



MENSA® FOUNDATION

Educational Programs

Have Fun Storming the Castle!

Overview

This series of educational programs was designed to simultaneously entertain and challenge gifted youth in their time outside of the school setting; however, the activities may be easily shared and enjoyed by older people as well. Programs may be scaled up or down depending on number of attendees, desired level of complexity, etc. Sample materials are included with most plans.

The Educational Programs series was developed by Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T., the Mensa Foundation's Gifted Youth Specialist.

Introduction

Taking its name from Miracle Max's line in *The Princess Bride*, this activity can expand or contract to fit your Local Group's needs. Read through the plan and select those elements that fit your time and resources. At its least intricate, it is a building activity; at its most elaborate, it is a medieval extravaganza! Not only can these activities be *for* kids, they can be *by* kids as well. Use Young Mensans to develop and prepare for the event.

Supplies (see Preparation and Showtime! sections for details)

- Decorating/building elements such as cardboard, markers, construction paper, empty boxes, crepe paper, etc.
- Cutting implements
- Glue or tape
- Snacks
- Materials for craft projects
- Items to juggle
- "Tournament" materials such as pool noodles and pool rings
- Items for younger children such as coloring pages, crayons, etc.
- Reference books (optional)

Samples

Attached as a separate Word file, you will find the following sample materials that you are welcome to use or reproduce:

- One-page event invitation.



MENSA® FOUNDATION Educational Programs

Preparation

Select a location that is appropriate for this set of activities.

Select your activities from the Showtime! section and gather the necessary items.

Choose two colors (such as red/blue, green/yellow, red/silver) to be the theme colors. Gather building/decorating supplies in those colors.

Decorations

- Make a drawbridge at the door. Use cardboard for the bridge, drawing wood grain lines with marker. Add the look of planks by drawing lines and large dots to look like nails. Cut the bridge into a rounded shape at the far end. For the chains, use either rope; brown, gray or black construction paper chains; or lightweight metal chain. Attach the “chains” at the top of the door frame and to the bridge. Use blue paper to create a moat under the bridge. Use brown bulletin board paper with black lines to look like castle stones on either side of the door.
- Make a castle out of large boxes. Use a marker to draw “stone” lines. Use crepe paper streamers in the theme colors to fly from the towers (make towers out of cylindrical boxes or cartons such as oatmeal containers). Cut out windows.
- You can add some of the following to make your castle even cooler:
 - Periscope.
 - Courtyard with pillows to sit on.
 - Secret passageway.
 - Fake ivy on the walls.
 - Royal coat of arms.
 - Throne.

Remember, creating the decorations is a great Young Mensan activity!

Food

- Grilled chicken or chicken drumsticks.
- Round bread loaves.
- Cheese.
- Fresh fruit.
- Apple juice or ginger ale.
- Make trenchers (plates) out of pita bread, and use fingers to eat all foods.

Storming the Castle—Preparation



MENSA® FOUNDATION

Educational Programs

Showtime!

Activities

Popsicle stick catapult

Construct the catapult that will throw an object the farthest. Get instructions at www.stormthecastle.com/catapult/popsiclestick-catapult.htm

Make sure all participants are on the launch side of the catapult and are wearing safety goggles.

You can also find great ideas on catapult building (and similar projects) in these books by William Gurstelle, any one of which could be an entire activity by itself:

- *Backyard Ballistics: Build Potato Cannons, Paper Match Rockets, Cincinnati Fire Kites, Tennis Ball Mortars, and More*
- *The Art of the Catapult: Build Greek Ballistae, Roman Onagers, English Trebuchets, and More Ancient Artillery*
- *Whoosh Boom, Splat: The Garage Warrior's Guide to Building Projectile Shooters*
- *Adventures from the Technology Underground: Catapults, Pulsejets, Rail Guns, Flamethrowers, Tesla Coils, Air Cannons, and...*

Make a cardboard castle

Expand upon your drawbridge and castle using common household items. Get instructions at www.stormthecastle.com/paper-castle/make-a-cardboard-castle.htm.

Make your own grail

Participants can decorate their own cups using clear acrylic goblets, plastic adhesive gems (or glue dots and acrylic gems), etc. Alternately, you could decorate one “grail” and hide it, creating a scavenger hunt for participants.

Court Jester School: Learn to juggle

Get good instructions here: learntohowtojuggle.info. You can also find books at the library on juggling; the Dewey Decimal number is 793.87.



MENSA® FOUNDATION Educational Programs

Paper maché dragon eggs

You will need:

- Water balloons
- Newspaper or tissue paper
- Maché mix:

Ingredients:

- Cornstarch (1-2 tablespoons for each cup of water)
- Cold water
- Dash of salt (optional)

In a saucepan, mix cornstarch and water. Heat on medium, stirring constantly, until it thickens and becomes translucent. Cool.

Instructions:

Tear narrow strips of newspaper or colored tissue paper. Blow up balloons. Thoroughly immerse strips in maché mix until quite wet. Lay the strips on the balloons and let dry. When dry, you can paint the “eggs” if desired.

Tournament

Use broomsticks or pool noodles to try to catch pool rings. If you use pool noodles, wind electrical tape up the length like a barber pole.

Other ideas

You may wish to have a selection of books on King Arthur or the Middle Ages available for attendees to peruse. There are a number of books for all ages that would be appropriate. Try any by Hudson Talbott, *Merlin and the Dragons* by Jane Yolen, and *The Making of a Knight: How Sir James Earned His Armor* by Patrick O'Brien. For older kids, check out the series by Robert San Souci. You may wish to have some of the adult versions, too, such as *The Once and Future King* or Steinbeck's version of the Arthurian legend.

If you are expecting very young children to attend, have some coloring pages available as well. Try the ones at these sites:

- www.edupics.com/en-coloring-pictures-pages-photo-knight-p5965.jpg
- www.printactivities.com/ColoringPages/Knights/Knight-Coloring-Pages.html