



PLATFORM  
THEATRE

# Ada



**Activity workbook and tasks for  
Key Stages 1-3 based on the life of  
Crewe suffragist Ada Nield Chew and  
Platform Theatre's drama, *Ada***

## PLATFORM THEATRE

Platform Theatre is a new professional theatre company based in Crewe, Cheshire. Set up in September 2018 with a vision to create, develop and share new and innovative work across all mediums of art, Platform is a socially focussed theatre company that values the intrinsic benefit artistic engagement can have on an individual's social capital and mobility.



### ‘ADA’

Ada, written by Platform Theatre's Artistic Director, Sean Johnson-Hargreaves, tells the true story of Ada Nield Chew who, in 1894 works as a 'finisher' in a clothing factory in Crewe. Discontented by the rampant favouritism and the lack of a living wage paid to its female employees, she anonymously writes a series of letters to the local newspaper exposing the inner workings of the factory. What follows will not only change her life but forms part of the fabric of the early suffrage movement.

This worksheet is designed for children at key stages 1, 2 and 3. It asks children to think about Victorian History but in a local context, using the life of Ada Nield Chew as a stimulus. This worksheet can draw together drama, English, creative writing, art and some grammar topics.

**Key Stage 1 activities—pages 4, 5, 7 & 9**

**Key Stage 2 activities—pages 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 & 14**

**Key Stage 3 activities—pages 10, 12, 13 & 14**

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## **LIFE IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND**

During the Victorian era many British towns and cities became centres of industry and attracted lots people to live and work there.

Many people lived in terrible poverty and lived close to the factories they worked in. Whole families would share one or two rooms and children would share beds. There was no running water: water had to be collected from a public tap.

Wealthy Victorian people often lived in big houses, far away from where the poorer people lived. They would have rooms called 'Drawing Rooms' where they would entertain guests and have parties.

## **WHAT WERE FACTORIES LIKE IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND?**

- Factories were often large and overcrowded
- Factory owners were often very rich but the people that worked in them very poor
- Machinery was noisy and dangerous – some people could be seriously hurt
- Some children, as young as 6, had to work in these conditions
- Life was very hard for the people that worked in the factories – the houses they lived in were cold, damp and dangerous

## **CHILDREN HAD TO WORK IN THE FACTORIES TOO**

- Poorer children could not go to school – they had to work to help their families buy food
- Children would work long hours and had dangerous jobs like cleaning machines while they were still running and there were many accidents
- Lots of children got poorly from the dust in the factories
- Children would work all day long and they only had Sunday to rest
- Children would only get a small amount of money compared to the adults

**TASK:** Click [shorturl.at/sBCJ3](https://shorturl.at/sBCJ3) to view images of Victorian children working in factories.

**TASK: Can you complete the sentences using the information from page 3?**

Pick the correct statement:

- a. Factory owners were often poor and the factory workers were often very rich.
- b. Factory owners were often very rich and the factory workers were often poor.

Why did children from poorer families have to work in the factory?

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Children had to work in the factories all day long and could only have one day of rest which was on a \_\_\_\_\_.

True or false; some children as young as 6 had to work in some factories if they were from a poorer family?

TRUE                      FALSE

Write one word that describes the machinery in the factory:

---

There was no running \_\_\_\_\_ in poor peoples houses. It had to be collected from a public tap.

Wealthy Victorian people had big houses. They had rooms called \_\_\_\_\_ rooms that would be used for \_\_\_\_\_ their guests.

Fill in the blank; children would jobs like cleaning the \_\_\_\_\_ .



# Inside a Victorian House - Colour me in!



**ACTIVITY: The Factory**

**Task: create your own factory worker**

What is your character’s name?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does your character look like?  
Can you describe them?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Describe what a normal day is for your character – think about the factory where they work, who they live with and how they feel about having to go to work to help look after their family  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Inside a Clothing Factory - Colour me in!



## Who was Ada Nield Chew?

Ada was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1870 in Staffordshire. She had seven younger brothers and had to leave school when she was 11 to look after them.

She moved to Crewe in 1887. She worked in a shop in Nantwich before getting a job at the Compton Brothers clothing factory.

In 1894, Ada decided to write a series of anonymous letters to the local newspaper, The Crewe Chronicle, to talk about what it was like to work in the factory.

Ada kept her letter-writing secret for months and wrote about how unfair the pay and conditions the factory women faced were, especially compared to the men that worked in the same factory. Ada was eventually forced to reveal her secret and was told to leave the factory. She did this to stop anyone else being treated unfairly but lots of other women lost their jobs, too.

Ada Nield Chew



artwork by Rosey Dight @artyrosy ©2019

### Who was Ada Nield Chew?

1. True or false; Ada had to leave school at the age of 13?
2. What did they make at the Compton Brothers Factory?
3. Fill in the blank; Ada wrote letters to a newspaper called The Crewe \_\_\_\_\_.

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*This worksheet is designed for children at the older end of key stage 1*

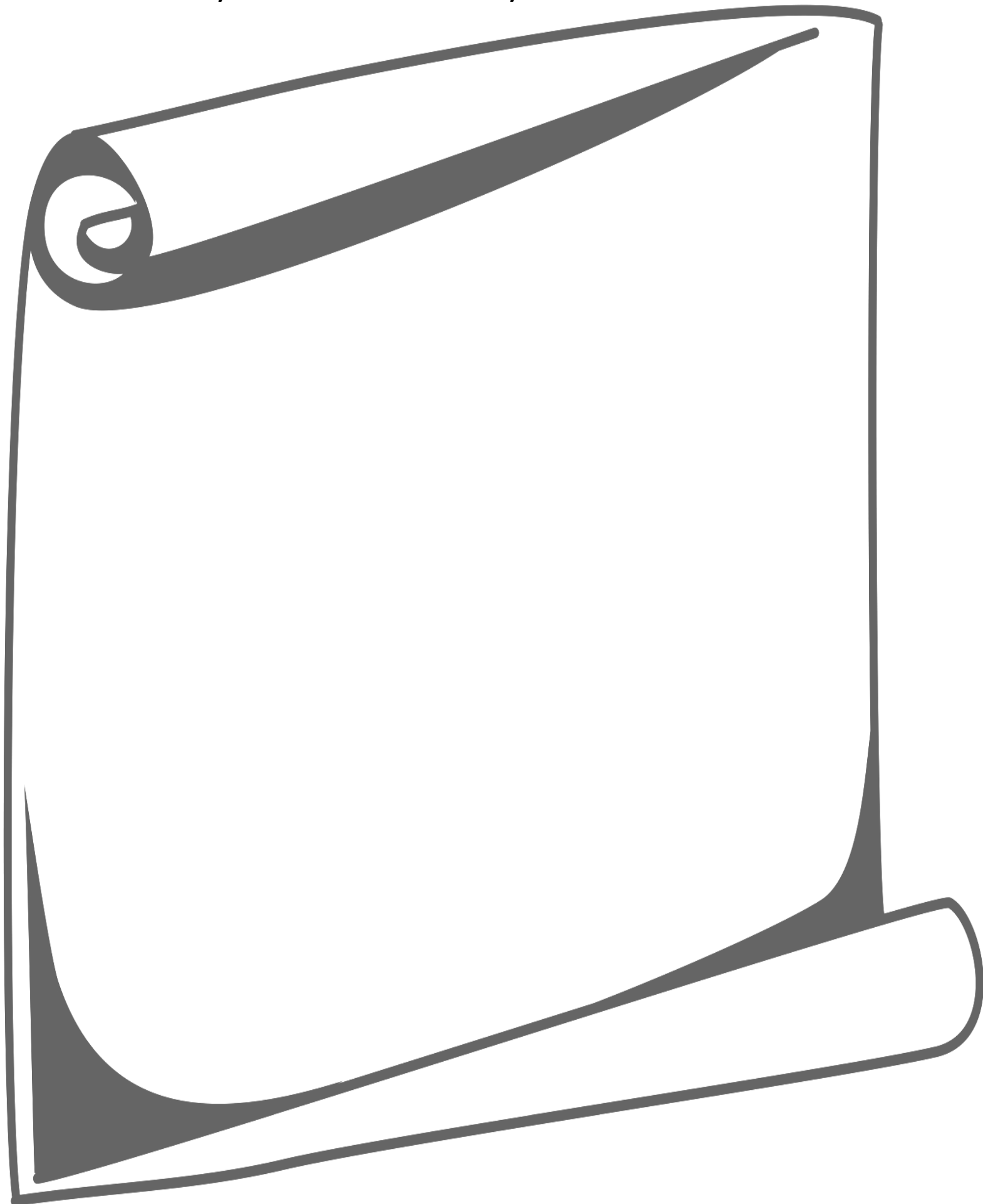
**Task: arrange these words from Ada's letters in alphabetical order.**

**Try sounding them out using phonics.**

<b>Ada</b>	<b>Letter</b>
<b>Factory</b>	<b>Compton</b>
<b>Equal</b>	<b>Unfair</b>
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Wage</b>
<b>Honour</b>	<b>Suffrage</b>

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

**Task: As your character, write a letter to Ada telling her about what it is like working in the factory. Use your description of your normal day from page 6 to help Ada understand how difficult and dangerous working in the factory is. You might talk about the kind of house you live in and who lives with you**



# Ada: The Play

Platform theatre premiered 'Ada' at the Lyceum Studio at the Crewe Lyceum in 2019. It attracted lots of interest from the local area and was the first time a lot of people had heard of Ada and her story.

Each character represents a different kind of person from Victorian Britain—from the hopeful and brave Ada, to the mean spirited Mr Compton.

The following tasks are based on the play itself and are predominantly drama and acting activities specifically aimed at key stages 2 and 3. These are adaptable for younger children—why not try reading the piece of script and asking how it makes younger children feel or if they can describe the characters personality.



Original Cast of 'Ada', 2019

**Task: Learn the piece of script below and perform it. This is an extract of the first letter Ada writes to the newspaper anonymously. If you feel comfortable, record yourself performing and share it with Platform Theatre at [facebook.com/platformtheatrecrewe](https://www.facebook.com/platformtheatrecrewe) using the #adaathome**

Things to think about:

- Don't rush the speech – use pauses and breathing to add more emotion
- Think about how desperate Ada must have been to write to the newspaper
- When you're performing, think about how scary it must be for a woman to do this knowing she might lose everything

ADA

Sir, will you grant me space in your sensible and widely read paper to complain of a great grievance of the class – that of tailoresses in some of the Crewe Factories...

...We merely exist. We eat, we sleep, we work, endlessly, ceaselessly work from Monday morning till Saturday night, without remission...

...'A living wage!' Ours is a lingering, dying wage.

Who reaps the benefit of our toil...?

...I am afraid I am trespassing a great deal on your space, sir. I sometimes wax very warm as I sit stitching and thinking over our wrongs...

## ACTIVITIES:

What do you think about this excerpt from a letter that Ada wrote in 1894?

What do you think this means?

How would you describe Ada's feelings?





**Task: Learn the piece of script below and perform it. This is an extract of speech from the factory manager who is confronting the factory girls about the anonymous letters that are in the local newspaper. If you feel comfortable, record yourself performing and share it with Platform Theatre at [face-book.com/platformtheatrecrewe](https://www.facebook.com/platformtheatrecrewe) using the #adaathome**

Things to think about:

- Don't rush the speech – use pauses to let the audience understand what you are saying
- Use gesture when you're performing to make it clear the character is annoyed
- Think about how angry the manager must be to have his employees share secrets about his factory

#### MANAGER

Alas, ladies, we find ourselves secure in the knowledge that it is from this factory the 'Crewe Factory Girl' writes. Following a simple investigation, piecing the information together and with a little co-ordination between the Managers at the other local factories leaves us clear on this fact.

It passed as a folly for a while, but this last letter contained baseless insinuations and suggestions that profit was being made from the materials and tea money. Let me be absolutely clear – not one farthing of profit was being made out of them. As a result, the team room will now be closed as punishment. You shall all have to suffer for the one who has written these letters...

#### ACTIVITIES:

What do you think about this excerpt of the script?

What do you think this means?

How would you describe the Manager is feeling?



We have picked out some of the key words from the play and put them into the word search.

Can you find them all?

## The Crewe Factory Girl

S	C	D	Y	T	I	L	A	U	Q	E	A	R	N
L	R	C	A	I	O	G	I	C	F	D	H	U	J
C	E	H	C	A	I	A	N	Y	A	E	S	U	O
O	W	R	I	T	C	R	I	N	R	E	S	L	E
M	E	O	E	O	S	M	I	A	R	T	R	A	I
P	A	N	O	A	R	E	A	O	I	V	D	A	T
T	I	I	I	T	L	N	T	N	I	F	S	N	Y
O	H	C	O	D	M	T	R	U	O	N	O	H	L
N	Y	L	D	O	O	H	R	E	T	S	I	S	E
R	R	E	T	S	I	G	A	R	F	F	U	S	T
S	E	A	H	E	F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S	T
C	O	L	R	I	G	Y	R	O	T	C	A	F	E
N	I	A	S	G	N	I	H	S	I	N	I	F	R
S	V	F	A	V	O	U	R	I	T	E	S	R	S

CHRONICLE  
LETTERS  
SUFFRAGIST  
ADA NIELD  
COMPTON  
HONOUR  
EQUALITY  
JUSTIN  
FACTORY GIRL  
SISTERHOOD  
CREWE  
FINISHINGS  
FAVOURITES  
GARMENT  
FAIRNESS

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