



Disney and CAMERON MACKINTOSH present

# MARY THEATRE DE LA SALLE POPPINS

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## TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: MARY POPPINS

21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration are embedded in the process of bringing the page to the stage. Seeing live theatre encourages students to read, develop critical and creative thinking, and to be curious about the world around them.

This Teacher Resource Guide includes background information, questions, and activities that can stand alone or work as building blocks toward the creation of a complete unit of classroom work.

## THEATRE DE LA SALLE presents *MARY POPPINS*!

*"Winds in the east, mist coming in.  
Like somethin' is brewin', about to begin..."*

Theatre De La Salle is excited to announce *MARY POPPINS* as its practically perfect musical for the 2018/2019 season.

In this brand new production, producer **Michael Luchka** and directors **Glenn Cherny** and **Lisa Pollock** will be joined by guest director and TheatreDLS alum **Johnny McGroarty**, choreographer **Melissa Jane Shaw**, Musical Director **Chris Tsujiuchi**, and Set Designers **Michael Bailey** and **Jerry McGroarty**, to bring you another must-see family favourite.

The irresistible story and unforgettable songs will take the stage next April as everyone's favourite nanny swoops in to teach the Banks family a lesson or two about love, kindness, and imagination.

Based on the beloved book series by author P.L. Travers, **MARY POPPINS** became an immediate hit when it premiered as a Walt Disney movie musical in 1964 starring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke. Forty years later, renowned theatre impresario Cameron Macintosh conceived an enchanting stage musical that combined elements of Disney's film with material inspired by Travers' books. Featuring original music and lyrics by Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman, a book by Downton Abbey creator Julian Fellowes, and new songs by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe, this perfectly magical, properly heartwarming, *supercalifragilistic* musical is one the entire family will love.

With classics like 'A Spoonful of Sugar', 'Chim Chim Chiree', 'Feed the Birds,' and 'Let's Go Fly a Kite', Theatre De La Salle's 2019 production of **MARY POPPINS** will set your spirit soaring "up through the atmosphere, up where the air is clear," as you pay a visit to 17 Cherry Tree Lane!



*SupercalifragilisticDELASALLEidocious!*

### *The Practically Perfect Musical!*

Here at Del, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of re-privatization this year and thought this would be a practically perfect way to do so - by bringing everyone's favourite nanny to the De La Salle stage. We have a few special guests and some old alumni working alongside us this year. There's a spoonful of surprises in the works as well.

~ Artistic Director Mr. M. Luchka ~

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## THE ONTARIO CURRICULUM, GRADES 1-8 | The Arts SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

**B1.2** demonstrate an understanding of the elements of drama by selecting and combining several elements and conventions to create dramatic effects

**B2.1** express personal responses and preferences and make connections to themes and issues presented in their own and others' drama works

**B2.2** identify a favourite scene and give reasons for their preference, using correct drama terminology to describe how the elements of drama contribute to its effectiveness

**B2.3** identify and give examples of their strengths, interests, and areas for improvement as drama creators, performers, and audience members

**B3.2** identify and describe a wide variety of ways in which drama and theatre make or have made contributions to social, cultural, and economic life in a variety of times and places





# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: MARY POPPINS

## COMING TO THE THEATRE!

De La Salle College is an exciting venue to see live theatre! The school was built in 1951 and included an auditorium that became the home of Theatre De La Salle. During its 68-year history, Theatre De La Salle has staged 28 dramatic productions, 44 musicals, and three musical revue shows.

As audience members, you and your students play a vital role in the success of the performances. You are part of a community that creates the theatre experience. For many students, this may be their first time viewing a live theatre production. We encourage teachers to discuss some of the differences between watching a television show, attending a sporting event or viewing a movie at the cinema. Here are a few examples to start the discussion:

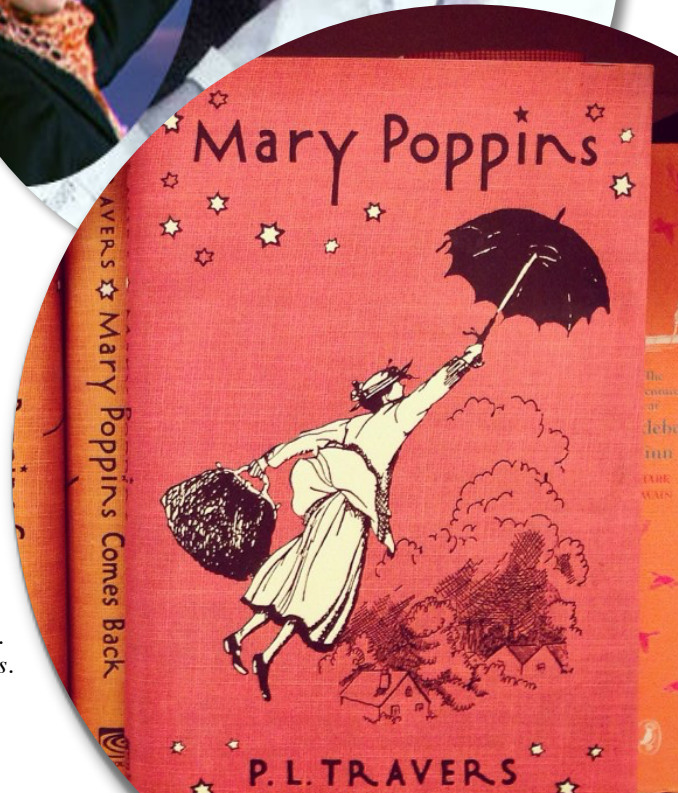
- Students are led into the theatre and seated by an usher.
- Theatres are built to magnify sound. Even the slightest whisper can be heard throughout the theatre. Remember that not only can those around you hear you, the performers can too.
- Appropriate responses such as laughing or applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage; they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Refreshments will be distributed during the Intermission. Photography and videotaping of performances is not permitted.
- When the houselights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please turn your attention toward the stage.
- After the performance, you will be dismissed by bus number. Check around your seat to make sure you have all of your personal belongings.

*(above) Mary Poppins creator P.L.Travers (right) and the original Mary Poppins from the 1964 Disney film, Julie Andrews (left)*

*The original cover of MARY POPPINS by P.L. Travers. She would write a total of eight books in the series.*



*The cast of the 2018 production of Lionel Bart's OLIVER! made a promise to the audience: we'll be back soon! And they are!*



# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE:

# MARY POPPINS

With favourite tunes such as "Jolly Holiday", "Chim Chim Cher-ee" and "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", **Mary Poppins** is a familiar tale for many of us, harkening back to the nostalgia of our childhood. And yet the themes still ring true for young audiences today.

*How do family members connect with one another? Why is it important to find the fantastical in every day? What does it mean to believe in your potential to be "practically perfect"?*

This play tells the story of a family that is dealing with very real concerns. When nanny Mary Poppins blows into the Banks household just as the "threads of their lives are all ravelling undone", she provides just a "spoonful of sugar" to begin the healing. The Banks children, Jane and Michael, discover they have the wisdom and heart to affect change as they come to connect to their father and he connects with them. Ultimately, just as we believe at Theatre De La Salle, it takes the spirited motivation of these children to change the world around them.

## PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Ask students:

- What does it mean to be fair? What does it mean to be "good?"
- What does judgement mean? How does it feel to be judged?
- What does respect mean? What are some ways to show respect? How does one gain respect?
- What are the responsibilities of the members of a family?
- What responsibilities do children have today? How do they differ from the responsibilities children had in the past?
- How can music and dance help to tell a story?

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### THE STORY

- What is the wisdom that the children share with their parents? What do Mr. and Mrs. Banks learn from Michael and Jane?
- Where do we see forgiveness in the play?
- What does Jane mean when she asks her father if he looks for a "good man" or a "good idea" when making a decision for the bank's money?
- How are Miss Andrew and Mary Poppins the same and how are they different?
- Why does Mary leave the Banks family the first time? Why does she return? Why does she leave at the end? Do you think she will come back again?
- Discuss the play with your class. What did they like, what did they find challenging? Why? Ask for specifics to generate a more intense conversation.
- Would you have liked a nanny like Mary Poppins? How would it feel to have a nanny raise you instead of your parents or grandparents? What kind of effect do you think that would have on your relationship with them now?
- Mary Poppins tells Mrs. Banks that "anything can happen if you let it". What did she mean by that? Discuss whether or not that statement is true, or under what conditions it is true.

### THE THEATRE

- Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
- What did you like about the costumes? Did the costumes help tell the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
- What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
- Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story you forgot you were watching a play?
- Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways you can be the same person but play different characters?





# INFO SHEET

## >> Story Synopsis

### ACT ONE

Bert, a man of many trades, introduces us to Cherry Tree Lane ("Chim Chim Cher-ee/Cherry Tree Lane"). He has a feeling that something is about to happen. He stops in front of No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane, where things are not going well. Jane and Michael Banks are constantly misbehaving, and Katie Nanna, the latest in a long line of nannies, has had enough. She leaves, and Mr. Banks asks his wife to place an advertisement in the newspaper for a nanny, but the children take matters into their own hands and write their own ad ("The Perfect Nanny"). Just as Mr. Banks is about to leave for work, Mary Poppins arrives; she fits the children's requirements exactly. Mary Poppins is strict but fair; she keeps the children focused with a combination of common sense and magic ("Practically Perfect").

Against their wishes, Mary Poppins takes the children on a walk to the nearby park. There they meet Bert, who is busy creating his latest works of art. Bored with the park and wary of Bert's ragged clothes, the children try to escape their new nanny. Mary Poppins urges them to look beneath the surface of every day life to see the magic there; suddenly the parks bursts into brilliant colors and the statues come to life and dance with them ("Jolly Holiday").

The Banks children are not the only ones feeling out of place. Back at No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane, Mrs. Banks feels that she is disappointing both her husband and her children. She is throwing a party, but she really doesn't know the guests. She longs for the days when she was an actress on the London stage ("Being Mrs. Banks").

The household prepares for Mrs. Banks' party ("A Spoonful of Sugar"), but even with Mary Poppins' magic, the event is a disaster as no one shows up.

Mrs. Banks is left feeling more lost than ever.

**Conniving:** to scheme and plot

**"A FATHER, A MOTHER, A DAUGHTER, A SON  
THE THREADS OF THEIR LIVES ARE ALL RAVELLING UNDONE  
SOMETHING IS NEEDED TO TWIST THEM AS TIGHT  
AS THE STRING YOU MIGHT USE WHEN YOU'RE FLYING A KITE."**

- Bert

Mary Poppins takes Jane and Michael on a trip to visit their father at his workplace, the bank ("Precision and Order"). At the bank, Mr. Banks has a choice: to give a loan to Herr Von Hussler, a **conniving** businessman who cares only about money, or John Northbrook, a factory builder who cares for his workers. An innocent question from Jane prompts Mr. Banks to remember the ideals and values he once held ("A Man Has Dreams"). He decides to take a chance on Mr. Northbrook and gives him the loan.

On the way home from the bank, the children and Mary Poppins run into the Bird Woman, feeding the birds in front of St. Paul's Cathedral. Jane is still worried about outer appearances and shuns the beggar woman, but Michael offers to give the Bird Woman money ("Feed the Birds").

Mary Poppins, Jane, Michael and Bert meet Mrs. Corry, the mysterious owner of the unusual "talking shop," where people actually purchase words along with gingerbread. The children are surprised to hear that Mrs. Corry knew their father when he was a boy ("Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious").

Things begin to go very wrong for Mr. Banks. Von Hussler has gone to another bank and is making millions, and Mr. Banks is being blamed. Under great stress, he yells at the children. In turn, Jane and Michael are furious with their father and in their anger, fight over their toys. The toys magically come to life and teach the children a lesson they will never forget ("Temper, Temper"). Recognizing that the children are not yet open to learning, Mary departs with a note which says, "au revoir," or "till we meet again."



Gavin Lee as Bert

# INFO SHEET

## >> Story Synopsis



### ACT TWO

The house is bustling again, this time because a nanny is returning to No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane. However, the visitor is Miss Andrew, Mr. Banks' old nanny, and not Mary Poppins. Miss Andrew is a cruel and harsh woman who believes that children should be punished on a regular basis with a horrible medicine that tastes like cod liver oil ("Brimstone and Treacle"). In a panic, the children escape the house and run to the park where they meet Bert, who explains that the cure for every ill can be found at the end of a kite string ("Let's Go Fly a Kite"). Their kite flies up into the London sky and when it returns, Mary Poppins is on the other end. She returns home with them and defeats Miss Andrew in an **epic** battle. Mr. Banks has also been hiding from Miss Andrew ("Good for Nothing"), and is relieved to see Mary Poppins again.

Whisked up to the rooftops, Mary Poppins, Jane and Michael meet Bert and his fellow chimney sweeps ("Step in Time"). The sweeps dance across the rooftops of London and into the Banks' house, wishing good luck to Mr. Banks and shaking his hand as they go.

Mr. Banks' boss, the Bank Chairman, wishes to see Mr. Banks immediately. Mr. Banks fears the worst, but Bert reminds him that his family is more important than his ambitions ("A Man Has Dreams/A Spoonful of Sugar Reprise"). Mr. Banks leaves for the bank and Mrs. Banks wishes she could go with him. Mary Poppins and the children encourage her to do what she believes is right ("Anything Can Happen If You Let It").

At the bank, Mr. Banks defends his actions in front of the Board of Directors, who tell him that he was right all along: Herr Von Hussler's schemes have fallen through and their competition has been ruined, while Northbrook's factories have made a healthy profit. They promote Mr. Banks, who tells them that from now on his family comes first. As Mr. and Mrs. Banks walk along the streets of London, they are joined by Mary Poppins, Jane and Michael, Bert, Mrs. Corry. The whole universe spins above their heads, like a giant umbrella. Her job done, Mary Poppins leaves, perhaps to help another family in need. Although Jane, Michael and their parents are sad to see her go, they are glad that they have finally found each other.



Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins, Katherine Leigh Doherty as Jane, Alexander Scheitinger as Michael, Gavin Lee as Bert, and the original Broadway cast

**Epic:** imposing or impressive





# INFO SHEET

## >> Meet the Characters

**BERT:** A one-man-band, a sidewalk artist, a chimney sweep and a kite salesman, Bert also narrates the story, introducing the audience to the inhabitants of No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane. Above all, he is a friend to Mary Poppins, Jane and Michael.

**MR. GEORGE BANKS:** A bank manager, Mr. Banks is father to Jane and Michael. He tries to be a good provider, but often forgets how to be a good father.

**MRS. WINIFRED BANKS:** A former actress, Mrs. Banks struggles to find herself as a woman as well as a wife and mother.

**MICHAEL & JANE:** The Banks children, Jane and Michael, are bright and precocious. However, they misbehave to get attention from their parents.

**KATIE NANNA:** The last in a long line of nannies for the Banks children before Mary Poppins arrives, Katie Nanna can't stand any more of Jane and Michael's pranks and leaves No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane.

**MARY POPPINS:** Jane and Michael's new nanny, Mary Poppins uses magic and common sense to show the Banks family how to appreciate each other again. Full of hope even when things look bleak, she tells them "anything can happen if you let it."

**POLICEMAN:** This local policeman brings Jane and Michael home after many of their adventures and becomes fond of Michael's kite.

**ADMIRAL BOOM:** The Banks' friendly neighbor on Cherry Tree Lane.

**MISS LARK:** Another neighbor on Cherry Tree Lane.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Miss Lark's dog!

**MRS. BRILL:** The Banks' cook, she rules the kitchen at No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane.

**ROBERTSON AY:** Clumsy but good-hearted, the Banks' footman has trouble following instructions.

**THE PARK KEEPER:** A stickler for rules and regulations, the Park Keeper watches over the park near the Banks' home.

**MRS. CORRY:** Mysterious and very old, Mrs. Corry runs the "Talking Shop" where people buy conversations and gingerbread. She knew Mr. George Banks when he was just a boy.

**VALENTINE & WILLIAM:** Two of the children's special toys.

**NELEUS:** A statue in the park, the Greek Neleus was abandoned by his father, Poseidon, god of the ocean.

**THE BIRD WOMAN:** She sits in front of St. Paul's Cathedral every day, selling bags of crumbs for feeding the pigeons.

**VON HUSSLER:** A conniving businessman who cares for money above all things.

**JOHN NORTHBROOK:** An English factory owner who cares more for his workers than for making money.

**MISS ANDREW:** When Mary Poppins disappears, Mrs. Banks calls on Miss Andrew, George Banks' old nanny. Miss Andrew is cruel and demanding.

**THE BANK CHAIRMAN:** Mr. Banks' boss.



# INFO SHEET



Now that you've met the characters in *Mary Poppins*, meet some of the people who might have worked in an upper class or upper middle class English home in 1910.

**THE BUTLER:** Often the oldest servant in the house, he was in charge of the family silver, china and glassware and answering the door to callers. He assisted at all the family's meals, standing behind the chair of the master of the house, awaiting his next command. His responsible position meant that he had the highest salary.



**THE HOUSEKEEPER:** The housekeeper was in charge of maintaining order and cleanliness in the house. She looked after all the household stores, ensuring that everything was in good condition. All of the other female servants reported to her, and she would work closely with the butler to see that everything ran smoothly.



**THE VALET:** He was second in importance to the butler. The valet assisted the master with his clothing. He would also take care of all travelling arrangements when the master decided to go abroad. If valets had a good relationship with the head of the house, their job would be made much easier.



**NANNY:** Children from wealthy families would spend very little time with their parents. Instead, a nanny would be employed to look after them. Although the nanny's job was very important, they were not paid very much. She was given a comfortable bedroom in the family's house, and allowed more days off than the other staff.



**THE FOOTMAN:** Reporting to the butler, the footman's job was to clean and refill oil lamps, clean cutlery, polish silver and copper plate and set the dining room table for dinner. He would also accompany the man of the house as he paid calls. It was very important that footmen kept on the good side of both the butler and the valets in the house.



**THE HOUSEMAID:** The housemaid was responsible for many tasks with kept the household running. She swept the rooms, cleaned the fireplaces, polished the brass, mended clothes and washed dishes. She would usually be younger than the housekeeper, and her wage not as high, but her position was not the lowest in the house.



**CHIMNEY SWEEPS:** Although not employed by the family on a permanent basis, many Edwardian families would regularly pay chimney sweeps to clean their chimneys. It was a dangerous job with many health and safety risks, such as: breathing problems, falling and breaking bones.



**THE COOK:** In consultation with the lady of the house, the cook chose and prepared the dishes for each day's meals. She also oversaw the kitchen area, ensuring that there was enough food, and that this was well kept. Her position was very important and she had a lot of influence - if you upset the cook, you might not get any dinner!



**SCULLERY MAID:** The scullery maids were often the youngest girls in the house. Their jobs included washing dishes, pots, and pans, preparing fires and lighting the stove in the mornings. Because work was hard, low paid, and there was little time off, they took every opportunity to have fun behind the bosses' backs.





# INFO SHEET

## >> The Magical Teacher

*Mary Poppins* is a modern myth: the tale of four heroes – the Banks family – who are schooled by a magical teacher.



Alexander Scheitinger and Ashley Brown

For thousands of years, people have told stories of gods, genies, and spirits: magical teachers who have granted humans special knowledge and insights. Heroes sometimes need guidance from supernatural mentors to continue their journey. What else is “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” but a magic word? What else is “A Spoonful of Sugar” but advice from a magical being on how to live a better life? As Brian Sibley and Michael Lassell write in *Mary Poppins: The Story Behind the Journey from Books to Broadway*, “Mary, like many

modern fairy tale characters – not to mention mythic beings – fills some longing, some need, some desire in us all...Like many of her fellow figments of imagination, from *Goldilocks* to *The Little Mermaid*, she teaches us real and valuable lessons about life.”

Many of these magical mentors have been women: oracles, wise women, and even witches who nurture male and female heroes alike and pass knowledge down through the ages. In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, helped many heroes by making them use their common sense, just as Mary Poppins does for the Banks family.

What is common sense? It's what we know deep in our hearts to be true, not what we read in books or what others tell us. Athena shows the hero Perseus how to kill the Medusa, not by magic, but by forcing the monster to gaze upon its own reflection in a mirror. Teachers like Mary Poppins show us how to see the magic in everyday life. It's wonderful to read about magical occurrences in books, or see them happen on stage. But magic can be an old woman feeding the birds on the steps of a cathedral, or a father teaching a son to fly a kite.

Of course, all the enchantment and good advice a magical teacher can give can only go so far. In the end, it is the hero who must make the journey alone. Now it's up to the Banks family to take the next step.

**“Who of us doesn't want a Mary Poppins in our life? Someone to love us unconditionally, to be magical but not too sappy, to enchant us and to make everything right, and then to leave us to do it on our own.”**

– Thomas Schumacher (Sibley & Lassell, 2007)



Ashley Brown and Gavin Lee



### VARIATIONS:

Compare Mary Poppins with some modern magical guides such as Ms. Frizzle from *The Magic School Bus* series, or Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which & Mrs. Who from *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle.

# INFO SHEET

## >> A “Dangerous Brilliance:” The Life of P.L. Travers

Like the magical nanny she created, P.L. Travers never explained. Throughout her career, people often asked her where the idea for



P.L. Travers

Mary Poppins came from, but she never really told. She believed in mystery, mythology and folk tales – she believed in questions, not answers. For P.L. Travers, life was a never-ending quest for the truth.

Born Helen Lyndon Goff, she grew up with stories. She was born in Australia on November 9, 1899 into a world with no TV, no radio, no movies or Internet.

She especially loved the stories of the Brothers Grimm and began to create her own fantastical tales at an early

age. One night when Helen was ten, she was left in charge of her two younger siblings during a driving thunderstorm; their mother had walked into the storm, distraught, and they didn't know if she would return. To comfort the younger children, Helen began to weave intricate and magical stories about an enchanted horse, allowing the children to fill in the blanks of the tale.

Although she entered her teens wanting to be an actress and a dancer, Helen soon realized that writing held more power for her. She loved to express herself through storytelling. As a young actress, she had changed her name to Pamela Travers, and she loved to see it in print. In February of 1924 she left for London, England, the home of poets, playwrights and famous storytellers. “There, at last,” she said, “I was where I wanted to be” (as quoted in *Mary Poppins, She Wrote: The Life of P. L. Travers* by Valerie Lawson (Simon & Schuster, 2006)).

### A “DANGEROUS BRILLIANCE”

While in London, she wrote for Australian newspapers, describing her adventures abroad. She soon met the poet George William Russell, nicknamed AE, who became a close friend and mentor. He told her that she had a “dangerous brilliance.”

“‘It’s no good asking her. She knows everything, but she never tells,’ said Jane.”

– from *Mary Poppins* by P.L. Travers

It was Russell who introduced her to the inner meaning of fairy tales and mythology and, in a moment that would change her life, suggested that she write about a witch. Something about a magical teacher – a combination wise old woman and fairy godmother – appealed to Travers. She took all of her experience and imagination and poured them into a solitary figure, blown into London by a mysterious wind.

### “NOT CHEERY AT ALL”

In 1926, Travers had written the first Mary Poppins story, “*Mary Poppins and the Match Man*,” about a young Mary Poppins meeting Bert the Match Man for an afternoon tea in one of his sidewalk chalk drawings. She built on that original story, creating a world around her mysterious nanny that combined magic and ordinary life.

Who is Mary Poppins? Travers’ biographer Valerie Lawson wrote, “The original Mary Poppins was not cheery at all. She was tart and sharp, rude, plain and vain. That was her charm; that – and her mystery.” *Mary Poppins*, published in 1934, was very popular, and Travers began writing a series of books about the family who lived at No. 17, Cherry Tree Lane.

### THE DARK JOURNEY

Throughout her life, Travers explored the connections between life and storytelling. Fairy tales, she wrote, “live in us, endlessly growing, repeating their themes, ringing like great bells. If we forget them, still they are not lost. They go underground, like secret rivers and emerge the brighter for their dark journey” (as quoted in *Mary Poppins, She Wrote: The Life of P. L. Travers* by Valerie Lawson (Simon & Schuster, 2006)). In *Mary Poppins Opens the Door*, she writes of a mystical crack in the fabric of reality that opens between New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day in which all the fairy tale characters come out to play.

P.L. Travers died in 1996 at the age of 96. Her journey was over, but in many ways it had just begun. At the first day of rehearsal for *Mary Poppins*, Cameron Mackintosh said to the company, “I’m sure Pamela Travers is here, today, in spirit! And you can be sure she has plenty of notes for us already!” (from “Out of the Blue: The Comings and Goings of Mary Poppins” by Brian Sibley).



# INFO SHEET

## >> From the Page to the Screen to the Stage

No one had ever seen anything like it. When the Disney film *Mary Poppins* was released in 1964, audiences saw live actors dancing with animated creatures, characters jumping into sidewalk drawings and a magical nanny flying above the London skyline. As David Tietzen, author of *The Musical World of Walt Disney* wrote, "It was a total synthesis of all that was Disney – animation, music, special effects, outstanding art and superb casting and acting."

Walt Disney had been introduced to the world of *Mary Poppins* by his daughter and spent many years persuading writer P.L. Travers to let him adapt her stories for the screen. Once she gave Disney the film rights, he knew that the story needed the best in movie magic and music (he brought in the songwriting team of Richard and Robert Sherman).

Disney was sure that, along with its visual delights, *Mary Poppins* had to be about the characters. "We had to come up with a need for *Mary Poppins* to come to the Banks family," said Richard Sherman. At first they thought of having the father be away at war, but then they had a better idea. "He would be emotionally absent," said Sherman. "We made it a story about a **dysfunctional** family. And in comes *Mary Poppins* – this necessary person – to heal them" (as quoted in "Becoming *Mary Poppins*: P. L. Travers, Walt Disney, and the Making of a Myth" by Caitlin Flanagan, *The New Yorker*, December, 2005).

The film garnered 13 Academy Award® nominations, and won in five categories (Best Actress, Best Song, Best Score, Best Film Editing, and Best Special Effects). After such a massive success, talk of a sequel was natural. After all, P.L. Travers had written many stories about her supernatural nanny. However, a sequel was never made.

Years later, following the Broadway success of *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney Theatrical Group's President Thomas Schumacher partnered with Producer Cameron Macintosh to bring the beloved nanny to life on stage. Drawing from the classic film version for inspiration, they assembled a dynamic creative team to combine the original film score with new songs as well as additional stories from Travers' other Poppins tales. In an unusual pairing of past and present, composers George Stiles and Anthony Drewe were brought in to work with the film's original songwriters, Richard and Robert Sherman to merge new tunes with the existing movie score. Additional members of this innovative creative team included writer Julian Fellowes, Director Richard Eyre, Choreographer Matthew Bourne and Designer Bob Crowley.

**Dysfunctional:** abnormal or impaired functioning

**"WIND'S IN THE EAST  
THERE'S A MIST COMING IN –  
LIKE SOMETHING IS BREWING  
AND 'BOUT TO BEGIN..."**

- Bert

*Mary Poppins* had flown from the silver screen to the musical stage. In 2007, *Mary Poppins* received seven Tony® nominations including Best Musical. Designer Bob Crowley was recognized with the Tony Award® for Best Scenic Design for a Musical for his magical sets.



Mary Poppins arrives on the East wind at No. 17 Cherry Tree Lane

# How *Mary Poppins* Became A Musical

BY CARLY VESTER

**P.L.** Travers, author of the *Mary Poppins* books, insisted she never created Mary Poppins. In true magical fashion, Travers' fastidious leading lady simply appeared to her one day, much as Mary Poppins simply appears with the east wind on 17 Cherry Tree Lane. However, Travers did have a key inspirational source. Raised by her Aunt Ellie, a woman she described as "stern and tender, secret and proud, anonymous and loving," she once said Aunt Ellie served as inspiration for not only Mary Poppins, but Miss Andrew and Miss Lark too. It was while living with Aunt Ellie in Bowral, Australia, Travers met many people who would later become characters in her books, including Mrs. Corry.

Though some of these book characters were absent from the Walt Disney film adaptation, they were brought back to life for the musical you are about to see. Travers was not fond of Walt Disney's movie adaptation, saying the real Mary Poppins "remained within the covers of the books." She was so unhappy with the film, that when Cameron Mackintosh approached her in 1993 (when she was nearly 94 years old), she only granted the rights to him with the addendum that the script must be written by an English-born author. Julian Fellowes (creator of *Downton Abbey*) was brought on to write the script due to his knowledge of the 'finer points' of the English class system in the Edwardian era. When George Stiles (music) and Anthony Drewe (lyrics) heard about the project, they put together a demo version of a new introductory song for Mary Poppins titled "Practically Perfect." Mackintosh's response was so positive that both were brought onto the team for producing the musical.



As Brian Sibley and Michael Lassell wrote in *Mary Poppins: Anything Can Happen If You Let It*, the musical was a collaboration of many creative sources. "The musical-theatre *Mary Poppins* is not an attempt to put P.L. Travers' book onstage per se, or even put the *Mary Poppins* movie onstage. Instead, the show's director Richard Eyre and the creative team assembled for the production [and] incorporated elements of the books and the film, the film's music and new songs, the inventions of Walt Disney and his studio, and the [creative] of the stage musical's book writer Julian Fellowes and [the show's] team of composers."

However, the film and stage musical have something else in common. It's been noted that the creative teams behind both endeavors agreed the atmosphere in working on *Mary Poppins* was extraordinary. Sibley and Lassell wrote: "It was, for both teams, as if there was something inherently pleasant in having to inhabit the world of *Mary Poppins* on a daily basis."

Ten years after this magical show opened in the West End, we are thrilled to be opening this production at Village Theatre. As P.L. Travers once said, Mary Poppins doesn't symbolize the magic that lies behind everyday life. "She is everyday life, which is composed of concrete and magic."

Source Credits:

*Mary Poppins, She Wrote – The Life of P.L.*

*Travers* by Valerie Lawson

*Mary Poppins: Anything Can Happen If You Let*

*It* by Brian Sibley and Michael Lassell

# INFO SHEET

## >> TWO TEAMS CREATE THE MUSIC FOR MARY POPPINS:

RICHARD M. SHERMAN & ROBERT B. SHERMAN

and

GEORGE STILES & ANTHONY DREWE



Richard and Robert Sherman had music in their blood. Their father, Al Sherman, had been a songwriter on Tin Pan Alley, that famous New York City street where hundreds of songwriters worked at their pianos day and night creating a sound like crashing tin pans. And their grandfather had been Court Composer and Conductor for Emperor Franz-Josef of Austria-Hungary in the early 1900s. Richard and Robert Sherman would follow the “family business” by spreading their joyous music around the world.

The Sherman brothers were born in New York City to Rosa and Al Sherman (Robert was born in 1925, Richard in 1928). After several trips across country, the family finally settled in Beverly Hills, California in 1937. Both boys were **intensely** interested in music, but it wasn’t until their father challenged them to write a song together that they began to work as a team.

By the early 1960s, Richard and Robert had become the main song writers for Walt Disney. In 1961, they wrote several songs for the Disney movie *The Parent Trap*. Then in 1964, they began

work on *Mary Poppins*. They had to find ways to fit songs into P.L. Travers’ stories. Richard Sherman said, “From the beginning, we saw this in musical terms. We wanted to do a full blown musical fantasy of the first magnitude...” (as quoted in *The Musical World of Walt Disney* by David Tietzen).



Richard and Robert Sherman

“Do you boys know what a nanny is?”  
“Yeah, it’s a goat.”  
“No! An English nursemaid!”

- Walt Disney talking to Richard and Robert Sherman  
about *Mary Poppins* (Sibley & Lassell, 2007)



George Stiles and Anthony Drewe

George Stiles and Anthony Drewe had admired the Sherman brothers all of their lives. This song writing team had worked together with Cameron Mackintosh on the musical *Just So Stories*. At Mackintosh’s suggestion, they wrote a song called “Practically Perfect” for *Mary Poppins*, not realizing that the Sherman brothers had written a song with the same title that never made it into the film! When work began on the *Mary Poppins* stage production, the two song writing teams began to **collaborate**, creating new songs and expanding some of the original songs with new dramatic context. “By the end of the process,” said Richard Sherman, “it was sometimes hard to remember who wrote what and when.”

**Intensely:** having great strength, strong feeling  
**Collaborate:** to work together



# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE:

# MARY POPPINS

## STEPS IN TIME

### **MARY POPPINS Premieres (1964)**

Because she had originated the role on Broadway, Julie Andrews was hoping to be cast as Eliza Doolittle in *MY FAIR LADY*, so she didn't accept Disney's offer to play Mary Poppins right away. She ended up winning an Academy Award for her practically perfect performance. Dick Van Dyke, who played the the original Bert character, said this was the best movie he's ever been in. But he also insisted he was miscast, saying the part probably should have gone to someone more talented. The film was nominated for 13 Academy Awards and won five in 1964: Best Actress, Editing, Score, Visual Effects and Song ("Chim Chim Cher-ee").



Original stars Dick Van Dyke as Bert and Julie Andrews as Mary Poppins (1964)

### **MARY POPPINS on Broadway (2006)**



Mary Poppins opened at the New Amsterdam Theatre on November 16, 2006 and grossed nearly \$300 million during its 2,619 performances. The Broadway musical featured Ashley Brown, who'd previously played Belle in *B&B*. She auditioned nine times before landing the role of Mary.

The Broadway version of Mary Poppins won the 2007 Tony Award for Best Scenic Design. It was nominated for 6 other Tony Awards including Best Musical, Best Choreography and Best Leading Actor and Actress in a Musical.



Original Broadway stars Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins and Gavin Lee as Bert at the New Amsterdam Theatre (2006)

### **MARY POPPINS RETURNS (2019)**

A sequel to *MARY POPPINS* has been in the works since its original release in 1964. Walt Disney attempted to produce a sequel a year later, but was rejected by the author P. L. Travers, who dismissed Disney's first adaptation.

Set in 1930s London, twenty-five years after the events of the original film, the film sees Mary Poppins, the former nanny of Jane and Michael Banks, returning after a family tragedy. The film stars Emily Blunt, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ben Whishaw, Meryl Streep, Colin Firth, Julie Walters and much-loved cameos by Angela Lansbury and the original Bert, Dick Van Dyke, playing the role of Mr. Dawes Jr, the chairman of Fidelity Fiduciary Bank.



The long-awaited sequel to the original *MARY POPPINS* was released by Walt Disney Pictures in 2019 and starred Emily Blunt as Mary Poppins and Broadway star Lin-Manuel Miranda as the lamp lighter, Jack.

# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE:

## MARY POPPINS

### *Supercalifragilistic* TRIVIA

- ☂ **Mary Poppins** was the first film the Walt Disney Company ever released on DVD format.
- ☂ It took Walt Disney 20 years to secure the film rights to **Mary Poppins** from prickly P.L. Travers, who almost sabotaged the movie.
- ☂ Travers so disliked the Disney adaptation and the way she felt she had been treated during the production that when producer Cameron Mackintosh approached her years later about making the British stage musical she acquiesced only on conditions that English-born writers alone and no one from the original film production was to be directly involved. This specifically excluded the Sherman Brothers from writing additional songs for the production. These points were even stipulated in her last will and testament.
- ☂ Though the Sherman Brothers claimed they made the word up themselves, a 1949 song called "Supercalafajastickespeealadojus" would seem to say otherwise. The writers of the song, Barney Young and Gloria Parker, sued for \$12 million. They lost because lawyers were able to present evidence showing that the nonsense word had been around, in some form or another, for decades.
- ☂ The word "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" was officially added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1986.
- ☂ Julie Andrews was left hanging in mid-air during one particularly long camera setup. The stagehands unwittingly lowered her wire harness rather rapidly. "Is she down yet?" called a grip. "You bloody well better believe she is!" fumed Andrews.
- ☂ Many of the nannies that are lined up for the available nanny role in the film were actually men dressed in drag. It's no wonder Mary Poppins stood out as much as she did.
- ☂ The opening shot of Mary Poppins sitting on a cloud contains a gag originally used in Disney's **Dumbo**. While Poppins checks her makeup, her carpetbag slides "through" the cloud. She catches it repeatedly just before it falls to oblivion. The stork delivering Dumbo does the same thing with his bundle.
- ☂ The child actors who play Jane and Michael were not told that Dick Van Dyke would also be playing Mr. Dawes, Sr., in the bank scenes. Van Dyke suggested to Walt Disney that he double in the role of Mr. Dawes, Sr. He even offered to play the role for free. Disney made him audition for the role, and when Van Dyke was cast, they also made him make a financial donation to the CalArts Film school.
- ☂ Julie Andrews' performance in Mary Poppins convinced the producers of **The Sound of Music** to cast her as Maria von Trapp a year later, where she played another singing governess (with decidedly fewer magic powers).
- ☂ In the original books, Jane and Michael have three additional siblings: the twins, John and Barbara, and youngest sister Annabel, who is born in the middle of the second book, **Mary Poppins Comes Back**. While Jane and Michael are the primary characters in the books, the other children do accompany Mary Poppins on adventures as well.
- ☂ A year after **Mary Poppins** was released, Hammer Horror Studios released **The Nanny** (1965) which starred Bette Davis as a psychopath who comes to kill the children in her care. Ironically, she is also referred to as Mary Poppins.
- ☂ 2019 marks a few *supercalifragilistic* milestones: the 85th Anniversary of the book's publication (1934); the 55th Anniversary of the feature film's release (August 27, 1964), and the 15th Anniversary of the stage musical's premiere (2004)



# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: MARY POPPINS

Rehearsing for the 2019 production of



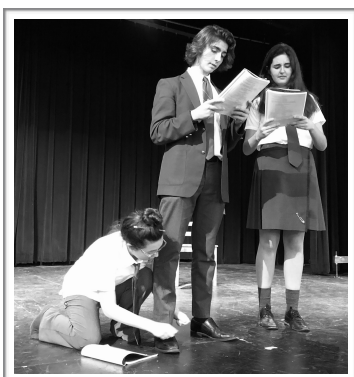
The cast of TheatreDLS's MARY POPPINS has a wide array of talented students in Grades 5 through 12 who range in ages from 9 to 17. Here are some of them.



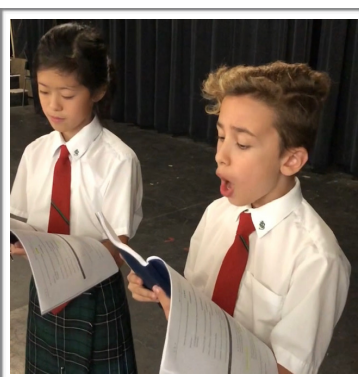
The cast rehearses the complex choreography for the show stopping "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" number near the end of Act 1



Megan Campbell (Mrs. Banks), Olivia Misasi (Robertson Ay), Savanna La Selva (Mary Poppins) and Audrey Cheng (Jane Banks) practice their vocals.



Being Mr. and Mrs. Banks: Grade 12 cast members Jon Cucchiella and Megan Campbell



Audrey Cheng and Vasili Prangikos rehearse "The Perfect Nanny", their first duet!



MARY Christmas from the Banks children, Vasili Prangikos and Audrey Cheng



The cast of MARY POPPINS gets a visit from TheatreDLS alum Max Gibson.



# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE:

## MARY POPPINS

## MEET *our* CAST

### AUDREY CHENG (*Jane Banks*)



Audrey made her TheatreDLS debut in the 2018 production of Lionel Bart's musical *Oliver!* as one of Fagin's boys. Audrey made her stage debut at age 7 with the Bravo Academy production of *Seussical: The Musical*. At age 10, she appeared as Mrs. Potts in Bravo's production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Audrey has been pursuing vocal training with Breanne Dietrich. She has performed with the CCOC and won Platinum First Place Best of Class at the Kiwanis Festival.



### VASILI PRANGIKOS (*Michael Banks*)



Vasili is only in Grade 5 but he's not new to the stage. He started dancing at the age of 3 and for the last four years, has been training and dancing competitively with the Boundless Dance Company. Vasili is a multi-medal winner at several dance festivals, including On the Floor, Inspire, Starbound, and Kick it Up. Vasili is represented by the Camera Talent Acting Agency. He made his film debut in a short film called *3 a.m.* and has done print modelling for Walmart, K'Nex, and Hasbro. He is making his TheatreDLS debut in *MARY POPPINS*.



# CLASS CONNECTIONS

Look for these symbols throughout the guide:



**HOT SEAT!** With the Hot Seat, any exercise can suddenly become a theatrical game. Classmates take on the roles of characters from *Mary Poppins*, and audience members get to see what they are thinking!



**VARIATIONS:** Look for Mary Poppins' umbrella for suggested variations on exercises and activities!

Throughout the guide, you will see **“quotes”** from *Mary Poppins* the Musical. Discuss how these quotes are connected to the exercises.





>> A good way to assess any story  
is through the 5 W's:

“ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IF YOU LET IT  
LIFE IS OUT THERE WAITING, SO GO AND GET IT”

- The Ensemble

WHO? (CHARACTER)

Who are the different characters?

WHAT? (PLOT)

What happens to the characters during the story?

WHERE? (SETTING)

Where does the story take place?

WHEN? (TIME PERIOD)

When in history does the story take place? When  
during the day or the year?

WHY? (THEME, MOTIVATION)

Why do the characters act and behave as they do?





WHO  
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# WHO?

>> Characters can see the world in different ways

## THE HOT SEAT!



A story can change depending on who tells it. People see the world from different viewpoints; a group of people might see the same event from completely different **perspectives**.

You've gotten a chance to meet the characters at *Mary Poppins* and learn about their development. Now it's your turn to become the characters by expressing their viewpoints in words and styles that you help to create.

**STEP ONE:** Set up the "hot seat": a single chair in front of your classroom.

**STEP TWO:** One by one, each member of your class or group should take a turn in the "hot seat." When it's your turn, choose one of the characters from *Mary Poppins* (for a full list of characters, see page 6). Introduce yourself in the voice and manner of the character you have chosen.

**THE "RASHOMON" EFFECT:** *Rashomon* is a 1950 Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa. The film, based on two stories by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, uses a unique narrative structure to tell its story: a crime is committed and seen by four witnesses. Each witness recounts what happened; however, each version of the story is different, colored by the person's opinions and character.

**Perspective:** a mental view or outlook



**"BEING MRS. BANKS  
WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?  
FACING TESTS OF CHARACTER  
I ALWAYS SEEM TO FAIL"**

- Mrs. Banks

**STEP THREE:** Below find some important events from *Mary Poppins*. Ask the "characters" in the "hot seat" questions about how these events affect them.

### EVENTS:

KATIE NANNA LEAVING  
MARY POPPINS ARRIVING  
VISITING MR. BANKS AT THE BANK  
FIGHTING OVER THE TOYS  
PREPARING FOR MRS. BANKS' PARTY  
MISS ANDREW ARRIVING  
MR. BANKS BEING FIRED FROM HIS JOB  
MEETING WITH VON HUSSLER  
MEETING WITH NORTHBROOK

After the class or group has interviewed several "characters," discuss how the characters' viewpoints differed. How were they alike? Was there a point in the story when most of the characters' viewpoints were the same?



### VARIATIONS:

- Describe Mary Poppins and the other characters in the show: write down 10 adjectives describing Mary and the other characters, then use your adjectives to write a paragraph description of each character. How can your descriptions help inform your improvisations?
- Instead of acting out the characters' viewpoints, write about them in diary entries.
- How would the characters respond to events in your life? How would they respond to current events happening today?

WHO  
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# WHAT?

## >> What Happens in *Mary Poppins*?

### Get up on your feet and jump into *Mary Poppins*' story!

Break your class or group into smaller groups of 2 or 3 people. Each group can choose or be assigned one of the events in *Mary Poppins* (to refresh your memory, check out the plot summary on pages 4 and 5).

**Create an emotional portrait:** Using gestures, facial expressions and body language – but no words – express the emotions of your event from *Mary Poppins*. You can even use sounds – but no words! Can the audience guess what event you are portraying?

**Create a tableau:** Create a tableau, or frozen moment in time, from your event – with no words. Can the audience guess what event you are trying to portray?

**Create an improvisation:** Each group will have two minutes to improvise its events from *Mary Poppins* with full use of language, facial expression, gesture and body language. Don't worry about recreating lines from the musical – the idea is to reveal the emotions behind that moment in the story to your audience.

**Hire a director:** After the initial round of improvisations, a director can be assigned to each scene. Another student joins the group. It will be his or her job to lead the scene, advising the actors on the best way to make the story clear for the audience.

**Hire a playwright:** Assign one student to be the playwright. Another student joins the group; it's her or his job to write out the lines after the improvisations in proper dramatic format, complete with character names and stage directions.



### VARIATIONS:

- Perform your improvisations in order of the events in *Mary Poppins*. Are there other scenes or moments necessary to bridge the gaps between your events?
- Take photos of your tableaux and place them in order in a book, creating a picture book of *Mary Poppins*' story.
- After performing your scene or moment once, switch roles. How does your performance in the first scene inform your new role?



### THE HOT SEAT!

Questions from the “audience” may clarify or redirect a scene. Fellow students might stop a scene in the middle and place characters on the “Hot Seat” to be questioned. During a “Hot Seat” pause, characters can ask each other questions as well.

WHO  
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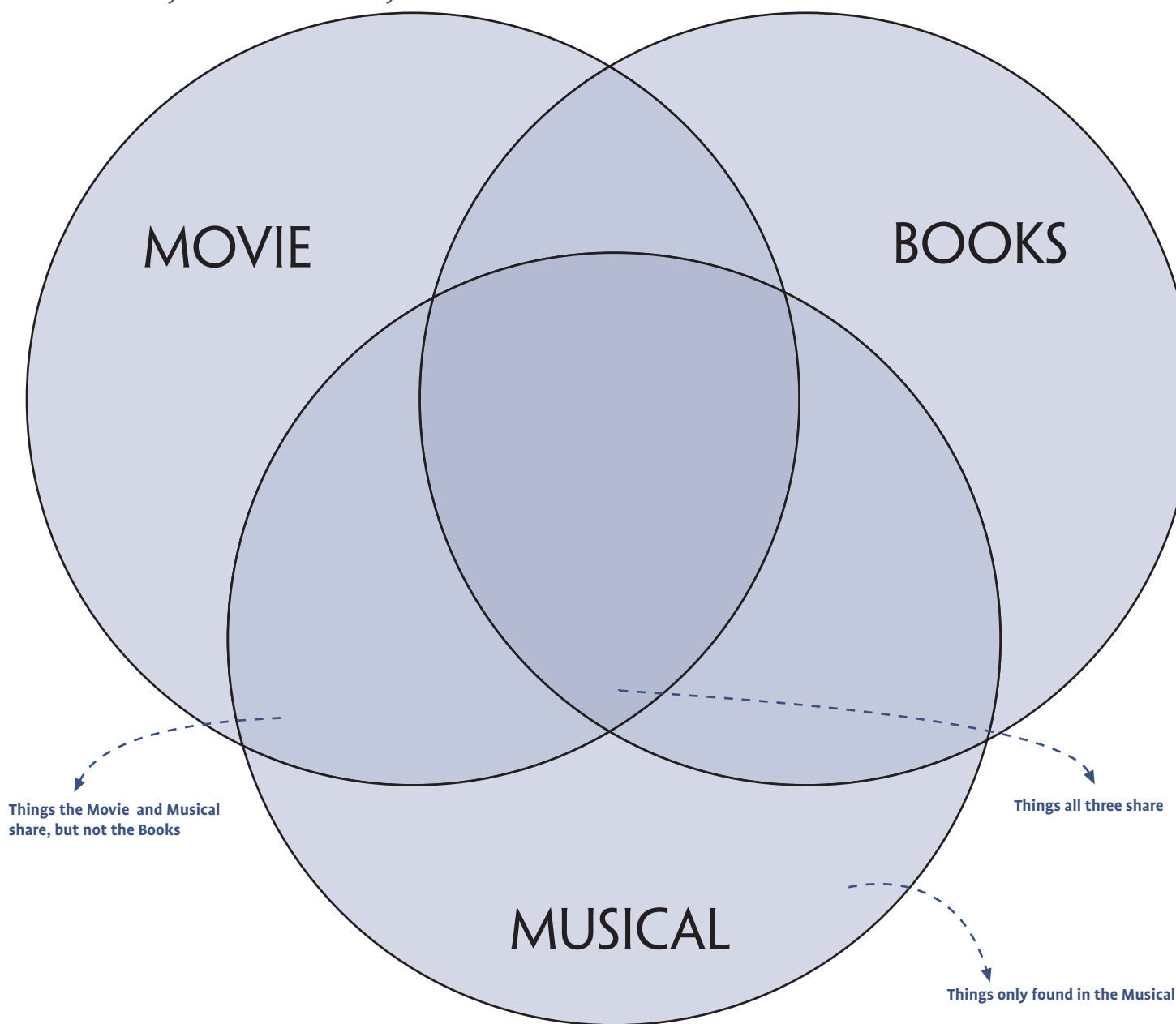
# WHAT?



## >> What Happens in the Books, Movie, and the Musical of *Mary Poppins*?

Try to read the books, see the movie and experience the musical version of *Mary Poppins*. Use the Venn Diagram below to compare these three different versions of the same story. Where are they different? Where are they the same?

Use this diagram as the launching point for a discussion about the opportunities and limitations of each art form. In your opinion, which one tells the story best?



**LEARNING OBJECTIVES: ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS:** Students will understand how informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning; **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS:** Students will know how the ways that works of art evoke emotions through the use of selected media; **THEATRE:** Students will understand the various settings and reasons for creating dramas and attending theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.





WHO  
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# WHAT?

## >> Report the News on Cherry Tree Lane



### The Cherry Tree Lane Gazette

Vol. I No.1

*Mary Poppins* takes place in London, England in 1910, a time before text-messaging, the Internet, television or radio. People got their news through newspapers. During the time of *Mary Poppins* there were dozens of newspapers published in London, each one with a different style and viewpoint, read by people from all walks of life.

Create a neighborhood newspaper for the street where the Banks family lives. Study the front page of a modern newspaper to see what your front page might include, such as the date, a motto, weather and a masthead.

Ideas for articles can include:

**CURRENT EVENTS:** Use Library or Internet research to study what was happening in the world in 1910 with such topics as:

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY  
CLASS DISTINCTIONS  
THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN SOCIETY  
THE ECONOMY & COMMERCE  
THE PLACE OF BRITAIN IN THE WORLD  
THE PLACE OF THE NANNY IN BRITISH SOCIETY

Choose one factor from the list above (or another of your choosing) and write an article describing how that factor affects the characters in *Mary Poppins*.


**“YET NOW IN OUR MIDST THERE’S  
WELL, I CAN’T EXPLAIN  
BUT SOMETHING IS UNSETTLING  
IN CHERRY TREE LANE ”**

- Mr. Banks

**INTERVIEWS:** Create fictional interviews with different characters from *Mary Poppins*. First, write out a series of questions you would ask one of the characters, then answer the questions in the “voice” of the character (this can also be done in pairs, with one person writing the questions, the other writing the answers in the “voice” of the character. These interviews can be improvised and then transcribed.

Choose an event from the musical and describe it in article format; include quotes from different characters.

You can interview the characters on how they feel about events in the musical, including the arrival of Mary Poppins, the arrival of Miss Andrew, Mr. Banks losing his job, Mr. Banks getting a promotion.



WHO  
WHAT  
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WHY

# WHAT?

## >> Report the News on Cherry Tree Lane (cont.)



### The Cherry Tree Lane Gazette

Vol. I No.1

#### FEATURE ARTICLES:

**Advice Columns:** Give advice as if from Mary Poppins and Mr. Banks. Split your class in half. One half can write letters to Mary Poppins or Mr. Banks, asking for advice on such topics as: “Chores: Why or Why Not?”, “Is Homework Important?”, “Should Parents play with their Kids?”, “How Should We Treat Our Toys?” The other half might write responses in the voices of Mary Poppins or Mr. Banks.

**Pro and Con:** Use the topics from the Mary Poppins/Mr. Banks advice columns above to create a “Pro and Con” column. Split your class in half. One half will write brief paragraphs about the “pro” aspects of schoolwork, chores around the house, parenting, and teaching. The other half will write from the negative, or “con” position. Place the paragraphs side-by-side for comparison; what can you learn from points on either side?

**Advertisement from Bert:** Describe Bert’s various skills as a sidewalk artist, chimney sweep, one-man band and kite salesman.

**Crossword puzzle:** Develop a puzzle or word search with words and terms from *Mary Poppins*.

**The Winds of Change:** Create a weather report – is it good weather to fly kites? What are the winds of change coming to Cherry Tree Lane?

**Horoscopes:** Imagine what the stars hold for the characters in *Mary Poppins*?

**Comic strips:** Design a comic strip or one-panel comic portraying a scene from *Mary Poppins*.

#### EDITORIALS:

Unlike a newspaper article which is just supposed to present the facts, an editorial expresses the opinion of the editors on important timely matters. Possible ideas for “The Cherry Tree Lane Gazette” editorials:

1. Should Mr. Banks encourage Mrs. Banks to be an actress?
2. Are nannies good for the English home?
3. What is the most important lesson the Banks children learn from Mary Poppins?
4. Your suggestions?



#### VARIATIONS:

Rather than writing a newspaper, use video to create a newscast from Cherry Tree Lane, or recording equipment to create a radio broadcast. If recording equipment is not available, you can simply perform your newscast for your classmates or an audience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS: Students will provide details of fictional characters; ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS: Students will write in response to literature; THEATRE: Students will understand how informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning

WHO  
WHAT  
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WHEN  
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# WHAT?



## >> What Happens to Us Every Day Makes Us Who We Are

### CREATE YOUR OWN MUSICAL TALISMAN

Sometimes everyday words just won't do. Think about slang or made-up phrases that only you and your friends share. Everyone should have his/her own special word to help them through hard times.

Richard Sherman, one of the *Mary Poppins* songwriters, said of the song "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," "When Mary Poppins takes the children through the chalk drawing from the world of reality into the world of fantasy, we wanted the children to have something to bring back with them, a **talisman**.... As kids, we went to summer camp, and we recalled...a special long word similar to the one used in the film...it gave us a word that no adult had" (quoted in *The Musical World of Walt Disney* by David Tietyen).

Jane and Michael have their special word – now it's your turn to create your own musical talisman!

A **talisman** is a keepsake that is said to have magical powers. Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious is a word-talisman that the Banks children and Mr. Banks use to make themselves feel better.

**STEP ONE!** Think of a singular event in your life, a joyful moment you will always remember. Write a one sentence description of that day or event:

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#### VARIATIONS:

Describe your word to another student or someone else in one sentence

“WHEN TRYING TO EXPRESS ONESELF IT’S FRANKLY QUITE ABSURD TO LEAF THROUGH LENGTHY LEXICONS TO FIND THE PERFECT WORD A LITTLE SPONTANEITY KEEPS CONVERSATIONS KEEN YOU NEED TO FIND A WAY TO SAY PRECISELY WHAT YOU MEAN”

- Mary Poppins

**STEP TWO!** Write down five adjectives or describing words you would use to describe that special moment (try to include at least two multi-syllabic words!)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**STEP THREE!** Now, break up your words. Write them again below, breaking them up between syllables:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
e.g.	won	der	ful	ly		
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						

**STEP FOUR!** Finally, choose sections of the words you broke up in Step Three and piece them together into one long, special magical word talisman that means something only to you. Every time you say your word, you'll think of that special time in your life.



Ashley Brown

With my umbrella in hand, I always know  
**WHERE I am!** (Turn the page...)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS: Students will make connections between characters in literary work and events or people in his/her own life: THEATRE: Students will use non-verbal communication to enhance and support their performances





WHO  
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# WHERE?

## >> INFO SHEET: London

In many ways, *Mary Poppins* can be seen as a magical **travelogue** of London in 1910. Throughout the story, we see London's parks, shops, banks, the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, even the city's rooftops! Since *Mary Poppins*' story is so **ingrained** in the city, learning about some of London's landmarks will make seeing *Mary Poppins* a richer experience.

### The Parks:

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, London's neighborhoods were arranged to create a balance between buildings and open, leafy spaces that still exists today. London's industry was growing at a rapid pace, and people of all classes needed places to go to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and reconnect with nature. Most of London's small parks were built during the 1820s. The parks were laid out with larger evergreen trees and shrubs along the outer belt to create a **secluded** feeling. The interior of the parks were set with grass, paths, flowerbeds and statuary.

### St. Paul's Cathedral:

The current St. Paul's Cathedral is actually the fourth to occupy this same site. A Cathedral of St. Paul has looked over London since 604 AD. The Cathedral that towers over the London skyline today was designed by the architect Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1675 and 1710 after the third cathedral had been destroyed in the Great Fire of London. Since the first service took place there in 1697, St. Paul's Cathedral has become a **focal** point for the history of London and England. The funerals of Winston Churchill and the Duke of Wellington took place here; peace services were held here after both World Wars. Millions have visited St. Paul's: to worship, to sit in its peaceful interior, and to feed the birds that still flock its steps.

**Travelogue:** a description of travels  
**Ingrained:** deep rooted, firmly fixed  
**Secluded:** isolated, shut off  
**Focal:** relating to a central point  
**Sweep:** a nickname for a chimney sweep

“All that it takes is a spark  
then something as plain as a park  
becomes a wonderland”

- Bert

### The Rooftops:

“NOWHERE IS THERE A MORE ‘APPIER CREW  
THAN THEM’S WOT SINGS, ‘CHIM CHIM CHER-EE, CHIM CHER-OO’”  
- Bert

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rooftops of London were the chimney sweeps' kingdom! As long as we have heated our homes with fire, there has been a need to clean out chimneys of soot, and chimney sweeps have always come to the rescue. During the Industrial Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, more and more people built tightly packed houses in cities and urban centers. And with houses came chimneys! In 19<sup>th</sup>-century England, many young boys were employed as chimney sweeps because it was easier for them to get inside the chimney. Many became sick and died from this difficult work.

Have you ever heard the phrase “to light a fire under” someone to make them work faster or harder? That comes from the young chimney sweeps - sometimes a young sweep was too scared to go into a chimney, so his boss would light a fire in the fireplace underneath him! Being a chimney sweep was a dangerous job, but an important one. Dirty chimneys could easily cause fires and back up with deadly smoke.

Eventually, the creation of instruments that would allow someone to sweep the chimney without actually being inside allowed older men like the character of Bert to take over the job. In many places in Great Britain, it's still considered good luck to shake hands with a sweep. Chimney sweeps are sometimes hired for weddings so they can shake hands with the bride and groom before the ceremony; in fact, **sweeps** today often make more money at weddings than they do cleaning chimneys!



Library of Congress

WHO  
WHAT  
WHERE  
WHEN  
WHY

# WHERE?

“ALL YOU ‘AVE TO DO IS LOOK ANEW  
THEN YOU’LL UNDERSTAND WHY...  
IT’S A JOLLY HOLIDAY WITH MARY  
MARY MAKES YER HEART SO LIGHT”

– Bert



## >> The Objects Around Us Can Seem Magical If We Let Them

### MAGICAL PROPS

Mary Poppins enables the Banks family to experience the magic in everyday life; in her hands, common objects become infused with magical power. Actors can also work magic on objects in the theatre, called “props.” Short for “properties,” props are objects used by actors on stage that cannot be classified as scenery or costumes (such as keys, glasses, or a book). They are usually held in the hands in some manner or kept on the body. Props can help reveal a character’s status or occupation, or illuminate an important moment in a scene.

By using them again and again in rehearsal, actors endow props with an emotional power for the audience; in an actor’s hands, a stick can become a magical staff, a wooden sword can become a deadly weapon of steel, or a simple bowl can become a family heirloom.

#### HOW DID THEY DO THAT?

Theatre artists are problem solvers. The creators of *Mary Poppins* were given many interesting problems to solve, such as: How do you make a nanny fly? How do you make a bed appear out of thin air? How do you bring toys to life? Movie artists can use computerized special effects to create magic, but theatre artists must make the magic happen right in front of a live audience!

There are hundreds of magical special effects in *Mary Poppins*, and just like a magician, we can’t tell you how the “tricks” are done.

When Mary Poppins first comes to the nursery, she reveals a large sheet. Spreading it out on the floor, a bed seems to magically appear beneath the sheet! This is a breathtaking effect, but one that has been a part of theatre since Shakespeare’s day. How do you think they did it?

Write one sentence describing how these ordinary items become extraordinary in *Mary Poppins*:

#### The Umbrella:

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#### The Carpet Bag:

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#### The Bottle of Medicine:

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#### The Kite:

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#### The Statues:

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#### The Toys:

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#### The Urn:

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#### VARIATIONS:

- **Write a short story** (not more than 2 pages) about a magical object. First, choose an object that you see or use every day: the more ordinary the better! Hold it in your hand or watch it for a while. What magical properties could it hold? How can it help, or harm, human beings?
- **Create your own** “magical object” prop based on your story.
- **Improvise a short scene** in which you experience your prop’s magical aspects.
- **Before seeing** *Mary Poppins*, think about how you would solve some of the theatrical “problems” in the show, such as making a nanny fly or pulling large items out of a small carpet bag.
- **Make a list** of any other props you remember from *Mary Poppins*. How did the actors instill them with emotional power?
- **Research** the history of stage magic. Discover how the “tricks” in *Mary Poppins* were performed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS: Identifies and researches cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts; ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS: Knows that “supernatural helpers” are an archetype found in literary texts; THEATRE: Demonstrate an understanding of the skills required to be a prop master



WHO  
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# WHEN?

“THOUGH YOU’RE JUST A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH, BERT  
UNDERNEATH YOUR BLOOD IS BLUE”

- Mary Poppins

## >> Characters Are Affected by Their Status

### THE STATUS LADDER

We’ve seen how different viewpoints can change the way we see the world. Something else that can change the way we see the world, and how others see us, is status. Status is a person’s position in society. In Edwardian England, status was pretty much set in stone; your position when you were born was the same throughout your life. But your status can be different depending on whom you relate to: Mary Poppins’ status is high compared to the children (she is their mentor and caregiver) but Mr. Banks can fire her (she is his employee). Think about your own status within the community of your school, and how that can change depending on whom you relate to (fellow students, teachers, administrators, parents).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English society was built on the vision that everybody had his/her place in the ladder of society, and those on the lower rungs of the ladder served those higher up. As you’ll see, there were even servants to raise the children of the wealthy. It was a time when having a nanny became a status symbol; the middle classes hired nannies even if they couldn’t afford them.

British society during the Edwardian period was divided into the following general classes:

- **Upper class:** Royalty, the nobility, and the very rich
- **Upper-middle class:** The wealthy, bankers, lawyers, doctors, merchants and manufacturers.
- **Lower-middle class:** A growing class in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain, consisting of shop keepers, managers, civil servants and small manufacturers.
- **Working class:** chimney sweeps, farmers, factory workers, shop employees, house servants, clerks.
- **Lower class:** The homeless and destitute were still a grave and growing concern during the Edwardian Era.

Place the characters from *Mary Poppins* on this status ladder. Which of the following factors might you use: economics, age, community respect, impact on Michael and Jane? Keep in mind that some names may be on the same rung:

BERT

MR. BANKS

MRS. WINIFRED BANKS

MICHAEL & JANE

MRS. BRILL

ROBERTSON AY

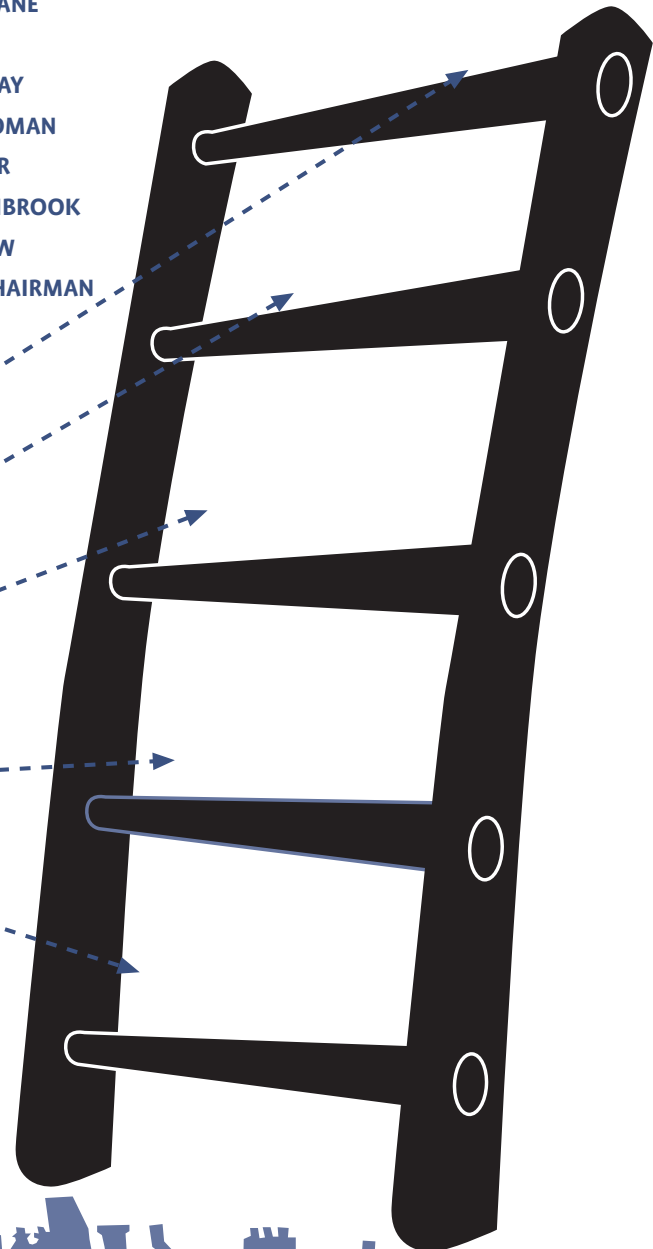
THE BIRD WOMAN

VON HUSSLER

JOHN NORTHBROOK

MISS ANDREW

THE BANK CHAIRMAN





# WHEN?

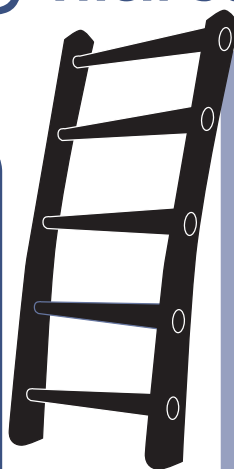


## >> Characters Are Affected by Their Status (Cont.)



### VARIATIONS:

- Think about how class and status affect the characters and story of *Mary Poppins*. Consider how Mr. Banks' status changes whether he is at work or at home
- How are we affected by class and status today?
- Where did you place Mary Poppins on the ladder? Discuss how Mary Poppins fits on the status ladder. Does she fit at all? Why or why not?
- In *Mary Poppins*, John Northbrook convinces Mr. Banks to invest in his new factory. With what you've learned about the Edwardian Era, consider what Mr. Northbrook might be making in his new factory. Split your class into two groups. One group will brainstorm what could be made in Northbrook's factory. Once that decision is made, the other group will decide if the new factory is worth investing in.



### HOW DO ACTORS USE STATUS TO INFORM THEIR CHARACTER?

Actors often use status as the foundation for acting exercises and improvisation. Whether they know it or not, people react in different ways depending on what they perceive as their "place" in a situation. These gaps in status can create great tragedy or hysterical comedy. As Keith Johnstone writes in his book *Impro* (Routledge, 1987), "Once you understand that every sound and posture implies a status, then you perceive the world quite differently, and the change is probably permanent. In my view, really accomplished actors, directors and playwrights are people with an intuitive understanding of the status transactions that govern human relationships."



## THE HOT SEAT!

Here's a fun theatre game to illustrate the importance of status in defining character:

1. Pass out enough standard playing cards for each member of your class or group. Each member should receive the card, but not look at it, then hold the card, face out, on his or her forehead.
2. The group is given one minute to wander around the classroom. Holding the cards on their foreheads, members cannot see their own cards, but can see everyone else's. Members are instructed that the cards represent the status ladder: face cards (Ace, King, Queen, Jack) represent Upper class; higher number cards (10, 9, 8, 7) represent the Upper-middle class; middle number cards (6, 5, 4) represent the Lower-middle and Working classes and the lowest cards (3, 2) represent the Lower class.
3. Imagine that you're at a party. Class members should react to other members of the group according to their "status" as shown on the card. How do you treat someone from the Upper class? Upper-middle class? Middle class? Lower class?
4. Members should gauge how others are treating them.
5. After several minutes, stop the exercise, but do not look at your cards yet.
6. Members are instructed to line up according to what you think your status is from the reactions of your fellow classmates, with high status at the one end of the line and lowest status at the other.
7. After getting in line, look at your cards. Are you where you thought you should be? Are you surprised at others' reactions? How did you treat other people? Should a person's status matter in terms of how we treat them? Did it in the exercise?



WHO  
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## >> Reality Check: Nannies

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, something unique happened in Great Britain. Rather than raising their children themselves, as parents had done for centuries, mothers and fathers from rich and middle class families handed over their children to special caregivers, called “nannies,” who were hired to address childrens’ every need, from food and education to discipline. As in *Mary Poppins*, fathers were expected to work while mothers were expected to entertain guests and lead the staff of servants.

### Why did this happen?

#### “Whether it was a coat, or a child...”

During the Industrial Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, both population and wealth dramatically increased in Great Britain. In 1830, the average English family had six or seven children, and this number was even higher for the wealthy. More children created a need, and more money created the means to hire more servants to watch the children. As Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy in his book *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* writes, “If the rich had anything that needed looking after – whether it was a coat or a child – then there was a servant to do it.”

#### Ruler of the Nursery

As nannies became more and more popular among the wealthy and middle classes, their power in the household increased. The nursery was their kingdom and they ruled it with a firm hand. The nursery was always removed from the rest of the house; many times, as in *Mary Poppins*, it was on the top floor, or near the servants quarters. Nannies controlled every **aspect** of the child’s life; children would see their parents for only a short amount of time each day. Nannies controlled the child’s clothing, books, food, medicine, and discipline, and so exerted a great deal of influence over the lives and personalities of their charges.

**Aspect:** part or feature

“A NANNY SHOULD GOVERN  
A NANNY SHOULD RULE”

- Mr. Banks

#### “As made my childish days rejoice”

Nannies could be very cruel, like the character of Miss Andrew in *Mary Poppins*. But when nannies were kind, the connection between them and their children could be very close. The writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote *Treasure Island* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* wrote about his own nanny in *A Child’s Garden of Verses*:

“And grant it, Heaven, that all who read  
May find as dear a nurse as need,  
And every child who lists my rhyme,  
In the bright, fireside nursery clime  
May hear it in as kind a voice  
As made my childish days rejoice.”

**DID YOU KNOW?** Nannies also passed on stories. Why do you think they’re called “Nursery Rhymes?” Remember, there was no television, no Internet in 1910; although people read books and newspapers, stories told through the oral tradition were still a popular way to pass on morals and traditions. Who might be the storyteller in your family?

#### NANNIES TODAY

Nannies are more popular today than ever! In these stressful times when both parents need to work long hours, or single parents raise children, parents are still looking for help in raising and appreciating their kids, and nannies like “Supernanny” Jo Frost are there to help Mom and Dad cope!

There are many different web sites that describe the duties and responsibilities of a modern nanny. Use the Internet to research how different countries define these roles.

#### What was Brimstone and Treacle?

Yuck! Mean nannies like the character of Miss Andrew would sometimes give their charges a foul-tasting mixture of sulphur and molasses, originally thought to cure illness, but often used as a punishment for misbehaving children.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES: MUSIC: Students will understand how expressive devices are used in music from diverse genres; LANGUAGE ARTS: Students will use strategies to enhance listening comprehension (e.g., takes notes, organizes, summarizes, and paraphrases spoken ideas and details) and justify character motivation; THEATRE: Students will understand how dialogue is used to discover, articulate, and justify character motivation; LANGUAGE ARTS: Students will use strategies to enhance listening comprehension (e.g., takes notes, organizes, summarizes, and paraphrases spoken ideas and details)

WHO  
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# WHY?

## >> Why Do Characters Act the Way They Do?

*Mary Poppins* is an example of musical theatre. The essence of musical theatre is the merging of song and story, where songs help to move the story forward and let us know more about the characters' thoughts, feelings and/or actions. As Robert Sherman said, "Writing songs for *Mary Poppins* [the movie] was a songwriter's dream. Each song we did had a purpose, a reason for being. Whether it is to build characterization or to carry the action, there is a purpose for each song" (as quoted in *The Musical World of Walt Disney* by David Tietzen (Hal Leonard, 1990)).

Use this chart to write down what we learn about the characters through their songs, and how the songs move the story forward:

### CHARACTER/SONG

### INSIGHTS

1. THE COMPANY/"CHERRY TREE LANE"

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. THE BANKS FAMILY/"THE PERFECT NANNY"

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. MARY POPPINS /"PRACTICALLY PERFECT"

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. MRS. BANKS /"BEING MRS. BANKS"

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. MARY POPPINS, BIRD WOMAN/"FEED THE BIRDS"

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. THE COMPANY /"SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS"

6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. THE TOYS /"TEMPER, TEMPER"

7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. MISS ANDREW /"BRIMSTONE AND TREACLE"

8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. MR. BANKS/"A MAN HAS DREAMS"

9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. MARY POPPINS, MRS. BANKS, JANE, MICHAEL/  
"ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN"

10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"If a song isn't necessary to tell the story, it shouldn't be in the film."

- Richard Sherman (Sibley & Lassell, 2007)



### THE HOT SEAT!

Rather than writing these answers down, students can get in the "hot seat" and describe their emotions and thoughts to the class in character.



“ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IF YOU LET IT  
WHAT GOOD IS A WHISTLE  
UNLESS YOU WHET IT ”

- The Ensemble



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

## HOW DO THE ARTISTRY AND THEMES OF *Mary Poppins* CONNECT WITH YOUR WORLD?

**Visit a rehearsal:** Visit a working rehearsal of a professional, amateur or school theatrical production. Discuss the work and collaboration needed to mount a production.

**Compare:** P.L. Travers often said that “thinking is linking.” She believed that everything is “linked” or connected: all the stories we have told for thousands of years, and, as she wrote in her essay “Only Connect,” “the individual and the community, the known with the unknown...the past to the present and both to the future.” How is *Mary Poppins* linked to other plays or musicals you have seen? How is it linked to other Disney Broadway shows like *The Lion King*, *TARZAN*® and *The Little Mermaid*? Compare *Mary Poppins* with a musical produced at your school. How were the productions different? How were they similar? Realize that nearly every Broadway performer began his/her career in school productions!

**Compare, pt. 2:** *Mary Poppins* takes place in England. Using online resources, study the theatre from another country and culture. Compare it to theatre you have seen. Compare it to *Mary Poppins*.

**Collaborate:** Ask a local theatre professional to work with your class or group on either a student production or integrating theatre within the curriculum.

**Go to the park:** Like Jane and Michael in *Mary Poppins*, look at the parks in your neighborhood with new eyes. How can you help to make your parks clean? Join an organization that helps to maintain local parks, or begin such an organization yourself with your class or group.

**Tour the New Amsterdam:** Did you know that the New Amsterdam Theatre where *Mary Poppins* is playing was once called the “House Beautiful”? Can you tell why? Take a tour of the New Amsterdam Theatre to find out more about this beautifully restored theatre. Compare the architecture within the New Amsterdam to theatres you have seen, including your school auditorium.

**Think about the ideal teacher:** What are qualities you would like to see in an ideal teacher or role model? What qualities do the special people in your life have that match those of Mary Poppins?

**Meet a real Mary Poppins:** Invite a nanny or an au pair to come to your classroom and speak about his/her training, experience, philosophy, and how he/she became interested in child rearing. Was Mary Poppins, either the original books or movie, an influence on his/her career choice?

**Imagine you are a family looking for a new nanny.** What might you look for in a nanny? Write down 5 characteristics of a good nanny or babysitter. Write a short paragraph as a newspaper advertisement for your perfect nanny, just as Jane and Michael did.

**What do you value?:** In *Mary Poppins*, the factory owner John Northbrook tells Michael that money has a monetary worth (for example, one dollar or, in London, one pound) and also a value, that is, what the money can do to help others. What do you value? Friends, family, possessions? Consider the difference between value and worth?



Original Broadway Cast



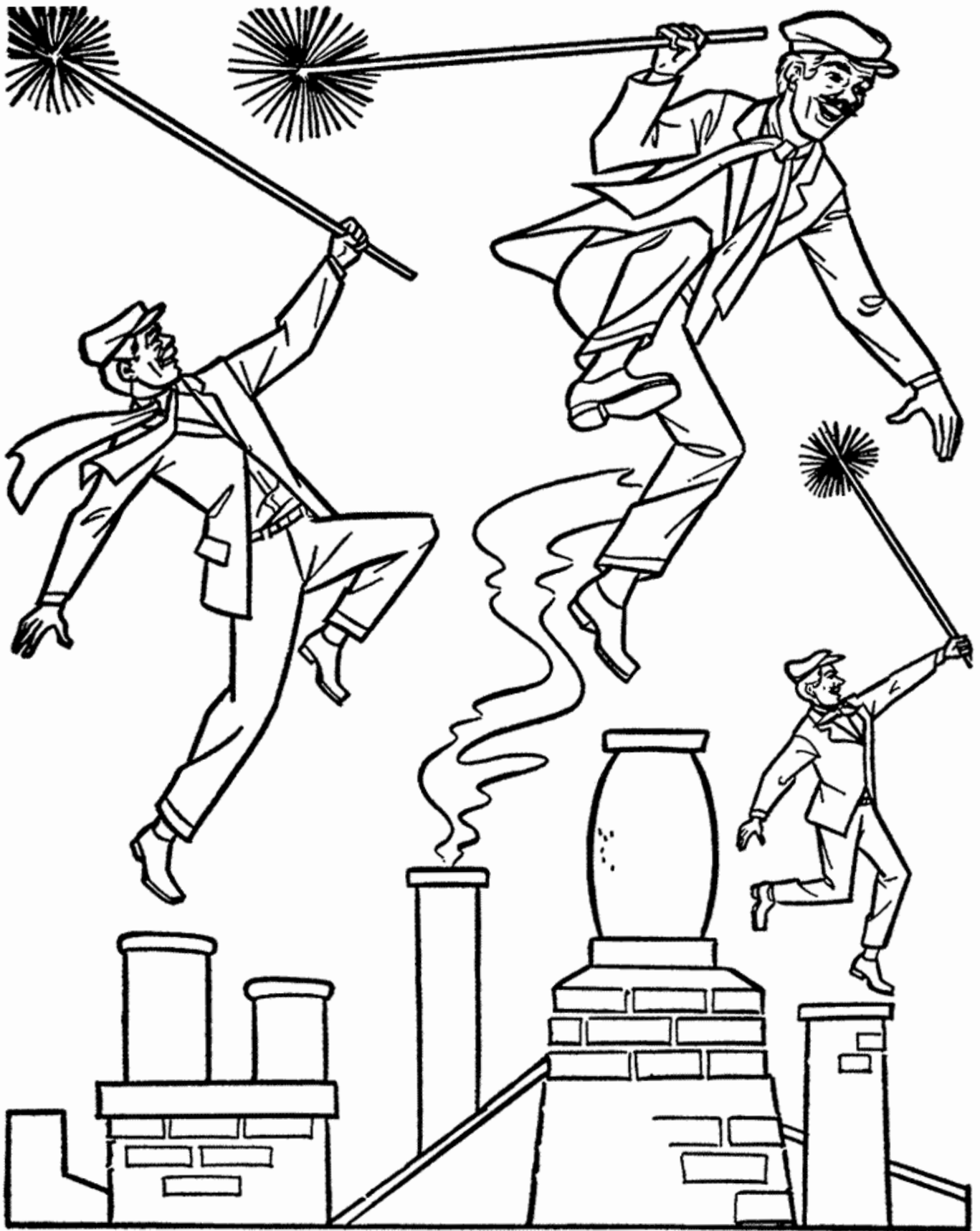
## **Activity Pages**



MARY POPPINS



# STEP IN TIME





FEED THE BIRDS

SUPER

CALI

FRAGIL

ISTIC

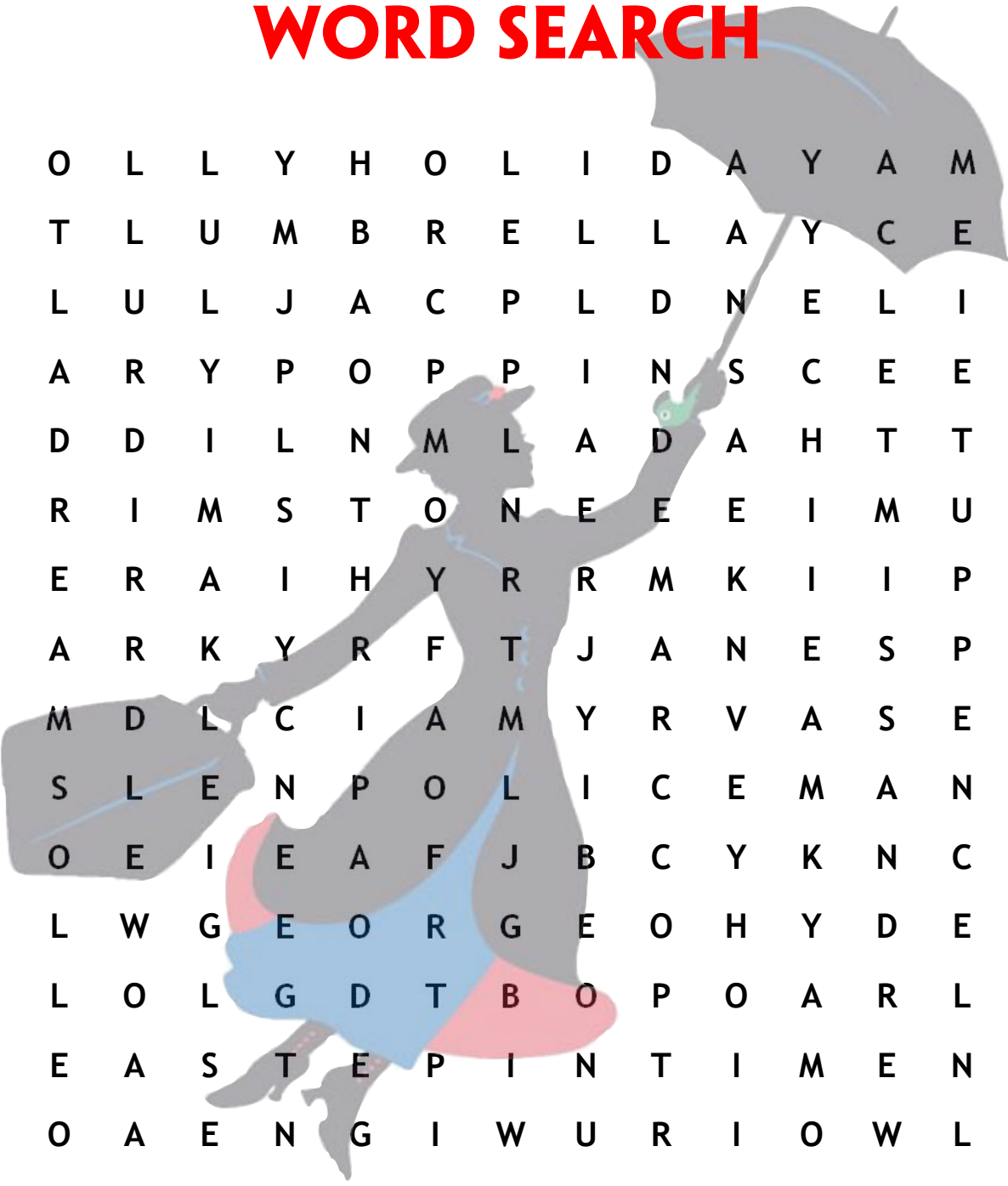
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DOCIOUS !





# MARY POPPINS WORD SEARCH



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

Park  
Umbrella  
Vase  
Step In Time  
Jolly Holiday  
Michael

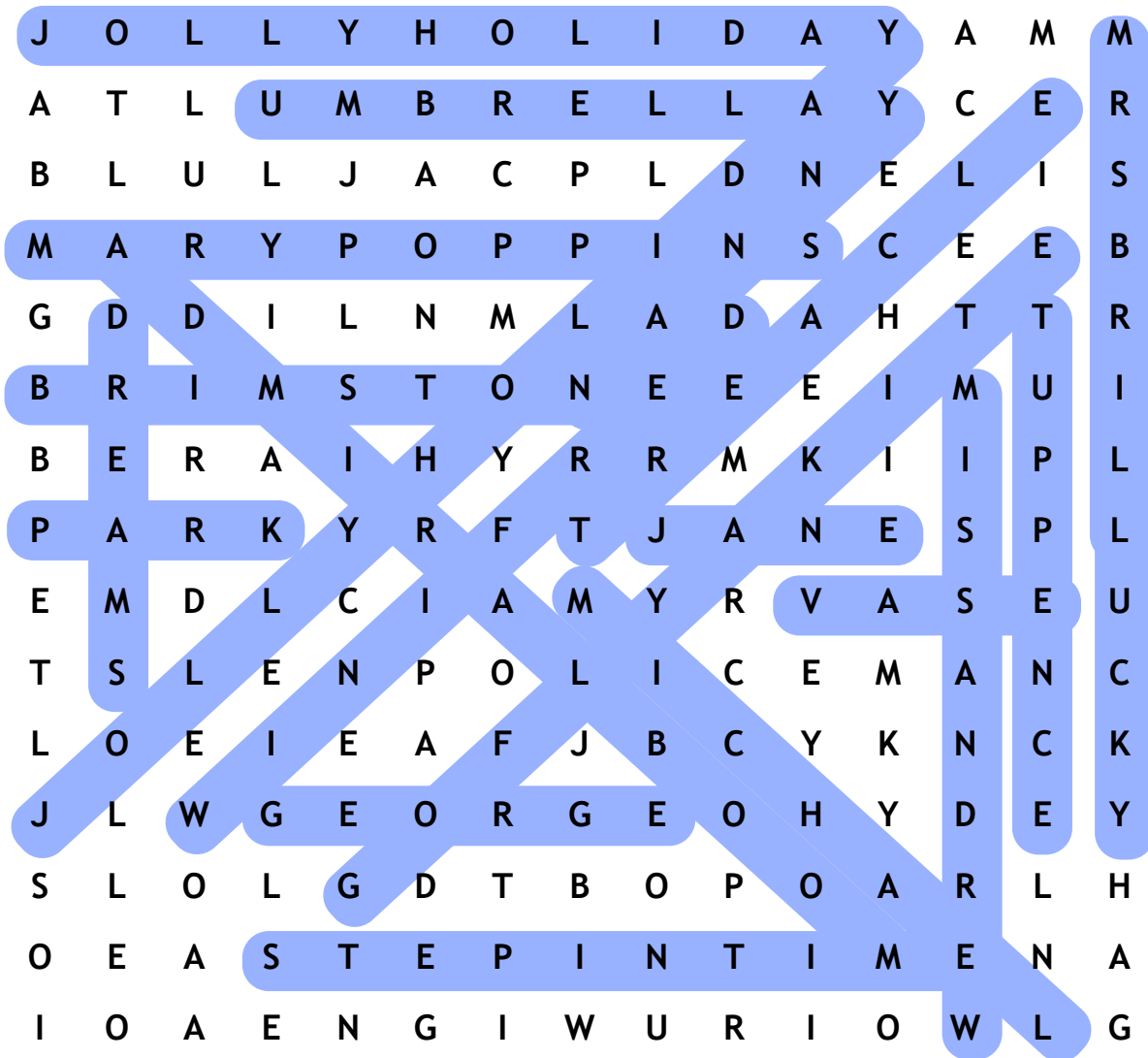
Mary Poppins  
Go Fly a Kite  
Brimstone  
Dreams  
George  
Jane

Admiral Boom  
Treacle  
Policeman  
Lucky  
Nanny  
Tuppence

Winifred  
Mrs. Brill  
Miss Andrew



# MARY POPPINS WORD SEARCH KEY



Park  
Umbrella  
Vase  
Step In Time  
Jolly Holiday  
Michael

Mary Poppins  
Go Fly a Kite  
Brimstone  
Dreams  
George  
Jane

Admiral Boom  
Treacle  
Policeman  
Lucky  
Nanny  
Tuppence

Winifred  
Mrs. Brill  
Miss Andrew

# MARY POPPINS CROSSWORD

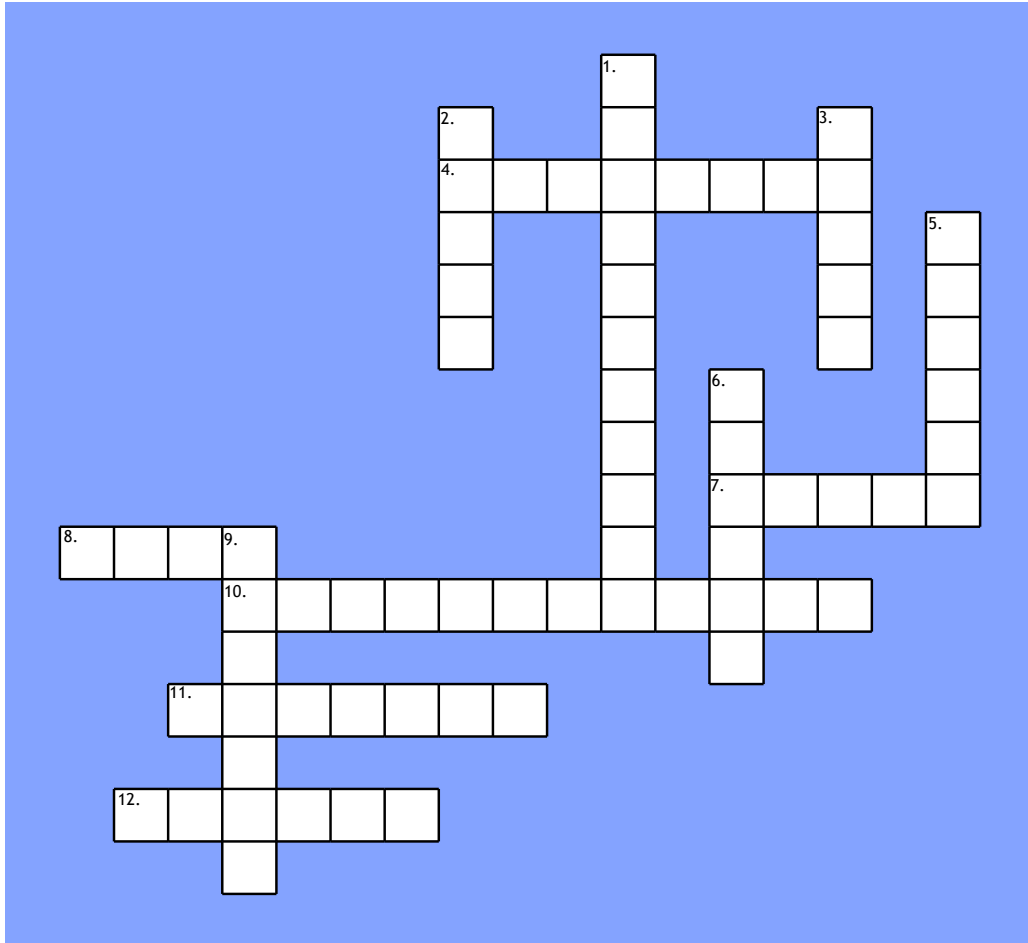


## Across

4. Parrot handled
7. Servant who cares for children
8. "What's more important a good man or a good \_\_\_\_\_?"
10. Bert's dusty job
11. Based on the books by P.L. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Walt \_\_\_\_\_

## Down

1. She's "Practically Perfect"
2. Spoon full of \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jane and Michael's last name
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Tree Lane
6. Mr. Banks' profession
9. Mrs. Banks was an \_\_\_\_\_



# MARY POPPINS CROSSWORD KEY



## Across

4. Parrot handled
7. Servant who cares for children
8. "What's more important a good man or a good \_\_\_\_\_?"
10. Bert's dusty job
11. Based on the books by P.L. \_\_\_\_\_
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