

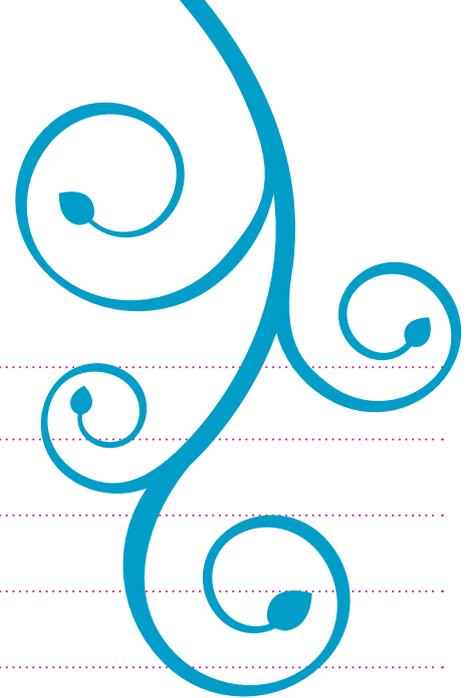
# Crystal's Vardo

Teaching materials  
and information



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COVER PHOTO : JESSIE-ROSE CLIFFORD

PIC CREDIT : CORRINA ADAMS



PIC CREDIT : CHRIS THOMAS - MILTONCONTACT.CO.UK

## Produced by Friends Families and Travellers

For more information and resources please visit our website [www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org)



We work on behalf of all Gypsies, Travellers and Roma regardless of ethnicity, culture or background. We seek to end racism and discrimination against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life. Registered Charity: 111 2326

# Introduction

Romani Gypsies have formed part of British society for about five hundred years. Over the centuries, they have maintained strong cultural traits that are often reflected in language, customs and occupations. They have contributed to society and are woven into its fabric. There is very little recorded of Gypsy and Traveller history but we do know that Romani origins lie in Northern India and that the first Gypsies arrived in England in the early sixteenth century.

All the stories and places Crystal travels to in the play are as true as it has been possible to stage and the characters the children meet are mainly real people who did exist. I hope this will enable you to understand why I have chosen to write this play in the way that I have. I felt it was important that we hang on to the little history we have of these communities and bring to life these few historic stories.

The play was written in response to continued problems of bullying in schools faced by young Travellers. Many young Travellers do not continue their education to secondary level because of experiences of racist bullying. I felt that only by learning to understand about the histories and cultures of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities could we begin to help tackle this problem.

I hope you will find these materials useful. I would particularly recommend that the children become familiar with some of the Romani words and terms, and also the timeline before seeing the performance. Included also are the lyrics from Go Move Shift; it would be great if pupils from Key stage 2 could learn verse one and join in during the performance. There are a few ideas for follow up work in the class room along with some useful background information to support some of the stories in the play.

We hope you will enjoy the Performance, we value highly your comments and suggestions so please complete the evaluation form after you have seen the performance, we would like to hear from both teachers and pupils.

*Suzanna Woodward, writer*



# Who are Gypsies, Roma and Travellers?

PICTURE CREDIT : JONATHAN SVET



Travellers can be divided into two groups, Ethnic Travellers such as Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers and those who live on the road for economic reasons such as New Travellers and Showmen. Ethnic Travellers are people born into traditionally nomadic cultures and have their own specific customs and traditions. They are recognised under the Equality Act 2010.

Romani Gypsies have been living in Great Britain from around 1508 migrating from Europe and originally Northern India. When they first came to England they were referred to as Egyptian owing to their dark complexion. Romani Gypsies were recognised as a distinct ethnic group in 1976.

Irish Travellers share some cultural values with Romani Gypsies. They have their own language widely known as Cant (also Gammon or Shelta). Irish Travellers are of Irish ancestral origin but split from the main Irish population around the mid 1600's. In March 2017 The Republic of Ireland formally recognised Irish Travellers as an indigenous ethnic minority.



THE WORD TRAVELLER REFERS TO ANYONE WITH A NOMADIC LIFESTYLE

Roma people are descended from the same people as British Romani Gypsies and have moved to the UK more recently from Central and Eastern Europe.



# Who are Gypsies, Roma and Travellers...



## Non Ethnic Travellers

Sometimes referred to as New Age Travellers and are generally people who have taken to life on the road in their own life time, though some New Travellers have now been on the road for three consecutive generations.



## Showmen

They are a cultural minority that have owned and operated fun fairs and circuses for many generations. They are culturally similar to Romani Gypsies and their identity connected to family business.

## Scottish Gypsy

Travellers are believed to go back to the twelfth century and are made up of a range of different groups. Some speak Scottish Cant - different to the Irish Cant.



PIC CREDIT - JONATHAN SYER

**Traveller Norms:** Common norms shared among all Traveller groups

- Nomadism past and present
- Self-reliance and independence
- Shared culture and strong oral traditions
- Strict rituals around birth, death and cleanliness
- Importance of children, family and extended family

## Liveaboard Boaters

People who usually for cultural or financial reasons live full time aboard boats on inland and coastal waterways.

# History time line

**Time line of events relating to the play and significant dates in Traveller history.**

**1192**

The Battle of Terrain - between the Muslims and Hindu Rajput meant that many Romani people left for the West

**420 AD**

**420 AD**

The Shah of Persia brings Romani musicians from India

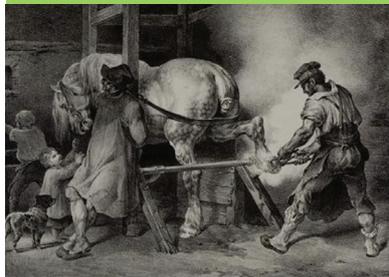


## **IDEA for activity**

You could hang a washing line in the class room to denote the timeline above and hang the different events on pegs at the relevant points, maybe also adding some extra dates of events the children are learning about in history.

**1290-1493**

Romani Gypsies appear all over Europe taking up trades such as blacksmithing, veterinary medicine, shoe making and entertaining



**1290 - 1493**

**1493**

The first Romani Gypsies expelled from Europe

**1508**

First record of Gypsies in England

**1554**

'Egyptians' Act - Being found a Gypsy was punishable by death

**1530**

**1530**

Henry VIII passed 'Egyptians Act' - forbidding Gypsies to enter the realm & made to leave within sixteen days

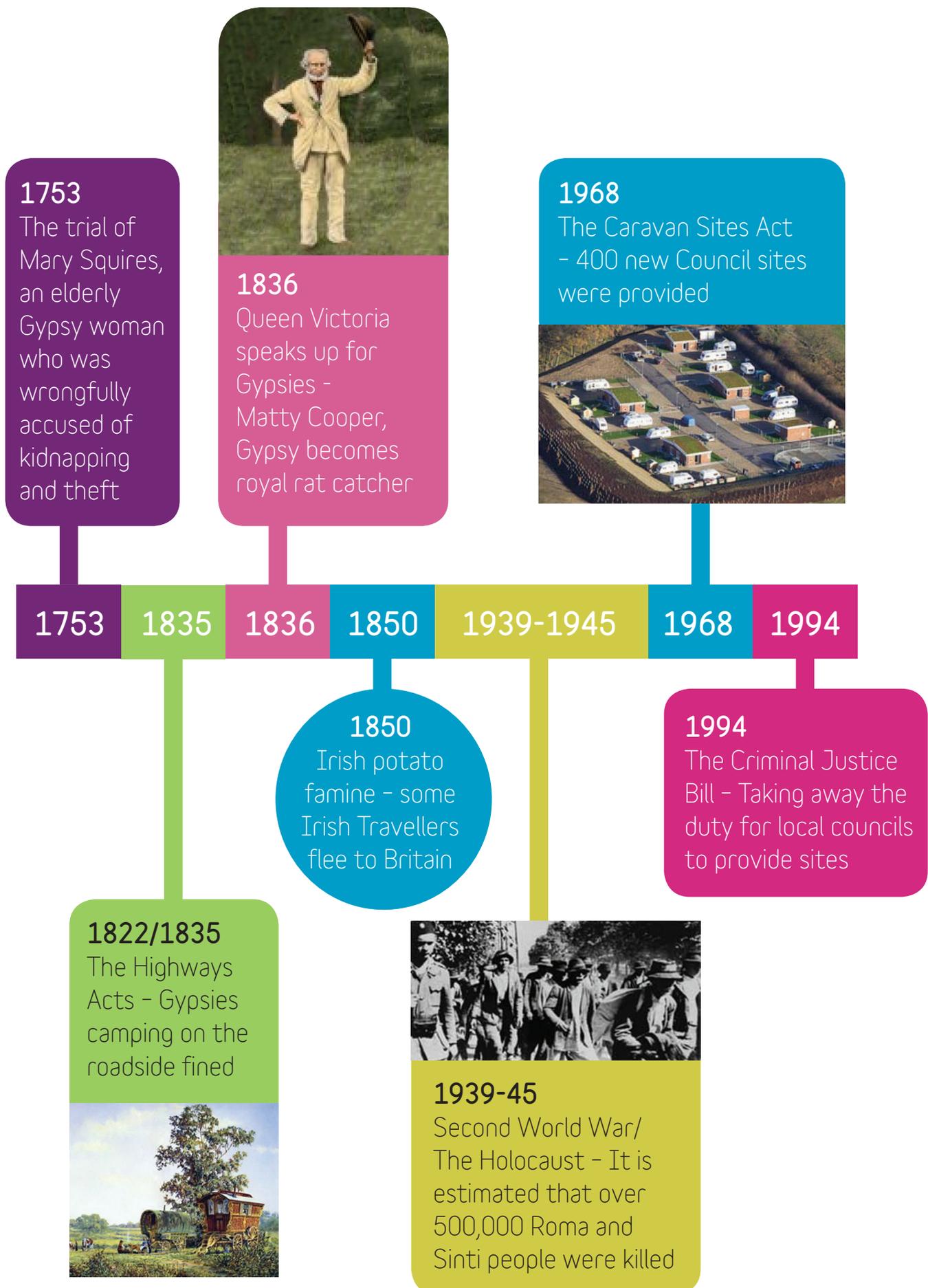
**1594**

Nine Gypsies are hung in York just for being Gypsies

**1594**

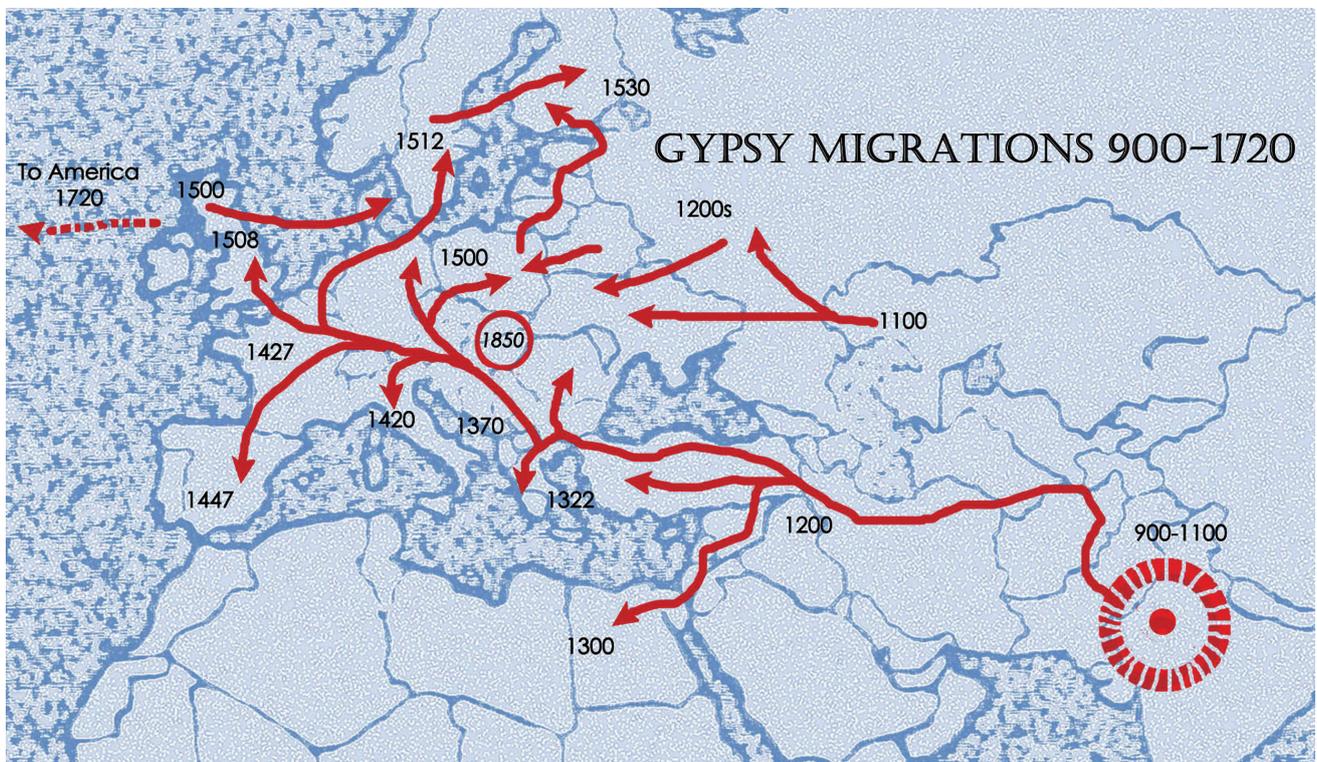


You may like to discuss or add other events the pupils have been learning about that fit in to this time line to reflect an understanding of Gypsy Roma and Traveller culture within the curriculum.



# Romani migrations

Below is a map of the Romani peoples' migrations which will give you an idea of the voyage of Britain's Romani Gypsies and their migration routes across Europe.



# Vardos

## Gypsy Wagons

**A vardo is a traditional horse-drawn wagon used by Romani people - Gypsies.**

Vardos have large wheels running outside the body of the van, which slopes outwards towards the roof. originally Gypsies would travel on foot, or with light, horse-drawn carts, or would build bender tents – so called because they were made from supple branches which they bent inwards to support a waterproof covering.

One half of the vardo was the sleeping area with a raised bed and carpet. adults would sleep in a double berth and children in a single berth below. The other half was like a kitchen with a stove whose chimney went up through the roof. It also has a larder, several chests, a big jug of water and a few cooking utensils and pieces of crockery which hung on the walls.

Building a vardo took between six months to a year and was often made for newly married couples. They were highly decorated, hand carved and painted with traditional Romani symbols such as horses, birds, lions, griffins, floral design & vinework.

Vardos were the original Gypsy caravan drawn by a Gypsy cob (horse). They are very seldom used now as they have been replaced by the modern trailer.



Included in this pack are several line drawings which can be decorated with Romani Gypsy symbols.

Vardo Decorate and colour as you like

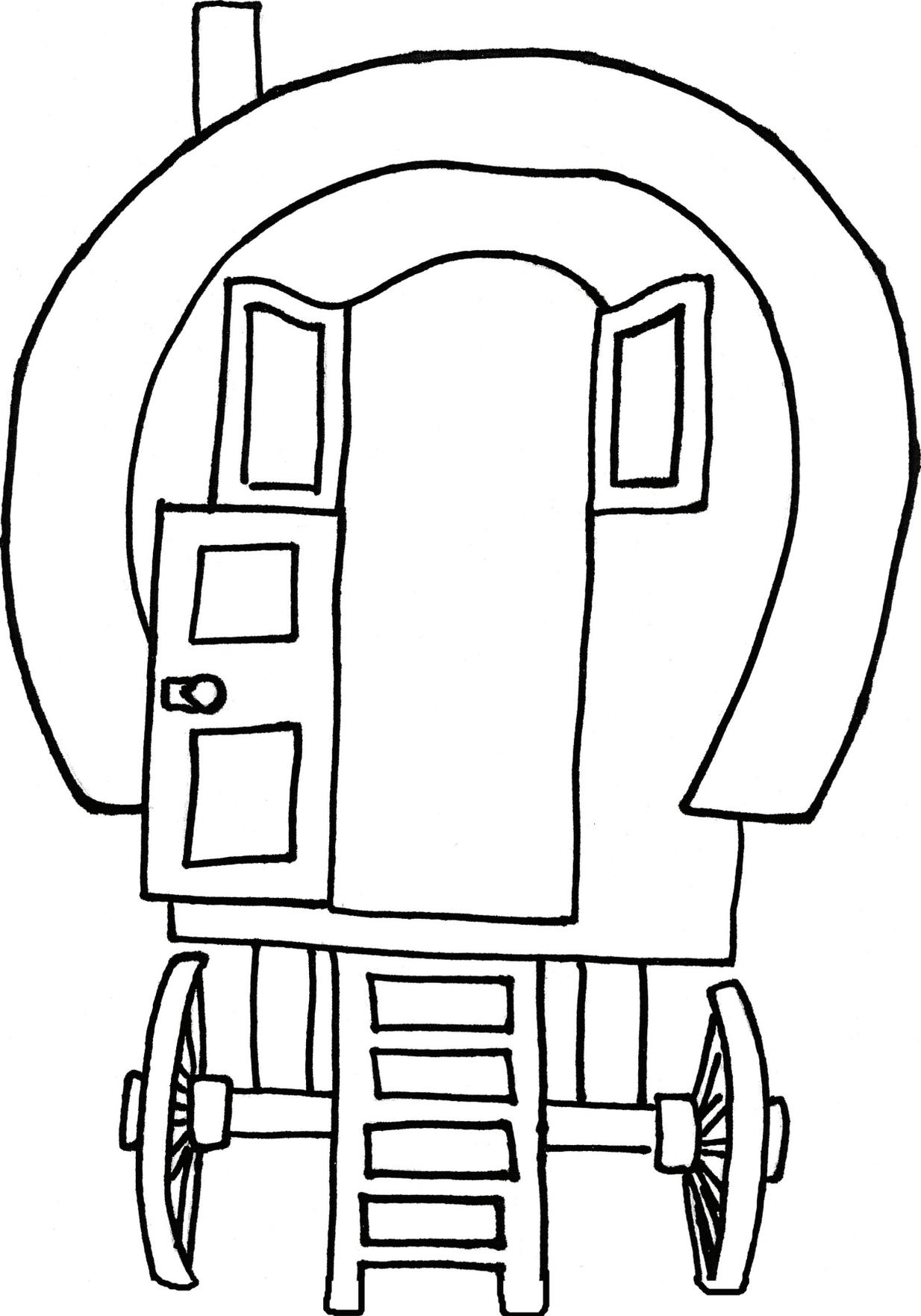
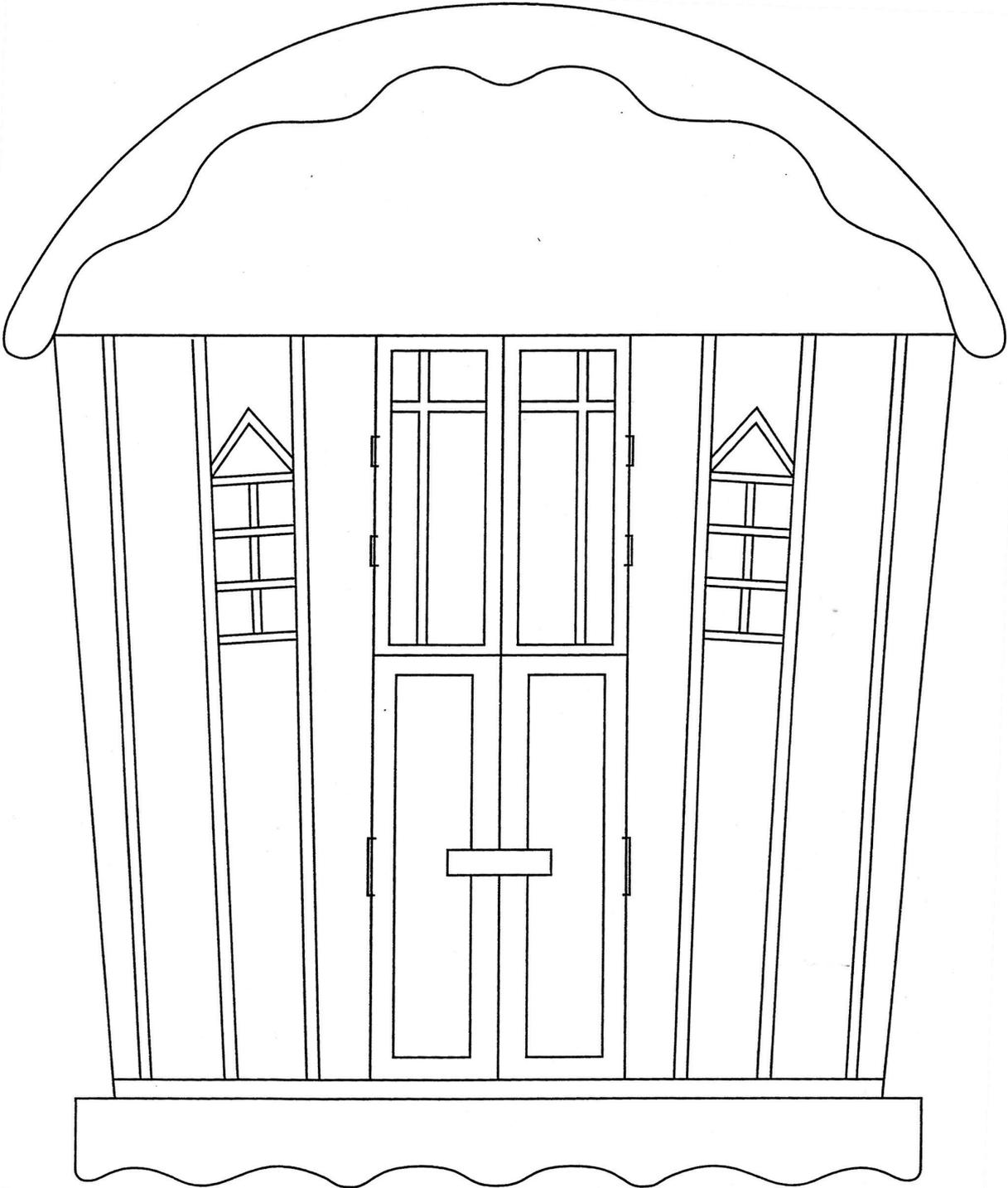


ILLUSTRATION : GEMMA CHALLENGER

**Vardo** Decorate and colour as you like



Vardo Interior Decorate and colour as you like

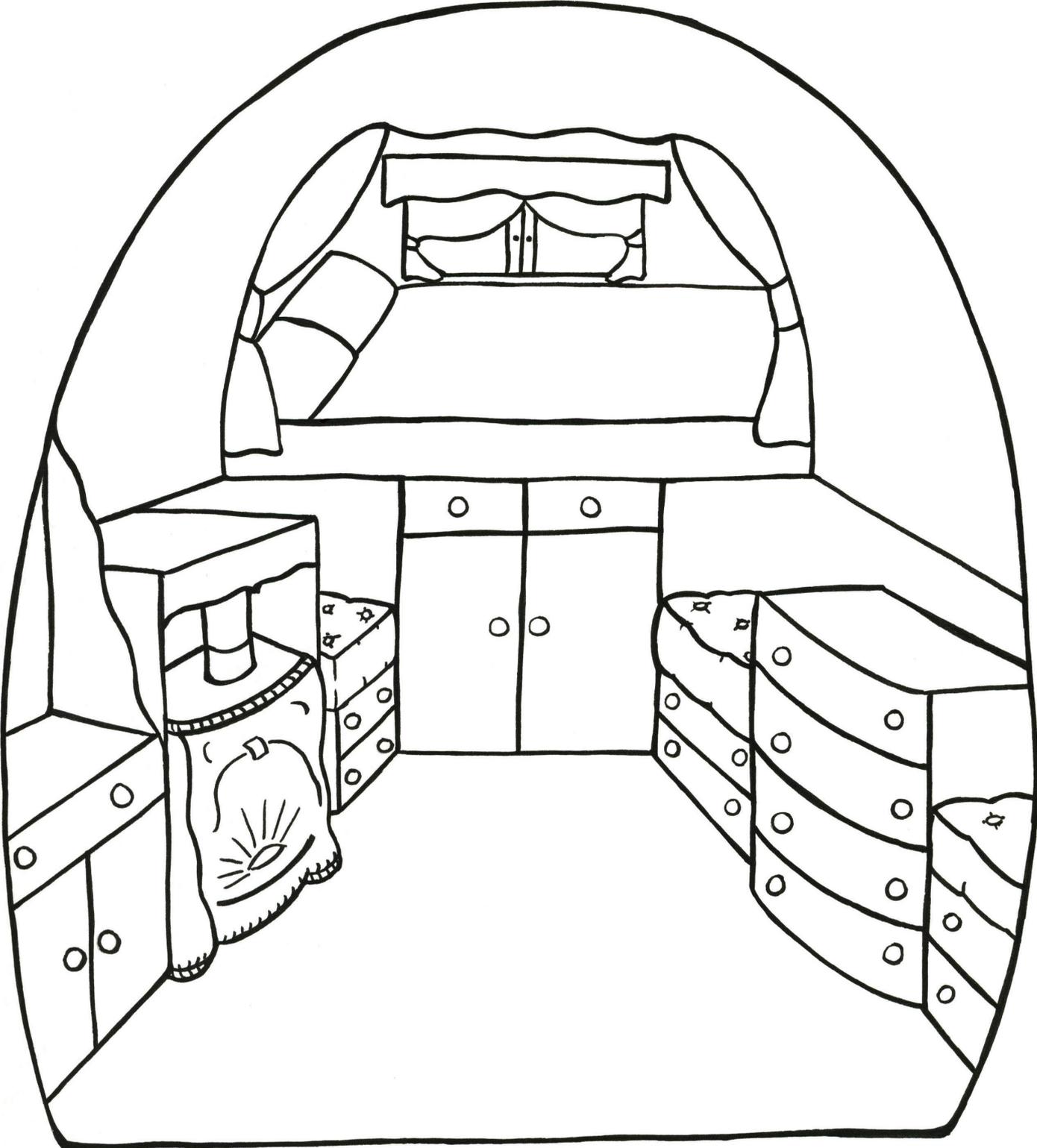
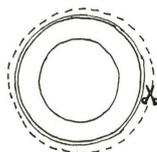
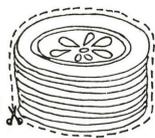
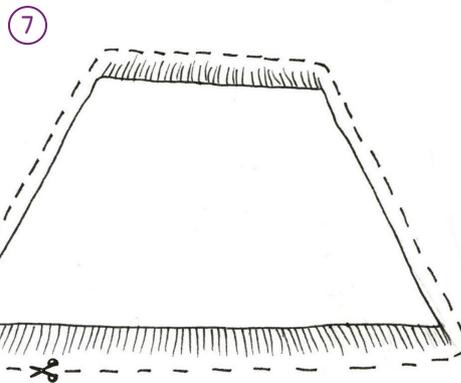
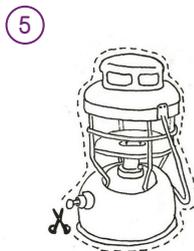
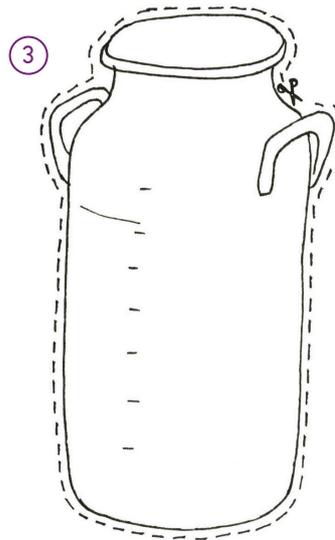
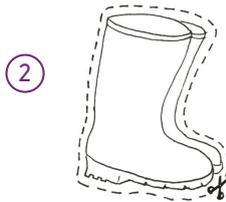


ILLUSTRATION : GEMMA CHALLENGER

# Things to put in the Vardo

You can cut out, decorate and colour in, then place items in your vardo - some items live outside can you guess which ones ?

ILLUSTRATION : GEMMA CHALLENGER



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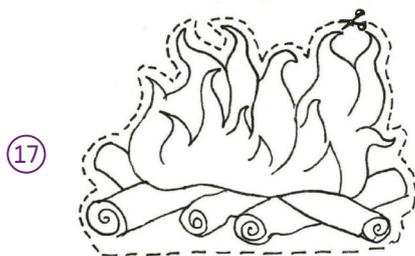
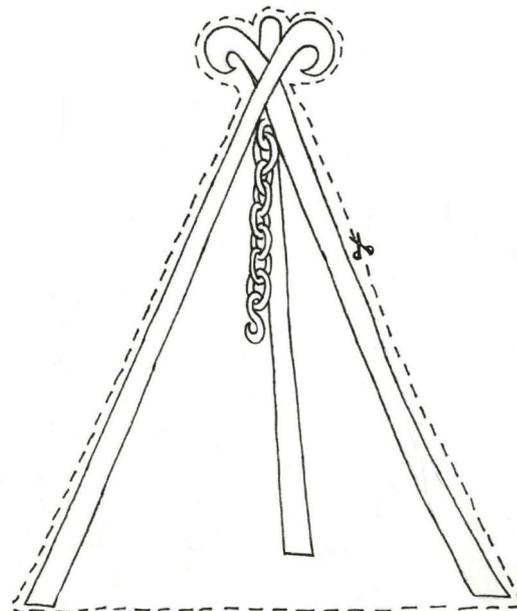
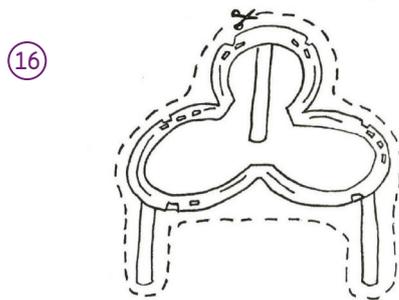
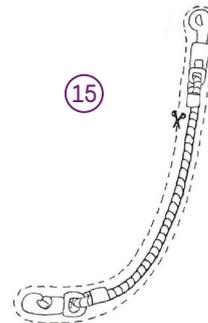
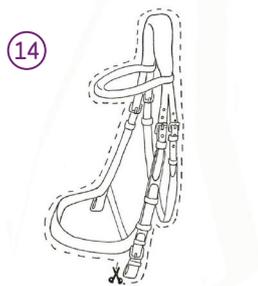
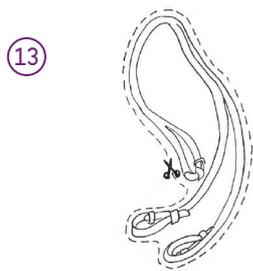
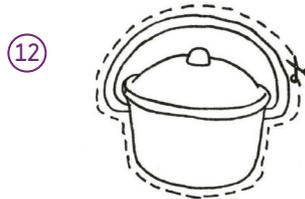
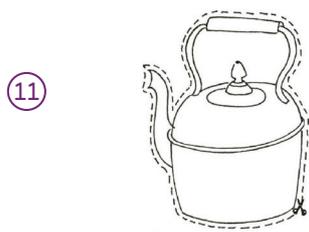


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If there is anything you'd like to add to your Vardo maybe draw them or cut out from old magazines.

# More things to put in the Vardo

ILLUSTRATION : GEMMA CHALLENGER



Here are the names of the items for your Vardo

- |                   |                   |               |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Jug            | 7. Rug            | 13. Reins     |
| 2. Wellie         | 8. Plates         | 14. Bridle    |
| 3. Water churn    | 9. Matches        | 15. Tack rope |
| 4. Kettle         | 10. Candle        | 16. Trivet    |
| 5. Tilly lamp     | 11. Tether kettle | 17. Camp fire |
| 6. Cup and saucer | 12. Trivet pot    | 18. Tripod    |



# Romani Words



## You may have noticed some unfamiliar words in the play.

The Romani language is closely related to the languages of Northern India from where it was thought the Gypsies originally came. Because of this we have been able to trace the origins of Romani populations. Their language relates to the ancient language of Sanskrit. The Romani language also has words that have been picked up from every country. Many Gypsies still use Romani words and it is important the language is passed down to future generations as it is part of Romani heritage.

### Below are a few of the Romani words used in the play

**Vardo** - Traditional Gypsy wagon

**Tatcho** - Truth (name of Crystal's horse).

**Gavver** - Police

**Gorja (Gawjie)** - Settled people/non Traveller community

**Kushti** - Nice

**Kushti bok** - Good luck

**Longtail** - Rat. Some Romani Gypsy people are superstitious about using the word rat

### Some other important terms used in the play

**Hawking** - To carry goods about for sale, sometimes from door to door or calling aloud in the street

**Tinkering** - Travelling around to make money selling and repairing pots and pans

**Egyptians** - In the sixteenth century Gypsies were referred to as Egyptians as it was thought they came from Egypt partly owing to their dark complexions

**There are many more Romani words and here are some examples**

Atchin Tan	Stopping place
Chauv (chauvis)	Child
Dookerin	Fortune telling
Gokal	Dog
Groy	Horse
Rokkerin	Talking
Rom	People
Yog	Fire

### INTERESTING FACTS

The word lollipop originates from Romani and relates to selling apples on a stick

# Famous People with Gypsy, Roma or Traveller heritage

## You might like to do a celebratory piece of work following the theatre visit.

Your task is to pick a famous person with Gypsy, Roma or Traveller heritage and produce a fact sheet which can include pictures, fabulous facts and why you find this person interesting or an inspiration. Perhaps you could then collect all these sheets and make them into a class book celebrating famous people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds.

### Some famous Travellers include ...

**Matthias Cooper** - Royal rat catcher to Queen Victoria

**Charlie Chaplin** - Actor/entertainer

**Cher Lloyd** - Singer

**Django Reinhardt** - Belgian jazz musician

**Rafael Van der Vaart** - Dutch footballer

**Ronnie Wood** - Musician Rolling Stones

**Billy Joe Saunders** - GB 2008 Olympics boxer

**Eric Cantona** - French footballer

**Michael Caine** - Actor

**David Essex** - Musician/actor

**Shane Ward** - Singer

**Tyson Fury** - Boxer

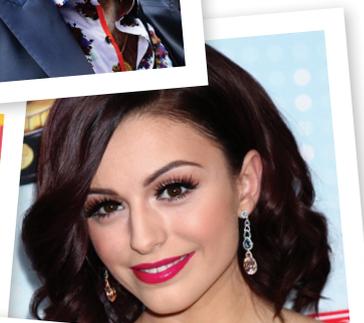
**Scarlett Lee** - Runner up X factor 2018

**Sharyn Ward** - Irelands Got Talent finalist 2019

**John Connors** - Actor

### GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER HISTORY MONTH

Gypsy and Traveller history  
and culture is celebrated  
every year in June



# Crystal's photographs

Here are some of the photographs from Crystal's album, some of which help to challenge the misconceptions some people have of Travellers. You could use the images as a springboard for discussion.



Thousands of Gypsy men died fighting for this country in the first and second world wars.



Not all Gypsies live in caravans; over two thirds of Gypsies in the UK live in houses but they are still Gypsies by blood, ethnicity and culture.



Many Romani Gypsy people follow strict codes of cleanliness. Separate wash bowls are often used for clothes and crockery. Generally animals are not allowed inside the trailer or house.

PIC CREDIT : MARY TURNER

# The Moving on Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLnvwPk7-u0>

The song was written in 1960 by **Ewan McColl** and formed part of a BBC radio documentary called **'The Travelling People'** produced by Charles Parker. The first verse is the story of a Gypsy woman who was expecting a baby whilst parked on an unauthorised encampment. The group were about to be evicted and the police come to move them off the land. They ignore the pleas from the Travellers asking them to wait while the woman has her baby. The baby is born on the A5 while they are travelling - *you may recognise this scene in the play*. This happened before councils provided authorised sites for Travellers. Now if Travellers were encamped on an unauthorised place the council would have to carry out welfare checks to make sure there were no health issues among them such as a woman in the late stages of pregnancy. Christie Moore also later did a version the song **'Go Move Shift'** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maxfustXF7A>) **As the song is played during the performance it would be great if the children and young people could learn the first verse so they can join in.**



## Go Move Shift Lyrics

Born in the middle of the afternoon  
In a horsedrawn carriage on the old A5  
The big twelve wheeler shook my bed,  
"You can't stay here" the policeman said.

CHORUS

You'd better get born in some place else.  
So move along, get along, Move along, get  
along,  
Go! Move! Shift!

Born in the common by a building site  
Where the ground was rutted by the trail of  
wheels  
The local Christian said to me,  
"You'll lower the price of property."

CHORUS

Born at potato picking time  
In a noble tent in a tatie field.  
The farmer said, "The work's all done  
It's time that you was moving on."

CHORUS

Born at the back of a hawthorn hedge  
Where the black hole frost lay on the ground.  
No eastern kings came bearing gifts.  
Instead the order came to shift.

CHORUS

The eastern sky was full of stars  
And one shone brighter than the rest  
The wise men came so stern and strict  
And brought the orders to evict

CHORUS

Wagon, tent or trailer born,  
Last month, last year or in far off days.  
Born here or a thousand miles away  
There's always men nearby who'll say

CHORUS

Six in the morning out in Inchicore  
The guards came through the wagon door.  
John Maughan was arrested in the cold  
A travelling boy just ten years old.

CHORUS

# Poem for discussion

**The following poem is by an unknown Gypsy war poet.**

**Key stage 3**

**Please discuss the meaning behind the poem and what it is trying to tell us**

**What does the poem mean to you?**

**Discuss the role of the Gypsy man in both wars**

**Could the Flanders poppy be so ever red?**

Could the poppy bloom so ever red,  
Without the Gypsy blood shed there on Flanders fields?

At the eleventh day, in the eleventh month kneel and pray.  
Are you sincere?  
The countless crosses, row by row,  
Mark the place where those that know are lying.  
How many then amongst those who fell, but given voices, stories could  
tell of mucker Gypsy?  
When Gorga, Gypsy, side by side, comrades in arms, obscenely died,  
They were then brothers.  
They argued not the rightful place of this wandering Gypsy race.

See not the horror, taste not the stench of rotting corpses in that trench  
But mark the Gypsy, tell me the difference.  
Point out which among that heap there in the ditch is Gypsy.  
When our men have died they are all the same.  
None can tell what pride or shame they felt in passing.

So think about poppy blooms so red, whose colour marks the blood shed.  
So if this country did fall,  
Remember they're equal, one and all.

*(Author and date unknown)*

## INTERESTING FACTS

**John Cunningham VC was the first Gypsy man to be awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in the face of the enemy during the Battle of the Somme (WW1). He was only nineteen years old.**

At the start of Crystal's Vardo, Crystal talks to the audience about her experience at school and how she has been bullied. Here are extracts for you to study.



*The kids at school call me names... over and over again making me feel worthless and alone... I never get invited to parties... never get invited for tea like the other kids... I've got used to it, being left out... not that you'd care.*

*Mum says I should go to school get myself an education, but what's the point (shrugs) when I just get picked on. I ask my mum 'when will it stop? When the Gorgers open their hearts and minds she said. Gorgers are the settled people like many of you I suppose...*

*I live on a site in a trailer and this vardo belongs to my Grandad, who painted it. It's a traditional old wagon like we used to use, drawn by a horse...*

*anyway why am I telling you? I don't know you! And I can't trust the kids at my school, so why yours?'*



*I only ran away because I couldn't stand another morning of feeling sick at the thought of going to school and trying to convince my mum I really was sick so I didn't have to go.*



## Activities

1. Highlight the phrases that tell us how Crystal is feeling. Write down what you think these feelings are.

.....

.....

.....

2. Imagine that Crystal is starting at your school today. What might you do to help Crystal feel welcome?

.....

.....

.....

3. We all have different things in common, write down two things you share with Crystal

.....

.....

.....

4. Get in to pairs with one of you playing Crystal or a character in a similar situation. This is a hot seat activity where you interview Crystal about how she is feeling. Take it in turns to play the Crystal character and then discuss in a group how it made you feel when you put yourself in Crystal's shoes.

# Gypsies Roma and Traveller

## Facts and figures

- There are over 300,000 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the UK – that's around one in 200 people.
- An estimated 75% of Gypsy Roma and Traveller people live in houses. They do not lose their ethnicity by living in a house as they take their culture and values indoors with them.
- One in five Traveller mothers will experience the loss of a child, compared to one in a hundred in the non-Traveller community.
- Traditional forms of work in Gypsy and Traveller communities include seasonal agricultural labour, peddling, basket making, and horse dealing. Working practices have now evolved in response to the needs of modern society to include landscaping, gardening, laying tarmac, motor trading, scrap metal dealing and tree felling. You can find members of Gypsy and Traveller communities in almost all types of job – as policemen, doctors, nurses, teachers and more.
- Life expectancy is 10 to 12 years less than that of the non-Traveller population;
- According to Ofsted Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children remain the most at risk of being bullied within the school community.
- A survey carried out by Traveller Movement, a national Gypsy, Roma and Traveller charity, found that, in 2017, 91 per cent of the 199 respondents had experienced discrimination and 77 per cent had experienced hate speech or a hate crime
- In February 2020, FFT released the findings of a YouGov survey and found that 55% of British adults surveyed did not know that over 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed by Nazi's during the Holocaust.
- Gypsies and Travellers living on a local authority or privately owned sites pay council tax, rent, gas, electricity, and all other charges, just like people who live in bricks and mortar housing.
- The Roma people are the largest ethnic minority group in Europe. Recent estimates of the size of the Romani population worldwide suggest a figure of around 15 million. There is no way to obtain an exact number since information on Roma ethnicity is not collected by most Governments. Many Roma people conceal the fact that they are Roma out of fear of discrimination.

