

This script is for a mini performance of the narrative poem of Matilda (who told lies and was burned to death) by Hilaire Belloc. It breaks up the poem with mimed and improvised performances, using narrators to read the lines from the poem and link the scenes.

I have used this poem, and this script, with a mixture of KS1 and KS2 children all of whom were new to performing. It can be staged very simply and children enjoy the gruesome nature of its content – and hopefully heed its moral warning! If you want to use this in literacy lessons, a good comparison would be the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf.

The stage directions are merely suggestions, and what worked for me and my group. Please feel free to be as imaginative as you like with movement, scenes and staging.

We used simple low staging rostra, without curtains or wing areas. NARRATORS stood or sat at the side of the stage. The FIREMEN entered (and exited) from each side, and down the centre aisle from the back of the hall. The TOWNSPEOPLE stood in front of the rostra, initially with their backs to the audience. They exited the same way they had come on.

The whole performance takes approximately 20 minutes (depending on how long your improvised scenes are) so it could be used for an assembly or a topic day, or a mini performance for parents.

## **MATILDA (who told lies and was burned to death)**

*NARRATOR 1 stands and introduces the poem.*

**NARRATOR 1:** Matilda (who told lies and was burned to death) by Hilaire Belloc. Matilda told such dreadful lies, it made one gasp and stretch one's eyes; Her Aunt, who from her earliest youth, had kept a strict regard for truth, attempted to believe Matilda: the effort very nearly killed her, and would have done so, had not she discovered this infirmity.

*NARRATOR 1 sits down.*

*MATILDA and her AUNT enter. They improvise a scene where Matilda is accused of doing something wrong but denies it and her Aunt becomes frustrated with her constant lying.*

*Matilda's Aunt exits. Matilda sits down.*

*NARRATOR 2 stands.*

**NARRATOR 2:** For once, towards the close of day, Matilda, growing tired of play,

*MATILDA mimes being bored and fed up.*

**NARRATOR 2:** and finding she was left alone, went tiptoe to the telephone

*MATILDA mimes tiptoeing to the telephone.*

**NARRATOR 2:** and summoned the immediate aid of London's noble fire brigade.

*MATILDA acts out making a telephone call to the Fire Brigade, telling them that there's a fire at her house.*

**NARRATOR 2:** Within an hour the gallant band were pouring in on every hand, from Putney,

*Pause for FIREMEN to enter from Putney.*

**NARRATOR 2:** Hackney Downs

*Pause for FIREMEN to enter from Hackney Downs.*

**NARRATOR 2:** And Bow.

*Pause for FIREMEN to enter from Bow.*

**NARRATOR 2:** With courage high and hearts aglow, they galloped, roaring through the town,

*NARRATOR 2 sits down. NARRATOR 3 stands.*

*The FIREMEN line up in front of Matilda's house, facing the audience, and shout:*

**FIREMEN:** (Shouting) Matilda's house is burning down!

*The TOWNSPEOPLE enter and cheer loudly, then mime cheering, shouting and waving at the Firemen.*

**ALL NARRATORS (Together):** For every time she shouted

**MATILDA:** (*Shouting*) Fire!

**ALL NARRATORS (Together):** They only answered

**ALL TOWNSPEOPLE (Together):** Little Liar!

*MATILDA collapses on the floor.*

*The TOWNSPEOPLE all exit.*

**ALL NARRATORS (Together):** And therefore when her Aunt returned.

*Matilda's AUNT enters.*

**ALL NARRATORS (Together):** Matilda, and the house, were burned.

*Matilda's AUNT freezes in a position of shock.*

*ALL ACTORS come on stage and take a bow.*