



Ten expressive arts activities for any book

The activities in this resource are linked to expressive arts and have been designed so that they can be used with almost any fiction text.

The activities will allow young people to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions through expressive arts.

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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Contents

Getting started: choosing a character	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 1: Can you be a designer?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 2: Time to dance.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 3: Compose a soundscape.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 4: Add character	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 5: A time or place for art	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 6: Make a playlist.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 7: What happens next	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 8: Can you be an illustrator?.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 9: In the mood	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Activity 10: Bring the book to life.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Some inspirational links	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Getting started: choosing a character

To start you off . . . chose a character from the book and create a profile for them.

What does the book tell you about their likes or dislikes? You may have to work it out from their actions or the things they have around them. Who are their friends? What do they eat? What are their clothes like? What artist would they like? What kind of music do they like?

Activity 1: Can you be a designer?

Solve a design problem for a character in the book.

Early level EXA 0-06a

- Design a piece of tableware for your character e.g. a plate, bowl or mug.
- Design and decorate a plate for a character in the book. You can use paper, paper plates, card or clay.
- What do they do in the story? What can you tell about the character from the descriptions or actions? What do you think their favourite colour might be?

First level EXA 1-06a

- Design a bedroom for your character. Think about what they would need.
- Create a mood board to reflect your design ideas.
- Draw a plan of the room from above and detail the layout.
- Design a pattern for the bedding and wallpaper.

Second level EXA 2-06a

- Design a bedroom for your character. Think about what they would need.
- Create a mood board to reflect your design ideas.
- Draw a plan of the room from above and detail the layout.
- Draw a 3D one point perspective drawing and create the room in full colour.

Activity 2: Time to dance

Devise or learn a dance inspired by a character and the time period or world they are set in. You could have a celebration tea dance themed on the book. Make up or learn a dance that would suit the characters.

Early level EXA 0-08a EXA 0-09a

- Create a happy dance.
- Devise four different dance moves.
- Practice each move to a beat of four or eight.
- Repeat the pattern to create a dance.

First level EXA 1-08a EXA 1-09a EXA 1-10a

- Create a happy dance using percussion or music to set the rhyme.
- Working with a partner, use travel, turn, jump, gesture, pause and fall to create a short dance.
- Perform the dance for friends.

Second level EXA 2-08a EXA 2-09a EXA 2-10a

- Create a celebration dance in pairs using percussion or music to set the rhythm.
- Investigate a range of dance styles, features and cultures and learn a short dance.
- Discuss coordination and control and demonstrate it in dance sequences.
- Create and rehearse a short original dance piece, comprising several sequences, to music or a rhythm.
- Teach the dance to another pair and perform to friends.

Activity 3: Compose a soundscape

Compose a soundscape for all or part of the story. First, choose part of the book and identify the types of sounds that match the action. Use found materials and musical instruments to make sounds to match actions and record it.

Early level EXA 0-17a EXA 0-18a

- Explore loud and quiet, rhythm, fast and slow using voice, clapping or tapping.
- Using simple percussion, create sounds to accompany the story.

First level EXA 1-17a EXA 1-18a

- Explore musical ideas using voice, instruments and technology to create different sounds, rhythm, pitch and dynamics.
- Create a soundscape by adding tuned/ un-tuned percussion to enhance the story.

Second level EXA 2-18a EXA 2-19a

- Explore musical ideas using voice, instruments and technology to create different sounds, rhythm, pitch and dynamics.
- Create a soundscape by adding tuned/un-tuned percussion to enhance the story.
- Experiment with sounds to match descriptions from the story.
- Record sounds on iPad or phone.
- Edit sounds to follow the story line.

- Play the soundscape to your classmates to see if they can identify the part of the story it accompanies.

Activity 4: Add character

Add a character to the story. It could be a made up character, or pupils could add themselves to the story. Plan and write a script then act out their new interactions with the existing characters.

Early level EXA 0-13a EXA 0-14a

- Use facial expressions to convey the feelings described in the story.
- What would happen if you were in the story? How would you feel? What would you say or do?

First level EXA 1-13a EXA 1-14a

- Use voice and movement to respond to a character from the story. Can you show feelings and emotions in your response?
- Have a go at writing a short script using the story as a starting point.
- Act out the new scene for your classmates.

Second level EXA 2-12a EXA 2-13a EXA 2-14a

- Write a short script adding a new character to the story.
- Convey the new character's feelings using movement and body language.
- Use expression and voice to convey the action of the characters.
- Land your character in different parts of the story and improvise their response to the action.

Activity 5: A time or place for art

Look at and discuss art from the time period, country or town the book is set in. Use it as a stimulus for your own artwork.

Early level EXA 0-07a

- If using a picture book, use the illustrations as a stimulus for your own artwork.
- Discuss the images using simple artistic language including colour, shape, line, pattern and express likes and dislikes.

First level EXA 1-07a

- From the character description can you work out what kind of art they would prefer .

- Identify art styles that could be in the book. Respond to artists' work by sharing thoughts and feelings towards the work of at least one artist and one designer.
- Create your own artwork in the style identified in the story.

Second level EXA 2-07a

- From the character description can you work out what kind of art they would prefer.
- Identify art styles that could be in the book. Respond to artists work by sharing thoughts and feelings towards the work of at least one artist and one designer.
- Create your own artwork in the style identified in the story.
- Hold an art exhibition that is themed around the book. Display your work alongside the work of artists that inspired you.

Activity 6: Make a playlist

Make up a music playlist for a character to enjoy. Make a playlist based on the theme of the book.

Early level EXA 0-16a EXA 0-18a

- Learn and sing nursery rhymes that your character would enjoy or that match the book.

First level EXA 1-18a EXA 1-19a

- Make a playlist of songs for a character.
- Discuss the themes in the book and use the mood to help set the tone for a playlist.

Second level EXA 2-18a EXA 2-19a

- Make a playlist of music for a character.
- Discuss the themes in the book and use the mood to help set the tone for a playlist.
- Discuss music used in film to create atmosphere.
- Make up a playlist that matches the story line of the book.

Activity 7: What happens next . . .

Plan and create an alternative next chapter then act it out.

Early level EXA 0-13a EXA 0-14a

- Read part of the book then pause to allow the children to act out the emotions and actions they feel will happen next.

First level EXA 1-13a EXA 1-14a

- Read part of the book and pause at a cliff hanger.
- Improvise the next scene of the story.

Second level EXA 2-13a EXA -14a

- Read part of the book and pause at a cliff hanger.
- Improvise the next scene of the story.
- Read the next part of the story and compare the two story lines. Which one works best? Are they similar? Are you surprised?

Activity 8: Can you be an illustrator?

Respond to a description from the book and draw the character, setting, action or event.

Select a descriptive section and set a task to draw what is described by the text. Allow the children to experiment and select their own media and style appropriate to stage.

Early level EXA 0-02a EXA 0-06a

First level EXA 1-02a EXA 1-06a

Second level EXA 2-02a EXA 2-06a

Activity 9: In the mood

Use the mood of the book to inspire a piece of music, short performance, artwork or dance.

Focus on feelings and emotions. Talk about the mood, tone, and pace of the book. Generate and display a class word bank of the feelings and emotions.

Can the word bank be reflected in an art form? Can you reflect the shape of the story in the book in your work? Is there a lot of repetition? Is there a big climax? It can be as simple as pace, fast or slow.

Colours are known to reflect mood. Discuss the choice of colours in hospitals compared to funfairs.

We show our emotions through body language. Can body language be used to reflect the story?

Music is used in film to set the scene and emotion. Can you identify the feeling a piece of music evokes?

Activity 10: Bring the book to life

Create a 3D version of the book in the class. Add sensory experiences with sounds, smells and textures. Include mirrors for children to use to become part of the installation. This can be done in a number of ways to suit your setting.

Use a tent or partitions to create a space and then turn it into a room from the book.

Create a space under a desk that reflects a setting from the book.

Place a table or desk against a wall and create the world on the surface, on the wall and even underneath the desk.

Collect or make your own objects from the story.

Using a cardboard box as a frame, create a mini world representing the book. You can close it off and create viewing windows.

Use sounds, smells, textures, excerpts from the book in your installation. Add little speech bubbles or labels with instructions for users on how to interact and use the installation.

Some inspirational links

- [National Theatre Scotland](#)
- [Royal Scottish National Orchestra- School and Nursery programmes](#)
- [Scottish Chamber Orchestra](#)
- [Scottish Ballet](#)
- [Scottish Opera](#)