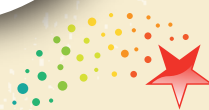


# The History of the Circus

**The History of the Circus** has been produced in celebration of World Circus Day for classroom practitioners and parents to help prepare a child for a trip to Circus Starr. Aimed at KS1 and KS2 children with differentiated activities to include children with Special Educational Needs.



The History of the Circus is part of a series of free, downloadable resources produced by Circus Starr. Each title explores a different aspect of the circus, helping children understand, enjoy and engage with this unique and magical art form. The resources aim to help foster a life-long appreciation of the performing arts as well as open new doors into other arts and cultural experiences. Activities can be used by classroom practitioners and parents.



**Circus Starr**  
*the circus with a purpose*

## Key Objectives

To find out about some of the acts in the circus.

To research the history of the circus.

### Curriculum subjects and areas covered by the end of this lesson include:

- English – participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates.
- History – construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information
- History – understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.
- Computing - select, use and combine a variety of software (including internet services) on a range of digital devices to design and create a range of programs, systems and content that accomplish given goals, including collecting, analysing, evaluating and presenting data and information
- Computing - use search technologies effectively, appreciate how results are selected and ranked, and be discerning in evaluating digital content

## Whole Class Activities

Show the children a range of photographs (resource 1) illustrating the different circus acts. As a group sort them into past and present photographs.

What might they see at the circus? (acrobats, clowns, trapeze artists)

## Independent Activities

Children can draw a picture of what they imagine a circus looks like. This could include the big top and some of the acts they may see today.

Different mediums could be used to convey the colours and vibrancy of the circus such as pencil crayons, pens, paints or collaging using magazines and coloured paper.

**or**

Working in pairs/small groups children should choose an area of interest e.g. the first circus, the different types of acts, the use of animals, what a current circus is like.

Using circus posters (Resource 2) books, magazines, newspapers, ICT they should then research their particular area.

This could culminate in a presentation to the class using a speech, powerpoint presentation or a poster.

## Plenary

What have we learnt? Each individual to share one thing they have learnt during the session. Individuals/groups can present their image or findings to the class.

## Resources

Photographs of the circus (resource 1).

Circus Posters (resource 2)

Textbooks with information regarding the circus e.g. Working at a circus by Mary MeinKing.

Access to the internet.

Powerpoint

## Success Criteria

Children can create an image of the circus

Children can research a particular aspect of the circus.

Children can present their chosen topic to others



## Resource 1



Photo Credit: The History of the Circus: Classical liberty act performed by Louis Knie Jr. at Circus Louis Knie Jr., Austria



The Kenyan Warriors, Circus Starr © Photo Credit: Briscoe Photography



Photo Credit: Danka Dear, Australia: Sascha Williams springs from scattering components of a rolla bolla, Circus Sunrise, Victoria, Australia



Photo Credit: Jessica Hentoff, USA: Circus Harmony's youth performance troupe, the St. Louis Arches, perform at Circus Flora, USA



The Serik Brothers, Circus Starr © Photo Credit: Briscoe Photography



Nicolino the Clown, Circus Starr © Photo Credit: Briscoe Photography



Photo Credit: Stefan Nolte, Germany: World-famous Italian clown David Larible in the ring of Circus Roncalli, Germany





## Resource 1ctd



Photo Credit: Stefan Gierisch, Germany: Brother-sister duo Rene, Jr. and Merryly Casselly of Germany perform atop an African elephant, La Grande Fête Lilloise du Cirque, France



Nicolino and Miss Lara, Circus Starr © Photo Credit: Briscoe Photography



'Daneva' Illusionists Circus Starr © Photo Credit: Briscoe Photography



Circus Starr would like to thank the Federation Mondiale du Cirque for their kind donation of circus photography for use in this resource



Photo Credit: Linda Himself, Sweden



Photo Credit: Linda Himself, Sweden



Photo Credit: Manel Sala Ulls, Spain



Photo Credit: Markus Moll, Germany



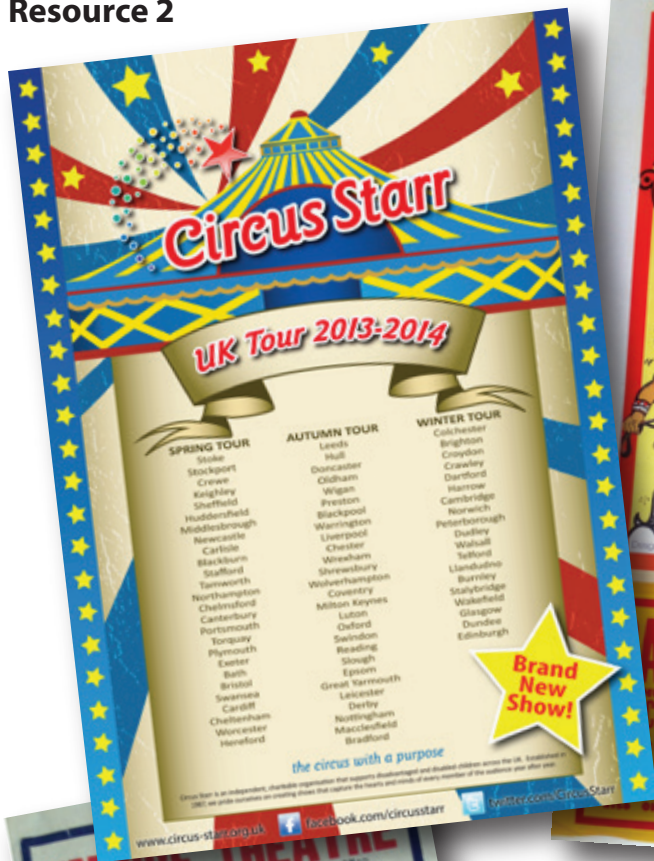
Photo Credit: Essi Mäkelä, Finland: Equestrian performer Laury Tissot of France with Picasso, a Lusitano stallion, Helsinki, Finland



Photo Credit: Manel Sala Ulls, Spain: Second and third generations of the Flying Millas (Chile), perform at Circo Atayde, Mexico City



Resource 2



**Circus Starr**  
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Stockport	Hull	Brighton
Crewe	Doncaster	Doncaster
King's Lynn	Oldham	Crawley
Sheffield	Wigan	Dartford
Huddersfield	Preston	Harlow
Middlesbrough	Blackpool	Cambridge
Newcastle	Warrington	Norwich
Carlisle	Chester	Peterborough
Blackburn	Wrexham	Dudley
Stafford	Shrewsbury	Walsall
Tamworth	Wolverhampton	Salford
Northampton	Coventry	Llanudno
Chelmsford	Milton Keynes	Bury
Canterbury	Luton	Stalybridge
Portsmouth	Oxford	Wakefield
Torquay	Swindon	Glasgow
Exeter	Reading	Dundee
Bath	Slough	Edinburgh
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**Resource 3**

The word 'circus' describes a performance which may include clowns, trapeze artists, tightrope walkers, hoopers, trained animals and jugglers.

The circus has been around for hundreds of years and there is evidence that dates it back to Ancient Rome. However, the modern circus is often attributed to a British Cavalry Officer named Philip Astley. In 1768 he created a space in London which brought together acts such as tricks on horses, clowns, acrobats and even wild animals. He called the performance area 'the circle' and the building was known as an amphitheatre, but this was later known as a Circus.

In 1792 the circus made its way to America through Englishman John Bill Ricketts who had travelled to Philadelphia. Circuses would tour the country, often building circus theatres in the cities that they visited. It wasn't until 1825 that a large canvas tent was used to house a circus performance.

The Americans added a combination of animal and human acts, often using the exhibition of humans as a freak show or side show. They also began to use circus trains to move the circus from town to town.

Traditional circuses were and still are led by a ringmaster and often have a band that travels with them. Acts can vary widely, but can include some of the following: acrobatics, the trampoline, trapeze, contortion, stilts, juggling, plate spinning, clowns, human cannonball, fire breathing, knife throwing, magic and even sword swallowing.

Historically animals such as big cats, elephants, horses, bears, birds, sea lions and domestic animals have been used. However, these traditions have changed over time. Since the 1970's there has been a move into contemporary circuses which combine the traditional circus skills with theatrical techniques to convey a story or theme.

Circuses have changed and developed over the years but it is clear to see that they still play an important and significant role in our living social heritage.

Circus Starr is a not-for-profit, charitable organisation also known as 'the circus with a purpose'. With world class performers, aerialists, acrobats, dancers and entertainers from across the globe, it prides itself on creating a magical show that captures the hearts and minds of the youngest to the oldest members of the audience.

Circus Starr operates a unique Donated Ticket Programme that enables thousands of children to attend free circus shows every year thanks to the generous support of local businesses who, in turn, enjoy the opportunity to 'give back' to their communities.

*Resource written by Charlie Lacy, BSc (Hons), EYPS, PGcert, PGCE for Circus Starr.*

*Starr in the Community CIC, registered in England & Wales, registered company no. 7477542*

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