



A Midsummer Week's Activities

A Brief Story:

A few summers ago, I was working for a college preschool. A lot of the children were really fascinated with fairies, so I wanted to take them down a fairy-tale adventure. We started with a magical room where we set up blocks into castles, took natural resources from outside and turned it into a dragon's den, and used sequined fabric as a flowing ocean on the floor with frolicking mermaids and a toy pirate ship. We created large maps where the children had the opportunity to decide where castles, rivers, forests and more all lay. We took trips through forest trails and gardens and talked about fairies and other creatures that might be hiding behind flowers. We would take moments of silence to listen to the wind and in hopes of hearing fairy giggles. We put on puppet shows and plays, coloured and sang. The children were encouraged to be as creative and self-expressive as they wished.

Play is incredible. Children learn so much and develop so many skills just through play. Each activity facilitated learning, whether it be math, science, language, or art, social/emotional skills like teamwork, communication, compromise, empathy. To share in the creative process with children is an incredible experience, and one we can facilitate through listening and letting their ideas lead the way! A simple interest in fairy tales took our class through days of activities, learning, experiences, and memories. Feel free to try one or all, and I hope you get to enjoy in some of that childlike wonder and learning too!



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Activities

Activity 1 – World Building

Equipment:

- -Lego or building blocks (or both!)
- -paper small and large if you have it
- -markers
- -fabrics and/or scarves
- -twinkle lights
- -get as creative and big as you want!



Your child's castle and worldbuilding can be as intricate or simple as they imagine. Talk to them about the height, size, width. Ask them questions like who lives there? What do they do? What does it mean to be a king, queen, princess, or knight? Are dragons good or bad? Why, what actions make them good or bad? Can some be good, and some be bad? Really aid your children in expanding their concepts in their dramatic play.



This is an example of the map we made. It was fairly large, so the children were able to crawl all over it, stand up and back and take it in as a whole. They drew where the castle was, where the forest, the dragon's den, the rivers and lakes were. They told me what each place was called, and I would label it for them, speaking out loud each letter of the word. We pinned it to the wall, hung the signs on the dragon's lair and the castle, and off they were to become whomever it was they imagined! Take part – maybe you've always wanted to be a king or queen, or maybe you want to play the villainous dragon!

In days following we expanded this theme and added a river of sparkling fabrics and placed pirate ships and mermaid dolls in it. We had fake flowers that we sprinkled along the way. We set up dimly lit tents with fairy tale books to encourage reading. We placed scarves or fabric over the lights on the walls to help set the mood. Outdoors, we used big logs and branches to create the dragon's den. It's like building a magical fort! Carry it as far as your children will imagine, and with whatever resources you have around the home.



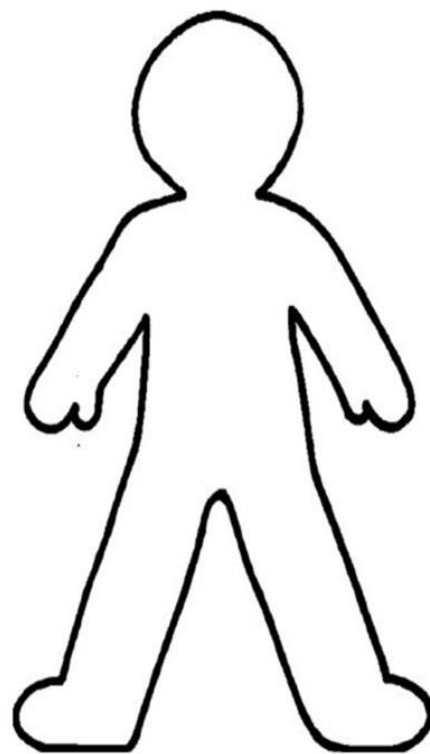
Activity 2 - Puppet Play

- -dolls
- -a stage (a box, a premade stage, a tabletop, behind your living room curtains)
- -paper, or cardboard for more durability
- -scissors & glue
- -markers
- -decorative materials (shells, stickers, beads, gems, yarn, buttons, feathers)
- -Large popsicle sticks



In later days the children started using the dolls to create plays for each other. It was a riot! Individually, or in groups, the children started creating these short plays for each other and family members. The audience can be invited to call out

questions whenever the actors got stumped, but mostly they made full wonderful stories themselves. We were very lucky to have a stage for them, but you can create your own stage on a table, or with a cardboard box that you cut the top and bottom out of. To encourage their creative spirits, we found some cardboard people cut-outs we'd had lying around forever. If you don't have these, a simple google search will bring up an endless amount of these outlines: from superheroes, to people outlines in dresses or pants, or just simple human shape. I prefer the



ones that have no distinct clothing or shapes so the children can really dress their person or design them however they want them to be. Here is an example below:

To make them a little more durable, make them on cardboard or with felt. Lay out your decorative items in bowls and let the children run wild! When they're done, glue them to a large popsicle stick. Maybe they'll continue the fairy-tale theme and make a pirate or a fairy, or maybe they'll create an alien, monster, fireman, or a reflection of themselves! No matter what they'll have a blast, and they'll have more figures to continue their plays. Maybe there's a future play-write, director, or actor in your midst!



Activity 3 – Fairy Houses

This next activity was one of the most magical experiences I have had working with children.

Here's a description of the activity!

What you'll need:

- -small boxes (milk jugs or cartons, tissue boxes, amazon boxes, etc.)
- -any decorative materials you have (feathers, beads, tissue paper, leaves, flowers, buttons, etc.)
- -glue
- -scissors
- -1-hole punch
- -string, or thin leather strips, fabric

While playing out in the garden one day, some of the kids started to talk about fairies. I asked them questions like what are fairies? What do they eat? What do they do? Why can't we see them? Where do they live? When we started talking about housing it popped into my head '*Why don't we make fairy houses?!*'. And so, we were off! We sat with the children and helped them cut doors out of their boxes. They decorated them, all the while talking about how much they hoped the fairies would like their homes.

To attach doors, we used a 1-hole punch to make three small holes beside the door space, and three small holes on the door. We weaved pieces of lace, ribbon, leather, or string through them to attach a swinging door. We made one hole at the top of the house and laced a string through it. If the whole is too big you can anchor the string with a large button. Then we hung them outside in our garden! To attract the fairies, we made sugar cookies (because what else would fairies eat, if not sugar?!). Here's the recipe!

Activity 4 - Sugar Cookie Recipe

I can't take credit for this recipe, so I'll provide the link. But I've been making these for years and get TONS of compliments on them. I even had a few parents come ask for the recipe because they loved them so much. So here it is:

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/9870/easy-sugar-cookies/>

Ingredients

Ingredient Checklist

- 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



Directions

Step 1

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). In a small bowl, stir together flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Set aside.

Step 2

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in egg and vanilla. Gradually blend in the dry ingredients. Roll rounded teaspoonfuls of dough into balls, and place onto ungreased cookie sheets.

Step 3

Bake 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until golden. Let stand on cookie sheet two minutes before removing to cool on wire racks.

*Tip: I bake mine for the minimum amount of time. This will vary per oven, but I take them out as soon as they start to golden. That way they stay soft and chewy for longer.

Children love baking, and if we can take a breath and step back from our need for control, they do a fabulous job! Baking gives opportunities for children to learn math through measuring, counting out eggs, and rolling balls of dough onto the pan. It helps them with literacy, communication, teamwork, and self-autonomy. They get to enjoy something delicious that they made and can share with their friends and family. We cut up the cookies into wee pieces and placed a piece into each house, so that the fairies would have a snack waiting for them (Fairies love sugar, didn't you know?).



Activity 5 – Letters from the Fairy

For this final activity, it's mostly on you. When the children went down for their afternoon naps, I sat down and wrote each child a personalized thank you note. It doesn't have to be long, just a sweet thank you with maybe a special note. If your child worked for a long time or was proud of a certain aspect of their house, or if they really truly believe in the fairy, have the fairy mention this and thank them. *(for older kids no longer napping this could be done in the evening)*

I sprinkled glitter in the note, folded it and rolled it up. Then I tied it with a ribbon, took the cookie out (okay fine, I ate the cookies!) and replaced them with the note.

It was a magical experience for me to get to see the excitement, wonder, and delight on each child's face when they saw the missing cookie and a letter in replace. When they unravelled them and were dusted with glitter they exclaimed with joy! The children were filled with a sense of accomplishment and a sense of fulfillment from helping their fairy friend. Children who hadn't participated in building a fairy house were now begging to do so. The children shared what their notes said and kept them near to them for the rest of the day.

Whether you choose to do 1, a couple, or all these activities over however many days, weeks, or months; I hope it creates incredible memories for you and your children. Know that the time you invest in their play is time invested in their learning and development. So, go out there, get creative, put on a pirate hat or a crown, and get imagining! *The adventures are limitless... & midsummer can happen any time!*

