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Using This Book

This book, *Classroom Activities*, contains lesson plans of activities around a castle theme. *Classroom Activities* is a supplement to the *Parent's Guide*. The *Parent's Guide* contains all the information you need about using **My Make Believe Castle** on the computer. As teachers, you know that the activities in the classroom and home are as important, if not more important, than the on-computer activities. Connecting classroom activities to the computer environment helps children integrate new concepts and information with their existing knowledge. A thematic unit on castles enriches children's play with **My Make Believe Castle** on the computer and their development in the classroom environment.

Introduction

My Make Believe Castle is an imaginary play environment inviting children to explore and learn. It was designed to support the following objectives:

To foster imaginative play and creativity

Young children in every culture engage in imaginary play. Psychologists maintain that play is very significant for young children's cognitive and social development. In fact, imaginative activity serves emotional and cognitive functions throughout life. For example, there is some evidence that an imaginative attitude is linked to divergent thinking processes involved in creativity.

The cognitive and social benefits of engaging in imaginative play include:

- increasing the capacity for using internal representation
- allowing children to assimilate aspects of the environment which puzzle, interest, or frighten them into their own conceptual framework
- strengthening children's ability to deal with hypothetical situations
- increasing social competence by allowing children to try out adult roles and interact with other children

My Make Believe Castle provides opportunities for sustained imaginative play. It is open-ended so children can create new make-believe situations each time they play. **My Make Believe Castle** encourages creativity with activities such as Painting in which children can draw their own picture, and the Harp where children can make their own tune.

To develop problem solving skills

The steps in problem solving involve:

- identifying a problem
- generating and testing hypotheses
- interpreting results
- drawing conclusions and generalizations

Often what is a problem to an adult is not identified as one for a young child. With the help of a teacher or parent, **My Make Believe Castle** encourages children to identify problems and seek solutions. The section, More Things to Do in the *Parent's Guide*, has a list of challenging questions to provide opportunities for problem solving within each room of the castle. Certain activities, such as the obstacle course and the maze, encourage children to use spatial awareness and reasoning to solve these problems. The catapult activity gives children opportunities to experiment, by testing their hypotheses and evaluating the results.

To develop critical thinking skills

Critical thinking skills in mathematics and language include making inferences, recognizing sequences, classifying, using numbers, and making decisions. Teachers can use elements of **My Make Believe Castle** to enhance these skills. For example, children can find a hidden scroll in four rooms in the castle. Following the sequence on the scroll allows them to enter an obstacle course. Children must recognize there is a sequence and then follow it in order to solve the problem.

Activities

These activities were developed as a thematic unit on castles and medieval times. The first activity introduces the idea of a castle through a story to stimulate the children's imagination. Ideally, try to introduce **My Make Believe Castle** to the children in small groups. Briefly demonstrate how to make a character move and change action. Let the children take turns (minimum 20 minutes) playing with the program.

Make the software available as one of the play areas for children's exploration during free play. Every day or so, you may want to do brief "group sessions" with the children to consolidate their understanding and to introduce new ideas. For example, ask children some questions (see *More Things to Do, Parent's Guide*) to point out problems to solve or clickable spots in a room. Show the children how to find the help in each room (the flag with a ?) and encourage them to help one another. Each room has an activity. Show the children how to access and play in the activity (for example, the maze in the Woods).

The activities suggested in the following section were designed to relate the software castle to real world activities. For example, demonstrate how to make a crest with **My Make Believe Castle**, then let each child have a turn making his or her own. Making a crest allows a child to save his or her own castle layout (see *Saving and Opening Castles, Parent's Guide*). When you are doing the Family Crest activity (page 9), point out the similarities between the class activity and the on-computer activity. These kinds of discussions will enrich the children's time off and on computer.

While the children are involved in the castle theme, provide castle stories in the reading corner as well as castle costumes in the house corner. A culmination to these activities could be a castle day in which parents are invited to participate. Children dress in costumes and display their castle artwork, play music, do puppet theater, eat foods from ancient times, and tell stories about the castle.

Activity 1: Introduce the Castle Theme

Divide this activity into 2 parts. The first part entails reading the story about the castle. Then introduce **My Make Believe Castle** in small groups. In the second part of the activity, have the discussion about the castle rooms and inhabitants.

Content Objectives

The children's imagination about castles will be stimulated. The children will be introduced to the idea of a castle, its rooms, and inhabitants.

Developmental Objectives

cognitive
language
social

Materials

- pictures of castles from fairy tales, travel magazines, books
- story in which a castle is the location (see Play Activities in the Real World, *Parent's Guide*)

Procedure

Part 1: Gather the children in a circle. Read the story. Be sure to show the pictures as you read. After reading, discuss which characters appeared in the story. "Was there a queen or princess? A king or prince? A scary creature?"

Part 2: Show pictures of various castles. Ask the children if they know what they are. When someone identifies them as castles, ask if there are real castles. "Who lives in a castle?" When children give answers such as queens, princesses, kings, ask if there are any real queens and kings. Then discuss who lives in **My Make Believe Castle**.

Ask, “Where is the entrance to the castle? What are the rooms?” Tell them to think about **My Make Believe Castle**. “Which rooms did they personally explore?” At this point they may have only seen the outside of the castle (you may want to have this discussion again later on). Introduce the idea of a Great Hall. “What did people do in a Great Hall?” Ask the children to think about what they do in their living room and eating area. “What other rooms are there in a castle?”

Activity 2: Build a Castle

This activity may take a few days to complete.

Content Objectives

The children will participate in making a real castle to play in. The children will relate their play castle to **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

art
creativity
fine motor

Materials

- large box, for example, appliance or furniture box (big enough for at least one child to fit inside)
- cylindrical containers, toweling rolls, or rolls made out of heavy poster paper
- corrugated paper for castle door
- straws for flag poles
- paint
- pieces of material
- glue

Procedure

Before beginning this activity with the children, cut out windows and a door in the box. Glue the cylinders to make the towers.

In small groups, have children decorate the castle. Paint the whole box. Each side could be painted in a different color. (Each group could pick a color.) Use the pieces of material to decorate the towers and windows. If possible, have the children work in groups to add a parapet and a drawbridge.

Take a few minutes as a group before and after they work on the castle. Ask the children to think about their own homes. “How is a castle different? What does the **My Make Believe Castle** look like? What would they like to add?”

Older Children

Have them make their own small castle using shoe boxes and paper rolls. Encourage the children to think about the different parts of a castle. Discuss why the castle walls were so high and the reasons for having a parapet and drawbridge.

Activity 3: Family Crest

Do this activity after you have demonstrated the Family Crest activity in **My Make Believe Castle**.

Content Objectives

The children will learn how pictures have meaning.
The children will relate their own crests to the family crest in **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

art
fine motor
social

Materials

- cut-outs of shapes of crests
- cut-outs of small shapes, objects, animals (use stickers if available)
- glue

Procedure

Before doing the activity, discuss how pictures can give you information or make you feel happy or sad. Talk about why people had different crests. Ask them to think about pictures that tell you something about yourself.

For example, “Do you have an animal in your family? Are there objects you can find in your house? What are your favorite activities? Is there a place in your home you like best?”

“Sometimes shapes make you think about things you like. Stars make you think about a night sky. Sun makes you think of a sunny day.” Suggest thinking about a favorite food or game as well.

Place the cut-out crests, cut-out objects, and glue on a table. Each child takes a crest and picks cut-outs to paste. After the children have completed their own crests, show them some real family crests from medieval times.

As a subsequent activity or to replace this one, make a crest for the classroom. Everyone makes a suggestion for what would be on it. Then, as a group, decide which pictures represent the class. Place the crest over the door.

Older Children

Find a book about family crests and explain the symbols. Discuss why some symbols appear in many different crests. They can cut out their own symbols and objects from a magazine. (They may also want to draw the pictures.)

Activity 4: Castle Costumes

Content Objectives

The children will learn about the people who lived in castles. The children will identify the characters in **My Make Believe Castle** by aspects of their clothing.

Developmental Objectives

art
language
social

Materials

- construction paper in different colors
- cut-outs of crowns
- cut-outs of swords

-
- ribbons, sparkles, foil
 - glue
 - crayons
 - scissors

Procedure

Talk about the different people who live in a castle and how you know who is who. Ask the children to think about the characters in **My Make Believe Castle**. “How do you know the prince from the knight? The princess from the court jester? There are hats to wear and sometimes different equipment which identify each person. A sword identifies a knight. A musical instrument identifies a musician.”

On different tables, spread out the materials for

- | | |
|----------|--|
| crowns | cut-out construction paper, glue, sparkles |
| swords | cut-out cardboard, foil, glue, crayons |
| cone hat | construction paper, ribbons, sparkles, crayons |

Encourage the children to try to make at least two of the three objects.

Older Children

Do not use cut-outs. Help the children make their own outlines on construction paper or cardboard, and to cut it out themselves. Some children will think of other types of hats, clothes, or accessories to identify people; for instance, a shield or wizard’s hat. Help them create other objects. Make the discussion richer with details of medieval times when talking about the castle people (see books on medieval times in References, page 22). Show pictures of different kings, queens, knights.

Activity 5: Music and Dance

Content Objectives

The children will learn a song from medieval times.

The children will learn about medieval instruments and relate it to **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

music

movement

Materials

- cassettes of medieval music for flute, harp, recorder (see books on medieval music in References, page 23)
- pictures of ancient instruments

Procedure

Gather the children in a circle and put on the music. Ask the children to sway to the music. Explain that music sometimes tells a story. If you have a guitar, play the music of Greensleeves (or another song of medieval times). In medieval times, the musicians told stories in their songs. Teach them the chorus to one of the songs.

Show the children pictures of an ancient instrument, for example, a lute. Ask them if they have ever seen one. "What other instruments does it look like?" Point out that some instruments have been around a long time.

In medieval times, people danced in a circle. With the music playing, have everyone join hands and move around in a circle in time to the music.

You may want to follow up this activity by creating a "harp" or a "lute" using a shoe box and elastics.

Older Children

When the music is playing, help them pick out the instruments. Compare the music to popular music and dancing.

Activity 6: Imaginary Creatures

Content Objectives

The children will think about the parts of an animal and how they go together.

The children will learn about imaginary creatures and become more aware of the creatures in **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

art
cognitive
language
social

Materials

- construction paper in different colors
- cut-outs of heads, bodies, and feet of different animals
- glue
- crayons

Procedure

Discuss the different creatures in **My Make Believe Castle**.

“What is a dragon? Is there one in real life? There are many stories in which dragons are very scary and do bad things to people. There are some stories in which people think a dragon is mean but actually the dragon turns out to be nice.”

“What is a griffin?” Explain that the griffin is part eagle and part lion, but it’s not real and doesn’t exist. “People in medieval times believed that griffins existed. Some animals that are made up are beautiful and good, like the unicorn.”

Ask the children if they can make a new animal. Have them use the cut-outs to make their own animal. Once they put it together, they can color it in. Have the children try to think of a new name for the animal. For example, part tiger and part alligator could be tiger-gator.

Older Children

Let the children draw and color in the new animal. They can cut out the parts of the animals. Have them sound out the new name of the animal on their own. (For more ideas about imaginary creatures, see References, page 23.)

Activity 7: Obstacle Course

Do this activity after you have shown the children the obstacle course in **My Make Believe Castle**. This activity may last several days.

Content Objectives

Children learn what an obstacle course is and how to construct one.

Children will relate their own obstacle course to the one in **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

language
problem solving
social
spatial sense

Materials

- tires
- boards of different shapes
- boxes
- small ladders
- benches

Procedure

Discuss an obstacle course. “What is an obstacle? If there is a big box in your path when you are walking, how will you get past it? Think about the obstacle course in **My Make Believe Castle**. What are some obstacles? How can you get by them?”

In a gym or outdoor playground, help the children construct an obstacle course. If you wish, you could construct one first, let the children go through it a few times, and then they could construct one on their own. Divide the children into pairs and ask each pair to construct one obstacle using the materials. When the obstacle course is made, they can have turns going through it. Ask them how they got through each obstacle. “Was it hard? Was it easy?” If it’s too hard to solve, no one will be able to pass.

Older Children

Ask each child to create his or her own “model” obstacle course before constructing one in the gym. Use toothpicks, toilet paper rolls, popsicle sticks, yarn, and small boxes.

Activity 8: Paper Bag Puppets

Content Objectives

The children will act out characters in dramatic play.
The children will make different castle characters from **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

creativity
fine motor
language

Materials

- paper bags (lunch-size)
- cut-outs in a zigzag shape
- cut-outs of eyes
- cut-outs of tongues
- yellow, brown, black yarn (for hair)
- crayons
- glue

Procedure

Discuss the main characters in **My Make Believe Castle**. Tara is the princess. Todd is the prince. Nicky is the dragon. Ask the children which puppet they would like to make. Explain the basic procedure, i.e., where to put the eyes, the mouth, etc...

The dragon can have a big red tongue and be colored in green. The children can glue on zigzag felt or construction paper along its back. Let them think about whether the dragon is happy or angry, and then draw the eyes accordingly.

Use the yarn as hair for the prince and princess. Draw in their clothing.

Once the puppets are finished, they can take them in the castle box (Activity 2) and make up stories.

Older Children

Let the children cut out the shapes they will need for features. Use the castle box as a puppet theater. Act out stories using the puppets. Let small groups of children perform their stories for the other children.

Activity 9: Food in Medieval Times

The banana bread contains ingredients that were not common in medieval times. A banana bread was used as an example because it is a quick bread that the children will like. Feel free to replace this recipe with another bread if you wish.

Content Objectives

Children will learn how to make banana bread and pudding, noting the transformations in food preparation. They will think about foods they eat now and foods that were eaten long ago.

Developmental Objectives

cognitive
fine motor
language
social

Materials

■ mixing bowls	Banana bread ingredients:
■ mixing spoons	1 3/4 cups flour
■ potato masher	2 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
■ measuring cups and spoons	1/2 teaspoon salt
■ loaf pan	1/3 cup soft butter
■ oven	2/3 cup brown sugar
■ pudding mix	2 eggs
■ milk	2 ripe bananas

Recipe for banana bread:

Sift first 3 ingredients.

Cream the butter, add the sugar, and then the eggs.

Add the mashed bananas to the mixture, then stir in the dry ingredients.

Mix, pour into the greased loaf pan, and bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

Procedure

One group of children can prepare the pudding, and the others, the banana bread.

Draw pictures of the different ingredients in the banana bread on a chart, so the children can follow along the recipe. Divide up the children so each child has a different task; for example, measure the flour, peel the bananas, mash the bananas, add the sugar.

Discuss each step as it is occurring to involve all the children in the process. For example, “What happened to the flour when you mixed it with the other ingredients? Can you still see it?”

Before snack time, discuss the idea with children that things we eat now are different than what was eaten a long time ago.

Mention that the bread they made has bananas, a fruit until recently many people didn’t know. “In medieval times, people couldn’t go to the store to buy their foods. There were outdoor markets. But people living in a castle had animals, gardens, and fruit trees to provide their food.”

“People long ago ate bread, mostly whole wheat. White bread was only eaten by the rich. People didn’t drink milk, but used it in cooking. A pudding was very special.” Tell the children that they made a “bread” and pudding to see what it was like to live in a castle and eat the food they had then.

Older Children

Spend more time on the discussion of foods today and long ago. Ask about frozen foods and foods that come from far away.

Activity 10: Story-telling (Round Robin)

The story that the children create can be written to go along with the mural (Activity 11).

Content Objectives

The children will create their own story about **My Make Believe Castle** and its characters.

The children will make up stories as they play with **My Make Believe Castle**.

Developmental Objectives

cognitive
creative
language
social

Materials

■ cassette tape recorder

Procedure

Tell the children they are going to take turns telling a story. One person will start and then the next person adds to the story, and so on. Tape record the story so that everyone can listen to it afterwards.

Start a story about a castle and its characters. For example: “Once upon a time, there was a dragon named Nicky. He was a very friendly dragon and loved his friends Todd and Tara. One day, he met Tara in the woods near the castle...” Turn to the child next to you and let him or her take a turn.

Encourage the children to be imaginative. Be enthusiastic even if the story becomes silly. Let the story take whatever direction it will. When the circle gets back to you, you can wrap the story up.

Older Children

Each child makes up his or her own story, in writing and pictures. Make the story into a book.

Activity 11: Mural of Castle Scene

Content Objectives

The children will work together to draw and paint a group picture of a castle scene.

They will think about the castle scene in **My Make Believe Castle** and other scenes they have seen in storybooks.

Developmental Objectives

cognitive
creative
fine motor
language
social

Materials

- paper about 5' to 6' in length
- 9" by 12" paper
- paints, marking pens, crayons
- scissors
- glue

Procedure

Explain to the children what a mural is and that they will be working together on the picture. You may want to make an outline of a castle which the children can use as a starting point. Suggest that some children paint the sky and others paint

the landscape. Others can paint the castle.

As the background is being worked on, ask, “What is in the sky? What do you find in a meadow? Does the castle have windows? Where is the drawbridge?” Encourage the children to think about the castle scene in **My Make Believe Castle**, and others they have seen in storybooks.

Ask the children to draw pictures on the smaller pieces of paper to cut out and glue on the castle scene. Let them use their imaginations to include new items that are not in the castle.

Older Children

Have them work as a group to draw their own castle. They can draw the castle characters as separate items to be glued on the scene. Discuss how to place the characters to show some of the actions the characters do in **My Make Believe Castle** (the princess jumping over the moat, the witch chasing the wizard).

References

The following books are a sampling of research and practical applications in early childhood education:

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Essa, E.L. and Rogers, P.R. *An Early Childhood Curriculum*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers Inc., 1992.

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Spodek, B., Saracho, O.N., and Davis, M.D. *Foundations of Early Childhood Education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987.

These books provide information about castles and medieval times:

Gravett, C. *Castle*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 1994.

Oakes, C. *The Middle Ages*. San Diego: Gulliver Books
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989.

These books have groups of songs and music which can be presented as medieval spectacles:

Bagenal, A. and Bagenal, M. *This Merry Company 1*. London: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Bagenal, A. and Bagenal, M. *This Merry Company 2*. London: Oxford University Press, 1979.

These books provide ideas about imaginary creatures:

Evans, C. *How to Draw Monsters and Creatures*. London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., 1987.

Hancock, P. *Monsters*. Richmond Hill: Scholastic-TAB Publications Ltd., 1989.

Hancock, P. *Unicorns*. Richmond Hill: Scholastic-TAB Publications Ltd., 1988.