



The Ark



The Haircut!

At Home Activities for Children

A selection of complementary activities for children aged 8+ to enjoy before and after seeing *The Haircut!* by Wayne Jordan & Tom Lane

Introduction: Creative activities connected to *The Haircut!*

The Haircut is a show made by The Ark in 2019. In The Haircut, you will see 3 musicians and 1 actor tell the story of the play.

The play is inspired by the old folk tale of King Labhraidh Loingseach. There are many versions of this story from all over the world and Wayne Jordan (the writer & director) has used the Irish version as the inspiration for his script. His version also brings in its own unique elements, including the use of music to tell the story. The music was written by composer Tom Lane.

These activities and the show itself are aimed at children aged 8+ and work with the themes of the show. The activities have been selected and adapted from our full classroom activity pack which links to aspects of the primary school curriculum. If you would like further activities you can download the full document for free [here](#).

Before Watching *The Haircut!*

Before you watch the show here are a few easy warm up activities to get you thinking:

Story and Music on TV/Film

- The combination of story and music is something very familiar to everyone from TV and films.
- Think about your favourite films or TV shows.
- Choose one and think about how the story and the music fit together.
- Does the music help to tell the story? Does it make things more exciting when there's a lot of action? How does the music do that?
- What about the mood or feelings of the characters? Does the music make that more obvious? How?
- Think about your favourite character. What do their words or actions tell you about their personality? Does the music also show their personality in some way?

Music, Mood and Movement

- Choose a piece of recorded music you like and play it.
- Think about how the music makes you feel e.g. happy/sad, dreamy/agitated, calm/excited?

- Now, imagine the music in your head and, silently, move in any way you like to show the different feelings.
- If you can, find a partner. Person 1 selects a music mood and demonstrates it with a movement. Person 2 mirrors their partner's movement and then tries to guess the mood. Then they swap roles and person 2 demonstrates a different mood with a new movement.

Music Painting

- Choose a piece of recorded music and listen carefully to it.
- After listening once, play the music again and then paint the shape of the music in the air with your hands while it plays.

To help you do this, think about what you hear:

- Does the tune go up and down or stay the same on one note?
- Are the notes detached and jerky (staccato) or is the music smooth and joined together (legato)?
- Does the music have a big loud sound or a small soft sound?
- How might this change the different shapes that you are 'painting' in the air?
- Repeat this process with recordings of different types and styles of music.

Where in the world do stories come from?

- Different versions of the story in this play have been found as far away as Greece, France, Central Asia, Korea, Somalia, Wales and Ireland.
- Look at these places on a map
- Are they near each other or far apart?
- These stories come from a time long before there was any form of modern communication between such far off places.
- Can you think of ideas of how all these different places shared similar stories?

After Watching *The Haircut!*

Drama Activity: 20 Questions – What's My Secret?

- Think of a "secret" like the king's – for instance, that you have a tiger's tail or duck's feet.
- Asking 20 Questions with yes/no answers, grown-ups or siblings try and guess what it is.
- You could give clues, such as where you might find the animal or what having this extra body part might help you do, e.g. you might find this

animal by water and this body part might help you be a good swimmer (duck's feet).

- Swap roles and let others take turns making up another secret for the king while you guess.

Drama Activity: Freeze Frame

- Think of the significant moments in the play you saw. If you haven't seen it, read the story at the end of this document first, and work from that instead.
- Can you retell the story in 5 moments, creating a still image or frozen picture (with your body) of each moment?
- Think of it like creating 5 photographs and each one captures a key moment from the story silently.
- To add further challenge, can you add 1 line of narration or dialogue to each moment?

Variation: Freeze Frame with Music

- Word Play: Words have their own natural rhythm and so they can form the building bricks to create a musical rhythm. Choose your favourite line of dialogue or narration from the previous activity. Repeat this line continuously until the natural rhythm of the words becomes clear and it starts to sound like a chant or rap.
- Add mood music: Using simple instruments if you have them or using your voice or body percussion, can you create one simple sound effect for each of your freeze frame scenes that matches the mood or action in that scene e.g. fast hand clapping or stamping for a dramatic moment or gentle playing of shakers or rain sticks for a quiet or sad scene.
- Add in a melody to one scene: If you play an instrument or enjoy singing, create a short melody for one of your scenes.

Writing Activity: Newspaper Reports

- Imagine you were a journalist at the King's Palace on the day when the King's secret is revealed and everyone learns about his ears.
- Write a headline and a short newspaper article describing what happened. In the article you can include interviews with other people who were there when it happened including the musician, the barber, a guest, a child, another King, one of the cooks or anyone else you can imagine.
- There might be some people who are not happy about the fact that The King has revealed his secret – such as the people who make his crowns and head-coverings as their business might reduce now the King has revealed his secret.

- Come up with a series of questions a journalist might ask, such as: Where were you when the news about the King's ears broke? What did you think? What do you think might happen next?
 - If you like, create the front page of the newspaper with a catchy head-line, articles, interviews and pictures.
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The Story of Labhraidh Loingseach

According to an Irish legend there was a King named Labhraidh Loingseach, who was given horse's ears as a punishment when he was young for being cruel to a horse. The King was so embarrassed and ashamed that he decided to only have his hair cut once a year and the barber who was chosen to cut his hair was put to death as soon as he'd finished.

A widow, hearing that her only son had been chosen to cut the King's hair, begged the King not to kill him, and eventually he agreed so long as her son kept the secret. However, the burden of keeping the secret was so heavy that the young barber fell ill.

A druid advised him to go into the woods and tell his secret to a large willow tree in the middle of the woods, and then he would be relieved of his burden. The young barber did what the druid suggested and immediately felt better.

However some time later the King's harper needed to make a new harp. So he went into the woods to cut down a willow tree to make a new harp and he happened to cut down the very tree the barber had whispered his secret to.

When the new harp was played for the King the harp sang out "Labhraidh Loingseach has horse's ears".

The King was very angry at first but eventually admitted his secret. From then on whoever cut his hair was safe and they were no longer put to death afterwards.