

A Capital Theatres and Pitlochry Festival Theatre production

nessie

A musical tale of bravery... and beasties

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Shonagh Murray**

Directed by **Beth Morton**



Education Pack

A classroom resource for Primary 4-7 pupils

Nessie Education Pack

In this pack you will find:



Page

- 3 The Story of Nessie**
- 4 Meet the Characters**
- 5 An Interview with creator Shonagh Murray**
- 6 Meet the Creative Team**
- 7 Classroom Activity 1: The Great Hydro Power Debate**
- 8 Classroom Activity 2: Paper Envelope Puppets**
- 9 Resources, Experiences and Outcomes**
- 10 References and Links**

The Story of Nessie

Teachers note: This contains a synopsis of an the entire story which can be used with your learners as you wish. It can be a comprehensive preparation for the visit for those who want that support, or alternatively it can be a way to help prompt memory and discussion after your visit to the show.



Mara lives in Brauchness, near Loch Ness. Her mother, Emma, works at a new hydro-electric plant that generates renewable energy, though not everyone in town supports it. Murdo Campbell, a local, thinks the plant is ruining the view and leads a "Say No To Hydro" movement to close it.

Meanwhile, the animals who live in the loch have their own things to think about. We meet Heather the Heron, Oggie the Otter, and their best pal, who doesn't quite know what kind of animal she is. You might call her the Loch Ness Monster but she's never heard that tale herself and she much prefers to go by Nessa anyway.

Mara is surprised to meet Nessa when she visits the loch after school one day. Although they seem different in so many ways, they have a lot in common too. Mara promises to help Nessa find out where she came from. The two quickly become friends but Ally Campbell, Murdo's son, secretly takes a photo of them together and sends it to the local paper.

The next day, Nessa's photo is published. The town discusses rumors about the Loch Ness Monster, with Murdo blaming the hydro-plant for disturbing Nessa. Mara's mum is upset thinking Mara lied about the encounter. At a town hall meeting, Mara's mum is supposed to discuss the plant's benefits but the meeting becomes all about the Loch Ness Monster instead. Mara sneaks out to meet Nessa.

Mara finds herself at the Lossenfoon, a cave where lost items from the loch are stored. Nessa explains that lost things can be returned if given a helping hand, but Mara realizes how much litter pollutes the loch. They discover Murdo has been sabotaging the hydro-plant, which is blamed for the sightings of Nessa.

But then Nessa sees a monstrous souvenir of the Loch Ness Monster and realises that the town think that she is a monster – and worse, that her friends have known this and kept it from her all along. Mara tries to explain but as she and Nessa argue, Mara falls into the water. Nessa is quick to save her, but then swims away to be alone.

While Heather and Oggie promise to find Nessa, Mara is rescued by an unexpected helper – Ally! Mara and Ally put their differences aside. With Nessa's help they expose Murdo's sabotage. They also explain the plant's benefits, as well as the town's litter problem. They present their evidence at the town hall and Mara reveals that Nessa is not a monster but a friend.

Mara bids Nessa farewell as she swims off to search for her family in the North Sea. Nessa will miss her friends, and they will miss her, but she won't be gone forever.



Meet the characters



Mara

A girl who lives by the loch and loves learning about animals. Her mum is worried she isn't making any new friends.

Emma

Mara's mum and a senior electrical engineer at the hydro-electricity plant in Brauchness.

Ms Morrison

Mara's school teacher, who encourages her interest in animals.

Oggie/Ogilvie the Otter

An otter with an urge to build – tunnels, bridges, dams! He doesn't care that's supposed to be beavers, not otters.



Ally Campbell

A girl in Mara's class who seems to go out of her way to make life difficult for Mara.

Murdo Campbell

Ally's dad, a vocal town activist and the hydro-plants biggest critic.

Nessa

Not a dragon, kelpie, alien or monster, thank you very much! Nessa doesn't know how she got to the loch but she's found a family for herself here.

Heather the heron

A caring friend and more sensible than Oggie.



An Interview with creator Shonagh Murray

Writer and Musical Director of Nessie.

What came first – the story, the idea to do a musical, or the idea to work with puppets?

It was the idea to do a musical. I wrote the opening number first because my dad had dared me to do a Nessie musical. As I started writing the monster's song, however, all these other characters started to come out! As the story unfolded I asked myself "How are we going to bring these characters to life? Right, we are going to do puppets!" So it was musical, then story, then puppets.

How did this production go from being an idea to a real show, in front of audiences?

It's been about five years since I first started writing it. And was just writing away on it for my own joy, just to keep myself busy. Then in 2021 we did five days development with a director-dramaturg and two actors. I also got our lovely puppet-maker Ella MacKay to make a prototype of the Loch Ness Monster to play with. The show will be rehearsed for three weeks in Pitlochry. It's a big rehearsal process. Nessie is not just a story, it's a musical. This means there are songs and scenes. There are actor-musicians so we have to teach all the instrumental parts, and then of course, there are also puppets to think of! It's very much an ensemble piece.



Did you find it easier to write the lyrics, spoken words or the music?

I think sometimes the music comes really easily and the story and the lyrics just follow and it makes sense. But sometimes if there's a bit of story block - if there's a scene that doesn't quite make sense in the jigsaw puzzle of the whole show - then the music isn't going to come as easily. Personally I will always find I will come up against a bit of a block if I don't have the story and the beats of that story all locked in.

What are you most excited for audiences to see?

The main thing has to be the puppets! This is the first time that I have worked with puppets as an MD (Musical Director) or as a writer. It's the most charming and magical thing to see these puppets come alive. Also Natalie Fern's set design. The set can be multipurposed and can be manipulated by the cast. I create a story and music and then I hand it over to people who are able to make magic in a way that I would just never be able to. It's really so rewarding to be able to experience how people respond to my work with their own skills and imagination.

In the show, the Lossenfoon is a place where lost things are found and returned to their owners. What objects would you most love to find in your own Lossenfoon?

It's always sentimental things, like I've got a ring from my grandmother that I hold so dearly that I barely ever let it off my finger. I've got a scarf that was my Grannies that I wear day-to-day as well. Can I throw my accordion in there as well? I've got a new accordion. She's green and pearly-sheen. I've been writing some of the show on the accordion, which is new to me, and I'm just really enjoying the sounds of her.

Meet the Creative Team

Teachers Note: In this section we get to know a little bit more about some of the artists that have worked together to make Nessie. From their jobs, to what they're excited about sharing and which real or mythical Scottish animal they'd like to be.



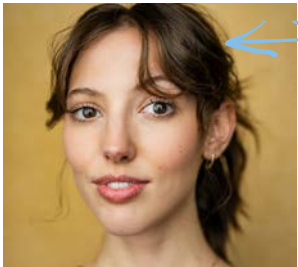
Alyson Orr

I play Emma MacDougall (Mara's mum), Ms Morrison the school teacher and Heather the Heron. I also play flute in the show. People might be surprised to learn that the cast are like a family. We are working so closely with each other and we all become friends really quickly. Some of these friendships we will have for life. I would like to be a Selkie as I love seals and it would be great to shape-shift between seal and human form.



Beth Morton

My role in making the show is Director. As part of my job on the show I work with every production department and production element to build the world for the story to be told within. I'm most excited to share all the wee magical visual surprises that we have up our sleeves. If I could be any Scottish animal I'd be a Selkie because they are gentle creatures who get to have a human life but return to the magical land of their sea.



Eden Barrie

In the show, I will be voicing Nessa, as well as being part of her puppetry team. I also get to play a towns person, a chairperson and a pupil! I will be performing two other shows at Pitlochry Festival Theatre this year. This is because Pitlochry is a repertory theatre, which means you can see lots of different shows in just a few days, often performed by the same actors. I'd love to be a red squirrel, because they're so special and rare.



Keith MacPherson

I play Oggie, Murdo Campbell and Pupil 1 in the show. If I could be any Scottish animal it would be a fallow deer. Those are the ones I used to see as a child when we went to stay at my gran's in Dunkeld. One thing about my job as an actor that people might be surprised to learn is that when they're rehearsing, you try lots of different ways of doing things then stick with the ones that tell the story best.



Louis Newman

I play Ally and Nessa 2. If I could be any Scottish animal, I would love to be a Highland Cow, because they are majestic and have a very calm and relaxed lifestyle, chomping on grass all day long. Something that might surprise you to learn about my job is that sometimes you have to do different accents to your own to help portray a different character. I am most excited to share all of this beautiful music with you all and the journey that it will take you on!



Natalie Fern

My job in the show is to design the set and the costumes. People might be surprised to learn that although my job involves lots of drawing and making models, you need to know quite a lot of maths! If I could be any Scottish animal I would be a Shetland pony, because my hair is never tidy and I don't always want to do what I'm told...



Ella MacKay

My job is to design and make the puppets for the show. I made models to trial how they would move, and drew digital pictures to imagine what a Loch Ness Monster might look like. My job involves lots of different techniques like sculpting, sewing and painting. If I could be any Scottish animal I'd love to be a red squirrel. I do my work behind-the-scenes just like a red squirrel, which can be hard to spot!



Caitlin Forbes

My name is Caitlin Forbes and I play Mara. If I could be any Scottish animal, I'd be a puffin because I love their colourful beaks and I would love to fly at our beautiful coastline. Something that might surprise people about my job is that sometimes I need to act, sing, dance and play an instrument all at the same time! I'm excited to share the magical puppets with audiences. I've fallen in love with them and I'm sure audiences will too.

The Great Hydro Power Debate!

The show Nessie looks at a community on the banks of Loch Ness who are getting used to having a new hydro power plant nearby.

What is a hydro power plant?

A hydro power plant uses water to make electricity. It works by using a dam to control the flow of water. Gravity makes the water move, and when the water flows through the dam, it spins a turbine. A turbine is like a giant fan or a plane propeller. When the turbine spins, it creates electricity. This electricity is stored in batteries and then released into the national grid, ready to travel through power lines into homes and businesses across Scotland.

Hydro power is a type of renewable energy because it uses the natural flow of water to create energy. The water isn't used up in the process; it stays in the water cycle and can be used again for other things. Plus, no carbon dioxide is made when creating this energy, which makes it a clean way to make electricity.

Scotland is a great place for hydro power plants because it gets a lot of rain, and there are plenty of rivers and lochs. This means there is always a reliable source of flowing water. Engineers use dams and reservoirs to control the water flow and make sure the plant can keep making electricity.

Although hydro power is renewable, building the plants takes a lot of resources. Large amounts of carbon and cement are needed in the construction, and the machinery used often relies on fossil fuels. It also takes years to design and build a hydro power plant.

Changing the flow and storage of water with dams can also change the landscape around it. This can affect animals, plants, farms, and local communities. That's why a lot of planning and research is needed before building a hydro power plant to make sure it's safe for the environment and the people living nearby.

Classroom Activity

Teachers Note: Suggested research and discussion time - 1-2 hours

As a class, choose a local body of water such as a large river, waterfall or loch (Alternatively use Pitlochry dam as an example). Imagine that it is being considered for a new hydro power plant. Look at the features of the area and decide what may or may not make it suitable.

Small groups can each be given a different area to research:

- Animals, plants and conservation
- Farming and land use
- Local businesses and people

Each group should list what they find about the area and how it is used by their specific group.

For example

- Which animals and plants are native to the area and what aspects of the land do they need to survive?
- What local business, houses or schools are close by and how many people live and work there?
- What is farm land used for and are there other features such as roads, car parks or recreational areas?
- How do these different groups depend on the area?

Then as a group – discuss and come up with as many questions as they can as if they were one of these interest groups.

What would each group like to know about the proposed dam? Some groups may even wish to plan how that information could be found out, or how any concerns or questions could be collected from different groups of people in the area. The more they are encouraged to be 'in character' for their group, the easier it will be to think up different positives, negatives and questions as farmers, conservation charity workers, local business owners or people living in the local town.

Teachers Note

There are suggested links in the references section of where to start with research, but local maps and books from the library will be helpful too. Please adjust the research and discussion time to suit your group. You may also consider existing hydro power plants such as the Pitlochry dam instead of picking a site local to you. Pitlochry already has a hydro power plant, but you can look at the geographical features and discuss why it might have been chosen at a site and discuss why it might have been chosen at that site, imagining what different people might have thought about it before it was built.

Make your own paper envelope puppets



Think about what kind of creature your puppet might be. There are lots of brilliant creatures in Scotland – real or mythical - which could help inspire you.

How many examples can you think of as a class?

- You will need:
- A white A5 size envelope
 - Felt tips pens
 - Sellotape or a glue stick
 - Scrap paper or other decorations if you wish

1



Take your envelope and open it, placing your thumb on the lower bottom corner and your index finger in the upper bottom corner.

2



Using your other hand press gently in the middle of the bottom edge of the envelope as you slowly bring your fingers and thumb together inside the envelope.

3



Gently pull out the corners of the envelope that form either side of your hand. Your puppet now has a mouth.

4



Take your hand out of the puppet and smooth down the edges.



5
With your hand inside as a guide – fold over the extra top part of envelope that sticks up. Make sure that you leave enough room for your hand to come easily in and out of the puppet. Tape or glue down this top flap.



6
Feel where your knuckles are inside the puppet. The eyes of your puppet must be below your knuckles so that we can see it as the puppet moves. Draw two large eyes for your creature.



7
Draw the rest of the features of your creature. Pay special attention to the inside of the mouth. When your puppet speaks or makes noise, the audience will see into its mouth. Draw any beak, teeth and tongue your creature has. Felt tip pens work well to colour in large sections of your puppet.



8
(Optional) You can add scrap paper or tissue to your puppet to make fur, feathers or scales, or other lightweight recycled materials. Just keep checking the puppet can still move easily before sticking anything down.



9
Your puppet is now ready to perform. Choose a name for your puppet and practice moving it around. In puppetry your creature's eyes follow its nose, so practice pointing the nose where you want it to look. Most puppets are never fully still. Keep your puppet life-like by gently moving it up and down as it breathes. You can have fun trying out different noises and voices for your puppet. The more different this is from your own voice the better.

References and Links

The Great Hydro Power Debate!

Pitlochry Dam

pitlochrydam.com

Forestry Scotland – Wildlife

forestryandland.gov.scot/learn/wildlife

National Geographic learning sites about hydroelectric power

education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/hydroelectric-energy-power-running-water

education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/hydroelectric-energy

Filmed tours of hydro dams which you could watch as a class

sserenewables.com/hydro-tour

Water of Leith Conservation Trust

waterofleith.org.uk/wildlife

Paper Envelope Puppets

An example of how to make a similar envelope puppet:

youtube.com/watch?v=1XbcCOqGKYI

A Youtube video of a TV show in 1969 where Jim Henson teaches viewers how to make several simple puppets. An envelope puppet is created at 11.24 into the video:

youtube.com/watch?v=jF24B9CCtb4

Experiences and Outcomes

- I can consider the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed land use development and discuss the impact this may have on the community.
SOC 2-08b

Experiences and Outcomes

- I can create, adapt and sustain different roles, experimenting with movement, expression and voice and using theatre arts technology.
EXA 2-12a
- Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through drama.
EXA 2-13a