

Branar Téatar do Pháisti's



HOW TO CATCH A STAR

Education Pack



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How to Catch a Star



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for booking your class to join us for Branar's production of How to Catch a Star. Before you arrive, learn more about the show, the company, where we are from and how we work.

About the Show

Once there was a boy who was always looking up. He dreamt of having a star as a friend. From climbing trees to a game of hide and seek and a game that takes a dangerous turn, this is the story of his adventure.

Based on the beloved book by award-winning Irish author Oliver Jeffers, Branar Téatar do Pháistí are proud to present How to Catch a Star. Combining intimate puppetry with a magical original score, Branar's signature storytelling creates a show which remind us all to follow our dreams.



Curriculum Links

Fine Arts:

Drama, Puppetry, Physical Theatre, Visual Arts, Design & Technology

Language:

Literacy, Reading, Critical Evaluation

Science:

Space, Stars, Night and Day

Music:

Composition, Appreciation, Conducting

Geography:

Maps, Water Safety

Emotional and Social

Development:

Friendship, Imagination, Teamwork, Healthy Eating

How to Catch a Star



Who We Are

CREATING BIG STORIES FOR LITTLE CITIZENS

Branar Téatar do Pháistí is one of the leading theatre companies making work for children in Ireland. We create beautiful, innovative, high quality productions that inspire children and their families. We tour our work to venues and festivals locally, nationally and internationally. We support artists to make work for young audiences through our tailored programmes of resource sharing and Tiny Show creation. We create opportunities for children to explore their own arts practice in school settings.

The company tours extensively nationally and internationally every year. Our work has been presented throughout Ireland, Europe, USA, China and Japan.

Where We're From

Branar Téatar do Pháistí are a theatre company based on the west coast of Ireland, in a city called Galway.

“Téatar do Pháistí” means “theatre for children” in Irish. Irish is our national language.



Here's some fun facts:

- Ireland's national day of celebration is 17th March – St. Patrick's Day
- Ireland's national language is Irish/Gaelic. There are designated areas in the country where Irish is spoken exclusively.
- Almost 35 million American citizens can claim Irish heritage. That's over 10% of the population of USA.

Check out the [National Geographic Kids Edition here](#) for more information about Ireland

How to Catch a Star



How We Work

Branar's creative team was inspired by Oliver Jeffer's books. We have now adapted two of his books for stage: *How to Catch a Star* and *The Way Back Home*. The production of *HOW TO CATCH A STAR* incorporates set, costume, music and lighting to help retell the story on stage.

The process of bringing the story from page to stage took 3 years for the production of *HOW TO CATCH A STAR*. During this time, we worked with a number of artists in a collaborative design process. By working as a team, our job was to capture the essence and magic of Jeffers' story in each of the design decisions we made. This was done by ensuring that the feeling we got when we read the book was still present, if not enhanced, by the stage version. Check out the full list of our team members, there's over 20 people!

In order to make sure that the show is right for our young audiences, we also visited children in schools and showed them what we were working on. We asked for their opinions and suggestions and this informed the next stage of development.

Teamwork is an important element when we make a show. What is teamwork? When have you used it? Can you incorporate teamwork into your activities today?

The Branar Creative Team:: *How to Catch a Star*

Puppeteer 1

Puppeteer 2

Technical Manager

Director

Executive Producer

Associate Producer

Stage Manager

Costume Designer

Set Designer

Composer

Set Builder

Lighting Designer

Dramaturg

Show Technician

Puppet Designer

Props Designer

Props Maker

Assistant Director

Photographer

Videographer

Graphic Designer

How to Catch a Star



Preparing for the Show

What You'll See

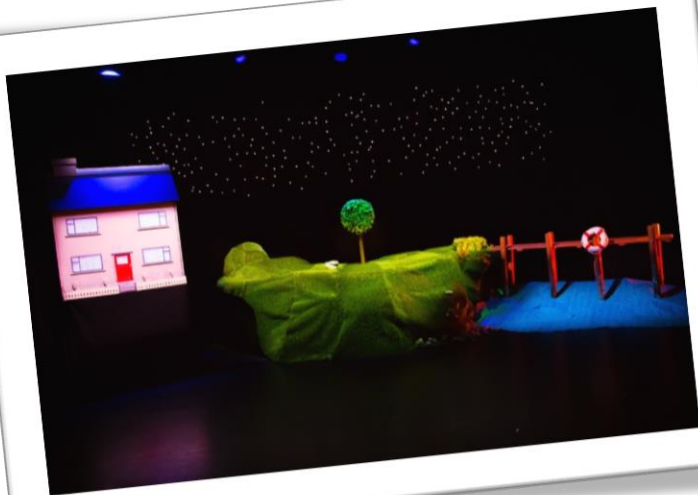
You will visit a theatre in order to watch Branar's **How to Catch a Star**.

You'll see a large set, including a house, a park and a pier. You'll also see two puppeteers. The puppets include a boy, a star, a bird and a worm.

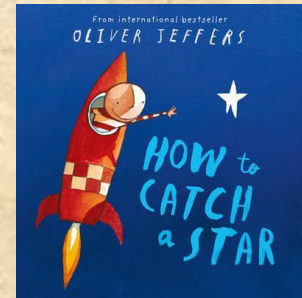
You'll see the stage lights above the set and a twinkling star cloth behind the set. You'll hear music too.

The puppeteers do not speak but will make little sounds and noises to suggest how the puppets feel.

Once you enter the theatre, you'll sit in the theatre seats beside the rest of your class during the performance.



PROFILE: Oliver Jeffers



Name: Oliver Jeffers

Age: 42 years (1977)

Birthplace: Belfast, Northern Ireland

Living: Brooklyn, NY

Job: Visual Artist & Author

Art Types: Painting, Bookmaking, Illustration, Collage, Performance, sculpture

Books: 16 books (as of 2019), including How to Catch a Star & The Way Back Home

Exhibitions: Brooklyn Museum in New York, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, The National Portrait Gallery London, Palais Auersperg Vienna

Awards: New York Times' Best Illustrated Children's Books Award

Website: www.oliverjeffersworld.com

Make a profile about yourself, a famous person or the person sitting next to you. Add in pets, favourite foods, colours, siblings etc.

How to Catch a Star



Visiting the Theatre

For some of your students this may be the first time they will have visited a theatre. Here are 4 handy tips for each part of your time in the theatre.

WHILE WE'RE WAITING

1. Wait in foyer until staff tell us to go in.
2. Chat quietly and stay as a group.
3. Use the Key Questions on Pg. 10 of this resource to facilitate a quiet discussion.
4. Take off our coats and put them in our bags. *

WHEN WE ENTER

1. Follow the Theatre Staff + sit in the seat they show us
2. Put bag/coat under seat
3. Remain seated while we wait for it to start
4. Leave any snacks/drinks until the end of the show

WHEN IT'S FINISHED

1. Wait in our seat until teacher/staff tell us we can get up
2. Take all belongings with us when we leave our seat
3. Do not touch the set when we leave (it's delicate!)
4. Stay as a group in the foyer



*Reminder: It might be a little dark when we enter, the same as in a cinema, but the staff will show us the way.

We look forward to welcoming you to **How to Catch a Star**. If you have any questions regarding your visit, get in touch with your local venue who will be happy to help.

For Teachers

Branar follows a “No Shush” policy. Often teachers are worried their students are disturbing the performance when they are talking/whispering/reacting to the show and will “shush” them. However, there’s no need. With Branar’s “No Shush” policy, we welcome children to react to the performance with laughs, comments and questions as it’s only natural!

We only ask teachers to intervene if their students are speaking very loudly on a constant basis or if the topic they are discussing is unrelated to the show, which would be considered disruptive behaviour.

How to Catch a Star



DISCUSSION

In order to open a discussion about your visit to Branar's production of HOW TO CATCH A STAR, find out how much your students already know about the story and about theatre in general.

- Have you ever seen a play?
- What types of puppetry are there? Which do you like best? Why? (List of puppet types on P14)
- Have you ever read the book HOW TO CATCH A STAR?
- Have you ever read any other books by Oliver Jeffers?
- What is imagination? When do you use it?

*Puppetry information on page 14
Imagination Activities on page 9*

READING, DISCUSSION, ADAPTATION

1. Sit in a circle and read the book aloud.
2. Use the **KEY QUESTIONS** on Page 10 to frame your discussion. Make use of the teacher tips to facilitate an open discussion.

Other Adaptation Questions:

- What do you think will be different in the show? What do you think will be the same in the show?
(music, drawings, will the boy wear the same colour jumper? Will it be flat or 3D? etc...)
- Are there any parts in the book you would like to see more of in the show?
- The puppeteers do not use any words when they perform, just little noises to help us understand what the puppets are feeling. What do you think it will be like to watch a show with no words? (NON-VERBAL)

ADAPTATION ACTIVITY:

In pairs or groups of 3, decide what part of the story you would change (ADAPT). Would you like a part of the story to be funnier, sadder, more exciting or interesting, louder or quieter? Would you like a new character or a different ending? Write or draw the change. Come together as a group and share your adaptations. Why did you decide to make this change?

Explain that this is what **Branar** did when they decided to tell **How to Catch a Star** on stage. Sometimes elements that work in the story book don't work on stage, or vice versa. The Branar creative team worked together to make both style and narrative changes, to ensure that the audiences could enjoy the stage version as much as they enjoyed the storybook. For example, stage lighting and music can be incorporated into the stage production but aren't possible to include in a book!

I wonder will Branar have made any of the same changes as your class did?

How to Catch a Star



MEET THE CHARACTERS



The Boy



The Star



The Bird



The Worm

How to Catch a Star



After the Performance

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Engage in a conversation with your students regarding their thoughts and feelings about the show. In order to fully engage in a critical response to the production, use these questions as prompts:

Key Questions

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you feel (when...)?

What did you think (when...)?

Top Tips for Teachers:

- a) The more open the question, the more options there are for responses.
- b) Repeat answers so the whole class can hear.
- c) It's important not to celebrate answers as all of the children will assume this is the answer you want. Repeat their answer, thank them for their contribution and move onwards.



How to Catch a Star



CRITICAL EVALUATION



Use the space below to draw your favourite moment from HOW TO CATCH A STAR. Think about what you saw, what you heard and about the puppets and visually recreate one of the scenes from the play.



How to Catch a Star

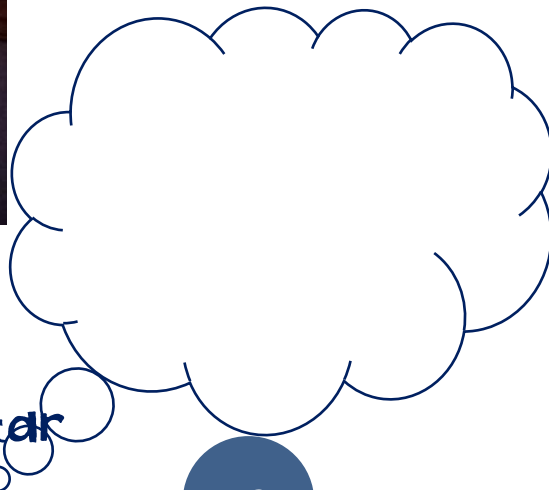
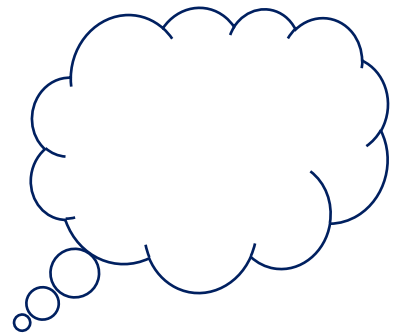
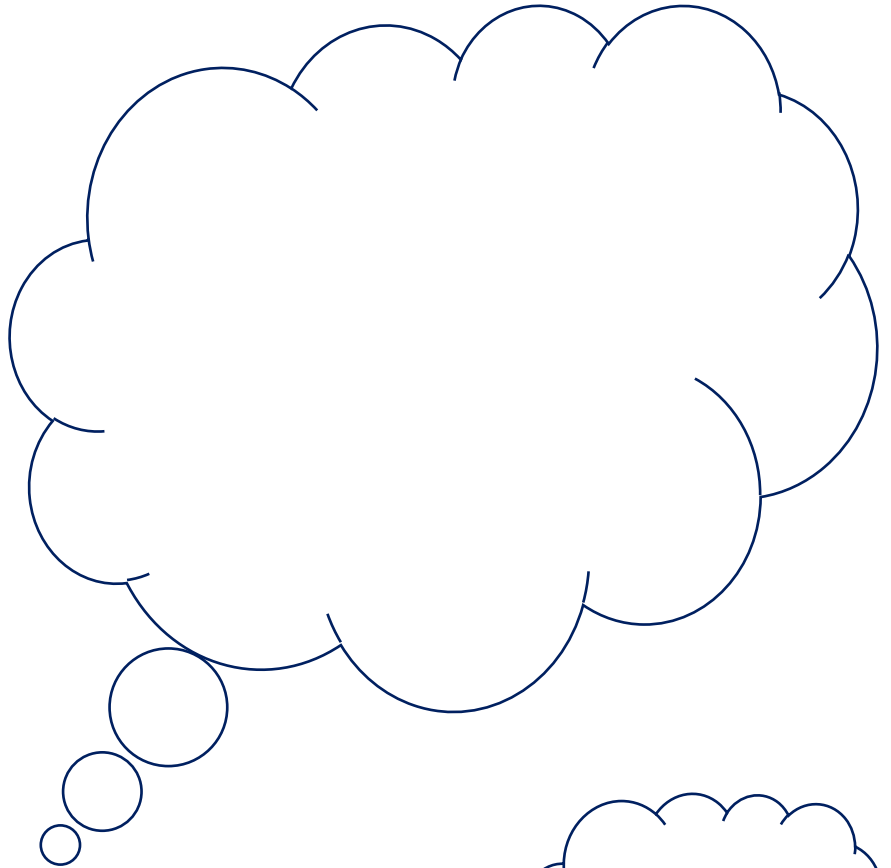


CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

IMAGINATION

During the performance of HOW TO CATCH A STAR, the boy can't reach the star and uses his imagination to figure out how to get as high as the star. He tries his rocket, he climbs the tree, he imagines putting springs on his feet, he tries to fly up on a bird.

Can you imagine different ways you could reach the star? Draw your suggestions. Discuss as a class.



How to Catch a Star



Use the production of *HOW TO CATCH A STAR* to learn about stars, constellations, and night and day.

STARS

What is a star?

Stars are born in dense regions of hot gas throughout the galaxy. These “stellar nurseries” are where the materials that form stars congregate. Stars form when gases gather under the force of gravity. Accumulated and dense gases begin their lives as protostars – baby-stars born in stellar nurseries.

Stars shine for the same reason our Sun does. Stars “burn” hydrogen and helium in their deep interiors, converting mass into energy. However, most stars don’t actually twinkle. The twinkling effect comes from dust in the atmosphere or other particles in the interstellar medium. They just appear to twinkle to the human eye.



What is a constellation?

For thousands of years, people have seen shapes and patterns made by the stars in the sky. The shapes we recognize today, known as 'constellations,' help people to understand time, space, and directions.

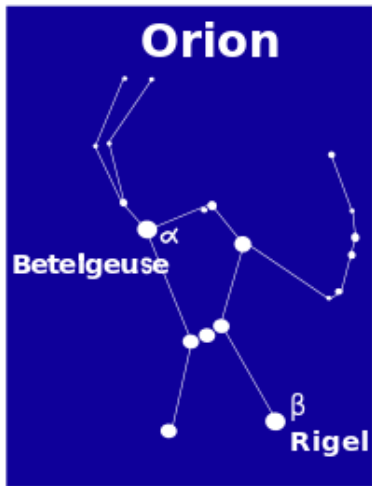
The patterns were called after different object and characters from stories. This was to make it easier to remember where star patterns were located in the sky.

Check out some famous constellations below. You can look for them the next time you are looking at the stars!

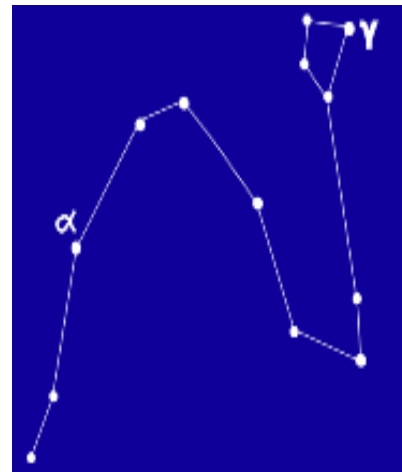
How to Catch a Star



EXAMPLES OF CONSTELLATIONS



Orion – The Great Hunter



Draco – The Dragon



Leo - Lion



Scorpius – The Scorpion

Further Resources:

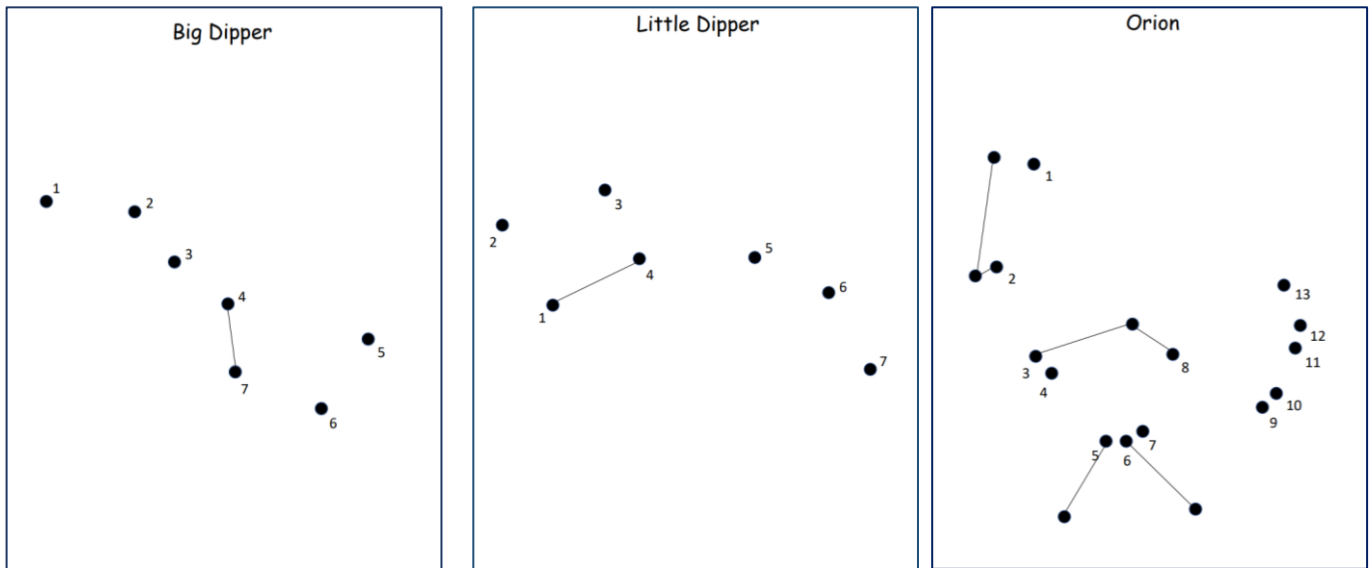
- [Clemm Gill School of Science & Conservation](#)
- [Ducksters.com](#)

How to Catch a Star



CONSTELLATION ACTIVITIES

1. Dot-To-Dot :



[Download the PDF here](#)

2. Glow Sticks and Stars

Materials Required – Glow sticks; images of famous constellations; star shapes

Now that you've had a look at the different constellations, try to recreate the shapes with the glow sticks. Turn off the lights to really see them glow.

3. Create your own Constellations

Constellations were made because people saw different pictures in the stars. They named them after important places and things and used them to guide navigators.

Design your own constellation. What will it be called? Why? Who are the navigators looking up at it? Where will your constellation guide these navigators? What is their final destination?

How to Catch a Star



Day Versus Night

In Branar's production of *How to Catch a Star*, the boy must wait until it is night time before he can see the stars again.

Branar uses stage lights that gradually get brighter and darker in order to convey day and night. You'll even notice that the colours change, depending on the time of day.

This could be a good opportunity to learn about day and night. For older classes, the subtle changes of colour in the show could be used to study the different colours we see in the sky throughout the day.

Stage Lighting in Branar's How to Catch a Star

Sunrise – Red and Orange
Day – Yellow
Sunset – Red, Orange, Pink
Dusk – Dark and Light blue
Night – Blue (night); White light (moon); Twinkling back drop (stars)

What is Day? What is Night?

Daytime is when you can see the sun from where you are, and its light and heat can reach you. Night-time is when the sun is on the other side of the Earth from you, and its light and heat don't get to you.

We get day and night because the Earth spins (or rotates) on an imaginary line called its axis and different parts of the planet are facing towards the Sun or away from it.

It takes 24 hours for the world to turn all the way around, and we call this a day. Over a year, the length of the daytime in the part of the Earth where you live changes. Days are longer in the summer and shorter in the winter.



Some great resources

[TheSchoolRun.Com](https://www.theschoolrun.com) – Day and Night Gallery

[DK Find Out](#) – Day and Night Video

Fun Facts

- It takes 24 hours for the earth to turn all the way around (rotation)
- At any moment, half of the world is in daytime and half is in nighttime.
- In summer the days are longer than they are in winter, as the northern hemisphere is tilted closer to the sun. In Ireland, the longest day has nearly 17 hours of daylight while the shortest day has under 8hrs of daylight.

How to Catch a Star



PUPPETRY

Puppets are objects that are moved by a puppeteer to tell a story. There are many kinds of puppets: marionettes, table-top puppets, hand puppets, sock puppets, rod puppets and shadow puppets. In HOW TO CATCH A STAR, table-top, hand and rod puppets are used. The puppeteers use their hands to manipulate the puppets. They make various sound effects to create characters, environment and emotions.

Try out this lesson plan below to incorporate elements of puppetry, drama, storytelling, teamwork, English and imagination into your classroom's activities.



*Sometimes the
puppeteers are seen
and at other times
they're not*



Check out [Branar's video online](#) which shows how to operate a table-top hand puppet.



How to Catch a Star



TYPES OF PUPPETS



This is a table-top puppet

Puppets in Branar's other shows:



This is a marionette puppet



This is a rod puppet



This is a shadow puppet

(See page 19 for activities)

Other types of puppets
you can research include:
Japanese Bunraku
puppets, finger puppets
and ventriloquist
dummies

How to Catch a Star



Make your own Shadow Puppet Story

Materials:

- Black paper
- Scissors or art knife
- Tracing paper or grease proof paper.
- Tape/ glue
- Drawing pins
- A white pencil or chalk
- Lollipop stick
- Light Source (lamp,torch,projector)

Create your Puppet

Decide on a simple image from How to Catch a Star. (Boy, Star, Bird, Worm...).

Decide on whether the character will be facing out or in profile (facing sideways).

Draw the character from the story on the black paper with chalk. Then very carefully cut it out.

Look at your cut-out behind a piece of tracing paper to see if it looks right.

Create your Stage and Tell your Story

1. Place a school chair on top of a desk
2. Cover the gap between the table top and the seat with tracing paper. Tape the paper to the legs so it holds. This will become your screen.
3. Put a lollipop stick on your character (either at the side or underneath) wherever is best to hide your hand.
4. Turn off the lights and shine the light at the screen from behind. For best results hang a piece of dark cloth over the sides of the chair to cover where the light spills out.
5. Bring your character between the light source and the screen and begin to tell your story with images.
6. Have the class guess the moment or else team up to create a story between the boy and the star/bird. Cut out props like the book, the lunchbox or the telescope for more detail. Place lollipop sticks on these too.

BONUS ACTIVITY

Add Movement

If you want an arm or leg to move you must make a separate piece and attach it to the character using a drawing pin at the shoulder or hip.

Play with image in the light before attaching the arm to find the best place to put it. (you will be surprised)

When you have it attached use a straw/barbeque skewer or match to move the arm.

How to Catch a Star



FRIENDSHIP

In *How to Catch a Star*, the boy always dreams of having a star as a friend. He tries very hard to reach the star and when he finally does, they play together, dance together and help each other out.

Discussion Points

- Why do you think the boy wanted to be friends with the star?
 - What did they do when they were friends?
- Did the boy help the star? Is this being a good friend?
 - Do you think the bird and the boy were friends?
 - What makes a good friend?

Activity Idea

- Write “**A friend is...**” on the board. Have a student read it aloud and ask everyone to think of some answers in their head.
- Give students a sheet of drawing paper with the instructions: “Draw a picture of you and a friend having fun together.”
- When the drawings are complete, ask students why they have so much fun with their friend and why they like spending time together. Students should describe what they specifically like about their friends.
- Mount the gingerbread person on the board and ask: “If we could create a friend, what qualities would that person need to have?” The teacher writes qualities on the gingerbread person as the discussion progresses. (Include both visible and invisible strengths.)
- The teacher takes down the gingerbread person from the board. Students volunteer to hold the figure and, from what they have learned, describe the ways to treat a friend. The teacher compiles a list of suggestions.
- The teacher introduces the “A Recipe for Friendship” activity. Discuss how a recipe can be used to make something special. The class then works together to create a friendship recipe, including ingredients and directions. Be sure that students include both visible and invisible qualities.
- Students use the recipe template to create their own recipe ingredients. This may be illustrated.
- The teacher compiles all the individual recipes into a cookbook for friendship that can be put on display in the classroom to remind and encourage students to use what they have learned during the lesson.

Source: *Ophelia Project*


Download this worksheet from [Ophelia Project](#) here and check out the rest of their friendship programme.

A Recipe for Friendship

If you could cook up the perfect friend, what special ingredients would you include? What is your friend like? What qualities do you think are important for a friendship to be healthy?

Write down a list of friendship 'ingredients':

Ingredient List:



Now, how would you put your friend together?

HOW TO MIX IT UP:

Remember to encourage the good 'ingredients' in your friends!

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How to Catch a Star



MUSIC

One of the main features of Branar’s production of How to Catch a Star is the music. As a non-verbal show, it adds atmosphere, emotion, feeling and interest to the story.

Colm Mac Con Iomaire is the composer of the music. He read the book, watched Branar’s rehearsals and then composed several different songs to accompany the show. Colm is a professional musician who played with popular Irish band, The Frames.

One of the How to Catch a Star tracks has been included in Colm’s 2019 album. Give it a listen on [Youtube here](#).



Activity Idea

Listen to the How to Catch a Star track.

- 1. Listening & Responding**
Use the KEY QUESTIONS on page 10 to open a discussion about how the students feel about the music.
(MUSIC APPRECIATION)
- 2. Composition**
What kind of sounds make you think of stars? Are they high-pitched or low-pitched? Are they loud(forte) or soft(piano)? Are they fast or slow (pace)?
Can you make the sounds with your voice?
Can you find objects in your classroom or in your music box that reminds you of stars?

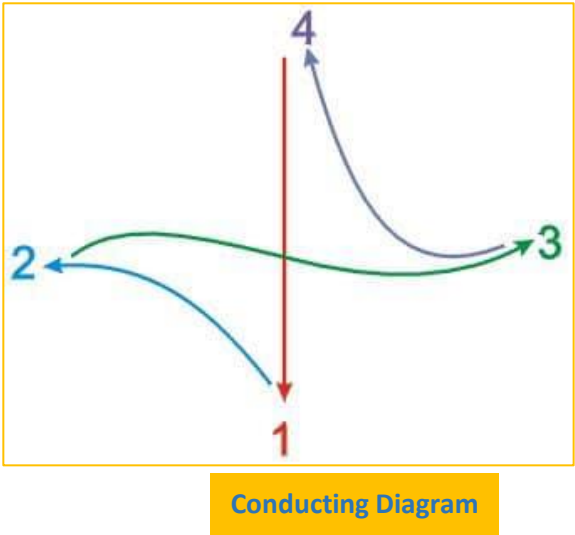
3. Conducting*

Simply put the below diagram onto your whiteboard or draw it out. Grab a pencil and make the pattern in the air (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 1 – 2....). Count aloud the first few times, then count in your head.

Next, put on the How to Catch a Star track and conduct, keeping to the beat.

You can try this with many different songs. E.g. Hall of the Mountain King. Incorporate larger movements for louder parts and smaller movements for quieter parts.

***Check out [Music in the Classroom](#) – a vibrant online music resource for primary teachers**



How to Catch a Star





The goal of this workshop is to bring an image to life and investigate the creative possibilities within it.

Take an image from How To Catch a star by Oliver Jeffers

Example:



Show the image to the whole class as they sit around you on the floor in a semi circle.

STEP 1

Ask the class:

1. What do you see?

- Allow for one-word answers.
- Repeat answers to the whole class.
- Thank the child for the answer but it is important not to celebrate an answer with “great” or good answer or that’s right.
- Continue until you have exhausted all the details.

2. What do you hear?

This begins to encourage the imagination and the children will build soundscapes in their head.

How to Catch a Star



3. What do you think he is feeling?

Now you are beginning to get the children to empathise with the character. This will help us to create a story for him in the next section.

Always follow up an answer with a “why”? The answer to the why doesn’t need to come from the original person someone else could add to it.

4. What do you think he is thinking about?

Again we are deepening our exploration of his thought process and empathising with him.

5. Where do think he has been before he walked into this picture?

Now we are story building – no answer is wrong.

STEP 2

- Explain that stories have a start, a middle and an end.
- Imagine that the image we have is the middle image.
- Divide the class into smaller groups and set them the task of imagining what was happening in the first image.
- They can discuss and draw if you like – but if possible you should try to have them stand up and create a frozen picture with their bodies (a tableaux) of the image. Allow 5 – 7 mins for this task.
- Following this task, each group will show there frozen picture to the group.
- Repeat the questions from step 1 to ensure you have an actively watching audience.

STEP 3

- Using the same method as step 2 set the groups the task of creating the final image.
- When the class have the images created, they can show this tableaux to the class.

STEP 4

- Create a comic of your 3 images

Or

- The class can individually write their stories or storyboard them.

How to Catch a Star



Other Curriculum Links



Geography:

As a link to using stars for directions, learn about the points of the compass, maps and sense of place. Draw the map of the Boy's journey from house to park to pier. Have your students draw a map of how they get to school.

Healthy Eating:

The Boy eats his lunch while waiting for the stars to come back out. Use this as an opportunity to discuss healthy eating. What do you think was in the Boy's lunchbox? What's in your lunchbox? Go for a picnic in your classroom, use different objects to represent different foods. See what everyone packs for their picnic (yellow block for banana, red ball for apples....)

Hobbies and Interests:

The Boy's room is filled with things to do with stars – posters, drawings, a star chart, star books, star bedding. Take this as an opportunity to learn about hobbies, things that interest your students and why hobbies are a good thing. (friendship, exercise, fun....)



Water Safety:



The Boy saves the Star when she falls into the water on the pier. The boy takes the life ring and throws it out to the Star. He returns the life ring when he's finished with it. Take this as an opportunity to draw up a lesson plan around water safety. Water Safety month is often in the month of May.

How to Catch a Star



OTHER INFORMATION

Let us Know What you Thought 

We love receiving feedback and responses from our audiences around the world. If you would like to send us drawings, letters, postcards, stories from your class addressed to Branar, please feel free.



Email Us

info@branar.ie

Send Us Mail

Branar Téatar do Phaistí

15 Glenrock Business Park

Bothar na Mine

Galway

IRELAND

H91PW52

THANK YOU AND WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE SHOW!



FOR TEACHERS:

Let us know what you thought on our Social Media:

Facebook/Instagram/Twitter: @BranarTeatar

How to Catch a Star



Additional Resources

You'll find below some additional resources that you may find helpful in planning lessons around your visit to Branar's How to Catch a Star.

1. BRANAR

www.branar.ie

www.maloneysdream.ie (additional resource for Branar's Irish History show)

2. OLIVER JEFFERS

www.oliverjeffers.com

<http://www.oliverjeffersworld.com/> (Resources and worksheets)

3. SCIENCE / STARS

[Create-A-Constellation](#)

<https://www.ducksters.com/science/physics/constellations.php>

<https://www.eurekacamping.com/blog/article/5-constellations-everyone-can-find>

4. SHADOW PUPPETRY AND CONSTELLATIONS

<https://www.howweelearn.com/constellation-myths-kids/>

5. FRIENDSHIP

<https://www.opheliaproject.org/teaching/LetsBeFriends.pdf>

6. WATER SAFETY

<https://www.apsp.org/nwsm/>

7. MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

<https://www.facebook.com/MusicInTheClassroomOnline/>

8. PUPPETRY

<https://sites.uci.edu/class/k-2-puppetry/>

9. COLM MAC CON IOMAIRÉ

<http://www.colmmaconiomaire.com/>

How to Catch a Star

