Meet the real EastEnders
Information for teachers
Thank you for booking the Meet the real EastEnders school performance, a creative collaboration between the Museum of London Docklands and Moth Physical Theatre.

Here is some information about the session and what you need to do to prepare for it taking place at your school.

- Page 3 contains information for the lead teacher on preparing for the performance to take place at your school.
- Pages 4-5 contain information for you and your colleagues about what will happen during the performance as well as ideas for teaching resources to use in class after the performance.

**Session overview**

Introduced by a cheeky East End street rat, pupils will meet three East End characters, who lived and worked in the area around the Museum of London Docklands over the last 100 years. Through an exciting mix of puppetry and physical theatre the show will share the stories of:

- **Ben Tillett** (1860-1943)
  His experiences in the Dock Workers Strike

- **Minnie Baldock** (1864-1954)
  Suffragette

- **Kamal Chunchie** (1886-1953)
  Sri Lankan immigrant and philanthropist

The children will learn about the lives and experiences of people in the past, and are invited to think about what it means to be an EastEnder, and how they themselves can contribute to their school and wider community today.
Preparing for the performance

You can view our risk assessment advice for 'at your school' sessions by following this link: museumoflondon.org.uk/schools/museum-visits/risk-assessments

Please use this checklist to help prepare for the performance.

Before the day

- Book your school hall for the times agreed in your confirmation email. Our performers require a performance space of at least 2m depth x 4m width.
- Make sure the sound and video systems are working in the hall.
- Ensure that the space the show will take place in is as clear as possible.
- Provide one classroom table for the actors to use in the show.
- Remind all classes involved in the show that a prompt start will be appreciated.
- Provide information regarding car parking for our facilitators.
- During the show, talcum powder is used to create a time travelling effect. Please let us know if you would rather this was not used at your school.

On the day

- Ensure that someone is available to meet the facilitators, and show them to the performance space.
- The facilitators will need 30 minutes to unload their resources and set up in the hall before the show starts.
- The performers will require assistance to use your sound and video system equipment 15 minutes before the performance start time.

Additional important information

- The children should be seated in normal assembly style, with space at edges to allow performers to pass objects to each row.
- Responsible teachers are expected to stay with their classes at all times during the show and to support them to participate where appropriate.
- Teachers are responsible for pupils' behaviour at all times.
- The show will last for 45 minutes.

Information for adults attending

The children will be watching an assembly-style performance, with plenty of opportunities for interaction and participation. We hope that the children will be full of wonder whilst watching the show, especially when they see some of the puppets moving!
The show will take the children from Victorian times to the 20th century, accompanied by a time-travelling rat, and will deal with issues such as community and citizenship, as well as providing a stimulus for local history topics. It will also support the work children will have done previously on significant individuals.

**Curriculum links**

**History**
- A study over time tracing how several aspects of national history are reflected in the locality (this can go beyond 1066)
- A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality

**Citizenship**
- To think about the lives of people living in other places and times, people with different values and customs
- To appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom

**Activity ideas and online resources**

We have worked in collaboration with **Moth Physical Theatre** to provide a series of puppet-making tutorials. In an easy to follow and share step-by-step guide, they will show you how to create puppets from low cost and available resources – and use them to bring historical figures to life!

You can view these tutorials by following this link: museumoflondon.org.uk/puppetry

**Meet the real EastEnders**

Information for teachers
Ideas for using puppetry in local history teaching

- Recreate speeches made by historical figures relevant to your local area, and perform them using your puppets. Alternatively, write your own speeches that your significant individual could have delivered at key moments in their life, using historical sources.

- Use the puppet to create key moments from an individual's life, photograph them, and display on a washing line to support with chronological understanding.

- Use puppets to demonstrate different jobs or leisure pursuits that communities who lived in your local area in the past may have undertaken.

- Think about the issues of the day that your character might have cared deeply about—use your puppet to create a class march. What would they have been marching about? What might their slogans/banners have said?
Ben Tillet was born in Bristol in poverty as the son of a labourer, and the youngest of 8 children. His mother died when he was a child, and he undertook a series of jobs before joining the Royal Navy at the age of 13.

At the age of 17, Tillet was invalided out of the Navy, and settled in Bethnal Green in East London. Dismayed and angered by the working conditions of those on the Docks, he formed the Tea Operatives and General Labourers Union, and rose to prominence during the London Dock Strike in 1889. During this strike, as leader of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers Union, Tillet, amongst others, campaigned for the Dockers’ Tanner, (a minimum wage agreement to ensure all Docks workers were paid a rate of sixpence an hour) and better working conditions. The London Dock Strike attracted considerable national and international interest and support, with 130,000 dock workers striking at the peak of the dispute. The strike brought Tillett national recognition – not only did he play a continuous role in negotiations, but also shared responsibility with John Burns and Tom Mann for public speaking and organising pickets. When the strike ended on 16 September the Tea Operatives Union was reorganised to become the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers’ Union and Tillett remained as General Secretary until 1922 when the union was merged into the Transport and General Workers’ Union. He was an MP 1917-1924 and 1929-31.

The victory of the Dock Strike is widely thought of as a key moment in the trade union movement, and also raised the profile of the social deprivation and often dire living conditions of the Victorian Dockers.

INTERESTING FACTS

Ben Tillet ran away as a boy to join the circus, and spent time as an acrobat before his Father forced him to join the Navy.

As a young man, Ben Tillet had a speech impediment, but overcame it during the Docker’s Strike, becoming an outstanding orator.

‘I was puny little fellow a circus boy with limbs and [He left home aged 9 and joined a circus] body racked with unnatural contortion, [Also with asthma, insomnia, and a stammer] a tired penniless little tramp [An illiterate truant] a homeless little waif [He first ran away form home at 6 years old] a sailor [His father put him in the navy aged 13] a docker [He founded the first dockers union aged 27] an agitator a fanatical evangelist of Labour a prisoner in the dock of the Old Bailey [Accused of inciting violence at a Bristol An Alderman of London County Council demonstration] A Member of Parliament The President of the Trades Union Congress’

From Tillett’s autobiography ‘Memories and Reflections’
Minnie Baldock was born in Bromley by Bow, East London, where she married and had 2 sons. As a girl, Baldock worked in a shirt factory, in poor conditions.

Minnie was one of the earliest London supporters of the militant Votes for Women movement the Women’s Social and Political Union. Politically active in the Independent Labour Party her husband was a local ILP councillor in West Ham. In January 1906 Minnie became Chairwoman of the newly formed Unemployed Women of South-West Ham. This group subsequently went to Caxton Hall and joined Emmeline Pankhurst in lobbying the House of Commons. By February it had become the Canning Town branch of the WSPU, the first London branch of the organisation with a focus on increasing the involvement and participation of working class women to the cause.

Baldock was imprisoned twice for Suffragette militancy, and when faced with the choice of a fine or a custodial sentence, chose prison, as did her fellow suffragettes, with the hope of raising the profile of the suffrage cause and the injustice of women not having the right to vote. During her time in Prison, her husband was supported in the care of their youngest child by fellow suffragettes. Maybe could say here why she was imprisoned – first for a charge of disorderly conduct in Old Palace Yard at Westminster on the occasion of the opening of Parliament and secondly in 1908 arrested with Emmeline Pankhurst and Annie Kenney after the ‘rush’ on Parliament by Suffragettes from Caxton Hall.

Baldock became a full time Organizer and leading figure in the WSPU but, in 1911 was diagnosed with cancer. This prevented her continuing her active involvement in militant action but she remained an ardent support of female suffrage and became a member of the Church League for Women’s Suffrage. She moved out of London in 1913, and died in Poole, Dorset in 1954.

**INTERESTING FACTS**

Minnie Baldock’s name and image can be found on the recently unveiled statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament Square, alongside 54 other women and 4 men who supported women’s suffrage.

Minnie Baldock has a street named after her in Canning Town, East London, where lived until 1913.
Kamal Chunchie was born in Sri Lanka into a prominent Muslim family. After joining the police force and transferring to Singapore, he travelled to Europe where he joined the army. He fought in World War 1 before converting to Christianity and becoming a Methodist in 1918.

Immediately after the war he settled in East London and, from 1921, began working as a Methodist missionary amongst the transient immigrant population of London’s docklands. His religious and philanthropic work also extended to the small non-white population resident in the docklands, many married to white partners, and their children, as well as colonial and Indian students. In 1923, in a rented hall in Swanscombe Street, Chunchie started the docklands’ first black Wesleyan Methodist church, and a Sunday school. In 1926, the Methodists established the first Coloured Men’s Institute (CMI), a religious, social, and welfare centre in Tidal Basin Road, for both sailors and residents, with Chunchie as its pastor and resident warden. Through his work with the CMI he endeavoured to combat racism, and provided social, religious and welfare support for the growing black and Asian communities of the East End.

A rousing speaker, a bit of a showman even, he drew large audiences. Black people in east London regarded him as their friend, who did much good on their behalf. Others, however, were critical. The Universal Negro Improvement Association condemned the CMI for fostering segregation, and accused Chunchie of patronizing black people. Disagreements arose with the Methodists over the management of the CMI; Mission House considered Chunchie to be over-generous with material gifts. Following the demolition of the CMI in 1930, Chunchie was employed as a missionary deputation in the home church. Between 1933 and 1953 he worked hard to build a new CMI, but funds were never adequate. Using the Presbyterian church in Victoria Dock Road as the centre and his own home as a base, he continued his philanthropic work, including providing breakfast for Sunday school children, running a thrift club and organising an annual seaside excursion. He raised money by means of appeals, lectures, and weekend missionary deputations all over Britain. But despite generous donations, deficits soon mounted.

Chunchie died in London in 1953, after a heart attack.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Chunchie played cricket for Essex.
- During World War 2, Kamal Chunchie was a volunteer firefighter in Lewisham, South London.