Ray Harryhausen, Telling tales

Skeleton models from ‘Jason and the Argonauts’ (1963) Ray Harryhausen © The Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation.

Coming to a sofa near you... activities inspired by the grandfather of animation, Ray Harryhausen! Create characters, learn some tricks of the trade, make movie magic and end this school term with a creature club kitchen disco...
Activity 1: Create your character

Medusa model from 'Clash of the Titans' (about 1979) Ray Harryhausen © The Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation.

This is a model of Medusa made by Ray Harryhausen for the film, Clash of the Titans (1981). Ray Harryhausen used stop-motion animation to make Medusa appear to be fighting with the actors in the film. The character of Medusa comes from Ancient Greek mythology. Make your own creature out of plasticine, salt-dough, bits and bobs from around the house, stuff from your recycling bin (ask permission first!) or just draw your design in pencil! If you need a bit of inspiration, have a look at the questions below – they might help you get started!
Activity 2: See, Think, Wonder

Here are a few questions to get you thinking about mythical creatures and the characters that you might find in Ray Harryhausen’s movies.

- What kinds of magical creatures have you heard of?
- What makes a creature scary? Its size, sharp claws, big teeth, colour, loud roar, ability to breathe fire?
- What makes a creature magical? Wings, talking, magical powers - what could they be?
- Where would your magical creature or fierce monster live? What would they eat?
- What size would your creature be? As big as a house or small enough to fit in your pocket?
- Is your creature furry, scaly, slimy, spikey or feathered?
- What would your creature do if it met you? Would it let you ride on it? Would it show you some magic? Would it want to eat you up?
- Think about different stories with fierce monsters and magical creatures in them, Greek myths and legends, fairy stories, stop-motion model animation in films: King Kong, Clash of the Titans, Jason and the Argonauts

Use these questions to design your own movie poster featuring your own made-up character. When you’re done, why don’t you watch Ray Harryhausen’s film Clash of the Titans – to see how he brought his Medusa creature to life?
Activity 3: #ArtTogether

Your mid-week challenge this week is to create a forced perspective photo to create the illusion of scale. Ray Harryhausen used this in a few films but most notably in the 3 Worlds of Gulliver. It’s fun, easy to do and all you need is a camera. We can’t wait to see how you get on!
Activity 4: WATCH

Grab your popcorn and watch a trailer for The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958). You can find it on YouTube.

This trailer was filmed over 60 years ago – they didn’t have anything close to the technology that we have nowadays! It shows you some tricks to how the movie magic was made. Does anything surprise you?

Try making own storyboard template for a trailer of your favourite film:
- Draw a series of rectangles on a piece of paper, as if you were making your own comic.
- Think about key scenes in your favourite film. Draw them in the boxes.
- Add a script, to make the film sound really exciting. Under each rectangle, write the line of script or dialogue that matches that scene.
Activity 5: Make your own movie magic!

Stop-motion-animation is a technique in film-making that brings inanimate objects to life and makes things look like they are moving on their own.

**The basics:**
- Put an object in front of a camera and take a photo.
- Move the object a wee bit and take another photograph.
- Do this lots of times and play the photos back quickly. The object looks like it’s moving!

There’s a brilliant free app called Stop Motion Studio that we recommend you download.

**Become an expert:**
- Set up a backdrop. This could be a wall, a painted cardboard box, a piece of fabric...
- Gather toys or your own character to include in your animation.
- Set up your device on something that will keep your device in the same place - a stand, tripod or books stacked- across from the set that you’ve created.
- Start the Stop Motion Animation app and make your movie! As you experiment and get the hang of it, think about developing a storyline. Think about the who, where, when, what, why behind your wee film! Add a script, make a movie poster and trailer.... Why not dress up and have a film screening for your family! You’re the boss!
Don’t have a digital device?
If you don’t have a phone or tablet, you can make a non-digital animation by making your own FLIP-BOOK! It’s the same kind of idea - if you move lots of images through a single spot quick enough, it creates the illusion of a single, animated image.

One last thing...

**Creature club: Kitchen Disco**
To mark the end of the school term and the end of our #HomeArt activities, we welcome you to dress up like a Ray Harryhausen creature, throw some shapes and join us for a Monster Mash Kitchen Disco! Wear your best creature-costume and put on your favourite tunes– see you on the (kitchen) dancefloor!