

# TEACHERS' NOTES

Aimed at primary pupils, the ideas in this study guide are intended as starting points for a cross-curricular project on the film 'Anastasia' at Key Stages 1 and 2. Many curriculum areas are covered although the focus is on English.

The activities in this study guide seek to complement and extend the pleasure the children will have derived from their visit to the cinema, whilst at the same time meeting some of the requirements of the National Curriculum and Scottish Guidelines.

## FILM SYNOPSIS

A little girl of eight years old is torn from her grandmother's hands and is lost by the sweeping chaos of the revolution in Russia. The Dowager Empress never gives up the search for her beloved granddaughter Anastasia. Anya has no memory of her childhood and wants to find her true identity. In doing so she battles with the evil Rasputin who has vowed to eliminate the youngest surviving member of the royal Romanov family. Rasputin does not crush the spirit of Anya who begins to build her future.

Certificate: U Running time: 94 mins  
Directed by: Don Bluth and Gary Goldman  
Distributed by: Twentieth Century Fox

# FACT VERSUS FICTION (a)

The story of the real Anastasia is filled with mystery:

We know that she actually existed and that she was a Russian princess who lived with her family in a royal palace in the early years of this century.

We know that in November 1917 there was a revolution in Russia when the ordinary people finally became tired of the royal Romanov family living in luxury while they themselves were poor. The royal Romanov family were taken away in the middle of the night to a secret place and killed by the Bolsheviks.

But what we don't know is whether Anastasia was killed along with the rest of her family or if she escaped? Did she spend her life in a strange country living under a false name? Did she marry and have children who might be related to our own royal family? Is she still alive today and what tale could she tell of that dreadful night long ago?

To find out about the story of Anastasia, the filmmakers had to carry out research by looking at Russian history books, archives and old films from the time. They also travelled to St. Petersburg, filming old buildings and castles so that when drawing the backgrounds, the animators had something to help them with their ideas. Therefore the film has a real 'Russian' feel to it.

The filmmakers found out that Anastasia kept diaries filled with her own drawings and paintings which are still around today. She also had photographs which had been taken of herself and her family. From this historical evidence, the filmmakers had a good idea of what she looked like and what kind of person she was. One of her drawings is actually shown in the film during Anastasia's reunion with her grandmother thanks to the wonders of computer technology.

## TASK

Can you keep your own personal notebook or diary like Anastasia. Write about your family, friends, your hobbies and feelings. Stick photos of yourself and your home in your book. Draw pictures and include items that are important to you - letters from friends, cinema tickets etc. You can keep this book throughout the years so that you will be able to remember past events when you are older.

- You are a detective whose job is to find out as much as you can about the story of the real Anastasia. You could look in books, old newspapers and on the Internet. When you have completed your research, write up your findings, including pictures if you wish.
- Present your version of the story of the real Anastasia to the others in your class and listen to their versions. Be prepared to say why you think yours is the most accurate version of the truth.
- When you have all had a turn take a vote on whose story seems most likely to be the real one.

# The Story of Anastasia

A little girl of 8 years old is torn from her grandmother's hands and swallowed by the sweeping Chaos of the revolution. The Dowager Empress, living in Paris, never gives up the search for her beloved granddaughter Anastasia, the Grand Duchess of Russia. Ten years later, when we next encounter "Anya", all she has of her past is the tiny music box key around her neck with the inscription "Together in Paris". With no memory of her childhood, Anya knows in her soul that this is the missing clue she must follow to find her true identity. Her journey leads to Dimitri, a charming young con man who is trying to find the perfect actress to play the part of Anastasia, and thus collect a reward from her grieving grandmother. Little does he know he has stumbled onto the real thing, and that this orphan will eventually take them to a place where they discover the true meaning of home, love and family. Along the way, they must battle with the evil Rasputin, who has vowed to eliminate the youngest surviving member of the royal Romanov family. Despite all of his magic and power, Rasputin cannot crush the spirit of the girl who must discover her past, so she can begin to build her future.

## Fact vs Fiction (b)

You will notice that this tale is different in many ways to the story you will have put together from your research. Write down these differences in the table given below:

THE FILM STORY	MY STORY
Anastasia escapes with her grandmother	

# TASK

Why do you think there are differences in the two version you have in front of you now?

- Which of the versions do you prefer?
- Why do you think the screenwriters made changes for the film version?
- You can see how easy it is for stories to be changed as they pass from person to person by playing “Chinese Whispers. One person thinks of a simple sentence or saying, such as “I like strawberry cheesecake”. He/she must whisper this sentence in the ear of the person next to them, who must then repeat exactly what he/she heard to the person on the other side of them. The game continues until everyone in the group has heard and repeated the sentence. The last person in the group then says the sentence out loud. The final sentence may well sound totally different to the one that begun the game. Why do you think this might be?
- By the time a story is actually printed in a newspaper, it will have been passed on from person to person many times in the process of research, writing and editing. Try to get hold of the same story which has been printed in two different newspapers, for example ‘The Times’ and ‘The Daily Mirror’. What differences can you see between the two stories?

# LOOKING FOR THE PAST

In the film ‘Anastasia’, we see Anya (short for Anastasia) looking for her past. When she arrives at the boarded-up Imperial Palace looking for Dimitri, there are many clues which could tell her a lot about who she is and the way that she lived. However, because she has lost her memory, these clues mean nothing to her.

When we study history, we are a bit like Anya. We are looking for clues about the past. We can read history books but we can also look all around us and visit museums in order to see artefacts which tell us what the past was like and how people used to live.

For Anya, the key around her neck means something - but she does not know what. It is only when the Dowager Empress Marie shows her the music box that the key makes sense.

# TASK

Many things can help us to understand what life was like in the past. In the chart below, write down as many items as you can think of which tell us what the past was like (in the column marked ITEM). In the second column, write down the sort of information that each item can give us. Two examples are given to help you.

ITEM	WHAT IT TELLS US
Paintings/Photographs Toys	What people looked like/what they wore Different toys for different sorts of people. What games they played

# IN SEARCH OF A FAMILY

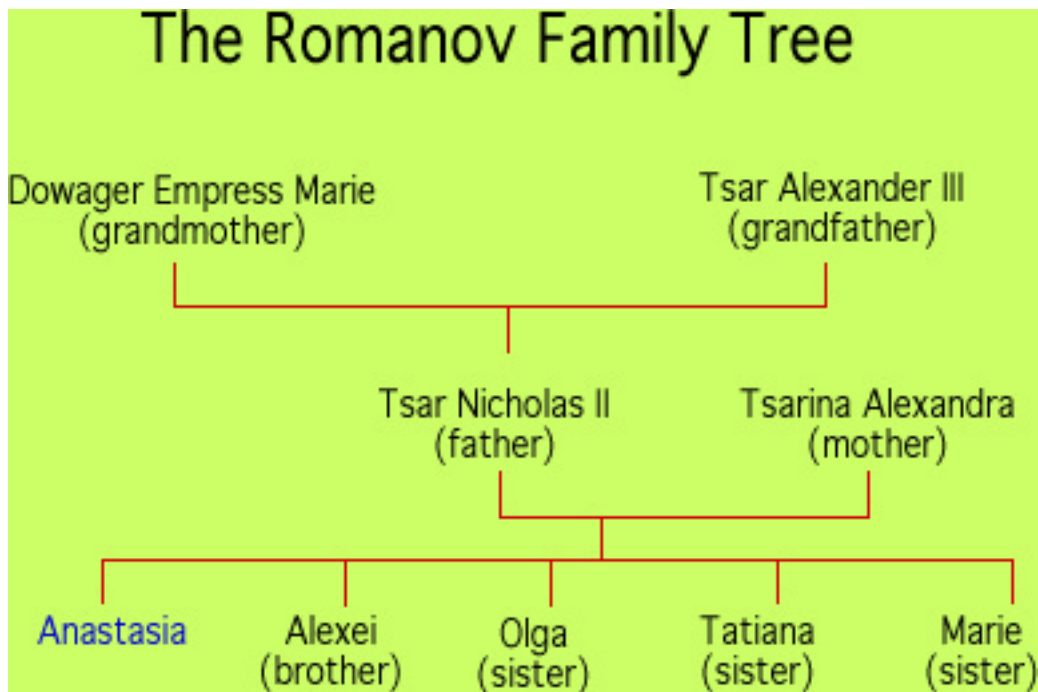
In the film Anastasia, we see Anya trying to find out who she is and who her family were. She is trying to construct her own past life.

## TASK

How much do you know about your family? You will know your parents and carers but what about your grandparents and great grandparents? Were they from this country or did they come here from elsewhere? When and where were they born? What did they do? And what was life like when they were alive? Can you go back even further to your great great grandparents? They were probably born over one hundred years ago into a very different world to the one in which we now live.

In tracing your family you can set out your findings in a family tree.

We have given an example of what the tree should look like below using Anastasia's family. Perhaps as well as people's names you could also find photographs of them to illustrate your tree.



Maybe you are a prince or princess and never knew it!

# GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS (a)

A thrilling adventure story needs a hero and a villain - the good guys and the bad guys.

But what makes a hero? If you were reading a story how would you recognise who the hero was and who the villain was? Is it just by what they do, their actions? Or is there more to it than that? Is there something about the way they look, or what they wear?

## TASK

With a friend, write down a list of all of the things that you would expect to find a hero and a villain. Try to write a description of a hero and then write a description of a villain. You should go to town on this, make your hero as heroic as possible and your villain as wicked as possible.

In the film Anastasia, how do we recognise the hero and the villain? Is it easier or more difficult to recognise the different types of character in a film compared to in a book?

Which are heroes and which are villains? How do you know when you watch the film which is which? Does the music you hear help at all?

Think of the following characters:



RASPUTIN



DMITRI

VLADIMIR

## GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS (b)

The people who drew the characters for the film are called 'animators'. When the animators first sit down design a character they have to think about all sorts of things, for instance what the character will wear, that their face will look like, what colours to use for their clothes, colours for their hair. The animators have to create the look of a character out of nothing.

When thinking about the character of Dimitri for example, the filmmakers wanted to make him look like an everyday guy rather than a classically handsome animation hero. Therefore they made his nose look a little crooked and made him quite skinny rather than being muscular.

The filmmakers will also have to think carefully about what sort of voice to give their characters. This will be influenced by the actor/actress who is cast to be the voice of the character. For example, the actress Meg Ryan, star of such films as 'Sleepless in Seattle', was the voice of Anastasia. Although Anastasia may not look much like Meg Ryan in terms of hair colour etc., her facial mannerisms and the way she says her words will be very similar as the animators studied the films of Meg Ryan to get the right kind of look.

Rasputin had to sound like an evil character and if you listen carefully, you will notice that his voice mnges according to the situation that he is in.







## TASK

Go back to the four characters we mentioned earlier - Dimitri, Rasputin, Vladimir and Bartok.

- Think about how the animators give us ideas about these characters from the ways in which they are drawn and also the ways in which their voices sound.

- In the chart below put in lots of adjectives which will help describe how each character looks and sounds in the film.
- Finally, go back to your description of a hero and villain. Imagine you are an animator who has to turn your written description into a character for a film. Draw a picture of your hero and villain, making sure that the way they look will let a film audience know whether they are a good or bad character. When you have all completed this exercise you could make a wall display of all of your drawings. Can your classmates spot your drawing from your written description?

**GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS**

HOW THEY LOOK	HOW THEY SOUND
<p><i>DIMITRI</i></p> 	
<p><i>RASPUTIN</i></p> 	
<p><i>VLADIMIR</i></p> 	
<p><i>BARTOK</i></p> 	



# THE DREAM WORLD

Before the Russian Revolution, we see Anya living with her parents in the Imperial Palace. What do you remember about the palace from the film?

## TASK

Imagine that you have been put in charge of building a brand new palace for a royal family. What do you think would be the most important things to have in the palace? How would you make the palace fit for a king or queen?

- Firstly, you will have to think of how many floors the palace has, then the different types of rooms ~ that the palace will need and how you will decorate each room.
- You should go to your school library and look at pictures of palaces from around the world. Make a list of five palaces from five different countries. How are they similar in the way they look and how are they different? Why do you think that they are different? What is it about the country where they are found that could help you explain why they are different?
- Now go back to your own palace. What you have to do is to either draw some of the different rooms in the palace or else make a model of one room, using boxes and cardboard.
- You will also need to think of the type of furniture which will go in each room. Don't forget that the furniture should also be grand and royal.
- You could work as a group, with each of you designing a different room or a different floor for the palace so that in the end you have a complete palace before your eyes.

Make your palace as grand and as royal as possible.

## ANASTASIA'S JOURNEY (a)

Much of the action in Anastasia' takes place in Russia a vast country in Eastern Europe and Asia. It stretches for thousands of miles across varying time zones. To travel by train from one side of Russia to another would take many days.

But what sort of country is it? You are going to have to find out! You will need to use an atlas and other books which will give you information about Russia.

## TASK

On the map below, put in the following information:

### **Towns / Cities:**

*Moscow St. Petersburg Viadivostock Sebastopo/ Tomsk Yekaterinburg Tobo/sk*

### **Rivers:**

*Volga Don Tobol Lena*

- Can you mark on the map where there are mountains?
- Now try to find out about the climate in various parts of Russia. What is Siberia like? How does southern Russia compare to northern Russia?



# ANASTASIA'S JOURNEY (b)

While a lot of the action takes place in Russia, Anya/Anastasia travels to other countries as she tries to prove who she is.

## TASK

On the map of Europe on the next page, find Russia and then mark in St. Petersburg. Can you trace Anya's journey on the rest of the map? You will have to remember the parts of the film which show her journey.

Imagine that you had met Anya in your town and had agreed to take her back to St Petersburg.

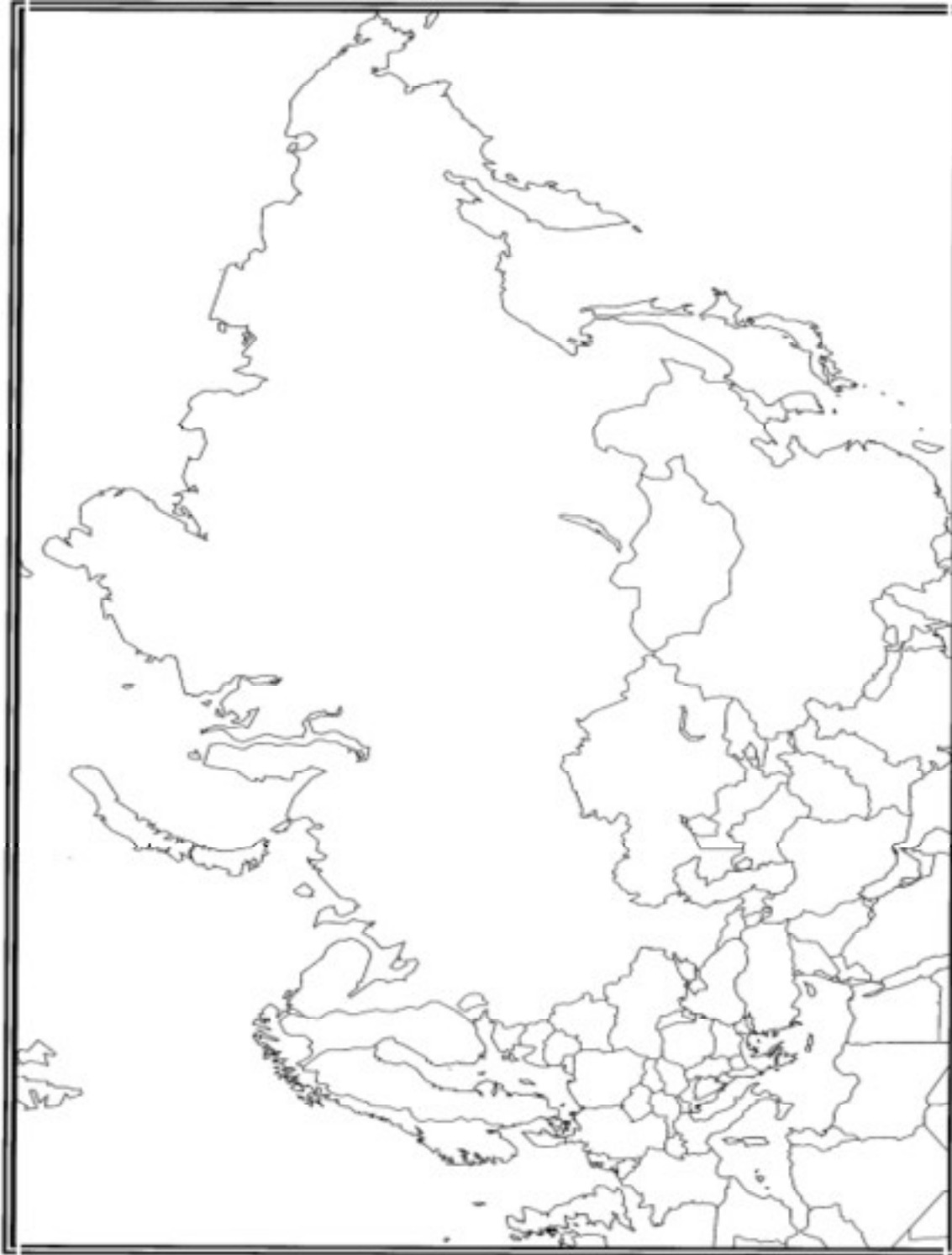
How many miles or kilometres would you have to travel to take her back?

Which countries would you have to travel through? Try to find two different routes to get back to Russia which go through completely different countries.

You could write the story of your journey with Anya. If you do then try to find out about the countries that you travel through on your way so that you could describe some of the interesting places that you visit.



## ANASTASIA'S JOURNEY (c)



# WHATS IN A NAME?

The name Anastasia' means 'she will rise again' - which is what happens!

All names have a meaning attached to them. Up until the time of William the Conqueror in the 11th century, first names were all that people had to define themselves. After this time surnames were introduced.

Over the years there have not been many changes in the spelling of first names. Names that were used then are still in use today.

Below are the meanings of the names of other characters from the film.

**Marie** (French for Mary) - 'bitter'

**Sophie** (from the Greek) - 'wise'

Below are the meanings of popular first names used today. Is your name shown?

**Andrew** (from the Greek) - 'manly'

**David** (from the Hebrew) - 'beloved'

**Mark** (from the Latin) - 'warlike'

**Carl** (from the German 'Karl') - 'strong'

**Julian** (from the Latin) - 'hairy'

**Anna** (from the Hebrew) - 'graceful'

**Lucy** (from the Latin) - 'light'

**Kate** (from the Greek) - 'pure'

**Melissa** (from the Latin) - 'honey sweet'

## TASK

Find out what your name means. Do you agree with the meaning? If not, make up your own meaning to suit your personality. You can find out the meanings of names in a reference book of names or a baby book of names.