Activity 1

WE CAN CREATE CHARACTERS

About this activity

**Preparation time:** 20 mins (experience-dependent)

**Activity duration:** 2 sessions: 1 × 30 mins, 1 × 40 mins

**Summary**
In this activity, the children will develop their familiarity with Minecraft controls and the *inventory* on a computer by creating a pixel-art character or creature from a story they know. They can first plan their design and then use different materials in Minecraft to build a face.

**Outcome**
By the end of the activity, the children will have created a pixel-art face of a character from a nursery rhyme, traditional tale or book being read in class, using different materials.

Curriculum links

**Art and design PoS**
- Develop a wide range of art and design techniques using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space.

**English PoS**
- Be encouraged to link what they read, or hear read, to their own experiences.
- Become very familiar with key stories, fairy stories and traditional tales, retelling them and considering their particular characteristics.

**Maths PoS**
- Compare, describe and solve practical problems for lengths and heights.

Learning expectations

**This activity will enable children to:**
- use their imagination to create simple character artworks using a pixel-art style
- talk about how character qualities can be conveyed visually
- use mathematical concepts in context, e.g. long, short.

Getting ready

1. Familiarise yourself with the lesson plans (pages 26–27).
2. Think about how you might want to adapt this activity for use with your own school topics (see Variations to try).
3. Watch the Minecraft walkthroughs to familiarise yourself with how to:
   - build with *blocks*
   - create *signposts* and *boards*.

4. Create and save a new *flat* Minecraft world in **creative mode** and build a selection of ‘frames’ of different sizes in which the children can build their characters. It is advised that children work collaboratively in this activity.
5. Research and collect examples of artwork created in Minecraft online. See **Useful links**.
6. Print out the photocopy master on page 25 for individuals or groups of children.
7. When running this session, adjust your expectations of the outcomes depending on how the children get on using Minecraft for the first time (see page 8).

Variations to try

This activity can be adapted for use with other subject areas:
- In history, this activity could be linked with the creation of mosaics for younger children (see Activity 8).
- In art, children could create a portrait of a person that they know and try to convey aspects of their personality within the piece.

Useful links

- Minecraft-inspired portraits from Figtree Public School: [http://stage2hornsby.weebly.com/minecraft-inspired-portraits.html](http://stage2hornsby.weebly.com/minecraft-inspired-portraits.html)
- TES lesson plan for portraits with Minecraft: [https://www.tes.com/lessons/nWwS7XjY3WXDHA/minecraft-portraits-mosaics](https://www.tes.com/lessons/nWwS7XjY3WXDHA/minecraft-portraits-mosaics)
WE CAN CREATE CHARACTERS

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<th>Write down words to describe the face you have created.</th>
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Checklist
- We have created a face.
- We have used different colours.
- We have described our face.
- We have described our materials.

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LESSON 1

1. Talk to the children about what pixel art is: art that is made, using a computer, with pixels (or very small squares). Ask if any of the children have seen artworks made up of squares before. On the IWB, look at some examples of art created in Minecraft (see Useful links). Encourage the children to discuss their thoughts on each artwork. If you have time, you may want to show examples of Minecraft art inspired by famous paintings (see Useful links).

   a. How is the Minecraft art different to other types of art (e.g. shapes and colours used)?

2. Show the children a pre-created pixel art-face (see slide 2 of the Activity 1 PowerPoint or show an example you have created yourself or from a previous session). Ask the children to look carefully at the different colours used, and the shape and size of the design. Explain that everything in this pixel artwork has been chosen to fit the characteristics of the character or creature.

   a. What do you like about this design?
   a. What do you not like about this design?

3. Explain to the children that they are going to create their own piece of pixel art in Minecraft. They will start by designing the face of a creature or character from a book they know and then they will build it using materials in the Minecraft inventory. Explain that their artwork will fit inside a frame so that together the class will make a gallery for everyone to visit. Display the Minecraft inventory on the IWB to explore colours and types of materials that could be used. Allow the children to discuss initial ideas.

   a. What colours and materials will you use in your face? Why?

4. If you wish, display the photocopy master on the IWB. Explain that the children can use this to record their ideas and plans. Talk through each section so the children understand what they need to do. Encourage them to start planning their character or creature (it could be a character from a traditional tale, nursery rhyme or a book you have been reading in class). Talk about size, shape, length and height, colours and characteristics of their creature or character. Give the children time to create a design and to write some words to describe their character.

   a. Can you describe your character or creature using words?
   a. How could you show these qualities in your design?
LESSON 2

1 Load your pre-built world in Minecraft and help the children to join. Ask them to locate the keys they will need to move around (E for inventory, W, A, S and D for movement, space bar to jump). Demonstrate how to fly around the world (double-tap the space bar). Give the children some time to explore the world, practising moving and using the mouse for building. An image of the keyboard functions would be useful to keep on the IWB for the duration of the activity (see Activity 1 PowerPoint slide 3).

What keyboard keys do you use to move around in Minecraft?

2 Remind the children about the character or creature they designed in the previous session. Let them choose an appropriately sized frame based on their design. Question the children as they build, and support them in navigating the inventory and controls. Help them to refer to their design and stay on task. Encourage the children to support one another (you might wish to pair up more experienced Minecraft users with those children who have less experience).

The picture on the right shows a close-up of part of a portrait.

3 As the session progresses, bring the children together and explain that they need to add a signpost to their artwork, showing their name, so visitors know who created it. Ask if any of the children know how to create a signpost or board in Minecraft. If they do, encourage them to demonstrate this to other children. If not, walk through the process on the IWB first before the children then attempt this independently.

4 If time allows, encourage the children to change or expand on their original plan to include different items/materials found in the inventory in their pixel-art creations. If appropriate, ask them to give reasons for their changes. Finally, ask the children to visit other children’s frames to provide constructive feedback on their creations.

The picture on the right shows a portrait from below, demonstrating that portraits can have depth.

Did the design of your character change from your original plan? Why?

What would you like to do with your character now?

Extension

Ask the children to create an environment for their character or creature, ideally that links back to the original story on which it is based. This could be a house, a cave, a hole or a nest in a tree!