

# THE STRANGE CASE OF HOTEL MORGUE

*inspired by Edgar Allan Poe*



## Teachers Material



**The PLAY GROUP**

## Dear Teachers!

This year the Play Group proudly present a free adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders In Rue Morgue*. His innovative, ground-breaking work set the tone for many generations of writers and is generally considered the foundation of the modern detective story! To indicate our liberal interpretation of his story, our title is *The Strange Case of Hotel Morgue*.

The performance lasts just under one hour and is designed for English learners all of ages, from primary schools to adults. For younger students, the language is simple and accessible. More advanced students are exposed to different levels of idiomatic and sophisticated vocabulary and grammar.

After the performance, there is always an opportunity to debate the story with the students, answer their questions and give them a chance to show off their splendid English!

## The original story

Edgar Allan Poe's work "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", published in 1841, astonished his readers. It laid the background for many elements now common in mystery fiction: an eccentric but brilliant detective, the slow and incompetent police force, as well as interesting novelties like the first-person narration by a close personal friend. Poe also portrays the police in an unsympathetic light as a counterpoint to the brilliant detective. Furthermore, this was the first example of a story where a detective announces his conclusions and then explains his reasoning. It is also the first locked room mystery in detective fiction.

## The Play Group's story

The Play Group have taken Poe's *The Murders in Rue Morgue* as an inspiration but we have made radical changes to the story, not least

because performing with an orangutan can be slightly problematic! *The Mysterious Case of Hotel Morgue* conserves some of the most important elements and a few of the characters from the original work. As usual, we prefer not to reveal the details of our story in advance, but we will cover some of the major differences in our summaries (ex. 2, 3 and 4)...

## About the teachers' material

This booklet is designed to help you prepare your students for the show, to maximise their understanding and enjoyment of English in the theatre, as well as consolidating language learning.

There are two parts: Teachers notes and the Students worksheets. You should download both, then either print them or browse on your computer, so you can decide which activities are right for your students. They are suitable for both photocopying and displaying on whiteboards (LIM).



Photocopy pages are marked with this icon.

Look through the activities, to decide which are right for your students. Hopefully, in many cases, you will be able to save trees by displaying the exercises on whiteboards /

LIM and other solutions...

The exercises for younger students are found at the beginning of this material and grow in complexity towards the end. But you are the best judge of what is appropriate for your classes!

This is version 1.2 of the Teachers Material.

Click here <http://www.theplaygroup.eu/morgue/teachers.php> to check for the latest version.



## If you don't have much time...

If you don't have much time, why not look at the words the actors will be using during the show (ex. 1) and story summaries (exx. 2, 3 and 4).

Then decide if you have time for any other activities!

## List of exercises

1. Important vocabulary of Hotel Morgue (Now featuring audio files!)
2. Simple summary of the story
3. Advanced summary of the story
4. Summary of the story in Italian
5. Word Grid
6. Wolf masks
7. An introduction to werewolves.
8. Big bad wolf
9. What is a werewolf?
10. Popular expressions with the word "wolf"
11. Knots
12. Crime scene exercise
13. The life and times of Edgar Allan Poe
14. Online comic version of the story

## 1. Important vocabulary of Hotel Morgue

These are some of the most important words in the show. The answers (though not in order) are at the bottom. Several answers are already provided. Ask your students to complete the exercise and check their answers. If you have time, go over the pronunciation with your class.



Photocopy exercise 1 and give students one copy each. Often students like to bring them to the show. And there may be questions before or after the performance!



On the teachers page, (<http://www.theplaygroup.eu/morgue/teachers.php>) you can also download an mp3 file with pronunciation read by one of the actors.

1. Ask your class to complete the vocabulary exercise in the students worksheets.
2. Then listen to the pronunciation of the words. Some words may surprise them, like “werewolf”!
3. Then, when you feel they are ready, ask them to turn their vocabulary sheets over and try to say the Italian words after the English pronunciation.

## 2 / 3 / 4 Summaries of the story

Ask your students if they know the story of *The Murders in Rue Morgue*. There are many versions of the novel: books, comics and of course, movies. Ask your students if they have seen or read any. You will find a simple version of the original story plus a translation. There is also a fuller version of the story for older students. Read through the summaries with your class in English or Italian. You might like to ask them questions afterwards. You may like to tell your students that The Play Group’s performance is liberally based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe, but there are major differences in our version.



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display the summary which is most appropriate for your students. (Exercises 2, 3 or 4 in students worksheets)  
One each or one between two - as you like.

## 5. Word grid



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display exercise 5. Give one each student or one between 2, so they can help each other. These are some of the main characters in Hotel Morgue plus some simple French words.

Ask your class to outline the characters in the grid. "Paris" is already shown. Ask if they know and can pronounce the simple French words in the list.

### CHARACTER LIST:

Aunt / Nephew / Madame Camille / Auguste Dupin / Gaston / Jacques Oignon / Doctor Flow / Bonjour / Au revoir / Paris

### Solution:

				F		N							
	C	A	M	I	L	L	E					A	
		U			O		P		M			U	
		R			W		H		A			G	
		E					E		D		O	U	
		V					W	P	A	R	I	S	
	B	O	N	J	O	U	R		M		G	T	
		I		A					E		N	E	
		R		C				G	A	S	T	O	N
				Q							A	N	
			D	U	P	I	N				U		
				E							N		
				S				D	O	C	T	O	R

## 6. Wolf masks



Exercise 6 of the students worksheets offers several mask templates. Photocopy them or print them on paper or cardboard.

Or, as homework give students the [web links \(click here\)](#) and ask them to print them at home or draw them on cardboard. Then they should colour them, cut them out and attach elastic to the ears for wearing. The actors always love to see them!

## 7. An introduction to werewolves

This is a simple presentation of the concept of the werewolf.



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display Exercise 7 of the students worksheets.

If you are using photocopies, give students one each or to small groups of 2 or 3 as you like.

Help your class to read the text and make sure they understand it. Then ask them to fill in the blanks.

### **Solution:**

They possess unusual speed, strength, reflexes and SUPERNATURAL senses.

Werewolves (or “lycanthropes”), are humans TRANSFORMED into wolf-form.

The werewolf LEGEND is now popular all over the WORLD .

The werewolf legend is also one of the oldest FANTASIES about human monsters in history.

JUMBLED WORDS:

The correct order is 1) STRONG 2) FEROCIOUS 3) VICTIM 4) FULL MOON 5) WEREWOLF 6) SUPERNATURAL 7) DECAPITATE

## 8. Song: the big bad wolf



[big bad wolf \(english\)](#)

[big bad wolf \(italian\)](#)

This is a popular nursery rhyme in the UK and America. Enjoy watching it (links above) with your class and decide if you like them to learn a verse or two. Below is the full text, which you may find rather long. But even the chorus is entertaining. Sometimes we get to enjoy classes singing songs at our performances!

CHORUS: Who's afraid of the big bad wolf  
The big bad wolf, the big bad wolf  
Who's afraid of the big bad wolf  
Tra la la la la

Long ago there were three pigs  
Little handsome piggy wigs  
For the big, bad the very big, very bad wolf  
They did not give three figs

Number one was very gay  
And he built his house with hay  
With a hey hey toot he blew on his flute  
And he played around all day

Now number two was fond of jigs  
And so he built his house with twigs  
Hey, diddle diddle he played on his fiddle  
And danced with lady pigs

Number three said, "Nix on tricks  
I shall build my house with bricks"  
He had no chance to sing or dance  
'Cause work and play don't mix  
Ha, ha, ha, the two little do little pigs

Just winked and laughed ah, woo

(CHORUS)

Came the day when fate did frown  
And a wolf blew into town  
With a gruff huff puff, he puffed just enough  
And the hay house fell right down

One and two were scared to death  
Of the big bad wolf's breath  
By the hair of your chinny chin I'll blow you in  
And the twig house answered yes

No one left but number three  
To save that piglet family  
So when they knocked, he fast unlocked  
And said come in with me

Now they all were safe inside  
But the bricks hurt wolf's pride  
So, he slid down the chimney and oh, by Jiminey  
In a fire he was fried

Oh, oh, oh, the three little free little pigs  
Just winked and laughed, ah, woo

CHORUS

## 9. What is a werewolf?

This exercise allows students to describe a werewolf using their own words. The following examples are provided:

*very strong, reacts to the full moon, eats animals, hairy (peloso), strange eyes, walks unusually, runs very fast, supernatural powers, can see in the dark*



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display Exercise 9 of the students worksheets.

Tell students they will be writing the typical characteristics of a werewolf. Discuss the examples in the list above and ask the class if they can think of more.

If you are using a whiteboard, ask students to write on paper. If you have made photocopies, they should write their names at the bottom and describe what they think a werewolf is.

Ask them to read out their descriptions, or share them with friends. Sometimes these can have very surprising results!

## 10. Popular expressions with the word "wolf"



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display Exercise 10 of the students worksheets. One for small groups is sufficient.

In English, there are a number of very popular expressions which include wolves. Students should read the expressions. Before they decide which phrase relates to the definition, ask them what they think the phrases could mean. Then ask them to decide which is correct.

## Answers

- 1) Civil rights groups are working hard **to keep the wolves at bay**.
- 2) The manager **threw** his young workers **to the wolves** order to save his job.
- 3) I have never seen him with other people. He has always been **a lone wolf**.
- 4) When Sally became a pilot, she **discovered her inner wolf**.
- 5) After football every day, John is so hungry **he wolfs down** three hamburgers!
- 6) She works three jobs in a day; but she still can't keep the **wolf from the door**.
- 7) Don't trust the salesman, he is a **wolf in sheep's clothing**.
- 8) Just because our team lost ten games consecutively, there's no need **to cry wolf** !

## 11. Knots

Knots are important in the Play Groups show as a clue to the possible murderer! (btw: The pronunciation is without 'k', ie exactly like "not")



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display Exercise 11 of the students worksheets. One for small groups is sufficient.

Ask them if they know the knots in Italian. Which is their favourite?

Which knot do they think will be crucial in our play?

The website <https://www.animatedknots.com> has all the information plus tutorials on how to tie these knots and dozens of other amazing creations!

## 12. Crime scene exercise

You do not need photocopies for the class here, but you do need EITHER cut-out pictures of ordinary man and women to be "criminals" OR a suitable video clip. (see links below).

This activity can be used by students of all levels to describe people and events and to formulate questions.

It's also good for getting students to listen to each other and to take notes - and have some fun.

The activity is based around a short video clip of a crime. Any crime scene will do. 2 examples are given below but you can also use your own. They don't even have to be in English since you can do it with the sound turned off.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9MKTzEU90M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjF6sGP9X4E>

### FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

If you don't have access to a video / TV you can do a 'low-tech' version of this activity by cutting pictures of single people out of a magazine. You will need enough pictures for half the class (and have a few to spare).

Put the students into pairs. One of them will play a police officer (boy or girl) and the other will be a witness to a crime.

Ask the witness from each pair come to the front of the class. Give each witness a picture of a person to look at. Tell them that the person in the picture is a criminal. The picture should remain private: nobody else must see that picture. The witness needs to study the picture carefully, to note the details. After 1 minute, take all the pictures back and then send the witnesses back to their seats.

Now their partners (the police officers) must ask them questions and make notes, to get an idea of what the person in the picture looks like.

When all the police officers have noted the descriptions of the criminals, put all the pictures on a desk at the front of the class. Ask the police officers to come to the front of the class and see if they can find the picture as described by their witness partner.

Of course, the witnesses must not speak until all the police officers have "arrested" their criminal.

You can then try this again reversing the roles of police officer and witness. This gives the students a chance to learn from mistakes they may have made the first time round.

You can make the activity more difficult by selecting pictures of people who look more similar (same age / sex etc.) or easier by having a greater range of people.

This activity can also be a very useful lead into discussions or vocabulary work on crime or description.

## FOR OLDER STUDENTS

Split the class into two groups and tell one half that they are going to be police officers (male or female) and they are going to interview the witness to a crime. Their task is to work together with the other police officers and prepare questions for the witness.

Tell the other half of the class that they are going to witness a crime. You'll need to have the classroom set up so that only the 'witnesses' can see the TV screen. If you trust your students enough you could actually send 'the police' out of the class or to another classroom, to work on their questions while the witnesses watch the crime.

When the crime scene video clip has been played, put the students into pairs so that each of the police officers is with a witness. The police should then interview the witness and get as much information as possible about the crime.

Make sure that the police take notes as they listen. If you have artistic students you could also get them to work together on a picture of the criminal or a diagram of the crime-scene reconstruction.

To add an element of motivation you could also give a prize to the most accurate notes.

(Author: Nik Peachey / British Council)

## 13. The life of Edgar Allan Poe

Here you find a brief summary of the life and career of the writer. Some words are missing, which students should complete, using the options above the story.



Photocopy or use a whiteboard to display Exercise 10 of the students worksheets.

If you are using photocopies, give students one each or to small groups of 2 or 3 as you like.

Ask your class to read through the story and decide which words are missing in the text.

*Answers*

*a) writer b) mystery c) short story d) detective e) earn f) named g) studied h) academy i) cities j) died k) death l) popular m) winner*

Ask your class if they noted that Edgar Allan Poe was the first author to live from his writing. How difficult was that for him?

## 14. Online comic version of the story

This is a fabulous online adaptation of *The Murders of Rue Morgue*. Follow this link or display it on your whiteboard / LIM

<http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-edgar-allan-poe-s-morella-and-the-murders-in-the-rue-morgue-eng/1>

Students may enjoy this story in their own time.

Discuss it in class afterwards if you like.

## More information and Online resources

wolf masks

<http://www.supercoloring.com>

Edgar Awards

<https://mysterywriters.org/2019-edgar-allan-poe-award-winners/>

Comic story

<http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-edgar-allan-poe-s-morella-and-the-murders-in-the-rue-morgue-eng/1>

Crime scene

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/crime-scene>

werewolf themes:

<https://kidskonnnect.com/animals/werewolves/>

6 signs you could be a werewolf

<https://medium.com/@KateBarayAuthor/6-signs-you-could-be-a-werewolf-bfd2eed7caff>

detective role play

<https://docs.voanews.eu/en-US-LEARN/2017/08/28/7315d415-c8f0-46c4-b5a2-c48e2b51d571.pdf>

## Contacts

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## Coming soon...

Audio file for pronunciation

More online resources

Detective role play (not crime scene exercise)

Knots

Animal tracks

Cluedo

Thumbnail sketches of characters... Who is the killer? "I think the killer is \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_ etc " online with a winner selected each month

Weather, to include phases of the moon

News jargon, flash, breaking jingle etc

Jobs in hotels

Other Wolf songs