

Resource 7

Teacher in role - script

This outline script is intended as a guide to the kind of things you might say to the children in the improvisation. Things can be covered in any order that makes sense to you and a key aim is for you to respond to the children in the improvisation. If you are new to Teacher in role you could follow it closely, perhaps concealing the script in a folder or notebook.

The housekeeper role will provide information about the rules of the house and the expectations the Lord and Lady will have of them. The teacher in role needs to find a balance between a firm housekeeper with high standards and an element of encouraging and supporting these new staff members on their first day.

If the housekeeper is too strict the children will likely enjoy it but the drama will be about challenging their authority. Keep in mind that the children and their families need the job and the income and that, compared to other child labour, this is a good job with food, accommodation and a reasonable wage. In role you can play with when to be strict and when encouraging and understanding, depending on how the children respond.

Welcome the new staff to the Manor House:

Good morning, I am [create a name] the head housekeeper / butler. Please stand while I check uniforms and hold your hands out so I can check cleanliness.

[Go down the line inspecting each child in turn] You need to be careful to clean your nails properly... This uniform is a little crumpled... After this meeting go to the laundry and they'll provide you with a properly pressed apron... Presentation is of course very important here at the Manor House, we expect the very highest standards.

Thank you. Please sit.

Welcome to you all. I'm sure you feel very lucky to have secured this job. There were many applicants as you can imagine. Before we begin the working day and your specific tasks, I'll take you through a few things you need to know...

This is a big house with a large staff and it is very important we all work together to keep the house running as smoothly as possible. My Lord and Lady are good and fair employers but they also have the very highest standards and expect professionalism.

First the house. You will keep to your working area: gardeners - in the gardens and outhouses; stable workers - keep to the stables; kitchen staff - remain here in the kitchens; the laundry staff - in the laundry. Chamber maids, cleaning staff and butlers and maids - you of course will need to move around the house. What is most important - and this applies to *all* staff - is that where possible you are invisible to my Lord and Lady. If they address you directly you should either bow or curtsey - a small neat bob - and say 'My Lord' or 'My Lady'.

[You could ask the new servants to stand and show you their bow or curtsey and how they will address the Lord and Lady by practising 'My Lord' and 'My Lady'.]

However, if you are not addressed directly, make yourself invisible. Move to the side of the room until my Lord or Lady, or their guests, pass through. If you can leave the room quietly and without drawing attention to yourself do so.

The main hall and stairway are not to be used. There is a stairway just here, from the kitchen up to the servants' quarters.

The day begins at 6am when all staff will rise to prepare for the day.

You all appear to be suitable for the roles we have here. Although I don't think any of you have worked in a big house before, have you?

Ask questions in role:

- What made you want to apply for the job?
- What work experience have you had in the past?
- What skills do you have that will be useful in your role?
- What are your first impressions of the house?

You can speak directly to the teams the new servants have been put into using some of this detail:

Kitchen staff. You'll be working under cook and at first you'll be washing and preparing vegetables, plucking all the fowl (chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, and of course - in the shooting season - pheasants, etc). Do you have particular skills in the kitchen?

Laundry workers. Your work will be in the laundry - washing, mangling, pegging out, ironing, and of course making any repairs. As well as the families' clothes and bedding you will need to do all of the staff's laundry too. I expect to see white aprons at all times. Are any of you skilled in needlework? The strongest shall be put on the mangle as it's heavy work, and hot.

Cleaners and chamber maids. You will be responsible for all of the rooms, the hall way, the ballroom, the bedrooms. You must make sure the beds are turned down ready for Lord and Lady and the children's bedtimes. The house is full of delicate and expensive objects, so we need you to be focused and disciplined when handling any objects. You will lay and light the fires first thing in the morning, before my Lord and Lady rise.

Gardeners and grounds people. The kitchen garden grows much of our food. The grounds are extensive and of course the boating lake is much enjoyed by my Lord and Lady and their guests. Have you any experience of gardening?

Stable workers. What knowledge do you have of horses? You'll be feeding, grooming and getting them ready to ride, or preparing the carriage ready to go into town. You will need to clean the tackle, the saddles, bridles and harnesses and muck out the stables.

Butlers and maids. You will be responsible for serving, looking after my Lord and Lady's clothing and personal affects. You will be on call at all times. The bells will ring down here and show which room my Lord or Lady are in. You must be there within seconds. You will also be ready to greet guests and make sure the family have everything they need.

[Ask the new staff if they have any questions]

Information pupils may ask about:

Pay: £25 a year. You will be able to send money home, save or buy yourself the odd luxury.

Time off: one day a month, when you will have enough time go home and see your family. You will also get half a day off each week, when you could take a walk into the village. But you are not permitted to wander the grounds of the house.

Food: we will eat together in shifts in the kitchens.