

Introduction

Based on an ancient Irish folktale, the radio drama, "The Black Knight," written by Joe McHugh, tells the story of three brothers who enter a dark, enchanted forest to complete a dangerous quest. Along with meeting a talking tree, a magical pony, and three very dysfunctional giants, Jack, the youngest, learns the value of compassion, determination, and trust!

For step-by-step instructions on how to perform a radio play with students, refer to the "Radio Theater Cookbook, Recipes for the Imagination," available from the Raven Radio Theater of the Air! This script is published with the following materials and information to help you prepare your students for their own radio theater presentation.

Master CD - a CD that contains the pre-recorded music and sound effects segments you will need to perform this play.

Master CD Index - lists the music and sound effect segments on the Master CD, their duration, and instructions..

Character List - tells you which characters are in the play, how many lines each one has, and which pages of the script to duplicate for each character.

Sound Effects Suggestions - ideas for finding or building the mechanical sound effects you will need to perform the play.

"Get-Ready" Cards - a master set of cue cards that you can copy onto card stock and use during the performance to cue sound effects crew.

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“The Black Knight” Character List

Announcer	22 lines	Introduces play
Grandpa	138 lines	Narrator/ Grandfather of Bobby and Melissa
Bobby	7 lines	Boy listening to story
Melissa	7 lines	Girl listening to story
Black Knight	8 lines	Mysterious stranger
Tomas	26 lines	Kings’s oldest son
William	21 lines	King’s middle son
Jack	40 lines	King’s youngest son/ hero of story
Old Woman	27 lines	Wise woman who helps Jack
Tree	7 lines	Enchanted talking tree
Spring	6 lines	Enchanted talking spring
Pony	35 lines	Jack’s guide
Wolfbears	1 line	Castle guardians
Girl	12 lines	Black Knights’ kidnapped daughter
Father-Giant	5 lines	One of the three giants
Mother-Giant	8 lines	One of the three giants
Son- Giant	6 lines	One of the three giants

Casting Notes: There are 17 speaking parts in “The Black Knight” Having an adult read the part of the Grandma can be very helpful as it helps establish the timing and expression of the young readers. Remember you are casting by voice alone, not by appearance. Become familiar with the script and try and match the reader to the voice of the character. The idea is to inspire the readers to bring as much life to their characters and the action of the story as possible. You will need 6 to 10 students for the sound effects crew.

Duplicating List

Announcer	pp. 1,22
Grandpa	full script
Bobby	pp. 1-4, 10, 13, 16, 21-23
Melissa	pp. 1-4, 10, 13, 16, 21-23
Black Knight	pp. 3-6
1st Castle Woman	p. 3
2nd Castle Woman	p. 3
Gilford	p. 3
Manuel	p. 3
King	p. 5
Tomas	pp. 6-11
William	pp. 6-12
Jack	pp. 6-22
Old Woman	pp. 8-10
Tree	p. 10-11
Spring	p. 12
Pony	pp. 13-16, 22
Wolfbears	p. 17
Girl	pp. 17-22
Father-Giant	pp. 18-21
Mother-Giant	pp. 18-21
Son- Giant	pp. 18-21

Master CD Index

With the music/sound effects *master tape* for "The Black Knight", you will be able to add audio texture and excitement to your radio theater production. The *master CD* includes **in sequence** the music and sound effects selections listed below.

1. Old-time radio segments and fanfare
2. Theme music
3. Crickets
4. Dark woods music
5. Rain
6. River
7. Giants' steps
8. Birds
9. Theme music

CLIPPITY-CLOP! SPLASH! PLOP! CRASH! BANG! WHOOSH!

Sound Effects

Sawing Wood - Use a short section of 'two by four' and a small saw. A dovetail saw or backsaw (the type used with a miter box) are safe to use. Begin the cut beforehand so that the saw will easily find the groove to make the sound.

Sanding Wood - Tack a piece coarse or medium grit sandpaper to a small piece of wood and rub it against another piece of wood near a mic.

Hoof Beats and Bridle - Take two halves of an empty coconut shell and drum them rhythmically against the desired surface such as wood for the drawbridge, flagstone for cobblestones, and gravel. You can also cover the coconuts with cloth to imitate hoof beats on a soft surface.

The easiest way to imitate a bridle sound is with a whole bridle or just the bit or piece of light chain. Shake it lightly along with the hoof beats to create a convincing illusion of horses and riders.

Horn - A hunting horn works the best but a trumpet, French horn, or bugle will suffice. A horn can also be done with the voice into a mic with cupped hands.

Joust - Begin this effect with two sets of charging hoof beats on gravel with "ringing" bridles followed by the clang of shields done with one or two hammers hitting a shovel or other piece of metal and the sound of lances breaking done by snapping two pieces of flat wooden strips over the knee by two people.

Sword Fight - A sword fight between knights can be done with two sections of steel bar (approximately 4' long by 1" wide by 1/2" thick). One bar has a hole drilled in the end and a stout cord for holding it. Hold the bar up dangling it by the rope while the another person hits it with the other piece of steel. The correct rhythm is most important here. Sword fighting has an irregular rhythm to it. Practice until the sound is convincing.

Campfire - An old standby of radio theater, this effect is created by gently crumpling a piece of cellophane. Different pieces of cellophane create different sounds so experiment to get just the right "crackle" for the campfire. You can add to this effect if you want by taking a small whisk broom and running your fingers along the top of the bristles while someone else snaps a thin piece of wood from time to time.

- Plates and Silverware** - Metal “camp-style” plates are best for this effect. Tap and scrape a knife or fork against the plate to simulate the sound of someone eating.
- Breaking Branches** - Snap some sticks or thin pieces of wood near the mic.
- Gold Coins** - Buy fifteen or so 2” washers from the hardware store and drop them from above into a hand held against the stomach.
- Bell Tree** - A versatile device for radio dramas, you can buy one or make one by cutting twelve or so pieces of 1/4” copper tubing into graduating lengths from 6” to 2.” Drill holes in one end of each piece and then hang them with strong thread, left to right, longest to shortest, from a piece of wood, Brush your fingers lightly across the tubes to create a tinkling “magical” sound.
- Fruit Falling to Ground** - Drop a small block of wood into a box of leaves.
- Eating Fruit** - Bite into a fresh, crispy apple near a mic. For a humorous effect, take the second and third bites close together in synch with the narration.
- Sword Hitting Tree** - Hit your free-hanging metal “sword” with a piece of wood.
- Body Fall Into Leaves** - Drop a bean bag or something similar into a box of leaves on the floor making sure not to hit the sides of the box.
- Bubbling Spring** - Take two pieces of 1/4” plastic tubing about 3’ long and place one end of each into a wash pan 3/4 full of water. Have two people blow into the tubing to make the water bubble near a mic. Practice each person taking their breaths at different times so the sound of the spring is continuous.
- Drinking Water from Spring** - Scoop a handful of water from the wash pan letting it fall back through your fingers near a mic.
- Thunder** - Go to a sheet metal shop and try different pieces of scrap metal until you get one that makes exactly the sound you want (18 gauge works well). Bolt a piece of wood along the top and a piece of leather for a handle to the bottom. You can hang the thunder-sheet or have it held up by two people while a third shakes it. (Be careful when laying it down afterwards so you don’t make any unwanted noise.) Students who handle the thunder-sheet should wear leather work gloves as sheet metal often has sharp edges.
- Another way to make thunder is to buy some lead shot from a sporting/hunting goods store (“OO-buck” is best). Put a handful into a heavy balloon and blow it up. Shake the balloon next to the mic to simulate thunder. A little practice will get it right. If you shake it too hard the balloon may break. Lead is poisonous so use caution around your students.
- Wind** - A wind machine is made by hanging a piece of heavy canvas with lead fishing sinkers sewn in a seam along one end over a large, cylinder made of wooden slats and turned on a frame with a hand crank. The rubbing of the canvas against the slats makes the sound of wind.
- Another way to simulate wind is to pull a length of silk-like material across two or three upright wooden boards. The strength of the wind can be increased or decreased by varying the amount of drag. For wind in the trees agitate a handful of old recording tape in front of the microphone.
- Swimming** - Splash water in a wash pan with your hand near the mic.

- Harp** - A real harp, an autoharp, or a dulcimer are best but there are some toy harps that are usable. Look around and experiment.
- Spinning Wheel** - Look for something that makes a continuous, mechanical sound. An old-fashioned seed spreader or kitchen beater held near a mic will work.
- Chains** - Rattle a section of chain near the mic. Try different types and thicknesses of chain to get the sound you want. When Jack releases the girl drop the chain on a hard surface just after the sound of keys.
- Whip** - The whip sound can be made by taking two wide leather belts and taping them together at both ends. Holding the ends in each hand, push them together and then pull them apart making a snapping sound. It takes a little practice to make it work each time.
- A better whip effect can be made with a "slapstick" which has two pieces of wood (roughly 18" long, 4" wide, 3/4" thick) connected at one end with a spring hinge like the ones used on the older screen doors. One piece of wood can be longer than the other and fashioned into a handle. Simply lift one piece of wood up and let it go to "slap" the other or, if made with a handle, flick it smartly with the wrist to make a consistent, realistic "crack" of a whip that is very easy to control.
- Sling Shot** - This humorous effect combines two sounds, the snapping of a large rubber band or piece of inner tubing followed directly by hitting two pieces of hardwood together sharply to create the sound image of a stone hitting a giant's head.
- Blows and Slaps** - Slip on a thin leather glove and strike the bare hand with the gloved fist. For slaps, simply clap your hands together.
- Fighting Giants** - To create the noise and violence of the giants fighting each other combine blows and slaps (see above) with a cracking whip and clang of swords. You can also use a "crash box," to add to the general ruckus. A crash box is a metal box or cake tin with a lid. Fill it with crushed aluminum cans, rocks, bolts, bottle caps, or anything that makes noise. Lift the box and shake it overhead and bring it down to the table in one grand crash.
- Breaking glass is also very effective. Take a jar (applesauce jars work best) and place it in a medium-size paper bag. Close the top and hit the jar in the bag with a hammer. Hit the bag just hard enough to break the glass but not the bag.
- Keys** - Tie several old-style keys together and dangle them near a mic.
- Pouring Water** - Pour a large glass of water into a wash pan near a mic.
- Transformation Sound** - There are many ways to make this sound. A bell tree (see above) or a single strum of the harp from low to high will work but be creative and you might even discover a better one.
- Hammering Wood** - Drive a couple of nails partially into a piece of 'two by four' beforehand. Hit the nail heads with a hammer when the effect is needed.

SAWING WOOD FALLS

Wait for Cue!

SANDING (2 cues)

HOOFBEATS (Wood to Brick) BRIDLE

Wait for Cue!

TRUMPET

HOOFBEATS (Brick to Wood) BRIDLE

HOOFBEATS (Fast) BRIDLE

Wait for Cue!

SHIELDS (2 Cues) LANCES

SWORD FIGHT

Wait for Cue!

(Finish with a final CLASH!)

HOOFBEATS (Regular) BRIDLE

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

**CAMPFIRE
PLATES & KNIVES**

Wait for Cue!

**FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)
SNAPPING WOOD**

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

COINS

Wait for Cue!

BELL TREE

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

FRUIT FALLING

Wait for Cue!

FRUIT EATEN (3 Bites)

Wait for Cue!

**SWORD HITTING TREE
PERSON FALLING**

BUBBLING SPRING

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

HANDFULLS OF WATER (Dripping)

FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for Cue!

HOOFBEATS

Wait for Cue!

THUNDER WIND

SWIMMING

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)
HARP

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)
SPINNING WHEEL
FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

CHAINS

Wait for Cue!

BELL TREE

Wait for Cue!

WHIP

SLING SHOT
RAP ON WOOD

Wait for Cue!

Repeat!

ONE SLAP w/ HANDS

FIGHT SOUNDS

WHIP

SWORDS

PAN

CRASHBOX

SLAPS WITH HANDS

ETC.

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

KEYS

CHAINS (drop)

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

Wait for Cue!

WATER POURED

HARP (1 strum)

HAMMERING

Wait for Cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface) HAMMERING

The Black Knight

Cue Cards

"The Black Knight"

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FADE-IN OLD-TIME RADIO SEGMENTS

Announcer: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the Raven Radio Theater of the Air and our exciting radio adventure, "The Black Knight." Today's play was written by Joe McHugh and is brought to you by (name of school / sponsor).

Our tale begins on a Saturday afternoon. Bobby and Melissa whose parents are out of town, are spending the weekend with their grandparents. Out in the workshop behind the house, the children are helping their grandpa with a little woodworking project.

fade-in sawing wood

Grandpa: (with slight strain in voice) I'll get this last piece of redwood cut to size and you two can do the sanding.

stop sawing as piece of wood falls to floor

Bobby: What are you making, Grandpa?

Grandpa: A bird feeder, Bobby. Maybe you two would like to take it home and hang it on your back porch. You can fill it with seed or pieces of stale bread, and the birds will come from all over. Here, take this sandpaper and start sanding the edges.

handling of sandpaper and begin sanding

Melissa: (concerned) Grandpa, can I talk to you about something?

Grandpa: Of course you can, Melissa. What's on your mind?

Melissa: It's my best friend. Her name is Shelley. She's having trouble at home. I think her parents are getting a divorce or something.

Grandpa: Well, that kind of thing can be tough on a kid.

Melissa: Yeah. It's like she doesn't care about school or her friends any more. She just mopes around all the time and wants everybody to leave her alone.

Bobby: Why not get another best friend?

stop sanding

Melissa: I swear, Bobby, you're a real moron. I'm not going to abandon her because she's having a hard time. I just don't know how to make things better.

Grandpa: You know, Melissa, trouble comes to everyone sometime or other. It's part of being alive. What really matters is how you handle it.

Bobby: What do you mean, Grandpa?

Grandpa: You see, trouble gets the better of some people. They try to run away from it. They think they can hide someplace where it can't find 'em. Then there are other folks who always look for someone else to blame for their troubles. But now, you take Jack. There was a boy who knew how to stand up to trouble and get something useful out of it.

Melissa: Who's Jack, Grandpa?

Grandpa: (surprised) Jack. . .you know. . . the King's son who had the bad leg. I told you about him and about the time he had to go off with the Black Knight.

Bobby: You never told us that story, Grandpa.

Grandpa: (exaggerated surprise) I didn't? Well, you know what they say—when your memory goes, you might as well forget it!

Melissa: I'd like to hear that story, Grandpa. Can you tell it to us now?

Grandpa: I guess I could, but don't stop sanding while I tell it to you.

fade-in sanding again and then slowly fade-out

Grandpa: Now, it happened a long, long time ago, as these things usually do. There was this King and he had three sons. He had once been a famous knight, but now his hair was white, like mine, and he hadn't gone to war for many years. Then, one day, a strange knight from a foreign land arrived in his kingdom. He was dressed all in black armor and he rode a black horse. The visor of his helmet looked like a large raven's beak, and it had a plume of black feathers sticking up out of the top. He came from the West, galloping across the wooden drawbridge and clattering over the cobblestones under the great arched gate. Reaching the inner courtyard, he reined in his horse and blew two long blasts on his battle horn.

**hoofbeats on gravel, then wood, then cobblestone, then stop
shake of bridle followed by several blasts of horn**

Black Knight: (in a loud, formal voice) Hear ye! Hear ye! I am the Black Knight. In all the world none has more courage or skill than I. I hereby challenge any knight of this realm to mortal combat to prove my claim.

Crowd: (general murmuring walla)

1st Castle Woman: (speaking above the commotion) Did you hear that? Such arrogance! Who does he think he is to come in here and insult our brave knights?

2nd Castle Woman: (with disdain) We've many that can handle the likes of him. Here come some of our knights now. They'll teach that upstart a lesson he'll not forget!

Gilford: I am Gilford the Gallant, Captain of the Palace Guard. I know you not, strange knight, but I will match lance and sword against you at sunrise tomorrow in yon, far meadow.

Manuel: And should my friend falter, then you will deal with me, Manuel of the Speckled Cape. But let me warn you: I am fierce and will show no mercy.

Crowd: (a rousing shout of approval)

Black Knight: (waiting for crowd noise to die away) I need none of your mercy or empty threats. Tomorrow will show who will be champion.

Grandpa: And with that, the Black Knight wheeled about on his powerful charger and galloped from the castle.

hoofbeats fade-away on cobblestone, then wood, then gravel

Grandpa: (with sadness) But, sad to say, the King's brave warriors were no match for the strange knight. One after another, they were defeated. Even the visiting Saracen (sar-a-sin), Kasem the Terrible, lost his life to the sharp, deadly weapons of the Black Knight, and none could be found to subdue him. Never had there been seen such a knight, except perhaps for the old King himself in the glory of days gone by.

Bobby: What happened then, Grandpa?

Grandpa: Well, the King feared that sooner or later all of his knights would be slaughtered. Perhaps even his own sons would ride against the Black Knight and be killed. He could not let that happen. But, as King, he was forbidden by law to risk his own life in personal combat.

Grandpa: So, early one day, unbeknownst to anyone, the King dressed and armed himself as an ordinary knight. He wore no insignia of the royal household, and he left behind the three magic weapons that had been given to him by the great wizard, Nilrem (nill - rem) . . . the lance that could not be broken, the sword that could not be dulled, and the shield that could not be pierced.

Melissa: But why did he leave his magic weapons behind if he was going out to fight?

Grandpa: Because, Melissa, the three weapons hung on the wall above the fireplace in the great hall.

Bobby: (jumping in) And if they were suddenly missing, then everyone would know that the King had ridden off to fight the Black Knight.

Grandpa: (with great feeling and excitement) Exactly! And what a fight they had of it, too!

**fade-in charging hoofbeats with bridles
shields being struck with breaking of wooden lances**

Grandpa: First on horseback, with long lances, the two men charged each other like enraged dragons spewing fire. Their shields rang from the impact, the shafts of the wooden lances snapping like tree limbs in a storm. Again and again they charged.

more charging hoofbeats and then stop

Grandpa: But in time the King's horse proved the weaker beast. Pushed beyond his strength, the poor animal at last fell from exhaustion, throwing his rider. The Black Knight then dismounted and, with sword in hand, resumed the fierce battle with the unhorsed King.

fade-in sword battle

Grandpa: And it was some contest, I can tell you! Each man as a stalwart warrior who used all his might and cunning to vanquish the other.

continue sword battle

Black Knight: (breathing hard - straining as he swings his heavy sword) I have fought knights from many lands, but never have I faced one as strong and relentless as you.

King: (breathing hard - straining as he swings his sword) And I can only wonder if you be man or devil. But whoever. . . or whatever you are . . . I shall defeat you!

Grandpa: It was the greatest battle between two evenly-matched knights as ever there was. They fought throughout the day until the sun began to dip behind the western hills. But in the end, the old King's strength began to fail him. The end of his sword had broken off and his shield was dented and split in many places. Encased in his heavy suit of armor, he began to stagger backwards as the endless sword blows fell on him without mercy. The thoughts of the harried King now turned from victory to survival. . . But then, casting his sword aside, the Black Knight took up his heavy mace and with it delivered such a blow that the King's shield was clove in two and he was driven to the ground. . .

one great sound of shield being hit and then stop all battle sounds

King: (in great pain, with effort) Brave knight, I yield to you. Kill me if you must. . . but I can fight no more.

Black Knight: And should I spare your life, what would you give me in ransom?

King: I am not a lowly knight as I appear, sir, but King of this great realm. I will pay any price you shall name.

Black Knight: Then hear me, worthy King. You have three grown sons. Bind them to my service to perform a perilous task that I shall name. Only this will I take in ransom for your life.

Grandpa: The old King agreed, but it grieved him sorely. He feared he would never see his beloved sons again. There was Tomas. He was the oldest, tall and fair and, like his father, a valiant fighter. William was the middle son. He, too, was brave and strong and had always an eye for a pretty maid. And then there was Jack, the youngest. Born with one leg shorter than the other, he walked with a limp. Nor was he strong and athletic like his older brothers. While they delighted in hunting and the clash of arms, Jack sought out the poets and the tellers of the old tales. But what he lacked in valor, young Jack made up for in wisdom and generosity of spirit.

And so it came to pass that, early the next morning, before the mists had lifted from the low fields, the three young men rode away with the Black Knight.