



Cast a spell on your class with **Jonathan Lear's** magical, cross-curricular topic starter...

One of the best things about being an AST is having the opportunity to work with different teachers. This topic starter was created through collaboration with our fantastic Y4 teacher, Miriam Booth.

November sees the much anticipated release of the latest Harry Potter film, *The Deathly Hallows*. In keeping with the wizardly theme, this topic transforms the classroom into a mini Hogwarts with a little help from some magical magnets.

The aim of this topic is to allow the children to explore the properties of magnets, springs and elastic bands. It relies upon the children being given the opportunity to discover the magic of magnets for themselves as part of their transformation into fully fledged wizards!

Before starting the topic, you'll need to collect as many different magnets as possible – most schools will have a selection tucked away in a science cupboard, but they may need topping up to ensure that you have enough. Each pair of children will need at least two magnets.

The magnets will be presented to the children in special 'magic bags'. These can be paper bags, or even A4 envelopes. To enhance the appearance of the bags, add some magical symbols and stars to the outside of each one. In each bag, place two magnets, some paperclips and some silver and copper coins (additional equipment will be added later).

The final step requires a costume. Lessons on magic cannot be delivered by a mere teacher. It will soon be time to let the children in on your secret identity. You may be an ordinary teacher by



day, but at night, you transform into a powerful wizard or witch! Wizard costumes are incredibly easy to come by and very easy to make – but the more effort you put into your costume, the better impact it will have with the children.

### Setting the scene...

In the first session, the children will meet your wizardly alter ego.

They'll then be amazed as you perform a dazzling feat of magic, thus beginning their initiation into the school of magic.

The magic trick to be performed is incredibly simple and uses a magnet and paperclip. As the trick is performed, the children will see the paperclip move purely by the power of the mind! To prepare, find a large square of black card. Make sure the magnet you use is strong enough to easily move the paperclip from beneath the card. It's worth spending time practising the trick in front of a mirror – the more theatrical it is the better (think lots of big magical gestures!) You may decide that you're going to use magic words as you attempt to move the paperclip, although I think it works really well done to music alone.

Having practised, add any other effects you can to enhance the presentation – we found some smoke machines from the drama cupboard that worked brilliantly.

With everything in place, it's time for the Great Wizard to make an appearance... Depending on the nature of your costume, it may be that you speak to the children first, and then disappear – to return moments later transformed. If your costume takes longer to get on, speak to them before playtime, send them out, and then be changed and ready for when they come back. Either way, tell them about your secret identity using a whispered voice, as if you're letting them in on a great secret. Drop in that you may need some children to help, and let them know exactly how they would need to respond in order to be chosen. Behaviour management is never a problem for a wizard! With children prepared, the wizard makes an entrance!

Perform the magic trick to your entranced audience. (It's likely you'll have children who know instantly how the trick is done – this really doesn't matter, although they're asked to keep it to themselves for the moment.)

When the magic is finished, accept the rapturous applause (lead by your pre-prepared, overly enthusiastic teaching assistant!). Tell the children that whilst you're a great wizard, you're also an old wizard. What you really need is a younger apprentice, someone who would love to learn magic and become a wizard themselves. As every hand shoots up, ponder out loud as to whether you have the time to train a whole class of apprentices, and when the pleading faces

become too much to bear, agree to induct them all into your famous wizarding school.

### The oath...

For the children to become wizards, they must take the oath of secrecy. Take the class through a 'repeat after me-style' pledge to do with not revealing secrets – you can also throw in clauses about being incredibly nice to their teacher upon fear of 'turning into a frog' type reprisals.

With children inducted, they're about to learn their first piece of magic. Take them through the trick you performed showing them how it was done. Use the correct vocabulary when explaining why the paperclip 'stuck' to the magnet. Magic phrases or incantations work really well throughout the topic as a way of getting the children to repeat key words, e.g. whilst trying to move the paperclip, chant "Magnet, magnet, magnet, attract, attract, attract".

When the children have had a chance to see the trick and chant the 'magic' words, they're ready to try it for themselves. Give out the pre-prepared magic bags and send the apprentices away to explore the contents. After a little practice, they'll soon be able to perform the trick.

Once they've demonstrated their new-found magic skills to fellow apprentices, the children are encouraged to experiment further. Can they create a new trick? Can they use some of the other materials from the bag? The children start to develop their own lines of enquiry and the School of Magic is firmly up and running.

**Organise a fancy dress day where the children can come in costume. The apprentice wizards can put on magic shows for other classes in school!**

### For my next trick...

Developing the topic further relies on adding extra items to the children's bags which allows them to explore different effects and ideas. The role of the teacher is to guide the children through their learning, teaching and reinforcing key concepts and vocabulary as they arise.

The magical theme is so engaging that it seems a shame to limit it to the children's science work. In English, the children could begin to make magic books that give step-by-step instructions for others to follow. They could write spells, collecting adverbs and adjectives that would enhance their performance, e.g. "Watch as the magical paperclip moves mysteriously across the table".

Creating potions would make a great maths lesson on measures – all you'd need would be water, food colouring and the odd plastic spider to throw in for good measure! In art, the children could work on transforming part of the classroom into a wizard's laboratory; this would also be a great opportunity for the children to develop their own role-play corner.

To end the topic on a high, organise a fancy dress day where the children can come in costume. The apprentice wizards can put on magic shows for other classes in school, play themed party games and eat terrible sounding treats! The day should finish with a graduation ceremony where the apprentices proudly receive scrolls announcing their status as fully fledged wizards!

A memorable ending to a magical experience.