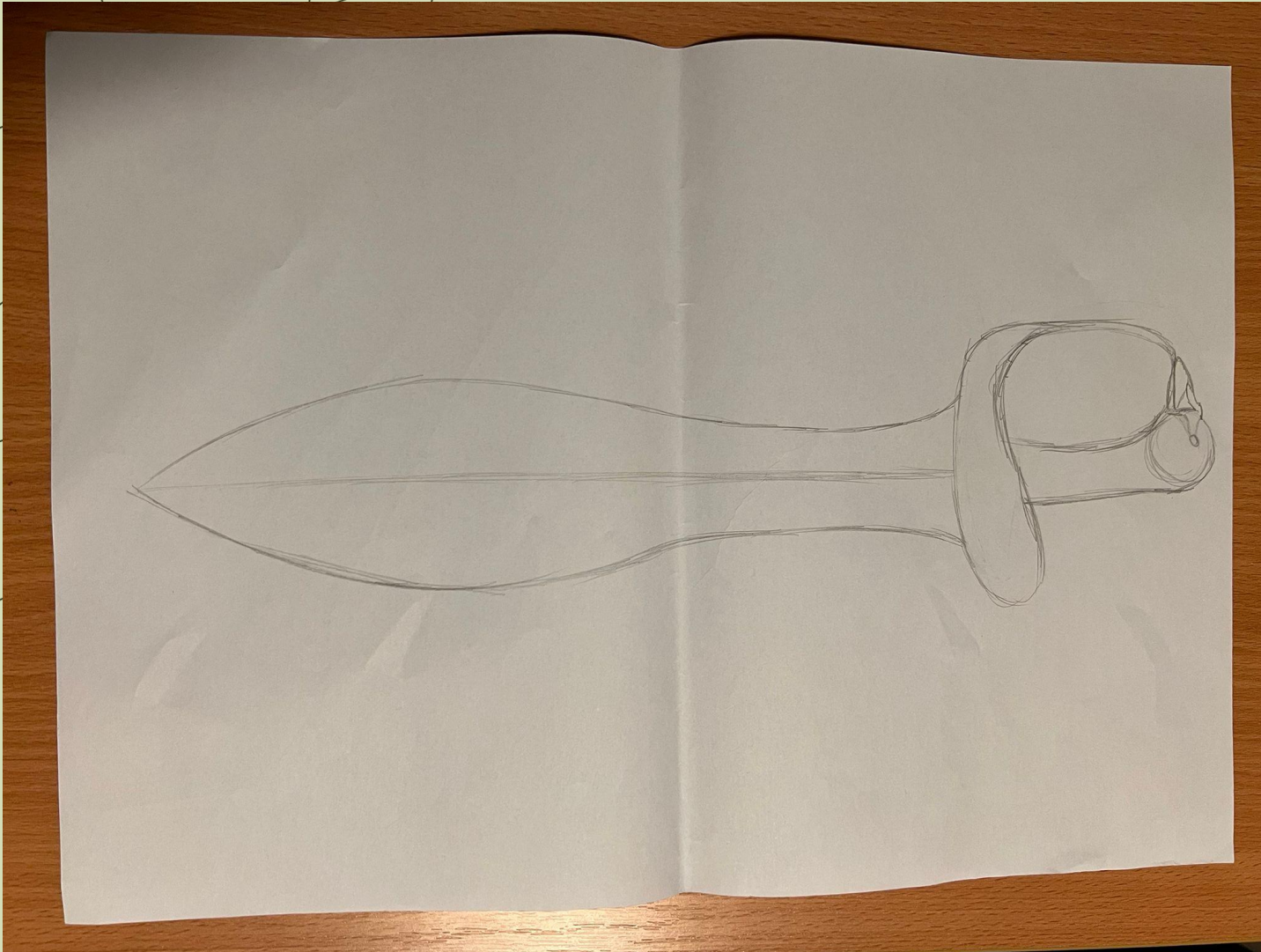
The image shows a funerary bronze helmet (Harrsch, 540-530 BCE)



The image shows a Greek bowl (Daderot, 3rd century BC)

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Initial sketches



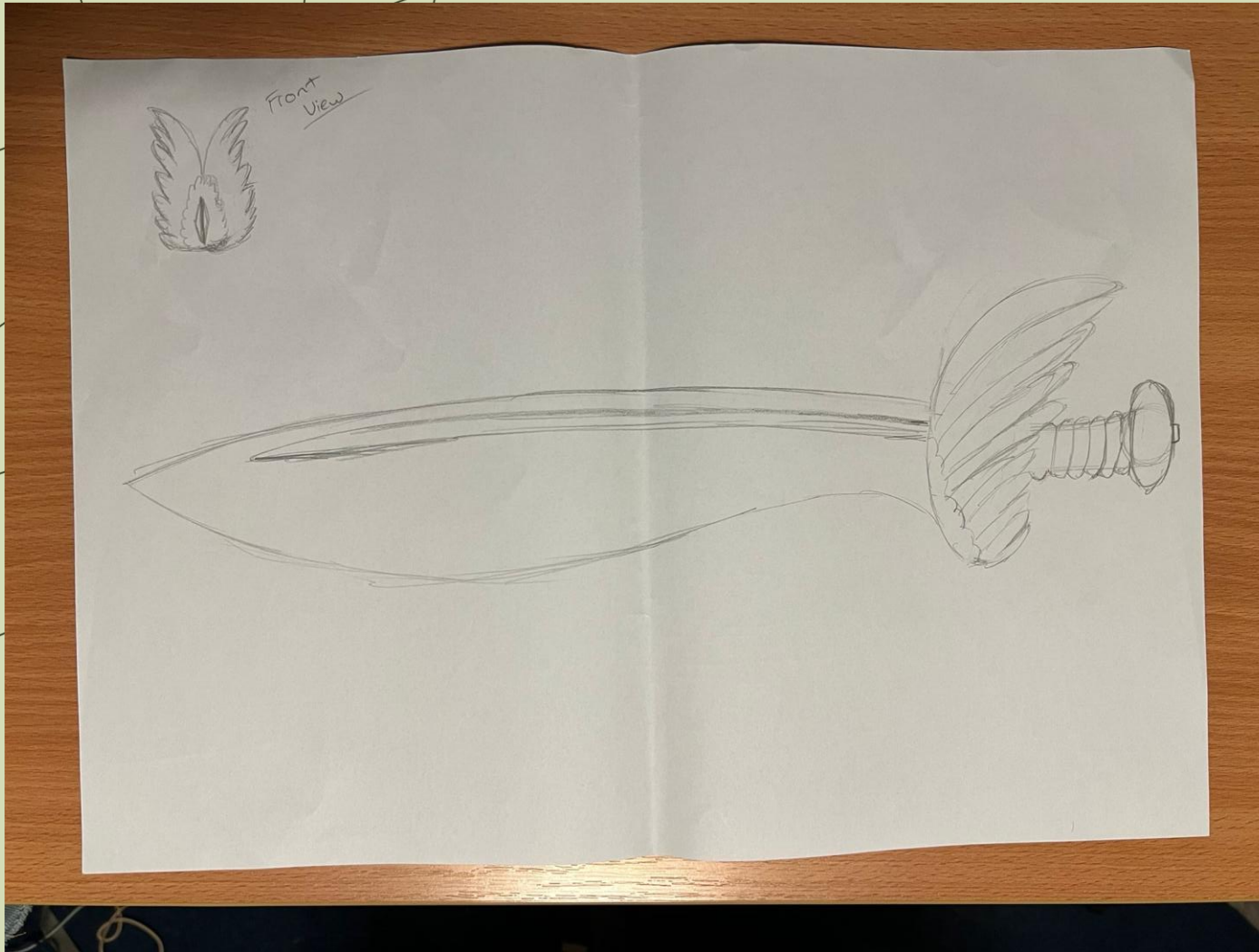
The first design I created drew a lot of influence from Admiral Nelson's sword and the Spanish naval sword for the hilt.

I decided to have a swan's head on the pommel of the sword, where the lions on their swords were and used the cross guard from the Spanish naval sword too. I decided on a swan because in the play,

Fevvers is compared to a swan and I really liked this imagery. I then took influence from the other swords and gave it a much shorter blade than the two types of naval swords. I also took inspiration from the xiphos and the gladius and made it a double-edged blade. I liked this design, but thought it was a bit too plain.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Initial sketches

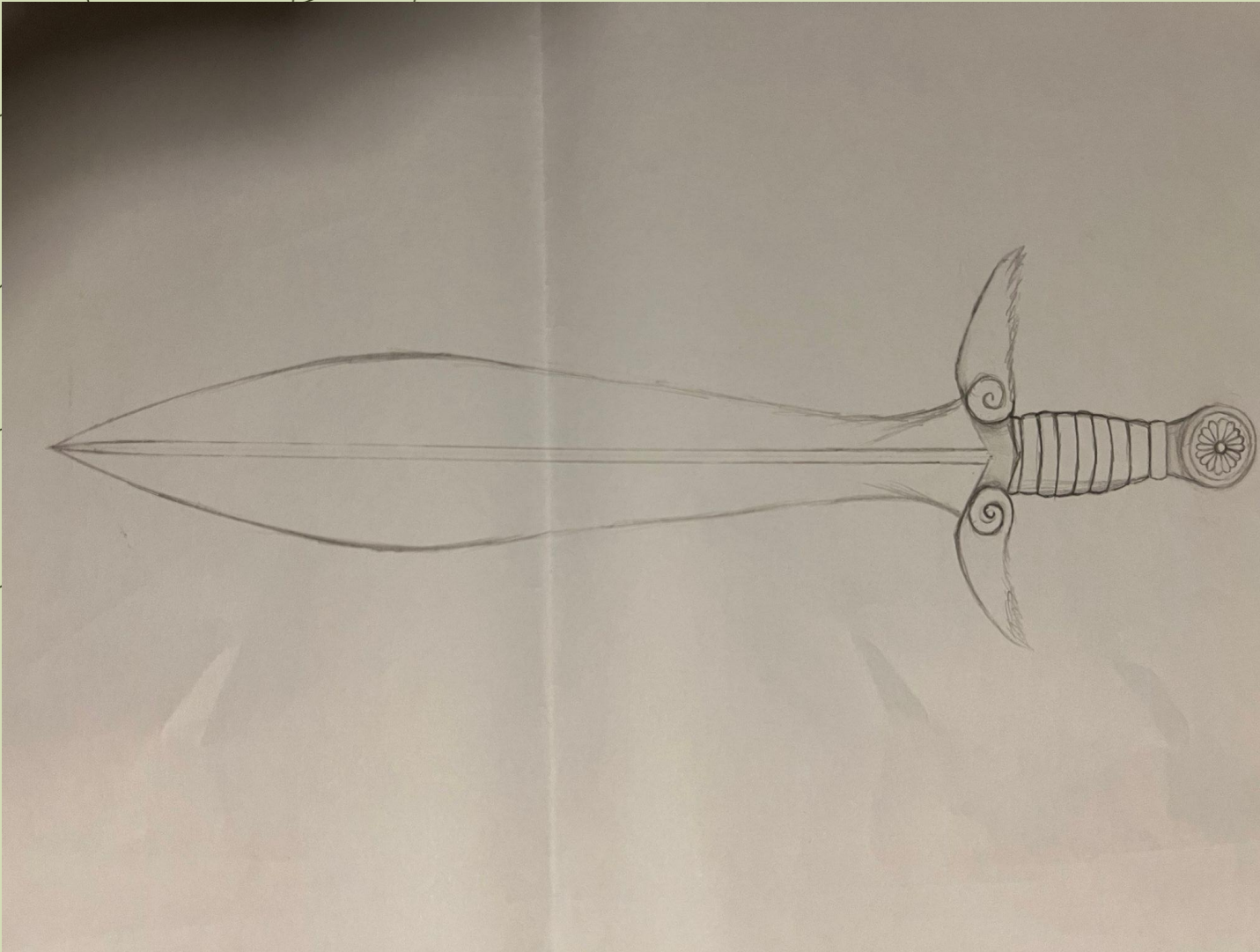


The second design I created was a lot bolder. This incorporated two bird wings into the design of the cross-guard. This time, I made the blade single-edged to help emphasise the specific way up the sword would be held to make the wings look impressive. I still kept the short blade as I think this would work well in the scene where Mr Sugar is trying to cut off Fevvers' wings. I also really liked this design , but as the wings on the cross-guard are flared, it would be difficult to carry on stage and impossible to have on her while she is on the trapeze.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Initial sketches

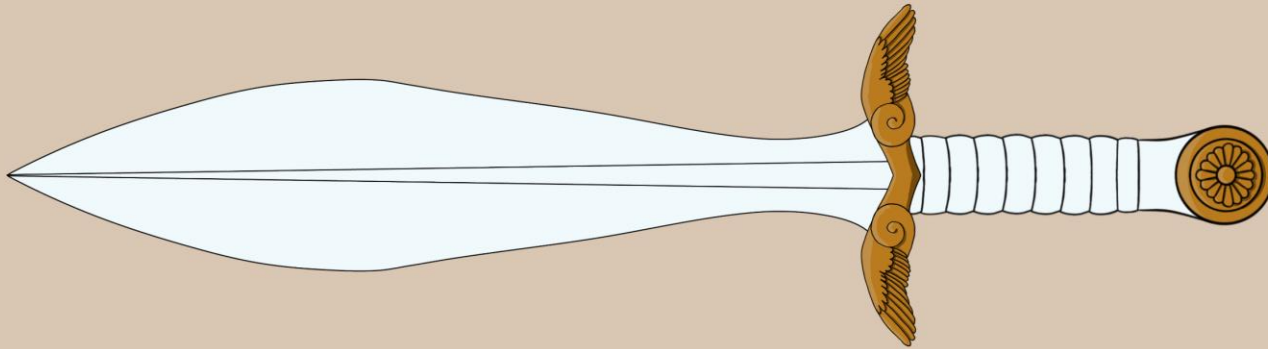


The last design I did, and the one I am going to try and develop further, takes influence in the pommel from the bottom of a Greek metal bowl, as I liked the pattern, and it helps us draw the sword back to the mythology we want to incorporate into our version of the play. I then took influence from the grip on Admiral Nelson's sword and incorporated that into my design too.

As I liked the wing design on the previous sketches' cross guard, I then used that idea but made it smaller and more manageable on set. I also added some influence from a spiralling pattern from a Greek vase to incorporate into the cross guard, too. I kept the blade short but changed it back to being a double-edged sword as a metaphor for the two ways it could be used for fevers to gain her freedom, to fight for what is right, or to give up and use it to cut off her wings to be seen as normal.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

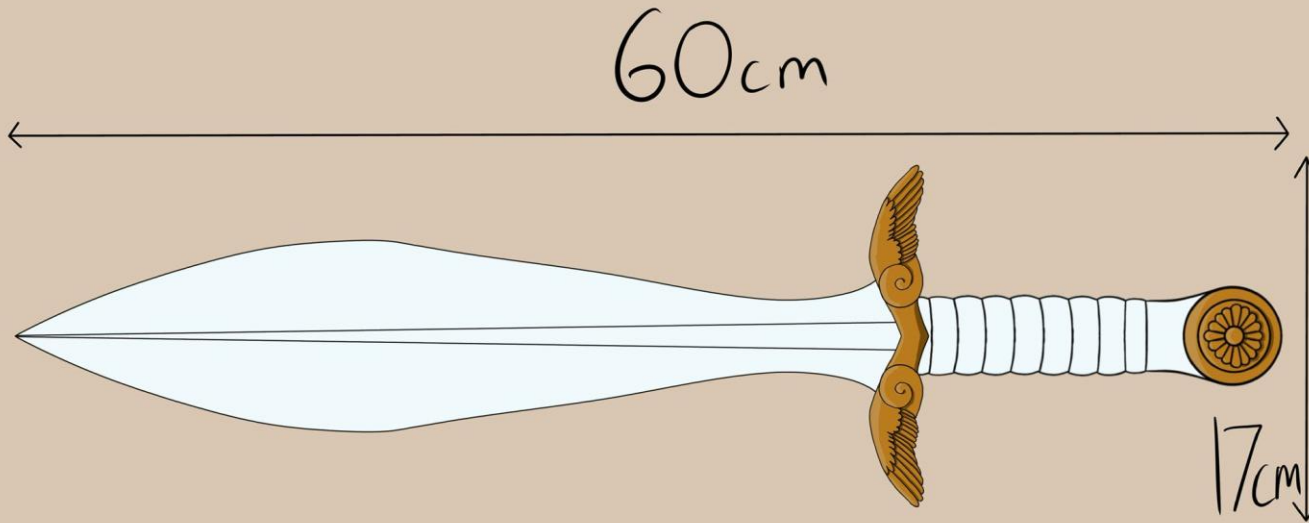
Digital Drawing



I then decided to do a digital drawing of my chosen design. I decided to add gold on the pommel and the cross-guard, inspired by both Admiral Nelson's and the Spanish naval swords. I also liked how well that would work with the fact that gold is a recurring colour throughout all three acts of our take on the play. I also decided to make the rest of the sword a more off-white colour rather than silver, so it doesn't stand out at the end of the play in the white void, and it would also work well with the stage lighting. I also want it to look somewhat flat, as a lot of Cam's inspiration for the set is 2D-looking flats.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Digital Drawing



From here, I was able to work out that if I wanted the sword to be 60cm long, the width of the cross-guard, the widest bit of the sword, would be about 17cm long. I did this by enlarging the image on my computer screen till the length was at 30cm and then measured the widest part of the cross guard and doubling it. This means that to create the sword, I would need at the very least 60 cm by 34cm of Plastazote. Ideally, I'd like more than that, so I have room for error, and so that I'm not cutting the two halves of the sword out literally right next to each other. I would also like a wooden dowel that runs the length of the sword and some spray paint to make the right colours.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Where to Buy the Materials – Plastazote

The first place I looked to buy plastazote was Flints. To buy a sheet, 75cm x 100cm, of 6mm thick white plastazote from Flints, it would cost £14.49. This would be a great amount as it would fit the longest side easily, and it would also have some left over, which would give me some room for error. When I added it to my basket, I found out that the tax made the total £17.39. The website says that most parcels are delivered on the next working day. It also has the price of shipping, which is either £4.95, £9 or £9.95 (Flints, 2025).

I then looked to see if I could find any cheaper alternatives on eFoam. I found a sheet of 100 x 100cm, 5mm thick plastazote for £17.55, including tax. It also has free UK shipping, which makes it less expensive than Flints (eFoam, 2025).

In the end, I ended up going with Poly Props as they also sold flexible paint, which I really wanted to use to get an idea of the colours I would use if I were to make the prop in an actual performance of the piece. I also found that Poly Props had a much larger range of thicknesses of plastazote than the other two sellers and I thought it would be a good idea to have some 1mm thick plastazote to help make the details on the hilt (Poly-Props, 2015).

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Where to Buy the Materials – Paint



The first lot of paint I looked at was Plastikote (Plastikote, 2024), as that is a brand of paint I have used before on plastic-based materials, and it has worked really well. I also know that Hobbycraft sells the paint really cheaply (Hobbycraft, n.d.). When looking into getting some, however, I realised it was collect in store only. I was then going to look for somewhere else to buy the paint from, but I then realised that, as the material for the sword will be slightly flexible, I would need a flexible paint. I then looked on Poly Props to see if they had any paint they recommend to be used with the plastazote they sell, and they did, so I decided to go with that brand as it would definitely work (Poly-Props, 2015). I have ordered the white and sunset yellow to get as close as possible to off white and gold.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Where to Buy the Materials – Dowels

I also knew I wanted a wooden dowel to run the length of the sword to help it hold its structure. At first, I couldn't find any dowels in any of the resources we already have, so I started looking at places I could get thin wooden dowels from. I looked at B&Q's website to see if I could find any dowels thin enough. The thinnest one I found had a 6mm diameter, which was a bit bigger than I would have liked, as the Plastizote I have ordered is only 6mm thick, and I need to be able to carve out the middle of the pieces without being in danger of cutting all the way through the material (B&Q, 2025). Before I looked at any more places, some dowels were brought into the room, and I found a couple that would work, so I'm going to use them rather than buy anything new. This would help keep costs down and reduce the environmental impact of the project.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

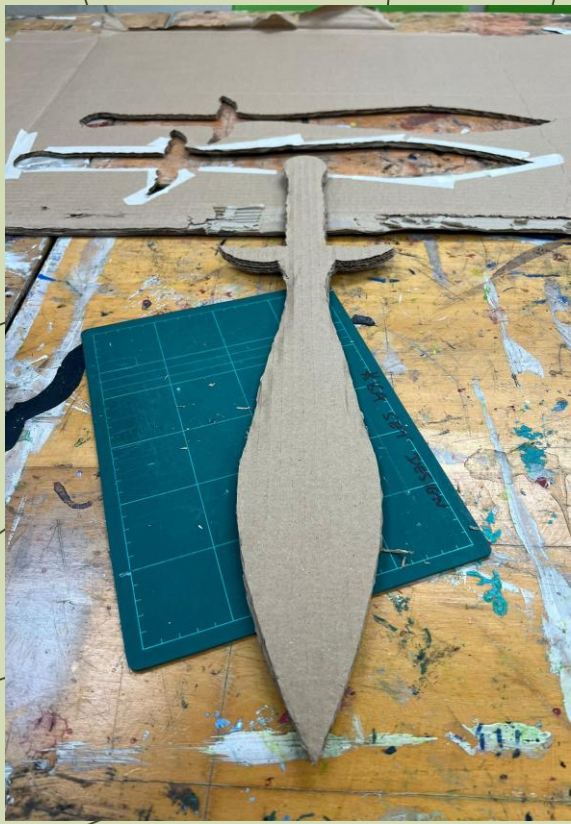
Where to Buy the Materials – Contact Adhesive



The last thing I needed was a contact adhesive that works on Plastazote. I decided to look for the contact adhesive that we used last year to make helmets out of Plastazote, as I know this works well. This was the Evo-Stik Impact Contact adhesive, which I did manage to find at B&Q for £7 (B&Q, 2025).

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

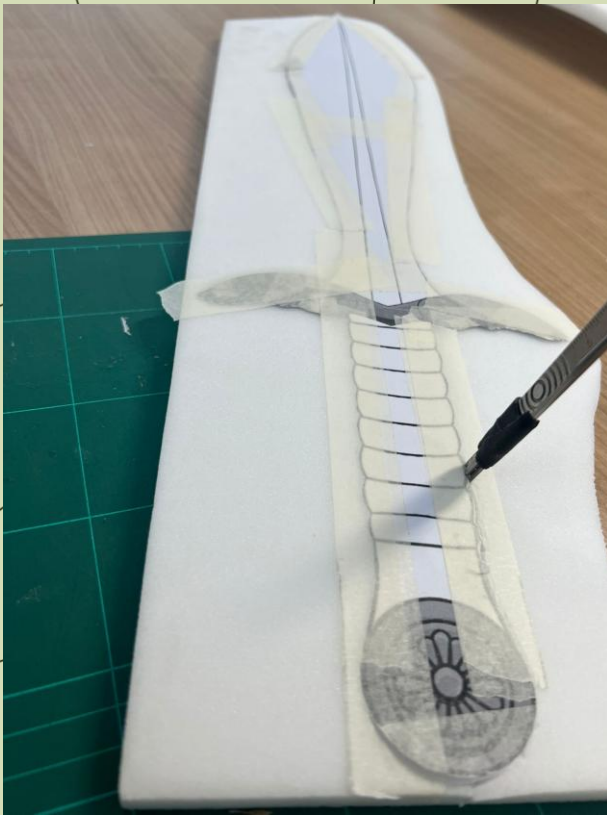
Cardboard Mock Up



I then got to work on creating a cardboard version of the prop to have a holdable visual of what the sword would look like. To do this, I got a cardboard parcel box and cut around a printed off template that I had made sure was the correct size with my craft knife, as this was more accurate than using scissors. After cutting around the template, I repeated the process and then stuck the two pieces together with a Pritt Stick. I did this to give the sword more thickness, so I could then press down the edges where I wanted to, to help shape the sword correctly. I like how this turned out. The handle and pommel are possibly a little bit too big, but I do think that if I made them any smaller, I would lose some of the detailing on the sword. I will consider this and decide whether I want to change the size of the hilt and pommel.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Experimenting with Plastazote

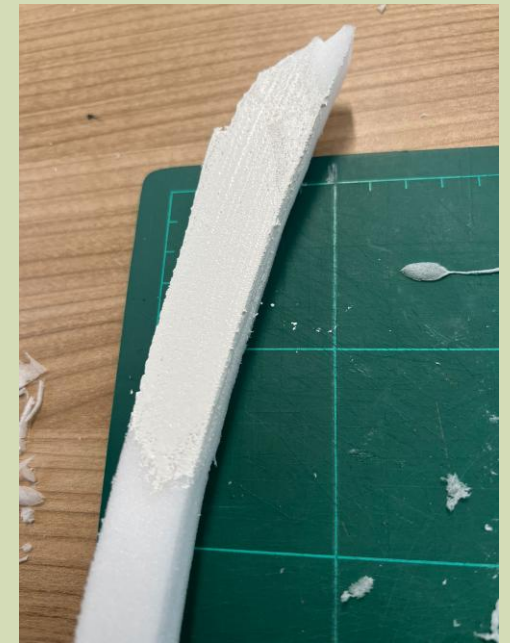


After making the cardboard mock-up up I decided to start experimenting with Plastazote. This was because I thought it would be a good idea to work out the best way to make all of the details on the sword, and I also wanted to have a better idea about how thick the sword would be in the end. I started off by cutting the sword out with my craft knife. I found it easier to cut it out with slow, long strokes going through the foam layer by layer, rather than stabbing through the foam and trying to drag the blade through all of the foam at the same time. This created smoother cuts and had less bits I needed to clean up after.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Experimenting with Plastazote

I then used some scissors to cut the sides of the blade at an angle to make it look sharp. After I was satisfied with the blade, I then looked at creating the grooves in the handle. To do this, I used my craft knife and sliced into the Plastazote in a V shape where I wanted the indents in the handle. I then used the same technique around the pommel and around the cross-guard to make them stand out a bit more. Having made this plastazote version of the sword one thing I would like to do on the final piece is to make the pommel of the sword bigger so there's less risk of it falling out of the weilder's hand. The last thing I did was then use some HexFlex paint, which was left over from another project, on some Plastazote to see how flexible it would be when it set. The next thing I want to do is experiment with a dremel and look at neatening some of the grooves.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Making the Sword

As the materials I had ordered hadn't arrived by Friday evening, and knowing I had to have the sword made and painted by Tuesday, I decided to use a thicker piece of Plastazote and make it using the same techniques that I would have used on the thinner piece. This isn't ideal, as I wanted the sword to feel slightly 2D, as our group wanted to take inspiration from surrealism, and I knew Cam was adding 2D elements into the set. Using a thicker Plastazote makes it feel a lot less 2D.

To start the sword I used masking tape to stick the drawing I had done on to the Plastazote to use as a template. I then cut around the template using a craft knife and then repeated the process so I had two complete outlines of the sword.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Making the Sword

After that, I scored a line down the middle of one of the two pieces, carved out a shallow trough and then glued in a wooden dowel to help the Plastazote hold its shape. As the glue needed to set I used some more masking tape to hold the dowel in place while I worked out where to score on the other piece of the sword. To do this, I used a highlighter and drew on the dowel, and then lined the second piece up with the first (with the dowel) before pressing the two pieces together, which transferred some of the highlighter ink onto the part of the Plastazote that I would need to cut away. I then cut out the extra bit of Plastazote and glued the two pieces together once again, making sure everything was held together while the glue set, using masking tape.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Making the Sword



I then waited to make sure the glue was completely dry before I started working on some of the details. The first thing I did was cut down the sides of the blades with the craft knife to make them look a little more realistic. I would like to cut these down further, but to do that, I need to either use a Dremel or get a new blade for my craft knife so I can cut through the Plastazote more easily. The next thing I did was work on the details of the cross-guard and pommel. To do this, I cut up the template drawing into the pieces I needed and cut them out of some scraps of 1mm grey Plastazote. This was very fiddly as some of the pieces I had to cut were very small, and I had also found that if you put masking tape on that type of Plastazote, it would leave a mark. I built these pieces up by layering them, so I also had to wait for the contact adhesive to dry. I still need to shape some of these pieces with a Dremel and a heat gun.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Making the Sword

As soon as I got a Dremel, I started to practice the sort of things I was going to have to do on the sword, cutting down the sides to help define the blade, creating grooves for the handle and removing excess Plastazote. I then realised the pommel and the cross guard were looking very rough, so I stuck on some more 1mm thick Plastazote around the edge of the pommel and the cross guard to help make those bits smoother. I then used the Dremel to create more definition on the sword's handle and to help carve down the blade.



DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

Making the Sword



When I was satisfied I'd done everything I needed to with a Dremel I used the heat gun to melt some of the rough edges created by the Dremel. I was really happy with the results on the thicker Plastazote but I did have a problem with the 1mm thick Plastazote as this was denser, so it didn't melt in the same way. Instead of melting it shrank so some of my pieces didn't fit quite right anymore. If I ever do this again I will take this into account and only stick on some of the thinner pieces of 1mm Plastazote after I've used the heat gun.

The last thing I needed to do was paint the sword. To do this I used a thin layer of white HexFlex paint as a base coat, as I don't have any HexFlex primer, and waited for it to dry before painting the blade and the handle white and the cross-guard and pommel gold.

DESIGNING MA NELSON'S SWORD

How I Would Make it for Stage

I then did some research into how I would make the sword for stage.

A lot of swords used on stage are repurposed real swords, especially when there are actual combat scenes, so the blades will make the right noise when they hit the other blade. These swords have been blunted so they are safer, but they have to be used with an armourer who knows how to choreograph the fight safely.

I watched multiple videos on different ways of making prop swords for stage. Prop swords can be made using EVA foam (Vega Theatrical Supplies, 2022) (The Hermit Workshop, 2021), resin and vinyl wrap (Punished Props Academy, 2018) and FlexFoam.

In the end, I think for this sword, as it's not actually used for stage combat, the best way to make the sword would be to create a sculpt of the sword using clay and to take a cast of the sword and make a mould. I would then follow Smooth-On's instructions on how to make a flexible foam sword using FlexFoam-iT 25 (Smooth-On, 2025).

Abstract geometric lines in the top left corner of the page, consisting of several overlapping, irregular polygons and lines in a light olive green color.

SECTION 17: THE PRESENTATION



ACE PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS
NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS

Design Process : Module Brief

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 Llywfan



Cameron
—
Set Designer



Anne
—
Props



Eva
—
Puppetry

Synopsis of the Play:

- 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.



Our Adaptation of the Play:



Token: for King's
Experimental
Philosophy lecture

A ticket to witness some
spectacular science.



Token: Black hand
amulet

An amulet worn for protection
against evil.



Token: Sir Isaac
Newton halved
medallion

The symbol of divided halves is still
used in jewellery expressing love
and friendship today.



Token: Engraved
mother-of-pearl

Was his father still in Jamaica, or
even still alive?...

Tokens were sometimes given to foundlings to help the mother identify them if they came back to get them





Style of Theatre:

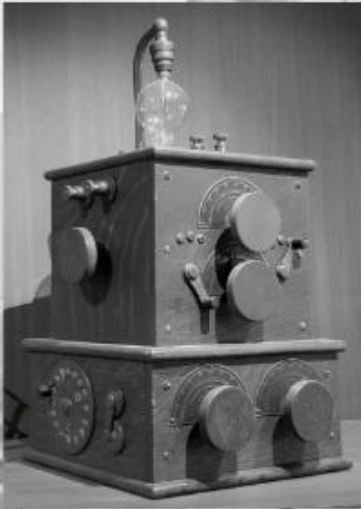


Act One Mood Board:





Act Three Mood Board:





PHILIPS



PG 0007 STEREO

Nina Simone

Pastel Blues



Strange Fruit
Feelin' a Bit
Down
Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out
End of the Line
Tell Me More and More and Then Some
Be My Husband
Only Would I Stay
Birds Be Free

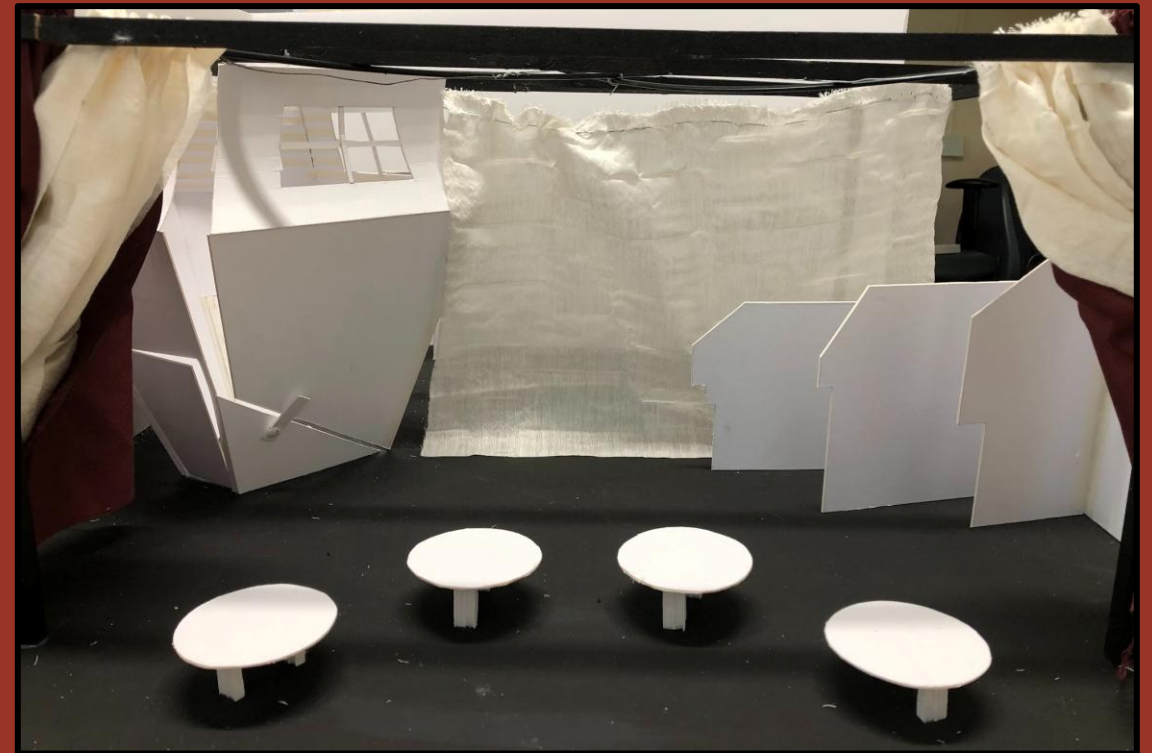
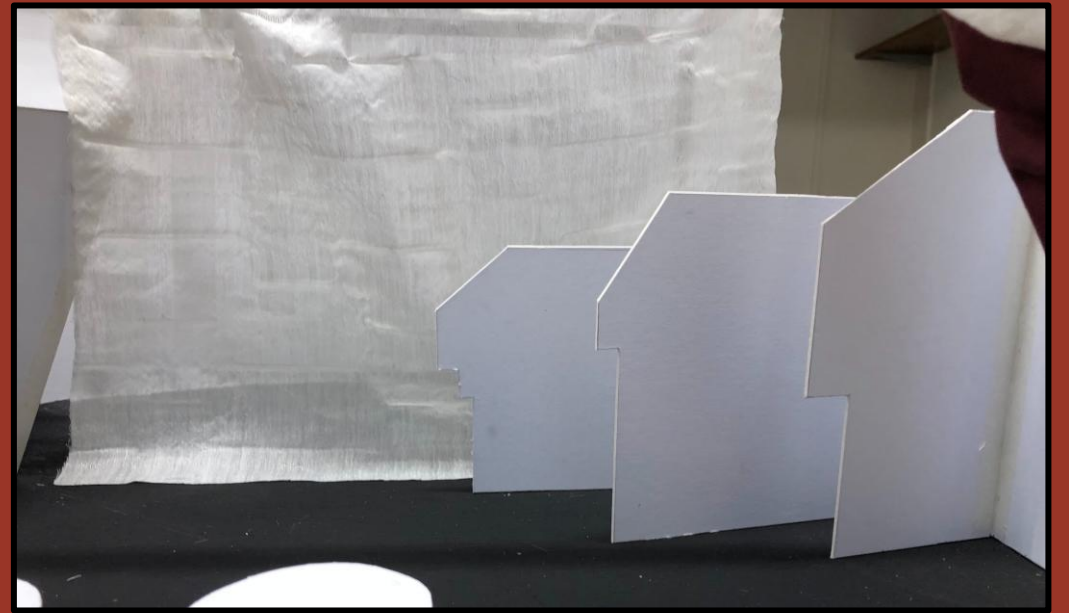




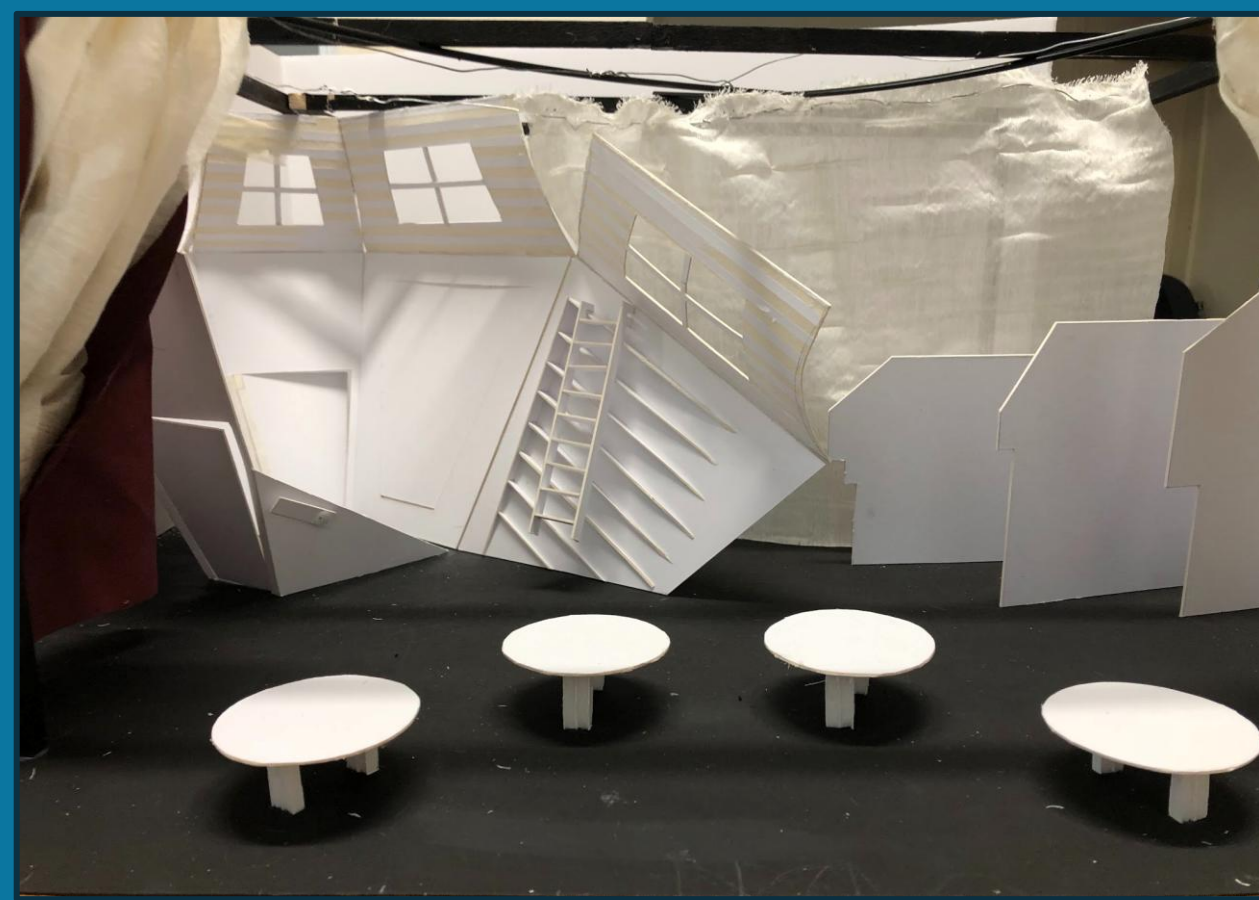
Cameron's Set Design:



Victor Hugo inspired painted
back cloth, leaning into
expressionism and sinister
atmosphere →



Brothel House – Library Scene and Fevvers first flight!



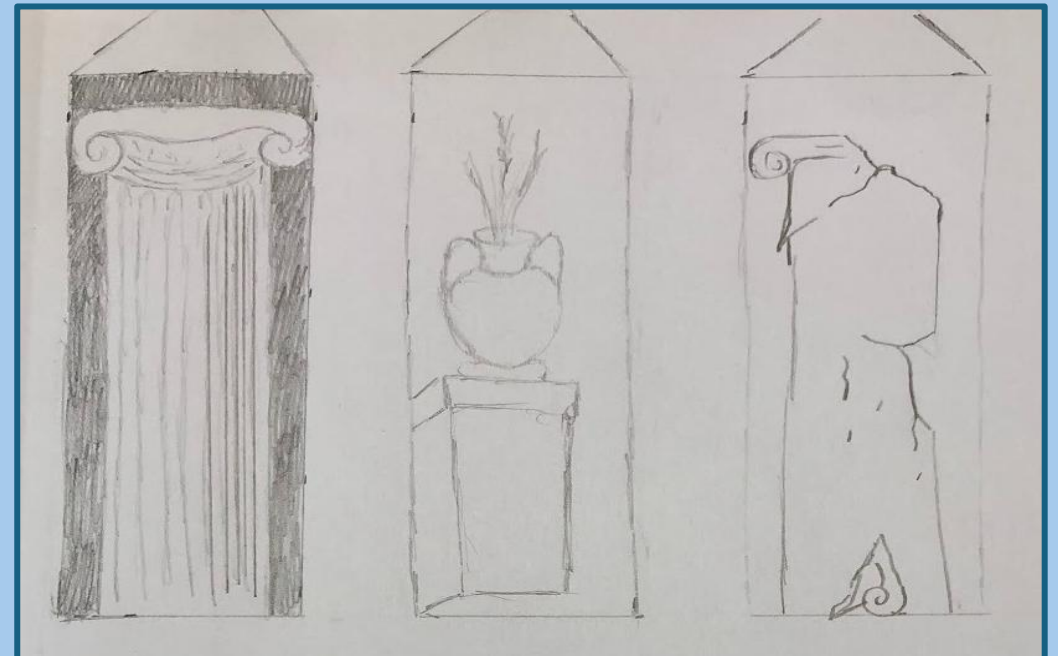
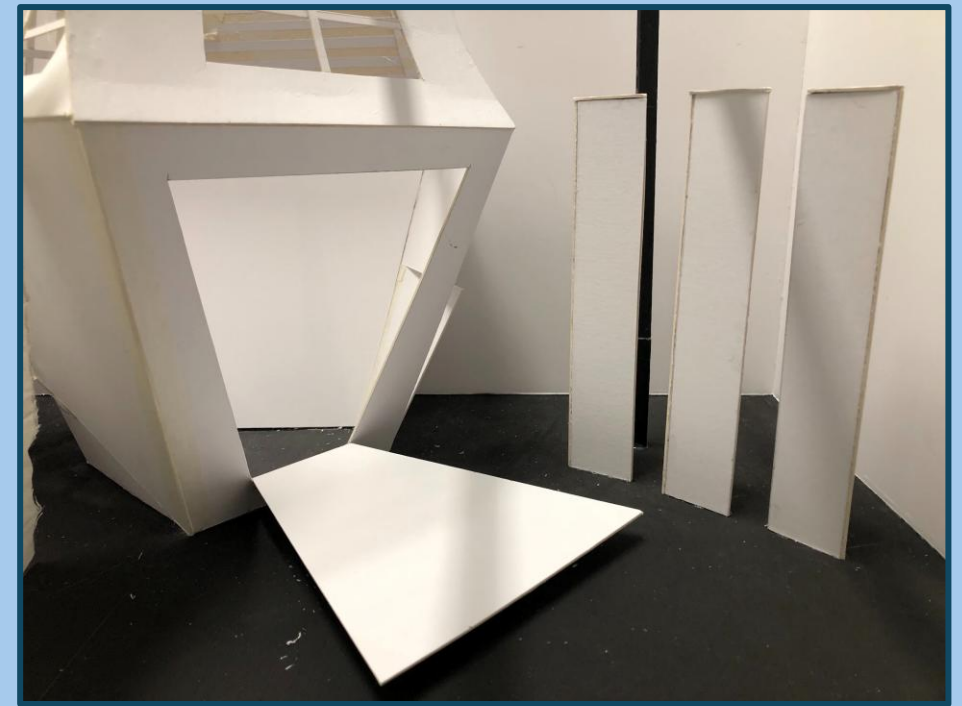
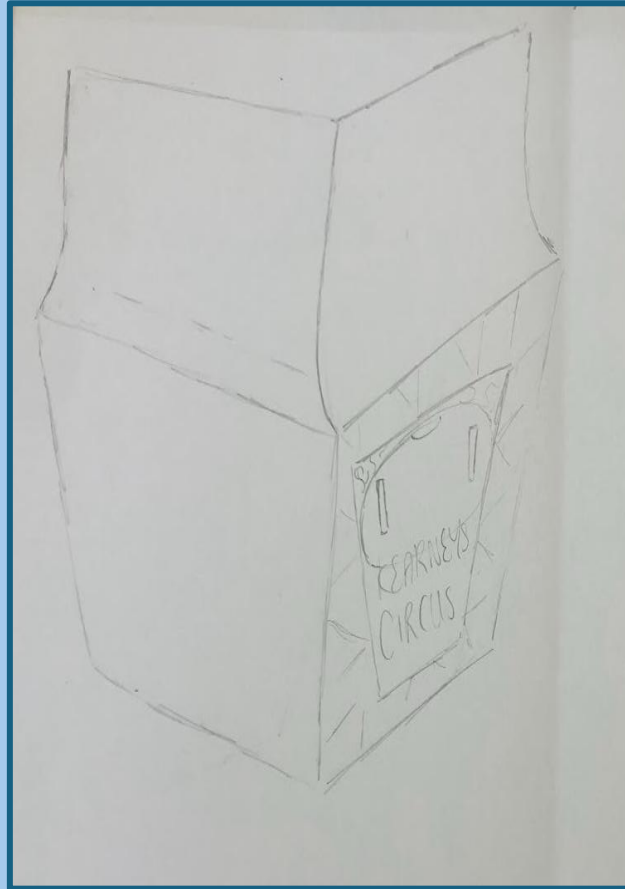
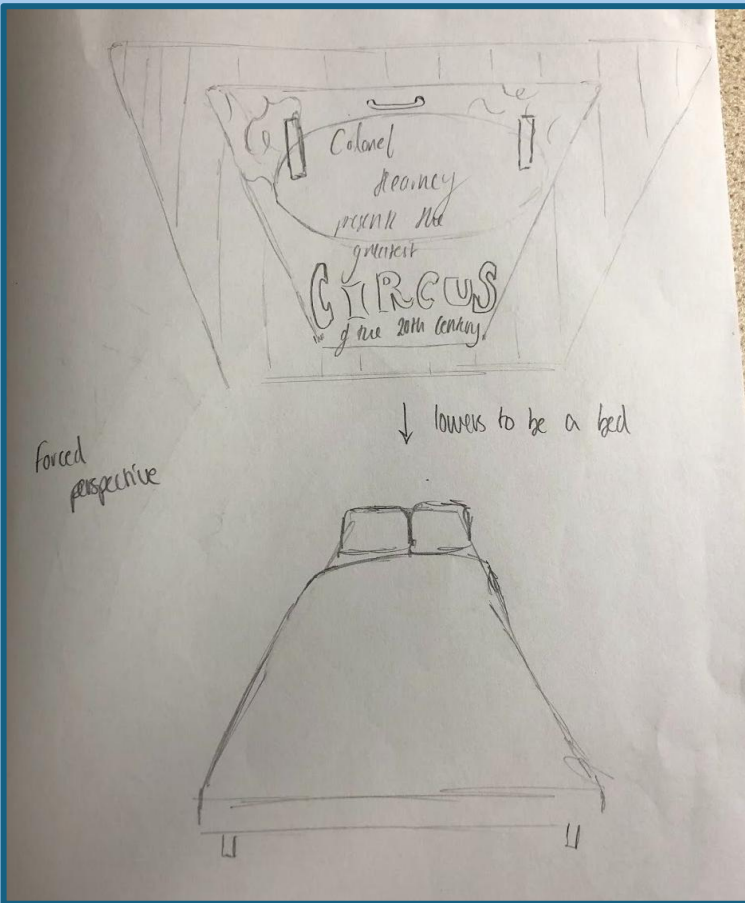
- ← Opens on a hinge
- ← Ladder accessible for climbing
- ← House interior furnished/painted



Transition to Act Two and Division of Space:



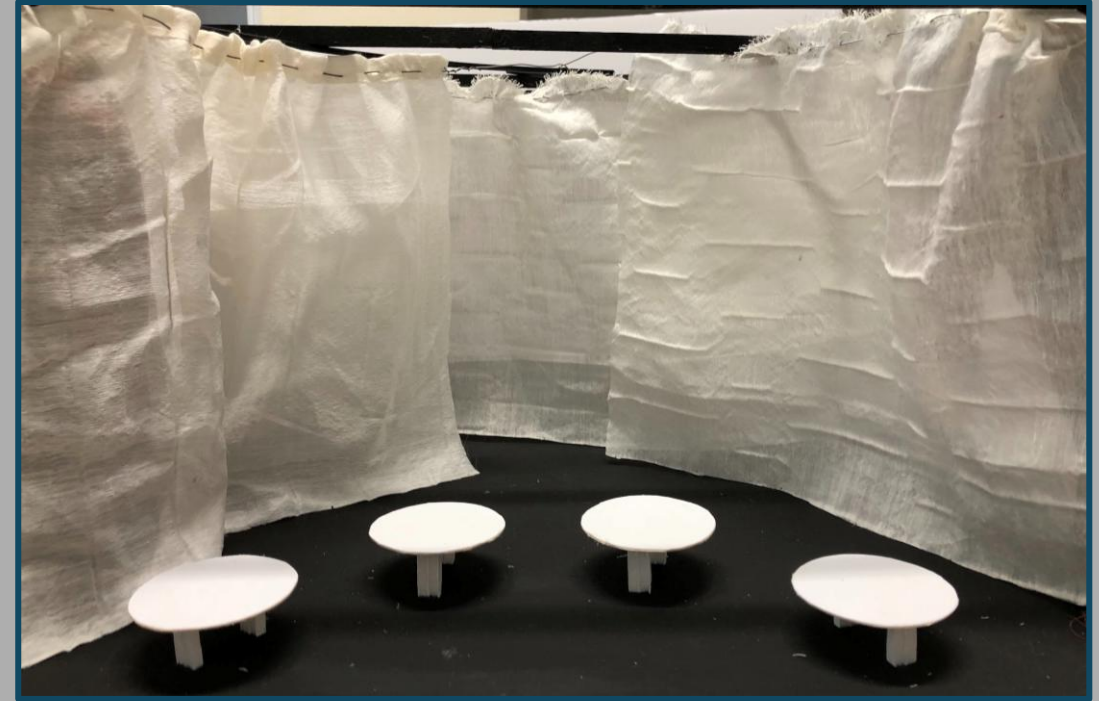
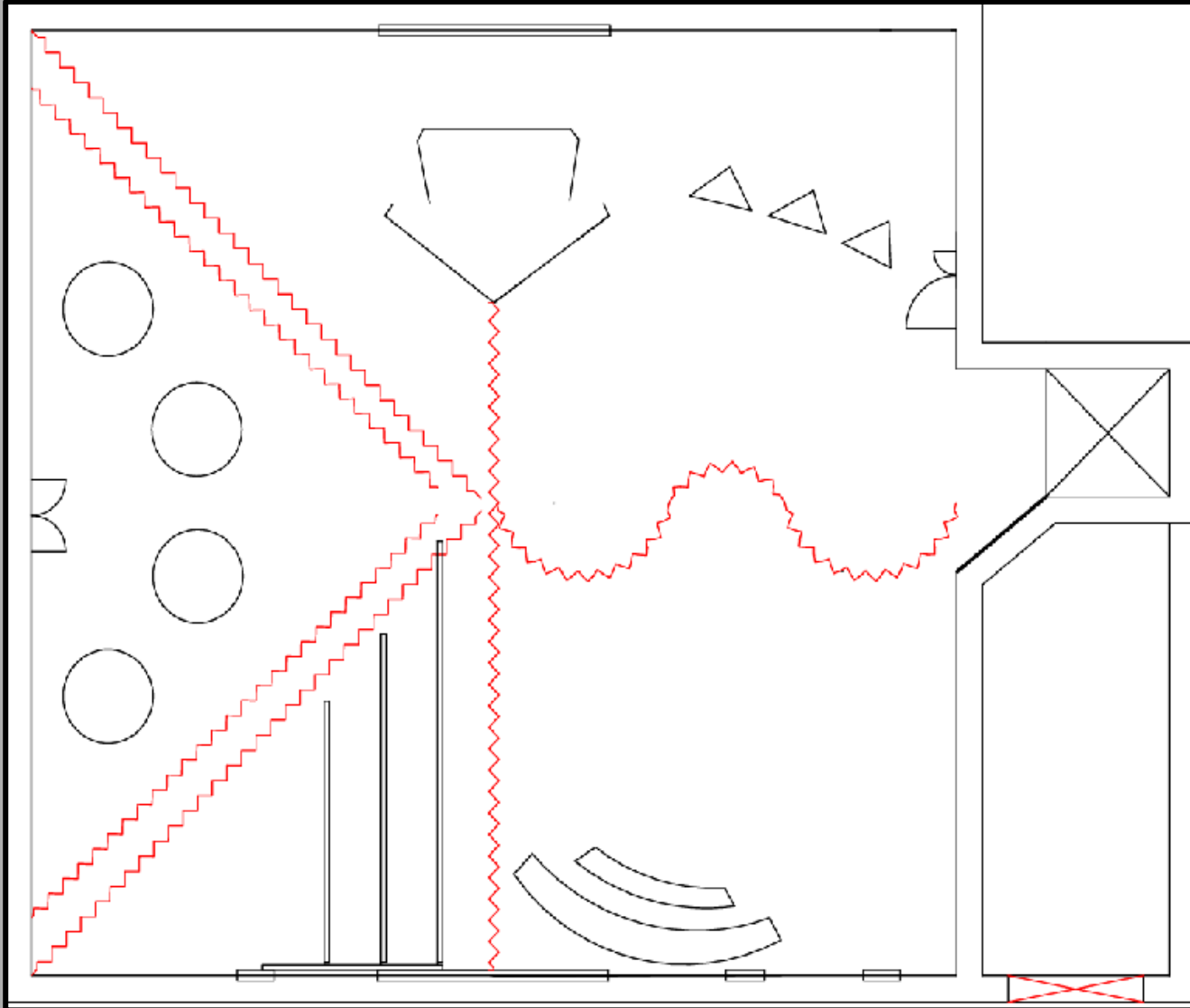
Periaktoi:



Sketches of each side of Periaktoi →
One Greek Pillar, one vase, and one crumbling
pillar →



Act Three and CAD Overview:

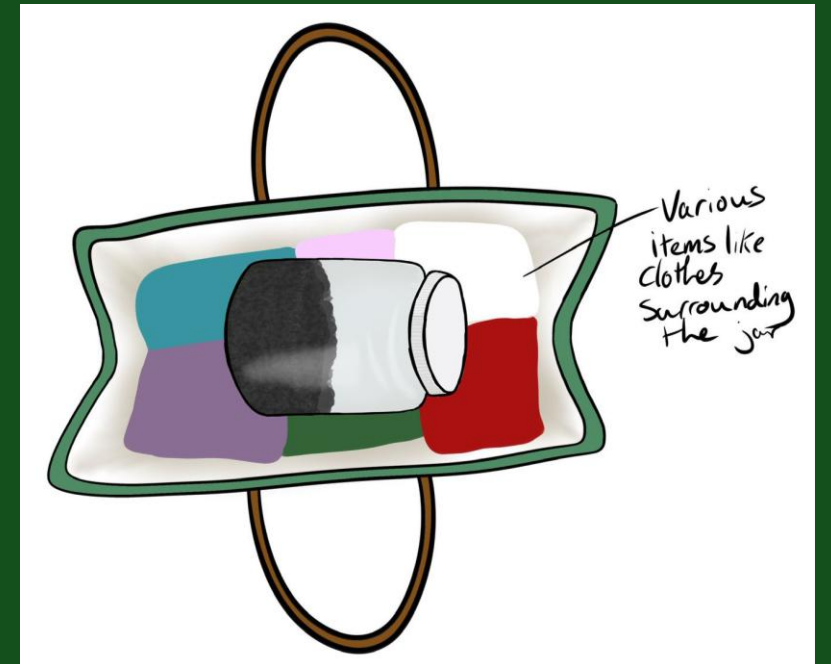


Use of a fog machine and removal of tables for
Act Three transition
Audience brought back to Act One space to help
close their experience

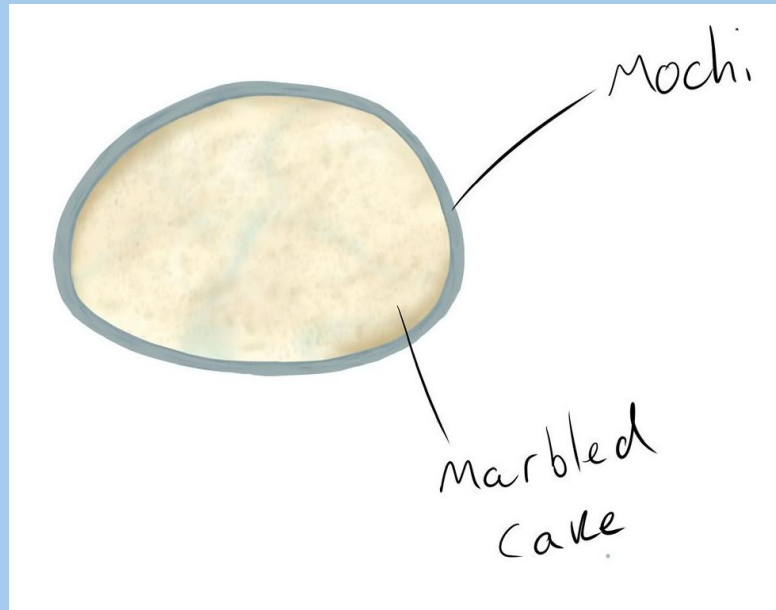
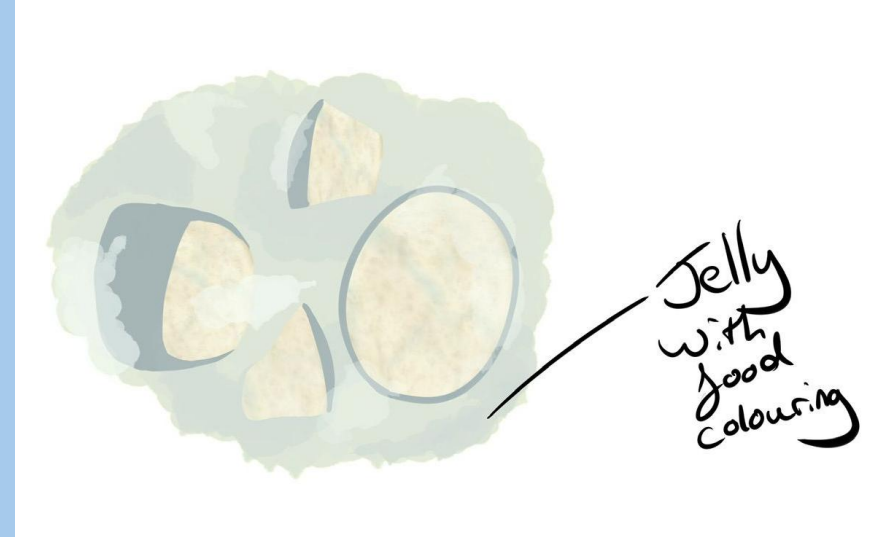
Anne's Prop Designs



Lizzie's Bag and Bomb



Jellied Eels



Ma Nelson's Sword

Research – Swords



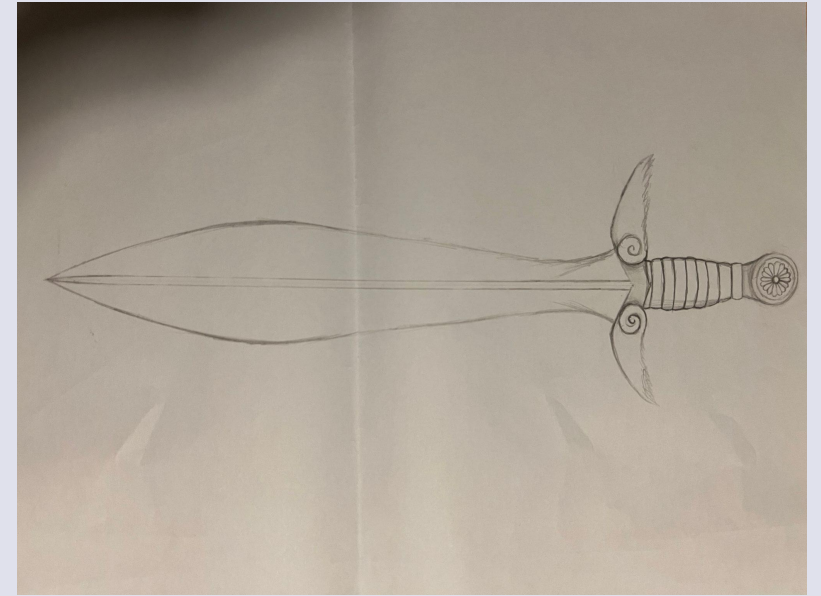
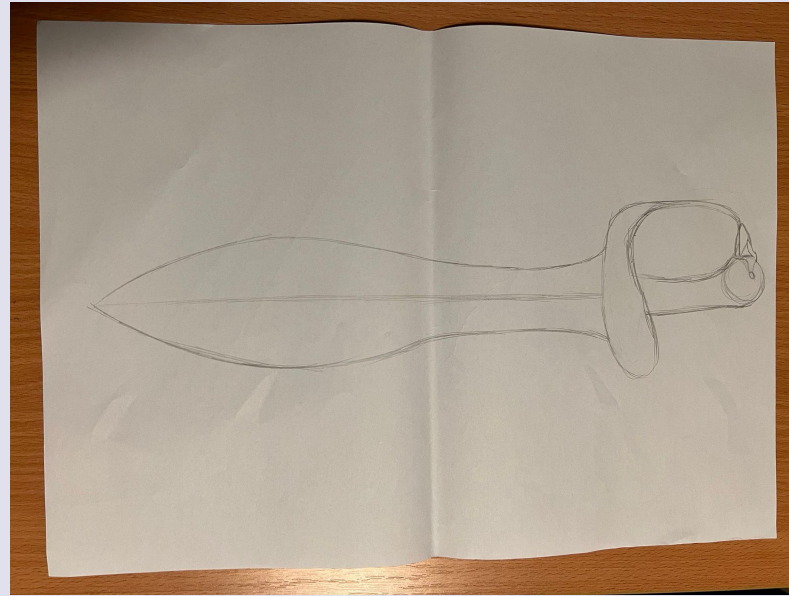
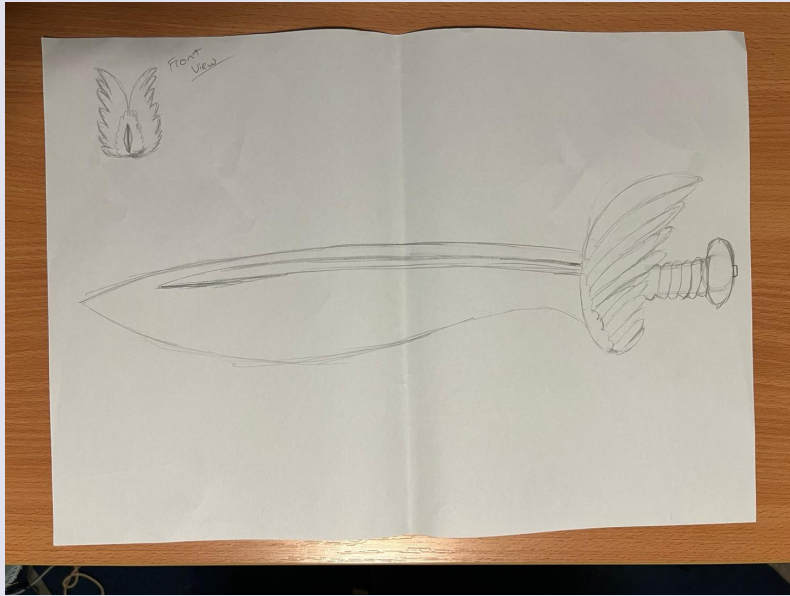
Ma Nelson's Sword

Research – Patterns



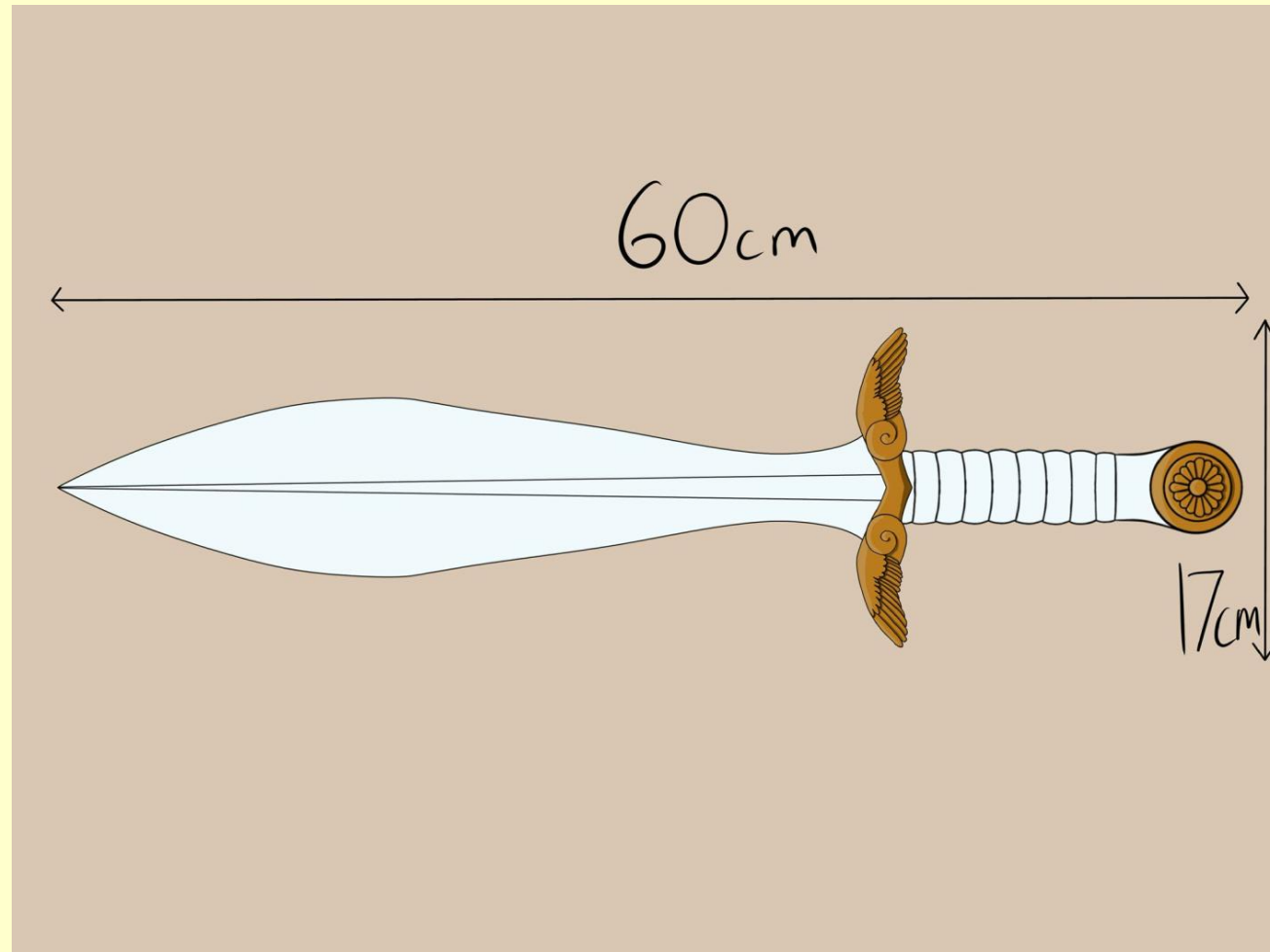
Ma Nelson's Sword

Initial Sketches



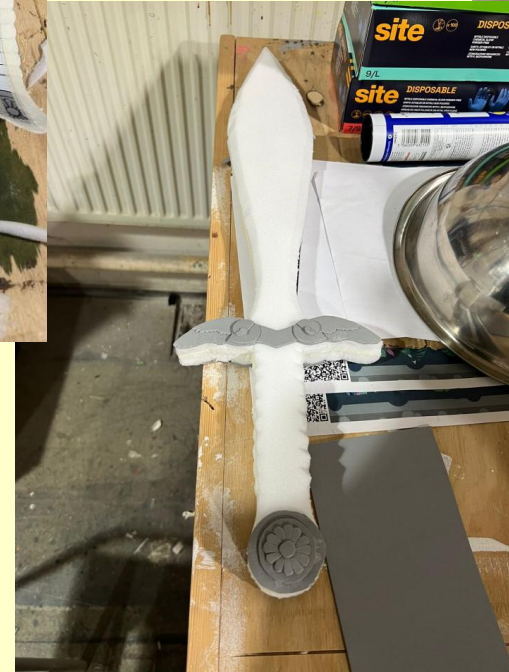
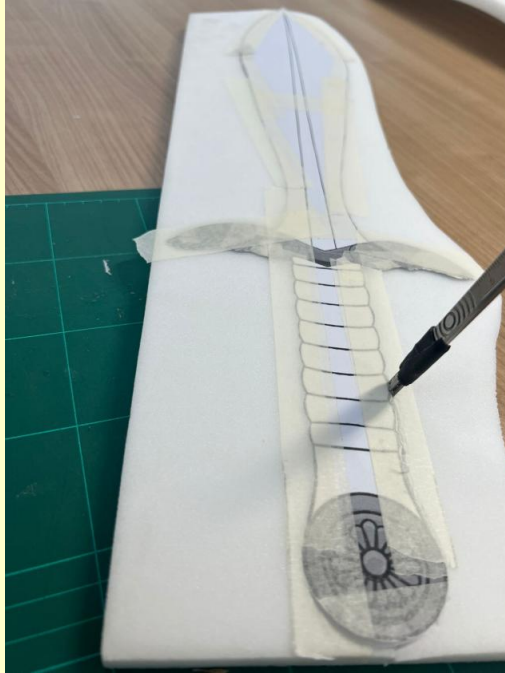
Ma Nelson's Sword

Chosen Design



Ma Nelson's Sword

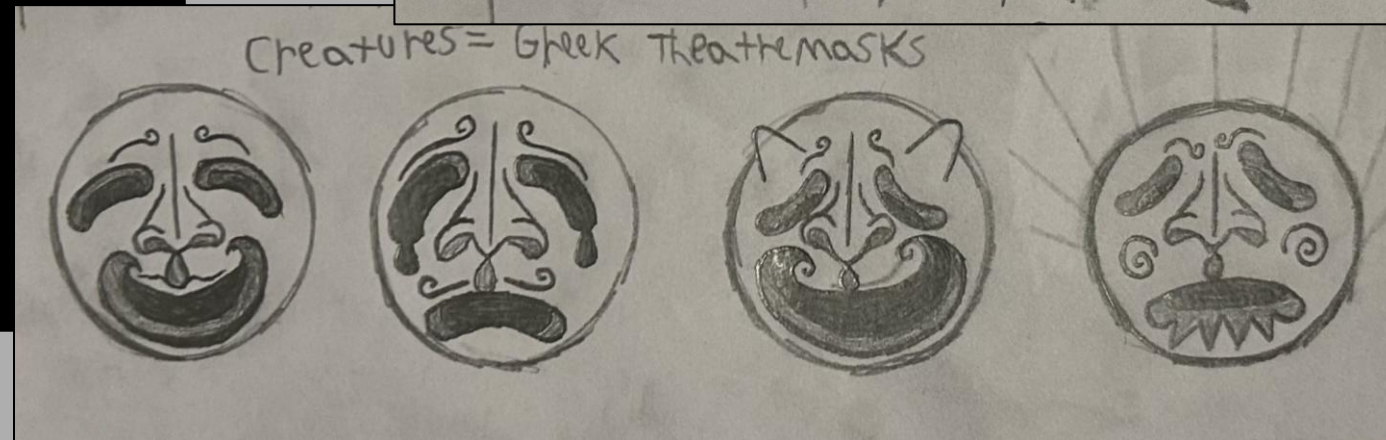
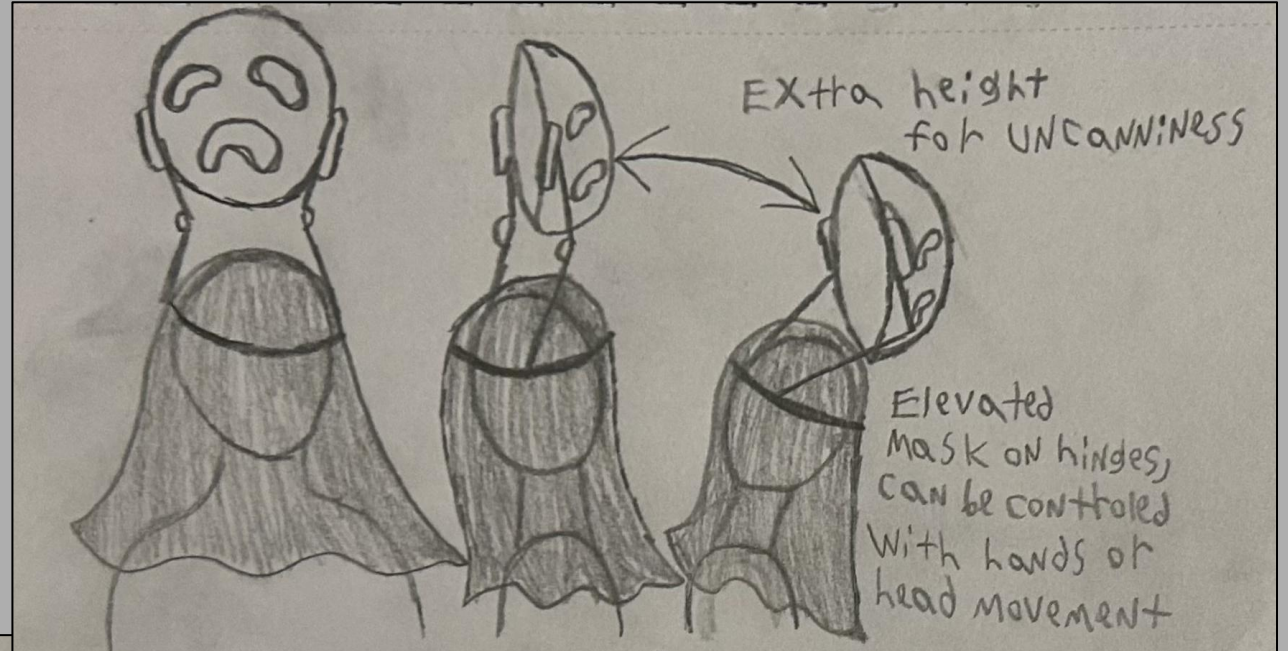
Chosen Design



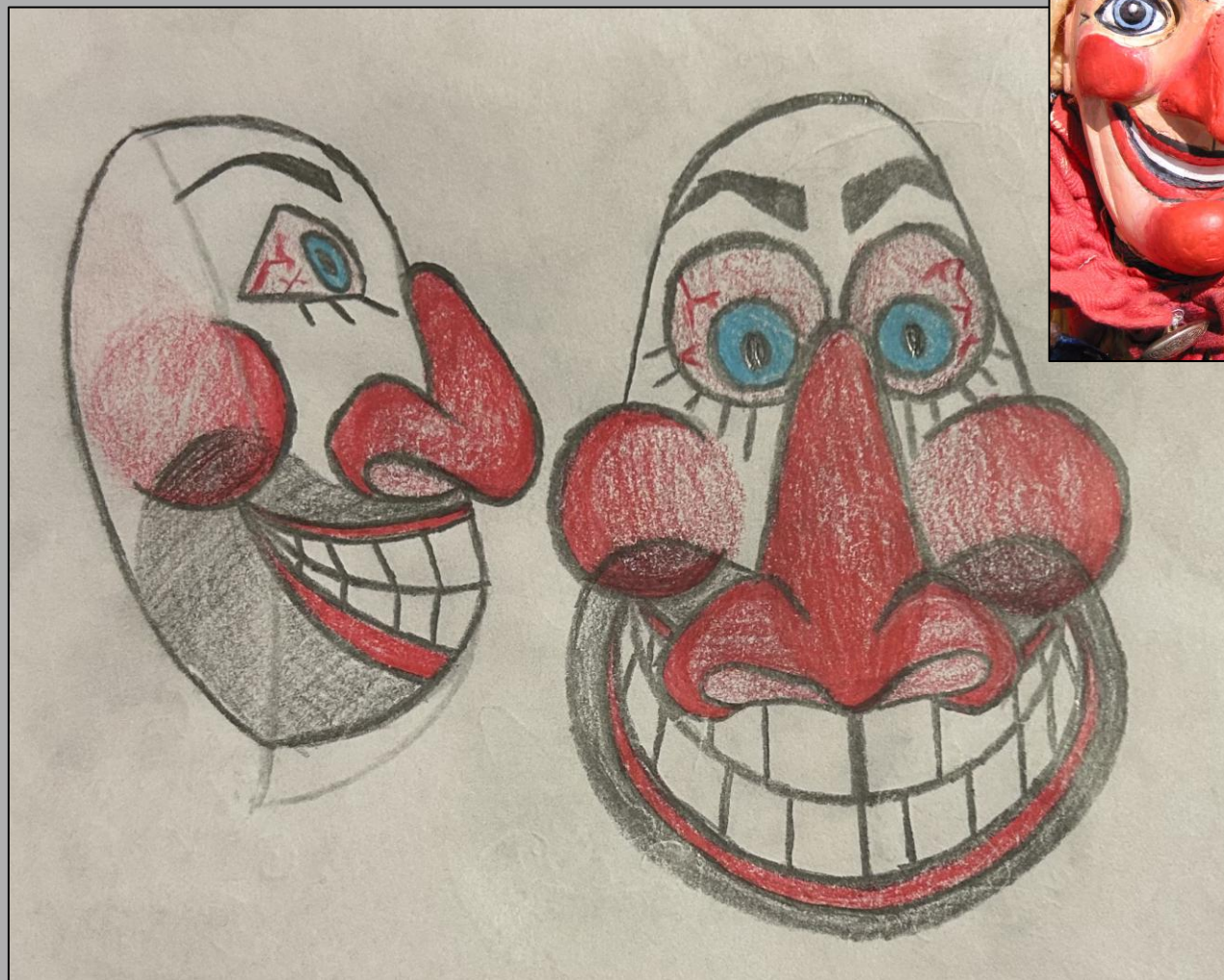
Eva's puppets



Creatures of the Theatre



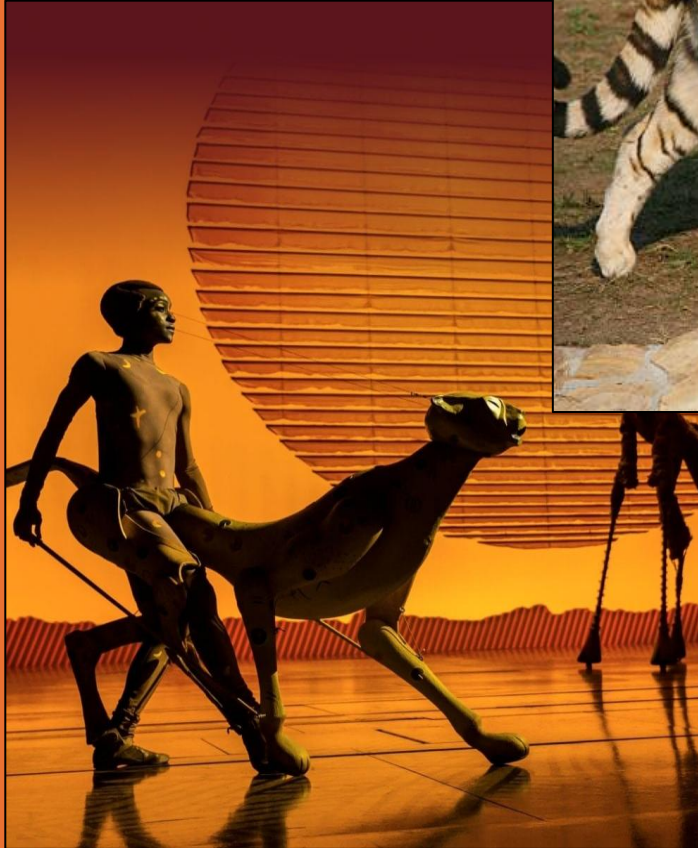
Clown Chorus



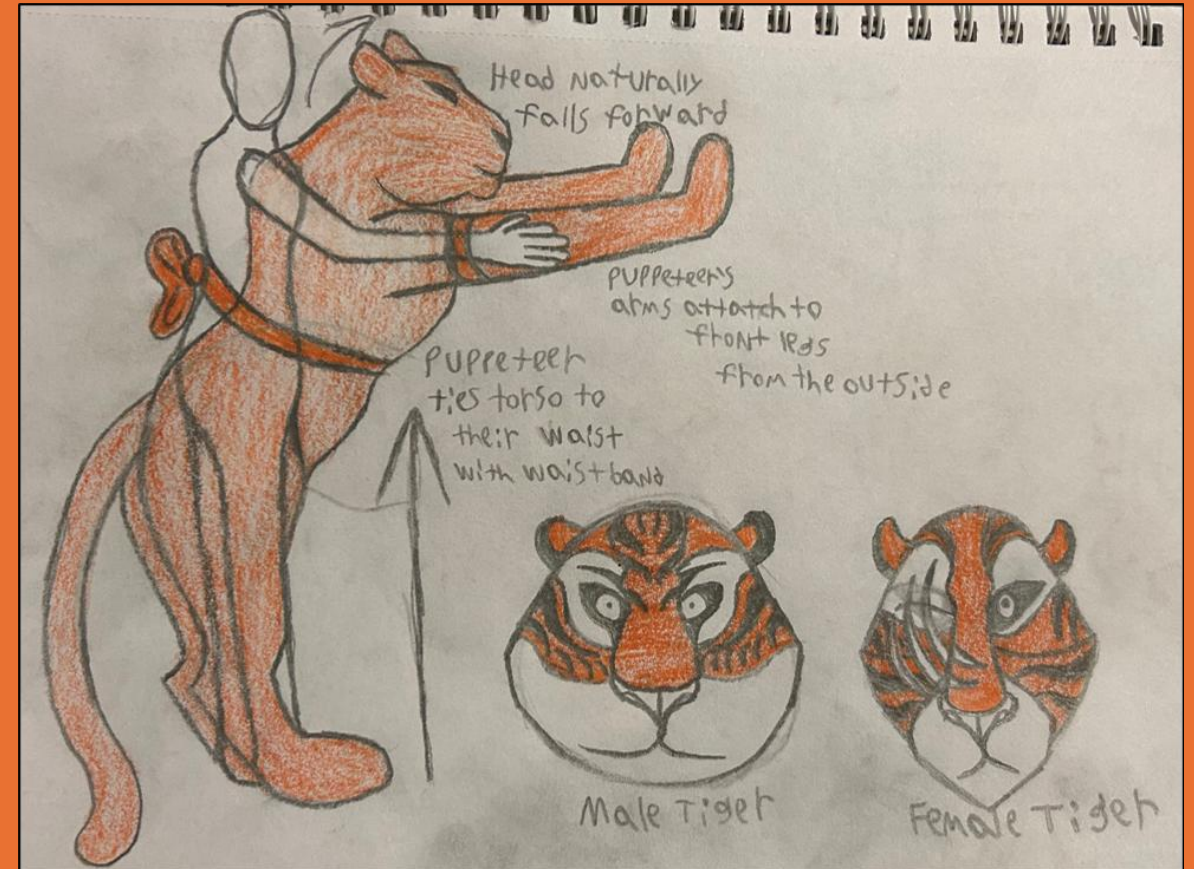
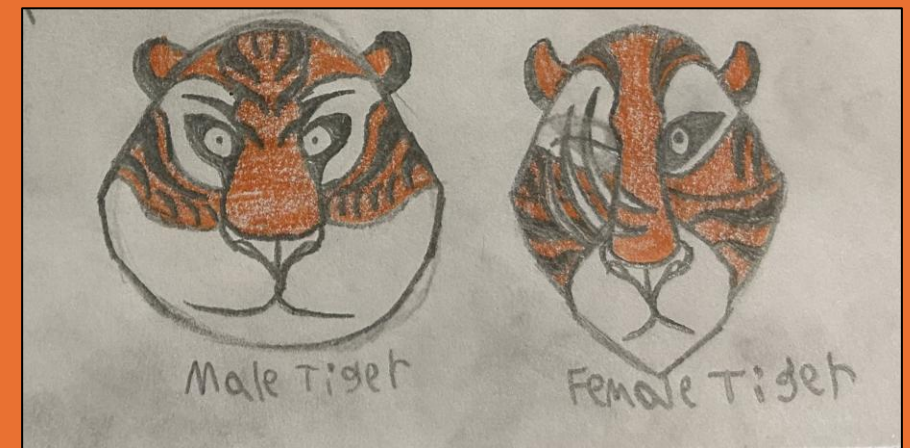
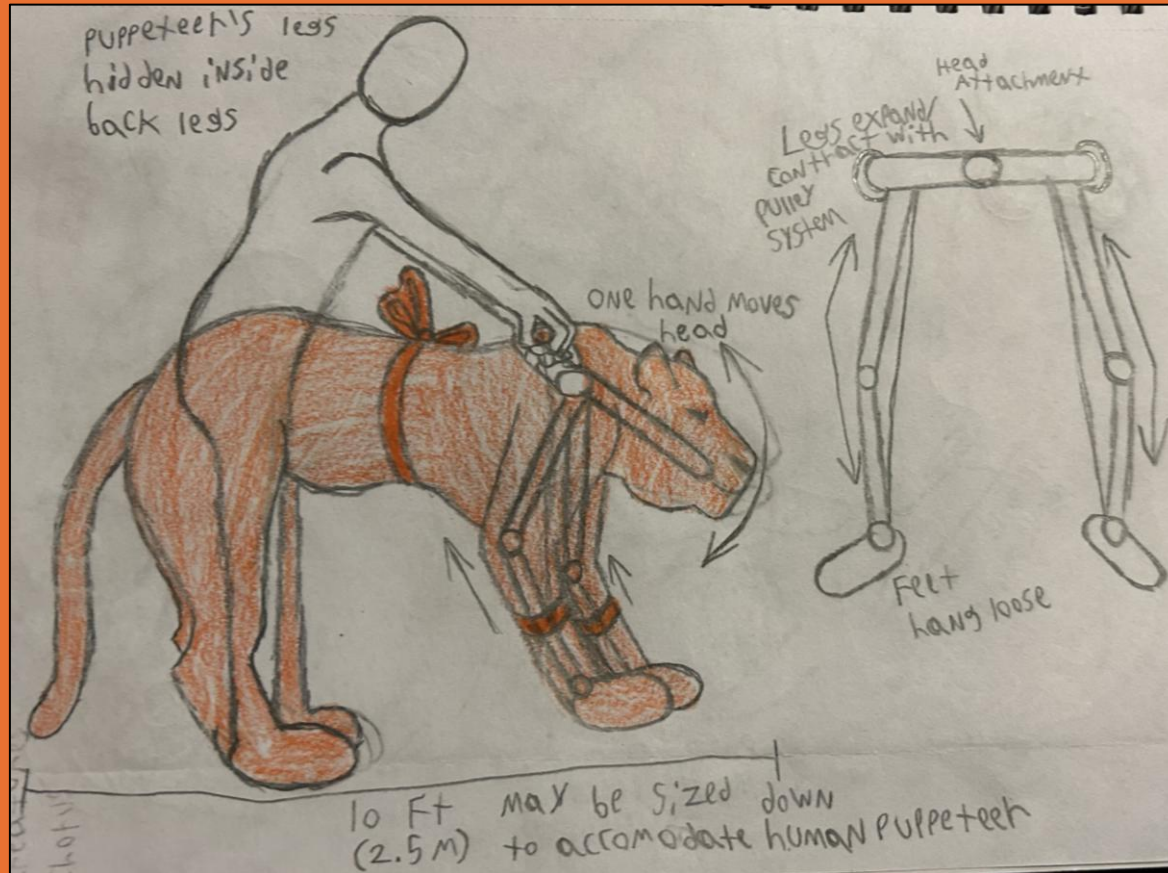
Animal Puppets



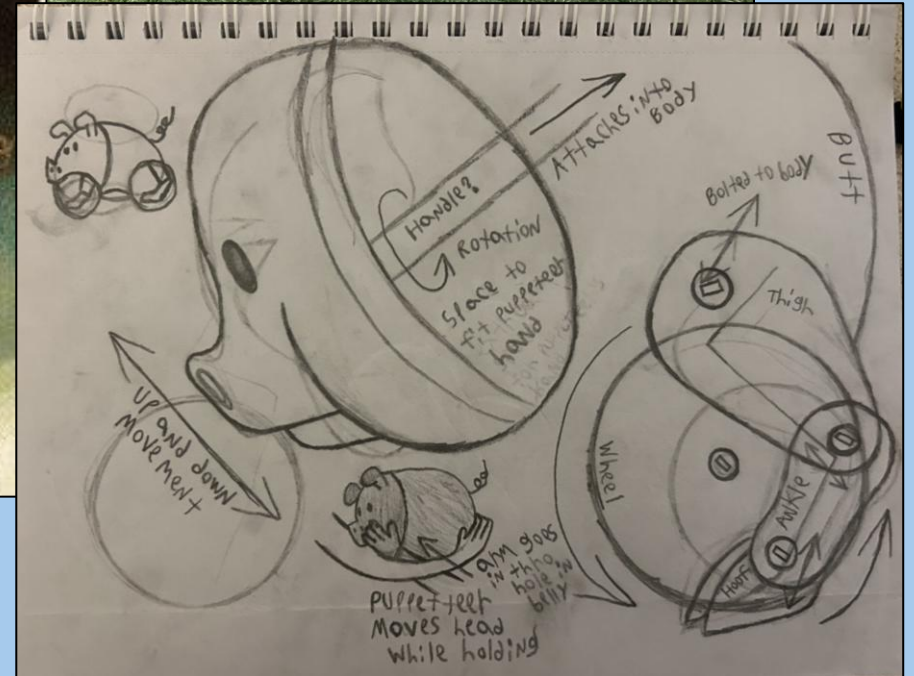
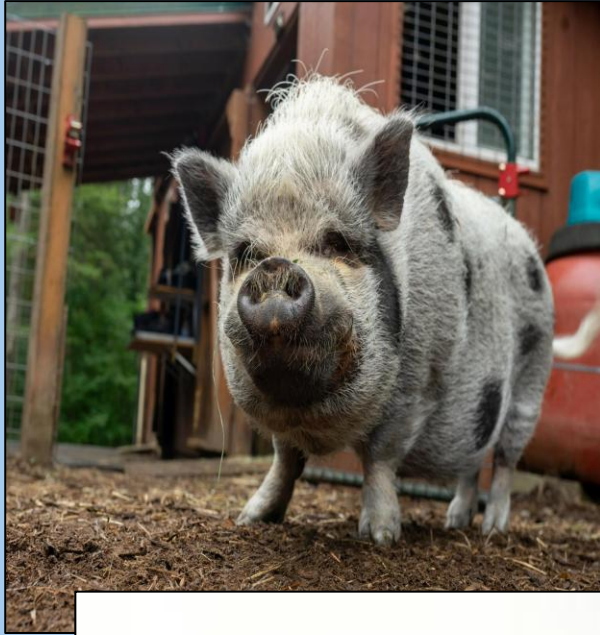
Tigers



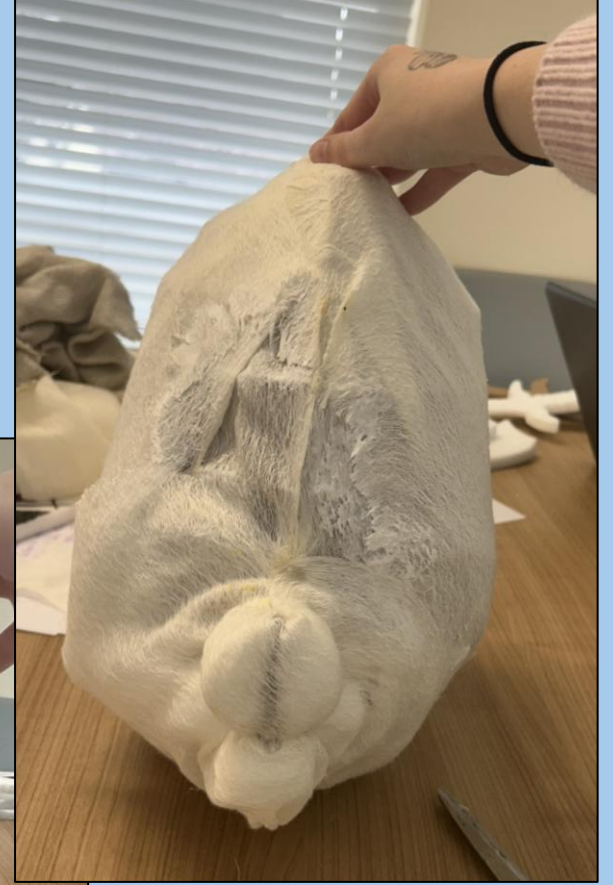
Tigers



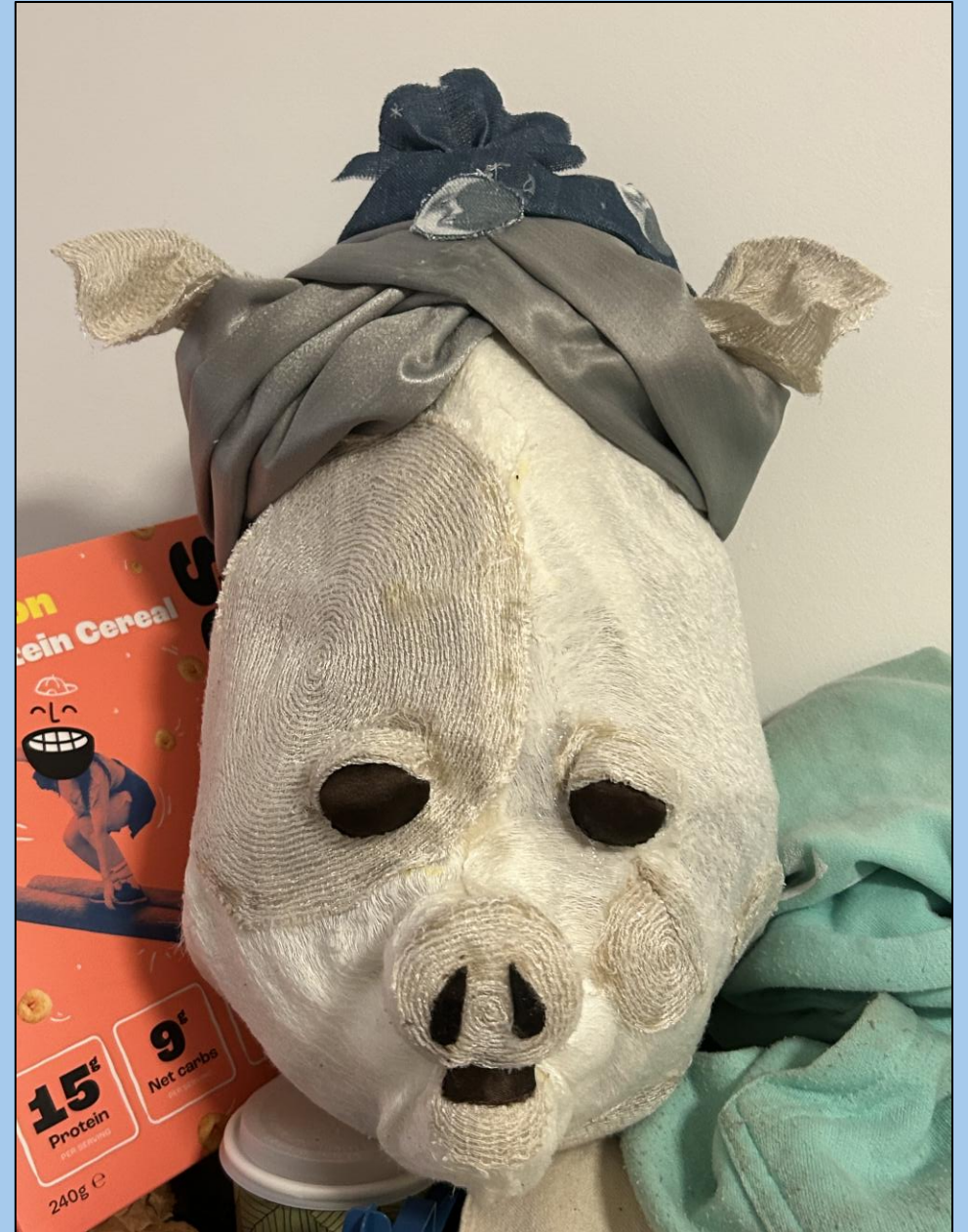
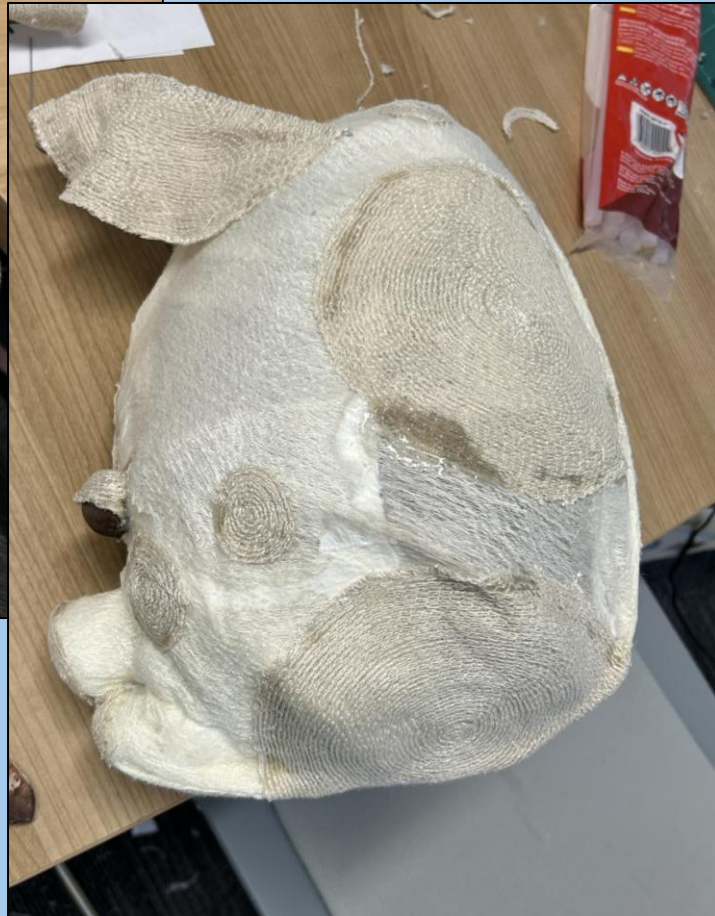
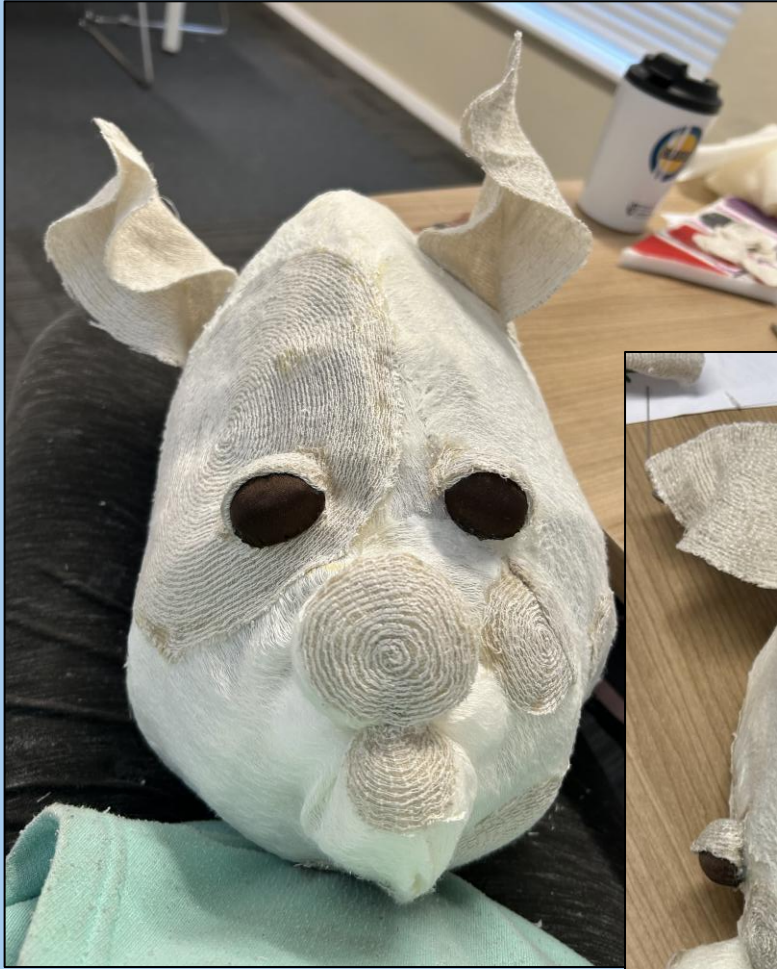
Sybil



Sybil



Sybil



Sybil



Conclusion:

Audience should feel:

Uncomfortable, unsettled, questioning
of everything, presenting them with
everything and giving a blank space in
act three for them to make their own
mind up



Any Questions?



CUE CARDS

An example of some of my Cue cards from the presentation.

A P D - Hi im Anne, the prop maker. 4

- looked at multiple props.
Lizzies handbag + bomb
Selled eels
Ma Nelson's sword.

Research - Swords.

8

- lot of inspiration
- Admiral Nelson's subrds, Spanish navy officer's ~~sabre~~ sabre, fal khattah, Gladius and Zifos
- Ma Nelson wears a Navy outfit - sword comes from Spain.
- Spanish steel - stage directions - Fal khattah + Gladius - comonly made blades
- Greek zifos - Greek imagery

Patterns

9

- Bird iconography - make the sword a symbol of freedom.
- ~~Fat~~ Feathers and wings. - main character called Fewers and in the book she is part swan so i then looked into swans.
- Patterns in Greek metal working - pattern on helmet and bottom of a Greek bowl. - flower like
- Pottery - swirls - meander pattern

THE OTHER GROUPS' PRESENTATIONS

It was really interesting to see the other groups' presentations, as it was nice to see all the other ideas that emerged when working from the same stimulus.

One group had changed the year the play was set from 1899 to 1999. This meant they kept the themes of the turn of the century, but they could then turn the setting into a music festival rather than a circus. This was very interesting and something I would never have thought of before. The other group did a more faithful adaptation of the play, which was equally unique as it had four stages: the actors would move from stage to stage to symbolise the changes in locations.

It was also interesting to see the differences in what Charlie and I did, as we are both prop makers working on the same scripts, just in different groups.

From the presentations, it was very clear that we had both found different things when doing our research. It was also interesting to see how this impacted our designs in different ways. I also liked finding out that, despite not being in the same group, we had chosen the same props from the play to look into and develop our ideas on.

Abstract geometric lines in the top left corner of the page, consisting of several overlapping, irregular polygons and lines in a light olive green color.

SECTION 18: EVALUATION

500 WORD EVALUATION

I have really enjoyed this module. This is partially because of the freedom our roles gave us to make whatever we wanted. We could make our own designs rather than having to follow someone else's ideas. I also like how we got to choose which roles we would like rather than potentially doing a role that doesn't suit us: I was able to try making weapons which I have wanted to do for a while. I have also really enjoyed working with Plastazote and would love to develop this further, however, I would like to experiment with some different types of materials too.

I also liked working in smaller groups as it was much easier for us all to communicate effectively. This year my group decided to have planning meetings at the beginning and end of each day. We divided work and set goals, which allowed us to keep up to date with our progress and refine our plans so we could meet our targets. We were able to keep our individual ideas and themes linked through themes such as 2D elements and the colour scheme. I also really liked working with Cam as we work really well together. We seem to have a very similar way of working which means we both know what to do when.

500 WORD EVALUATION

Another skill I have learnt in this module is to always have a plan B, especially when it comes to ordering materials. I had a slight problem with this module as the materials didn't arrive in time for me to make my prop sword with them and so I had to work out how else I could make the sword and rushed a bit more than I would have liked to with the making process because of it. If I had already thought of a potential plan B it would have been far less stressful then it was. Nevertheless, the sword allowed me to try using a Dremel to carve shapes into Plastazote.

For the next module I would like to improve on time management. Although I think it was quite good, I do think that I could have improved with the actual making of the sword. This was in part due to the fact that my order didn't arrive and I wanted to give it as much time as possible to arrive. I do think, however I should have started making the sword a day earlier to give the paint more time to dry. I would also like to improve on finding more visual references for inspiration rather than focusing more on the text side of the research. I definitely have already improved on this since last year but I would like to continue to do so.

Overall the module has been good fun and I like having something to show for the amount of effort I put into it. I am proud of my prop sword and really want to work on props again as I found it really enjoyable.

Abstract geometric lines in the top left corner of the page, consisting of several overlapping, irregular polygons and lines in a light green color.

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