

LEEDS CASTLE'S THE SWAN PRINCESS



WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

This workshop is designed to cover a selection of requirements for English and the Literacy strategy. Although primarily aimed at children at Key Stage 1, it would be equally suitable for younger children in Key Stage 2.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To cover a number of the text level requirements of the Literacy strategy and speaking/ listening section of the Key Stage 1 English requirements of the National Curriculum. The workshop and tour will cover castle features, terminology and think about the people who lived in it in the past.

During the role play, children will be encouraged to sustain concentration, make relevant comments and listen to others' reactions. They will learn the use of vocabulary such as 'stage' and 'wings' during the production. The children will also learn about castles during the day.

WORKSHOP SESSION

The workshop leader will support the pupils in the telling of The Swan Princess, based on a Russian fairy tale.

Well suited to the location, its cast of characters includes a cat, a sparrow, a gnome, a knight and a witch, as well as the Swan Princess herself, whose brothers and sisters

can still be seen swimming serenely on the lake around the castle. The story has all the elements of a traditional fairy tale - magical transformations, broken promises, friendship and loyalty repaid, and good and evil locked in a battle which virtue eventually wins.

All of the class will be involved in the story; it is essential that you assign children to their characters before the day. This is important as you will know your class and each child's aptitude for role-play - it also saves a lot of time on the day.

Simple costumes and props will be available for each group to dress up as the main characters in the story and act the plot out as the story proceeds. There will be plenty of opportunities, both during and after the story, to discuss what has happened and predict what could come next

TIMETABLE OF THE DAY

We are an inclusive venue and can accommodate groups of up to 100 children. The timetable you follow will depend upon the size of your group.

The timings shown are approximate and can vary depending on how the workshop and tours progress. We are able to be flexible and the Education Leaders will consult with you on the day if there are particular circumstances or considerations.

Timetable 1 - For group size 40 and below

WHOLE GROUP	
10.00 am	Coach to drive to Ticket Office where you will be met by your Education Leader.
10.15 am	Directed to the Education Centre by staff
10.30 am	Workshop session
11.30 am	Lunch & Free Time
12.45 pm	Guided Tour of the Castle
1.30 pm	Free time

Timetable 2 - For group size 41 – 75

GROUP A		GROUP B	
10.00 am	Coach to drive to Ticket Office where you will be met by your Education Leader.		
10.15 am	Directed to the Education Centre by staff		
10.30 am	Workshop session	10.45 am	Guided tour of Castle
11.30 am	Lunch	11.30 am	Lunch & free time
12.45 pm	Guided tour of Castle	12.30 pm	Workshop session (Ensure that toilets are used beforehand)
1.30pm	Free time	1.30pm	Free time

TIMETABLE OF THE DAY

Timetable 3 - For group size 76 – 100

GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C	
10.00 am	Coach to drive to Ticket Office where you will be met by your Education Leader.				
10.30 am	Arrive at Education Centre and workshop session	10.30 am	Free time & snack	10.45 am	Self-guided Castle tour
11.30 am	Self-guided Castle tour	11.45 am	Workshop session (Please arrive by 11:40 and ensure that toilets are used beforehand)	11.30am	Free Time & Lunch
12.30 pm	Lunch & free time	12.45 pm	Lunch & Self-guided Castle tour	1.00pm	Workshop session (Please arrive by 12.55 and ensure that toilets are used beforehand)

Cast List

Please nominate pupils to play the different characters in the story before attending the workshop. There will be enough costumes for every pupil to participate. Remember to bring this list with you on the day!

Main Characters (Large/Medium speaking parts)	Pupil Name	Supporting characters (Limited speaking roles)	Pupil Name
Swan Princess (Heroine – large part)		King of the Lake (Small part)	
Knight (Hero – large part)		Longshanks (Small part)	
Gnome (large part)		Skimbleshanks (Small part)	
Baba Yaga Spindleshanks (The witch – medium part)		Prince Blackcloak (Small part)	
Sparrow (medium part)		Queen of the Lake (Small part)	
Cat (medium part)			

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Swan Princess Story

Long, long ago in a country far away, lived three friends. They were a Sparrow, a Cat and a Gnome, and they lived happily together in a cottage in a wood.

Every morning the Cat and Sparrow would go out to collect wood, while the Gnome stayed at home to do the gnome work. One particular morning as Cat and Sparrow got ready to go out, they warned the Gnome to beware of the wicked witch, Baba Yaga Spindleshanks, as she might come looking for their spoons, as she needed a good wooden spoon to mix her best potions and spells. The Gnome promised he would be careful and hide if the witch came.

The Cat and Sparrow set off, waving to the Gnome as they left. The Gnome got on with his housework, suddenly he heard a “tap tap” on the garden path. Very quickly the Gnome hid behind the door and kept very still as Baba Yaga entered the cottage and opened the drawer. “This must be the Cat’s spoon, and this must be the Sparrow’s spoon, and this one must be the Gnome’s spoon” she said. “Which one shall I take?” The Gnome forgot about keeping still and quiet, and jumped out from his hiding place and yelled: “Leave my spoon alone you wicked old witch!” The witch gave a wicked cackle and grabbed the gnome, wrapped him in her cloak and carried him off. The Gnome, in great distress, shouted as loudly as he could: “Cat! Sparrow! Help me!” The two friends heard him and came running. The Cat scratched the witch, and the Sparrow pecked at her, and she had to let the Gnome go.

The next day the cat and sparrow again went out to collect wood, and again warned the gnome about Baba Yaga. As he got on with the housework the gnome heard the “tap” of the witch’s broom, and quickly hid himself under the table. The witch opened the drawer and counted: “This is the cat’s spoon, and this is the sparrow’s spoon and this is the gnome’s spoon”. Once again the gnome couldn’t help himself, he sprang out from under the table and said: “Leave my spoon alone you wicked old witch!” The witch gave a wicked cackle and grabbed the gnome, wrapped him in her cloak and carried him off. The gnome, in great distress, shouted as loudly as he could: “Cat! Sparrow! Help me!” The two friends heard him and came running. The cat scratched the witch, and the sparrow pecked at her, and she had to let the gnome go.

The next day the Cat and Sparrow again went out to collect wood, and again warned the Gnome about Baba Yaga. This time though they told the Gnome they were going deeper into the wood, and would not be able to hear him if he cried out.

As he got on with the housework the Gnome heard the “tap” of the witch’s broom, and quickly hid himself in a cupboard. The witch opened the drawer and counted: “This is the Cat’s spoon, and this is the Sparrow’s spoon and this is the Gnome’s spoon”. The Gnome stayed very still and quiet, and then the witch said: “I think the Gnome’s spoon would mix the best potion”. Now the Gnome couldn’t contain himself and he sprang out from the cupboard and said: “Leave my spoon alone you wicked old witch” The witch gave a wicked cackle and grabbed the Gnome, wrapped him in her cloak and carried him off. The Gnome, in great distress, shouted as loudly as he could: “Cat! Sparrow! Help me!” But the Cat and Sparrow were far away and did not hear his cries.



The Swan Princess Story

The wicked witch went deep into the dark forest with the Gnome until they came to her cottage. There she locked him in and kept him prisoner and made him do all the work.

In another part of the forest lived a brave Knight. He was a champion archer. As he was out walking one day he came across the witch's cottage. He could see the Gnome, who was looking very miserable, through the barred window. "Why are you so sad" called the Knight. "I am a prisoner of Baba Yaga Spindleshanks, the wicked witch" said the Gnome "and cannot escape from this horrible cottage. "The Knight took pity on the Gnome and, with a single arrow, he shot the bolt off the front door.

The Gnome was overjoyed to be free, and together with the Knight, ran into the wood before the witch could catch them. "Come with me" said the Knight, "for I am on an adventure, to find a wife. She must be good and beautiful and love only me."

The Gnome who was very grateful to be free, wanted to help his new friend, but all he wanted was to go home. "I just want to see my friends again" he said. "I know the way" said the Brave Knight, "follow me". As the two new friends walked through the forest they suddenly arrived at a beautiful blue lake. Up above them they could hear loud whooshing noise. They looked up to see a big white bird flying over them. "It's the magical swan princess" gasped the gnome "quick, let's hide behind this tree and watch

The Knight did as the Gnome suggested, and they peeped out from their hiding place to see the Swan Princess fly down and land on the water of the lake. As she did so, she turned into a beautiful young girl.

The Princess swam for a while and then came out the water.

"Quick" said the gnome, "why don't you ask HER to marry you"? The Knight ran from his hiding place, stood in front of her and said "I am a Knight of the Land, you are very beautiful, will you marry me"? "I will" said the Swan Princess "but first you must complete a quest" The Knight was overjoyed and agreed straightaway. "What must I do?" he asked. The Swan Princess looked serious: "I have been cursed by the evil Prince Blackcloak, he cast a wicked spell so that sometimes I am swan, sometimes girl. If you can break the curse I will become the true Princess that I am, daughter of the Lake King and Queen and will be able to marry you". The knight again asked "what must I do"? "Prince Blackcloak believes he is the best archer in the land; to break the spell you must beat him at the archery competition to be held next spring." said the Swan Princess. "I can do that" said the Brave Knight and they said goodbye to each other. The swan flew off, and the Brave Knight said to the gnome "come on, I'll take you home now".

The King and Queen of the Lake were so sad that their daughter the Princess had been cursed by the evil prince. "What can we do to help" said the King. "We must make sure that Prince Blackcloak does not win the archery competition" said the king. "The Brave Knight has been practising for months, I'm sure he will win" said the Queen. Let us gather the army and make our way to the arena.



The Swan Princess Story

The army gather to take part in the competition. The soldiers, the Brave Knight and Prince Blackcloak picked up their bows and arrows and aimed at the target. Just as, the King shouted “Fire”. Prince Blackcloak cast a spell on the Brave Knight’s arrow making it fly away from the target! The Prince’s arrow landed straight at the centre of the target. Prince Blackcloak cheered, “I win” he said. Then he gave an evil laugh and said “Now I can keep her for myself” If you really want to break my spell you will have to rescue her from the maze in the valley!

For many months the Knight searched for Prince Blackcloak’s castle. At last he could see in the distance a horrible looking black castle. As he got nearer to it he saw two strange people sitting on the roadside looking miserable. The Knight took pity on them and asked how he could help. The first one said:

“My name is Longshanks, because I can grow as tall as the trees.” The second one said “My name is Skimbleshanks. I have eyes that go bright like a cat and then I can see in the dark”. The brave Knight told the two friends that he was looking for the Swan Princess, captured by Prince Blackcloak and whom he was keeping prisoner. “We could come with you and help you search” they said. So all three set off together.

When they reached the castle, at the top of the hill, they could see the Maze, in the valley. When they reached it the Knight knew he would never find his way to the middle because the trees were so high, but Longshanks stepped forward and said “Follow me!” He grew and grew, and could see over the trees and saw the way to go. In no time at all they were in the middle. The Swan Princess was very happy to see the brave Knight. “Thank you for finding me” she said, “but how will we find our way out? We can only go through the grotto and its as dark as night in there.” Skimbleshanks stepped forward and said “I can help, follow me” and his eyes grew brighter and brighter, so that he could see the way out, and in no time at all they stepped out into the bright sunshine. From his castle Prince Blackcloak saw them emerge from the grotto and knew he was beaten. He yelled “You’ve rescued her! You’ve broken the spell! I am beaten.” He stormed back into his castle never to be seen again!

And so the Swan Princess and the Knight were reunited, and very happy to see each other again. . The Brave Knight proposed properly now, down on one knee. When they returned home to the Lake Palace the King & Queen were overjoyed to see them both safe and sound. When they heard that their daughter and the Brave Knight were to be married they prepared a huge wedding banquet for them and their friends, and gave them a wedding present of a beautiful castle by a lake, with swans swimming on the moat.

And they all lived happily ever after.



FOLLOW UP IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Storytelling & Drama

- With the children sitting in a circle, start to retell the story of The Swan Princess. Each child then continues by adding their own contribution. There are many variations to this idea. You could specify that each child adds only one sentence, or have a small light object that can be thrown from child to child in the circle. Whoever receives it must continue for a short while before throwing the object to another child and passing the story on. Develop your own alternatives.
- Ask children to choose a character from the story and use mime to act out that character to the rest of the class. Can they convey by movement and expression alone, who they have chosen to be?
- Older children could also be asked to make a 'radio play' out of the whole story or a section from it. Can they write a script which conveys the gist of the narrative and decide what sound effects they will need to complete the story? Record onto audio tape when it has been rehearsed thoroughly.

Finding Out

- The story of The Swan Princess comes from Russia. Can the children find any other books of Russian fairy tales in their school or public library?
- Using available information books and the Internet if available, what can children find out about the life of swans?
- Can the children find any other stories that feature swans in their school or public library?

(Clue: a good starting place would be the familiar tale of 'The Ugly Duckling'.)

FOLLOW UP IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Writing

- A group of children can work together to design a comic strip based on the story. This will involve deciding which are the most important episodes in the narrative and how many frames they will need, and how they can reduce the dialogue to its simplest form.
- For children whose writing skills are not so advanced, the story would make a good exercise in sequencing. Write a series of simple sentences which summarise the plot and jumble up their order. Ask the children to arrange them back into the correct order and draw a picture to illustrate each stage.
- Provide the children with a blank crossword or word-search grid and get them to design their own puzzle, using words selected from the story.
- As an exercise in IT, the children could type out the story onto sheets of A4 paper and illustrate it themselves. These could then be inserted into plastic wallets, put into a folder and added to the class library.
- There are a number of opportunities for letter writing in the story. For example, if the Knight was writing home regularly to his mother during his adventures, what would he say?

Art & Design

If possible look at books of costume design, especially costumes for the ballet 'Swan Lake'. The children could design costumes of their own for the play.

- Ask children to make puppets of the main characters in the story and use them to act out the narrative to the rest of the class. Puppets could be of almost any kind - paper bag puppets, shadow puppets, stick puppets, etc. The only limits are your time and imagination.
- Use a papier-mâché base built up over an inflated balloon to create masks designed for individual characters.