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THE SWIFTS

TEACHING RESOURCES



THE SWIFTS

BY BETH LINCOLN

On the day they are born, each Swift is brought before the sacred Family Dictionary. They are given a name and a definition, and it is assumed they will grow up to match. Unfortunately, Shenanigan Swift has other ideas. So what if her relatives all think she's destined to turn out as a troublemaker, just because of her name? Shenanigan knows she can be whatever she wants - pirate, explorer or even detective. Which is lucky, really, because when one of the Family tries to murder Arch-Aunt Schadenfreude, someone has to work out whodunit. With the help of her sisters and cousin, Shenanigan grudgingly takes on the case, but more murders, a hidden treasure and an awful lot of suspects make thing seriously complicated. Can Shenanigan catch the killer before the whole household is picked off? And in a Family where definitions are so important, can she learn to define herself?

Activities in this pack explore themes of identity, character and family, as well as vocabulary development.

They can be used to support lessons in:

- ✓PHSE
- ✓Literacy and language

You will need:

- Dictionary
- Printed worksheets
- Pen or pencils

Activity 1 – It's all in a name

LO: to explore names, how they might influence character, investigating pupil names and character names in the story. *Note with look-after and adopted children, this activity will need to be carefully managed*

Activity 2 – Identity definition

LO: to develop understanding of what contributes to our identity, exploring definitions through an identity map

Activity 3 - In character / out of character

LO: to develop understanding of character traits and how we see ourselves, completing a character trait table

Activity 4 – Personality Scrabble

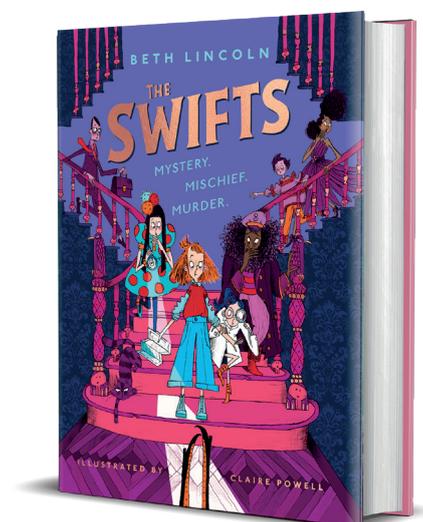
LO: to explore character traits, writing a personality description to share with others

Activity 5 - Dictionary definition

LO: to explore character definitions, creating a personal dictionary definition

Activity 6 – Have I got PUNS for you?!

LO: to understand what a pun is, creating a pun to share





Activity 1 – What’s in a name?

“Back in the old tights-and-doublets days of the Swift Family, every child had been named either Mary or John. It got terribly confusing at dinner time when someone asked a John to pass the potatoes and ten hands shot out at once, and so Mary Swift XXXV had begun the tradition of naming her children using the Family Dictionary. The idea stuck, and the Swifts prospered.”

Everyone has a name. Our names are usually given to us by our parents or carers when we are born. Sometimes names are handed down from generation to generation – meaning a grandfather, father, and son OR grandmother, mother and daughter share the same name, just like the Swifts used to do.

What is your name? Just like words in the Dictionary, names can have different meanings (definitions). What does your name mean? Write it in the space below:

My name means.....

Do you know why you were given that particular name? **Discuss with your classmates.** What stories can you discover about each other’s names?

The Swift family members are nearly all given a name from the Swift Family Dictionary and they often become like the meaning of their name.

These are the names of some of the characters who appear in the story. Can you find out and note down what their names mean?

1. **Candour** means.....
2. **Phenomena** means.....
3. **Atrocious** means.....
4. **Inheritance** means.....
5. **Momento** means.....



Based on the meaning of their names, what might their characters be like?

In the story, Shenanigan doesn't like the meaning of her name because it makes people think about her in a certain way. Can you find out what Shenanigan means? What might people think about her because of this? Write your answer below.

Whatever your name is, what matters most is what you do and how you behave, not what you are called. If we treat each other well and with kindness, we show the best of ourselves no matter what our names are.

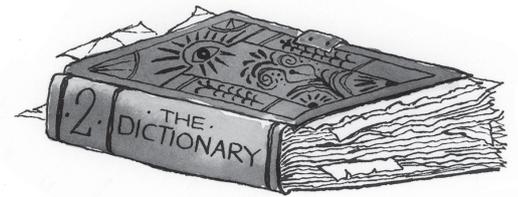




Activity 2 – Identity definition

“As a Family we are blessed,” continued Aunt Inheritance. “Normal people go their whole lives trying to find themselves. Once we are named, we know ourselves, our role from birth to death. Good or bad, we just...are. The Dictionary guides us.” She looked beadily at Shenanigan. “Don’t you find it a comfort to know exactly what you are?”

Many of Shenanigan’s Family believe that who and what they are is defined by the Swift Family Dictionary. But Shenanigan does not believe this and is certain she has more of a choice about who she is and what she will be!



Whatever name we have been given, every one of us is made up of our own set of character traits. Character traits are a combination of how we think, feel, and behave. They help make us who we are and contribute to our own, unique identity. Things like being a cheerful or sad person, an impatient or calm person or someone who is caring and kind – these are all character traits. Add to this the things we like to do and how we spend our time, this helps create our identity.

Even within families, each family member can have very different character traits, just like Shenanigan and her sisters!

Shenanigan is feisty and adventurous and doesn’t always think before she does something. Phenomena loves experimenting and is very intelligent. Felicity loves fashion, mazes and is very thoughtful but can get quite cross.



Felicity



Shenanigan



Phenomena

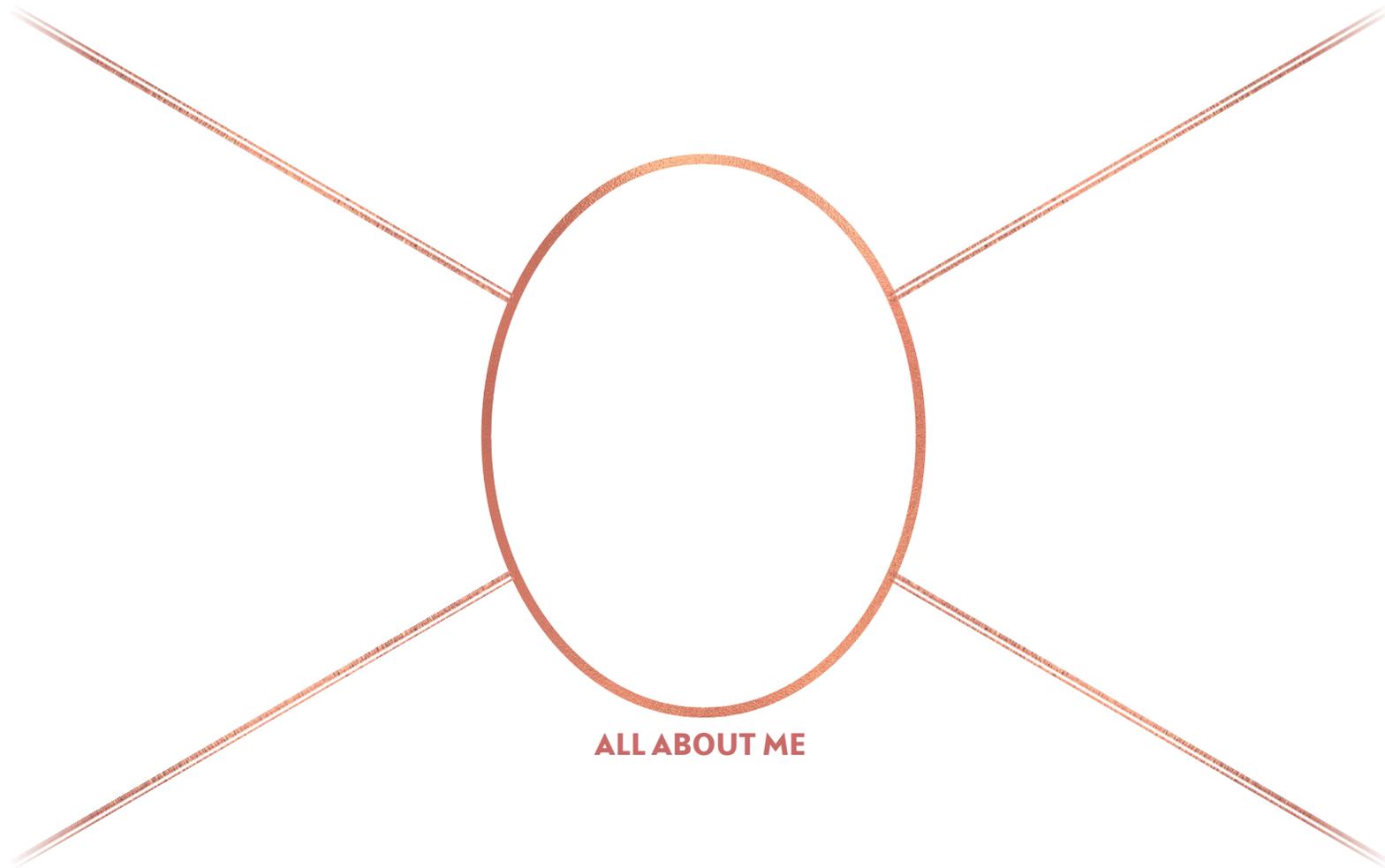


Each of the sisters has their own habits, their own thoughts and feelings and their own way of doing things, that defines who they are.

What things do you think contribute to defining who YOU are?

Complete the identity map below to show all the character traits and the things you like to do, that make up who you are.

In the centre circle, draw a picture of yourself. In the surrounding spaces write or draw the things that make you YOU.



ALL ABOUT ME

Share with your classmates. What similarities and differences do you have? That's what makes people so interesting, just like in the story!





Activity 3 – In character / out of character

‘Phenomena flipped to the back of her notebook where she had drawn up a table. It was titled Nominative Determinism in the case of Shenanigan Swift, which as usual, made no sense to Shenanigan. There were two columns: one said In Character, the other Out of Character. There were a lot more marks in the In Character column.’

Phenomena decides to do some research to help Shenanigan find out and prove what her identity really is. She creates a table with two columns, and makes a note of the things Shenanigan says and does that are ‘in character’ and ‘out of character’.

Look at the word bank below showing words that describe different character traits.

Fair	Kind	Quiet	Brave	Trustworthy	Selfish	Calm	Creative	Thoughtful
Unfriendly	Mean	Excitable	Thoughtless	Honest	Polite	Greedy	Funny	Clever
	Sensible	Silly	Caring	Impatient	Forgetful	Loyal	Bossy	

Can you think of any others?

Complete the table and add character traits that are ‘in character’ and ‘out of character’ for you, using the word bank and your own ideas to help you.

	In character	Out of character

Once you have completed your table, swap with a classmate and see what words they have used to describe themselves.

Does this fit with how you see them? Do they think you have captured all your own character traits?

What would you change or add to each other’s tables? How does this make you feel?

How we see ourselves and how others see us can sometimes be different. It’s important to always be true to yourself, just like Shenanigan tries to be in the story



Activity 4 – Personality Scrabble

“If you have ever played Scrabble, then you will know it is a board game where players take turns to set out letter tiles on a board to spell words. The tiles are assigned points. The longer and more complex words you set out, the more points you are awarded, with bonus points if the tiles are placed on certain squares. The person with the most points at the end wins.

The kind of Scrabble the Swifts play is not like regular Scrabble. While some rich people like to have life-size chess boards in their front gardens, the Swifts had always been more fond of word games, and their Scrabble court was the only one of its kind – the size of a tennis court, with the squares beautifully picked out in stone and coloured glass.”

Think about your character traits.

Write down your Top Five character traits. Next to them write down the score you would get if you used them in a game of scrabble, using the Scrabble tiles below to help you. Your words can be up to 14 letters long, just like the Swift Family Scrabble rules!





My Top Five Character traits

Does the word with the highest score reflect your strongest character trait? Discuss this with your classmates.



Activity 5 – Dictionary entry

“Phenomena snorted. “Is that what you’re upset about? Inheritance talks rubbish. All that guff about the Dictionary.” Phenomena brandished her thermometer like a wand. “Correlation does not equal causation, Shenanigan.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means that just because two things seem connected, it doesn’t mean they actually are.”

In the story, we discover that certain characters are nothing like the meaning of their name, just as Shenanigan is hoping to prove that she is more than the meaning of her name.

Think about the meaning of your name. Think about your character traits. If you were going to choose a ‘name’ for yourself from a Dictionary, what would it be and why? Discuss this with your classmates.

We see lots of the Dictionary names of the Swift Family in the story, like these ones:

House Swift (Noun)

- i. A place of abode, a dwelling
- ii. A family, royal or of noble lineage

Calamitous Swift (Adjective)

- i. Causing or fraught with, disaster

Shenanigan Swift (Noun)

- i. Tomfoolery, skulduggery, mischief of all varieties
- ii. A devious trick for an underhanded purpose

Write a dictionary definition for yourself in the style of the Swift Family Dictionary. Remember to think about who YOU truly are and create a definition that shows how you think, feel and behave.



Activity 6 – Have I got PUNS for you?!

In the story, puns and play on words feature throughout. In particular, Candour uses a lot of puns and play-on-words, to bring humour to often difficult situations.

What is a pun?

A pun is a phrase or sentence that includes words that sound the same or similar but have different meanings. A pun can also use different meanings of the same word to make something funny. For example:

'No more SHIN-anigans' – in the story this is a play on words, as Shenanigan has hurt her shin and is being told not to do it again!

'Buried the hatchet' – this can mean to resolve an argument, but in the story refers to murdering someone with an axe

Puns are often used to make a joke, or make a situation funny. From the story, can spot the word that makes this sentence into a pun?:

'I will make you laugh Shenanigan Swift. No matter how long it takes. I'm a doctor – we have a lot of patients'

Can you explain why this is funny?

Like in the pun above, lots of words sound the same, but have different meanings. These are called **homophones** and they can be ideal to use in puns:

Knead / need - Our recipe for bread is a family secret and can only be shared on a knead to know basis

Hoarse / horse – The pony had to see the vet, he was feeling a little hoarse

Knight / night – Medieval times are also known as the Dark Ages because there were so many knights

Can you think of any other homophones to create your own pun? Give it a go and write your pun in the space below.

Words can be great fun. Try your pun out on your classmates and challenge yourself to make even more puns, using different words!

