



Teacher's Notes

The play *Much Cackling in the Wood* is suitable for KS2 children and is designed for your class to perform in front of the rest of the school during assembly time. Written in verse to help young actors learn their lines, each part can be played by several children at the same time, thus allowing the whole class to participate if required.

Much Cackling in the Wood gives an amusing account of what happens when Q the Lion goes missing and is not able to give his quality stamp to the farm eggs. Q the Lion originates from the Lion Quality mark on eggs, which indicates that they have been produced to the highest standards of food safety in the world. All Lion Quality eggs come from hens vaccinated against salmonella and have a 'best before' date stamped on the eggshell and box.

Preparation for *Much Cackling in the Wood* covers a large part of the English and Literacy curriculum, giving pupils practice in reading out loud and acting in public, and in Design and Technology, making their own costumes and props. These can be as simple or as complicated as each class wishes, and we offer some guidance on costume and props in the following notes.

- ♦ The script folds into a booklet. To make this, first photocopy pages 1 and 8, then turn over and photocopy pages 2 and 7 on the back. Repeat for pages 3 and 6, with pages 4 and 5 on the back. Put them together so that when they are folded down the middle, the pages are in numerical order.

- ♦ When casting, choose small groups of Truckers and Dustmen and, preferably, at least four Hens. The words are written for one Constable Catchem, Bernie Burns, Miss Miss and Ping Kwok, but they can be changed to accommodate more ('I' to 'we' etc). There can be more than one Q and Farmer Hatchem, too, if words are changed where necessary. If this is done, they should wear very similar masks/costumes, so it is clear that they are the same character.

Where there is more than one actor per character, each actor should take one or two lines unless it is clearly a unison speech (e.g. the Truckers' and Dustmen's final two lines).

- ♦ **The Hens' Square Dance** – if there is room for a small dance, have two rows of Hens facing each other. They advance 4 steps then retreat 4 steps in time with the first two lines. Then they turn to their

neighbour and link one arm, going round and round, for the next two lines. For the last two lines, they do the actions – Squawk/crouch/flap bent arms, then 'lay' a paper or papier mâché egg they have made. Give the speech a good strong rhythm, not too fast. Get the Hens to dance with high knees and flat feet.

- ♦ **The Truckers' Dance** – children should come on in single file, miming driving while they speak, crouched over the steering wheel. Alternate children stick out right or left hand (at 'middle-of-the-roaders'). All brake hard with their right legs (at 'remember, we need feeding') and each child in the file bumps into the one in front.

- ♦ **The Dustmen's Dance** – this speech should be delivered with a strong beat and emphasis on the B's. Dustmen should have drums (empty metal waste-bins are ideal) which they carry on one shoulder, then tip out and bang the bottom (on 'bash 'em on the bottom'). Make the beat in time with 'bash', 'bot', 'rub' and 'out'. Beat the time again for the football chant (one, two/one, two, three/one, two/three, four) then do the chant, then shout 'Scrambled'.

If there is no room for dancing, the children can do the above actions in place.

