

Every Size Counts

A climate assembly about big problems, small actions, and why every year group matters • Whole School • 25 minutes

Cast • Narrator (Y6) • Lion (Y6 - commanding, not cruel) • Mouse (Y3/4 - small but certain) • Hunter 1 (Y5) • Hunter 2 (Y5) • Optional: Forest Chorus (Y1/2 - movement only) Props (all optional) • A length of rope or ribbon for the net • Simple mane headband or ears for Lion • Mouse ears or grey scarf for Mouse • Clipboard or map for the Hunters • Green fabric or paper leaves for Forest Chorus	Teacher overview <table><tr><th>Section</th><th>Time</th><th>Focus</th></tr><tr><td>Cast briefing</td><td>Before</td><td>Roles, props, staging</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 1: The Favour</td><td>6 mins</td><td>Lion and Mouse; size and underestimation</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 2: The Net</td><td>7 mins</td><td>Lion trapped; the problem too big to solve alone</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 3: The Gnaw</td><td>7 mins</td><td>Mouse acts; small consistent effort; freedom</td></tr><tr><td>Closing</td><td>4 mins</td><td>Every year group has a role; collective action</td></tr></table> Key facilitation notes • The net is the climate crisis - but the assembly never makes this heavy. The story carries the metaphor; the Narrator draws it out gently at the end. • Mouse must not be played as timid. Mouse is small and completely sure of themselves. That confidence is the whole point. • Lion's moment of helplessness in the net is the emotional centre of the assembly. Cast a Y6 pupil who can hold stillness and vulnerability without playing it for laughs. • The Forest Chorus (Y1/2) gives the youngest pupils a physical role. They become the forest being threatened - their stillness in Scene 2 is more powerful than movement. • The closing directly addresses each year group in the hall. Personalise the year group shoutouts for your school. • This assembly works especially well if timed to coincide with an eco committee launch, a school green pledge, or a climate action week.	Section	Time	Focus	Cast briefing	Before	Roles, props, staging	Scene 1: The Favour	6 mins	Lion and Mouse; size and underestimation	Scene 2: The Net	7 mins	Lion trapped; the problem too big to solve alone	Scene 3: The Gnaw	7 mins	Mouse acts; small consistent effort; freedom	Closing	4 mins	Every year group has a role; collective action
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Curriculum links

Subject	Connection
English (KS1/2)	Fables and moral stories; character and consequence; narrative structure; inference and prediction
PSHE / RSE	Collective responsibility; community action; resilience; contribution regardless of age or size
Geography / Science	Climate change; ecosystems and interdependence; human impact on environments; solutions thinking
Citizenship	Active citizenship; local and global responsibility; democratic participation; taking action
SMSC	Moral: no contribution is too small; Social: interdependence and mutual aid; Spiritual: belonging to something larger
DfE Enrichment	Benchmark 2 - nature and community; structured enrichment with whole-school participation

Cast List & Role Guidance

Six roles across the year groups, with a Forest Chorus that gives KS1 pupils a physical role in a whole-school assembly. The key casting decision is Mouse - pick someone small in stature if possible, and completely unafraid.

Role	Suggested Year	Notes
Narrator	Y6	Warm, clear, authoritative without being heavy. The Narrator carries the fable frame and the climate thread. The closing address is their biggest moment - it needs to feel personal, not read. Encourage them to look up at the audience as much as possible.
Lion	Y6	Commanding in Scene 1 - big, easy in their own power. Then genuinely vulnerable in Scene 2. The trap must feel real. Lion does not play their helplessness for laughs. The contrast between the Lion of Scene 1 and the Lion in the net is where the whole assembly lives.
Mouse	Y3/4	The star of the assembly, and the surprise of it. Mouse should be played with complete certainty - no timidity, no squeaking, no comedy. Mouse simply knows what they can do and does it. The best Mice are matter-of-fact, almost businesslike. That's funnier and more powerful than any performance.
Hunter 1	Y5	Practical, purposeful. The Hunters are not villains - they are just doing what people do without thinking too hard about consequence. Hunter 1 is the more confident of the pair.
Hunter 2	Y5	Slightly more uncertain than Hunter 1. Has a small moment of hesitation in Scene 2 that can be played up or down depending on the actor.
Forest Chorus	Y1/2	No lines. Four to six pupils who stand or crouch at the edges of the stage as trees. In Scene 1 they sway gently. In Scene 2, when the Hunters arrive, they freeze completely. In Scene 3, when Lion is freed, they begin to move again. Brief them carefully - their stillness in Scene 2 is genuinely affecting in a whole-school setting.

A note on the metaphor

The net is the climate crisis. Lion is the big institutions - governments, corporations, the systems that feel too large and too stuck to move. Mouse is the individual, the child, the small consistent action. The Forest Chorus is the natural world - present, affected, waiting.

The assembly never makes these equations explicit. The story carries them. The Narrator draws the thread out only in the closing. Trust the story to do the work first.

Staging note

Forest Chorus stand or crouch at the edges of the stage throughout. Lion occupies centre stage with ease in Scene 1, then is fixed to a spot (the net) in Scene 2. Mouse enters from the side and works at Lion's feet - the physical contrast in height and scale is part of the storytelling. Keep the staging simple and the sightlines clear for a whole-school audience.

The Script

Stage directions in [grey italics]. Narrator lines in bold. Audience prompts marked with ►. Approximate scene timings shown in the scene header.

Before the Assembly Begins

Staging: Forest Chorus take their positions at the edges of the stage, swaying gently. Lion is positioned centre stage, relaxed. Mouse is offstage left. Hunters are offstage right. Narrator stands to one side.

The net: a length of rope or ribbon laid in a loose circle on the floor works well. When Lion steps into it in Scene 2, Hunters can pull the ends to tighten it around their feet. Rehearse this once so it reads clearly to a large audience.

SCENE 1: The Favour

Approx. 6 minutes • Narrator, Lion, Mouse, Forest Chorus

[Forest Chorus sway gently. Lion stretches, rests, surveys their domain. Mouse scurries on and accidentally runs across Lion's paw.]

LION: (rumbling, not angry - more surprised) Well. What have we here.

MOUSE: (matter-of-fact, not scared) A mouse. Sorry about the paw. I was in a hurry.

LION: (amused) In a hurry. A mouse. In my forest.

MOUSE: Our forest, technically.

[Lion raises an eyebrow. Then, despite themselves, almost smiles.]

LION: You have some nerve for something so small.

MOUSE: (pleasantly) Thank you. Could you move your paw, please? I really am late.

LION: (not moving it yet) Give me one reason I shouldn't just... keep you here.

MOUSE: (thinking for exactly one second) Because one day I might be able to help you.

[A long pause. Lion looks at Mouse. Then looks at their own enormous paw. Then back at Mouse.]

LION: (a low, genuine laugh) You. Help me.

MOUSE: Yes.

LION: I am the largest, strongest creature in this forest. What could you possibly -

MOUSE: I don't know yet. But I will. Will you let me go?

[Another pause. Lion lifts their paw. Mouse gives a small, dignified nod and exits.]

NARRATOR: Lion watched Mouse disappear into the undergrowth. And laughed. Because what could a mouse possibly do, in a world that needed lions?

► **Audience prompt:** Narrator says: "Has anyone ever been told that what they do doesn't really matter? Because they're too young, or too small, or there's just one of them? Put your hand up if that's happened." Pause. "Keep it in mind. The story's not finished yet."

SCENE 2: The Net

Approx. 7 minutes • Narrator, Lion, Hunter 1, Hunter 2, Forest Chorus

[Forest Chorus freeze. Hunters enter quietly from the side, carrying a rope which they lay in a loop on the floor. Lion, distracted, paces directly into it.]

HUNTER 1: (pulling the rope) Now!

[The net tightens. Lion tries to move and cannot. The Forest Chorus becomes completely still.]

LION: (struggling, then stilling) What - I can't - let me -

HUNTER 2: (looking at Lion, uncertain) It's a big one.

HUNTER 1: (already making notes) It is. We'll come back tomorrow.

[Hunters exit. Lion is alone. Still. Caught.]

LION: (quietly, to nobody) I can't get out of this on my own.

NARRATOR: Lion pulled at the ropes. And pulled again. The more they struggled, the tighter it held. There was no roaring their way out of this one. No amount of strength was going to be enough.

[A long, held pause. Forest Chorus stands completely still. The stillness of the hall in this moment is part of the assembly.]

NARRATOR: Have you ever seen a problem that was just too big? Too tangled? Where you could see exactly what was wrong but couldn't see how anything you did would make the slightest difference?

► **Audience prompt:** Narrator says: "Climate change can feel like that net. Really big. Already tight. And when something feels that big, it's easy to think - what's the point? What could I do? I'm just one person. One school. One small thing in a very large world."
[Pause.] "But here's what happened next."

SCENE 3: The Gnaw

Approx. 7 minutes • Mouse, Lion, Narrator, Forest Chorus

[Mouse enters. Sees Lion. Stops.]

MOUSE: Oh.

LION: (with great dignity, despite everything) Hello, Mouse.

MOUSE: That's quite a net.

LION: Yes.

MOUSE: Are you all right?

LION: (pause) No. Not especially.

[Mouse walks around the net slowly, looking at it carefully. Lion watches.]

MOUSE: I can get you out.

LION: (quietly, not unkindly) Mouse. I have been pulling at this with everything I have. You are -

MOUSE: Small. Yes. I know. But I have very good teeth.

[Mouse begins to gnaw at the rope. It is slow, deliberate work. The Forest Chorus begins - very slightly - to move again.]

LION: (watching) Is it... working?

MOUSE: (not stopping) It's working.

LION: It's very slow.

MOUSE: (still not stopping) Most important things are.

[Mouse keeps gnawing. One strand. Then another. The rope loosens.]

LION: (feeling movement) I can - wait - I think I can -

[Lion steps free. Forest Chorus returns to full movement - swaying, alive. A moment of stillness between Lion and Mouse.]

LION: (quietly) I said you were too small to matter.

MOUSE: You did.

LION: I was wrong.

MOUSE: (simply) I know. It's a common mistake.

[Lion and Mouse stand together. Forest Chorus surrounds them. Narrator steps forward.]

Closing Address (Narrator, 4 minutes)

► **Step 1 - Name it:** "That net is real. Not made of rope - made of carbon, and temperature, and ice that's melting, and weather that's changing. And it is big. Lion-sized big. Bigger than any one person, any one school, any one country can pull apart on their own."

► **Step 2 - The whole school moment:** "But here's what Mouse knew that Lion didn't. You don't have to move the whole net. You just have to gnaw at your bit of it. Steadily. Without stopping." [Pause.] "And there are a lot of us in this room."

► **Step 3 - Address each year group directly:** Narrator looks around the hall and names each year group with something specific they can do. Personalise this for your school - suggestions below:

Year 1 and 2: You notice things. You ask why. Keep doing that - it matters more than you know.

Year 3 and 4: You are old enough to make choices and explain them. What you decide to eat, to use, to keep or throw away - those are real decisions.

Year 5 and 6: You can lead. The eco committee, the school council, the assembly after this one. You can be Mouse in this story.

Teachers and staff: You set the tone of this place. What you talk about, what you make time for, what you take seriously - it ripples.

► **Step 4 - The close:** "Mouse didn't wait until the net was small enough to manage. Mouse started on the net that was there." [Pause.] "The net is there. We've got good teeth. Let's get started."

Teacher Guide: Learning Moments

The overview and facilitation notes are on the front page. What follows maps what the assembly is doing beneath the surface, scene by scene.

Scene 1 - Underestimation and the small voice

- Learning moment: Mouse is not asking for permission. Mouse simply states what they can do and gets on with it. This is a model of agency that the assembly wants to leave with every pupil - particularly the youngest ones in the hall, who are used to being told they are too small to matter.
- Lion's laughter is important. It is not mean - it is genuine incomprehension. Lion cannot imagine a world in which Mouse could help. Most adults cannot either. The assembly is quietly about that failure of imagination.
- The audience prompt (has anyone been told what they do doesn't matter?) is the first personal moment in the assembly. Keep it brief but let it land. The instruction to 'keep it in mind' seeds the payoff in Scene 3.

Scene 2 - The problem that's too big

- Learning moment: the net sequence names climate anxiety directly without naming it. The feeling of seeing a problem too large to solve is one that many pupils - especially older ones - carry quietly. The assembly gives it a shape and a story rather than a statistic.
- The Forest Chorus stillness is the most powerful physical moment in the whole assembly. Brief them carefully. Their complete freeze when the Hunters arrive should feel like the breath going out of the room.
- The audience prompt here is the most direct climate reference in the script. The phrase 'what's the point?' names the paralysis many young people feel. Acknowledge it plainly. Then move on to Scene 3.
- Facilitation note: do not rush the pause after 'but here's what happened next.' Let the whole school sit in the problem for a moment before the solution arrives. The wait earns the Mouse.

Scene 3 - Small, steady, effective

- Learning moment: Mouse does not solve the problem quickly or dramatically. Mouse gnaws. One strand at a time. This is the most accurate depiction of climate action in the whole series - not a single heroic gesture but consistent, unglamorous effort over time.
- The line 'most important things are' (in response to 'it's very slow') is the moral of the assembly in five words. The Narrator does not need to underline it. Trust the Mouse to deliver it and move on.
- Lion's acknowledgement ('I was wrong') and Mouse's response ('it's a common mistake') should get a laugh. Mouse is not triumphant - just matter-of-fact. That's the character all the way through.
- The Forest Chorus returning to life as the rope loosens is the visual payoff of their stillness in Scene 2. It should be gradual - they do not leap into movement, they ease back into it.

The closing address

- The year group address is the most unusual element of this closing and the most effective for a whole-school assembly. Pupils of all ages are rarely spoken to directly and specifically in an assembly context. Being named - Year 3 and 4, this is for you - creates attention and ownership simultaneously.
- Personalise the year group lines for your school. If Y6 are running the eco committee, name it. If Y3 have been doing a seed project, reference it. Specificity makes it real.
- The final line - 'we've got good teeth, let's get started' - should be delivered with a lightness, not a rallying cry. Mouse was never dramatic about it. Neither should the Narrator be.

Extension: One Lesson to Follow

Our School's Climate Action Map: What Are We Already Doing, and What's Next?

1 lesson (50-60 minutes) • Whole school or KS2 • PSHE / Geography / Citizenship

What Pupils Will Do

Pupils audit what their school is already doing on climate and sustainability, identify what is missing, and propose one new action they could lead themselves. The output is a class contribution to a whole-school climate action map.

Starter (5 mins): Gnaw your bit

- Revisit the Mouse's approach: one strand at a time. Ask pupils: what strands has our school already gnawed through?
- Take quick hands: recycling? Energy saving? Growing food? Walking to school? Eco committee? Anything else?
- Tell pupils: today we're going to find out properly - and then decide what's next.

Main Activity 1 - The Audit (15 mins)

- Give pairs or small groups a simple audit card with categories: Energy, Travel, Food, Waste, Nature, Learning, Community.
- Groups walk around the school (or work from knowledge/a photo set prepared in advance) to find evidence of action in each category.
- They record: what we found, how well it's working (red/amber/green), one thing that could be better.

Main Activity 2 - The Gap (10 mins)

- Groups share findings. Class identifies the three biggest gaps - areas where the school is doing least.
- Discussion: why might those gaps exist? Is it cost, knowledge, habit, or something else?
- Y5/6 extension: which gap would have the biggest impact if it was filled? How would you measure that?

Main Activity 3 - One New Strand (15 mins)

- Each pupil (or pair) proposes one new action the school could take. It must be: specific, achievable without a large budget, and something a pupil could help lead.
- They write it as a short proposal: What is it? Why does it matter? Who would do it? How would we know it's working?
- Optional: proposals go to the school eco committee or council as genuine submissions.

Plenary (10 mins): The Action Map

- Each proposal is added to a large class display - a literal map of the school with action proposals pinned to the places they would happen.
- Vote on which one to pursue first. Assign a pupil lead.
- Teacher note: if this lesson generates a genuine school action, follow it up. The most powerful outcome of this assembly is a real thing that gets done.

Resources Needed

- Simple audit card (teacher-prepared, one per pair)

- Red/amber/green stickers or pens
- Large map of the school (hand-drawn is fine) for the action map display
- Optional: clipboards for the audit walk

Teacher Notes

This lesson is most powerful when the proposals go somewhere real - to a teacher with responsibility for sustainability, the school business manager, the eco committee, or a governor. Pupils who see their ideas taken seriously are more likely to take the next step.

The audit activity often surfaces things pupils didn't know the school was already doing. That recognition - we are already gnawing - is itself valuable. Climate anxiety is reduced when people can see that action is already happening, and that they are part of a school that takes it seriously.

Not Yet Zero • Ground Level Assembly Pack

notyetzero.com • Free to use and adapt for educational purposes