

INTRODUCTON: THE CREATOR OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN

You've now seen the film about the legendary Baron Munchausen. But Baron Munchausen had many more adventures; some of them you'll learn about from this booklet; some of them you'll create yourself.

The first Baron Munchausen stories were written in England - in English by a German, Rudolph Erich Raspe. Raspe was a scholar, author, art historian, naturalist mathematician ...and runaway embezzler ...that's why he was in England! He was also a member of the Royal Academy ...until the Academy found out why Raspe had been 'obliged' to flee from Germany.

Though Raspe wrote the original Baron Munchausen stories (they were published in 1785), because of their enormous popularity, other writers soon added stories. And that's what you're going to do.

THE REAL BARON MUNCHAUSEN

Believe it or not there really was a Baron Munchausen though he was not the fantastic character you watched in the film. The real baron was called Baron Freiherr Hieronymus von Munchausen and he fought for the Duke of Brunswick against the Turks. Eventually, he retired to his estates on the River Weser where he used to entertain his friends with amusing stories about his exploits in the army. Raspe would certainly have heard about this famous old man when he lived in Germany and so he used him, years later, in his book. Unfortunately, when Raspe's book eventually became famous in Germany the real baron was plagued by annoying visitors who simply came to look at him - as if he were a film star or TV celebrity!

The real baron stopped telling his stories; he'd become self-conscious about them. People either refused to believe his stories or were disappointed by them; they seemed rather tame after the sensational adventures of Raspe's Baron Munchausen.

Imagine that you are the real Baron Munchausen. Write an indignant letter to E.R. Raspe complaining about the Baron Munchausen stories. Mention the effect they have had on your life; how you've become famous for all the wrong reasons, how the simple pleasure of telling your stories has been spoiled and how people now regard you as either a celebrity ...or an old windbag!



ADDING TO THE LEGEND

You'll need to work in a group to complete this piece of work.

- Write down -in note form if you wish something strange that could have happened to Baron Munchausen on his travels.
- Now each person in turn should tell the group (in their own words) what happened to Baron Munchausen.
- When you have heard all the different stories you must try to write them down so that they make up a continuous story. Don't worry about writing down the stories in the correct order -just be certain that all the group's stories are somehow linked together. When you can't remember a detail -make it up. The important thing is to make sure that your story -no matter how strange always makes sense ...and is never boring.
- When you've done this, compare your version of Baron Munchausen's exploits with the versions other members of the group have produced.
- Decide which 'bits' are the best overall and produce a final complete version of the new escapades of Baron Munchausen.

One possible story is shown in the comic strip at the back of this guide. When you have completed your story you could turn it into a comic strip story in the blank strip provided. However, you will need to choose the most important points of the story so that you can fit your story into the boxes.

TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY-READ ALL ABOUT IT

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter. You've been sent to cover the siege of the Turkish town and are fortunate enough to be present when Baron Munchausen and his gifted comrades save the town.

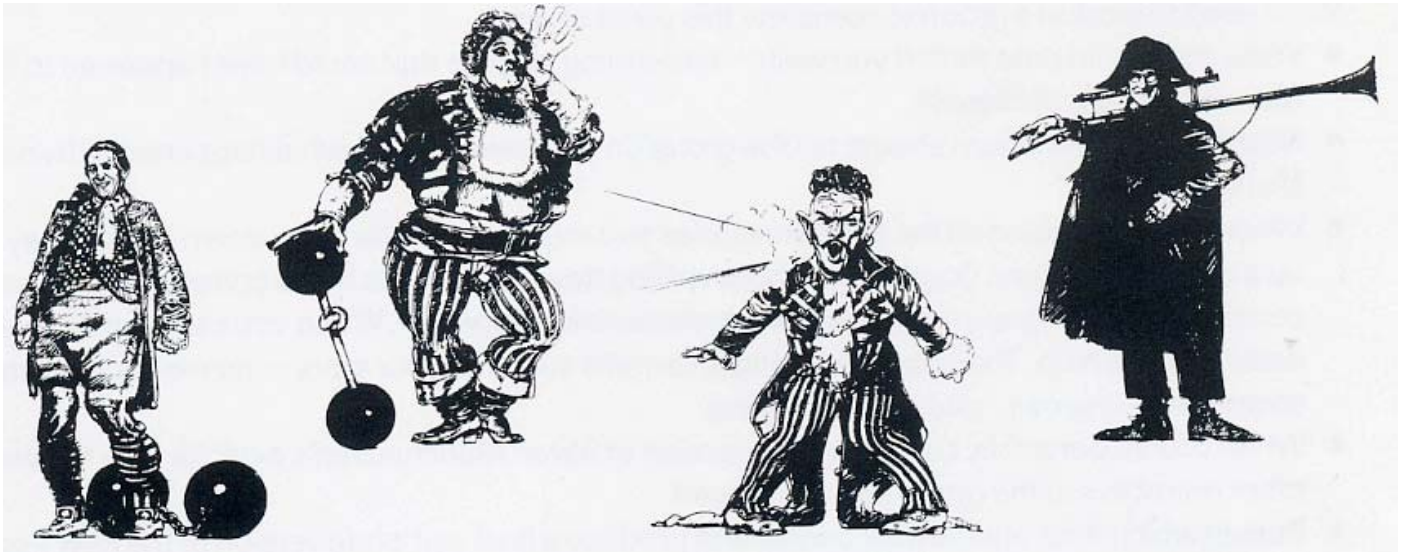
Write your eyewitness account of what happened. Set your story out like a proper newspaper article, complete with dramatic headlines and pictures (not photographs; the camera hadn't been invented in the 18th century ...unless it was the Baron who invented it!).

Now write the 'follow-up' story Baron Munchausen's triumphant entry into the city and then tragedy strikes! An attempt is made on the life of the hero of the hour; Baron Munchausen is struck down by an assassin's bullet. Don't forget to interview Sally who accompanied the Baron on his most recent exploits.

And when you return home to England you have the dismal task of writing Baron Munchausen's obituary. What can you say about this totally extraordinary human being? and what of the rumours that are already circulating? Is Baron Munchausen really dead?

BARON MUNCHAUSEN'S COMPANIONS

On some of his adventures Baron Munchausen is accompanied by four servants:



1. Berthold who runs so fast he normally has to wear chains to slow him down.
2. Albrecht who is so strong he can carry the contents of the fantastically wealthy Sultan's treasury on his back.
3. Gustavus whose lungs are so powerful he can blow away an army. He's also got very good hearing.
4. Adolphus whose eyesight is so good he can see for hundreds of miles. He's also a crack-shot.

How did the Baron come to meet these extraordinary characters? What made them decide to become Baron Munchausen's servants?

Write about one of Baron Munchausen's adventures in the course of which he meets one of these remarkable people. You could write as if you are one of the Baron Munchausen's servants. Perhaps Baron Munchausen could rescue one of them from some terrible peril? How does Baron Munchausen persuade him to become one of his servants?

Invent a new companion for the Baron. What sort of special ability will this new companion have? Write a story in which Baron Munchausen meets this new companion. The new companion could help the Baron to escape from danger or perform yet another amazing feat.

BARON MUNCHAUSEN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Baron Munchausen's adventures take place in the 18th century. How would Baron Munchausen cope with life nowadays? In a group, make a list of all the things the Baron would find extraordinary about life in the 20th century. Now write Baron Munchausen's account of how he is transported into the 20th century.

In your group, prepare a set of questions you would like to ask Baron Munchausen about his exploits in the 18th century. One member of the group could be Baron Munchausen and answer your group's questions. S/he could make use of what information they can remember from the film. If they find themselves stuck for an answer they should do what the Baron would do...make it all up!

BARON MUNCHAUSEN RETURNS TO HIS OWN TIME ...with a new companion... FOR NEW ADVENTURES

How does Baron Munchausen get back to his own time?

Write about Baron Munchausen's return to the 18th century only this time, he returns with an extra companion... you. Yes, you've been lucky enough to accompany Baron Munchausen on one of his legendary exploits. Write about what happens to you on one (or more) of these exploits. Remember, you can use your 20th century knowledge to help the Baron.

Here are some possible adventures though, with the Baron, anything's possible:

BARON MUNCHAUSEN'S UNDERWATER EXPLOITS

The Baron has been given some tablets that allow people to breathe underwater. He decides to take you and one of his servants to explore the depths of the Maloccan Ocean - home of the terrifying Great Fire Eel!

BARON MUNCHAUSEN MEETS THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN You travel with the Baron and his companions to the 'Roof of the World' - Tibet-and, on Mount Everest meet with the Yeti ...and her family.

THE ISLAND OF CHEESE You and the Baron are shipwrecked on a huge island made entirely of cheese and surrounded by an ocean of milk. The inhabitants of the island are 3 metres high, have three legs but only one arm and fight each other using horns which grow out of the middle of their foreheads.

THE SHRINKING FEVER

Whilst travelling, you and the Baron are unfortunate enough to catch Spondule's Disease -the dreaded shrinking fever which causes people to rapidly reduce in size. You and the Baron battle with wasps, ants and spiders before you are cured and return to your original size.

BARON MUNCHAUSEN'S PARTY

All good things must come to an end and so reluctantly you say farewell to Baron Munchausen and his friends. But before you leave for the 20th century the Baron organises a huge party for you...and, because Baron Munchausen has organised it, this will be no ordinary party! Write about the remarkable and extravagant party the Baron throws for you. By the way, how do you get back to the present?

AN EARLIER EQUESTRIAN EXPLOIT

In the film we saw Baron Munchausen ride his trusty horse, Bucephalus into battle. Baron Munchausen had other remarkable adventures with different horses.

One of the Baron's most famous (and nearly believable) stories took place in the depths of winter. Here is a very simple version of the story. Your job is to retell the story, making it sound as if the Baron himself is telling the story. He would not be modest about his part in the adventure.

1. In the middle of winter Baron Munchausen sets off, on horseback, for Russia.
2. It is snowing.
3. It begins to get dark.
4. There is no sign of the village the Baron expected to reach before nightfall.
5. The Baron decides to rest for the night.
6. He ties his horse to what seems to be a tree stump which is sticking out of the snow.
7. The Baron goes to sleep with his pistols tucked under his arm.
8. He sleeps soundly and does not open his eyes till full daylight.
9. The Baron is astounded to wake up in the middle of a village.

10. He is lying in a churchyard.
11. There is no sign of his horse.
12. He can hear a neighing from somewhere above him.
13. The Baron looks up and sees his horse hanging from its bridle from the church steeple.
14. The Baron realises what has happened.
15. The village had been completely covered by snow.
16. The 'tree stump' sticking out of the snow was the weathercock on the top of the church steeple.
17. There was a sudden change in the weather overnight.
18. The snow had melted overnight and the Baron, sleeping soundly, had been lowered gently down to the churchyard.
19. Without a moment's hesitation the Baron takes out a pistol and shoots his horse's bridle in two.
20. The horse falls to the ground, none the worse for its adventure and the Baron proceeds on his journey.

ANOTHER EQUESTRIAN EXPLOIT FOR THE BARON

Here, Baron Munchausen tells the story of the gallant conduct of his Lithuanian stallion, under the most difficult and trying of circumstances...unfortunately, the Baron's account has been jumbled up and it's your job to put the sentences into the right order and so tell the story correctly.

1. I resolved to wait for my loyal hussars and so led my thirsty horse to a fountain in the market place.
2. I galloped after them with my usual enthusiasm.
3. Imagine my disappointment when I charged into the market place only to behold the enemy troops leaving the town by the opposite gate.
4. The hind-quarters of my horse, infuriated by this savage separation - and unable to enter the town had galloped wildly about injuring friend and foe alike.
5. Little wonder that the unfortunate beast had seemed cursed with an unquenchable thirst.
6. One of my most curious equestrian escapades was due to the fiery spirit of my Lithuanian steed, a creature of indomitable courage and endurance.
7. But the miracle did not end here.
8. Thirty minutes elapsed as I drowsed in the saddle and my hussars had still not joined us.
9. I was leading an attack on a company of enemy soldiers and the swiftness of my Lithuanian put me at the very front of the assault.
10. The good man looked about and beheld some sprigs and young shoots of laurel that were growing nearby.
11. They sought refuge in a nearby walled town into which I pursued them.
12. As the horse drank so the water poured out again.
13. Rightly fearing the keen edge of my sabre, the enemy fled from me.
14. I questioned the people of the town and eventually discovered what had happened.
15. I reined my Lithuanian to a halt and realised that in my haste to engage the enemy I had left my men far behind.

16. When I had ridden through the gates the enemy troops had rapidly dropped the portcullis and it was this sudden action which had so abruptly parted my horse from his rear.
17. Thus I was able to rest - if not upon my own - on my horse's laurels wherever and whenever I wished!
18. Both parts of the horse appeared to be in good health so I summoned the local vet.
19. I looked around for some sign of my men and beheld a remarkable sight.
20. A month passed and the sprigs of laurel took root in my Lithuanian mount and began to grow.
21. He took in the situation at a glance and decided that speed was vital.
22. These he skillfully used to sew together the two portions of the beast and within a week its wounds had miraculously healed.
23. The hind-quarters of my horse were missing cut clean off!
24. Soon the branches intertwined to form a portable bower which sheltered both myself and my mount from the rays of the sun.
25. Believing that my own company of brave hussars were immediately behind me, I charged through the city gates.
26. When my hussars arrived they informed me of this and I was told that the other half of my horse was now performing ingenious tricks in a nearby meadow; much to the alarm of the other horses which had been grazing peacefully there.
27. The beast eagerly began to drink for we had outridden a whole company of the finest hussars and I was happy to rest awhile in the pleasantly shady square.

A NEW ADVENTURE FOR BARON MUNCHAUSEN

It's your chance to create a new adventure for the intrepid Baron Munchausen. On one of his many voyages Baron Munchausen is shipwrecked on the mysterious island of Mau-Kimmi. You decide what this island is like so -first of all draw a map of it. It might be somewhere peculiar like the Moon or the inside of the volcano where Baron Munchausen met Vulcan and Venus; it could be strange; it could be funny.

Here are some suggestions for places to include on your map ...and don't forget to include a key:

Kraggen Cliffs; The Forest of the Claw; Mount Kadath; The Island of Dreams; The Great Custard Mine; The Sifting Wastes; The Potato Orchards; Scorpion River; The Porridge Swamp; Yoghurt Mountain; Shivering Mire; The Fire Caverns; The Temple of the Beast; Cockroach Castle; Sherbert Fountain; Valley of the Termites; The Meadows of Tranquility...

Who/what lives on the Island of Mau-Kimmi? The Baron has met many strange people and seen many strange things on his travels so try to invent some truly remarkable things/people for Baron Munchausen to tell stories about. What happens on the island? The Baron must be given a chance in your adventure to demonstrate his courage and ingenuity...or - at least - an opportunity to boast about his valour and intelligence!

THE MUNCHAUSEN CREST

A nobleman like Baron Munchausen would certainly have his own coat of arms; a crest or a shield with pictures on.

- A coat of arms should tell us something about the person it belongs to. A mixture of English and old French is used to describe a coat of arms and once you understand all the different expressions it's possible to draw a coat of arms just from a written description.
- The usual shape for a shield is the heater which looks like the bottom of an iron. Other shield shapes commonly used are lozenge (diamond - used by women), cartouche (oval), triangle (like a triangle except that the top 2 angles are rounded) and kite (like an oval with a point at the bottom).
- The left and right sides of a shield are called sinister and dexter.
- The colours with which a shield is painted are known as tinctures. They comprise of 2 metals: or (gold) & argent (silver) and 5 colours: azure (blue), gules (red), sable (black), vert (green) and perpure (purple).
- Designs on shields are called charges. Almost anything can be a charge on a shield.
- The commonest charges are animals, birds, weapons of war, and the sun, moon and stars.
- Some coats of arms involve awful puns: the Hopwell family crest has rabbits on it; Shakespeare's crest includes an eagle shaking a spear; the Bowes-Lyon shield features yep, you guessed it bows and lions.
- The simplest and most basic charges are chief (a coloured band across the top third of the shield), fesse (a band across the middle of the shield), pale (a band running from the top to the bottom of the shield), bar (2 bars going across the shield), bend (a diagonal bar), saltire (an X), chevron (an inverted V), pile (a triangle with 2 angles at the top of the shield) and cross (which is surprise, surprise - a cross).

Phew! So now you know that a lozenge shield, argent with a bend sinister sable would be a blue diamond shield with a diagonal black stripe running from left to right. Of course, it's all much more complicated than this and you'll need to borrow a book on Heraldry from the library if you want to know more about the subject. But you've certainly got enough information now to be able to design a coat of arms for the Munchausen family using what you know about the wildly heroic Baron (Hmmm.. Munch-house-N?)

First of all, using the above information, write down a description of Baron Munchausen's crest. Now swap your description for a partner's description and draw their Munchausen crest whilst they draw your version. See if they follow your instructions properly; see how closely you have followed their instructions!

You might like to try designing a coat of arms yourself. You could add a motto (a short sentence that might be a family tradition like "Death Before Dishonour"), or something that tells us about the sort of person you are, or the sort of person you'd like to be (for example: "Float like a Butterfly, Sting like a Bee" was a famous boxer's motto). Mottos were often written in French or Latin so if you don't write yours in English it'll seem even more impressive!

