

Trouble in the Wood

A Play for the Environment

by Jennifer Cross.

Join the trees and animals to save their threatened woodland. A fun play for young actors to learn about ecology and recycling.



The Price includes A Performance Licence for 3 school/club performances.

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NB: THIS TITLE DOES NOT COME WITH A CD OR ANY MUSIC BUT THERE IS SCOPE WITHIN THE SCRIPT TO PROVIDE YOUR OWN MUSIC IF DESIRED

Cast List. (29)

Trees.

Major Oak.

Lady Holly.

Ash.

Elm.

Birch.

Animals.

Badger.

Squirrel.

Frog.

Bird.

Rubbish / Recycling Kings.

Rubbish King 1 / King of
Plastic.

Rubbish King 2 / King of
Metal.

Rubbish King 3 / King of
Glass.

Rubbish King 4 / King of
Paper.

Rubbish King 5 / King of
Compost.

Builders.

Frank.

Ernie.

Flo.

Spencer.

Foreman.

Children.

Mabel.

Jill.

Anne.

George.

Harry.

Ecos.

Spike.

Fern.

Daisy.

Daffy.

Pigeon.

Props.

Scene 2.

Loose rubbish in sacks for the Rubbish Kings.

Scene 3.

Pack of playing cards.

Newspaper.

Flask and mug.

Lunch boxes.

Builders tools incl. Axes.

Ribbons to tie on trees.

Scene 4.

Five rucksacks (One for each of the children.)

Picnic Blanket.

Cushions.

Two books.

Tennis ball.

Lunch boxes and drink bottles.

Old Slipper.

Box of dog biscuits.

Scene 5.

Torches.

Backpacks.

Pop up tents.

Bed rolls.

Sleeping bags.

Scene 6.

Props as set out in scene 5 for the Ecos camp.

Scene 7.

Loose rubbish in sacks for the Rubbish Kings.

Rope.

Tabard/Band to identify the King of Plastic.

Tabard/Band to identify the King of Metal.

Tabard/Band to identify the King of Glass.

Tabard/Band to identify the King of Paper.

Tabard/Band to identify the King of Compost.

Tools.

Poles (x5).

Scene 8.

Streamers.

Balloons.

Party poppers

Costumes.

Trees should obviously look like trees. Brown top and bottoms with leaves attached. They could also have some real branches to hold, or be attached to their tops.

Builders are to wear jeans and grubby t-shirts with boots, hard hats and orange workman vests. Spencer must have a jacket.

Children wear casual clothes.

Ecos wear clothes in shades of orange, green or brown. They also wear boots and have a unifying emblem identifying them as a member of the Ecos on their tops.

Animals should resemble the animals they are representing.

Rubbish Kings wear black and have coats/long tabards made out of black bags. Attached to these coats are lots of items of rubbish.

Staging and Scenery.

This play could be performed on one stage with scenery and stage changes. The original intention of the playwright was that it should be performed on three stages thereby reducing the need for changing scenery and stage settings. The idea is for both the building site stage and the picnic site stage to be on raised staging blocks and the woodland stage to be located on the floor between them as in the following diagram.



The backdrop should resemble woodland behind all the stages, with perhaps a few less trees behind the building site. Additional stage setting is only needed on the Building site stage to make it resemble a building site with the addition of some crates for the builders to sit on.

Trouble in the Wood

Scene 1 – Welcome To The Wood (Woodland stage)

(Lights up on woodland stage) (The five character trees are planted in a semi-circle. The three little trees are in the middle with Lady Holly and Major Oak on either end of the line.)

ASH: I've got more leaves than you.

ELM: No you haven't.

ASH: Oh yes I have.

ELM: Haven't.

ASH: Have.

ELM: Haven't.

ASH: Have.

ELM: Haven't.

BIRCH: *(Interrupts)* Oh, for goodness sake. Will you two stop arguing! Anyway I've got more leaves than both of you put together.

ASH & ELM: No you haven't.

BIRCH: Have.

ASH & ELM: Haven't.

BIRCH: Have.

LADY HOLLY: Pack it in. If you three would stop squabbling like school children you'd notice that we have some special visitors who haven't been welcomed yet.

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: *(All 3 craning their branches for the best view of everyone)* Oh.... Where? Where?...Let me see...

ASH: How many are there? Oooo.... what a lot there are!

ELM: Look, there are big ones and little ones.

BIRCH: Don't say much though do they?

ELM: I didn't know they had 2 sizes.

ASH: What, did you think one size fits all?

BIRCH: Don't you know they start off really small, and then grow into big'uns, just like we do?

ELM: Wait a minute...Wait a minute! What do you mean we grow? I'm not growing I've always been this size.

BIRCH: You have been growing.

ELM: Haven't.

BIRCH: Have.

ELM: Haven't.

LADY HOLLY: Stop it you two. *(rubs head and sighs)* You're giving me a headache. *(addresses ELM patiently.)* Little one. When you were planted you were just an acorn and you have been growing bigger and taller ever since. Have you never noticed the ground getting further away?

ELM: Um...yes. But I thought the ground was shrinking.

ASH: Shrinking... *(starts laughing hysterically and waving branches around)* Ahh...ha... ha... ha

(BIRCH starts laughing too)

MAJOR OAK: *(Shaking his branches slowly as if he wakes from a slumber – He clears his throat)* Ahem...Now then... Stop laughing you two. It's an easy mistake to make. I used to think that when I grew big I would hit my head on the roof of the sky; but learning about things like that is all part of growing up, and you shouldn't make fun of the mistakes that others make. Apologise, and then you can all greet our guests like you were supposed to.

ASH & BIRCH: Sorry Elm.

(ASH, ELM & BIRCH turn and bend their branches to the audience in a bow)

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: Welcome to our wood.

MAJOR OAK: That's better. *(Now talking directly to the audience spreading branches in greeting)* We would indeed like to welcome you to our wood. We hope you enjoy your time here and would like to thank you for coming to hear our tale.

LADY HOLLY: First we must introduce ourselves. I'm Lady Holly and it is a pleasure to have your company here with us. That fine gentleman over there is Major Oak and the young ones are known as Ash, Elm and Birch.

ASH: I'm not little!

LADY HOLLY: Yes dear, I know. *(All the trees wave their branches in greeting to the audience)*

MAJOR OAK: With the introductions over it's time for me to start our tale. *(Voice drops and takes on a spooky tone aimed at building suspense)* It started on a cold and misty morning. A howl was heard deep in the forest. The wind whistled and moaned through my branches. I started to shake as the howling came nearer, and nearer, and nearer. The thing I feared most was coming towards me, faster and faster. I couldn't move out of its way...

LADY HOLLY: Will you stop that. Can't you see you are scaring the little ones? *(Ash, Elm and Birch are shaking with fright)* Besides, you're a tree; of course you couldn't move.

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: *(In quavering tones)* We're not scared!

LADY HOLLY: Of course you're not. *(turning to Major)* Major, if you don't tell the story you're supposed to, then I will.

MAJOR OAK: I was just trying to make things more exciting but if you're going to get your roots in a knot. *(Addressing the audience now)* Hmm ... Where to start ... We wouldn't be here today if it weren't for our friends. You see, sometime ago life in the Wood was under threat. But rather than just telling you about it, we're going to take you into the past and show you. Now to make this possible, we need you to close your eyes and wiggle from side to side as fast as you can.

LADY HOLLY: Shall we have a practice first... right... close your eyes and wiggle... *(everybody wiggles)* That was great everybody, so let's do it for real... 1... 2... 3... Go!

(Time travelling music plays while everybody wiggles) (Lights off) (Curtain Closes)

Scene 2 – Rubbish (Woodland Stage)

(Scene set as before – Time travelling music still plays as spotlight slowly comes on, lighting up the trees, then music ends.)

ASH: I've got more leaves than you.

ELM: No you haven't.

ASH: Yes I have.

ELM: Haven't.

ASH: Have. *(ENTER RUBBISH KINGS who start throwing rubbish around.)*

BIRCH: Oi... You lot, stop doing that, you're messing up the wood.

RKS: *(they chant)* We don't care. We don't care. We Rubbish Kings are everywhere.
Spreading rubbish all around. Leaving rubbish on the ground.

Trees: *(chant)* Come back here! Come back here! Are we the only ones that care?
Do not drop your litter please! It brings danger and disease!

(They spread more rubbish amid protests from the trees and then leave chanting their ditty again)

BIRCH: Oi... come back here and clean up your mess.

ELM: They can't hear you.

BIRCH: More like they don't want to hear me.

ASH: I have too got more leaves than you.

ELM: No you haven't. (*ENTER ANIMALS*)

ASH: I have too.

ELM: Haven't.

SQUIRREL: (*stands next to Birch*) They're not still having the same old argument are they.

BADGER: Those two are never happy unless they're arguing about their leaves.

BIRD: (*shakes head and looks around*) I see the Rubbish Kings have been here too. They've been all over the wood leaving their rubbish behind.

FROG: It's not just happening here. We're swimming in rubbish that's been thrown in the pond.

BIRD: I've seen rubbish everywhere, blowing in the wind, clogging up rivers, and spoiling the countryside.

FROG: Did you hear about that family of ducks and the plastic bottle that washed up near their nest.

BIRD: Humph... Ducks are very nosy.

FROG: I know, but the point is that one of them got his beak stuck in the bottle's neck, and he couldn't get it out again.

SQUIRREL: Oh no, he's not still got it attached has he? Poor thing, he'll starve.

FROG: Well, you know there are some humans who help animals and care for the en... en...en... Oh, what's the word? ... It's gone right out of my head: anyway they helped him.

SQUIRREL: Enigma.

BIRD: Energy.

FROG: Nope, that's not it.

SQUIRREL: Envelope.

BIRD: Engine

SQUIRREL: End.

FROG: How exactly are you supposed to care for an end?

BADGER: (*said quietly almost a whisper*) Environment.

FROG: What did you say Badger?

BADGER: Environment.

FROG: Badger, you've got it!

BADGER: Got what? I haven't got anything.

FROG: No. I meant that was the word I was after.

BADGER: Oh, now I've got it.

BIRD: What have you got, Badger?

BADGER: I've got it.

BIRD: What's it?

BADGER: I don't know. Ask Frog. He's got it too.

BIRD: What have you and Badger got?

FROG: The word I was looking for.

BIRD: Why were you looking for a word?

FROG: To finish off my sentence.

BIRD: What sentence?

FROG: The one about the humans who help animals and care for the environment.

BIRD: What's the environment, Frog?

FROG: It's the world we live in.

BIRD: Oh.

BADGER: They call themselves the Eco's

BIRD: Who do?

SQUIRREL: The humans Frog was talking about. They travel around and camp outside. I heard they helped save a wood once, and they're always rescuing sick or injured animals wherever they visit.

BADGER: If they came to our wood they could help us do something about those Rubbish Kings.

FROG: We could always try and get in touch with them on the woodland web. Do you think spider mail will be fast enough though?

SQUIRREL: I'm not sure, but I'll try anything if it just gets rid of those Litter Monsters.

FROG: Right then, where's the nearest web site?

BADGER: There's one by run by Eyespy Diwood near my den.

SQUIRREL: I'll come with you and we can send the message from there then. You never know I might remember where I stored my hazelnuts on the way.

FROG: Squirrel, you've forgotten where you buried them again? You're hopeless.

SQUIRREL: I can't help it. I just can't seem to make my brain remember where I leave them.

FROG: Well make sure you remember what message to send.

BADGER: Don't worry, I'll remember. Come along squirrel. Bye everyone. See you later.

(EXIT SQUIRREL and BADGER.)

(ENTER RUBBISH KINGS throwing rubbish again.)

RKS: *(they chant)* We don't care. We don't care. We Rubbish Kings are everywhere.
Spreading rubbish all around. Leaving rubbish on the ground.

ASH: Oh no. Not them again!

BIRD & FROG: Clear that up. Bye everyone. *(Start to chase Rubbish Kings around and off stage as Kings are still chanting)* Bin it. Don't drop it.

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: *(Call out as they're leaving)* Bye.

ASH: I have so, got more leaves than you.

ELM: Haven't.

ASH: Have.

BIRCH: For the last time: I've got the most leaves.

ASH: Haven't.

BIRCH: Have.

ELM: Haven't.

BIRCH: Have, have, have! *(Lights fade out during this argument) (Curtain Closes)*

Scene 3 – Meet The Builders

(Building Site Stage)

(Lights up) (Scene opens on a building site – 2 builders (Spencer and Flo) are playing cards. Ernie is sunbathing. Frank is reading a paper and drinking tea – It's their lunch break)

FRANK: Here listen to this. It says here that the laziest people at work are builders. Now, that's not right is it. We work hard and it's not easy being a builder. Not everyone can do it you know.

ERNIE: We know Frank. Being a builder is a work of art. If you don't build properly it all falls down. You say the same thing every day.

FLO: *(Looks up from playing cards)* Anyway, we're not building today. We're chopping down the wood. The building doesn't start until next week.

FRANK: Anyone know what it is we're building?

SPENCER: Car park. I heard the boss talking about it this morning. Now Flo, are you playing or not?

FLO: Okay, keep your hair on.

ERNIE: I reckon it's going to rain soon.

FRANK: What time Ernie? I could do with an early night.

ERNIE: After lunch I think.

SPENCER: How do you know that?

FLO: He hit his head on a weather vane, when we were doing a roof, a while ago. Ever since then he reckons he can predict the weather. He's normally wrong.

SPENCER: I'll bet you my jacket that it doesn't rain then, Ern.

ERNIE: You're on.

FLO: Big mistake, Spence.

SPENCER: Why? You said he's normally wrong.

FRANK: He is normally, except every time someone bets him it won't rain, it does.

ERNIE: You could always give me your jacket now.

SPENCER: I think I'll wait and see if it rains.

ERNIE: Suit yourself. *(ENTER FOREMAN)*

FOREMAN: Right, playtime's over. You've got 2 minutes to finish your lunch and get back to work.

BUILDERS: *(salute)* Yes Sir! *(EXIT FOREMAN)*

FRANK: 'Cor, Guv'nor's a right old slave driver. No chance of us being lazy with him around.

(They all start to pack up their lunch stuff, cards and paper etc and move to the Woodland Stage. During the following song they mime chopping down trees and adorn each tree with a ribbon to mark it for the chop.) (EXIT BUILDERS) (Lights Out) (Curtain Closes)

Scene 4 – Picnickers And Car Park (Picnic Stage)

(Lights up) (Scene opens on an empty stage sets as an open area in the wood – Enter the children (Jill, George, Harry, Mabel, Anne) with rucksacks, blanket and cushions – they proceed to set stuff out and 3 (Jill, George and Mabel) play catch while the other 2 (Harry, Anne) read books)

JILL: Why don't you two play catch with us?

ANNE: Because we're reading.

GEORGE: Oh. Leave them to it, Jill. They'll join us when they are ready. Anyway, three's an ideal number for piggy in the middle. Let's play that. I'll be the piggy first.

(They all play for a bit in silence apart from occasional remarks like 'good catch', or, 'bad luck', or, 'nearly caught it', from the players – after a while Anne heaves a sigh and closes her book)

ANNE: What a thrilling read! *(stretches out and yawns)* Has anyone got the time?

MABEL: *(looks at watch)* It's just past one. Let's have lunch.

JILL: Let's see what we've all brought along then.

(They unpack their rucksacks and put their goods on the picnic blanket, except Harry who is still reading.)

JILL: I made loads of sandwiches. I've got Jam, Chocolate Spread and Marmite.

MABEL: I hope they're not in the same sandwich.

GEORGE: Urghh... That would be revolting. Like eating kippers that smell of old socks. Yeuch.

MABEL: Are you trying to put us off our food George? 'Cos I feel sick now.

GEORGE: In that case it worked and I'll have yours if you don't want it. What did you bring anyway? *(takes a look in Mabel's box)* Cucumber sandwiches? How boring, and you've cut the crust off. I think I'll stick to mine. My dad reckons crusts put hairs on your chest.

MABEL: Why on earth would I want to put hair on my chest?

JILL: Harry did you remember to bring the pudding?

HARRY: *(without looking up from his book)* Yeah, it's in my bag.

JILL: *(Looks inside Harry's bag and pulls out an old slipper and some dog biscuits)* Did you actually take your head out of that book for long enough to actually see exactly what you were putting in your bag?

HARRY: *(still reading)* Uh-hu. *(Jill starts to laugh)*

MABEL: What's so funny? *(Jill shows her Harry's picnic. Mabel starts laughing too)*

GEORGE & ANNE: What's wrong with you two?

(They spot Harry's picnic and start to laugh too – Harry noticing something's up closes his book)

HARRY: Why are you laughing? *(notices slipper and dog biscuits)* Who brings slippers and dog biscuits to a picnic?

GEORGE: *(finding it hard to stop laughing)* Apparently, you do, you great ninny.

HARRY: Me?... What? ...Why? ...*(Harry sees the funny side and starts laughing too)*

(ENTER SPENCER from the direction of the building site.)

SPENCER: Erm... excuse me... excuse me... *(they all start to stop laughing and listen to Spencer)* Could you tell me where the loo is? I was told there was one near here. *(Jill points it out off stage for him)* Thanks. *(As he leaves they all start laughing again and then start to calm down and eat their picnic – there is an undercurrent of chatter. ENTER SPENCER again)*

SPENCER: Thanks for that. I don't think I could've held it for much longer and the building sites loo hasn't turned up yet. I better get back now though. Thanks again. *(he starts to exit)*

ANNE: *(follows him to the edge of the stage/wood)* By the way, what are you building?

SPENCER: Well ... The real building doesn't start until next Monday. First, we've got to clear the wood. That starts tomorrow once the rest of our equipment gets here. Once that's done we can start work on the car park. Look, I'd love to stay and chat but I've really got to get back. Cheerio. *(He waves goodbye and exits looking up at the sky as he goes)* Looks like Ernie's gonna win the bet after all. Shame, I really like this jacket. *(EXIT SPENCER. ANNE returns to others)*

MABEL: What were you two talking about?

ANNE: The building work. He said they're going to start chopping down the wood tomorrow, and that they're going to build a car park in its place.

MABEL: They can't do that.

HARRY: They can and they will, if nobody stops them.

JILL: We'll have nowhere to go for picnics, woodland walks, or just to play.

MABEL: What about all the animals that live in the wood?

GEORGE: You're right. We can't just sit by and let them destroy our wood without protest. I mean it's the last one left around here, as they've already destroyed all the others.

(George starts to sing or chant– the others join in from the second line)

CHILDREN:

We shall not, we shall not be moved. We shall not, we shall not be moved.

We shall not let them have our wood. We shall not be moved.

We will save, we will save this wood. We will save, we will save this wood.

If it means we stay here all night through. We will save this wood.

HARRY: Nice Idea George, but be practical, we can't stay here all night. We don't have any camping stuff, and our parents will be worried about us. Besides, it's starting to rain.

GEORGE: All right, but I'm coming back in the morning to have a word with those builders. I mean, why destroy a wood when there's a waste ground just up the road that they could build on?

ANNE: I'd forgotten about that wasteland. I wonder why they didn't build there instead. Maybe we could suggest it to them.

HARRY: Right, that's decided; we'll meet here in the morning and talk to those builders together. Now though, we'd better pack up quick before everything gets soaked. Mum'll be here in a minute to pick us up. *(They clear up quickly and exit off stage) (Lights out) (Curtain Closes)*

Scene 5 – The Ecos Arrive (Woodland stage)

(Lights up) (Scene opens on woodland stage with trees swaying in the wind and their ribbon still tied on.) (As they finish Badger, Squirrel and Frog enter stage among trees – Bird flies on stage.)

BIRD: They're coming. I found them. The Ecos are coming.

SQUIRREL: Oh good. You can all stop feeling sad now. They'll sort those Rubbish Kings out for us

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: No. No. That's not it.

BADGER: Why? Has something else happened?

ELM: Builders!

BIRD: They can't be worse than rubbish kings can they?

FROG: Surely you've seen builders on your travels Bird?

BIRD: Erm... well... I don't normally take a long look at what's below me unless I'm looking for dinner.

BIRCH: I've never been anywhere, and I know what they are.

BIRD: Well excuse me for not knowing.

BADGER: They're humans, whose job is to knock things down, and build new things in their place.

FROG: But why should builders bother you?

ASH: Because they're here, and they're going to chop us all down and build something called a car park. They've already started on the other side of the wood, and they're coming here tomorrow.

BIRD: Is a car park where all those metal boxes on wheels go to die? If it is then I've seen lots of them all over the place.

BADGER: Those metal boxes on wheels are called cars and they haven't died. They've just been turned off as they're not being used.

BIRD: I like them when they're turned off. They make the air taste bad when they're on, and they make all those noises and yucky smells.

FROG: You're missing the bigger picture though. They chop down trees to make the car parks.

ASH: That's what the ribbons are for...to mark us as trees to be cut down.

BIRD: But that's terrible.

FROG: I'm afraid some humans just don't care what they do to the environment.

SQUIRREL: Don't worry though. The Eco's will help us.

BADGER: I hope they can!

ASH, ELM & BIRCH: *(wail)* We don't want to die.

SQUIRREL: Don't worry. The Eco's will know what to do. Where were they when you left them, Bird?

BIRD: At the edge of town.

SQUIRREL: Let's stay here and wait for them to arrive then, as they should be here by this evening.

(They all bed down for the night at the rear of the stage.) (Lights fade down to indicate evening)

*(Enter the Ecos onto the woodland stage. They're holding torches and carrying backpacks.)
(Bird awakes, spots Ecos, and goes to greet them.)*

BIRD: You made it.

SPIKE: We said we would. *(turns to the other Eco's)* Ok chaps, let's set up camp and get some sleep. We've got a busy day tomorrow.

(The Ecos proceed to set out their tents and climb into their sleeping bags) (Lights Off) (Curtain Closes)

Scene 6 – The Campaign Starts (Picnic Stage – Woodland Stage)

(Lights up on picnic stage – Enter the Children.)

GEORGE: *(Yawning)* Remind me again exactly, why did we have to get up so early?

JILL: To help save the wood.

MABEL: You said we should get here before the builders, George. I'm not sure what we can do to stop them though.

GEORGE: We could chain ourselves to a tree.

ANNE: Oh be serious, George. They could cut down the whole forest around you while you were tied to that one tree.

HARRY: We've got to be smarter than that, and talk to the builders about what they are doing.

(Enter Spike onto picnic stage)

END OF SCRIPT PREVIEW