

MIRACLE

ON 34TH STREET

TEACHERS' NOTES – CURRICULUM LINKS

The ideas in this study guide are intended as starting points for a seasonal cross curricular topic based on a film and they are aimed at children at the upper end of Key Stage 2 (Years 4,5,6). The learning activities primarily 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. Although this flow diagram is by no means exhaustive, it is offered as a loose guide for planning and record keeping.

Writing Newspaper Story	ENGLISH AT3 [2.2]
Plot on maps (Europe/World) the various names by which Santa is known	GEOGRAPHY Places [4]
Shadow Puppets	SCIENCE AT4 [5b]
Debate whether or not believing in Santa Claus is desirable	ENGLISH AT1 [2.1,2.2]
Researching information e.g. Santa Claus/Thanksgiving Day	ENGLISH AT2 [4.4]
Santa Poetry	ENGLISH AT2 [5]
R.E. Dramatising the Miracles	ENGLISH AT1 [4.4]
Designing and Making Santa Toys	TECHNOLOGY
*Lost in Manhattan-a mathematical game	MATHS AT1 [1c,2c,d,e, 3b, c d] AT2 [2a] AT3 [1b] AT4 [1a,e,2a]
Graph of 'invisible things'	MATHS AT4 [1b]
Responding to characters	ENGLISH AT2 [2.2]
Victorian Christmas customs	HISTORY Core Unit 3
Poster & Storyboard	ART [e]
Recognise how images, symbols and colour are used to evoke feelings	ART [h]



It was at the Thanksgiving Day parade and the start of the Christmas season when, senior citizen, Mr. Kriss Kringle found himself working as Santa Claus for the New York department store owned by C.F. Cole.

In America, Thanksgiving Day is an important festival. Use some information books to help you find out all you can about it. On which day is it celebrated? How did the custom begin? Which special foods are eaten?

BEFORE YOU SEE THE FILM

Find out all you can about the legend of Santa Claus. Who was the original Santa? Show on a map, the names by which he is known in other parts of the world. How do other countries' Santas differ from our own? Find as many pictures of him as you can. Make a display of the information and pictures for your classroom wall.

Find some poems which have Father Christmas as their theme, for example Roger McGough's 'The Man Who Steals Dreams', 'The Night Before Christmas' by Clement C. Moore, 'Santa Go Home' by Ogden Nash, 'Has Father Christmas Forgotten Me?' by Michael Rosen and 'Kriss Kringle' by Thomas Bailey Aldrich Write these out and add them to your display. You may wish to write some poems of your own.

Design and make some decorations which feature Santa Claus, they could be to hang on the Christmas tree or made into table ornaments or you may just want to make a model, it's really up to you.

SHOULD THEY BELIEVE IN SANTA?

When did you stop believing that Santa was really the person who delivered your presents on Christmas Day? How did you feel about it when you knew?

Take a vote to see who, in your class, agrees or disagrees with the idea that young children should be taught to believe in Santa Claus. Some of you may wish to say that you're not sure. That's just fine and anyone is free to change his or her mind. Now arrange to have a debate. Choose three people to speak who strongly agree that young children should believe in Santa Claus and choose another three who strongly disagree. Let them all take it in turn to speak for two minutes giving the reasons for their views. When they have finished, anyone can join in the debate. When it is over, take another vote to see how many people have changed their minds. After you have seen the film it would be a good idea to take a third vote.



WHEN YOU HAVE SEEN THE FILM

Remember how Kriss says, "If you can't accept anything in faith then you're doomed to a life dominated by doubt".

How do you feel about this statement? Furthermore, in the film we are told that the world is held together by the things you can't see.

As a class make a list of invisible things which could hold the world together; for example you may want to include in your list qualities like loyalty and love. Now create a graph to show which of 0 these qualities your class feels are the most important.

THE SANTA SENSATION

At the time of C.F. Cole's Thanksgiving Day Parade, their store on 34th Street is in deep financial trouble and is fending off a hostile take over by their rivals, the mega chain store Shopper's Express. Kriss Kringle, as Santa Claus, is a sensational success in attracting customers. This is because he is different from all of the other Santas.

How does the film make it clear that we should like and trust Kriss and dislike and doubt the other Santas? Completing this chart should help you to answer the question.

	KRISS	OTHER SANTAS
Costume/Clothes/ Appearance		
Behaviour/ Manners		
Facial Expressions		
Spare-time Activities		
Special Talents		

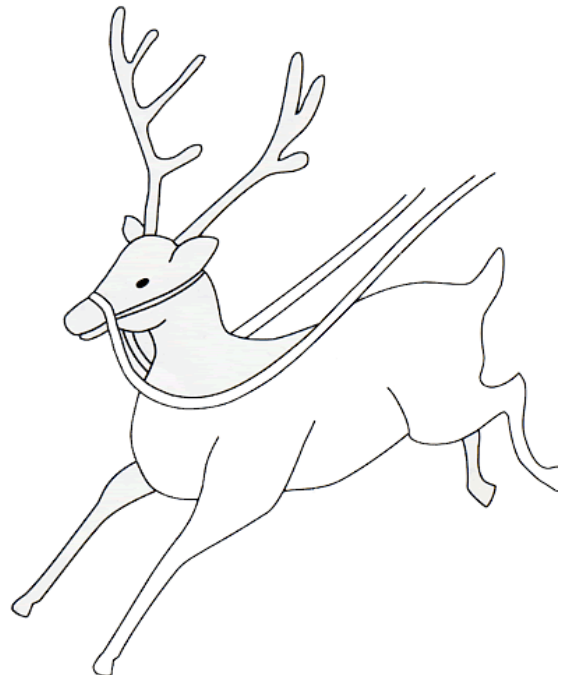
It may be a good idea to make a bigger copy of this chart and fill it in together as a class.

SANTA'S SHADOW PUPPETS

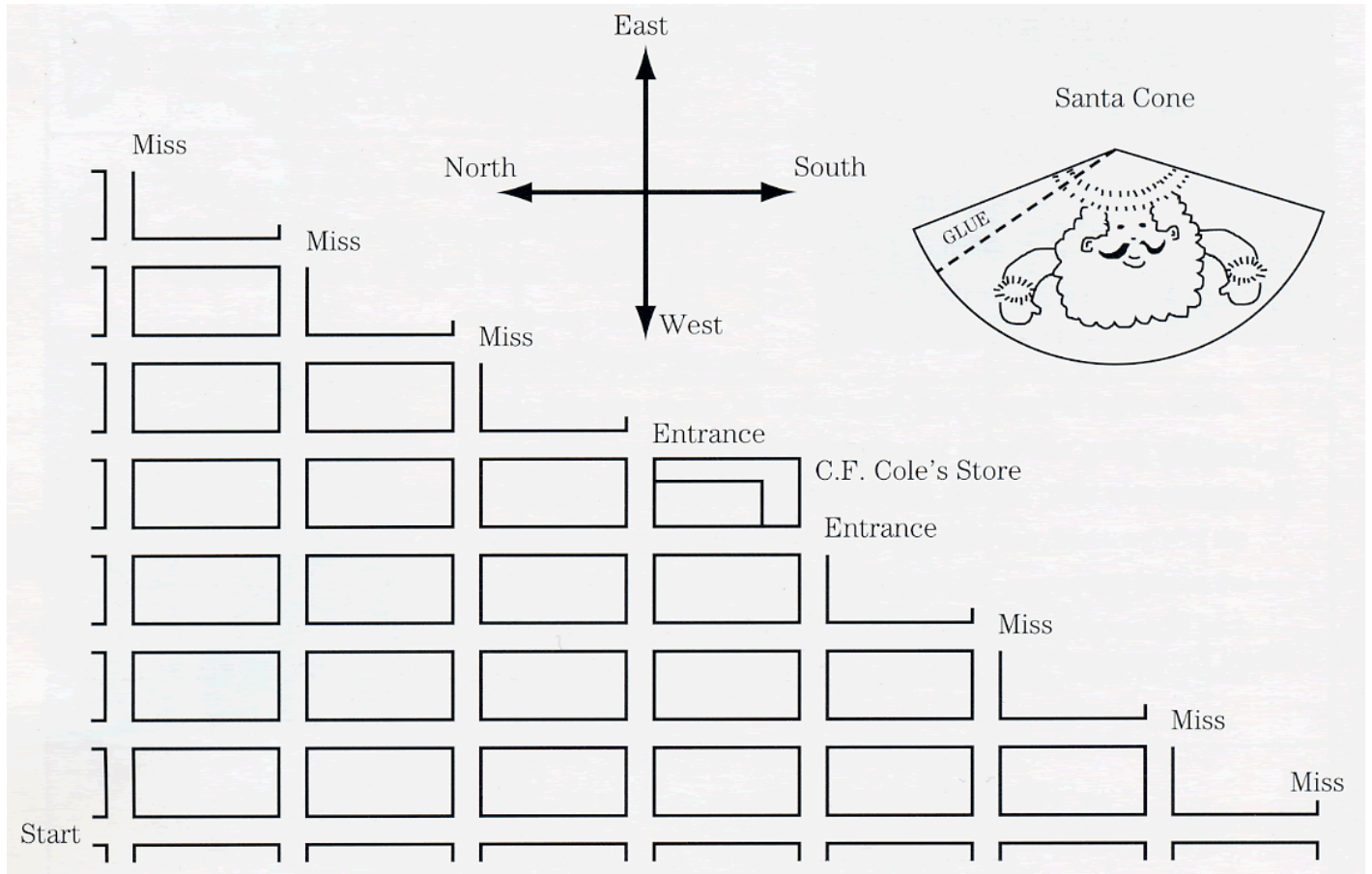
When Kriss baby-sits for Susan he entertains her with a reindeer shadowpuppet show. Shadow plays are probably the earliest form of moving pictures and likely to have begun when early people found out how to make fire.

Try making some shadow puppets yourself You will need a strong light source such as that from a slide projector.

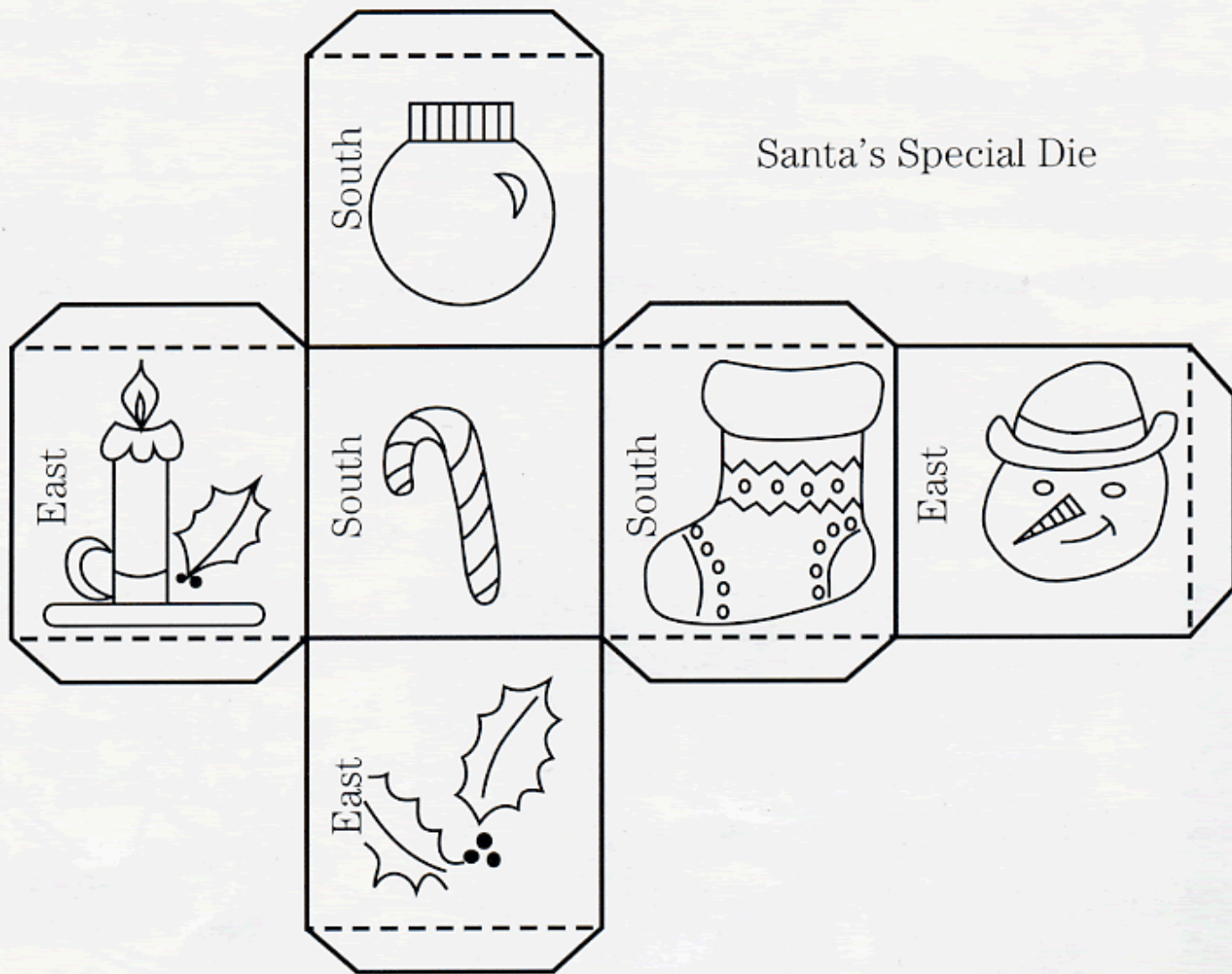
Why are shadows formed?



LOST IN MANHATTAN



Santa's Special Die



LOST IN MANHATTAN

A MATHEMATICAL INVESTIGATION BASED ON THE STREET PATTERN OF NEW YORK.

Imagine that Santa's parade is lost in Manhattan and he desperately needs to get back to C. F. Cole's store. He has two clues; the shop is in a South Easterly direction and it's seven streets away.

Since the roads in Manhattan form a simple rectangular grid, Santa decides to throw a special die which tells him in which direction to go each time he reaches a street corner. He throws the die seven times and hopes to arrive at one of the entrances to the store. One successful route would be E, S, S, E, E, S, S. Make the cut-out Santa cone and use it to follow this path on the grid. Now make Santa's special die and have a go for yourself, but before you start throwing, how do you rate your chance of success? (Remember there are only two entrances whereas there are six wrong destinations.)

Did you succeed? Try it twenty times and keep a record in a frequency chart like this.

Frequency Chart of Successes and Misses

	Tally	Frequency
Successful		
Miss		
	Total	

Did your results turn out as expected?* Compare your figures with others' in your class. Group them together so that you have a big number of tries. Are they still what you expect? Write a few lines describing what you have done. If the results were as expected say why. If they were unexpected try to give some reasons.

*NB Teachers' reference inside front cover.

COMMERCIALISM AND CHRISTMAS

You may have heard people say that Christmas is too commercialised these days.

What do they mean by this? Clearly shops need to make money and the men and women who work in the offices of both C.F. Cole's and Shopper's Express, are shrewd business people.

How did the film let us know they were like this? Think about the way they were dressed, the background music, the objects and furniture they have in their offices. How do we know that the workers at CE Cole's are the people we should like better than the workers at Shopper's Express?

There are lots of Christmas customs which began very simply, in Victorian times and which are big business.

Use a selection of information books to research how some of these customs started, for example find out about Christmas cards and crackers, which both began at this time. It may be a very good idea to work in groups, each researching a different subject. Try making some of these things for yourself You could even make a Christmas pudding and put in some lucky charms as this was a tradition which originated in the Victorian era.

WHICH IS BETTER, THE LIE THAT DRAWS A SMILE OR THE TRUTH THAT DRAWS A TEAR?'

Dorey Walker, the director of special events for C.F. Cole's and mother of Susan, believes that the truth is one of the most important things in life and that believing in myths and fantasies eventually makes you unhappy. On the other hand, her friend Bryan Bedford is shocked when Susan tells him that she knows that Santa is not real.

Read the following statements and fill in the chart below to show which statements describe Dorey and which describe Bryan. If you wish you may use some of the statements for both of the characters.

- a) wants Susan to be a happy child
- b) finds it hard to have faith in others
- c) finds it easy to have faith in others
- d) is an honest, good person
- e) is loyal
- f) is prepared to stand up for what s/he believes
- g) always does for others what is in their best interests
- h) always tells the truth

DOREY	BRIAN

Is seeing believing? How do the filmmakers persuade us that it would be better for Susan to believe in Santa Claus? Think about the expressions on her face. How does she change after she begins to believe in Santa?

In a court of law, we have to swear to tell the truth. Is the little boy telling the truth when he says Mr. Kringle is Santa Claus? How does Kriss persuade us that he is telling us the truth about his workshops in the North Pole? Does evidence matter in this case? How is Kriss's behaviour in the court similar to the children's and different from the other adults'? Try to remember how he introduced himself to Judge Harper.

MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

The film shows that money can either be used wisely or misused.

Work with a friend to make a list of the good uses of money in the story and a list of the bad uses. Which characters in the film misused money and which used it well?

As a class discuss how Susan uses the dollar bill to help the miracle to happen. Do you think this could have happened in real life? Give the reasons for your answer. How did it make you feel when it happened in the film?

Just what is a miracle? Read some of the stories of miracles which are told in the Bible. You could divide into groups in a drama lesson and act them out.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Santa Claus is a symbol of Christmas. The film says that he is a symbol of the "human ability to suppress the selfish tendencies that rule our life" for the rest of the year. What do you think about this statement? Write down as many words as you can think of that the image of Santa brings to your mind.

On a large piece of paper, draw six more symbols of Christmas and under each one write at least four words for which they stand.

Make a collection of signs and symbols and display them in your classroom. How do they communicate their messages?

Colours also work on a symbolic level and often in films, the filmmakers use colours to help tell their stories. Remember in the film when Kriss has failed his mental examination and has been sent to a hospital for the insane. He has lost belief in himself because he is ashamed that he struck the other Santa.

What were the colours of Kriss's hospital clothes? How did this change of colour signify a change in the man himself?

During this scene, how did the weather reflect the film's atmosphere? What did you notice about the patterns on the window?

THE MEDIA

Newspapers, television, magazines, films, videos and advertisements are all means of passing on messages about the world and our place in it. Another word for a 'means' by which something is communicated is 'medium'. The plural (more than one) of the word medium is 'media'. This is why we call newspapers, television and so on 'the media'. Sometimes we refer to them as the 'mass media' as they are the means of getting information to masses of people. Usually we receive many messages from the media every day of our lives and so we must expect to be influenced by them in some ways. Thinking about the film 'Miracle on 34th Street' can help us to understand some of the media's influences.

MAGAZINES

Susan has learnt what a 'real' family looks like from a picture which has probably been torn from a magazine. It must have made quite an impression on her as she has kept it long enough for it to become creased. However, most of us don't belong to families like Susan's notion of a perfect family.

What do you think makes an ideal family? Collect as many pictures of families as you can from magazines and make a collage of them. How do these magazine pictures differ from your family? Should we be pressured by magazine and other media images to want something different from our own families or can we be happy with what we have? Why do you think magazines create these images?

THE NEWS

Mean spirited Victor Lamberg, president of Shopper's Express, is angry when he sees how people are queuing to go into C. F. Cole's. When his effort to win trade by giving away tawdry plastic guns is a complete failure, he orders his staff to do something more about the situation. After Jack fails to persuade Kriss to be Santa for Shopper's Express, he resorts to dastardly trickery which results in Kriss being condemned.

How do the newspapers and television news deal with the story? Why do they not tell the whole truth? Why does such a relatively minor incident appear in the news?

Create a catchy headline and write a sensational story for the front page of a newspaper which tells the truth about this incident from the viewpoint which you saw on the film. Make sure that you write in the style of a real newspaper. Maybe it is a good idea to bring some newspapers into school and examine the ways in which they tell their stories before you write your own. You will probably need to plan, draft, revise and proof-read your writing before you present it as a front page story.

ADVERTISING

There were lots of different kinds of advertising used in the film. For example Kriss appeared on the 'Good Morning America' breakfast television show to promote C.F. Cole's store.

Make a list of the other kinds of advertising which you saw in the film.

How was advertising part of the miracle?

Make a poster for the 'We Believe in Santa' campaign. Who would you hope to convince?

Where would you put the poster?

STORYBOARD

Before movies are made the filmmakers imagine just how the shots will look by drawing storyboards. These are series of pictures of key moments of the scenes and they include details such as where the camera will be placed, precisely what the actors will do, what the sound track will be and so on.

Start by writing the story of what will happen immediately after the film has finished. Will Susan get the dog she wants? What is the rest of the house like? Do Dorey and Bryan go for a walk in their new garden?

When you have done this, make a storyboard version of your story to show how it will look on film. You will probably need quite a large piece of paper. Make your storyboard between five and eight pictures in length.

How do you feel your story is different when it is written as a storyboard?

THE POSTER

As you saw in the film, advertising is a powerful medium. Because films are so expensive to make, it is important that they are well advertised in order for the film companies to make a profit. Not only do people need to be informed that the film is showing at the cinema, they also need to know whether they would enjoy it.

Look carefully at the posters advertising 'Miracle on 34th Street'.

How do they let you know the kind of audience they are aiming to attract? How might you be able to guess what the main characters will be like? Why would you not expect to see these posters displayed in August? How do the clothes the characters are wearing and the colours which have been chosen for the posters help us to know what kind of film it is?

Show them both to a wide variety of people and ask them which poster they find more attractive. Do adults have a different opinion from children?

Design a range of posters for the film for yourself. Try to target one of your designs at children, another at adults, one at teenagers and so on.

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