

PERSONA DOLLS

NUMBER 37



Few of the ideas in this booklet are my own.
They have come from a variety of sources over the years.

To all I am grateful for their inspiration.

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February 2006

PERSONA DOLLS

Possible Learning Outcomes when using Persona Dolls:

- Children will be introduced to social and cultural diversity.
- Children will develop empathy and respect as they discover what they have in common with those from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds.
- Children will learn ways of challenging unfairness, discrimination, prejudice and racism
- Children will develop their emotional literacy

What are Persona Dolls?

- Persona Dolls are different from other dolls because they are the practitioners' dolls.
- Persona Dolls are special dolls with individual personalities and life histories which visit the children, (usually during circle time).
- Persona Dolls are given personalities, family and cultural backgrounds, likes, dislikes and stories to tell that raise equality issues.
- Persona Dolls are used to prevent young children from learning prejudiced attitudes and to unlearn existing stereotypical messages
- Persona Dolls provide a non threatening, enjoyable way to build on children's sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence.

How can we work with Persona Dolls?

- Any doll can be a Persona Doll. Avoid stereotyping when selecting dolls. They don't need to be anatomically correct but do need to have authentic features - hair texture, eye shape, skin colour etc. Large, child size soft bodied dolls are preferred.
- Introduce a Doll and use it to tell stories about the Dolls' life as a way of exploring people who are different. Weave stories around the Doll for the rest of the year.
- Start with happy stories and a male Doll to counter any prejudice against dolls from boys.
- Persona Dolls are not puppets and you don't speak as if you were the doll. You listen to the doll then speak on behalf of the Doll in your own voice telling the children what the doll tells you.
- You ask open ended questions e.g. What would you do if....? Do you ever feel...? What do you think...? Can you help...?

As children hear the Doll's story they empathise with the Doll and learn to put themselves in another person's shoes. They learn that discriminatory behaviour hurts and can see the injustice of the situations in the stories so are motivated to think of solutions. This problem solving helps boost their self confidence so they respond to others with more respect and sensitivity. After hearing stories in which the Dolls are unfairly treated children are more likely to stand up for someone who is excluded, teased or put down.

Two examples of personas:

a) This is Thandanani. She is nearly 5 years old. She was born in London and so were her parents and her baby brother William. Her Grandma was born in Trinidad and her Nan in Scotland. Grandma lives with them and looks after her and William when Mum and Dad go to work. Mum is a teacher and Dad's a librarian. Grandma is teaching Thandanani to speak Creole. Her favourite food is rice and peas and she also loves sausages and chips. She doesn't like tomatoes, plantains or chicken. Her favourite toys are her teeny-tiny teddy, her bicycle, her dolls and lego. She's very good at running and hopping but she can't catch a ball. She wants people to call her Thandanani and not Narni and to leave her hair alone!

b) This is Heather. She is 6. She lives on the ground floor of a block of flats with her Mum and her two big sisters, Rebecca and Penny. In the holidays they go to their Dad's farm but Mum doesn't go with them- that makes Heather sad. But she has great fun when she is on the farm. She's learning to ride a small pony. There is something Heather doesn't like and that's school. She does like her teacher but not the children. They laugh at her because they say she's silly and stupid. Sometimes they play with her but sometimes they don't. Her favourite food is pizza and pasta and she loves playing with her dolls and her beanies. She wishes she didn't have to wear glasses.

Some examples of Persona Doll scenarios:

- A. *Let me introduce you to Mary. She is 4 years old and loves riding her bike, painting and looking at books. She is very happy girl who lives in a caravan.
What do we know about people who live in a caravan?
Have you had a holiday in a caravan or trailer?
Mary has many similarities to you - can you think what they are?
Mary has some differences to you - what are they?
Mary is called a Traveller. She might come to our school and she might not. If she did, how would we welcome her to our school?*
- B. *Adam is going to his friend Clara's party. She is going to be 5. He wonders what he should get her for a present. Have you got any ideas?*
- C. *Frank is excited. He's going to do something he's never done before. His mum is taking him to choose some glasses so he'll be able to see properly. He's a bit worried though because his big sister told him he'll be teased and called 'four eyes. Can you help him?*
- D. *Ben wants to know if you can help him. There's something he doesn't understand. He asked his mum why his friend John has brown skin. She said it was because he came from a hot country and got burnt by the sun. But John told Ben that he's never been to a hot country. His Mum and Dad haven't either. Why do you think John has brown skin?*
- E. *John says he wishes children would stop teasing him because he lives in a trailer. He thinks living in a trailer is fun and he's glad he doesn't live in a house. But he really doesn't like it when children are horrible to him. He thinks it isn't fair. What should he do?*
- F. *There are no other children of African heritage in Max's class. When children go out to play they say they don't want to play with him. Sometimes they hit him and they call him names. It makes him feel very miserable. He doesn't know what to do. He wonders if you can help him?*
- G. *Marie is feeling happy. Her teacher says she can look after Hazel, who will be coming to school for the first time tomorrow. Marie remembers how worried she was on her first day and how glad she was that Michael looked after her. Hazel can't see well. What should Marie do to help her?*
- H. *William wants to know if you think thinks it's OK for boys to cry? His Mum thinks its okay and so does his Gran. But yesterday he cried when he fell down and hurt himself really badly. His cousins called him a cry-baby and told him big boys don't cry.*
- I. *Alice and Tina are twins. Alice loves climbing trees and riding her bike as fast as she can. Tina likes to play dolls and tea parties. Alice thinks that's boring. Tina thinks climbing trees and riding bikes is boring. They want to know if you can think of games they could play together?*
- J. *Jamie and his friend Tony have been arguing. Jamie says that children can't have two mothers and Tony says they can. Who is right?*

Adapted from Combating Discrimination: Persona Dolls in Action Babette Brown, Trentham Books

Developing a Persona Doll scenario:

Imagine that Suyuan, who is 4, has been in your class for 6 weeks. Her mother tongue is Chinese which neither you nor any of the other children can speak. The children seldom attempt to make contact with her but she responds to your efforts to involve her in ongoing activities. When her parents or grandparents come to fetch her, her face brightens and she talks animatedly with them.

Can you develop a story using a Persona Doll to help make Suyuan feel more comfortable and the rest of the class respond to her more positively?

Stories which are woven around the Dolls should encourage young children to develop empathy and respect for people different from themselves. The hope is that they will learn not to judge others by the colour of their skin, their physical features, their disabilities, their gender or their sexual orientation.

Billy's Story:

The teacher was concerned that some children were excluding Sunita from their games and verbally teasing her. She supported Sunita by successfully encouraging a popular girl, Nadia to develop a friendship with her and explained to the children why their behaviour was unacceptable. At circle time a few days later she told the following Persona Doll story to highlight the pain that exclusion and verbal abuse brings and to deepen empathy. To avoid spotlighting Sunita she used a boy Persona Doll from a European family called Billy. While telling the story she kept an eye on Sunita in case she needed support as well as on the children who had excluded and teased her.

Billy has come to visit us again today. He wants to know if you remember his brother's name.

That's right, Nick.

Who do you think is older, Billy or Nick?

Yes. Nick because he's nine and Billy's four.

Billy says I must remind you that he and Nick live with their mum in a flat and that they sleep in bunk beds. He wants to know if you remember who sleeps on the bottom bunk?

Right again, Billy. He doesn't think that's fair. Do you?

Billy asks if you remember that he finds lots of things hard to do like dressing himself. He takes a long time eating even his favourite foods and even longer when he has to eat foods he doesn't like. Sometimes his mum shouts at him and tells him to hurry-up and his brother Nick calls him 'slowcoach'. How do you think that makes Billy feel?

He's just told me that he went bowling yesterday and he knocked all the skittles down.

How do you think he felt?

He wants to know if you have been bowling. Did you manage to knock all the skittles down.

Billy has come to see you today to ask you what he should do about something that is happening at his school. A new girl called Kylie teases him and calls him "Dozy Billy" and "Silly Billy". How do you think that makes Billy feel?

It's even worse than that. The other children have also started calling him "Dozy Billy" and "Silly Billy" and they don't want to play with him.

Billy wants to know if you've ever been called names? How did you feel?

Billy hates it when they call him names and won't play with him but he says he doesn't know what to do. He wants to know what you would do if you were in his situation?

The children were eager to help Billy because they considered he had been unfairly treated. They enjoyed offering him their advice and talking about their own experiences and actions. These were some of the suggestions that were offered:

- I'd tell them that they were being horrid and unkind.
- I'd find somebody else to play with.
- I'll play with him.
- I'd cry if that happened to me.
- I'd hit them.
- He could tell the teacher.
- He could tell his mum or dad when he got home.

The teacher particularly supported and picked up on Sunita's contributions and of the children who had excluded and verbally abused her. She hoped that thinking about how Billy was feeling and empathising with him might help them gain insight into their own behaviour. She brought the story to an appropriate conclusion by weaving in the children's contributions especially those that most closely matched the goal of the story.

This story originally appeared in the magazine Five to Seven in April 2002.

Emily's Story:

In a nursery school Christopher shouted at one of the few black children in the group, "Rachid, go away! You can't play. My Gran and me don't like brown people."

Kylie and Geoffrey immediately invited Rachid to join their game. The teacher decided to tell a Persona Doll story based on this incident. She changed the setting, the circumstances and the gender of the main character but used a black Doll. While telling the story she observed Christopher and Rachid in case they needed her support and ensured that positive responses like that of Kylie's and Geoffrey's were highlighted.

Look who has come to visit us today. Do you remember her name?

Yes, it is Emily. Emily lives near here.

Do you remember how happy Emily was when she came to visit us last week?

But do you remember why she was so happy - what had happened to her?

But look at Emily today. She is sad. Why do you think she is sad?

Emily asked me to tell you what happened yesterday because she is too shy to tell you herself. Emily was having a really lovely time in the park on Sunday with her friends Lee, Alice and Jack. They were playing very happily.

Do you go to a park? What do you play when you go to the park?

On Sunday some big children came along and asked Lee, Alice and Jack if they wanted to join in their game. "Sure!" they replied.

Emily wanted to play but they said she was too small and small people were stupid so they didn't want her in their game. Off they ran leaving Emily all alone.

What do you think Emily was feeling when the children said she couldn't play with them?

How else might she have been feeling?

Do you sometimes feel like that?

Do you think small people are stupid?

What could Lee, Alice and Jack have done?

Emily was the smallest. She might have spoilt their game. Do you think they were right not to want her to play?

If you saw what happened to Emily what would you have done?

Emily wants to know, if it happened again what do you think she should do?

By weaving in the children's contributions, the teacher brought it to an appropriate conclusion, selecting those that most closely matched the goal i.e. to appreciate the pleasure of being included and the pain when excluded. She picked up on the contributions of Christopher and Rachid and stressed the solutions that mirrored Kylie's and Geoffrey's sensitive response to Rachid. She hoped that thinking about how Emily was feeling might help Christopher gain insight into his own behaviour and learn that some of the things he had been told were not true.

Persona Doll stories like this can address issues both when they arise and before they surface. They enable children to recognise and understand that words and actions can be hurtful, to empathise with people experiencing bias and motivate them to want to stand up and show their support.

This story originally appeared in Nursery World in May 2000.

Using Persona Dolls for the first time:

- Seat the children comfortably and in a way that makes them feel included, for example, in a circle
- Introduce the doll 'This is....., you haven't met her before.'
- Give a few simple details of the doll's history and encourage the children to ask a few questions. The teacher acts as an interpreter for the doll. She/he is not the doll. She/he listens to the doll then tells the class what the doll has said. The teacher should stroke the doll's hair etc. to help it feel comfortable.
- The main aim is for the class to make friends with the doll
- Keep a careful written record of any new parts of the doll's history you create
- When you introduce subsequent dolls, try to think of the relationship between the dolls and what the children might learn from each of them
- Ensure that the dolls are treated with respect and are made special

Subsequent sessions have 5 main parts:

1. **Introduction.** Reacquaint the children with who the doll is. *"Remember this is David, and he is Jewish and has lots of good times with his family. He has cerebral palsy so it's hard for him to get his muscles to do what he wants them to."* Allow the children to greet the doll. This might be by passing it around the circle. Briefly remind the children of previous stories which the doll has experienced so that he/she comes to life for them.

2. **Present the Story/situation:** Outline the situation to be discussed e.g. *"Last week David's new baby brother was born"*. Create simple stories that enable the children to critically examine and identify their feelings, solve problems and think critically.

3. **Discuss Feelings.** Ask children how they think the doll might be feeling. Use active listening, and repeat what the children say e.g. *"Yes, he's feeling mad because the baby cries all the time. Maybe he feels lonely because Mum doesn't have much time for him."*

4. **Problem solving.** Ask children what the doll could do e.g. *"Yes, he could scream like the baby. What else? Jane, what did you do when your family had a new baby?"*

5. **Resolution.** Give the story an ending, incorporating ideas the children have offered into a solution. For example *"David knows that Jewish families really welcome new babies but he was feeling left out. So one night after the baby was asleep, he told his Dad about how he was feeling. Now his Mum and Dad take it in turns to play with him for about a half hour while the other one watches the baby."*

Examples of introductory sentences and questions:

- You haven't met before
- Would you like to meet..... ?
- I wonder if you remember who this is?
- would like to tell you what happened to her/him yesterday/the other week?
- is really pleased that he/she came to visit
- How do you feel when somebody?
- Have you worried about?
- What happened to stop you worrying?
- How do you think that would make you/him/her feel?
- Have you ever been teased/called names/left out etc.?
- What did you do?
- What do you think he/she should do?
- What made you feel better?
- How can we help?
- Can you think of things he/she could do?
- Do children sometimes say things/call you names/do things you don't like?

Situations which can be explored with Persona Dolls include:

Common Experiences which apply to most children:

- Feeling sad when saying goodbye to parents.
- Crying when feelings are hurt or crying when physically hurt
- Feeling apprehensive about doing something for the first time
- Enjoying the same story
- Feeling happy when someone does something nice for you

Supporting Differences:

- What differences may cause a child to be teased or singled out by other children?
- Does a child display shame or sensitivity about aspects of their own background? e.g. not wanting to wear glasses, not wanting to play with girls/boys, not wanting to speak in their home language.

Managing Conflict:

- Is a child finding it difficult to communicate with others?
- Is a child experiencing bullying?
- Is a child acting aggressively towards others out of frustration/ tiredness etc?
- Are there conflicts over resources or space?

Cultural Experiences:

- Festivals and Celebrations
- Clothing
- Worship
- Traditions
- Introduce a photo album belonging to the doll, and artefacts, clothes etc from a variety of backgrounds
- Involve parents and other members of the community

Examples of Stories/Situations:

- Kofu is upset because Mark and Kate won't let him play football with them at playtime.
- Julissa is excited because she is going to visit her family in London at the weekend.
- Sally is going to be a bridesmaid when her mother gets married at the weekend.
- Eleanor loves playing with a train set. Her friend laughs at her because she thinks girls shouldn't play with trains.
- Ahmed is crying because he is frightened of having his vaccination.
- Rose and Akua are angry because someone has just called Muhammed a racist name in the playground.
- One of the teachers has shortened Adamu's name to Adam. He can't decide how he feels about it.
- Fatima is nervous about going swimming because she will have to take her glasses off.
- Gita will be celebrating Diwali tomorrow and she is really looking forward to it.

Story endings should be short and simple with a basic conclusion to the discussion.

An example of how to conclude a Persona Doll story:

Robert is really pleased that he came to visit you today.

He says you are good friends to care about him and help him feel less worried.

He says that Jane had a good idea. He's going to ask his mum to give him a photo of his dad and he will keep it in his special drawer. He can look at it when he has that funny feeling in his tummy.

He thinks John is right. If he does lots of things while he's at playgroup then he won't miss his Dad so much. As soon as he comes with his Mum in the morning he says he is going to play with the sand and then the water.

He likes Tom's idea too.

He will try all the things you suggested.

Buying Persona Dolls:

You can buy Persona Dolls for £60 made to order from:

Persona Doll Training Organisation

51 Granville Road, London, N12 OJH

T: 0208 446 7056

F: 0208 446 7591

www.persona-doll-training.org

personadoll@ukgateway.net

You can buy Persona Dolls for £45 mass produced in India and a selection of traditional clothes from:

The Parrotfish Company

51 North Street, Maldon, Essex CM9 5HJ

Tel/Fax: 01621 858940

www.parrotfish.co.uk

enquiries@parrotfish.co.uk

Suggested reading:

Persona Dolls in Action video and support book – Persona Doll Training

Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years by Babette Brown, 1999

Trentham Books, ISBN 1858561221

Combating Discrimination: Persona Dolls in Action by Babette Brown, 2001,

Trentham Books, ISBN 1858562392

The Little Book of Persona Dolls by Marilyn Bowles, 2004, Featherstone Education

Creating a Persona for your Persona Doll:

This needs to be a collaborative process in which all staff, and if possible parents and community groups can be involved. It is important that care is taken to ensure that stereotypes are not reinforced or created. When creating a Persona for a doll of a specific cultural heritage you need to do your research. You can:

- Get help from parents, friends and the local community
- Get information from the library/the internet
- Get information from Cumbria Ethnic Minority and Traveller Support Service

Creating a Persona for a Persona Doll:

Name:	Age:
Place of birth:	Gender:
Birthday (day/month):	
Physical features:	Skin colour:
Ethnicity:	Languages spoken:
Religion:	Cultural background:
Likes/Things enjoys doing:	Dislikes/Fears:
Food likes:	Food dislikes:
Special abilities/Things good at:	Disabilities/Things finds difficult
Family Structure: (who lives with, siblings etc)	Social Class: Parents/Carers occupation:
Type of home: (e.g. flat, 3 bedroomed house)	Pets (if any):
Where sleeps: (e.g. bunk beds)	Anything else:

Introducing Courtney Gladstone, a mixed heritage girl

Name: Courtney Gladstone	Age: 4
Place of birth: Manchester Birthday (day/month): 21 st September	Gender: Female
Physical features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small ears just like her dad's • Lots of frizzy hair 	Skin colour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light brown skin
Ethnicity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed heritage – Caribbean (Trinidad) and English • Mum born and brought up in Barrow • Dad born in Trinidad and came to live in London when he was 8 	Languages spoken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English
Religion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of England (but doesn't go to Church unless Grandma is over from Trinidad) 	Cultural background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English/Caribbean
Likes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McDonald's (but mum says she shouldn't go too often as it's not good for you) • Fried plantain* (Dad and grandma cook it for her) • Her Grandparents 	Dislikes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broccoli • Having her hair washed – her hair goes all funny when it has just been washed.
Special abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can write her name • Mummy thinks she's definitely left handed, but she can write using both hands 	Disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eczema - has it on arms and legs in patches, gets very itchy and bleeds sometimes, has to have special cream
Family Structure/who lives with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lives with Mum (Stacey Ann Gladstone) and Dad (Curtis Gladstone) • Has an older half brother called Lennox Gladstone, but he lives in London with his mother 	Social Class Parents/Carers occupation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working class • Mum works in Next • Dad is a Youth Worker and is manager of a local youth football team
Type of home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to live in a flat back in Manchester now lives in a new 3 bedroom house in Barrow 	Anything else: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family recently moved to Barrow (because mum has family here) • Courtney goes to school in a Rainbow class, attends afternoons only • Auntie Tracey (mums twin sister) • Grandma Merle Gladstone (Lives in Trinidad) • Nan, Alice and Grandpa, George Mitchell (Live in Barrow)

* Plantain is a large savoury member of the banana family. It needs to be cooked to be edible. It can be fried, boiled or roasted. It is used in Caribbean and African cooking.

From Abimbola Akinsanya, Minorities' Achievement Support Service (Bedfordshire)

Introducing Courtney in Six short sessions:

Week	Outline
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am going to introduce you to a new friend. She is feeling a bit shy about meeting all you new children. She wonders if you have ever felt shy? • This is Courtney Gladstone. She would like to know your names (so lets sing the welcome song to get to know the names of everybody in the group or just as an introduction). • Courtney is 4 years old. She lives with her Mum (who is Stacey Ann Gladstone) and her Dad (who is Curtis Gladstone). She has an older half brother called Lennox Gladstone, but he lives in London with his mother. How old are you and who do you live with? • Give children an opportunity to say goodbye to Courtney – pass her round the group (tell children they have to handle her carefully). Praise the children who handle her with care.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome song • Can you remember Courtney? What can you remember about her? • Introduce where Courtney lives – Ask the children what kind of home they live in. • Ask children what they like doing at home, explain what Courtney likes doing at home. • She has a particular friend called Omar Ojo. They love to play with the train set together. • Introduce the fact the Courtney goes to school like them and is in a Rainbow class. • Ask the children about who takes them and collects them from school. • Let the children know that Courtney particularly likes it when her daddy picks her up and why
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome song • Ask children what they can remember about Courtney – prompt with questions • <i>How old is Courtney? What is her last name?</i> • <i>Who does she live with? Does she have any brothers or sisters?</i> • <i>Who is her friend that likes to play with her train set with her (her friend is Omar Ojo)?</i> • <i>Who picks her up from school on Thursday? What does her dad cook her for tea?</i> • <i>Why does she have to have a plaster behind her ear?</i> • Introduce Courtney's concern – her hair. A child at her school keeps saying her hair is funny, keeps trying to touch it. Courtney doesn't like it. • Ask the children how that might Courtney feel and what should she do? • Talk about hair – in turn allow children to describe their hair – Facilitator describes his/her hair first (ensure positive comments about each child's hair) – similarities and differences
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass on a smile round the circle • Introduce Courtney's Grandma who lives in Trinidad and is coming to visit in the summer holidays. • Where is Trinidad? Describe where grandma lives • Read letter from grandma – show pictures (of Trinidad) that Grandma has also sent • Introduce fact can pick fruit from her garden – mangoes • Mangoes are one of Courtney's favourite fruit – mummy gets them from Tesco's. Ask children what fruit they like • Pass a mango round for children to feel, smell, taste
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass on a handshake round the circle. • Recap on Courtney's Grandma. Where does she live? When is she coming to see Courtney • Introduce the fact that Courtney misses Grandma – can't see her as often as her other Nan. Ask children if there is anybody that they miss • Ask children what you can do to help you stop missing people (keep in contact by phone, postcards, pictures) • Read book Nan reads to Courtney when she is in England – chose a book with a Caribbean theme – maybe "One smiling Grandma" – reminds Courtney of her own Grandma
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome song • Intro postcard from Courtney's Grandma and the recipe she has sent • Tell children Courtney did cooking with her Dad using Grandma's recipe – ask the children if they help with cooking/what cooking they help with • Courtney describes how she helped dad with the cooking – ingredients/method • Allow children an opportunity to taste the cake (which Courtney has brought in for them to try) Explain that they have this in Trinidad. Name the children that say thank you. • Introduce the story of the children at Courtney's school who just snatched the cake that she had brought in for them. Ask them what they should do if they are given something like a cake or a sweet • Introduce music (Calypso CD) that Grandma likes to listen to and the fact it is from Trinidad – Ask the children if they like the music/what music they like. Allow time for the children to listen carefully to the music.

From Abimbola Akinsanya, Minorities' Achievement Support Service (Bedfordshire)

Introducing Dani, an Afro Caribbean girl

Dani was born in Bristol. Her parents came from Barbados about thirty years ago.

Her language:

Dani speaks English. Her Gran used to speak to other Black people from Barbados in a special way. It's like English but it's different –its called Creole or patois (patwa)

Sometimes it just sounds like a different accent, but there are also some words that are different and they express things differently from English people with other backgrounds. Dani can understand them and can copy them, but has a Bristol accent, which her Mum thinks is better than a Barbados accent for getting on in Britain.

When Dani's older brother is with his black friends they sometimes talk in their own kind of Patwa. It's not like their parents'.... well, it's a bit like it but it's their own. It's something only other black youth can speak well. Also, it's different depending on where you live, like in different parts of the country, so it's an identity thing. They use it in school if they want to be private, instead of 'normal' English.

Her religion:

Dani doesn't really believe in any God or anything, but her Mum does. Her Mum goes to a mainly black church - it's called the New Testament Church of God.

Her Mum says it was set up 30 years ago because black people didn't feel at home in white churches. The white people didn't welcome them much - which sounds pretty amazing, but her Mum says she knows people who were asked by a white vicar not to come back! Also a lot of black people like to worship in a different way. More people join in, it's lively. The preacher is completely involved in what he's saying, and the people in the church can join in, like they call out if they agree with him, and sometimes people stand up and talk about what they believe.

The couple of times she has been to an ordinary white church it wasn't like that at all, it was really formal, and she felt like she didn't dare speak. She thinks the singing's better in black churches too - though she isn't saying everyone's like a gospel singer. Everyone joins in some hymns. If she did believe in God she'd go to a black church because they just seem more active and interesting.

Her food:

There's nothing special about what she eats. She is almost a vegetarian because she really likes animals and can't stand the thought of eating them, but it drives her Mum mad because she isn't vegetarian and she doesn't like to cook without meat or fish. She does sometimes have traditional Barbados food and she doesn't mind if it's fish.

Adapted from Britkid website

Introducing Mary-Kate, a Gypsy/Traveller Girl

She is just five.

As you can see she has long dark brown (or black hair) in plaits. She has green (or brown) eyes.

She is a Romany / English Gypsy and she lives in a trailer (sometimes called a caravan) with her Mum, (who is called Natalia); her Dad (who is called Nicholas); and her baby brother who is called William-Henry (or Nathan, or James-Elisha)

She has two older sisters: Shirelle and Tammy (or Martina, Melissa, Dallas-Kadine, Chanella, Annie-Martell, or Whitney)

Her favourite food is her Mum's homemade beef stew but she likes anything her Mum cooks and sometimes for a treat the family enjoy a Chinese take-away meal.

Mary-Kate's Dad and her uncle Joe have a carpet shop but they also travel around the country selling their carpets at Fairs and markets. So they aren't always settled in one place.

Her Grandmother makes beautiful silk cushions, pillows and quilts like the ones in Mary-Kate's trailer and she sells them at the fairs. Mum makes beautiful lace-trimmed dresses for little girls and she shares a stall with Gran at the Travellers Fairs.

Mary-Kate loves travelling around and stopping at different places. They some-times stay at Granny and Grandad's Traveller site, especially at Christmas time when aunts and uncles and cousins come to visit. Granny and Grandad don't travel around as much now so they live in a chalet on the site. It was put together in a factory in two pieces and had to be taken to the site on the back of a huge lorry. It looks like a bungalow.

Mary-Kate's two big sisters sleep in a small trailer beside hers because there wouldn't be room for them all in one trailer.

The best days of Mary-Kate's year are: -

- Christmas at Granny and Grandad's.
- Going to Appleby Horse Fair in June and looking at all the ponies and meeting up with lots of family and friends.
- Travelling abroad in the summer when Dad goes to buy the carpets and rugs to sell in his shops.

Mary-Kate likes making new friends when she travels around. She has already been to lots of different schools. The things she liked best at Nursery school was painting pictures, playing with the sand and baking little biscuits. At her last school she learned how to write her name and soon she hopes to learn how to read. Mary-Kate tries hard not to forget what she learns at school. The teachers often give her some homework to do with Mum while she is travelling.

Some things you will find in Mary-Kate's home are: -

- Her Mum and Dad collect China plates with pictures of horses on them or pictures of fruit. They also have glass bowls and vases which have to be wrapped in towels when they move so they don't get broken.
- Some pretty silk cushions that Granny made.
- A beautiful Indian rug like the ones her Dad sells.

Written by Margaret Newrick, Cumbria LEA, STS Ethnic Minority and Traveller Support Service

Introducing Taz, a Muslim boy

Taz (which is short for Mumtaz) was born in Bradford. His Dad and Mum were both born in Pakistan and his Dad was invited to come to Bradford to work.

His language:

Taz speaks in English almost all of the time in school. At home he mostly uses the Mirpuri dialect of Punjabi, which is a bit different from his friend Balvinder's, though they can understand each other. He talks in Mirpuri with his brothers and sisters and often with his Dad. He speaks in Urdu with his Mum and Gran. Urdu is a bit more formal and 'posh', and it's the national and written language of Pakistan. His Mum is teaching him to write in Urdu.

His elder brother goes to mosque school on Mondays where he learns traditional Arabic, because he is a Muslim and his holy book is in Arabic. It's almost the same as Arabic. Both of them are written from right to left, not like English.

His religion:

Taz is a Muslim, like nearly all Pakistanis. Everyone seems to think Muslims are fanatics which really bugs him. There are people in every religion who think they are right and take things to extremes, he thinks it's just not fair to think that it's only Muslims.

Most British Muslims have got roots in Pakistan and Bangladesh and a lot come from India as well. To Taz being a Muslim means that he believes in God, and that Mohammed was his messenger or prophet. There are five really important rules he tries to follow called the five pillars of Islam, and they affect the way he lives his life. He says he'll tell us about them another day.

Some people believe that the wrong sort of music and dancing can stir up bad thoughts, so they're sort of disapproved of by strict Muslims.

He believes that since it is impossible to imagine what God can be like, it is bad to try to draw him, so Muslims never do. Some Muslims take this further and say people shouldn't draw people either, since it's trying to copy the work of God.

His food:

At home he eats quite a lot of 'traditional' Pakistani food. It's not curry and rice, which is what a lot of people expect. Most English people think the food he has at home is like they'd get in an Indian restaurant, but it isn't. Most of those restaurants are not Pakistani, so although some things are the same, others aren't. It's a bit like... there are traditional dishes from the north of England which people don't cook so much in the south.

He does eat rice, but more often he has a kind of bread with his food-usually a thin bread called a chapatti, but there are thicker ones called nan.

With this he might have something made of lentils, called dall, which is a bit like a really thick soup. He likes food with spices in. He often has one or two main dishes and you might call these curries, though it's not the word he uses. They've usually got meat in, like chicken, or lamb, or beef, but never pork or ham, because his religion says he mustn't eat anything to do with the pig because it is considered unclean. Usually the meat is special meat, called halal, which means it's okay, it's allowed (haram means 'forbidden', so pork is haram). Halal meat is when the animal is killed while a prayer is said thanking God, and also all the blood is drained out. He has to be a bit careful with some ice creams and some biscuits and cakes, because they sometimes have pig fat in them.

His religion also says wine and beer and any alcohol is haram, so we don't have any of that at home!

He wouldn't like you to get the idea that all he eats is Pakistani-type food. He likes lots of other things as well such as Spaghetti hoops- it's one of the things he likes about being British, that you can try lots of different things.

Adapted from Britkid website

Introducing David, a Jewish boy

David was born in Scotland and his parents are from Scotland and he visits relations there a lot.

His language:

He only speaks English. His Grandparents all speak in German when they're all together because it reminds them of where they used to live. They also know a language called Yiddish, which is a mixture of different languages and used to be spoken by Jews in Europe.

The language Jews use for their religion is Hebrew, and both his Grandads know a bit of it. The word 'Shalom' means 'peace' and Jewish people often use it to say hello or goodbye. His Mum and Dad had some Hebrew lessons when they were younger, but not so they can speak. They also speak German pretty well, 'cos both their parents spoke it a lot to them. David understands it quite a lot, but wouldn't say he can speak it fluently. When the whole family is together they speak in English, though his grandparents speak to each other in German.

His religion:

When people look at David they think he is someone with no particular religion or anything, but actually he is Jewish. Being Jewish means different things to different people.

With David and his parents it's like an identity thing, a belonging thing. They don't go to the synagogue (though David's Grandad does, when he can get there). Grandad once went to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage. He visited the Western Wall one of the holiest sites in Judaism, and the Shrine of the Book, where there are some ancient manuscripts including the Dead Sea Scrolls.

To David, being Jewish means knowing about his history and the things that happened to Jews in the past. He has lots of family get-togethers at special times in the year, with special meals. The most special of these is the Passover, which Jews have celebrated for over 3,000 years. Last year David went to his cousin's Bar Mitzvah-it is like a coming of age ceremony for boys when they turn into men.

Like Christians, David's family have one day in the week which is different from the others. People who are really strict Jews don't do any work at all on Saturdays, that's the Jews' holy day - the Sabbath. David's family do that a bit - his parents never go to work on Saturdays, but it's just like some people keep Sunday special, when they relax. His Mum and Dad say they only do things around the house that relax them on the Sabbath, and not anything that's really work. So the washing gets done on Sundays, and things like gardening and reading the papers on Saturdays.

His food:

He mostly eats ordinary British type food. Since he is Jewish he doesn't eat anything like pork or ham - nothing that comes from pigs. It's the same as Muslims believe, the pig is supposed to be an unclean animal. His Dad says this is just tradition really, but in the past in a hot country like Israel (where Jews came from) it was sensible, because pigs are supposed to get some of the same sorts of diseases as humans do.

If you're a religious Jew you must only eat meat from animals that have been killed in a special way, with prayers. It's called kosher meat. Kosher also means anything that Jews are allowed to eat. Though he is Scottish, he's never had haggis, 'cos it's got some bits from a pig in it, so it's not kosher.

His Grandad likes sacher torte, which is a special kind of chocolate cake he ate when growing up in Vienna. He passed a taste for this on to David's Dad who lets him have some.

Though David's family are not strict Jews, they have a Sabbath meal every Friday night that starts with some really nice bread made with eggs. It's not so much what they eat, as the fact that all the family's together to talk. They have a big family meal once a year at Passover which they make lots of preparation for and they eat certain foods then that remind people of things in Jewish history.

The only other specifically Jewish thing David's family do with food is that they fast once a year on the Day of Atonement, when they think of all the things they've done wrong in the past year and try to do better.

Adapted from Britkid website

Introducing Balvinder, a Sikh boy

His language:

Balvinder speaks English and Punjabi. He uses English at school and most of the time when he is talking with his friends, (even if they're also Punjabi-speaking). When he talks to friends about football he uses English, but if he is discussing a family wedding he'll use Punjabi because his ideas and thoughts about weddings and stuff are in that language, it's like a part of him that's Punjabi. If you were someone who understood his language he'd say 'Sat siri akal' to you, that's how he says hello.

When he goes home he switches between the two with his Mum and family. Both Govinder's parents had a good education in India and his Mum's a teacher, so she speaks and writes English really well. But they also always use Punjabi for family matters like telling him and his brothers off, discussing relatives and visits, food and clothing. He also uses Punjabi when he talks with one of his uncles, who is less good at English than his Mum, and whenever he goes to the Gurdwara which is his holy place.

The Punjabi of the Sikh holy book is really old fashioned, so he don't really understand it, but he can understand the prayers.

His religion:

Balvinder is a Sikh. Most Sikh names can be used for either girls or boys. What some people find confusing is that Sikh boys keep their hair long and wear their hair in a knot in the top of their head before they start wearing a turban so people often think they're girls.

As a Sikh Balvinder believes in one God and that there were 10 special men called Gurus who taught about God and how we should live. The most important of these was called Guru Nanak. Balvinder's Holy book is called the Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikhs are not supposed to smoke or to drink alcohol, or to eat any beef. Lots of Sikhs are completely vegetarian, but others don't keep to the rule, or about drinking. Sikhs are supposed to be respectful of parents and elders, and teenage girls and boys should not go out together.

Being a Sikh to Balvinder means that he believes in God, that he belongs to a community of Sikhs that he sees regularly, that he should be careful of the food he eats, and that he should work hard to better myself.

A Sikh man usually always calls himself Singh (lion) and a woman's last name is usually always Kaur (princess). Sikhs are proud of their religion, so they have five signs, called the five K's because they all begin with K in Punjabi. They should have a knife or ceremonial dagger; called a Kirpan; they should not cut their hair (kesh); they should wear a steel bracelet on their right wrists (kara); they should have special shorts called kachs; they should wear a special small comb (kanga) in their hair. Not everyone keeps to these exactly, some have a plastic replica dagger - they don't walk around armed!

His food:

Balvinder eats all sorts of things. He doesn't know really what's supposed to be Punjabi food, except samosas, he thinks they're Punjabi. He has a lot of spiced food that his Mum learned to cook when she was a girl, but she makes a wicked prawn risotto and he has fish and chips once a week. He doesn't eat beef because it's against his religion, but he does eat other meat some of the time. That's it, really, there's nothing special to say about food in his house - except that he likes lots of it!

Adapted from Britkid website

Introducing Manjit Kaur, a Sikh girl

- **Name:** This is Manjit Kaur who is aged 5 and in Year 1 at school. What's your name? (A few children in the class tell Manjit their name.)
- **Language:** She speaks Punjabi and English.
- **Family:** She lives with her Mum and Dad and two brothers. Her eldest brother is called Jeetinder Singh. Girls often have Kaur (meaning Princess) after their name and boys often have Singh (meaning Lion). But in this country that is sometimes a problem because of the use of first names and family names. So sometimes girls use Singh as a family name after their dad. Jeetinder is 14 and goes to secondary school and is doing a GCSE in Punjabi (it's the language of many Sikhs who live in the Punjab in Northwest India, and South East Pakistan where her grandparents came from.) Jeetinder goes to Punjabi school on Sundays. Tejpreet, her brother who is 11 goes too. Manjit will go when she is a bit older. (*Are any of your brother and sister's doing GCSEs?*)
- Her family have been in Britain since 1970 when her grandparents came over. Her Dad was born in the Punjab but he's lived in this country since he was 10 (Perhaps show children where the Punjab is on a map). Manjit and her two brothers were all born in this country.
- **Food:** She likes eating vegetable curry and dhal- made from lentils. She also likes fish and chips especially from the chip shop round the corner from where she lives. What is your favourite food? (*Children talk about favourite food and why?*)
- **Morning Routine:** In the mornings she gets up and has a wash and some breakfast and gets ready for school. Her mum helps her brother Tejpreet tie his Jorra (top knot). (Children may ask *Why does he have a top knot?*) In the Sikh religion there is the believe that it is important to keep hair long. But actually her cousin Jagdeep has cut his hair and so does his dad but they still call themselves Sikh. But she and her two brothers and her mum and dad all have long hair and her dad wears a turban.
- **Playground:** On her way here she went on the slide and swings at the playground just down the road from the school –her favourite is the slide. What's yours? (*Children tell Manjit what they like*)
- Her brother sometimes gets teased by children in year 5 and 6 in Mr Millan's class for wearing his top knot. He is the only Sikh in the juniors. He didn't get teased in the infants. Have any of you been teased? What did it feel like? What did you do? What can Manjit do to help her brother? She has seen a few other people wear symbols of their faith – e.g. some Christians wear a cross- but they don't get teased. *Children may talk about the symbols other people wear – e.g. What does a cross mean for a Christian? Ensure the children appreciate that there is great diversity in Christianity, as there is in Sikhism- not all Christians wear a cross, not all Sikhs wear the 5 K's.)*

Adpated from work by Sally Elton Chalcroft, St Martins College

Introducing Tzu Lee, a Chinese girl

This is Tzu Lee, though people usually call her Soozie. She prefers her proper Chinese name, but Soozie is close enough for people who don't know her.

Her language:

Tzu Lee thinks she is luckier than some people since everyone knows she can speak Chinese and they seem to think it's pretty smart. She says Chinese is amazingly different from English. There is a different sign for every word or idea instead of an alphabet which you make words out of, so she has to learn by heart thousands of signs and their sounds (and even the way you make the sound can really change the meaning - it's really hard!)

Tzu Lee has learned to speak her family's dialect of Chinese (Cantonese) since she was a baby, and now she goes to lessons where she learns to write Chinese too, though she needs her parents' help with lots of practice. She likes doing it because it seems like it's part of her and her family's culture, and anyway it might be useful one day. She knows there are 3 main languages in China: Cantonese, Mandarin and Hakka.

Some Female names	Some Male names
Yin Han	Mau Wan
Ming Chu	Kwok Hung
Lai Mui	Ling Sung
Liu Yung	Philip Fong
Ying Hwa Hu	Li Ching
Karen Chinn	Peter Chang
Mei Ling	John Pang
Sharon Li	Lung Fung
Rose Chiao	Wai Sing Fong
Man Po	Lip Lee
Mai Li	Li Chi

Her religion:

Tzu Lee finds it hard to really explain about her family's religion, because it's not like something she really learns like she thinks Muslims and Christians do, and there's no special building she goes to. Her family are sort of Buddhists, but she knows there are lots of other kinds of Buddhists too. She has special meals at certain times, and celebrates New Year but that's really a Chinese thing rather than a Buddhist thing.

Her food:

Tzu Lee says everybody thinks they know all about Chinese food, which isn't really true. English pubs serve chicken in a basket, but that's not what English people eat at home all the time.

Some of the food Tzu Lee eats at home is a bit like you'd get in a takeaway, only it tastes different and better. There are always lots of dishes on the table and she takes bits from each. Like, with a stir-fry, the food is cut up really small so it cooks very quickly and she eats it straight away. But this isn't the only kind of food she eats, and her cousins hardly eat Chinese food at all. She uses chopsticks a lot of the time.

She doesn't know much about it, but she knows that since China is a really big country there are lots of different styles of cooking, and the sort you get in Britain is mostly from the south of China, where Chinese people in Britain mostly came from.

A hassle she has is it's hard sometimes having parents who work long hours and have to work in the evenings as well, but it's just one of those things isn't it? Her parents and grandparents expect much of her. That's nothing to do with being Chinese or anything, it's just that they have such high hopes - they did well and they want me to.

Adapted from Britkid website

Introducing Yin Meilo, a Chinese boy

This persona was developed at Thwaites School as a focus for three Theme days

Name: Yin Meilo. (Chinese people are usually named with their family name first and personal name last so we referred to him as Meilo all the time).

Age: 5 years. (Having him young worked to our advantage because if children asked him hard questions he could always say he was too young to know the answer.)

Born: Beijing, China

Language: Meilo speaks Cantonese and knows many words in English. His Dad speaks very good English and his Mum speaks it quite well though she would like to go to classes to improve it.

Why here: Father has a new job as a scientist at Sellafield. Meilo and his mum have joined him here. Mum intends to get a job once they are settled as she had worked in Beijing.

Previous schooling: In Beijing Meilo went to school and was taught English there. All the children wore a red neckerchief but he doesn't know why.

Character: Meilo is shy and will only talk to the grown up holding him. Whilst Meilo was with us it became clear that he was uncomfortable with people invading his personal space and touching him without checking if that was okay. (Some of the children were handling him and we used this as an opportunity to discuss this sensitive issue)

Favourite food: Noodles and pork

Family: Only child. Lots of his friends in China were only children.

Using Meilo gave a good focus for the period and the children were anxious to tell Year 6 all about him when they returned to school.

Children were organised into groups of 'families' of mixed age: Reception through to Y5. Year 6 children were on a Residential visit in London.

The theme was 'Circles and Cycles'. All cross curricular work covered over the three days tied in with this theme. The Persona doll was used as the person for whom the work was being done. Children:

- made furniture of just the right size from off cuts of wood.
- designed wallpaper for his bedroom in his new house.
- made pizza because he hadn't tasted it before (and it is round!).
- wrote circular stories for him.
- did observational drawings of bicycles for him to admire.
- had to do was find out as much as they could about China to tell Meilo. (Because he was only 5 he didn't know much about his home country.)

Before the Theme Days the two teachers running the programme of activities ensured that they both 'knew' the doll's persona.

The children's (and staff's) interest in China was genuinely boosted.