

# Monsters In My Wardrobe

## Teacher's Notes

**BlueBoat:** Blueboat produces action-packed performances for children and families. Working from original scripts, Blueboat's hallmark is 'animated storytelling' where the narrative is vividly enacted through the imaginative use of puppets, masks, mime, sets and animation techniques. Since it's founding in 1999, Blueboat has performed in schools and theatres around Australia and internationally.

**Mark Pençak Director/writer/performer:** Mark is a graduate of the Theatre/Media Course at Sturt University in Bathurst, with a Masters in Visual Communication from Edinburgh College of the Arts. As a scriptwriter, Mark has written for radio, TV and film, although the majority of his work has been for the stage. As a performer, Mark has worked extensively in both Australia and the UK creating performances for both adults and children. [www.blueboat.net.au](http://www.blueboat.net.au)  
[markpencak@gmail.com](mailto:markpencak@gmail.com)

## DRAWING MONSTERS IN A WARDROBE

The supplied illustration forms a wardrobe with two opening doors. (There's two wardrobes per page.)

If you've printed in black and white, you can firstly ask the kids to colour in the two 'doors' and the section that connects them.

These can now be folded to form the 'doors' of the wardrobe.

Inside the wardrobe is a blank area where the children can draw a monster of their choice.

On the back, in the space between the two 'doors', the class can draw something that would make their monster happy.

-  
-  
-  
**Fears**

In the play Mark is afraid of caterpillars, trees, electricity, television, his wardrobe and darkness.

Some people have more and stronger fears than others. That's OK. We're all different and it doesn't make someone better because they have less fear than others.

It is easy to consider all fear as being bad or a weakness. In fact some fear is natural and helpful.

Make a list of some common fears and discuss how they might be helpful. Discuss also how they might become a hindrance.

Some examples:

**Fear of Heights:** (Vertigo.) Helpful in preventing people from climbing tall objects or walking too close to cliffs. Not helpful if you want to be a mountaineer, an airplane pilot or work on a construction site.

**Fear of Spiders:** (Arachnophobia) Helpful in protecting us from being bitten.

Not helpful if you like camping or enjoy caving.

**Fear of the dark:** (Nyctophobia) Common and normal in young children. As they get older it typically diminishes.

Helpful: Being afraid of the dark might stop you bumping into things at night? (There is a theory that children are biologically programmed to fear the dark to discourage them wandering from the safety of parents and camp.)

Not helpful: When it creates fear and fuels negative imagination.

Question: Why do many people enjoy a scary movie or play?

**Facing your fears**

In the play, Mark faces his fears and eventually learns to overcome them. Facing fears is one of the ways we learn, gain experience and reach maturity.

What are some *everyday* fears that members of the class have faced and no longer fear? For example when I was a little kid, I was afraid to go down the big slippery dip. I was also afraid the first time I rode my bicycle without training wheels.

### **When does bravery become stupidity?**

Challenging fears and taking risks is a part of growing up. However is there a point when taking risks becomes dangerous. How can you tell whether the risk you're running is bravery or stupidity? (It might be brave to slide down a slippery dip but stupid to slide off a cliff.)

Make a list with the class. Here are some suggestions.

When you're doing something that could get yourself seriously hurt.

When you're doing something that could get someone else seriously hurt.

When you could cause expensive damage to materials or property.

When adults have told you something is dangerous, but you try it anyway.

Doing something that you shouldn't try until you're older. A seventeen year old can drive a car, would it sensible to let a five year old drive?

When you're doing something and you don't know what it is, or why you're doing it.

When people are encouraging you to do something, but they won't do it themselves.

When someone says, "Wait, I want to video this."

When you don't want to do something, but you're afraid of what people will think if you stop. (Sometimes it takes bravery to say 'no'.)

When you don't have the necessary knowledge. For example, going swimming if you haven't learnt how to swim.

When you put yourself in a situation where the forces against you are much, much stronger than you. For example, you might be a great swimmer, but even so, you can easily get in trouble if you swim in big surf or a swift running river.

When you try something that requires a teacher. You might want to do a triple somersault, but you need to be taught first. Some things require both a teacher and proper equipment. (For example, crash mats in gymnastics.)

When you don't use the right equipment. For example, skateboard helmets and pads.

When you try something too difficult for your level of experience or skill. For example, it'd be silly to go down a huge skateboard ramp if you've only ridden a skateboard for an hour.

Q: Sports like skateboarding, horse riding, motorcycling and gymnastics are a little dangerous, there's always a chance of getting hurt. However if you are careful and sensibly then the chances stay pretty small.

Using those sports, can the class chart the steps someone should undertake if they wanted to move as safely as possible, from being an absolute beginner to world champion?

REMEMBER, IF YOU'RE AFRAID TO DO SOMETHING, THERE COULD BE GOOD REASON. STOP AND THINK, ARE YOU OR OTHERS RISKING SERIOUS INJURY?

DO YOU NEED MORE KNOWLEDGE OR PRACTISE?

EVEN IF YOU CAN DO SOMETHING THAT'S SCARY, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD.

IF IN DOUBT, STOP AND ASK AN ADULT.

### **Using imagination positively and negatively**

In the play, Mark enters his wardrobe and discovers everything he fears appears. Eventually he used his imagination to think about 'positive' things and discovers that he can use it to get home.

Is that true in real life? Does thinking about good things tend to make good things happen? Conversely, does thinking about bad things make bad things more likely?

My feeling is that attitude does *sometimes* affect outcomes but it shouldn't be taken to an extreme. Bad things and good things can just happen to anyone irrespective of their outlook. However there are some examples where I think attitude does affect outcomes - can the class think of more examples?

When you get a shot at the doctors and you imagine how badly it's going to hurt. That tends to make you tense and so it ends up hurting more.

If you imagine someone doesn't like you or is angry at you, when you meet them you might be expecting they're going to say something unpleasant.

When that happens it is easy to misinterpret and hear insult where none was intended..

When you're worried about making a mistake in the school play, and that makes you nervous, and that unfortunately tends to make you more likely to make a mistake.

Similarly in sport, if you worry you're going to miss a goal, then you tense and you're more likely to miss it.

Q/ What is 'confidence' and 'lack of confidence?' How does it affect performance? How does one find confidence?

### **Looking from another's perspective**

In the play, Mark initially thinks the monsters are thieves, but then realises that the caterpillar took his yoyo to fix its home, the electrical monster needed the battery to eat and the alien took the light because it was afraid of the dark.

What does that say about judging before you know the reasons for the situation?

Stealing is wrong, but is it more wrong in some situations than others? Does it matter *why* someone steals?

We live in a fortunate country and few of us have experienced what it is like to be homeless or not to have enough food. What things can we do that might help us understand the feelings of people who are in those situations?