Activities with

Claire Linney

PART 1

The "Time Tub Machine" Journey

In the interview, Claire explains how her stories combine history with time travel to transport her characters straight into eras like Tudor Britain or Roman York. This activity builds children's historical vocabulary and imaginative role-play skills by encouraging them to step directly into the past.

Activity:

Turn a large cardboard box (or a designated classroom area) into their own “Time Tub” machine using foil, dials, clocks, and paper plates. Children set their dials to a historical period, make dramatic engine sound effects, and emerge into a themed role-play zone where they can try on costume props, act out daily routines, and spot differences between the past and modern life.

Earworm Character Creation

Claire describes how an earworm can be a catchy tune that gets stuck in your head, but also a persistent story idea that simply refuses to go away. This activity develops pupils' ability to invent and describe original fictional characters inspired by a sound or recurring thought.

Activity:

Play a few short, catchy melodies to spark ideas. Pupils then design and create their own model or drawn "Earworm" creature using craft materials like clay, pipe cleaners, and googly eyes. They decide on their creature's name, quirky personality traits, and the exact funny thoughts or tunes it whispers into people's ears to send them on unexpected adventures.

"Turn Your Hobby into a Story" Pitch

Claire reassures the children that English does not need to be their favourite subject to become an author, encouraging them instead to write about what they genuinely love, such as football or science. This activity helps pupils plan characters and structure a narrative concept rooted entirely in their personal passions.

Activity:

Pupils complete an "Author's Passion Map" highlighting three personal hobbies outside of reading and writing. Working in pairs, they craft a fast-paced adventure pitch combining their chosen hobby with a mystery or challenge, followed by designing a vibrant front cover and teaser blurb featuring themselves as the protagonist.



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PART 2

Brave Zula vs. Cautious Milo Debate & Drama

Claire introduces her contrasting lead characters: Zula, who is daring and leaps without looking, and Milo, who likes to plan ahead, know what he is letting himself in for, and worry about risks. This activity encourages pupils to explore differing character perspectives and strengthen their persuasive speaking skills.

Activity:

Present the class with a tricky scenario (e.g. discovering an ancient underground passageway beneath the school field). Ask children to choose whether they want to be in "Team Zula" (adventurous and spontaneous) or "Team Milo" (thoughtful and cautious) and then get them to role-play an impromptu dialogue debating whether to jump straight in or head back for equipment, finishing with a whole-group vote on which strategy would work best.

The "Editor's Red Pen" Challenge

Claire discusses the reality of receiving editorial feedback and how it can feel frustrating to get suggestions all over your work, but that it is an essential part of writing to help refine scenes and strengthen characters. This activity supports pupils in critically evaluating drafts and offering constructive peer feedback to improve their writing.

Activity:

Pupils take on the role of a book editors working in small "publishing teams." Swapping short, action-packed paragraphs, they use coloured pens and sticky notes to spot slow pacing, fact-check details, and suggest powerful alternatives for verbs and adjectives. They can then take on the role of the authors then rewrite their extracts to see how collaborative editing elevates an initial idea.

Fact-Checking Roman Life: Gross & Great!

Claire highlights the rich, diverse history of Roman Britain that she covers in *Roman Rescue*; throughout her work, she emphasises that Black history is British history, showing that Black people have been living in, and making a positive impact on, Britain for thousands of years. This activity develops research skills and non-fiction reporting by contrasting popular historical myths with real historical evidence.

Activity:

Pupils research some lesser-known aspects of Roman Britain, focusing on multicultural York and daily hygiene practices. They can then design an eye catching but funny double-page spread for a magazine, or a display for the classroom titled *"The Great & The Gross: The Real Roman Britain",* setting impressive engineering and diverse leadership side by side with stomach-churning toilet habits.

