

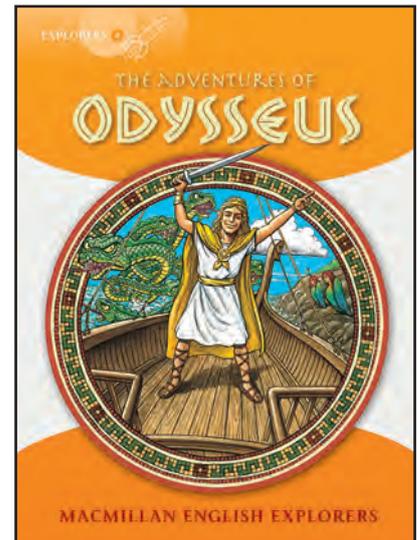
Drama projects

Longer drama projects often involve rehearsing and performing a play in front of an audience. We will look at the steps involved in doing that. However, there are other drama projects you can do with your children. Here are a few ideas.

Fortune-tellers (developing and confident readers, aged 6–12)

Aim: to encourage children to generate original ideas.

In this activity, children predict the future of the main story character or characters by pretending to be a fortune-teller. Ideally these should be characters with a very uncertain future, such as Odysseus in [The Adventures of Odysseus](#) (*Explorers*, Level 4).



- 1 Discuss fortune-tellers with children, and show them a simplified prediction that a fortune-teller might make, such as this:

You will meet a famous person this month. You will become very good friends. This person will help you in the future. You will become rich and famous.

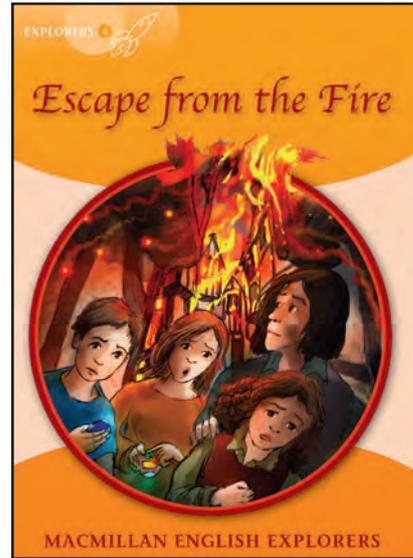
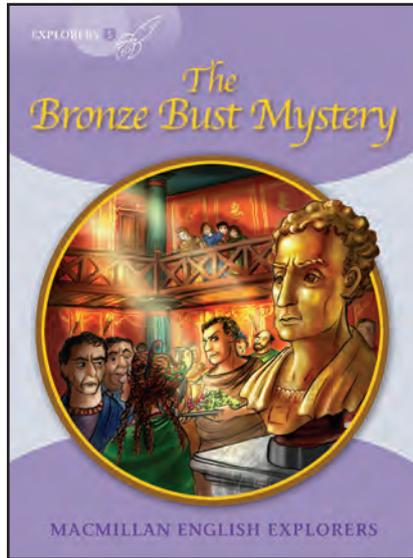
- 2 In class, children discuss the future of your chosen character. For example in the story above, will Odysseus ...
 - Sail home to Ithaca?
 - See his wife again?
 - Fight with a monster?
 - Become a prisoner?
 - Die in a storm?
 - Lose his ship?
 - Go back to Troy?
- 3 In class, children write a short one-paragraph prediction for their characters. Monitor and give help with difficult language.
- 4 As you move around the class, check children's predictions, asking questions and encouraging children to add details.
- 5 Divide the class into pairs. Children take it in turn to be the character and the fortune-teller. If you are reading *Odysseus*, you may wish to explain that in Ancient Greece, fortune-tellers were called 'oracles', and there were very famous oracles, such as the oracle at Delphi.
- 6 Ask strong pairs of children to act out their scene in front of the class. You may wish to give them some props to use as well, such as a glass ball or fake fortune-telling cards.

Depending on the attitude to fortune-telling in your country, you may wish to explain that fortune-tellers are popular all over the world, but that there is no scientific evidence that fortune-telling works, and most people no longer believe in it.

News readers (developing and confident readers, aged 6–12)

Aim: to teach children how to present factual information.

This activity is suitable for use with a collection of Readers, such as the Readers from a class library. Choose Readers that mention events which might be the subject of a news report. For example, the theft of an important bronze statue in Ancient Rome in [The Bronze Bust Mystery](#) (*Explorers*, Level 5) or the fire in [Escape from the Fire](#) (*Explorers*, Level 4).

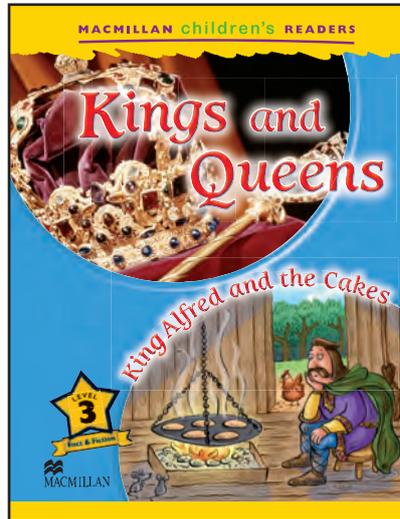


- 1 Write news headlines on pieces of paper and put them in envelopes.
- 2 Divide the class into groups and give one envelope to each group. Children match the headlines to events in the Readers.
- 3 Ask children to choose one of the headlines and write a short, one-paragraph news story about the event.
- 4 Discuss news programmes on TV, and tell children that they are going to dramatize a news programme.
 - With a weaker class, ask children to volunteer to be news readers and read their articles as part of a 'TV news' programme.
 - With a stronger class, ask groups of children to choose one of the events and dramatize a news report. Children improvise a scene in which a news reporter interviews the story characters about the event.

Making a radio play (confident readers, aged 8–12)

Aim: using voices to convey emotions.

This activity is easiest to do with a Reader which is already written in dialogue format, such as most of the stories in *Macmillan Children's Readers*. Choose a story with lots of different emotions, such as [Kings and Queens: King Alfred and the Cakes](#) (*Macmillan Children's Readers*, Level 3).



- 1 Divide the Reader into scenes and give each group one scene from the Reader. Groups may be divided into unequal numbers according to the number of speaking parts in each scene. Alternatively, some groups could have several narrators.
- 2 Tell children that they are going to make a radio play, with each group recording a scene from the story. In groups, children rehearse their roles. Allow plenty of time for this.
- 3 Each group of children acts out and records their scene on a digital recording device. You need to set up a time and place to do this, where other children will not be able to watch. For example, groups could record their scenes over lunch break. It is important to choose a place where there isn't much background noise.
- 4 In class, play each scene from the radio play in turn. At the end of each scene, ask questions about the scene, and about what has happened in the story before and after this point.
- 5 Play the whole radio play to the class. Children may wish to vote for the best scene. Make sure that each group receives plenty of praise.

Making a film (confident readers, aged 8–12)

Aim: to promote children's awareness of their own skills in acting and English; to encourage a sense of achievement by allowing children to have a record of their performance.

This activity is easiest to do with a Reader which is already written in dialogue format, such as most of the stories in *Macmillan Children's Readers*.

- 1 Divide the Reader into scenes.
- 2 Explain that you are going to make a film of your Reader, and divide the class into groups. Each group should have enough children in it for these roles:
 - The main characters in each scene
 - A narrator
 - Extras
 - Children to do sound effects
 - A camera person

Note that the group sizes may vary according to the number of extras and characters required to perform each scene.

- 3 In groups, children rehearse their roles. Allow plenty of time for this, repeating over several classes if necessary.
- 4 Each group of children acts out their scene. When children are recording their scene, monitor closely, playing the role of director. In particular, make sure that the sound effects are produced at the right time and that the camera person is able to film the scene. Most mobile phones have decent filming capacity.

You need to set up a time and place to film each scene, where other children will not be able to watch the actors. For example, each group could record their scene over a lunch break. It is also important to choose a place where there isn't much background noise.

If necessary, film several takes for each group until children are acting confidently on camera.

- 5 Load the film clips from each group onto a computer. Select one take from each group and paste the scenes together. You can download free film-editing software to do this from the Internet.

- 6 In class, play each scene from the film in turn. Children watch and comment on their performance. Make sure that each group receives plenty of praise.

- 7 You may wish to find or buy a cheap trophy, so that children can vote for the best scene and award an 'Oscar™'. You could also invite other classes to a screening of your film. Ask children to design tickets and a film poster.



Lights, Camera, Action! On Location

Trailers (confident readers, aged 8–12)

Aim: either to review the key events of the story after reading or to encourage children to make predictions about the story prior to reading.

This is an alternative version of the film project, and involves making a trailer for a story. The activity can be based on key events in the story (after reading) or it can use the chapter headings, pictures and blurb to predict the events of the story (pre-reading).

- 1 Discuss film trailers with children, and tell them that they are going to make a trailer for their Reader.
- 2 Divide the class into groups. Each group discusses the events in the story that will be shown in their trailer. They do this either by remembering the events of a story that they have read or by making predictions about a story that they haven't yet read (based on the pictures, chapter headings and blurb.)
- 3 Each group:
 - Decides on the characters to put in the trailer.
 - Prepares lines for the characters to say and actions for them to perform.
 - Allocates roles, including the camera person and non-speaking parts.

Monitor and help throughout.

- 4 Set up a time and place to film each scene. If necessary, film several takes for each group until children are acting confidently on camera.
- 5 In class, play each trailer in turn. Children watch and comment on their performance.
- 6 If you have done this activity prior to reading the Reader, play the trailers again when children have read the story. As a class or in groups, children compare the predicted events in their trailers with the actual events in the story.

Making a puppet show (any level and age)

Aim: to focus on character and performing a play in a different way.

This activity is easiest to do with a Reader which is already written in dialogue format, such as *Hide and Seek* (Macmillan Children's Readers, Level 1), or almost any other story in *Macmillan Children's Readers*.

- 1 Divide the Reader into scenes and give each group one scene from the Reader. Groups may be divided into unequal numbers according to the number of speaking parts in each scene. Alternatively, some groups could have several narrators. Have children identify the characters in their scene.
- 2 Either use class puppets, or have the children create simple finger or hand puppets based on the characters. You will also need to create a puppet 'stage'. This can be something as simple as a desk with a cloth over it for children to crouch behind, or the children can help to create a stage based on the Reader.
- 3 With younger children, read out the scene yourself. With older children, allocate speaking parts.
- 4 Each group takes it in turn to perform their puppet show to the rest of the class.

