Roald Dahl’s The Twits- Descriptive Notes

Set

The Twits’ house in the middle of the stage is represented by a wide bed with a headboard, and posts at the four corners, that hold up the outline of a crooked roof and chimney made of wooden beams. The bed is covered in an ugly brown striped duvet with brown pillows. Knives, saws, and other nasty looking tools hang behind the bed, and there’s a crooked portrait of Mr and Mrs Twit is in the middle above the bedhead. A small wooden stool and a beaten up old chair are in front of the bed. The stool is on the left,: Mr Twit’s side of the bed, and the chair is on the right: Mrs Twit’s side.

The floor of the house has is made to look like floorboards covered with brown, black and red splatters of paint and it has uneven jagged edges. To the front left is a tall wooden cage covered in ivy. To the right front is a flat outline of two large rocks and a tall rusty gas meter. There’s a small rock in the front middle of the stage and two larger  flat, brown fabric covered outlines of rocks – one on the left and one in the middle behind the bed. In the back left is a round garden full of weeds, and there’s a tall scruffy tree at the back right. All over the stage, surrounding all the set pieces, are brown manky leaves, weeds, and scraps of rubbish.

Characters

Mr Twit has a scruffy brown beard and long wild, wiry hair. His grubby black trousers are too short and his black coat is too small. Under it is a dark plaid shirt. His bare feet are dirty. He walks with a gnarled, crooked posture and short, quick steps as if he doesn’t do enough healthy exercise or stand up straight. He has lots of energy when he gets excited, but his movements are uncoordinated. He often glares at the other characters and the audience and laughs with a wicked cackle.

Mrs Twit wears an ugly, flowing brown dress with a cream cardigan and carries a wooden walking stick with a curved top. . She is tall and strong and moves with a solid heaviness. When she’s trying to trick Mr Twit she giggles and prances like a little girl.

Gas Meter Reader Fred Bloggs wears long sleeved, dark blue coveralls with patches from the gas company. He has a bald head, expressive eyebrows and is clean shaven, so his big cheeky grins or furrowed brow clearly shows his thoughts. His movements also show his mood: he creeps along slowly and cautiously when danger is high and strides purposefully when he is feeling confident. He tries several disguises to fox the Twits.

Gas Meter Reader trainees are three female actors dressed in coveralls like the Gas Meter Reader, but in a lighter colour. They come onstage during the songs and dance like a chorus or backup singers. Two of them also work as puppeteers dressed in black and one becomes the Roly Poly Bird.

Frog is a large, squat green and shiny blue soft puppet, worn on the hand of a puppeteer wearing black. Frog has a wide pink tongued mouth and large, bulging eyes.

Two birds are played by two pairs of puppets each. The first pair show the birds when they are flying high up in the sky. The birds (one red, one blue).   are fixed to the end of long black poles and they have fringed outstretched wings and tails. When the birds are closer and about to land, the puppets are swapped offstage with glove puppets that are shaped like sitting birds, with wings tucked to their large bodies which balance on small clawed feet. These birds have wide, movable yellow beaks (where the puppeteers insert their hands) and large cartoon-like eyes,  fluffy mops of red and blue feathers on their heads. The birds are also worked by puppeteers dressed in black.

Muggle Wump is played by a human actor wearing a loose brown fur costume with a curled tail. Her face is painted in brown to look like the curved heart shape of a monkey’s face.

She leaps and bounces with bent knees, her long arms swinging, full of energy.

Roly Poly Bird is played by a human actor wearing a costume with an enormous, rounded bright blue body, short feathery wings, big orange bird feet, and a blue sparkly feather mask that sits over her eyes. She is bubbly and joyful. She moves with a springing bounce and constant flaps of her arms that makes her costume jiggle up and down and the rainbow coloured streamers that make her tail swish from side to side.

Scene 1

Music begins, and the Gas Meter Reader and three trainees walk out onto the stage, snapping their fingers. The song introduces the nasty Mr and Mrs Twit. At the end of the song, the Twits sit frozen in seats in front of the house, as the Gas Meter Reader introduces them. At the end of his speech, the Twits come to life and scare off all the meter readers. Mrs Twit pranks Mr Twit, putting her glass eye into his beer. He chokes and splutters and Mrs Twit laughs and laughs, as they both leave.

A Frog hops in, landing on the right side rock by the gas meter, catching flies. Mr Twit spots the Frog and persuades him to get under the covers of the bed, to trick Mrs Twit. Mrs Twit settles into bed and gasps as she feels something small and slimy. Mr Twit tells her it’s a giant skillywiggler! He sings a song about the skillywigger, dancing around the stage with the Gas Meter Readers, as we can see a lump bouncing and writhing under the covers around Mrs Twit.

At the end of the song, Mrs Twit is so frightened she faints! Mr Twit dumps a watering can onto her to rouse her. The frog pops up under Mrs Twit’s chin from below the duvet, and she struggles off the bed.  They frantically shake out the duvet, swapping it round and round, but there’s nothing there. Mr Twit sees something on Mrs Twit’s leg, and she frantically shakes it off- only to discover that it’s just her sock! She storms out and Mr Twit, cackling with glee, gets back into the bed with the Frog hopping onto Mrs Twits pillow.

The next morning, Mrs Twit carries in a small table with two plates and a saucepan of orange spaghetti. She gets a nasty idea, and creeps over to the brown and sorry looking potted plant by the right side rocks. Uprooting it from a tin bucket, she plucks long, pink wriggling worms from underneath, and add them to Mr Twit’s spaghetti.

Mr Twit comes in for lunch, munching up the spaghetti and worms. When Mrs Twit reveals what she’s done, Mr Twit gags and splutters over the audience! They leave and the lights dim, and the Twits tuck themselves into bed as nighttime crickets are heard.

Mr Twit creeps out of bed, and picks up Mrs Twit’s walking stick (interrupted by a barking dog, causing Mr Twit to stiffen and look round with a glare), carrying it around the back of the house, where he makes an enormous noise of hammering and sawing. He returns with the stick- he’s nailed a long piece of wood to the bottom so the stick is now almost twice as long. He picks up Mrs Twit’s chair (interrupted once more by the dog) and repeats the exercise, returning a very tall chair to the front of the bed. Mr Twit settles back in bed as the alarm rings.

Mrs Twit gets out of bed and picks up her long stick. Mr Twit tells her she must have caught the “Shrinks” as the stick, and the chair, are much too big for her! Mr Twit sings a song about the “Shrinks” accompanied by the gas meter readers.

Mr Twit takes Mrs Twit into the garden to stretch her. He ties rope around her ankles and ties the rope to a rock at the front of the stage. He hands Mrs Twit a large bunch of orange balloons, and she is pulled upward. Mr Twit cuts the rope, and a lighting effect makes it appear like Mrs Twit is soaring up into the sky!

Mrs Twit sings a song about going to the moon. The gas meter readers, holding fluffy cartoon clouds on sticks, join her. In the song, Mrs Twit realises she can come back down by getting rid of the balloons. She hands them one by one to the gas meter readers. Mr Twit sits down on a stool to enjoy a beer as Mrs Twit lands back in the garden, and she pummels him with her remaining balloon in a fury.

The Gas Meter Reader sneaks in, dressed as a tree, to try to read the gas meter. But the Twits enter with a bucket of glue to paint on the right side rocks, for catching birds for bird pie. The Gas Meter Reader hides behind the rock and stays very still, but the Twits eventually spot him and chase him away. Two birds fly in and get stuck in the glue, and Mr Twit catches them. Mrs Twit takes them inside for the pie and Mr Twit looks for Muggle Wump the monkey for circus training.

The Gas Meter Reader enters, this time dressed as a garden gnome. He’s almost to the gas meter when he hears Mr Twit and has to hide again, in the garden at the back of the stage on the left. Muggle Wump appears and climbs up the tree. Mr Twit chases Muggle Wump all around the stage, eventually ending up with Muggle Wump on his shoulders trying to get the banana Mr Twit pulled out of this pocket. Mrs Twit joins in the taunt Muggle Wump with the banana.

Mr Twit gets Muggle Wump off his back. He wants Muggle Wump to perform upside down tricks, but Muggle Wump instead crawls through his legs and makes Mr Twit tumble head over heels trying to catch her. Muggle Wump laughs. The Twits make Muggle Wump do the Muggle Wump Jive upside down, and then Mr Twit cruelly eats a banana in front of Muggle Wump. Mr Twit will only give Muggle Wump a banana if she eats it upside down, so she does a handstand and hangs with her legs over Mr Twit’s shoulders as she eats. Muggle Wump does a raspberry in Mr Twit’s face, spitting banana all over him.

The Gas Meter Reader runs over to try to protect Muggle Wump, but ends up stuck in the glue. He escapes by untying his shoes and running off.

When the Twits are gone, Muggle Wump tells the audience how much she hates living with the Twits. She teaches everyone the Muggle Wump Jive the right way up. After the song, two more birds fly in. Muggle Wump tries to warn them, but they don’t understand her and they get stuck in the glue. Mr Twit catches the birds for the pie. Muggle Wump sings a song about friendship, during which we meet Roly Poly Bird, Muggle Wump’s best friend. Roly Poly Bird helps warn two new birds to stay off the glue covered rock. The birds tease Mr Twit, who tries to catch them but ends up stuck to the rock himself! Mrs Twit pulls Mr Twit off the rock, and they both tumble over.

Angry, Mr Twit and Mrs Twit go into town to buy guns to shoot the birds. They lock Muggle Wump in her cage. Once they are gone, Roly Poly Bird helps Muggle Wump escape the cage, and Muggle Wump plans an upside down trick for the Twits. Muggle Wump and Roly Poly Bird turn everything in the Twits’ house upside down. When the Twits return, shooting the audience with water from water pistols, Roly Poly Bird paints glue on the tops of their heads. When the Twits go inside, they think they are hanging upside down!

The Twits decide to stand on their heads to be right way up. They get on the bed with their heads hanging down and their feet sticking up, and their heads stick with a loud squelch- they are stuck, upside down. The Twits shout for help as Muggle Wump and Roly Poly Bird fly away to be free, with two birds following behind them.

The Twits realise they both have the Shrinks. The gas meter readers sing the Shrinky Shrink Blues as the Twits slowly shrug out of coats and shoes, leaving them behind on the bed, and then float away as ghosts.

The Gas Meter Reader, dressed as an old lady, returns to see the Twits have disappeared. He is overjoyed! He delivers their gas bill, and leaves.

The full cast returns to sing the finale song as they all bow, and leave the stage.