

Doctor Who – celebrating 50 years of the Time Lord



For many people in the UK, *Doctor Who* brings back memories of hiding behind the sofa on a Saturday evening, watching television as the doctor battled against his enemies. Scary!

Doctor Who was first aired in 1963 by the BBC and it depicts the adventures of a time-travelling Time Lord who explores time and the universe in his machine called a TARDIS ('Time and Relative Dimension in Space'). From the outside the TARDIS looks like a police box (a blue telephone box) but its dimensions are deceptive - inside it is a huge time-travelling spaceship. This was one of many innovations that delighted the 1963 audience, as well as the pioneering use of electronic music and the ingenious demons and enemies that the doctor had to fight. The doctor has been accompanied on his adventures by a succession of companions in his quest to fight world evils and help the citizens of earth.

But who exactly were his foes? The most famous are the daleks, who have appeared in over 97 episodes. They are cyborgs and have a tank-like robotic mechanical shell. Daleks feel no empathy at all and simply want to kill everything, hence their most frequently heard utterance: 'Exterminate!' which remains a popular cultural reference in Britain. There are plenty more aliens who are seeking to kill the doctor, but to date he has survived or regenerated. According to a recent poll in a British newspaper, the Daleks were voted the 'best' baddie. But check out some of the others in the running: the Zygons, the Ice Warriors, the Cybermen, the Weeping Angels and the very spooky Nestene Consciousness.

To date eleven actors have played the part of Doctor Who, including David Tennant and Christopher Ecclestone. Matt Smith is the eleventh embodiment of Doctor Who and has played the part for the past three years. The twelfth actor has recently been announced and from 2014 Doctor Who will be played by Peter Capaldi, known on British television for his part as foul-mouthed Malcolm Tucker in *The Thick of It*. This continual regeneration of the Time Lord is all part of his existence: he takes on a new body and to some extent new personality each time he has been seriously wounded, a situation which for mere mortals would be fatal. And is, of course, very useful for BBC production.

The programme has won an award from the British Academy of Film and Television for best drama series; and it also won awards six years in a row (from 2005-2010) at the National Television Awards. *Doctor Who* is also listed in *Guinness World Records* for the longest-running science fiction programme in the world.

The BBC is planning a 50th anniversary special entitled 'The Day of the Doctor'. This episode will be screened simultaneously in 75 countries (including Germany) on 23 November 2013 exactly 50 years after the first Doctor Who, played by William Hartnell, introduced viewers to the Time Lord. And Saturday evenings have never been the same since ...

To see the top ten Doctor Who 'baddies' click here:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8493054/Doctor-Who-the-top-ten-baddies.html>.

To find out more about *Doctor Who* click here: <http://www.doctorwho.tv/>.

And if you would like to use *Doctor Who* as a topic in your classroom from A2.2 upwards, then we have provided you with two activities. You'll find them in the **Teacher's Notes** and on the **Worksheet** (see next pages).

Teacher's notes

Activity 1 (level A2.2 upwards) (10+ mins)

- Copy **Who or what is Doctor Who?** (see **Worksheet**) – one for each student.
- On the board write the words: Doctor Who.
Ask students if they know anything about the person or the programme. (See background notes above for more information.)
- Give each student a copy of the exercise **Who or what is Doctor Who?** and tell the class to complete the text using *when*, *which* and *who*.
- Check answers together in class.

Key: (1) which (2) who (3) When (4) when (5) who (6) who (7) which (8) who

Activity 2 (level A2.2 upwards) (10+ mins)

- Copy **You are a time traveller** (see **Worksheet**) – one for each student.
- Ask students to imagine they are time travellers like Doctor Who.
- Together think of some funny or creative name for each student, for example Mr Space, Doctor Time, Ms Future, Mrs Hour, Professor When.
- Tell students to answer the questions on **You are a time traveller** and to exchange their answers with their partner.
- Have a class feedback session, and let students decide on the most interesting journey.

Worksheet

Activity 1: Who or what is *Doctor Who*?

Complete this text with *when*, *which* or *who*.

Doctor Who is a programme (1) _____ has been on television in the UK for fifty years. *Doctor Who* is a man (2) _____ travels through space and time – a time-traveller. (3) _____ he goes forward in time he can live in the future, and (4) _____ he goes back in time he can see the past. He has a companion (5) _____ travels with him. He has many enemies (6) _____ want to kill him, but he always survives. He travels in a special spaceship (7) _____ looks like an old blue police telephone box. There have been eleven actors (8) _____ have played the role of *Doctor Who* on television.

Activity 2: You are a time traveller

Answer these questions:

- Which place are you going to visit (where in the world or universe)?
- Which time you are going to visit (the past or the future)?
- How are you going to travel?
- What are you going to take with you?
- Who are you going to take with you?
- When are you going to return home?

Now tell your partner about your time travel plans.