

Tell Me a Story: Merman



This activity has been designed to support Arts Award Explore but can readily be adapted for other levels or used to inspire fun activities undertaken without formal Arts Award assessment.

The inspiration for this session is Marmaduke the Merman

Also known as Ringo the Man-Fish, a strange monkey fishy clawed creature said to have been found a hundred years ago, off the coast of China. Is he real do you think? Throughout history there have been folklore, stories and tales about the mysteries of the sea.



He might not look like the mermaids we think of today but 200 years ago small creatures like this were taken all over the world and sold to western sailors by traders in Asia. These mermaids were displayed in shows and became one of the biggest hoaxes of the 19th Century where they sparked the imaginations of people all around the world.

We don't know exactly how old Marmaduke is, but there's some evidence that he was on display in an American fair in the 1820's, where adults would pay \$2 (and children \$1) to see this mysterious creature from the deep. During this time there was a big interest in the macabre, and audiences would pay lots to see something supernatural and obscure things.

Initial discussion at the Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum

In groups of 8-10, look at Merman and discuss what people think it is and speculate why it was created.

Talk about other mythical creatures eg. Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, Hippogriff

Aim: Create a false news story about the Merman

Scenario: Your job is to create a false news story for the radio about the Merman to convince listeners that you really have found a merman.

Give each pair of children one or more of the following, to help them create their story:

- ◆ Describe the merman – it's size, what it looks like, how old it looks.
- ◆ Describe where you found it.
- ◆ By whom was it found?
- ◆ How did you come to find it?
- ◆ Decide what you are going to do with it.

Assign roles: reporter, four children + teacher who found it.

Have another two people as experts who are going to say it is fake.

- ◆ Why is it not real? think of two pieces of evidence to disprove it.

Collect all the answers together and compile a radio interview.

Practise your interview and then perform it for the rest of the class, either at the museum or at school. Remember to record it on phone or tablet.

After your visit

If submitting for Arts Award assessment: Check the recording of the radio interview for audibility re record if necessary. Ideally, ask the children to say their first names on the recording to ensure the recording can be matched with other assessment data.

Revisit story, refine and practise. Tell your story in assembly. Record and make stories available at listening station/put on school website.

Research false news eg: Piltdown Man (tiny.cc/piltdown); Spaghetti tree April Fool (tiny.cc/spaghetti-tree) and misinformation about Covid cures

Research mermaids/mermen. Read The Little Mermaid story by Hans Christian Andersen or listen to it by visiting: tiny.cc/little-mermaid

Remote Learning Suggestion

Look at the photo of the Merman. Aim: Create a story involving the Merman.

Here are some suggestions to help you come up with ideas:

- ◆ Where does it normally live?
- ◆ How was it captured?
- ◆ Does it have some superpowers?
- ◆ What is it scared of?
- ◆ What would it like to do?

Ways you could record your story:

- ◆ Draw a comic/ graphic novel
- ◆ Tell your story out loud and record it on your phone or tablet
- ◆ Write your story and leave spaces for pictures

Other suggestions to help achieve Arts Award

Don't forget, the creation of this radio interview is one of the 'range of activities' required to achieve Arts Award 'Explore level'. The evidence for this would be the recording of the dialogue in a digital format (eg. memory stick or upload) to be submitted with the rest of the portfolio and accompanying photographs of participation in the activities/assemblies. Children also need to give a personal response to their participation eg. "I enjoyed doing this because..."

Art activities

- ◆ Use clay to create your own incredible creature. For inspiration, search online for 'chimera' - a fire-breathing female monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail from Greek mythology.
- ◆ Make a set of cards with head body and legs of different animals to interchange (like the game Jumbalup).
- ◆ Make up a story where animals transform from one shape to another
- ◆ Imagine this Merman could speak. Create a radio interview you have with this creature

Art institutions

Find out about:

- ◆ The Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum:
museum.maritimearchaeologytrust.org
- ◆ Sea City Museum, Southampton
seacitymuseum.co.uk

Other Artists

- ◆ Walt Disney and animation/cartoon artists:
tiny.cc/disney-bio
- ◆ Mythical creatures in Harry Potter: tiny.cc/hp-creatures
- ◆ Food portraits by Guiseppe Arcimboldo:
tiny.cc/arcim

Presentation To fulfil the final part of the Explore level Arts Award, each student must share with others what they have enjoyed and/or achieved through completing their Arts Award. This could be done in an assembly or on a one to one basis with a child from another class. Each child would explain what they have created and how they felt about the process. (NB. A photo of this is useful evidence.)

Other Treasures from Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum

Siebe Gorman & Co diving helmet and suit

This is an example of an early 20th century suit and helmet used in commercial and military diving and underwater salvage.



In 1823 Charles and John Deane designed a diving helmet by adapting a smoke helmet. They used it to dive the wreck of the Carn Brea Castle off the Isle of Wight in 1829, the first time a diving helmet had been successfully used for salvaging cargo from a wreck. Working with the Deanes, Augustus Siebe created the first closed deep sea helmet in 1830. It had an innovative valve which stopped the diver's suit from flooding, no matter which angle they were at underwater.

Activities

- ◆ Make up an underwater treasure story
- ◆ Record an audio guide of the helmet for someone with a visual impairment

'Brown Bess' musket from the shipwreck of the 'Henry Addington'

At the time of its sinking, the 'Henry Addington' was on its second



journey, carrying bale goods and naval stores. The ship had previously stopped at Portsmouth after its initial departure from London.

'Brown Bess' muskets were widely used by the British Army and other armies around the world, they were the standard choice between 1722 and 1838. The East India Trading Company, who the ship was in service to, was a supplier and contributor to Britain's military in the 18th century.

Activities

- ◆ The last hour – make up a podcast by the ship's boy
- ◆ Make up a sea shanty about running away to sea

Arts Award To achieve an Arts Award Explore Level, children and young people have to collect evidence in an individual arts log of their experiences of:

- ◆ taking part in a range of arts activities, including a personal response about what has inspired them about taking part
- ◆ the work of artists or craftspeople and arts organisations
- ◆ creating a piece of artwork
- ◆ sharing with others what they have enjoyed and/or achieved through completing their Arts Award

Refer to the Arts Award website for detailed guidelines: www.artsaward.org.uk

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