

# Thinking big

A giant puppet show came to Liverpool for three days this summer. The event inspired one nursery to explore the concept of size – by getting the children to make their own figures

**G**iant puppets returned to the streets of Liverpool this summer and some 1.5 million people came out to see them. For staff and children at local setting Cottage Day Nursery it was an event, and a learning opportunity, not to be missed.

The puppets captured the hearts and imaginations of the city's residents in 2012 with a "spectacular" to mark the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic. This time, they walked the streets to commemorate the outbreak of World War I 100 years ago.

Both events were created by French street theatre company Royal de Luxe, under director Jean-Luc Courcoult, and featured a Little Girl Giant (5.5m) and her dog Xolo (3m). Accompanying them in 2012's Sea Odyssey was Uncle Giant, while in this year's Memories of August 1914 they were joined by Grandmother (7.5m), the latest addition to the Royal de Luxe family of giants and the first to be able to speak.

Over the three days (23-27 July), the grandmother, girl and dog roamed the streets in search of each other, were reunited and, in a grand finale, left together aboard a boat. As part of the spectacle, the grandmother read extracts from the diaries of Merseyside soldiers.

Stacey Connolly, acting manager at 88-place Cottage Day Nursery, takes up the story.

## **COTTAGE DAY NURSERY**

'A couple of staff members saw the giants on their first visit to Liverpool, but this time a lot of our families and staff went to see the event. The following week, the nursery was buzzing with stories about Jean-Luc's fabulous giants, so we decided to celebrate by creating our own.

'We knew a lot of our families were planning to visit the Memories of August event so we gave them WOW vouchers as an incentive if they ➤



**The 5.5m Little Girl Giant and 7.5m Grandmother were part of World War I commemorations**

PHOTO: LIVERPOOLECHO

## ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS ENHANCED PROVISION



recorded their comments on the spectacle. They then brought these into the nursery, along with photographs that they had taken.

'Adults and children alike thought the event was really impressive and the children were fascinated by how

the puppets could be manoeuvred. Their favourite was the dog, but they were also amazed and shocked by how fast it could move.

'For our project, each room chose a giant to build and parade at our

### MORE INFORMATION

For background and pictures of the Liverpool giants visit:

- [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-28373414](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-28373414)
- [www.giantspectacular.com](http://www.giantspectacular.com)
- [www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/liverpool-giants-2014-relive-weekend-7514853](http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/liverpool-giants-2014-relive-weekend-7514853)

**Clockwise from top left: the children's versions of Little Girl Giant and Grandma; Uncle Giant; Xolo the dog; the boat**

'giant' picnic, so on the day we had a grandmother, a little girl, a dog and a boat.

'We made the models out of papier-mâché and junk materials and filled latex gloves with sand to create hands and feet. The puppets were then dressed in old clothes supplied by parents and staff. A local garden centre gave us a trolley to use for the grandmother's wheelchair to make her look really tall.

'While the dog was the children's favourite on our day out, at nursery it was the grandmother that they liked best. They enjoyed jumping on her knee to have their photo taken. Parents too were keen to come to see our giants and be photographed.

'On the day of the picnic, all the children gathered outside to watch the giants being paraded around the garden. Our chef Dave got in on the act by providing giant sandwiches, meatballs and sponge cake.

'Overall, the youngest children in the nursery most enjoyed the sensory aspects of the model-making – mixing paint, helping to make gloop and papier-mâché, teasing the wool to make grandma's hair. But the older children were interested in why the event had taken place and the stories behind it. It also really boosted their confidence to have their giants showcased at the picnic and to be able to talk about the stories behind them.' ■

## BOOKS ABOUT SIZE

- *Ernest* by Catherine Rayner – this is a perfect story for exploring size and measure. Ernest is a very big moose (with a very small chipmunk friend) and is just too big to fit on the pages of the story.
- *You Are (Not) Small* by Anna Kang and Christopher Weyant – two fuzzy creatures can't agree on who is small and who is big, until some surprise guests arrive.
- *Tall* by Jez Alborough – Bobo the baby chimp thinks everyone is taller than he is, so he climbs on top of a lizard, a lion cub, an elephant and even a giraffe in his attempt to be tallest.
- *Enormouse* by Angie Morgan – Enormouse is big and lives happily with his little mouse

friends until one day they see a photograph of a rat and realise that Enormouse is not one of 'them'. A lovely story of friendship and belonging.

- *Once There Were Giants* by Martin Waddell and Penny Dale – once there was a baby in the house, and to that baby, mum and dad and Jill and John and Uncle Tom were giants. But little by little, that baby grew up, until she became a giant too.
- *Little Giant* by Simone Lia – Little Girl is the smallest member of her family. But when she's alone, she can be as big as she wants to be... until Dad reappears.
- *The New Small Person* by Lauren Child – in Child's latest story, Elmore Green

struggles with a small person, who then gets bigger (his sibling).

- *Two Giants* by Michael Foreman – part of the glut of picture book classics being republished at the moment, *Two Giants*, first published in 1967, tells of two giant friends who live in a perfect part of the world... until they quarrel.
- *Jack and the Baked Beanstalk* by Colin Stimpson – in this beautiful version of the story, Jack and his mum run a little burger café and are close to broke. So when Jack buys a can of baked beans with their last pennies, his mother throws it out of the window – starting a gigantic baked beanstalk adventure.

- *Jim and the Beanstalk* by Raymond Briggs – a wonderful retelling of the traditional tale. Jim finds a beanstalk growing outside his window one morning, and follows his famous predecessor up to the top.
- *The Smartest Giant in Town* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler – George wished he wasn't the scruffiest giant in town. So when he sees a new shop selling giant-sized clothes, he decides it is time for a new look: smart trousers, a smart shirt, a stripy tie and shiny shoes. Now he is the smartest giant in town. That is, until he bumps into some animals that desperately need his help – and his clothes!