

ALFIE WHITE

SPACE EXPLORER



EDUCATION PACK

'A charming story of discovering that there's as much to explore in the space you occupy in the world, as there is between here and the moon'

Fest Magazine

TALL STORIES BRINGS GREAT STORIES TO LIFE
FOR AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES

The company is a registered charity which has become internationally recognised for its exciting blend of storytelling theatre, original music and lots of laughs.

Tall Stories was founded in 1997 by joint artistic directors Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell, who have co-created all the company's shows since then.

'Tall Stories sets the benchmark for children's theatre'

Sunday Times

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THE SHOW

It's 1967 and the space race is on. Alfie White is crazy about space, and his dad is training to be the first man on the moon. At least that's what Alfie tells his schoolmates. In fact, Alfie's dad has disappeared without trace – as if swallowed up by a black hole... Together with his best friend Meg, Alfie sets out on a daring mission to find his dad. But where on earth – or in space – is he? Alfie White: Space Explorer is a cosmic tale of adventure and discovery.



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THE SHOW (cont.)

The story behind the story

Based on an original concept by Tall Stories co-directors Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell, 'Alfie White: Space Explorer' is set in 1967, at the height of worldwide excitement about the space race.

The story is partly inspired by co-director Toby's own childhood. As a child Toby had no idea that his father had once been a famous jazz musician...

The Malcolm Mitchell Trio

Malcolm Mitchell, guitarist, bandleader, composer and vocalist, was born in 1926. He was one of the first British musicians to play professionally with Duke Ellington. Later his trio and his big band toured nationally and internationally to great acclaim.

But, according to Toby, 'I grew up completely unaware that my dad had been famous before I was born. He was a very modest man, and he didn't really talk about his extraordinary past.'

Having decided on the dual themes of space and jazz, during the development period for the show, Toby stumbled across a newly uploaded YouTube video of his dad – a song entitled Spaceship Boogie. This provided Tall Stories with the last piece of the puzzle to create the show, as it combined the two themes in one piece of music.

Check out the song at www.tinyurl.com/spaceshipsong

Theatrical Style

Lots of people were involved in the creation of this show: actors, directors, a set designer, a lighting designer, sound designers and of course musicians. This is the first time Tall Stories has worked with musicians posthumously!

The show uses:

- exciting physical storytelling – the two narrators speak directly to the audience
- original 50s and 60s tracks
- sound effects
- lots of comedy

Themes and Activities

In this education pack there are activities and ideas linked to the main themes of the show:

• **Space**

The show was inspired by the true story of the ill-fated Apollo 1 mission. Mix space fact and fiction...

• **Music & Sound**

The show has a soundtrack of 1950s & 60s jazz. Think about theatrical sound effects...

• **The 1960s**

The setting. Go back in time to when some things were very different!

• **Finding your Place in the World**

Alfie goes on a journey of discovery in the story. What about you...?



These activities can be used before or after seeing the show to further understanding of the story, setting and themes, and to encourage creativity! There are also a couple of character activities at the end – to be used after you've seen the show.

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SPACE

'Alfie White: Space Explorer' is set in 1967, at the height of worldwide excitement about the space race.

FUN FACTS

- There are over a hundred million stars in our galaxy.
- And there are over a hundred million galaxies in our universe.
- One million Earths could fit inside our Sun.
- The 'Space Race' was a competition between Russia and America in the 1950s and 1960s. Each wanted to be the first and best at going into space!
- The first animal to go into orbit was Laika the dog. She travelled on the Russian spacecraft Sputnik II.
- In 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space. He orbited the Earth once. The flight took 108 minutes!
- The first woman in space was Valentina Tereshkova in 1963.
- In 1969 America landed the first humans on the Moon! Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin travelled on Apollo 11.
- It takes an astronaut over an hour to put on a space suit. And they need help too!
- The NASA space suits had a tube inside them to allow the astronauts to go to the toilet!
- The moon is really smelly!

MISSION TO SPACE – Packing the Lunar Module

Preparation for the teacher: You need a huge, simple outline of a rocket on paper. (This can be as simple as taped together pieces of sugar paper with a marker pen outline.) Inside the rocket mark out a large area representing the Lunar Module.

With the children: Place the plan in the middle of the room and ask the children to sit around the outside. Point out which area represents the pod that astronauts live in on their journey into Space.

Brainstorm as a class: Imagine that we are going to pack the lunar module full of everything we need to go on a Space adventure! What kind of things we will need? (Space food, water supply, computers, first aid kit, tools, spare oxygen tanks, books to read, etc.)

The Challenge! Each person gets one post-it note. Draw something on the post-it that will be packed onto the Space Pod. However, each person gets only one post-it note. We need to make sure that everything we need gets packed. So... walk around the room and talk to your fellow Space Team. Find out what other people are going to pack (draw). It would be awful if everybody packs the space food but nobody thought to pack the water! So try to think of something that nobody else will think of... Good luck, Space Team!

Pack the pod! Once everyone has drawn on their post-it, gather back around the pod and pack it (i.e. stick the post-it notes onto the plan). How did we do? Are we missing anything? Maybe decide exactly where everything goes inside the pod. We don't want to eat food next to the toilet!



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BE A SPACE EXPLORER

Actors love to imagine how it feels to be someone else. And the character of Alfie White loves to imagine being a Space Explorer. Can we imagine being Space Explorers...

Guided Mime: Mime getting into your Spacesuit. Make sure you think about all of the details – you won't be able to fasten any buttons once you've put on those huge gloves! Maybe start at your feet and work your way up, finishing with the helmet? Be sure to help your fellow Space Explorers as some of this suit is heavy!

Now you're in your suit – how does it feel? How does it change the way you walk? Try sitting / lying down. Are you nervous about your forthcoming adventure...? What does take off feel like? And once in orbit, what kind of jobs do you have to do? Can you see the moon? Take your first moon steps?

After the adventure, maybe some explorers can feedback to the class about how it felt?

SPACE CREATURES AND ALIENS

'Never thought the time would come when I should see

A six-foot spider shaking hands with me!'

(lyrics from Spaceship Boogie)

If you were to land on an unexplored planet, what weird and wonderful creatures would live there?

Draw your own Space Creature. Give it a name. Label all the interesting facts about your creature with exciting describing words. Are they slimy or spiky? What do they eat? Where do they live? How do they breathe on this planet? How big / small are they? Are there lots of them on this planet?

NEWS REPORT

Rehearse and perform a News Report for the TV, describing the findings of a Space Mission to a new planet. Think about what the news looks like on the TV. You might want to try some of the following ideas:

- Maybe create a short theme tune (think about the beginning of the ITV / BBC News). Sing, hum or la the tune.
- A proper introduction to the news. Think about the kind of words and voice that news readers use. Get into character!
- Interesting facts about the mission – where did they go exactly? How long was the mission? Did anything go wrong? Temperature? Keep the viewer interested!
- Interview some people – maybe one of the astronauts? One of the ground team scientists? Brainstorm in your team some good questions to ask.
- And finally – show the pictures of the Space Creatures that were discovered (from the previous activity).

Remember – when performing, use your best stage voices!

Possible extension activity for ages 8+

Rehearse and perform a **TV News Report** about a **real space event from history**. Maybe a report about the Space Race? About the first dog or person in space – or the first man on the moon? The Apollo 11 Mission?

Research and gather facts as a team before putting them into the report. Remember to create interesting characters as well as getting the facts right!



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MUSIC & SOUND

Music is hugely important in Alfie White: Space Explorer. Not only does it set us in the 1960s, but it helps to create an atmosphere and bring the story to life.

Alfie White has a song in his head that his Dad used to sing to him. It's a light-hearted jazz song from the 1950s. This song leads him on a trail of clues that take him on an adventure. Do you have a song that you remember from when you were young?

Listen to some 1950s and 60s jazz. Search YouTube for tracks like:

- Duke Ellington – *Take the A Train*
- Dave Brubeck – *Take Five*
- Ella Fitzgerald – *It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got that Swing*

What does each track make you think of? What does it make you feel? What kind of story would you set to each track? An adventure? A romance?

SPACESHIP BOOGIE

Firstly, **LISTEN** to the song from the following link (without actually watching the video):

www.tinyurl.com/spaceshipsong

What instruments can you hear? How many voices can you hear?

Now **WATCH** the video. Were you right?

SPACESHIP SOUNDSCAPE

In the middle of the song (at 1 min 30) the music is like a 'countdown to lift-off':

'Everyone's seated, the plan's completed

Trying to be a hero, the needle's on zero

The rockets fire, the skies turn red

With a terrible bump you fall out of bed!

Can we make the sounds of what's happening in these lyrics? The sound of an astronaut sitting down, the sound of the rocket firing etc. What other sounds would we hear in a spaceship? And what other dreams might you have...?

In groups, create a soundscape for the following:

- Entering the space ship
- Blast off
- Floating calmly in orbit
- Landing and walking on the moon!

Try making sounds loud and quiet. Can the sound build gradually? Try making the sounds using other parts of your body – maybe slapping your thighs or drumming fingers on a table? Are there things in the room you can use to make exciting sounds? What happens if you suddenly stop and we only hear one tiny noise? Or even a breath?

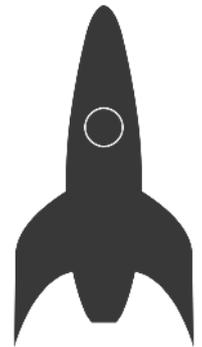
Possible extension activity for ages 7+ **Write your own Space Song!**

Start by brainstorming lots of words about space travel on a piece of sugar paper.

Now try to find rhyming words for each of them e.g. 'Space + Race'. The words can be sound-words too, like 'Moon + Vrooom!'

You can use the countdown section of the Spaceship Boogie as a model so you have a tune to work with. Listen to it a few times, then in small groups write your own lyrics. Try to make the end words of each line rhyme.

Practise and perform to everyone just like the a real group! You can mime playing instruments too, or use real ones if you have them.



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THE 1960s

'Alfie White: Space Explorer' is set in 1967. That's nearly 50 years before Tall Stories made the show! Things were very different then, especially technology.

Some of these things are used by or talked about by Alfie and Meg in the story. Did you / can you spot them?

SHAPES OF THE 60s

Look at the pictures of things from the 1960s (see final page). What are they? What are they called? Look at the details. How are they different to what we have today?

Things to think about:

Record player

How does it work? Can you see the different parts? The turntable, the arm with the needle, the volume dial, etc. Look how big it is compared to an MP3 player!

Vinyl record

Look at all of the grooves. Can you see where each song starts? Can you see scratches? What effect would that have on the quality of sound? What is the writing in the middle of the record? Think about how much space you needed just to have 10 records. Now we can have thousands all on a small device.

Camera

This is an advert for a Kodak camera. It's quite bulky, isn't it! Can you imagine having to take the film into the shop and wait a week for it to be processed before picking up your photographs? And if you didn't like a picture, you couldn't press delete.

The Beatles

John, George, Paul and Ringo – the original boy band? (Although, unlike many of today's boy bands, The Beatles wrote their own songs and played their own instruments.) Maybe listen to some of their tracks?

Also check out Lulu's song *Shout*, which Meg plays in her bedroom in the show.

School books

We still use books today. Fact, fiction, stories, pictures, maps – we love books here at Tall Stories. But what do we also use to look up information today? Can you imagine a world before the internet?

Letters

Who in this class has ever written a friend a letter? What do we normally use today? Can you imagine having to wait until news arrived at the door rather than switching on your email?

Telephone

A little less portable than a mobile phone! Look at all the different parts – the bulky receiver, the curly wire and the turning dial. And it needed to be plugged into the wall at all times!



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SHAPES ON STAGE

Sometimes actors use props on stage. But at Tall Stories, we often like to try to create an image of something just using actors' bodies, sound effects and our imagination.

Now that we've looked at things from the 60s closely, can we recreate them using only our bodies?

In groups of 4, choose one of the 60s things and make that shape using your bodies. Be sure to talk to each other so you know who is doing which part, e.g. the hand receiver or the wire of the telephone.

Once you've made the shape, think about which parts of the object can move (e.g. the lid opens on the record player before setting the needle down). Does it make a noise?

Show your object to the class – can we tell what it is...?

DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE

50 years ago people could not imagine that we'd be walking around talking on mobile phones and sending email messages to the other side of the world that arrive in just the click of a button!

In pairs, invent and design something for in 50 years from now. What does it do? How does it work? What is it called? Who is it for? Draw a detailed diagram so that you can present it to the class.

Possible extension activity for ages 8+

Now that you have your invention, **rehearse and perform a TV advert** to sell your new product.

Maybe you need a memorable jingle?
Or a slogan?

Remember to make it sound exciting so that everyone wants to buy it!



Alfie White flyer image

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FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

Alfie starts out on his adventure trying to find out about his dad. He ends up finding out about himself too.

THE MAGIC BOX

Alfie loves space. Meg loves listening to music. What do you love?

Sitting in a circle, imagine there is an invisible box in the centre. This box has a limitless number of things inside that we like to do / play with.

One at a time – go into the circle and take something (imaginary prop) out of the Magic Box. Now **mime** what it is you like to do, e.g. riding a bike, playing football, reading a book. You can make noises to help, but no words! Be sure to make the mime nice and big to help the audience watching. Don't forget your facial expression!

Can we guess what it is?

TREASURED POSSESSION

Alfie has a few things in his room that are very special to him.

If you went on a Space Mission, and could only take ONE treasured possession with you, what would you take? A diary? A photograph of your family? A favourite book?

'I went into space and I took...

Sitting in a circle. This is like the memory game 'I went to Market and I bought...' Add on one extra thing with each person. Remember what the people before you said.

Possible extension activity for ages 8+

If you were floating around in orbit for a long time, what are the things you would miss about home? Imagine you are a Space Explorer. Write a diary entry saying how you feel. What are the things that are important to you back home? What / who do you miss? Are you frightened / excited?

Now imagine you are the family member of a Space Explorer – left behind, waiting at home. Write a second diary entry from this point of view.

JOURNEY TO SCHOOL

Alfie's journey to school is performed by the actors physicalising all the different elements and adding sound effects. We see the banister on the stairs, the cars whizz by on the road and the see-saw in the park.

Working in pairs, rehearse your journey to school. Use parts from both partners' journeys so you end up with a combined, shared journey, full of detail. Try not to use ANY props or chairs – just your bodies! How do you make it look like you're going through your front door? Or sitting on a bus?

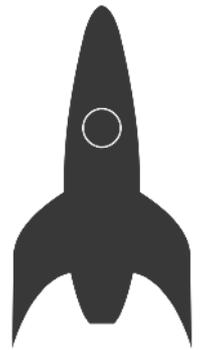
Perform to the class.

ACT IT OUT!

Now you've got your journey performance as a pair sorted, practise it in different styles. How does the journey look if you are:

- Running late?
- Feeling tired?
- Worried about something?
- Excited about something?

What changes can you make to the movement/sounds? This is a great opportunity for comedy!



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FRIENDSHIP CHART

Alfie's friendship with Meg is very important to the story. Meg tells him to stick up for himself and even helps him in the hunt for clues about his Dad.

Brainstorm ideas of what makes a good friend. Do they make you laugh? Do they play with you? Do they let you be on your own when you need some time?

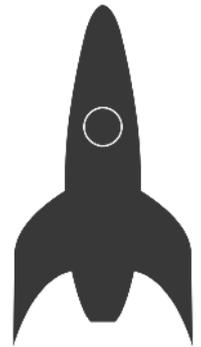
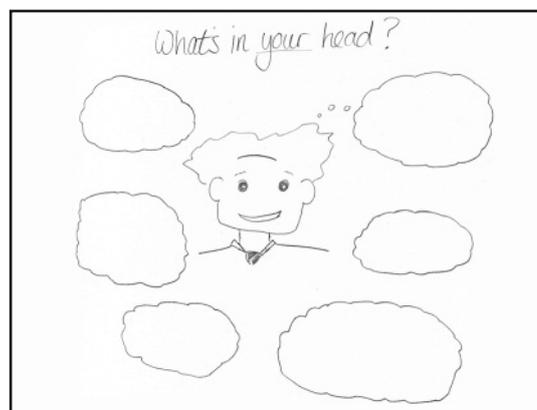
Make a class chart with your thoughts?

You can act out the different times these things are important.

SELF PORTRAIT

When we look inside Alfie's head, we see lots of facts and songs about Space. What do we see when we look inside your head?

Draw a self-portrait surrounded by lots of thought clouds.



AFTER WATCHING THE SHOW...

CHARACTERS

There are lots of characters in the story of 'Alfie White: Space Explorer'. Can you remember them all? Here are the main ones:

- Alfie
- Meg
- Grandma
- Rosa – the Jazz Club owner
- Ron – Record shop owner
- Stan (the school hard guy)
- Miss Winchester (the teacher)

All of these characters (and more) are played by just 2 actors, by changing their voices and their bodies (the way they move and walk etc).

WALK ABOUT LIKE...

Walk around the room like each of the characters. Think about changing each part of the way you move. What length of steps does this person take? Where do their hands fall? Are they quick or slow? Do they stand tall or crouch over? What kind of things do they say? Try out a voice for each character. Have fun making all of them very different!

Hot seat some of the characters. Ask them questions about their involvement in the story. How do they feel about other characters? Would they change what they did if they could? Think about the more emotionally difficult parts of the story (being left behind, relationships with parents, friends, secrets and lies). Use empathy to imagine how the character feels.

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SHAPES OF THE 60s



To load it is to love it.

People used to hate to load their cameras. ... So we hatched instant-loading Kodak Instamatic cameras. No more threading. Just drop in the film and shoot. And your pictures come out good and clear, picture after picture. Color or black-and-white.

Indians, just pop in one of those handy little flashcubes and take four flash pictures without touching a bulb.

Choose from a wide range of Kodak Instamatic camera models. The 104, shown here, comes in a complete color outfit, including Kodachrome X film and flashcube, for less than \$20.

Load it. You'll love it.

The Kodak Instamatic® 104 camera.

Kodak

