



The *Wizards of ONCE* SERIES

Resources for KS2 Teachers & Librarians


Cressida Cowell's aim as [Waterstones Children's Laureate](#) is to encourage EVERY child to read for fun and get something out of books. Her latest series, *The Wizards of Once*, will certainly achieve that in your classroom! It is full of [magic](#) and [wonder](#), [adventure](#) and [danger](#), [friendship](#) and [family](#) ... and lots more!

Cressida has a passion for developing the creative intelligence of children and she believes that reading allows the reader to grow three superpowers:

- Creativity
- Empathy
- Intelligence

Cressida explains that the magic of books is partly about the words, but also, importantly, what happens in the reader's imagination.

These classroom ideas aim to focus on those three superpowers and to explore and enjoy the reader's own imagination.



The *Wizards of ONCE*
CRESSIDA COWELL

About

The **Wizards of ONCE** Series

The Wizards of Once is an exciting high-adventure series set in an ancient, magical time, full of Wizards, Warriors, Giants and Sprites from the author of *How To Train Your Dragon*, Cressida Cowell.

The Wizards of Once (Book 1)



Once there was Magic, and the Magic lived in the dark forests. Until the Warriors came ...

Xar is a Wizard boy who has no Magic and will do anything to get it. Wish is a Warrior girl, but she owns a banned Magical Object, and she will do anything to conceal it.

In this whirlwind adventure, Xar and Wish must forget their differences if they're going to make it to the dungeons at Warrior Fort. Where something that has been sleeping for hundreds of years is stirring ...

The Wizards of Once: Twice Magic (Book 2)



Witches are creating havoc in the Wildwoods and danger lurks behind every tree trunk.

Wish is in possession of a powerful, Magic Spelling Book; Xar has a dangerous Witchstain on his hand. Together they can save the Wildwoods from the curse of the Witches but they are separated by the highest wall imaginable, and time is running out ...

It was unlikely that these heroes should meet in the first place. Is it possible they are destined to meet TWICE?

The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (Book 3)



Wish and Xar are now outlaws on the run, hunted by Warriors, Wizards and worst of all, by WITCHES ...

Can they find the ingredients for the Spell to Get Rid of Witches before the Kingwitch gets his talons on Magic-that-Works-on-Iron?

Their next Quest is the most terrifying and treacherous of all ... And someone is going to betray them ...

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Creativity

Noun: the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness.

Creativity comes in many forms. These ideas will encourage children to be creative in a number of ways, such as drawing, acting and storytelling. They aim to complement *The Wizards of Once* series, building enthusiasm and eagerness to engage with the story.

Creativity does not come from a blank page; it comes from finding solutions to problems, from being innovative based on previous ideas and knowledge. Ideas exercise the skill of creativity.

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What Did He Do?

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once* (Book 1).

Extract – begin reading from Chapter 1 on page 21 up to ‘In the past week:’ on page 22.

Part 1: Based on this initial passage about Xar, give children a chance to jump into the world of wizards and suggest what he might have been up to. Establish what we know about Xar already from the text:

- He’s a wizard with no magic
- He’s a scruff of a boy
- He’s the most disobedient boy in the Wizard Kingdom for four generations and forbidding him from doing things only encourages him

Part 2: Focus on the word DISOBEDIENT. Split it into DIS and OBEDIENT. How many synonyms for obedient can you find? What does this tell us about Xar?

Part 3: Pose the question, ‘What might Xar have been up to to get him in trouble?’. Start off with a brief discussion about wizards and rules they may need to obey. Then, try paired talk to get children to come up with some funny antics for Xar.

Part 4: Compare children’s ideas with what Xar gets up to in the text.

Extract – continue from where you left off on page 22 up to ‘And yet none of these disobedient things was half as bad as what Xar was doing right now.’ on page 23.

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Create a Companion

This activity is linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

Xar has a companion and minder in the very wonderful Caliburn, a talking raven, whose job is to keep Xar out of trouble.

Why not get your class to conjure up a talking creature as their companion to keep them out of trouble too?

Part 1: Consider the attributes associated with animals found in literature. Foxes are often seen as sly, lions as brave and proud, owls as wise etc. Children can then think about the attributes they'd like a companion to have and design an animal that suits them. To spark ideas, use the activity sheet on the next page, an example of which is below.



A great companion would be:	Name:
List attributes for your companion here ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	Sketch your companion here ...

This activity can be done at any point while reading the series. Ideas for what makes a good companion will grow and develop as children see the interaction between Xar and Caliburn throughout the story. If you create companions at the beginning of reading *The Wizards of Once*, you may wish to revisit children's designs at regular points to see if they still think their animal has the right attributes.

Create A Companion Activity Sheet

A great companion would be:	Name:
List attributes for your companion here ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••••••••	Sketch your companion here ...

Brother's Dialogue

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once* (Book 1).

Extract – begin reading from Chapter 1 on page 29 'At that moment ...' up to '... the feather from his belt.' on page 32

Part 1: Xar has an older brother called Looter. Like many siblings, they are competitive and can be rather mean to each other. This activity is based on the first time the reader meets Looter in the story. Challenge children to create a playscript from the extract given using the activity sheet on the next page (an example is below). Adding director's notes is an opportunity to develop inference and deduction.

Speaker	What they say	Director's notes
Xar:		
Looter:		
Xar:		
Looter:		
Xar:		

Part 2: Give children time to practise and perform the short scene. Work in groups of three, where two children play Xar and Looter and the third is the director. Encourage children to mark their script with words they will emphasise, moments to pause, volume changes and emotions they will convey.

Part 3: Give each group a chance to perform to the rest of the class or to another group, receiving feedback to support the understanding of characters and their performance.

Brother's Dialogue Activity Sheet (Part 1)

Speaker	What they say	Director's notes
Xar:		
Looter:		
Xar:		
Looter:		
Xar:		

Part 4: Now, task children with completing the scene. How will this conversation end? How do siblings normally talk to each other? Ensure that children's ideas stay within the same emotions and realm of possibility as the rest of the scene. You could give a constraint to support creativity, only allowing each character to speak a set number of times.

Children can plan ideas using the activity sheet on the next page, considering what each character is trying to achieve from the conversation:



Again, allow children to write, practise and perform in their groups of three.

Part 5: Read the rest of the chapter to compare children's duologues with the actual story.

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Brother's Dialogue Activity Sheet (Part 2)

How will this conversation end between Xar and Looter? How do siblings normally talk to each other? Write what they would say below.



Looter and Xar



A Wizard with No Magic?

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

Xar is a wizard, but his magic hasn't arrived yet. When you think of a wizard, magic is vital to their character. So, let's take the idea of removing a crucial quality from a character and use it to spark a short story.

Part 1: As a whole class, or in groups, gather lots of ideas of known characters and their crucial quality, for example: mermaids can swim, birds can fly ...

Part 2: Children can then select their favourite option. How might their character feel without their crucial quality? What could be done to fix it? Then, ask them to write a short story to show how their character finds their 'missing magic'.

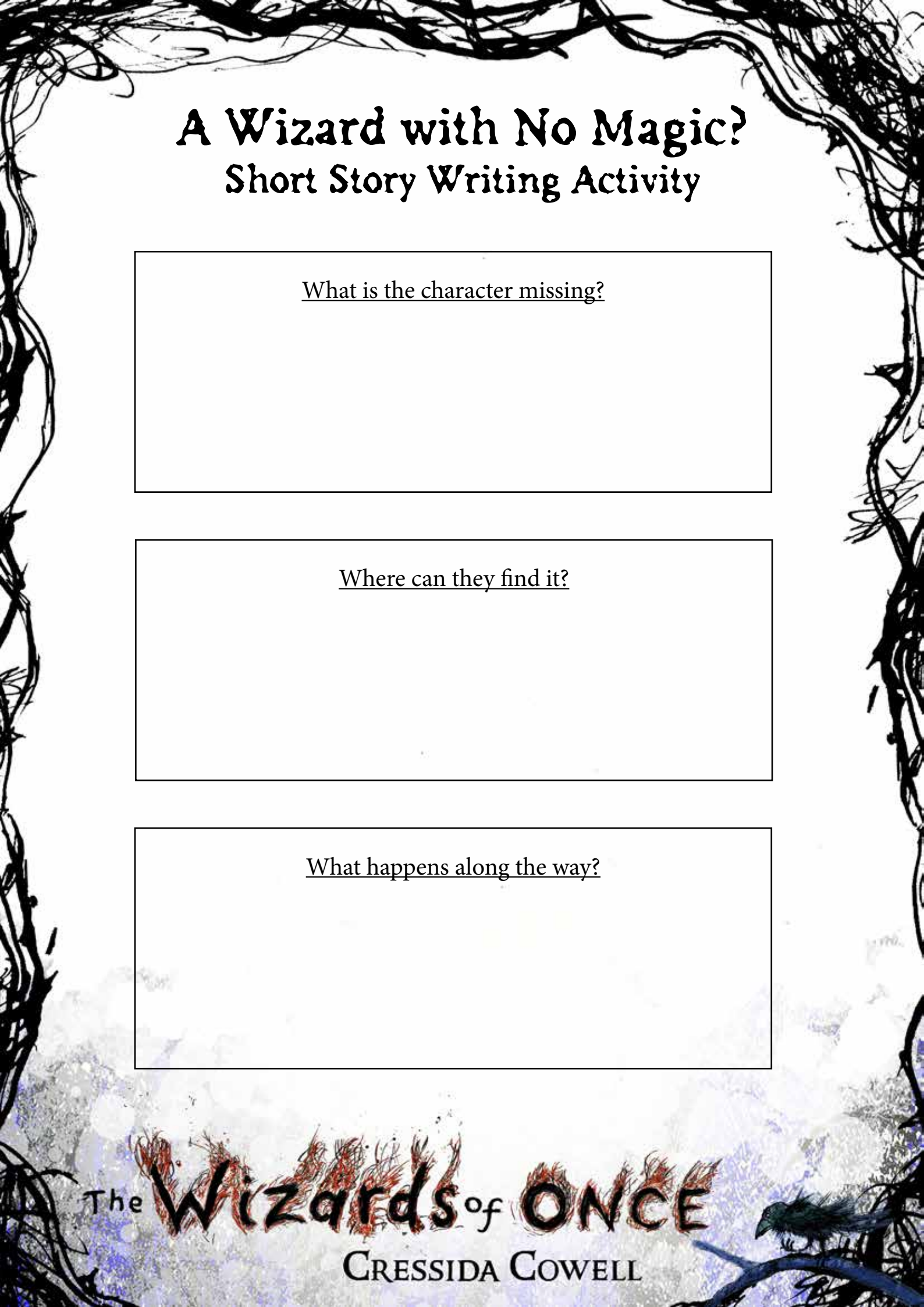
Short Story Writing

What is the character missing?

Where can they find it?

What happens along the way?

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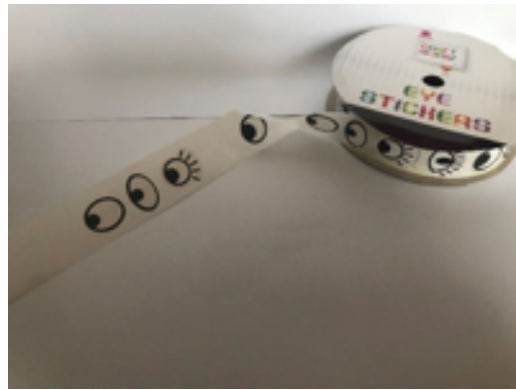
An Enchanted Pet

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

Wish has an enchanted friend who is her pet. It is in fact an iron spoon. What everyday object would children turn into a pet?

Part 1: Gather a collection of everyday items from home or school, ranging from cutlery to pens, socks to hairbrushes. Sit in a circle and ensure there is an item for every other person. As children take hold of an item, they should explain to their partner what it would be like if it came to life. Give 30-60 seconds before items are passed on to the next person. This quickfire game will generate many ideas and be less intimidating than being asked to create a character. You may wish to model first to give pupils an idea of what to talk about.

If you want to make this activity a bit more visual, get yourself a packet of googly eyes or a roll of stick-on eyes. These can be stuck on items for a bit of fun. Maybe stick them on items in the classroom before children enter and set them off on an enchanted item hunt before you start the activity.



Part 2: Having gathered lots of ideas, children can now create their own enchanted object pet.

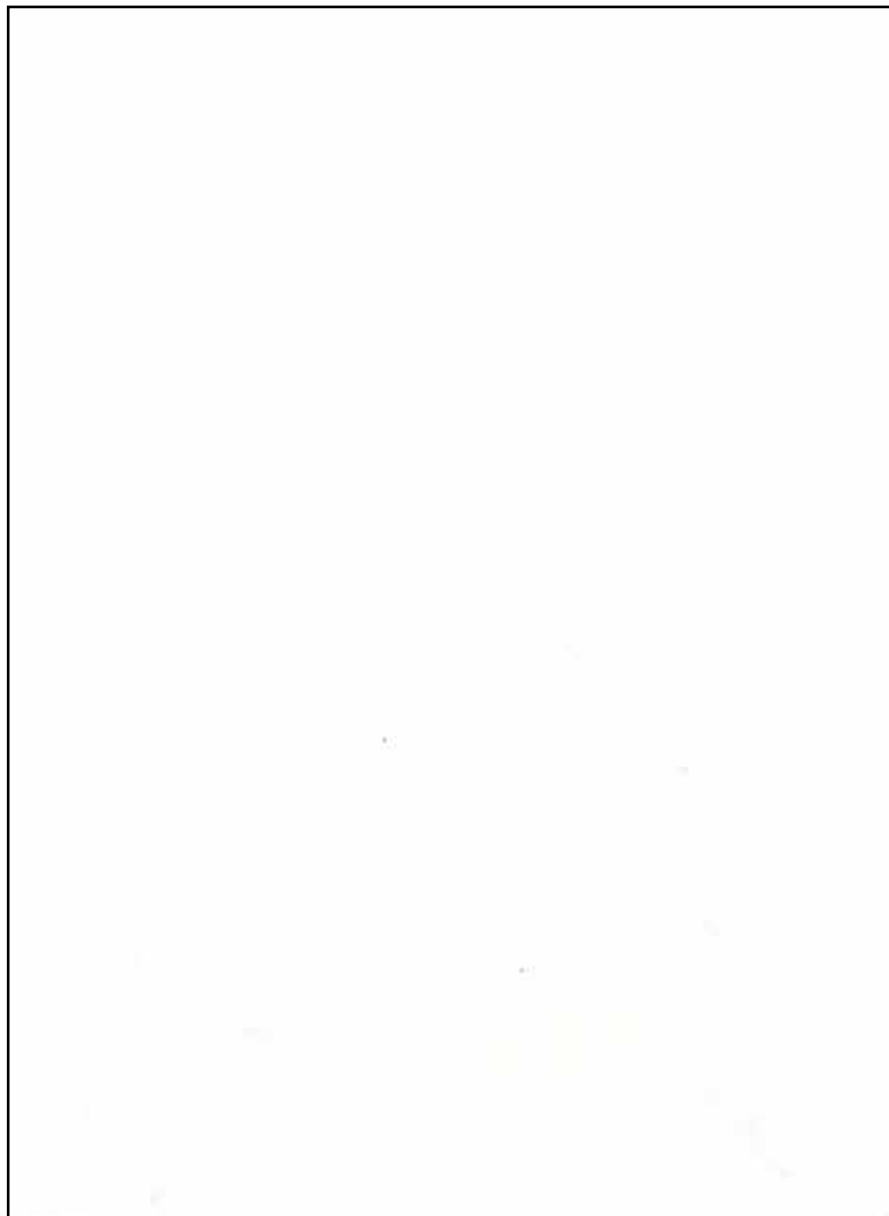
As an extension, children can create moods for their pet too.

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My Enchanted Object Pet Activity Sheet (Part 1)

Sketch your pet in the box, then add short descriptions around the outside.



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My Enchanted Object Pet Activity Sheet (Part 2)

Create moods for your pet just like the Spoon Moods featured in The Spelling Book in *The Wizards of Once* (Book 1).

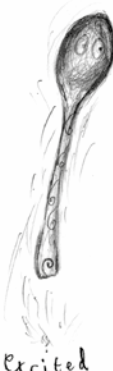
THE SPELLING BOOK

SPOON MOODS

Anxious



Sad



Excited

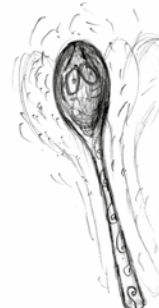


Cross



Sleepy

Scared



MY ENCHANTED OBJECT PET MOODS

The

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Fantastic Fonts

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

Each chapter in *The Wizards of Once* series starts with a large capital letter, drawn to match the style of the illustrations. Can children create their own *Wizards of Once* alphabet? This can be used to start off their own writing pieces.



Children may like to create each letter differently or try to keep them all a similar style. It's up to them – get those creative juices going! Children may like to make their letters all look magical, all strong and warrior-like or come up with an idea of their own.

Allow children time to look at all the examples in the books for inspiration. The alphabet at the front of Xar's Spelling Book on page 157 of *The Wizards of Once* (Book 1) would be good to look at too. You could adapt this activity as the starter page for children's own Spelling Books.

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My **Wizards of ONCE** Alphabet

A	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O
P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y
Z	!	?		

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How Would You fly?

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (Book 3)*.

In the books, our dynamic duo, Wish and Xar, travel on a flying door. First a bedroom door, then a cupboard door. At first it seems like an odd thing to fly on (not being a carpet as we may expect!). So, what other odd objects could you fly on?



Part 1: Here are some questions children could consider in their design:

- What is your flying item?
- What does it look like?
- How is it controlled?
- How many people fit on it?

Part 2: Following this, children could imagine they are riding their enchanted object over one of the settings in the books: the wildwoods, warrior fort or Gormincrag. This could spark a descriptive piece of writing from a different perspective. You could support this writing by watching some drone videos, discussing how different things may look from a bird's eye view.

Part 3: If children create some fantastic pieces of writing, you may wish to use digital technology to publish the writing:

- Try using a green screen to get children 'aboard' their enchanted object by drawing in the object and using a gym horse under the green screen to 'climb aboard'.
- Children can create a drawing from above as an image to voice-record over in an app such as iMovie. The voice recording will consist of them reading aloud their own description.

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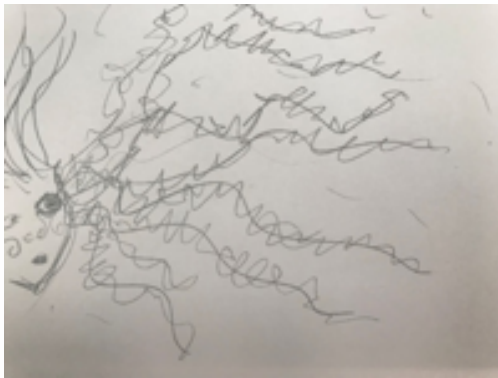
White on Black Artwork

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Twice Magic (Book 2)*.

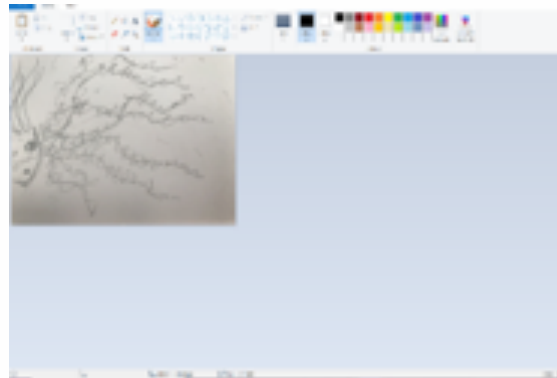
Extract – take a look at pages 374-375 and 378-379.

Part 1: At certain parts in the book, the black text and white page are reversed. Discuss what effect this creates. Does it make the scene scarier, darker, more imposing? Think about why these specific scenes were selected for this effect.

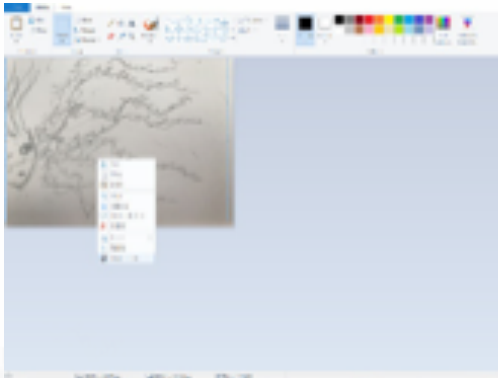
Part 2: Have a go at creating something similar. This is a brilliant way for children to publish their writing and artwork and will make great work for a classroom display.



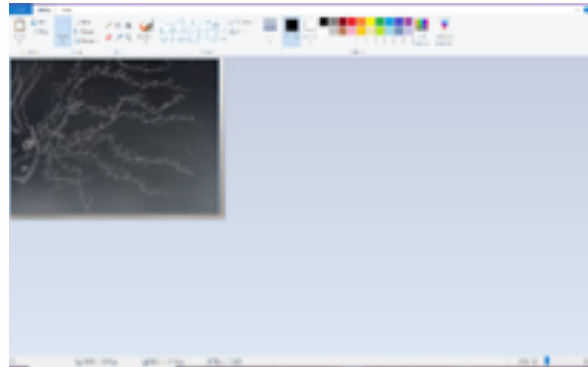
Step One: Children should type or write up their best draft of writing or create a drawing with pencil or black fine pen. This should be photographed, and the image file saved.



Step Two: Open this image file in MS Paint.



Step Three: Use the select tool to select the whole image in a rectangle. Use a right-hand click to show the dropdown menu.



Step Four: Click 'invert colour' to create your own negative image. Print and display.

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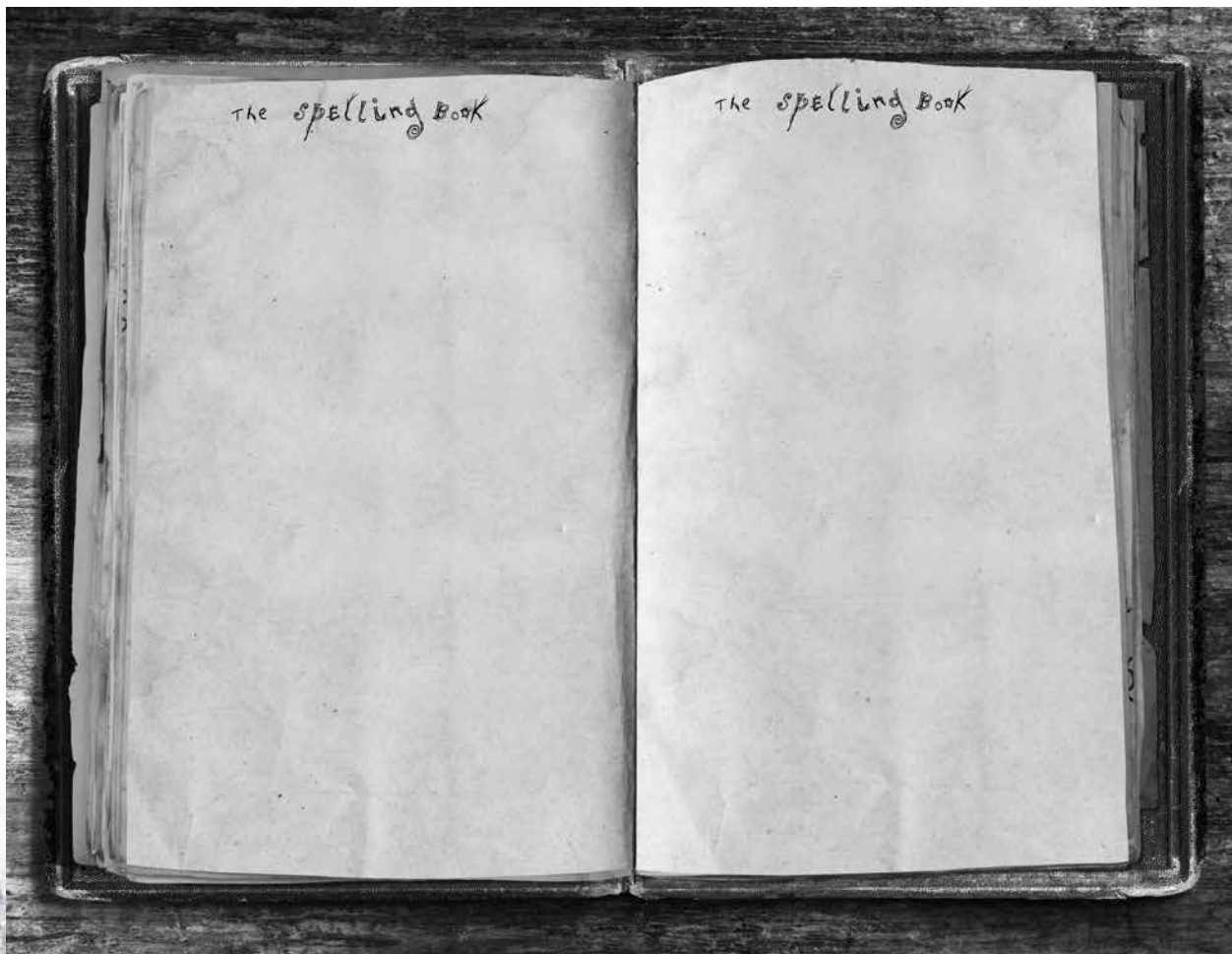
Spell Writing

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (Book 3)*.

Extract – begin reading from page 125 ‘Why would a lovespell work ...’ up to ‘... is endurance.’ on the same page.

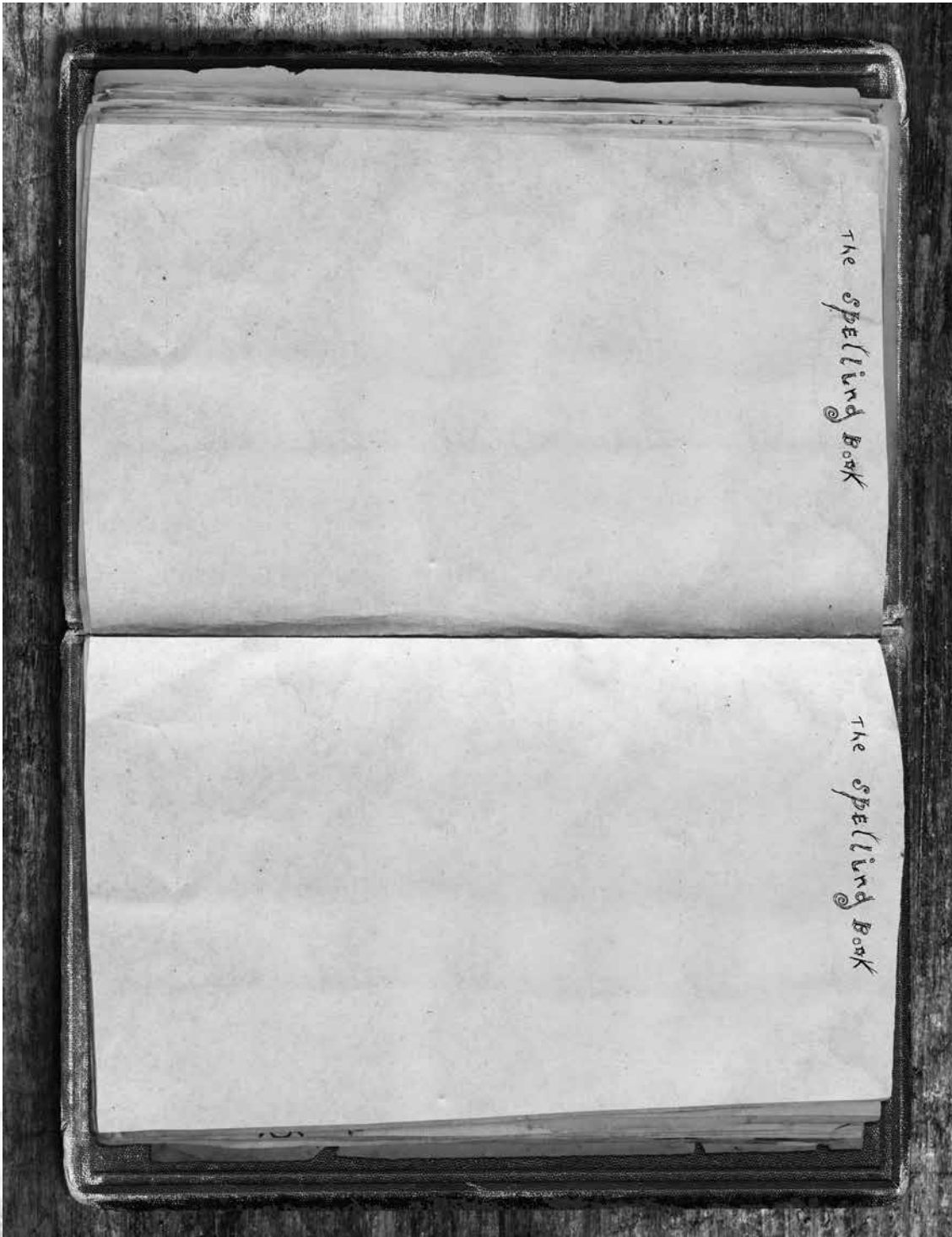
In *Knock Three Times*, Xar, Wish and Bodkin are on a quest to find the ingredients of a lovespell to get rid of witches. Challenge children to create their own lovespell. It must include five ingredients, and each must represent a value. You may like to discuss these as abstract nouns and/or link with discussions on your school values. Note that the values in this spell are all positive attributes.

Details can be added by including measures and amounts, then instructions on how to combine them.



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Spell Writing Activity Sheet



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Empathy

Noun: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Stories and books have the power to nurture and develop empathy in children, enabling them to understand their own and others' feelings and impacting their actions positively.

These activities pick out just a few opportunities in the books to focus on empathy. There are many more chances throughout the stories to pause and reflect on the actions and feelings of the characters, to discuss and learn, to compare and contrast.



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Meet the Heroes

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

At the beginning of each book, Cressida introduces us to Xar and Wish.



The boy, Xar, is from a Wizard
Tribe, but he has no Magic, and
he will do ANYTHING to get it.

The girl, Wish, is from a
Warrior Tribe.



but she owns a banned
Magical Object, and she will
do anything to conceal it.

Part 1: Take a moment to consider children's previous ideas on what a hero is and how they should look. Ideas can be jotted on a flip chart or large sheet of paper. Children can draw on ideas from other books, films, games and real-life heroes.

Now begin to compare these ideas. Are some of them 'stereotypes'? Discuss what this means. Are Xar and Wish typical heroes?

Part 2: Lead the discussion into reflection. Who can be a hero? Do children have the capacity to be a hero themselves? What would they like to be a hero of?

Part 3: As you follow Xar and Wish's adventures, revisit this discussion as a class. Consider when they behave heroically and when they don't. Is a hero always strong, courageous, just? What can children learn from this?

It may be good to keep a record of this on a working wall.

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The Same but Different

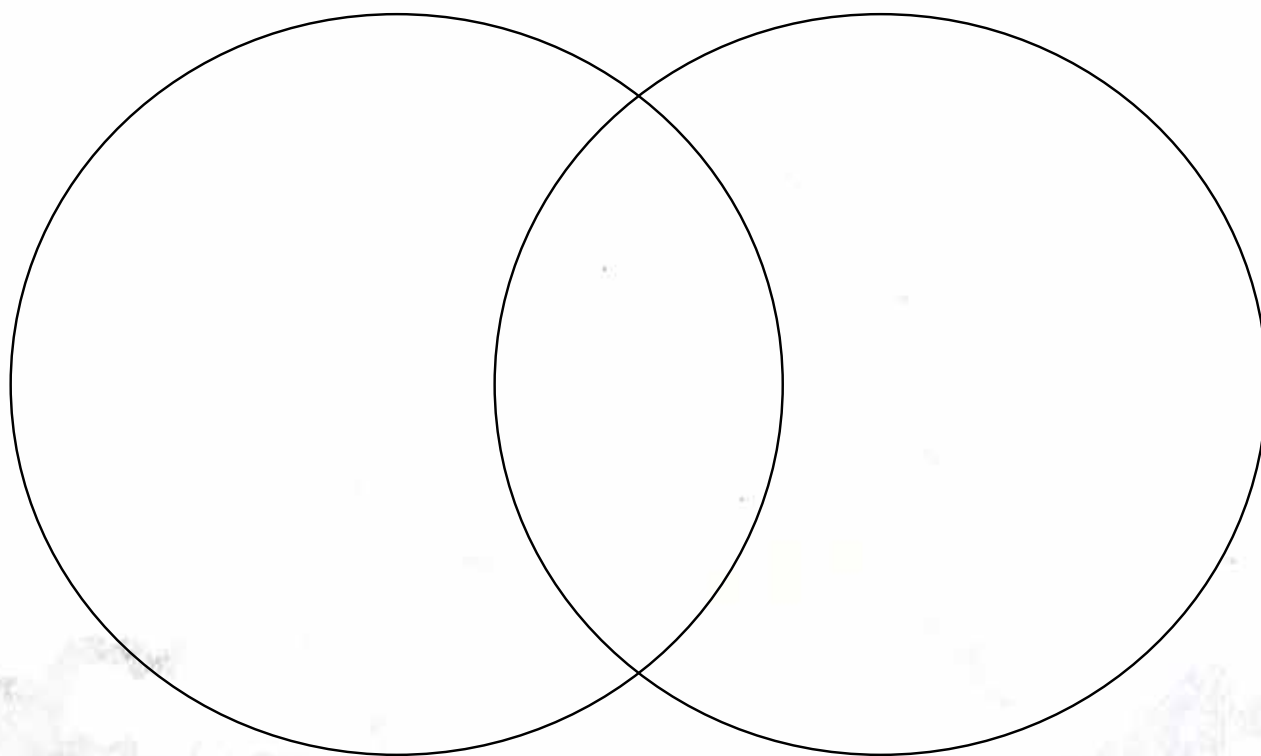
This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

As you read about Xar and Wish, keep a track of the ways that they are different and the same in this Venn diagram. Try printing it on A3 paper (or create an even bigger one yourself) and add sticky notes to it with evidence from the books written on them. This could be a time they agreed, times they show a similar attribute such as courage, or when they show attributes on separate occasions.

As you come across these attributes, try to label and recognise them: fear, courage, hesitancy, disregard for others. Get underneath the reasons the characters choose to behave this way. Ask children if they would behave the same or think the characters could/should have chosen a different response.

XAR

WISH



The **Wizards of ONCE**

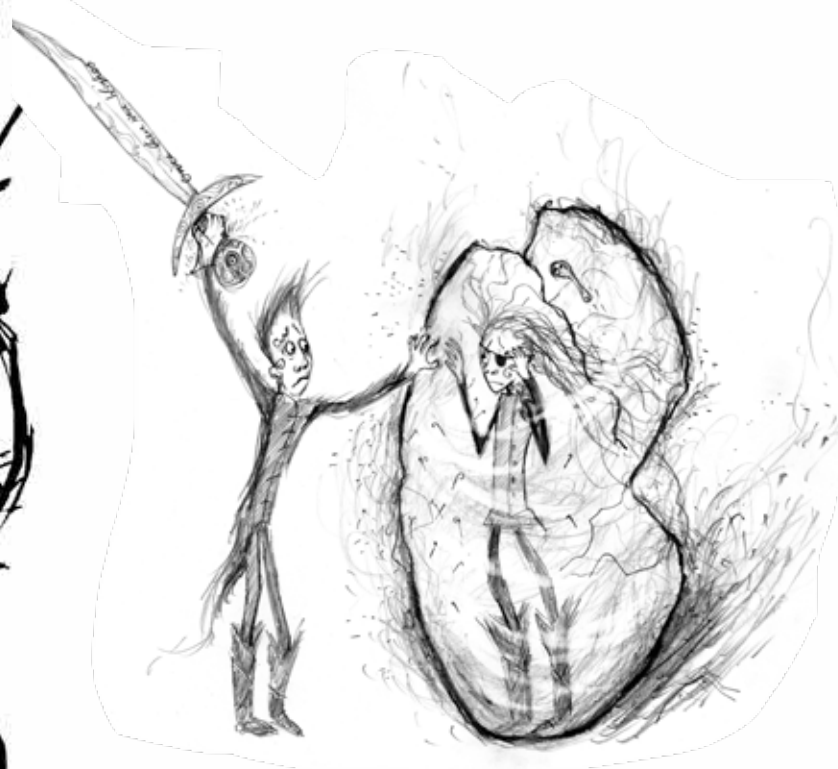
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Focus on Your Strengths

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Twice Magic (Book 2)*.

Extract – begin reading from page 364 ‘I can’t fight this ...’ up to ‘... with what you DON’T!’ on the same page.

Part 1: In this tricky situation, while Xar and Wish are battling the Kingwitch, Xar begins to lose faith in himself, thinking he can’t do it. Ask children to discuss occasions when they haven’t felt good enough or have given up. Can they link the feelings and experiences they have had to those of Xar?



Part 2: Wish gives Xar the advice to focus on his strengths. Try out this activity to show children the feeling you get when others are positive about you. Tape a blank piece of paper to each child’s back. Now, ask everyone to walk around the room with a pencil. It’s important that everyone has the same colour to write with. Things written down should be anonymous. Each child should write one strength on the back of every other person in the room. You may wish to discuss before hand what a strength is and remind children that they should be kind and take this seriously.

Part 3: At the end, children can take the paper off their backs and read all the strengths others see in them. Ask them to describe how this makes them feel.

There may be some surprises in what others see in them. Hopefully children will be smiling and feeling confident.

Part 4: End with a reflection about how we can make people feel braver and more courageous and how we can help others be the best version of themselves.

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Patient Perdita

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (Book 3)*.

Extract – begin reading at Chapter 9 on page 151 ‘That marked the ...’ up to ‘... crowds of friends.’ on page 156.

Part 1: Xar wasn't the biggest fan of school and we know he was very disobedient. Perdita seems to treat him differently from his previous teachers. Discuss the differences and the impact of Perdita's choices. How did it change Xar? Why do children think this was the case?



Part 2: Contrast this with Madam Clairvoy.

Extract - read page 159 from ‘Madam Clairvoy taught starcraft ...’ up to ‘... in other lessons as well.’ on page 160.

Why do children think the way Madam Clairvoy behaves towards Xar brings out the worst in him? Can he behave differently? What is Perdita trying to teach him?

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In Each Other's Shoes

This activity is linked to *The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (Book 3)*.

At the end of chapter 10 in *Knock Three Times*, Bodkin and Xar end up in each other's bodies for a day after taking an Interesting Transformation Potion. In chapter 11 and 12, they both discover things about each other.

Part 1: Read these chapters together or in pairs and find each occasion the characters have a moment of understanding about how the other must feel. Ask children to write these examples down on sticky notes and collect them and feel free to use the activity sheet as a starting point on the next page. Children may also note how a character changes as a result of that understanding.

Part 2: Develop this into a prediction about how this may change the character's behaviour and actions in the rest of the story.

BODKIN IN XAR'S SHOES:	XAR IN BODKIN'S SHOES:
<i>Understanding Xar's feelings:</i>	<i>Understanding Bodkin's feelings:</i>
<i>Changes in Bodkin:</i>	<i>Changes in Xar:</i>

In Each Other's Shoes

Activity Sheet

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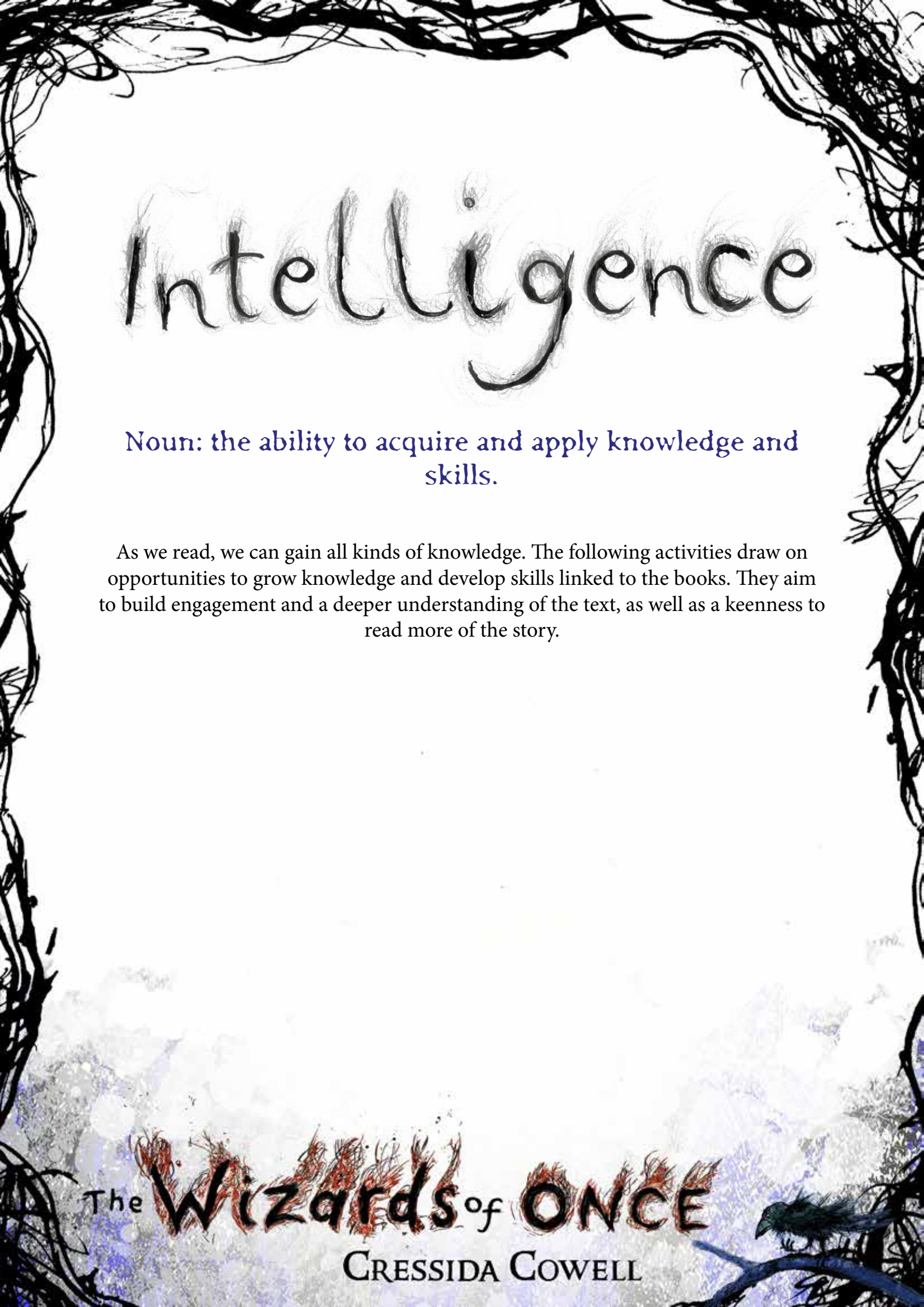


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Intelligence

Noun: the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills.

As we read, we can gain all kinds of knowledge. The following activities draw on opportunities to grow knowledge and develop skills linked to the books. They aim to build engagement and a deeper understanding of the text, as well as a keenness to read more of the story.

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CRESSIDA COWELL





A Wizard of Words

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

With a broad and rich vocabulary, children can understand better and express themselves better too. Develop a keenness for words in your class; let them know that a great vocabulary helps them be successful. They are masters of their own fate!

All three books are dripping with wonderful and great words for children to enjoy, learn and use. Collect them as a class or in children's own word collections.

I'M A **Wizard** OF WORDS

The **Wizards of ONCE**
CRESSIDA COWELL





A Wizard of Words
Activity Sheet

I'M A Wizard OF WORDS

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Spelling Book

Alphabetical Order

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

Xar's Spelling Book is very wonderful. To find a spell, you just tap the letter it begins with. In the real world, we have to manually navigate non-fiction books ourselves!



Secondly, children can group the spells. This will then lead into a contents page, as spells will fit into categories.

Finally, encourage children to think of how we use an index page. Highlight all the key words in the spell name, then create a group index section. This one will be a tricky task that requires communication, patience and focus.

Part 1: Give each child a few small pieces of paper or sticky notes. They should create a spell name on each piece. The crazier the better!

Part 2: In groups, children can collate all their spells. The first task is to sort them into alphabetical order. This could prove tricky if all the spells start with 'Spell to ...' or 'How to ...', so children will need to decide on which main word they use to order alphabetically.

The SPELLING Book

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPELLS

① Flying Spell

② Water Spell

✱ Fire spell

✱ Love Spell

✱ Growing spells

✱ Spell of Forgetting

① Invisibility Spell

① Thunder Spell

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etirW ekil a hctiW

This activity can be linked to all three books in
The Wizards of Once series.

In the books, witches use the same words as humans, but they say them backwards. There is lots of fun to be had with this. Here's a few to try:

- Challenge children to create a message in witch speak. Then get the class to decode each child's word.
- Write a message in witch speak on your board for children to decode after a break or lunchtime.
- Teach them a word of the day in witch speak. It's a nice way to focus on the spelling of a new word.
- Create witch labels for items in the classroom e.g. sriahc, srossics, kcolc, rood, srelur.



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Your Own Enchanted Sword

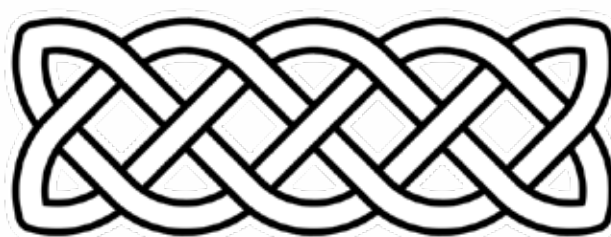
This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

The Wizards of Once series is inspired by the Bronze to Iron Age era of history. You may wish to find out more about the weapons of that age if you are studying this period in history.

This video shows how a bronze sword would have been made:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00fcwbg>

Part 1: The Droids are key characters in the series, and they are modelled on Druids, who were around during the Iron Age period. Druids were esteemed leaders of the ancient Celts. Check out some Celtic artwork with your class to inspire their own sword designs. If helpful, get them to use the activity sheet on the next page - simply photocopy as many as you require.



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Once there were.....

But I them.

Get children to be creative with the message on their swords. Below are some alternatives to fill in the blanks and feel free to photocopy the activity sheet a couple of pages along for them to use to come up with their messaging - get them to be as creative as they can!

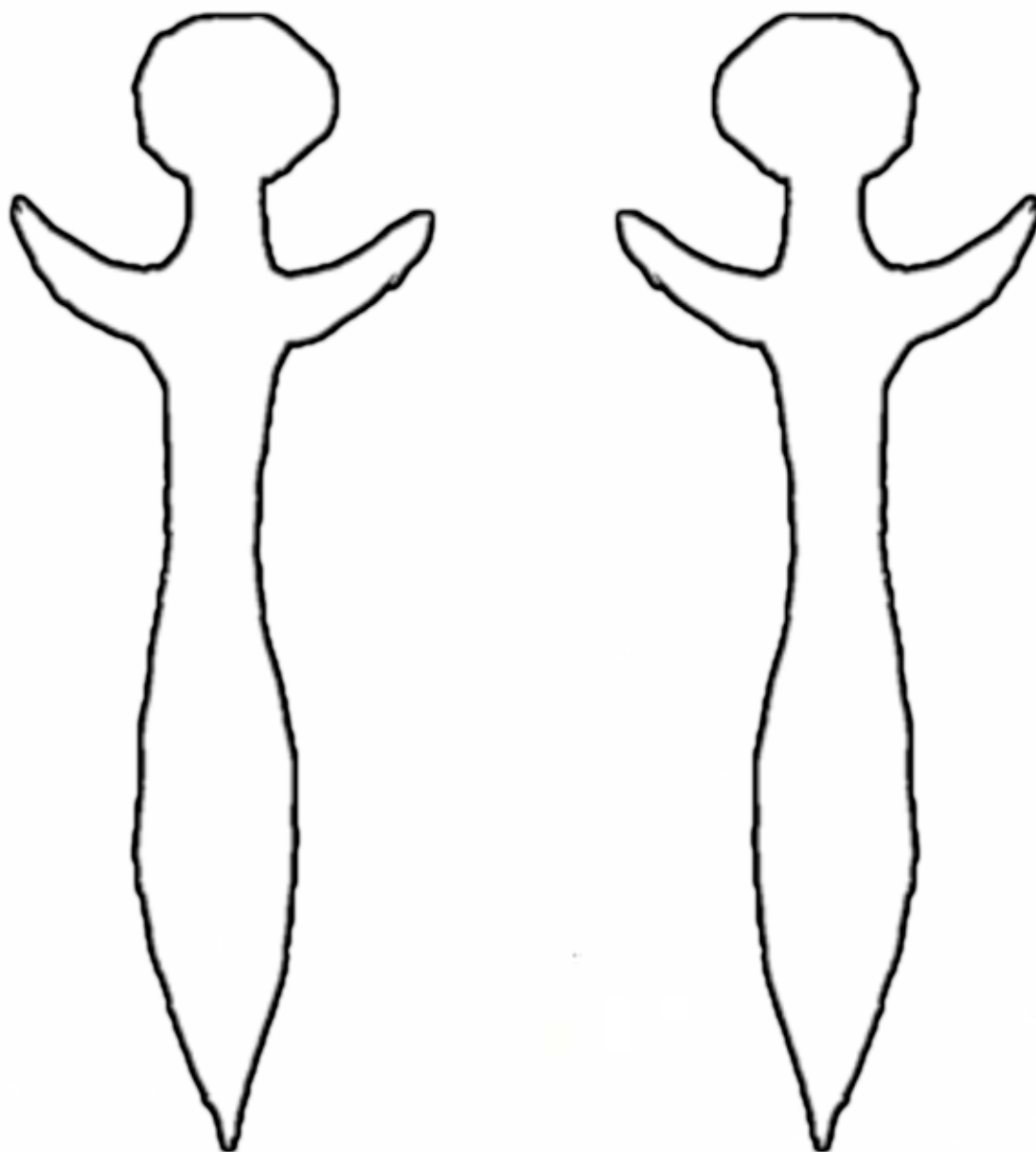
NB - witches is a plural so the synonyms need to be plural too. A nice opportunity to sneak in a bit of grammar!

WITCHES	KILLED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• enchantresses• sorceresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• slayed• charmed• freed

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Your Own Enchanted Sword Activity Sheet (Part 1)

Design your very own Bronze Sword fit for The Droods!



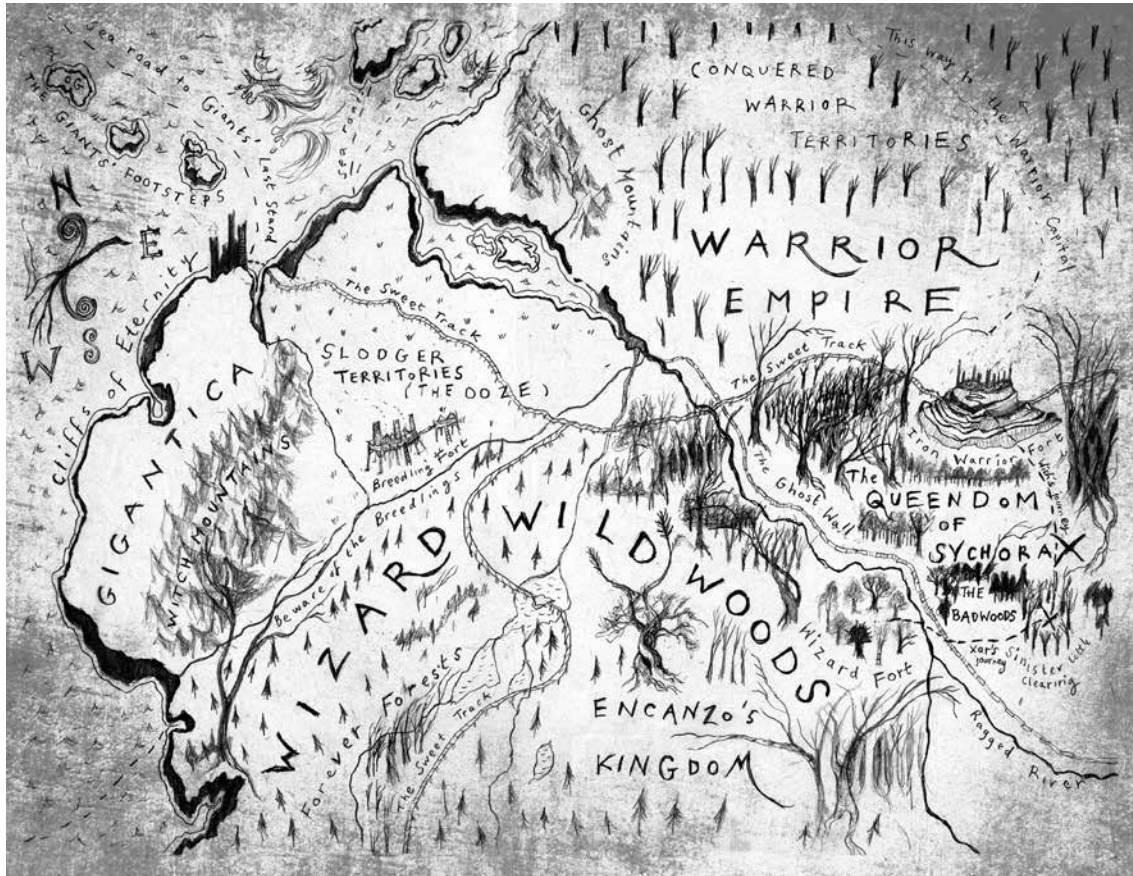
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Iron Hill Forts

This activity can be linked to all three books in *The Wizards of Once* series.

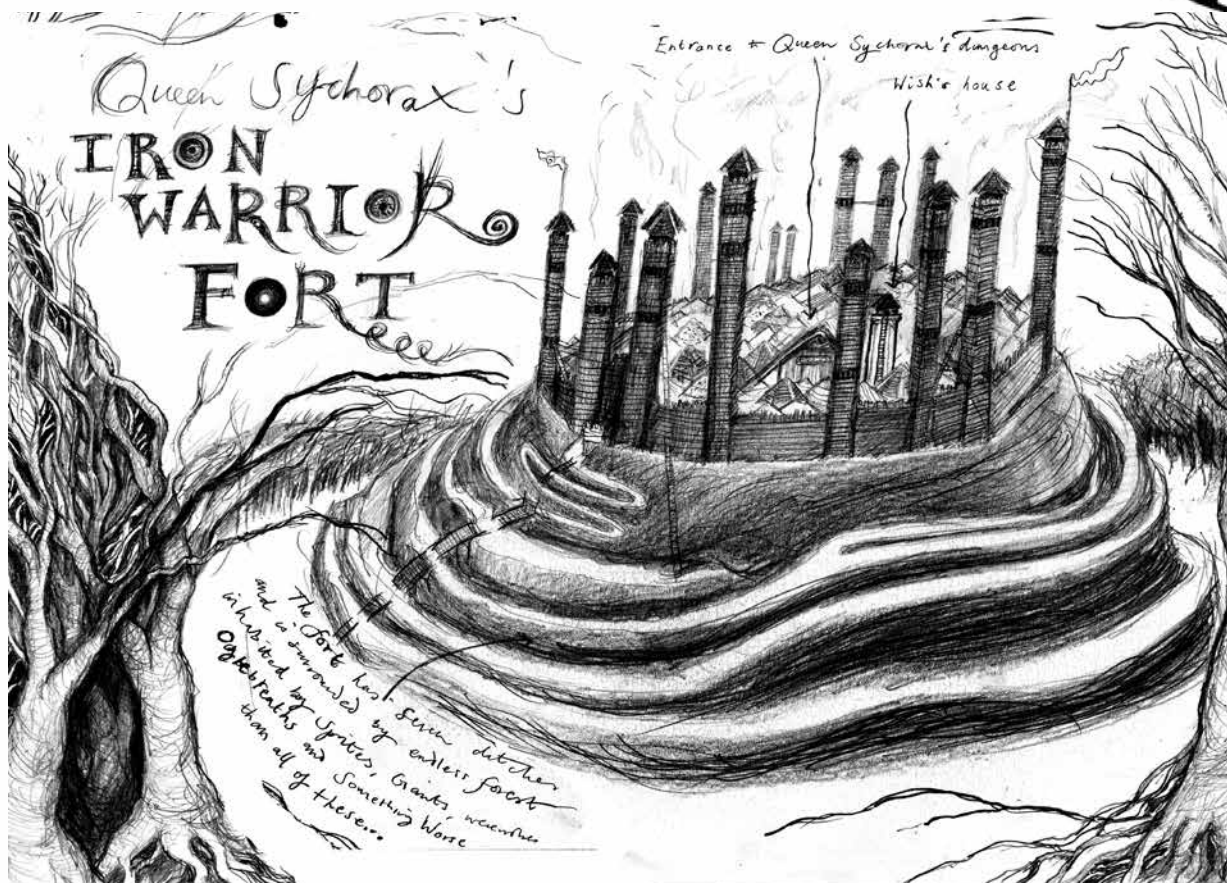
The Wizards of Once series is set in the pre-history period, including the Iron Age. Cressida has used this time period to inspire many parts of the story, including the brilliant Iron Warrior Fort.



Living in Iron Age Britain was pretty tough as there was a lot of fighting. People lived in tribes or clans, each on a fort built for protection. They had a leader or Warrior King in charge of each group.

In our story, Cressida has altered history a little by having a Queen in charge of the Fort – Queen Sychorax. You may wish to discuss why Cressida chose to do this.

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Part 1: Hill forts were very cleverly designed to keep danger out, using walls, ditches and weaponry. Encourage children to take a close look at the drawing of the Iron Warrior Fort to see if they can spot all the ways it is designed to keep others out.

Here's a great video to learn a little more about Hill Forts:

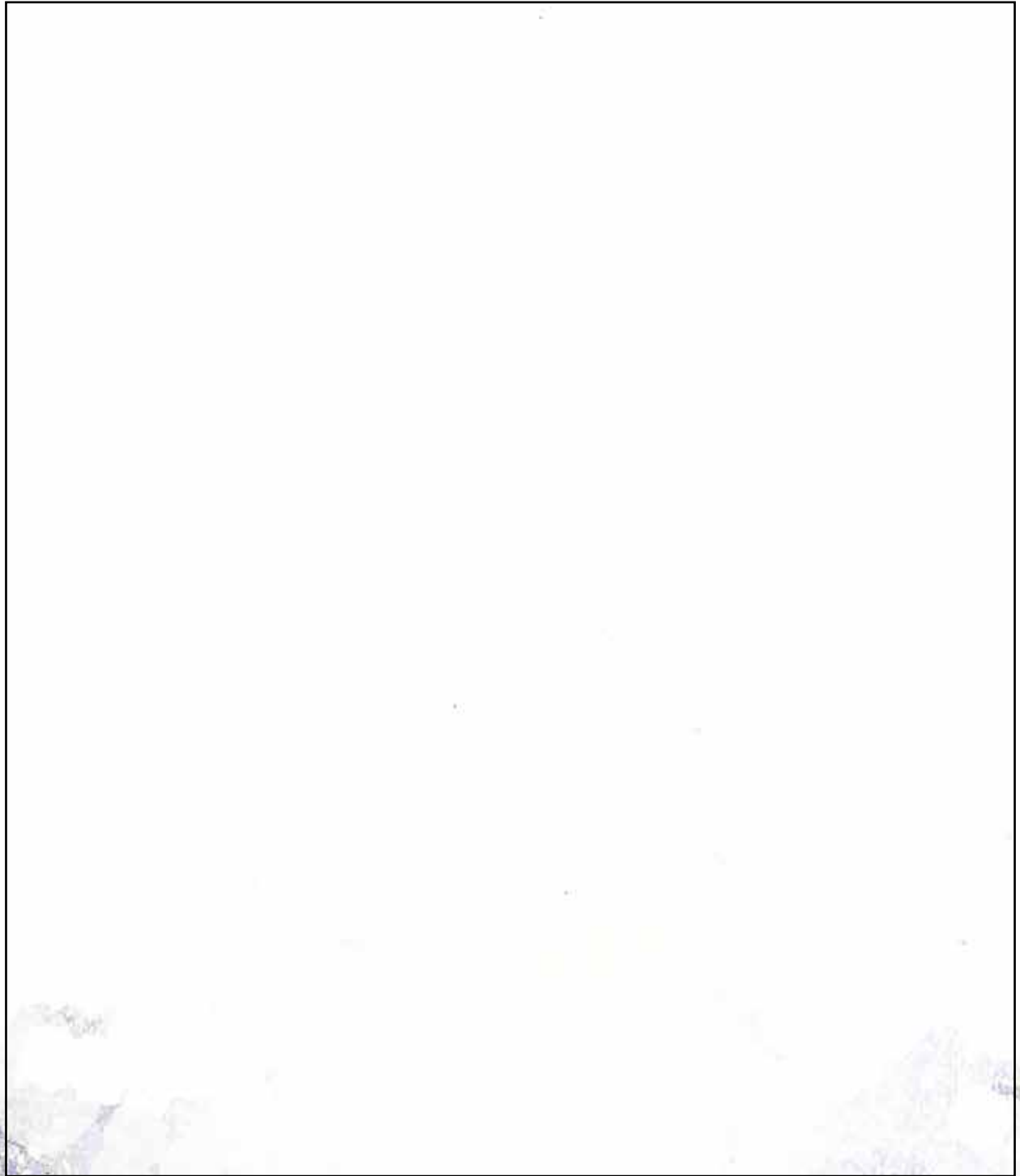
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z8bkwmn>

Part 2: Now, challenge children to create a Warrior Fort of their own using the activity sheet on the next page, with the purpose of keeping others out in as many ways as they can. They can take their own name to give it a king or queen. To extend this activity, turn these designs into models.

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My Warrior Fort Activity Sheet



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