




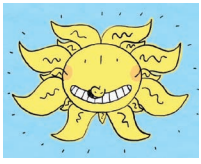

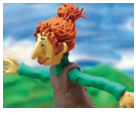
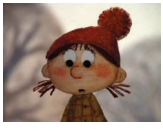
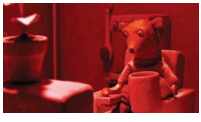
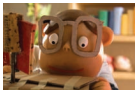


ANIMAGINE

TEACHER'S BOOKLET

FILM&VIDEO WORKSHOP | LIAF

BFI discover film

ANIMAGINE

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Contents

Introduction

Why teach about films?

Films are texts. They are an important part of our culture: that is, they are one of the ways in which human societies create and circulate stories and ideas. They are also popular and widely available.

Films have a unique, distinctive and complex language that combines images, sounds, words, music, movement and duration in order to convey meanings and construct narratives. Children unconsciously and independently learn this language at a very early age (from TV as well as from films), so that when they arrive in school they already have the ability to interpret film texts and to make inferences and predictions about them. This is an important ability that needs to be fostered and developed, not only because it is a valuable foundation for literacy, but because it is of value in its own right, given the significant roles that moving image media such as film and television play in our culture.

The fact that children's 'film learning' tends to be ahead of their 'book learning' is not something we should worry about. It's an achievement we can respect. And some children who find 'book learning' difficult may be able to achieve a great deal in learning about films.

Why teach about animated films?

Young children's moving image media experiences tend to be dominated by animated films and TV programmes. In fact there's a widespread perception that animated films are just for children and that it's somehow a rather 'babyish' form. But the story of animation is fascinating and has its roots in prehistory. Humans have always tried to represent movement and examples of sequential drawings of animals and people can be found in cave art and Egyptian wall paintings.

Animation can be thought of as the purest form of film because animators have complete control of every aspect of meaning and can make anything seem possible. The many different techniques of animation, from simple drawings or cut-outs to elaborate computer-generated images, constitute an enormous and diverse range of art forms that is fascinating to explore and enjoy.

Animated films aren't all fast-moving and funny. They can be subtle, complex and emotionally moving. They can be surreal, strange, hard-hitting and informative. This DVD collection of 12 recent animated films from the London International Animation Festival (LIAF) is designed to help you introduce children to the world of animated films and to realise its amazing scope.

What can children learn from animated films?

The teachers' notes in this booklet draw on two research projects: Reframing Literacy and Persistence of Vision, in which teachers found that children from age 3 onwards could reach higher than expected levels of critical understanding and creative achievement when they were offered continuing opportunities to view, discuss and make animated films.

This resource is thus not designed to support stand-alone, time-limited animation projects. It's designed to help you build in activities relating to animated films on a continuing basis and as a regular part of your teaching. The most appropriate curricular location for work with these films is likely to be in Literacy. The adaptation of the Assessment Framework for Assessing Pupil Progress (see pp 60-61) indicates how children's learning can develop in terms of the standard assessment focuses. Only Levels 3 and 5 have been selected because you will quickly find that when children are viewing and analysing films they are often able to, for example, identify and interpret textual features, or understand the purpose and function of creative choices, at levels well beyond what they might be able to do if they were reading a book. In recognition of this, the report on the Reframing Literacy project has adapted and extended the progression focuses in order to take account of non-print texts.

The focuses are:

1 Engagement, understanding and response
2 Inference and deduction
3 Structure and organisation of texts
4 Style and composition
5 Purpose, viewpoint and effect of text on the audience
6 Social, cultural and historical context

The framework is set out in full in the booklet *Beyond Words*, which can be ordered from the UK Literacy Association (UKLA) at http://www.ukla.org/publications/view/beyond_words_developing_childrens_understanding_of_multimodal_texts/.

Just as learning to read is reinforced and consolidated through learning to write, having opportunities to create animated films sharpens children's appreciation and enjoyment of films and may well help them to make more adventurous choices in the films they choose to watch. Making Animated Films In The Classroom (pp 9-14) will help you to make a start on creative activities.

Talking About Films In The Classroom

To take full advantage of the prior knowledge that children bring to film viewings you may need to consider a different approach to teaching and learning. Children are likely to offer more complex and thoughtful responses to film than they do to other kinds of text. And because the LIAF films may be very different from what your children are used to, they may need encouragement to approach a film viewing with an open mind. There is no 'right way' to set up children's first encounter with one of these films, the key principle is to try and ensure that the children enjoy the film and get something from it.

Preparing for the viewing

You will have your own ideas about how best to get the children interested in seeing the film and looking forward to it. But it is easy to over-prepare and to pre-empt the children's own responses by setting them specific things to look or listen for, or by setting the film within a teaching sequence that imposes your own agenda on how the film could be interpreted.

You have three choices here:

- Undertake some extended preparatory work (for ways of doing this, see the following section: Preparatory Activities).
- Introduce the film very briefly and show it right through, followed by discussion and analysis (see Strategy A in the Strategies for Viewing section, p 5).
- Show the film in sections with pauses for comments and discussion (see Strategy B in the Strategies for Viewing section).

Which of these you choose depends on the film, on your class, and which approach makes you feel most confident. There is no right way; with other films or another class, you may decide on a different approach.

Preparatory Activities

Undertaking ONE of the following would probably be enough: each activity could easily take 30-60 minutes if it works well. The first two activities should sharpen children's inferential and predictive skills and alert them to the fact that films are constructed in complex ways; the third activity is designed to raise children's awareness and stimulate their ideas about the themes the film deals with.

1 Listen to some of the film's sound track[1]

Children are likely to be intrigued by this and will also be alerted to the important relationship that films construct between sound and image. Don't make this into a 'guessing game' in which those who guessed wrong feel foolish when they see the film. Not every film will be suitable for this treatment. *Signalis, A Sunny Day* or *The Propellerbird* would work well. Select a SHORT bit of sound track: 30 seconds is ample; a minute is probably too much) and listen to it first yourself, to make sure that it will work. You could select something that is all sound effects, something that is just music, or a mixture of the two. Before playing it to the children, ask them to listen very carefully and to think about what clues the sound track offers about what may be happening in the film. You could divide the class into groups, asking each group to pay attention to a different aspect.

Aspects to consider:
Time: can you hear anything that suggests what time of day it is, whether the film is dealing with the past or the present?
Place: can you hear anything that suggests where the story is taking place: indoors or outside, city or countryside, etc?
Character: can you hear any characters doing things or making noises? (Remember that characters are not necessarily people). If so, how many characters can they hear and what do they seem to be doing?
Story: can you figure out what sort of story this might be and what might be going to happen?

Cover the screen or turn off the visual track and play the sound track extract at least twice. After discussion, play it again, so that the children can refine their ideas. Competent writers could try writing the opening sentence of the story, not to use the sound track as a stimulus, but to help them reflect on the differences between film and writing and the kinds of creative choices filmmakers and writers can make.

2 Look at one or more still images from the film

'Grab' an image from the film to show to the children on your IWB. You could show only part of the image to start with, especially if it is complex and detailed: use an IWB tool that allows you to move a 'spotlight' around or to progressively reveal a larger section of the image. You can take charge of the 'reveal' process or ask children to take turns. At each stage, ask the children to describe what they can see, using an open question such as "Tell me what you can see now",

1 With acknowledgment to the British Film Institute's Story Shorts 2 (BFI 2006)

and follow-up questions such as “Can you see anything else?” Where children are guessing, ask them “What can you see that makes you think that?” You need to alert them to the fact that everything in the frame has been put there on purpose and has a function in the story. Once the whole image is revealed, children can use their inferential skills to speculate about what may happen in the story and/or what they think they are going to learn about the character(s) they have studied in the still image.

3 Use writing, drawing or performance

For preliminary exploration of ideas, issues or stylistic approaches (to get ideas for this, look at the Things you might notice and Themes to explore sections in the notes for each film, pp 19-50).

Organising the viewing

Ensure that everyone can see the screen and hear the sound track properly. Group children on the carpet or in rows of chairs, rather than at tables spaced out round the room. Make sure no light falls on the screen and makes it hard to see. Establish some rules about behaviour. For a first viewing or when the children are looking carefully for something specific, you may want to have complete silence. In other contexts you may want pairs or trios to talk quietly. For some films you may expect strong reactions (laughter, surprise, disgust, etc) which could be discussed later.

Strategies for viewing

The big decision you have to make is (A) whether you want to start by showing the whole film right through, or (B) whether you want to stop at various points during the first viewing to ask questions and elicit responses. By opting for (A) you enable the children to respond to the film in its entirety. If you are confident that they will enjoy it and understand at least some of it – and/or be intrigued by what they don’t understand at first viewing - then try (A). If you think they will find the film challenging and may be resistant to it, then opt for (B). But in either case, turn to the other option afterwards: follow (A) with re-viewing, pauses and analysis; follow (B) with a chance to see the whole film through without interruption.

Strategy A

After showing the complete film, it is important to ask open questions. So don’t ask “What did you like best?” Instead, try some or all of these questions:

Questions to ask:

Q Was there anything you liked in the film?
Q Was there anything you didn’t like?
Q Was there anything you didn’t understand?

Note where there are differences of opinion (but don't try to resolve them – point out that "…it's interesting that different people have different ideas and we're going to have another look in a minute and check…"). After a second or third viewing, these further questions can generate more reflection and probably a third or fourth viewing:

Further questions:
Q Did you notice any patterns?
Q How much time did the story in the film cover?
Q What would you tell other people about this film? (without giving the story away)
Q What do you think were the most important things that happened in this story?

Strategy B
Decide in advance on an interesting stopping-point, when you can ask things like:

Questions to ask:
Q What do you know about this character so far?
Q What do you know so far about the place (or 'world') that this story is set in?
Q What do you think might happen next/in the end? (if they have not seen it before)

Alternatively, or as well, you could encourage the children to ask their own questions at these points – but be ready to acknowledge that it may not be possible to answer them yet. You can prompt further comments by asking supplementary questions such as:

Further questions:
Q What did you see that gave you that idea/told you that?
Q What did you hear that gave you that idea/told you that?
Q How could you tell….[repeat the child's comment]
Q That's interesting: can you tell me a bit more about that? (especially when their comment is not very clear)

After collecting comments and questions from the class (either as a whole-class discussion or from work in groups), show the film from the beginning,

either to the same stopping-point, or right through to the end – whichever seems more appropriate. This time, use the still-frame control, to freeze the image at points relevant to their earlier comments. Don't use this to introduce things you think they ought to have noticed – stick to their agenda. They may come up with new comments at this stage.

If you want to get them to look more closely at a freeze-frame, try not to prompt them but ask "What can you see?" and "What else can you see?" This can take a long time! Use the same supplementary questions as before. Some children may come up with ideas from their other media experiences and you may need to prompt this with questions like "Have you seen another film/heard another story where that happened?" They may also use their experience of having seen and discussed the first part of the film in order to make inferences and predictions based on clues that they feel are important.

Making the most of classroom talk

No two people's experiences of the same film (or poem, or play, or story, or picture….) are ever exactly alike. You are trying to elicit their own unique point of view on this film, and then seeing to what extent they can articulate this, and perhaps whether they can relate it to what they have seen and heard. It's important, therefore, to try and resist comments such as "That's right!", "Well done!" and "Yes we did see that didn't we!" etc – however well-deserved they may seem. These establish the sense that you are seeking 'right answers', and encourage children to 'Guess what's in your mind'.

If a child can't answer right away, it's important for her/him to know that this doesn't matter. You could say "Do you want a bit of time to think about that?" or you could make a note and come back to it later, as in "You were saying something very interesting earlier on about….could you tell me a bit more about that?"

To summarise, the challenges for you are:

- Can you convince the children that what they say really matters and that there are no right or wrong answers?
- Can you reflect back enough of their response to show that you think it is interesting and worth reflecting on, without pre-determining their next response?
- Can you take up the cues in what they say in order to identify what kind of comment they are making?

The Crib Sheet (pp 51-59) is intended to help you recognise where some responses might lead in this kind of discussion. Having the Crib Sheet

information in your mind as you listen to their responses may help you to frame follow-up questions. You'll be listening for indications that they may be able to notice and comment on ANY aspect of film language: framing, composition, editing or sound. They may also make comments that relate to modality (ie how real it seemed/was meant to be) or to genre (ie other films like this; other films not like this). Use the question "Can you tell me a bit more about that?" when you think you might be able to elicit a bit more, but try not to prompt them or lead them to think that there's a right answer.

Be careful not to exclude discussion about the sound track. Questions like "Can you remember what you heard at that point?" and "Do you think the character(s) in the film could hear that sound?" can be useful prompts.

Interesting lines of discussion to spot and develop:

- **Modality:** Are children interested in exploring the extent to which the film is/is not real/true to life/plausible/scientifically possible?
- **Agency:** Are children aware that the film was made by someone? Are they interested in how it was made? Do they have their own theories about how – or why – it was made? Do they have questions about this?
- **Expectations:** Did the children find anything unexpected? Did they enjoy the film? Did they mind if questions were left unanswered or did they find it puzzling?
- **Confusion and misunderstanding:** The children may ask you questions. As far as possible, try to counter these with "That's interesting; I'm not sure. What do you think?" or at least say "Well I think it might be…[give brief explanation] …but I'm not sure." You do not have to have the right answers.

Following up

Children may be keen to do a drawing about, or inspired by, the film. Some children may desperately want to solve a problem posed in the film, or to create a sequel, whether in play, drawing, writing or their own filmmaking. Younger children may talk you through their play or drawing, which can generate both questions and comments.

Children may be keen to return to a film some days or even weeks after they have worked on it. Let them ask you to stop the re-viewing at any point if there is something they'd like to say. You might also want to ask whether they have changed their minds about the film. Did they see anything new or something that they didn't notice last time?

Making Animated Films In The Classroom

Just as creating your own text is an important part of becoming literate, making your own moving image work is an intrinsic part of developing media literacy. Making animation is a good route into this as children will be using tools they are familiar with, (pens and paper) and the technology is fairly simple, giving immediate feedback.

The young animators can also edit and refine their ideas as they go along without the pressures of actors and crew. More importantly, they will not be constrained by practical considerations such as needing helicopter shots or car chase stunt drivers. In addition, little editing is needed because most of the composition and structure is decided at storyboard stage and the 'acting' is done in the process of animating.

Before you try this in the classroom it's essential that you make an animation yourself using one of the three techniques described below, right from the initial idea through to showing it to someone else. Only through making one yourself will you get a clear picture of the process and feel confident about tackling it with children in the classroom.

Perhaps the most important principle in creative work with film is that children should have more than one opportunity to do it. Their first film will be the one where they get used to the technology and make their mistakes. Their second and third films will be where they start to explore the imaginative possibilities of the medium and to focus on creating meaning. If you can't commit to supporting this process of learning progression it will be better not to do any creative work at all.

Not confident with IT?

The biggest barrier for you (less so for the children!) is likely to be anxiety about the technology. But there is an increasing amount of simple but good software available as free downloads from the Internet. For currently recommended and tested routes and the most recent information, visit www.filmworkshop.com.

At school, you will probably need to obtain administrator access to install any program onto your computer. The key issue that may come up is saving the work successfully. If work is saved in the wrong place, or worse still, not saved at all, it won't be possible to retrieve it and a lot of effort will be wasted.

What technique should I use?

The basic process involves loading a series of still photos into a computer, where a simple software program can play these images back at a chosen speed. So the process doesn't necessarily require a camera or any other special equipment. If you have access to more than one computer, you can plan for children working in pairs (three or more is too many!) at computers so that your class can be making several films at the same time, or different scenes of one film for joining together later. Children can work on their film or scene, then save it and come back to it later. Alternatively, you can project the work on to your IWB so that the whole group can share in creative decisions. Being able to work informally in a relaxed way, rather than as part of a time-limited, high-stakes 'project', will support more successful learning.

Three easy options

for doing 'entry level' animation in the classroom

Still camera and slide show

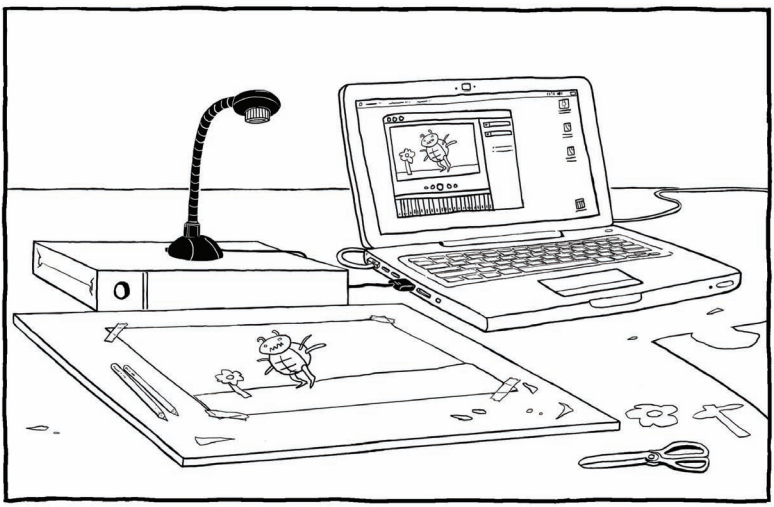
Playing a series of photos on screen with a soundtrack can be thought of as slow animation. You can use PowerPoint or PhotoStory. You simply take or download a series of photos, upload them into the computer and ask the children to choose some (perhaps just three or four to start with) and decide what order they are to be shown. They can make choices about the length of time each image is seen, and about the transitions from image to image. In PhotoStory and similar programs they can also select parts of the image and can move the 'camera' across the image. Sound (voice-over and/or music) can normally be added. The photos don't have to tell a story: they could express a mood or reveal a location.

Pivot

This program can be downloaded free from the Internet. It should run on any PC and you don't need a camera. The children can create their characters and backgrounds and then animate them. This is very easy and the children either already know it or quickly start using it at home. Go to http://pbone.it-mate.co.uk/pivot.htm to download it. The Mac version is called Stykz and can be found at http://www.stykz.net/. Sound can be added via the computer as a piece of music or voice over.

Webcam and animation program

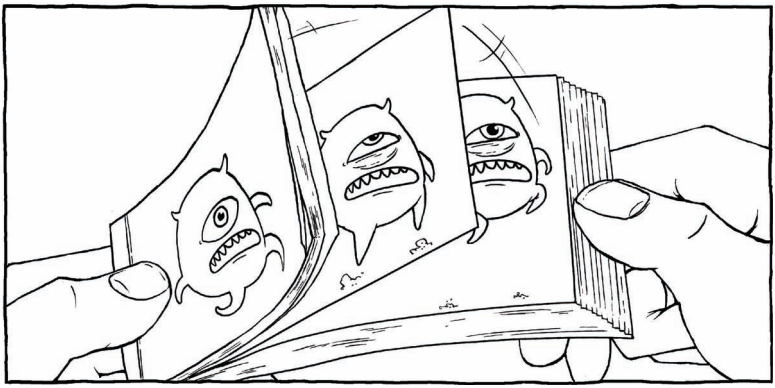
This is the simplest way of doing real animation in the classroom. The latest advice on suitable cheap webcams and free animation programs can be found at www.filmworkshop.com. The webcam enables the animation program to 'grab' a picture each time you click the mouse. The software can then play your animation back, showing 10 pictures per second, which will create the illusion of movement. Most programs have a section for recording sound so when you have finished you can add a sound track. Getting more than one webcam, if you have access to more than one computer, is good if you can afford it.



Webcam and laptop with animation program, set up for film-making

Explaining the basic principle of animation

It's important for children to understand the concept of 'persistence of vision' before they start doing any animation, and this is more easily done through practical demonstration than by explaining it. The children can all easily make paper rolls or spinners (see www.filmworkshop.com). If you can get flick books from a toy or novelty shop and pass them around, you can ask the children to look at the difference between one page and another, so as to get a sense of the changes that need to be made from one image to another in order to achieve a sense of movement, and how the changes can be bigger or smaller depending on the speed of movement to be shown.



Flick book in action, notice the slight changes from image to image

First steps

Allow some time for all the children to have a go at learning whatever animation software you are using and try out some simple movements.

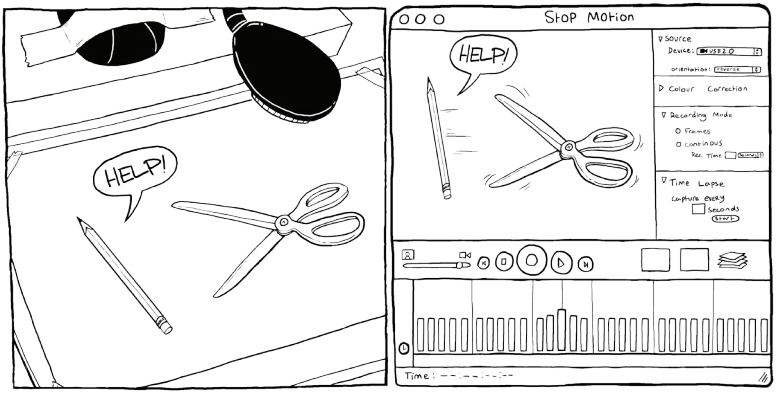
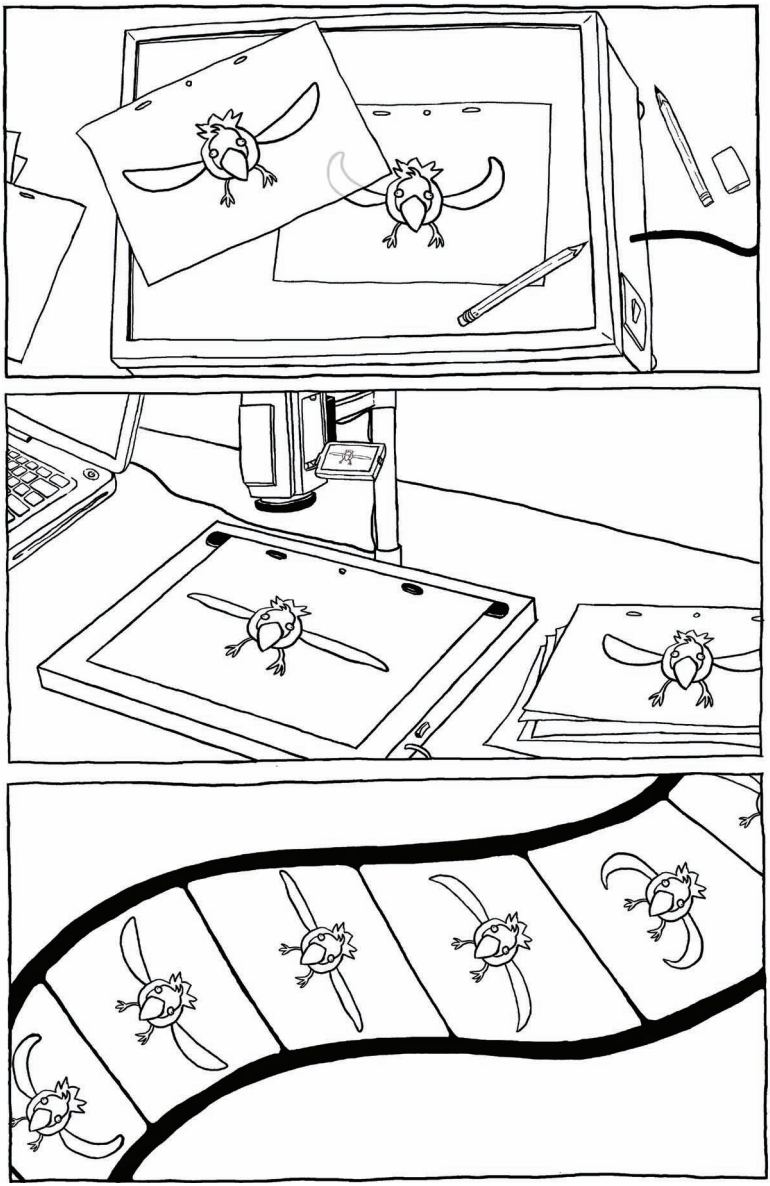


Table-top and on screen views of animation work in progress

To start them off on using the webcam and animation program, they can animate and record a simple process such as moving a pen across the screen or a pair of scissors chasing off a pencil. The webcam should be positioned over the artwork and taped so it can't move. The artwork must also be taped down. On the computer they will be able to see the webcam's view of the artwork. Then they can move an object into shot and take a photo, then move it a bit more and take another, repeat this, and then play it back to see the pen move on its own.



Key stages in drawn animation

Storyboards

This is a very important stage where the children can plan and edit their work. They need to be confident about turning a simple story into a series of four to eight key moments. You could simply ask them each to fold a sheet of A4 into 4. In each section they should then sketch out a key moment of a very simple and well-known story or process. It will be more fun if they each choose their own, but you can suggest examples such as a fairy story or a process like getting up in the morning. Emphasise that the artistic quality doesn't matter: they can use stick figures and simple sketches, and some text under the pictures to help with the meaning.

Example of a story board telling a simple story

The aim of this stage is simply to establish key turning points, cause and effect, or motivation. So when the finished sheets are shared, children can be asked questions that require them to develop their story and give it more depth such as "Why was he robbing the bank?". To provide answers, the paper can be cut up and more squares can be added in order to cover all the important points of the story. Finally, you can use voting to choose the best six storyboards. The children can then work in groups to produce the art work and create the film.

Animation Techniques

The easiest animation by far is 2D cut out where the artwork lies flat on the table and the camera is suspended above it. Instead of paper characters you could use flat pieces of Plasticine or add other textures such as cloth.

A little more ambitious approach is to create animation by painting onto Perspex, or by using watercolours onto absorbent paper. Another idea is to light a Perspex sheet from below (ie using a light box) and use sand or tea leaves to create images. Once you start to watch other animators' work you will see wonderful examples of all these techniques.

It is good to explore the world of drawn animation. The key factor here is that each drawing is traced from the previous one so that you build up a stack of images. The papers remain in the same position (using a hole punch, stapling the pad together or the more expensive peg bar and animation paper). Start with creating a loop (playing the sequence over and over again) of a bird flying.

The Films

Introductory Notes and Spoiler Warning

Your own personal response to the films you decide to use in the classroom is an important basis for your teaching. You will be asking children for their own responses to these films, so the similarities or differences between your initial responses and theirs could be an interesting starting-point for discussion. It is also important for children to realise that you care about the texts you are bringing into the classroom and that it is possible for people to make a personal 'investment' in the texts that they like. This is an important basis for becoming literate in all kinds of text and for being able to articulate critical ideas.

So please **DON'T READ THE NOTES ON PAGES 17-50** until you have seen the films yourself! The notes provide detailed synopses, comments by each filmmaker, pointers towards things that you or the children might notice, and suggestions for themes to explore, but your own responses and ideas are equally important, and reading the synopses in advance will spoil your enjoyment.

The aim of these notes is to help you to focus on the films themselves in any classroom work that you plan to do. You may well want to offer activities that 'move away' from the film: asking children to talk, draw or write about what might happen after the end of the film-story, for example, or asking them what they would do in a similar situation to a character in a film. These are legitimate activities, but they should be undertaken as a follow-up to work that focuses on the film itself. This means that you should start by focusing on:

- what the children's responses are;
- what features of the film enabled them to make the interpretations and judgments they have made;
- identifying the strategies used by the filmmaker to...

tell the story, provide clues about characters, setting and genre, what may have happened before and what may happen next, create surprises, generate emotional responses and/or moral judgments.

You may feel that these will be too difficult for the children you are teaching. But you may well be surprised to find how much more confident they are in talking

about films, than they are in talking about books. You are likely to find that many children will speak and write more fluently and use more sophisticated vocabulary when they are discussing a film, and that this will include some children you may have judged to be poor at speaking, listening and writing.

This is why we do not offer any indications of appropriate age-level for each film. You should make your own judgments about which films would suit the class you are working with. But again, do not be too hasty in judging a film to be 'too difficult' for the children you teach. You may be surprised by what children are prepared to watch and try to understand. Even if they do not understand a film fully on first viewing, they may well be happy to view it again to try and make sense of it. They are used to doing this with other films (for example, most popular family films include much that younger children do not understand at first).

Because we are proposing that you take account of children's own responses to the films, we are not providing you with plans for teaching sequences with predetermined outcomes. We believe that work with film demands a more open pedagogic approach and that if you use the techniques described on pp 3-8 to start out with, you will be able to sustain high quality critical and creative work for a surprisingly long time.

The notes headed **Things you might notice** are not intended to provide you with a mechanical check-list of things that the children should be required to discuss. They highlight features of the way each film is produced that may help you to be more alert in listening to children's comments and responding to them and in planning how you are going to present the film. They may also help you drive discussion forward if children are struggling to express ideas, or offer you key points to go back to in the class's re-viewing of a film. Likewise, the **Themes to explore** section offers some 'ways in' that may be appropriate but you might not want to pursue them all, and you may find other themes emerging in your classroom or from your own viewing.

Once you have previewed one or more of the films and read the notes, you can start to consider the context in which you want to use it. Do not depend too heavily on written work as the only legitimate 'end product' of a teaching sequence that includes film. Children's talk, drawings and, ideally, their own creative work with film, would be equally appropriate. Bear in mind that creative activities in animation can be very simple, and easier than you might expect to manage in the classroom. Your main objective in starting creative work with film should be to ensure that children have more than one opportunity to explore their creative powers in this amazing medium. These powers will be stimulated by repeated opportunities to view and talk about films such as these.

Cyber

Filmmaker: **Stefan Eling**
Country: **Germany**
Year Made: **2007**
Length: **5' 04"**
Technique: **hand drawn**

Synopsis

From an oblique high angle we see a red-haired man standing in a room. The furniture includes a coffee table, a standard lamp, and a carpet with a spotted pattern. The man switches on the standard lamp and we can see that in the middle of the carpet is a large cube covered with a cloth, on which stand a cup and saucer. He moves the cup and saucer to the coffee table and folds up the cloth. The cube opens to form a chunky armchair, in which he sits, having taken off his slippers. Immediately, a different reality takes over the cube of space directly above the carpet. Rapid piano music begins, his hair flies back as if in a wind, the coffee table, cup, slippers and lamp all vanish behind him, and he seems to be rushing along a road, sitting in the armchair. A number of large eggs fly past him, until he is distracted by a toaster flashing by and one of the eggs hits him in the face. He crashes to the floor and all the objects return to their normal places.

He gets up slowly and gets back into the armchair. The 'ride' is again a road, but the chair turns into a low-slung trolley. He passes a traffic light. Suddenly the road changes to a railway track and the trolley into a freight truck. As arrows start to fly past him from behind, the railway changes to sandy ground scattered with skulls and cacti. The truck changes into a chunky wooden horse and a number of cowboy hats flash past. Then a sombrero hits him in the face and he crashes back into his room. There is a toaster on the coffee table instead of the cup and saucer.

The third ride begins as before but quickly everything vanishes and he finds himself in a plane with clouds and birds flying past. Two toasters also fly past and he shows some skill in manoeuvring past these hazards. But then a cup and saucer start to overtake him from behind: looking at this, he collides with a bird and crashes to the floor once more. The cup and saucer are back on the coffee table but a cactus has replaced the standard lamp, and he notices that his slippers have moved to a different part of the room.

In the fourth ride, the chair drives straight into the sea and changes into a boat. He negotiates posts and lifebelts in the sea before a huge wave rolls over him, the boat changes to an underwater jet ski and he acquires goggles and breathing apparatus. He negotiates many different fish but fails to notice a figure just like himself lying on the floor as he has done after each crash, although facing in the opposite direction. A shark swims alongside and bites off his breathing apparatus. Back in the living room, the coffee table has gone and a traffic light and railway signal unit have appeared.

In the fifth ride, the chair quickly changes to a trolley and then a motorbike. He swerves to avoid hedgehogs and tyres lying in the road, then several other motorcyclists, the coffee table, the standard lamp, the spotted carpet and his slippers. Finally he crashes headlong into another motorcyclist and disappears. The chair is now facing in the opposite direction, with the motorcyclist lying on the floor in front of it. The motorcyclist – who seems to be a pig – gets up, puts on the slippers, replaces the cover on the folded-up armchair and the cup and saucer on top of it, and switches off the standard lamp.

Filmmaker's comments

> My main inspiration was that so many men waste their time with computer games.

> My ideas for the film were:
> • that it would be funnier if we could change the shape of the furniture in our living rooms, rather than buy small ugly games consoles;
> • to mix a modern visual theme with traditional 2D drawn animation that has a 3D 'look' and to use classical piano music;
> • to bring action and motion to what is normally a quiet place: an ordinary carpeted living room;
> • that it would be interesting to have a 'virtual enemy' take over at the end and wear my slippers!

> The difficult part was finding the time to do all the hand drawings that make up the film when I had to earn my living doing other things.

Things you might notice

• The 'camera position' never changes; and you could consider the effect of having a high-angle, oblique shot. What if the audience's point of view were different, or if there were several different viewpoints as in most films?
• The colour range is very limited, brightening up only in the game world.
• We don't know anything else about this man apart from the things he has in his living room and what he does in it – or where he goes at the end.
• The effect of the music (try showing the film without the music, or playing the music on its own before showing the film).

Themes to explore

'Ride' type computer games – why are they such fun? What makes them addictive? Which are the best ones (and why)? Do some children prefer them to other types of game (eg shoot-em up, quest, virtual worlds) – why/why not? Are there 'rules' in some families about how much time to spend on them? (If so, why, and do children keep to them?) Do boys like them more than girls? (If so, why?) Do children ever worry that they are spending too much time playing games? If they could invent a 'ride' game what would it be like?

What's real and what isn't in this film? This is a complex question but children can enjoy exploring and reflecting on the criteria they use when judging something as 'real'. For example a ride is more exciting if it is realistic: you may believe it is real while you are playing. Watch out for the ways in which Eling signals the switches between the ordinary everyday world and the game world. Look for the objects that appear and disappear, passing through the 'cube' of the game world: which ones originate in the living room and which ones come from the game world?

An impossible ending? The film ends when the central character disappears completely (and for ever?) from the scene and is replaced by a character from the game world. Watch carefully to spot how this happens. You might want to stop the film just before the end, or once the children have grasped the pattern, and ask what they think the ending might be. This could encourage ideas about how to finish off the scenario with a funny and/or meaningful conclusion. Children may also want to discuss "What happens next?" or Cyber 2: does the character from the game world settle down in the living room? Does the film's central character settle down in the game world – or did he originally come from the game world himself?

Is there a moral to the story? Does Eling want to put us off computer games?

The Tiny Fish

Filmmaker: **Sergei Ryabov**
Country: **Russia**
Year Made: **2006**
Length: **9' 30"**
Technique: **cut-out animation**

Synopsis

A cat is stalking birds outside a house on a hill, surrounded by wintry brown trees. A little girl comes out of the front door and invites the cat to join her on a bike ride. They speed over the hills, followed by the flock of birds, until they come to a frozen lake. They venture out on to the ice and find an old man fishing through a hole in the ice. He catches a beautiful sparkling little fish and throws it on to the ice. The little girl rescues it and throws it back into the water, but the old man angrily grabs it out again and stuffs it into a bag. As he walks away, the snow starts to fall.

Later, children are playing in the snow and trying to build an igloo, watched by the cat, and by the little girl from inside her house where she is drawing and cutting out an image of the fish. The children yell at the cat and chase it away.

The little girl puts the fish cut-out on the music stand of the piano and starts to pick out a tune. A different, starlit environment appears and the fish seems to come alive. The little girl starts to play with the fish but suddenly the old man's thundering footsteps are heard: the stars start to fall out of the sky and into his bag. The little girl and the fish start to run away but fall and are caught on the branch of a tree. Unable to reach them, the old man chomps through the trunk of the tree: as it falls, the little girl finds a series of staircases to climb, chased by the old man who gobbles up each staircase as she flees. She wakes up, still on the piano stool.

The little girl comes out of her house and calls the cat. Together they walk back to the lake through the deep snow. The little girl takes out the fish cut-out and drops it into the ice hole. The water starts to sparkle and we see the fish come alive again, winking at the little girl and the cat before swirling away into the deeper water. The little girl and her cat go back to the house, now lit up at dusk. As she goes in, the little girl invites the cat into the house.

Filmmaker's comments

> I became an animator because I didn't want to grow up.

> My main inspirations in this film were kindness, love and enigma.

> My ideas for the film were: In the autumn the big snowfall has begun. Trees have put on white fur coats, a fluffy blanket has covered the earth. It is as wonderful as a fairy tale. I have tried to convey this mood to the audience.

Things you might notice

- The music: all the music is closely related to the little girl's different states of mind and helps us to identify with her feelings. The calm melodic tones of Tchaikovsky's *Mama (Opus 39 No. 3)* open and close the film and are also used for the happy part of the dream sequence, while Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No. 5* is used for the exhilarating bicycle ride. Ravel's *Une Barque sur l'ocean (Miroirs III)* is used to invoke the magical world of the fish, and the faster, more 'anxious' tones of Tchaikovsky's *Baba Yaga (Opus 39 No. 20)* accompany the dream sequence chase.
- Sound effects: winter sounds: the echo and crackle of ice when you first step on it; the creaking of footsteps in thick snow; the yells of children outside contrasting with the enclosed space and ticking clock of the room; the echoing boom of the old man's stamping and biting in the dream sequence; the 'flatter' sound of the living room when the little girl wakes, in contrast to the resonant tones of the dream.
- Transitions: from outdoors to inside; from 'real' to 'dream' and back again; the slow fade from the lake to the house at the end. How are these changes shown?
- Duration: the long sequence at the end of the first part as the old man walks away into the snow. Why hold this shot for such a long time? Look at where there is a rapid succession of shots and where shots are held longer than you might expect, and consider why this might be.
- Narrative structure: what's the point of the scene with the cat and the children in the snow? Does it tell you things about Ryabov's themes? What would we lose if it were left out?

Themes to explore

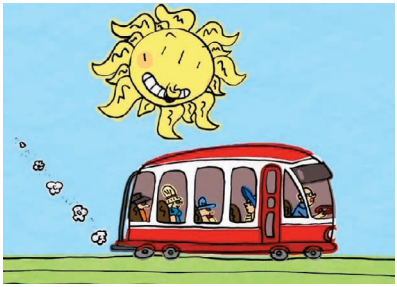
Moral judgments: Who's kind and who isn't? Is anyone really 'bad'? We see the old man mainly from the little girl's point of view, so he seems cruel when he snatches the fish away from her and throws it on the ice to die, and it is this image of him that returns in the dream, but his delight when he first catches the fish has told us that he is looking forward to eating it. A consideration of what we know or can infer about these two characters tells us that the little girl lives in a big house with a piano, but we may infer from his lonely trudge across the ice that the old man is much poorer. The gang of children trying to build a snow house act as one unit, reacting with rage and running screaming after the cat, and are contrasted with the little girl sitting alone and thoughtful in her house – is she missing out on the fun of playing in a gang, or are we encouraged to see her as more sensitive and thoughtful than they are?

Different kinds of reality: The little girl's dream adds to what she has seen of the old man at the lake: his desire to eat the fish is translated into a desire to eat everything including the stars and the trees, and to grow bigger with everything he eats – a deep-rooted notion that many children find frightening. Look closely at the transitions between the paper fish, the dream fish and the real fish to see how close-ups are used and small features signal that the fish is coming alive. The sound track is key to the differences between the dream world and the real world: the booming echoes contrasting with the 'flatter' sound of the room. The dream world seems to operate on two levels but there is no ground or horizon and little detail, while the 'real world' of the house, the woods and the lake is rendered in detail.

Symbolism: It could be interesting to explore what the fish 'means' to the little girl, and why stars, a tree and a staircase appear in the dream world. This could lead on to wider discussion of symbolism and children using symbols in their own creative work (drawing, writing, oral storytelling or filmmaking). But note that 'enigma' is one of Ryabov's themes.

Character: What kind of person is the little girl? What kind of person is the old man? If you use Strategy B (see p 6) you could ask this when each of them first appears, as well as returning to the question later. You could use the 'still' button to pause and discuss what impressions the children have when they first see each character and what inferences they make about what they may do or what may happen to them. The cat features throughout the story, but children could consider what it's role is and what difference would it make if there were no cat in the story.

A Sunny Day



Filmmaker: **Gil Alkabetz**
Country: **Germany**
Year made: **2008**
Length: **6' 04"**
Technique: **hand drawn animation**

Synopsis

Night time. Behind the hills the sun is fast asleep and snoring. His alarm clock wakes him and he bounces up into the sky: after swatting away the stars he gets ready for the new day. He shaves with cloud-foam, cleans his teeth with rainbow toothpaste, grabs a bird and squeezes it to get a fresh egg which he then fries on his face. He peers down at the landscape, expectantly scanning it like a book, turning over the pages to different scenes.

With excitement, he sees a woman emerge from a little house with her dog. Eagerly, the sun combs out his rays, flicks the clouds away and beams down from a bright blue sky. He is disappointed to see that she immediately dons sunglasses and that both she and the dog put on big hats.

She joins a bus queue waiting in the shade of a tree, and again the sun is disappointed when the queue moves round the tree to stay in the shade. Once on the bus, the passengers pull down their window-blinds, but the sun nevertheless follows the bus as it toils up and over a big hill.

At the seaside, the sun gets ready to blaze away, but everyone immediately puts up their umbrellas. The sun performs a belly dance, but the people retreat into their tents for a siesta, and even the sea creatures scurry back into the water. The woman with the dog buys an ice-cream from a van; the sun fancies one too, but his attention frizzles up the van and melts all the ice-cream.

When the clouds all evaporate and even the birds put on sombreros as they fly past the sun, he decides to pull off his rays and sink, defeated, into the sea. As he sinks, he notices a camera flash. Everyone is lined up on the beach to watch the sunset, taking photos and applauding.

Delighted to have got their attention finally, the sun leaps up for one last spectacular dive into the sea in a blaze of colour, to the sound of applause. The stars return and the sun starts snoring again.

Filmmaker's comments

> The main message of my film is never to give up, because you never know when your great moment will arrive.

> This was my second children's film on the theme of Time. The first was about a year, and the protagonist was a tree. This is about one day, so the protagonist is the sun. It also makes indirect references to the theme of global warming. I'm planning further films about a month and a week.

> The filmmaking went really well, but when it was finished the crew didn't like a bit at the beginning, so I had to go back and change it even though I'd completed all the editing and music. But the film works better with that change.

> The film is made to look as simple as possible, but I wanted it to have a bit of a personal touch so I asked the ink tracer to make the tracing a bit 'dirty'. This was hard to control so I had to go over each drawing again afterwards in Photoshop. I also wanted to have the colours not completely overlapping the outlines. This meant a lot of extra work on each frame. So both these ideas took a lot of time.

Things you might notice

- Ways in which the animation looks 'clumsy' and 'unrealistic': the rough, 'sketched' look of the sun's features; hasty and jerky movements eg the bus queue, the starfish and the crab; the use of 'boiling' (deliberately not creating smooth movement, as with the stars at the beginning).
- The use of non-verbal reaction sounds: grunts, squeaks, etc. together with very simple changes of expression (children could easily try this themselves in PhotoStory or other simple software).
- The modality 'rules' for what the sun can do: some are fantasy (eg frying an egg on his own face, producing a pair of hands and implements such a a comb or a fly swatter when he needs them) and some are realistic (eg the shadows, the heat of the day, the evaporation of clouds, melting ice-cream).
- The two-dimensional framing: all movement is sideways across the frame and each image has very little depth, so that it's possible for the sun to bump into a hill and for birds to have to change direction and fly under the sun.

Themes to explore

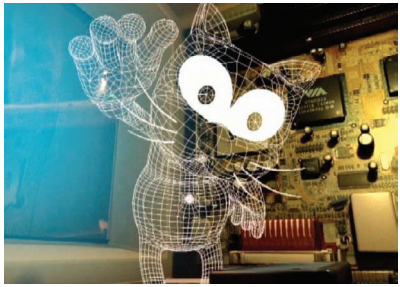
Time: How does the film manage a time-scale of at least 12 hours in just six minutes, and with what appears as more or less continuous action? How time is managed in narrative is an interesting problem that both filmmakers and writers have to address. Equivalents in film to verbal time markers such as 'then', 'later', 'after a while' etc are transitions such as fades, dissolves, and cutaways (see Crib Sheet, pp 51-59 for explanations of these devices), but none of these appear in *A Sunny Day*. Instead, the film is punctuated by moments of 'thought' by the sun as he ponders what's happening and then looks to see what's happening next.

Humour: Whether or not the children find the film funny, it can be interesting to explore what does or does not make people laugh – although of course you may not want to spend much time on this if they were not amused by the film! There are many ridiculous ideas in the film that are designed to amuse: some little touches you may not notice on a first viewing are the 'shut eye' click on the alarm clock, the appearance of spectacles as the landscape suddenly turns into a book that the sun is scanning, the fact that in one sequence the sun's own nose casts a shadow. But what might put some viewers off is the sense that the filmmaker is trying too hard to amuse.

Character: The sun's own character traits are the main feature of the film so there is potentially a lot here to discuss, re-view and perhaps experiment with in children's own drawing and writing. Expressing different emotions through drawings of faces or even abstract shapes, using a minimum of dots and lines, and through different non-verbal sounds, could be explored before considering the words that could be used to express similar ideas. Hopefulness and disappointment are the predominant emotions in the film, underpinning the filmmaker's theme of 'never giving up'; but the sun's elation and bashfulness at the end could also be explored, perhaps through drama: how do you feel when everyone is looking at you? Or when everyone is clapping you?

Sunshine: There is an ambivalent message about the sun in this film: we think we love it, but too much sunshine is bad for the planet. The film presents us with an unusual point of view by making the sun the central character: does this make the 'global warming' message more, or less, effective?

Animatou



Filmmaker: **Claude Luyet**
Country: **Switzerland**
Year made: **2007**
Length: **5' 35"**
Techniques: **hand drawn, cel animation, sand animation, 3D claymation, computer animation, 3D model animation, live action.**

Synopsis

1 Over the film's title, we hear an electronic 'swanee whistle' sound and then see a vertical shot of an animator's desk. A line-drawn mouse drops and lands with a bump in the middle of a white sheet of paper. The animator's hand appears and brushes the mouse away, but it returns and stays, despite being prodded by the animator's finger, to tiny rhythmic electronic sounds. The animator starts to draw a figure; the film speeds up and a line-drawn cat appears. Another layer of sound begins as the cat and mouse see each other.

2 Zoom to full screen as the cat raises a paw and the mouse turns to run towards the right-hand side of the screen. A conventional left-to-right chase ensues, created by a simple 'loop' of drawings and music, until the mouse disappears and the cat screeches to a halt: he's approaching a closed door. The mouse disappears through a hole at the bottom of the door but the cat has to stop and turn the handle.

3 We see the cat in mid-shot from the other side of the door. The animator's desk reappears and the animator's hands start to trace the outlines of the shapes and colour them in blue and buff. A black sheet slipped behind the figures reveals them to be on transparent acetate. The cat looks both ways, runs off to the left and another layer of sound begins. Our point of view swings up to a vertical shot as the cat approaches a window, sees the drop to the street and follows the mouse down. Landing at street level, the mouse runs under a car and across the road, leaving the cat helplessly watching from the pavement. Seen in close-up as it runs along, the mouse dissolves into the pupil of the cat's eye as it looks to and fro, then runs off to the right.

4 Cut to a high, oblique angle shot of a 'still life' scene: window, table, bottle, bowl and jar all throwing sharp black shadows. The mouse runs under the table but the cat jumps over it, smashing the objects. Back to the left-to-right chase, this time with a horizon and shadows. The horizon bends and becomes the edge of a curving yellow sunlit arcade crossed by dark blue shadows. The mouse disappears around the bend and the shadows flicker past as we follow the cat's point of view into darkness.

5 Two eyes appear in the darkness, swivelling to and fro, up and down, and a scratchy cymbal sound is heard. The animator's hand appears carrying a plastic tube, and clears the sand in tiny puffs to create glasses around the eyes, and then a cross cat's face. The mouse whizzes past in the darkness, but the cat can't see it until he smears a white streak across the screen. The mouse flashes across and the cat rubs away more sand until he can again chase the mouse from left to right along a level line that suddenly ends in mid-air. The cat faces us in consternation before dropping downwards.

6 The falling cat turns into a black smudge of sand before dissolving into a lump of black Plasticene on the animator's table. The animator starts to mould the Plasticene; then the scene is reframed to show how it is moulded on to an armature and a blue cat figure emerges. In close-up, the cat's head is nudged by the animator's finger and the cat comes to life, tries out some movements and starts to look around. He walks to a computer screen, taps on the glass and peers in. He bends his knees and jumps into the screen.

7 Seen from a high angle inside the computer, the cat emerges through the screen as a digital armature. He peers around as our point of view arcs overhead past the fizzing light bulb that illuminates the 'real' interior of the computer. The cat peers into the audience's 'screen' before turning back to the screen he came in by, and realises that the animator is still out there, tapping the keyboard. The cat's mesh body becomes solid and then gets changed to red, green, black and finally blue while he gestures to the animator to desist. The buzzing light finally fails and the computer screen goes dark: the cat jumps on to the 'sill' of the screen, peers out, and catches sight of something.

8 The animator has disappeared but the computer mouse left on the table starts to jiggle, and suddenly sprouts eyes and ears. The cat reacts and meows. The mouse tries to get away, but is still attached to the computer by a cable. The cat bangs on the inside of the computer screen in frustration. With one final effort the mouse jerks the USB connection out of the computer. The computer switches off.

Filmmaker's comments

> The film doesn't pretend to have a message, unless it's just to demonstrate how films can teach you things without long explanations.

> The film got made because the Cinematou Festival asked me to make a film demonstrating different animation techniques, while I wanted to make a proper film.

> It was important to choose a simple story that referred to the innumerable cat-and-mouse chases in classical animation. We had to have a very precise storyboard that made the links between the different techniques into a believable part of the story.

> It was good to have filmmakers around me who were each experts in specific techniques and were prepared to work without financial guarantees.

Things you might notice

- Classical drawn animation allows the animator endless inventive scope and is produced through a process that makes revisions and alterations much easier to achieve than in 3D claymation or sand animation. It also allows for more fluid movement than 3D model animation, but the drawings have to be extremely simple given that each figure must be re-drawn hundreds of times.
- 3D model animation can exploit the uneasiness and fascination of seeing 'real world' objects move as though they were alive. (see Fig. 1)
- It is harder to achieve rapid movement in sand animation (see Fig. 2) but it has a unique texture and strangeness that can be exploited for particular kinds of story and mood.
- The addition of colour in cel animation (see Fig. 3) creates heightened realism and depth of field, but is much more complex to make and renders it harder to achieve continuity.
- Computer animation provides the flexibility of hand-drawn animation and the depth of field that can be achieved with colour, but may lack the 'texture' of other techniques.

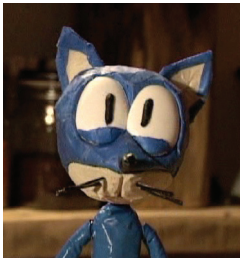


Fig. 1 3D model animation

Fig. 2 Sand animation

Fig. 3 Cel animation

Themes to explore

Relevance for the study of animation: This film can hardly be bettered as an account of different animation techniques, and you might want to use it to return to from time to time as a reminder of what is available to the animator, and perhaps especially as a precursor to children's own animation work.

Meaning: The film works on two levels: as a history and explanation of the different techniques of animation, and as a cat-chases-mouse story in which, of course, the mouse wins. So you might also want to show it straight through as an entertaining story. This wouldn't stop you going back to it to consider the techniques as well.

Genre: The film deliberately invokes the themes of classical Hollywood animation such as Felix the Cat (Pat Sullivan/Otto Messmer for Paramount, 1923), Sylvester and Tweety Pie (Frtiz Freleng for Warner Bros, 1947) Tom & Jerry (Hanna and Barbera for MGM, 1960), – and indeed the Roadrunner series (Chuck Jones for Warner Bros, 1948) in which the protagonists are a coyote and a flightless bird but the theme is much the same: bigger animal chases smaller animal and the smaller animal always wins. These films provide some of the purest examples of genre: strictly rule-bound stories in which the characters, narratives and often the settings are always exactly the same, but the means by which the ends are achieved are wildly and ingeniously variable. As a change from demanding total originality in children's stories, encouraging them to invent generic rules and to tell stories within strict generic boundaries is also an interesting creative challenge.

Big Plans

Filmmaker: **Irmgard Walthert**
Country: **Switzerland**
Year made: **2008**
Length: **3' 58"**
Technique: **3D model animation**

Synopsis

We hear busy noises before the first images appear, and then see a series of close-up shots of cardboard being cut, plans being consulted, a gadget being constructed out of a tin can and a wire whisk, and a doll's arm being cut off with scissors and used to make part of a machine of some sort. On the sound track is a 'traditional' brass band melody. Finally we see the face of the inventor who stops to think for a moment and then bends forward again to adjust something, before inserting a coin into the machine and waiting for something to come out. Nothing happens.

Puzzled, he adjusts the plan. In the background, a baby starts to crawl past. The inventor tries another coin: this time a metal screw comes out. He bangs the cardboard side of the machine in frustration. He notices that the baby is doing something in the background, but turns again to his machine and inserts another coin, kissing it for luck. This time, orange sludge comes out. Sitting back and taking off his glasses, he looks round to see what the baby is doing. The baby pushes a ball which sets off a chain reaction involving toy cars and animals, bricks and other little objects, ending in a sweet being shot back into the baby's mouth. The baby looks smug; the inventor looks puzzled, then smiles faintly.

The inventor stands by his machine, now positioned in a street. We can hear noises of traffic and passers-by. Someone stops to look at the machine and, encouraged by the inventor, inserts a coin. An apple drops into the tray. More satisfied customers follow, and the inventor starts to dream of all the things he will be able to buy with the money: lollipops, a football, a Superman toy. Then a different noise is heard and he realises something is wrong: apple cores are piling up in the tray. Peering at the machine, he's taken aback to see the baby's face burst out of the front. The baby 'walks' the machine away as the inventor looks on helplessly.

Filmmaker's comments

> I'm fascinated by the worlds that are created in animation films. As a director I can build a world that has different rules than the world we are living in, but by doing this I reflect the world we ***are*** living in.

> The idea came from a funny story in my family when I was a baby: two of my brothers played a similar trick on their younger brother when he was trying to build a 'machine'. When I came to make a film of the story I involved my brothers: one made the end titles and another composed the music. It was nice, but also challenging, to work with them. We hadn't done that before.

Things you might notice

- The use of close-up. Most of the story is told in close-ups, which can be seen as appropriate to the size of the protagonists and the fact that the main part of the story takes place on the floor, but is also a good demonstration of the fact that stories can be told economically in close-up and that we don't need to be shown more.
- Setting and other characters indicated by sound effects and reaction shots. In the 'street' scene we only see the machine, the inventor and a wall: another 'prompt' for children considering how to provide minimal clues and information when they tell a story (whether in writing or in film).
- Clues about the age of the inventor. He looks like a 'proper' inventor in spectacles and a white coat, but there are clues that he is quite a young child: the cardboard spectacles, the relative size of his hands and the tools he is using, the clumsy plans and machine, the things in the toy box and that fact that he is working on the floor. Finally his fantasies about being 'rich' show the modesty of his ambitions.

Themes to explore

Timing is important in this film for creating its humour and if the children find it funny you might want to explore how the baby's two 'interventions' are hinted at before they are revealed.

Improvisation vs laborious construction: The baby and the inventor represent two different approaches to creativity: which do the children think might win more approval in school?

Signalis

Filmmaker: **Adrian Flükiger**
Country: **Switzerland**
Year made: **2008**
Length: **4' 50"**
Technique: **3D claymation**

Synopsis

An anxious, tense-looking weasel-like creature switches off his TV and checks his watch. The room is bathed in a reddish light, and there are traffic noises in the background. He clicks two switches on the wall, which turn out the red light and start a flashing yellow light in the room below. He slides down a pole to this room, which turns out to be a bedroom. He gets into bed and is asleep in seconds, although the yellow light continues flashing. An exterior shot shows a traffic light with a flashing yellow signal. Inside the weasel's dwelling, we see that there are three rooms: the top one contains a toilet, an armchair, the TV and a coffee-maker; the middle one (with the yellow light) is a bedroom, and the lowest room has a table and chair, and an alarm clock.

At 5.00 the alarm clock goes off. The weasel switches off the yellow light, switches on a green light in the lowest room and slides down. He stops the alarm, pulls a paper from a slot in the wall and sticks it to the wall: it's labelled 'PLAN' and has a complex grid of red, yellow and green squares. He picks up a cup and straightens a picture: both cup and picture have dotted lines around them showing where they are meant to be. He goes upstairs to the next room, switches the green light off and the yellow one on, and puts a sugar cube in the cup. On the top floor he changes the lights again from green to red, and puts the cup into the coffee machine. While the coffee is filtering he goes to the toilet. We follow his activities, going from room to room, altering the lights as he does so, and straightening the picture each time he passes it. He cooks a sausage and eats it, then dozes in front of the TV while the red light is on, dropping his coffee cup on the floor. Woken by an ambulance siren and the screech of brakes, he switches the yellow flashing light on again and goes to bed. But the cup is still on the floor of the top room.

When he wakes in the morning, he absent-mindedly picks up a watering can instead of the coffee cup. It won't fit into the coffee machine and coffee flows all over the hot plate while he is sitting on the toilet. He pulls all the paper off

the toilet roll, mops up the coffee, and wants to go back to the toilet but has to go downstairs first to switch on the green light. Back in the middle room to get the toilet paper, he switches on the yellow light, but then drops the paper and it rolls down the stairs. He switches the light back to green and goes downstairs to get the toilet paper. There is a screech of brakes and a crash. The room tilts sideways, he falls to the floor, and the picture slips once again on the wall. The room is suffused with daylight, some of which shines through jagged shards of green glass. He gets to his feet and stumbles to the now broken window, through which we can seen distant buildings and sunlight. He steps through the window and leaves. The picture remains crookedly hanging on the wall. As the credits roll, we see a series of brightly coloured photos of the weasel enjoying life in the country and at the seaside, to romantic Latin-style music.

Things you might notice

- Visual clues to the weasel's way of life which show how precisely planned it all has to be, such as dotted lines where everything has to go. But at the same time the layout of the dwelling is illogical in many ways: for example cup and frying pan on the lowest floor; sugar and refrigerator on the middle floor; coffee machine and cooker on the top floor – so one item out of order sets off a fatal disruption of routine.
- Sound: the recognisability and realism of the sound effects (both interior and exterior) contrasts with the chunky, rough texture of the set, props and the figure of the weasel himself.
- The time-frame of the story we are shown covers perhaps two days, but is suddenly extended during the credit sequence as we see snapshots from the weasel's subsequent life.

Themes to explore

Stories give and withhold information: How long does it take to work out that the weasel lives inside the traffic lights? Very little explicit information is given: we have to infer the reasons for the weasel's actions and why it all goes wrong.

The 'what if' scenario: This is an enjoyable way of stretching the imagination and could move from a focus on the weasel himself (eg how and why did he get the job?) to other 'what if' questions (eg what if someone had to live inside your fridge and turn the light on and off every time you opened the door?) and imagining other 'what if' scenarios.

Drudgery vs freedom: The last shot is of the weasel's picture which shows a country scene: was he dreaming all the time of freedom and leisure?

The Propellerbird

Filmmaker: **Thomas Hinke**
Country: **Germany**
Year made: **2005**
Length: **4' 58"**
Technique: **hand drawn animation**

Synopsis

The title is introduced with a burst of lively jazz music. A forest glade appears, and birdsong can be heard. Three sparrows fly down to a tree stump and start to cheep in a brisk syncopated rhythm. Suddenly something zooms overhead: they all stop and duck. They start cheeping again, accompanied by the sound of drum and bass from the jazz band. Once again something zooms past and this time in long shot a smoke trail can be seen in the background.

Before the sparrows can resume their song, the zooming comes back. A large bird with a propeller on its back flies up to them and hovers nearby. Suddenly it honks loudly and they all fall off the stump in fright. The Propellerbird looks puzzled and zooms a little closer. The sparrows fly off to another stump and start singing again. The Propellerbird reappears and hovers nearby as before. They chitter angrily at it. The Propellerbird turns and zooms away, enveloping them in a cloud of smoke. They prepare to start singing again but they hear the Propellerbird coming back.

A chase ensues: the Propellerbird is much faster than the sparrows and they soon fall one after the other through the propeller blades. Ruffled and shaken, they huddle together and plan what to do. They fly away; the Propellerbird returns and follows them as they fly into the foliage of a big tree. They come out the other side unscathed, but the Propellerbird can be heard stuck in the tree as its engine sputters to a halt. The sparrows land smugly on a branch and prepare to resume their song, but are indignant to hear a sudden 'Honk!'

The Propellerbird is dangling from the tree, its propeller caught in the branches. The sparrows chitter angrily again while the Propellerbird honks back. Suddenly the Propellerbird falls to the ground, but without its propeller, it can't fly. The sparrows fly around its head in a triumphant dance: the Propellerbird tries to fly up to them but fails. As it lands, the propeller drops out of the tree and lands beside the Propellerbird. Through an iris-in, we glimpse the Propellerbird fetching the propeller and zooming off again.

Filmmaker's comments

> I'm fascinated by seeing something moving and becoming alive that only existed before in my mind. It could become anything, but it becomes what you make of it. If you can see people laughing or even crying when they watch your movie it is the most wonderful feeling in the world!

> Everything started with a sketch of a bird with a propeller on his back. So the difficulty was to find the right story around him. The story came by giving him the three little sparrows and thinking of a lot of different ideas. We then drew the 5 key pictures that told the whole story. After that we did the animatic and Carsten [Raabe] the composer worked on the music at the same time, because we had to have the final music before we did the animation. We split the animation: one of us did the Propellerbird and the other did the little sparrows. Jan [Locker] and I worked very hard, usually from 2 or 3 in the afternoon until 5 or 6 in the morning. It took about 4 or 5 months altogether.

Things you might notice

- Everything takes place in a single 2D plane (ie there are no reverse shots or changes of angle) and there are only basic indications of the setting. This is common in animation (see also the early drawn animation sequences in *Animatou*).
- The way the action is coordinated with the music, with the percussion coming in softly at first to establish the rhythm.

Themes to explore

Character: Establishing and differentiating characters through simple features such as expressions and movement as well as body shape is important in animation. The plump sparrows' laboured flight contrasts with the stretchy body and wild acceleration of the Propellerbird. Close-ups show facial expressions reacting to events.

Moral judgments: Is the Propellerbird a bully or just an awkward person looking for others to play with? Do the sparrows exact a cruel revenge or are they just defending their right to sing in peace? Opinions may differ on this and you will need to re-view the film a few times to enable children to argue the case either way.

The Witch's Button

Filmmaker: **Nils Skapāns**
Country: **Latvia**
Year made: **2006**
Length: **6' 56"**
Technique: **3D claymation**

Synopsis

A red-haired young witch turns to look at us: we hear birdsong and a simple musical theme. Whistling, she balances a fir cone in her hand, pondering what to do with it. She's looking quizzically at a little house surrounded by trees with cabbages growing in its garden. When she twists a green button on the back of her dress, the fir cone suddenly changes into a blob of pink clay, which she hurls at the house. Whistling at the effect, she gets another fir cone out of the pocket of her dress, transforms it into a yellow blob, and throws it at the house. Three more fir cones are successively transformed into white, orange and purple blobs and thrown at the house.

From a nearby mouse hole, a mouse looks out apprehensively. Coloured blobs are whizzing past and the house is now covered in blobs. The witch looks down at the cabbages and gets another idea. One of the cabbages is changed into a broomstick, which she mounts and flies away, seeing the house diminishing below her. When she gets back, the blobs that smothered the house have been incorporated neatly into its walls. The witch changes the broomstick into an apple tree. Not noticing that the button thread is unravelling, she climbs the tree and settles on one of the branches to eat an apple, and dozes off.

The button rolls away into the mouse's hole. Two young mice discover it. Each jumps on to it and each in turn is decorated – or disfigured – with coloured flowers, spines and frills. The mouse parents find them and are similarly transformed; the mouse father throws the button away. It is found by a frog and then a fish, who are both also unwillingly decorated with coloured blobs. It lands in a blackbird's nest and colours all the eggs, to the distress of the blackbird who throws it away. It lands on the witch's lap and she wakes up. As soon as the button is in her hand, the magic starts to unravel. The apple tree turns back into a broomstick: she lands on the ground and sees the unhappy animals. She shakes the button hard: it disintegrates into a flock of ladybirds and the animals lose all their garish decorations.

Things you might notice

• The claymation style that deliberately draws attention to its lumpiness and smeary texture (for example the pocket that appears and disappears when required; the lumpy 'puffs' in the witch's cheeks as she whistles). Some children might like this; others might not.
• Frequent changes of framing and camera angle that contrast with the relatively crude images and limited movement of the figures.
• Simple background kept out of focus: the models and props are the important elements.

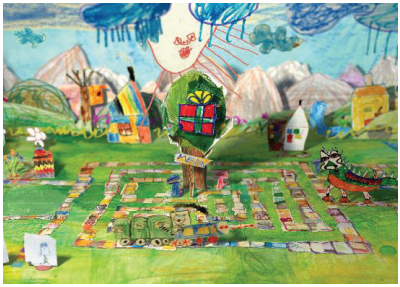
Themes to explore

Magic getting out of control: Because animation lends itself to transformations and fantastical images, this is a common theme in animated films (a classic example being the 'Sorcerer's Apprentice' section of *Fantasia* – Disney, 1940).

What sort of magic is it? Who 'owns' this magic and what rules govern it? Did the witch just find the button and use it, or has she created it herself as a useful tool for doing magic with? The button seems to be able to make its own decisions about what transformations it effects, once it gets away from the witch; she seems to need to have an object to use as the basis for a transformation, whereas the button on its own is able to add features to the mice, frog and fish that weren't there before. One of the features of magic in stories is that it can be used to cut corners in narrative logic, so it may not be possible to establish 'rules' for the magic here.

Variations on a stereotype: A number of features in the usual witch stereotype are broken or modified here: she is young, and apart from having the typical big hooked nose of a witch, she may be thought quite attractive, with an expressive face and wild red hair. She wears a pinafore dress and a jumper, but she does have black boots like other witches. She whistles and laughs, and most of all appears to be doing magic for fun and to please herself, rather then for malign purposes. When the magic gets out of control and others suffer, she is quick to return the world to order. So she may be offering an attractive role model for girls.

Joyets



Filmmaker: **Magdalena Osinska**
Country: **Poland**
Year made: **2009**
Length: **10' 36"**
Techniques: **2D drawn and cut-out animation, 3D model animation and live action**

Synopsis and voice-over script

Opening titles appear on a dark background, to a scribbling noise. A panda-like creature hops across the screen, and a coloured split appears up the centre of the screen. The panda reappears and starts to open the split as other creatures appear from the edges. The split is pulled open to reveal a scrap of paper with the word RADOTSKI written on it in blue crayon, the O formed as a red strawberry, in the centre of a wide screen. Suddenly water flows over the paper, blurring the letters. The Story Teller starts to speak.

Story Teller: *"Oh no, it's spilt again. It was supposed to be nice but it's just like always. That's all right. Maybe I can fix it. So today I will paint – a boy and a girl. I will call them Logan and Jasmine."*
Animated figures appear on scraps of paper stuck into pink clay blobs.
Story Teller: *"Now I will create – a board game."*
Coloured cards flip out to create a board game 'track' and a landscape appears, with cut-out houses and mountains; some elements start to move.
Story Teller: *"Logan and Jasmine, I have a quest for you. There is a … surprise. These are the rules. By noon, which is 12.00, you have to reach this tree* [tree appears]. *There'll be many dangers along the way* [a creature growls]. *The sun will show you the time. This is the east and this is the north. North means noon.* [white suns with red crayoned faces appear] *and this is the west, where the sun sets. At 12.00 the real fun will begin. You'll discover what real friendship means."* [Story Teller coughs.]
Dark blue clouds roll in and big inky blue drops start to fall on the landscape.

A fast zoom and dissolve take us to Jasmine and Logan standing on a blue 'horizon' line in a flat 2D setting behind big stylised blue drops, which then merge to form wet runnels on the paper where the characters are standing. Jasmine squeaks and tries to push a runnel away; Logan produces long spindly arms and tangles with the runnels. Jasmine starts pulling Logan along by one of his arms when we hear a voice saying *"Grrr, what's that on my tail?"* and see a large cut-out cat-like creature striped in the same way as the

landscape across which it moves.

Against a yellow sky, the sun rises: its long spindly red rays reach out to Jasmine and Logan, whose shadows start to extend behind them. Then we see them walking up a steep green line across orange paper. The dark 'curtains' seen at the beginning reappear and the same creatures creep about over them, although this time they are in colour.

Story Teller: *"Testing, 1, 2, 3. Oh, I forgot to tell you that there are the animals on the side that wanted to be in the story but didn't get in, and I am the Story Teller."*

Against a blue background, Jasmine and Logan are sidling towards the right-hand edge of the screen. Suddenly Logan screams and drops downwards out of sight. We see the same scene in long shot: Jasmine is standing on the edge of a blue sea, seen in section so that all the fish and other creatures in it are visible. Logan swims about freely. But Jasmine screams as a huge sea-monster starts to chase him. He escapes from the sea by climbing up Jasmine's hair. Against a pink background, Jasmine starts to blush as Logan kisses her. They hug amidst rotating pink images of cakes, sweets and hearts. But suddenly they find themselves upside down on an orange background, being threatened by a large growling flower. The landscape revolves so that they are the right way up again, but the flower has become a dinosaur. Logan faints, and the Story Teller intervenes: *"Oh no, I think I have to help you."* The dinosaur is rubbed out.

Jasmine and Logan are skipping and jumping up a big brown-paper hill in a mountainous 2D landscape. Suddenly Jasmine screams and falls: Logan turns to run and jump down the hill while the Story Teller shouts *"Quickly, quickly!"* Logan catches Jasmine just before she hits the ground.

Story Teller: *"I'm so happy that you made it. But now you have to hurry."* Jasmine is pulling Logan across a flat 2D landscape, facing the gradually rising sun. Shadows start to cover their faces as they approach a huge tree trunk.

Story Teller: *"Hurray! You made it!* [tilt shot up tree to reveal huge strawberry in tree] *Attention, Attention! I'm announcing a new rule. You have to get the strawberry before the sun sets. I can hear mummy calling me for dinner. I have to leave you alone for a while. Be good."* [steps are heard running away]

Jasmine and Logan try several different ways of getting up the tree: running at it, jumping, leaping off the top of a big stone, scrambling up the trunk. Finally they both run towards it, but crash into each other and fall to the ground, crying.

Story Teller: *"What have you done? You didn't listen to me!* [slow zoom out

to reveal strawberry in tree then clouds above the tree from a very high angle] *I can't leave you alone for a minute! Sunset is very close. Maybe the sun will help us. Sun, please help us!"*

Behind Jasmine and Logan the sun is starting to set and cast long shadows. Facing the tree, they see their shadows start to climb the trunk. Logan realises that the shadows of his long arms can reach up very high if he stands on Jasmine's shoulders. His shadow arms reach up and grasp the strawberry, which falls with a plop on top of them. The screen goes red, and the little creatures start to appear, munching their way through the strawberry flesh, to the sound of laughter.

Two women speak:
"I thought the strawberry could be a little bit better…"
"That's all right. I noticed the most important thing…"
"…and the sweetest thing…"

Story Teller: *"I'll tell you something more, from MY point of view. You can love your friends, yes you can, you can love your nanny, a lot of nannies, if you have three of them you can love all three; if you have 10 you can love them all, if you have four you can love them all, even 11…* [laughs; iris-in on Jasmine and Logan] *Thank you!* [credits start to roll] *It's the end. You can go home now!* [laughs] *Can I have my surprise now?"*

Filmmaker's comments

> Joyets is addressed mainly to a child audience. It's about the happiness of being a child: the intensity of a child's emotions and their 100% experience of their surroundings are the plot and the form of the film. The story consists of an incredible game in which we set off on a journey to an unknown and fantastic world. A child is our guide and narrator. He creates the rules of a game, in which the two main characters, a boy and a girl, have to take part. The characters learn that thanks to love and support they are able to overcome the most challenging obstacles.

> The style was inspired by my own childhood drawings which I found in my attic. I decided to bring to life my buddies from childhood. I recorded interviews with my nephew, four-year-old Kamil Grzybowski, in which he told me made-up stories and opinions: I used his voice in the [Polish version of the] film and his ideas in creating the script.

Things you might notice

• The English language voice-over may seem too obviously middle-class and scripted, as opposed to the more spontaneous recordings of a younger child that were used in the original, so you may want to ask children to make allowances for this.

• *Joyets* uses a mix of animation techniques in a more complex and daring way than *Animatou*, and goes much further than *The Witch's Button* in drawing attention to the texture of the materials used. The different effects of crayons, markers and paint are very obvious; different kinds of paper are used for various backgrounds (eg coarse coloured paper, graph paper, wrapping paper, etc), and it is often clear that the paper has been drawn or painted on before, but the marks are partially rubbed out. The technique of 'boiling', which is another way of drawing attention to the animation process, is used with the pencil-drawn creatures at the beginning and at several other points. The concept of deliberately making the creative process obvious and including apparent errors runs counter to the assumption that art works should look 'finished' and ought not to show 'mistakes'. So it could also be interesting to discuss this with children in relation to their own films or other art work.

• Osinska's use of her own childhood drawings provides an interesting discussion-point about the 'quality' of the drawings you would expect to see in an animated film. She has used drawings that are typical of certain ages: for example Logan's extra-long arms rendered simply by long lines with scribbled lumps at the ends instead of hands. But she has then stayed true to the logic of these 'immature' drawings and even exploited their features in the characters' actions. There is a big contrast between this and the highly standardised characterisation seen in most mainstream animation.

Themes to explore

Sentimentality? The 'love' message of the film may seem contrived: the Jasmine-Logan relationship certainly depends on collaboration, ingenuity and friendship, but to go from this to 'loving your nanny' may seem a stretch.

Modality: The film is clearly NOT meant to seem real, and pushes at the boundaries of fantasy in animation. It may prove quite a challenge for some children but can reward repeated viewings.

Game structure: Using the conventions of 'quest' type computer games where an increasing series of hazards have to be overcome, is a common device in stories and films. It can be linked back to folk tales and fairy stories which use similar structures to test the virtue of characters while maintaining suspense.

Speechless

Filmmaker: **Daniel Greaves**
Country: **UK**
Year made: **2009**
Length: **7' 42"**
Technique: **hand drawn animation**

Synopsis

A textured grey screen appears. A cursor starts to blink, the word SPEECHLESS emerges as if in predictive text, and is then deleted. A dark grey surface with a skin-like texture then appears. The story is told through a series of different size panels which appear, resize, move around and disappear according to the requirements of the story. The sound track consists of realistic effects, (keyboard tappings, computer, phone and game noises). There are also little tinkles of sound from a piano, rather like the piano accompaniment to silent films. All the images are in shades of grey.

First we see a microwave in which six boxes labelled QUIK-SNAK are revolving. After the microwave pings and a hand opens the door, we see two hands tapping a keyboard, then an e-mail message to Mary, cc Mum, Dad, Julia, Simon. Subject: Supper. Message: SUPPER'S READY. As the cursor clicks SEND we see the face of the man at the keyboard, who wearily rubs his eyes. Next we see the table being laid, from the point of view of the table layer. Each setting has a table mat, coaster, knife and fork. More characters are introduced: Mary laying the table, looking cross, Simon playing a handheld game and peering out occasionally from behind a cowlick of hair, a very doddery old grandmother Mabel, Simon's sister Julia, Mary's husband the e-mail message sender, and finally an old grandad, Bob, who helps Mabel to sit down. Mary's husband irritably texts Simon: SIT DOWN!!

Handing out the QUIK-SNAK boxes from person to person around the table and passing the salt is done in silence, punctuated by irritable nudges and gestures followed up by text messages between Mary and Simon: PASS IT ON!! and SAY THANK YOU!! Julia is urgently texting and gradually everyone around the table joins in, except Mabel. Then Julia's phone shows Low Battery and she flips up the 'coaster' beside her plate: it's actually a recharging point. But the others lose their phone coverage too, and impatiently Mary's husband pushes his plate away. To ominous organ chords he opens up his table mat: it's actually a laptop. They all tap away at their laptops – except Mabel.

She can't eat the QUIK-SNAK and she has a sudden vision of the table being enormous, with six tiny figures each lost in their own world. She has a cunning idea. She starts to cough. At first nobody notices, but as her coughing becomes louder and more desperate, everyone rushes to help her, and then Mabel collapses on to the table. They all suddenly start speaking and colour starts to flood the screen. The family argue about what to do: administer first aid or call an ambulance. Finally Bob gets them all to shut up. He turns to Mabel, saying "Mabel, speak to me!" Mabel sits up, she does not reply, but simply spreads her arms happily to indicate the gathered family. They all smile.

The screen fades to black, then a still image shows the whole family seated at the candlelit table, chatting animatedly, eating real food and drinking red wine.

Filmmaker's comments

"As a child I always drew a lot. My father is an artist so I was surrounded by paintings and drawings. I bought an 8mm film camera and began experimenting with animation techniques at the age of 13. The message of the film is to highlight the extraordinary dependency on technology in communication. The situation of family members texting each other is exacerbated by the farcical image of them sitting around a dinner table attempting to have supper."

"I was struck by the phenomenon of the every day use of texting, even when in close proximity to the person you are addressing. I have seen and heard of many examples of people texting or e-mailing each other while in the same room, and I thought this would be a humorous observational subject for a film."

"I decided to animate the idea of *Speechless* using paper animation, because I thought it would be interesting to have an obviously hand drawn feel to the story in contrast to the high tech subject matter. Different animators did each character to give unique personality traits to each one. I had a good time assembling the animators' character sequences to create the family dynamic, and adding the appropriate sound effects. But it was technically difficult to hand draw and coordinate the camera movements with the drawn panels."

Things you might notice

• The idea of the different size panels: the ways in which these at first swoop around and slide across the screen is reminiscent of smart phone apps, but the constant re-sizing is used in several different ways. For example at some points to reveal or conceal parts of the screen, at others to emphasize disconnections between characters.

• The combination of monochrome and the use of music for dramatic punctuation is reminiscent of silent movies, in contrast to the modern technology used in the story. The scenes are all 'flat' with no shadows: the only light sources are the lights emanating from the devices.

• The fact that, until Mabel provokes a response, none of the characters has a mouth – apart from Mabel herself.

• The use of the 'boiling' technique (see p 24) which emphasises the 'hand made' quality of the film; again, in contrast to the high-tech devices on which the characters all depend.

Themes to explore

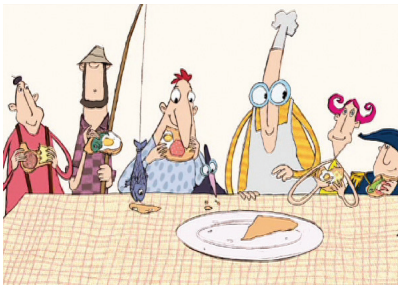
Modality: The caricature style of the drawings, the wobbly hand-drawn style of animation and the 'peep hole' function of the panel shapes are all make-believe, artificial features. In contrast, the computer, mobile and game sound effects and the instantly recognisable features of e-mail messages and other screen images (the microwave and the table-laying), all underline the familiar and the everyday. And while the characters' obsessive behaviour is a deliberate exaggeration, other details are instantly recognisable, such as Simon's surly and petulant attitude and Julia's excitement over her text messages. A question such as "What looks or sounds like real life in this film, and what doesn't?" could provoke some interesting discussion and could lead children to explore the same kinds of choice in their own creative work.

Narrative: Using Strategy B (see Talking About Films In The Classroom, p6): children could discuss at what point the theme of over-dependence on digital devices becomes obvious, and what then drives the narrative forward. Figuring out which character is likely to be the vehicle for transforming attitudes, and attempting predictions of possible endings, could be explored, as could the question of whether children feel that this ending is satisfactory.

Moral message: Does Greaves over-state his case? Do people who use a lot of technology necessarily eat only fast food and lose their social skills? Some children may feel that the insistence on the ills of technology is rather too well-worn a theme; alternatively the film's humour may compensate for the predictability of the message.

Tally Ho Pancake!

Filmmaker: **Kai Pannen**
Country: **Germany**
Year made: **2009**
Length: **6' 45"**
Technique: **hand drawn animation**



Synopsis and voice-over script

Soft, scratchy, squishy noises are heard before the title appears in pink, cracked letters on a white background and 'tiddly pom' music starts up. We see the back view of a fat chef at a stove and hear a male voice-over with a German accent commenting on the action.

Voice-over: *Not long ago when Mr Bumble decided he wanted to eat a pancake, something very strange indeed happened.* [sings] *"Tally Ho! A pancake is really quite nutritious. Add lots of maple syrup and make it quite delicious" said Mr Bumble. "Flip it over again and yum – but the pancake didn't flip back into the pan. Instead, it flew out of the window and far away. It didn't like maple syrup. Much too sweet, and sticky. Mr Bumble's mouth watered at the thought of that delicious pancake with syrup. But he couldn't be bothered to make another. So he started chasing after the pancake."*

We see Mr Bumble scampering left to right across a basic green landscape. The film now follows the familiar 'chase' format of the Brothers Grimm version of *The Golden Goose*: a succession of greedy characters are compelled to chase after something. In this case, each of the seven characters adds a new verse to the "Tally Ho!" song with a new garnish for the pancake, with each song rendered by the voice-over artist, Bruno Bachem. The characters, their preferred garnishes, and the voice-over story-telling, are as follows:

Voice-over: *At the sight of the flying pancake the cow got such a shock that the milk in Farmer Finlay's bucket curdled.* Here we see the cow moving forwards and dropping a lot of 'poo' into the bucket, while the milk splashes on to the ground as Farmer Finlay continues to milk and sings the "Tally Ho!" verse with the addition of *"Add a slice of cheese, and make it taste delicious"*. Farmer Finlay's big round cheese rolls along with him as he chases Mr Bumble, he disturbs a bird perched on a telephone wire, who flies after the pancake as well.

Voice-over for the back view of a fat woman in a frock pegging out washing: *Mrs Minty had popped the sausages in the washing machine yet again. When the pancake flew by, she unpegged the sausages and the washing from the line and tossed them in her basket.* Mrs Minty turns and holds up two slices of sausage that look like large spotty pink breasts with green nipples, and suggests *"a juicy sausage"* as a garnish.

Next we see a bearded man sitting in a boat with a fishing line surrounded by twitching, multicoloured fish. Voice-over: *Captain Gruff had just sat down to choose his lunch. "Fish with yellow fish" he mused. "Fish with red fish, fish with orange fish – just then the pancake flew past, narrowly missing his fishing rod."* His garnish is *"a little fishy"* but he doesn't get to chase after the other immediately because his boat falls over a waterfall and he follows the others – now in a yellow canoe – a long way vertically down until they splash into a lake at the bottom.

Voice-over for a man in a shirt and tie teetering on a ladder over a green tree: *In his lunchtime break, naughty Mr Summer was nicking an apple from the garden next door, when the pancake zipped past. Mr Summer's garnish is "a juicy apple".*

Voice over for another fat woman with high heels, red hair and a big nose perched on the top strand of a barbed wire fence, juggling eggs: *Agnes had already broken three eggs when the pancake appeared out of nowhere and flew straight through her juggling practice. Now she had four broken eggs.* Agnes' suggested garnish is "some scrambled egg".

Voice-over for a man in old-fashioned military uniform standing on a pile of six wooden banana boxes: *The general was practising looking dignified for his memorial statue when his nose started to twitch at the delectable smell of the pancakes and his statue's post began to wobble.* The general and the boxes collapse in a heap as he recommends *"a squishy banana".*

Instead of the previously repeated shots of the chasers running from left to right across a simple green 'horizon'. They are all now seen running around the rim of a green hole which revolves faster until it dissolves into a big revolving pancake.

Voice-over: *Finally the pancake got tired of all this mad racing around and flopped down to rest over a telephone wire which was just as well for Mr Bumble and* [list of all the characters] *who were completely out of breath.* All seven and the bird are shown in a high angle shot clustered round a telephone pole, casting long shadows. *All of a sudden a happy little girl with a big empty plate came dancing by. An empty plate is a much more inviting place for a*

pancake than a thin telephone wire. So the pancake hopped off the wire and settled down comfortably on the plate. Very few pancakes can resist the temptation of so many delicious tidbits. So the pancake finally gave in and let [the characters] *pile all their delicious things on top of it.* A vertical shot of the pancake shows all their hands garnishing the pancake. *They guzzled and guzzled happily together until there was only one tiny morsel left. Everyone was so full that they couldn't eat another bite. Everyone except Mr Bumble, who rummaged in his apron and pulled out the large bottle of maple syrup. The lusciously sticky golden juice trickled sweetly on to the last piece of pancake. Mr Bumble had never eaten a pancake that tasted so good.* The film ends with an iris-in on Mr Bumble's contentedly munching face.

Filmmaker's comments

> I am mainly an illustrator, but I've also been inspired by trickfilm (German for 'animation') from my early years. So now I´m happy to combine both, drawing and animating, which is very lucky for me. The main message of the film is that a pancake is always delicious, but is much more delicate, when you eat it together with your friends. I found the picture of an escaping pancake in my head from a dream early one morning. It was when I was heavily involved in animation, so that I not only drew all day, but also dreamed about it all night. From this initial image I wrote the little story about Mr. Bumble and his friends. The production process was much fun but I didn't have enough money.

Things you might notice

- The minimal background and scenery – just enough visual information to support the story – but economically used, for example when the edge of the waterfall appears in the Captain Gruff sequence and sets up pleasurable suspense. In this visual style, tiny features are important, for example the long shadows at the end perhaps indicating the end of a long day's chasing about.
- The continuous right-to-left movement which is the conventional format for a film chase. Left-to-right movement tends to imply reversal or failure: you could explore this with children in creative work as well as discussion.
- The fairly elaborate language of the voice-over will be useful if you want the children to reflect on word choices, eg "mused", "zipped", "delectable", "rummaged", "lusciously" etc, particularly as a way of making the repetitive structure of the story more entertaining.

• In some schools difficulties may be anticipated with the explicit images of cow faeces and the breast-like positioning of the sausage slices. But this is clearly a film meant for children so it could offer an opportunity for reflecting on cultural differences as German schoolchildren probably aren't shocked by these images.

Themes to explore

Repetitive structures: Many children's stories and traditional tales make use of the cumulative chase format. You and the children could collect examples, create new ones and consider what the appeal is of this kind of tale. In the Brothers Grimm version of *The Golden Goose* the structure emphasises people's foolishness and gullibility; the message here is lighter and more friendly. You could use Strategy B to identify the point at which the children identify this as the organising structure of the film. They may enjoy predicting the kinds of characters and situations that the pancake is going to encounter, and inventing a few more of their own.

Variations: The repetitiveness is balanced by the introduction of unexpected variations to the format. You could ask children to identify moments when they were surprised. Answers may include the cow-poo, the sausage slices, the waterfall, the egg-juggling, etc. There are also visual variations, for example the appearance of the line of chasing characters in silhouette.

Irrationality: This is a film that clearly doesn't care about being realistic or predictable and takes delight in overthrowing expectations. Flying pancake? Sausages in the washing machine – again? Juggling eggs on a barbed wire fence? Multicoloured fish? Surviving a thousand-foot waterfall? Whatever! Children may enjoy discussing the irrational and surprising features of this film and introduce their own daft ideas into the films they make.

Arbitrary ending: Opinions may vary about whether the ending just seems arbitrarily tacked on or is just another amusing example of the filmmaker's carefree attitude. Unlike the moralising denouement of *The Golden Goose*, this story just ends when the pancake has had enough – and suddenly becomes much bigger than it had been before!

The function of voice-over: Try out this film without the voice-over. Does it work? Does this voice-over add too much to the visuals or is it an essential part of the entertainment value of the story? Note that this story with these visuals is also available as a book (in German): *Kom Essen Pfann-Kuchen!* Lappen Verlag 2009.

The Little Boy and The Beast

Filmmaker: **Johannes Weiland & Uwe Heidschötter**
Country: **Germany**
Year made: **2009**
Length: **6' 59"**
Technique: **computer animation**

Summary

The film was made for KI.KA, the children's channel from ZDF, a German TV channel. It deals with the emotional difficulties faced by children and parents following the breakdown of the parents' relationship. The film therefore differs from the others in this collection in that it is made with a specific therapeutic purpose in mind: not necessarily just for children in troubled families but for their friends and peers as well. The film is centred on a young boy whose parents have already split up: the main 'beast' of the title is in fact his mother who is seriously depressed after the father's departure, the father is also seen as a 'beast' when he picks up the boy for a visit.

The central metaphor rests on the idea that parents who are depressed or angry with each other are perceived by their children as monsters who look frightening but who actually need care and patience. So the 'beasts' are shown as conventional 'monster' figures but at the same time not as figures to be feared. So at the 'beast's' first appearance - her shadow looms menacingly over the boy - we expect him to look round in terror, but in fact he simply looks a bit sad and tired. The film is presented, almost light-heartedly, as helpful advice to others who may have 'beasts' to look after. Walking in the park, visiting the supermarket and life at home, are all depicted. Almost comical situations lead into more challenging emotional issues. No easy solution is offered: the mother does get better, gradually turning back from 'beast' to normal human being, and she may have started a new relationship, but the father remains a 'beast' at the end.

You should prepare well for discussing this film with children: consider getting parental approval, for example. The film is narrated by a child, in German with English subtitles, but you should not be put off by this. Most children are used to reading text on screen, from websites and computer games. You may find that they can read subtitles more easily than you expect.

Things you might notice

- The importance of time to the story and how time is managed: the opening shot shows trees in blossom, the scene in which the mother is shown as restored to normality takes place in winter, the final scene when the boy runs from his mother and her new friend to his father waiting in the car seems to be summertime again (so the timeframe is at least 18 months).
- The two 'matching' scenes in the park with the dog, each framed in the same way with the mother's shadow looming over the boy, but with key differences: a low-angle-shot of the mother as monster in the first scene, but a long-shot of 'normal' mother and son in the second. The dog snarling in the first scene and being friendly in the second.
- The two 'matching' scenes in the supermarket in which the boy's selection of lollipops, the encounter with the check-out man, and the woman behind them in the queue, are each handled differently in the later scene.
- The 'new friend' is the checkout man!

Themes to explore

Metaphor: Children may not at first realize that the mother isn't really a beast and it may be interesting to discuss when, and why, they realised that the beast figure is a metaphor. They might also want to discuss the effectiveness of this metaphor: beasts are usually thought of as horrible and fierce but note that even the first reaction we see from the boy is merely a sad grunt, not fear.

'Documentary' tone: While the visuals present a conventional and apparently fictional narrative, the commentary takes a more philosophical, generalising tone, and avoids first person verb forms until the very end. For example "You have to take care of everything by yourself, just as if she wasn't there at all" and "That's why most people don't want to deal with beasts" are presented more as advice to others in the same situation.

Therapeutic effects: You will have to feel sure of your ground if you decide to explore this but the film is clearly made to help children understand the effects of a breakdown in parental relationships and how to deal with them. You might feel it appropriate to explore how well they feel it does this. One notable point is that we do not see the actual separation of the parents, only the consequences; and that although the boy is shown at times as anxious, annoyed, embarrassed etc, he is never shown as sad or despairing.

Teachers' Crib Sheet

This provides you with some background information and vocabulary to support your own thinking about film as well as children's discussion and analysis of the films. Arranged in the form of a glossary, it should enable you to help children talk about films more confidently and clearly and to think about how the choices made by filmmakers may have affected their interpretations. It is thus appropriate to see this collection of definitions as a 'crib sheet' which might be useful in the more central business of viewing and analysis. **It is NOT intended to be used as the basis for a teaching sequence!**

Each term is given a general definition and most of the words are also illustrated with examples from the films on the DVD. They are grouped into five main categories: Animation, Framing, Composition, Camera movement, Editing, and Sound.

Animation:

The process of conveying the illusion of movement by recording a series of still images, representing small stages of movement, by figures or objects and showing them at a rate of at least 10 per second. At this speed the brain perceives the series of images as continuous movement (a phenomenon known as 'persistence of vision'). The term 'animation', in reference to films, is preferable to 'cartoon'.

animation techniques: Three-dimensional models, cut-out shapes, drawings and many other techniques can be used as the basis for animation. *Animatou* demonstrates all the main animation techniques apart from 2D cut-out animation (in which flat shapes are animated against a flat background, as in parts of *Joyets* and in *The Tiny Fish*). See pp 26-29 for an account of the techniques used in *Animatou*.

animatic: In making professional animations, the **storyboard** stage may be followed by a simplified mock-up called an 'animatic' to give a better idea of how the scene will look and feel with motion and timing. An animatic may be just a series of still images edited together and displayed in sequence. A rough sound track may also be added to the sequence of still images (usually taken from the storyboard) to test whether the sound and images are working effectively together.

Framing:

Frame as a noun means the outer edge of a photograph or of the images on the screen in film or TV. As a verb: 'to frame' or 'framing' means the act of deciding what is going to be included within the frame of a particular shot. See also close up, mid shot, long shot and wide shot. Glossaries often provide exact definitions of different types of framing (and may often call them 'shot types' or 'camera angles'). But in practice, there are no such precise definitions.

camera angle: The level at which the camera is placed in relation to the subject. A 'high angle **shot**' is taken from above a character or scene, while a 'low angle **shot**' shows them from low down. A high angle shot of the characters flopped out on the ground is used towards the end of *Tally Ho Pancake!* The witch is seen from a low angle as she works her magic in *The Witch's Button*.The more commonly used neutral (or 'straight-on') **shot** doesn't draw attention to itself, and may be seen as reproducing the 'normal' position of a person viewing the scene (as for example in much of *Signalis*).

close-up: A close-up tightly **frames** something relatively small such as a face, hand or small object so that it fills the whole screen. It is an important and noticeable way of providing emphasis, whether for information, emotional impact or shock. Close-ups are often used as **cutaways** from a more distant shot to show an important detail, such as a characters' facial expression (as when the little girl is shocked by the death of the fish in *The Tiny Fish*), or some intricate activity by their hands (like the manipulation of machine parts in *Big Plans*) or a key piece of information (like the text messages in *Speechless*). It is almost always interesting and useful to discuss close-ups and why they have been used.

Pupils may have many interpretations of the other uses of close-ups in these films. Variants of this term include 'medium close-up', 'big close-up' etc. These don't have objective definitions but can be used, especially in scripts and **story boards**, to indicate differences between the framing of **shots**. Shortened to CU in a **story board**.

long shot: When the image is framed so as to show people and/or objects at a distance, for example the house and its surroundings at the beginning of *The Tiny Fish*. A long shot can indicate isolation, or simply reveal the physical context. Variants include 'extreme long shot', 'medium long shot', etc. Pupils can consider why long shots are used also listening hard to the sound track and thinking about what additional information it provides. Shortened to LS in a **story board**.

mid-shot, medium shot: When the image is **framed** so as to show a person or object as seen by someone else close by: a figure from the hips upwards, for example. This kind of framing is typically used in soap opera, sitcom and other naturalistic drama, as it represents a 'human' point of view: this is used for the witch in much of *The Witch's Button*.

over the shoulder shot: While a **point of view shot** shows what a character actually sees, an over the shoulder shot includes part of the character's head and/or shoulder (both are used in *Big Plans* and the opening of *The Little Boy and The Beast*). Shortened to 'OTS' in a **story board**.

point of view: Can be used in a general sense, for example in criticism: "the story is told from X's point of view". However it has a specific meaning in filming when a **shot** appears to show a scene as one of the characters might actually see it (like the cat's view of the approaching door in *Animatou*): hence 'point of view shot'. Shortened to 'POV' in a **story board**.

wide shot: A way of framing a **shot** in order to show as much as possible of the setting or context. Often used at the start of a scene or the beginning of the whole story, as in *The Tiny Fish*.

zoom: The change of image size that is created in live-action films when the focal length of the zoom lens is altered. For example, something small in the distance is brought much closer and bigger (zoom-in), or vice versa (zoom-out). In 2D animation, this effect is created by the animator (as in the 2D sequences in *Animatou*, or in *A Sunny Day*).

Composition:

Film critics use the French term mise en scène (pronounced "meez-ahn-sen") which literally means 'put in the scene' and refers to the decisions made by directors about what to include within the frame. We are using the broader term 'composition' here to cover everything in the image. This includes the lighting, focus and colour as well as the positioning and movement of the character. It also includes the set design and the choice and positioning of objects.

colour: Animators are free to use colour in any way they want. It may be naturalistic (as in *The Tiny Fish*) brighter than life (as in *The Witch's Button*) monotonous (as in *Cyber*) or a key part of the narrative (as in *Signalis*). In *Joyets* the colour 'bleeds out' from one world into another as the film's 'project' starts to be revealed.

continuity: In planning and filming scenes it is important to keep track of colours, props and other features so that they don't arbitrarily change between shots. TV programmes that show collections of 'movie mistakes' love to show continuity errors. (See the orange clay ball in *The Witch's Button* which unaccountably becomes white when she throws it.)

focus: The technical basis for focus is complicated, but its effects are well-known. Something on the screen is 'in focus' when its outline and detail are sharp and clear. Something is 'out of focus' when it looks soft and fuzzy. A camera can be made to focus on things at a specific distance away, so that anything nearer or further away will be out of focus. For example in *Big Plans* the baby first appears in the background, out of focus (while s/he is being ignored by the inventor).

The part of a scene that appears in focus is referred to as the 'depth of field'. Some shots have considerable depth of field, in other words, we can see the entire scene quite clearly, as for example when the board game is revealed in *Joyets*.

lighting: Refers to lighting effects used in film and TV. A scene might look like ordinary daylight, but often powerful lamps are used to enhance the natural light. In other films, darkness can be used to create a frightening atmosphere, dull light for a depressing effect, or highly contrasted light and shadow for a dramatic effect.

Model animation as used in *Signalis* and *Big Plans* uses real lighting (unlike drawn or computer animation where the lighting effects have to be created). In *A Sunny Day,* the lighting levels vary dramatically as the day progresses.

props: Props is short for 'properties', meaning things belonging to the set or the actors that relate to the action. Props are sometimes very small but very significant, such as the doll's arm or the baby's bottle in *Big Plans* (which introduce the presence of the baby before we see it). They can also be just part of the background of a scene, like the furniture in *The Tiny Fish* or the drawing equipment in *Animatou*, however they can still add information to the story and/or the character.

set: The place where the action is filmed, or set. Sets may be on location (in a real place) or specially-built rooms/scenes in a studio. Everything in the place (background, furniture, **props**) is part of the set. Sets in animated films may be elaborate and three-dimensional (as in *Signalis*) or extremely sketchy (as in *The Witch's Button*).

Camera movement:

The camera can be moved in many ways while filming and each type of movement can affect our interpretation of what we are watching. See pan, tilt, and tracking/travelling shot. In animation the appearance of camera 'movements' is mostly created through the animation process itself.

pan: When the camera turns from one side to the other, seeming to sweep across the scene. The term comes from the word panorama, meaning a wide, horizontal view, eg as the seaside is revealed in *A Sunny Day.*

tilt: When the camera is tilted up or down while filming (for example when the characters' gaze up the tree as shown towards the end of *Joyets*).

tracking shot or travelling shot: A **shot** that seems to follow the action or move around a **set**. In live action films, the camera is usually mounted on a moving platform, called a dolly or a vehicle, in order to move through the scene or follow the action as it moves. The same effect can be created in animation, for example when the characters fall down the waterfall in *Tally Ho Pancake!* It looks like they are being followed by the camera.

Editing:

The process of assembling and ordering all the elements of a film. This includes selecting and perhaps shortening shots, putting them in sequence, adding cutaways, and creating transitions from one shot to another. Editing also includes assembling and adding one or more sound tracks, including sound effects and music. Editing can be the most creative stage of filmmaking.

cut: The simplest form of **transition** in which one **shot** is simply followed by another. Cuts can be almost unnoticeable when they link very similar shots or shots that show the same thing happening (as in *The Witch's Button*) or follow a logical progression (as in *Signalis*), but they can also be surprising if the next shot is framed in a very different way or shows something unexpected (as when Logan falls into the sea in *Joyets*).

cutaway: In film a cutaway is the interruption of a continuously-filmed action by inserting a view of something else. It is usually, though not always, followed by a cutback to the first **shot** (as in the cutaways to the exterior shots of the traffic light in *Signalis*).

dissolve or mix: One type of **transition**: one shot gradually changes into another. A quick dissolve can be used (as in the transition in the film *Joyets* from landscape to two characters in the rain) to disguise and minimize the effect of a shot change. A slower dissolve can be used to indicate a lapse of time, as seen between the characters leaving the lake and arriving at the house at the end of *The Tiny Fish*.

duration: An 'invisible' but extremely important element of all films and TV. The length of **shots** and **sound track** components, and the rhythmic patterns which may govern the way they are assembled, make a major contribution to the way we understand and interpret films.

fade in/out: One type of **transition**, applied both to images and sound. In an image fade-in, an image gradually appears on the screen. In a fade-out, it gradually disappears to be replaced by a black or white screen. In a sound fade-in, the sound starts faintly and gradually gets louder. If the sound gets gradually quieter, it is a fade-out. Fades can function like paragraphing in written texts, marking the beginning and end of story episodes or topics. They are often used at the end of a film.

iris-in: A key part of the image (usually a figure or face) is circled by black and diminishes to nothing. A convention associated mainly with pre-1929 silent film, the iris-in can be used to end a film (as in *The Propellerbird*, *Joyets* and *Tally Ho Pancake!*).

jump cut: When a cut is made from one action to another taking place later in time. This can be a dramatic and jarring effect, or it can simply be an economic way of managing time within a narrative, as in *The Witch's Button*, when the process of changing the fir cones into dollops of colour and throwing them at the wall is speeded up.

montage: A sequence of shots that conveys a mood or summarises a period of time, often linked by **dissolves**, as in the 'time passing' sequence towards the end of *The Little Boy and The Beast*.

scene: Used to refer to a section of a drama that takes place within one place and one continuous time-frame, often identified by its setting. Sometimes used almost interchangeably with **sequence**. In *A Sunny Day* you could talk about 'the sunset scene' for example.

sequence: Used to refer to a continuous series of **shots** that may comprise all or part of a scene, but is often identified in terms of the action that takes place, for example 'the chase sequence' in *The Propellerbird*.

shot: The basic unit of meaning within a moving image 'story'. A single scene may be made up of one or more shots of varying duration. A shot is usually described according to the **framing** and **camera angle** as well as by reference to its subject-matter, for example 'the close-up shot of the witch's button'.

shot/reverse shot: We can follow and interpret an exchange of glances between two characters through the way that separate **shots** of each of them are juxtaposed. The direction of the gaze (or 'eyeline') and the changes of expression in, for example, the table-laying sequence in *Speechless* indicate the relationships in the family.

story board: This planning tool can be used to work out how a scene will be shot as well as being a guide to how it should be edited. A story board is a series of drawings and notes and looks a bit like a cartoon strip or graphic novel. It shows how each **shot** should be **framed** and how a **sequence** is to be built up, though it can also be used to indicate **camera movement**, **transitions**, **duration** and **sound**. It can sometimes be interesting for pupils to draw a story board as part of their analytical work on a film. But there is little point in asking pupils to draw story boards until they have done some analysis of a film and at least looked through a camera or cardboard frame in order to think about how things look when they are **framed**.

transition: Any way of changing from one shot to another: see **cut**, **fade in/out, dissolve** or **mix**, **wipe**. The choice of transition is important and meaningful.

wipe: A **transition** in which the new image appears to 'push' the old image off the screen, either from one side to the other, or from top to bottom, or by the insertion of an expanding shape such as a circle or star. If you do any creative work, your pupils will quickly find that the camera or editing software allows them to use all sorts of wipes. This can be fun to do but quickly gets irritating to watch. Filmmakers have to be clear about why they are using a wipe.

Sound:

The sound track of any film or programme can have up to four elements: speech, music, sound effects and silence (although silence in films and TV is never absolute). Each of these is meaningful and important: they can interact with each other and with the visual images to create rich and dense layers of meaning. The sound track is often more important than the 'visual track' and can lead audiences to interpret visual images in specific ways. Some documentary sound tracks may be partly recorded when filming, but drama sound tracks are usually added afterwards. The process of creating elaborate sound tracks is called 'sound design'.

dialogue: People talking to each other. There is little spoken dialogue in any of the films in the LIAF Collection but several films include some very expressive sounds eg *A Sunny Day*, *Animatou* and *Joyets*.

diegetic sound: **Sound** of any kind (including voices or music) that is part of the 'world' of the TV programme or film. This includes the voices of people you can see speaking or noises made by events you can see happening. It can also be sounds that don't relate directly to anything in the **frame** and are just part of the atmosphere. The mobile phone noises in *Speechless* and the traffic noises in *Signalis* are examples of diegetic sound.

music: Music is an enormously important part of most films and in most of these films it is much more than 'background'. *The Tiny Fish* uses pieces of piano music by Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Ravel to create the mood of many of its scenes. *Cyber* uses a 'loop' of Bach's music to covey the relentless thrills of virtual reality games. *Animatou* uses a complex percussion track that runs through all its other **sound effects**.

non-diegetic sound: Sounds that do not come from within the 'world' of the film or TV programme as shown on screen. For example music that is added to create atmosphere or mood, a character's thoughts being spoken, noises added to heighten tension or signal an imminent surprise. Music in films is very often non-diegetic, so for example almost all the piano music throughout *The Tiny Fish* is non-diegetic, apart from the notes the little girl herself picks out on the piano.

sound effects: Sounds which are added to the film sound track to create specific meanings. Sound effects include 'spot effects' (like a crash or a crack of thunder) and 'atmospheres' that are continuous background sounds like the 'countryside' sounds in *A Sunny Day*.

Different kinds of 'silence' are also created for films and TV because an actual 'dead silence' would sound very strange. Effects like reverberation can be added to other sounds to create a sense of large or small spaces, indoors or outdoors. They can also signal a '**modality** change' as in the dream sequence in *The Tiny Fish*.

voice-over: *Joyets* has a disembodied, unidentified voice that helps tell the story and *The Little Boy and The Beast* is 'explained' by a child's voice-over. A voice-over tends to carry the authoritative message of the film: it 'reads the story'.

Additional vocabulary:

modality:

An important element of how we make judgments about any text is our assessment of how real it is meant to be. We make inferences about this from signals in the text and on this basis decide what kind of relationship it has to the real world. A sports broadcast or other live TV material has 'high modality' – even though it may be quite difficult to see what is going on – because we know that what we are seeing is 'really happening now'.

A stop-frame animation could be considered as having 'low modality', especially as it shows things that we know can't really happen, like a paper fish turning into a real one (*The Tiny Fish*), or the sun pulling on its own rays like a hat (*A Sunny Day*).

But some animated films also ask us to recognise very familiar objects (a button and a fir cone in *The Witch's Button*) or everyday activities (going to the toilet and frying sausages in *Signalis*) and familiar sounds (creaking footsteps in the snow and snipping scissors in *The Tiny Fish*) – all of which are provided with loving attention to detail. On another level still, some animated films invite empathy or engagement. Even a very fanciful film such as *The Propellerbird* presents us with a moral question (whose behaviour is meanest?).

So the concept of modality is not necessarily a way of neatly categorising texts, but of generating thought and argument. A question on the lines of "How real do you think this is meant to be?" can open up this kind of debate more effectively than 'yes/no' questions like "Could this really happen?"

titles and credits:

The opening **sequence** of a film or TV programme tells you the title, and may also add images, graphics and/or music and other sound to give you an idea of what the film or programme is about.

Opening credits may be used at the beginning of a TV programme, film or videogame to list the most important members of the production. Closing credits come at the end of a TV programme or film and list all the cast and crew involved in the production. Credit sequences are usually accompanied by music and thus form part of the film. It is disruptive to stop a film before the credits and music have finished. In any case the credits themselves can also be entertaining to watch, as for example the mechanical letters for the *Big Plans* credits.

Level 3	Level 5	Assessment Focuses
The film is watched most or all the way through with obvious interest and enjoyment.		**AF1** – use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of film language, to understand the film.
Simple, most obvious points identified though there may also be some misunderstanding, e.g. *about information from different parts of the film.* Some comments include quotations from or references to film, but not always relevant, e.g. *often retelling sections of the story rather than using it to support comment.*	Most relevant points clearly identified, including those selected from different places in the film. Comments generally supported by relevant reference, even when points made are not always accurate.	**AF2** – understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use reference to film.
Based on a single point of reference in the text, e.g. *'the cat is cross because his face looks cross'.* Responses to film show meaning established at a literal level e.g. *'you could see she lived in a little house'* or based on personal speculation e.g. *a response based on what they personally would be feeling rather than feelings of character in the film.*	Comments develop explanation of inferred meanings drawing on evidence across the film, e.g.*'at the beginning you think the propellerbird is bad because he annoys the little birds but in the end you feel sorry for him because he's all alone'.* Comments make inferences and deductions based on evidence from the film, e.g. *in drawing conclusions about a character's feelings on the basis of their movements and actions.*	**AF3** – deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from films.
A few basic features of organisation identified, with little or no linked comment, e.g. *'it tells about all the different things that happen on a sunny day'.*	Comments on structural choices show some general awareness of filmmaker's craft, e.g. *'it doesn't tell you why he keeps switching the lights on and off, so that it's a surprise when you find out he lives in the traffic lights'.* Features relating to organisation at text level, including form, are clearly identified, with some explanation, e.g. *'the rides in Cyber are funny because each one is more crazy than the one before'.*	**AF4** – identify and comment on the structure and organisation of films, including technical and presentational features.

Level 3	Level 5	Assessment Focuses
A few basic features of filmmaker's use of film language identified, but with little or no comment, e.g. *'we can see the witch's button because it's in a close-up'.*	Various features of filmmaker's use of film language identified, with some explanation, e.g. *'you could tell it was a dream because the sound went all echoey'.* Comments show some awareness of the effect of filmmaker's creative choices, e.g. *'it was the stamping sound that was used in the dream sequence that made it really frightening'.*	**AF5** – explain and comment on filmmaker's use of film language.
Comments identify main purpose, e.g. *'the filmmaker wants to make us laugh'.* Express personal response but with little awareness of filmmaker's viewpoint or effect on viewer, e.g. *'she was just horrible like my nan is sometimes'.*	Main purpose clearly identified, often through general overview, e.g. *'it shows you how computer games take over your life'.* Viewpoint in films clearly identified, with some explanation, e.g. *'the view through the window is what the little girl can see because we never get any closer to the other children'.* General awareness of effect on the reader, with some explanation, e.g.*'it's funny because we can see the baby is really clever but the big brother can't'.*	**AF6** – identify and comment on filmmaker's purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the film on the viewer.
Connections between films identified, e.g. *similarities in plot, topic, or films by same filmmaker/studio, about same characters.* Recognition of some features of the context of texts, e.g. *historical setting, social or cultural background.*	Comments identify similarities and differences between films, or versions, with some explanation, e.g. *'the sun is a 'character' in both A Sunny Day and Joyets and the sunset is the important bit in both stories'.* Some explanation of how the contexts in which films are made and seen contribute to meaning, e.g. *differences between watching live TV, a DVD and feature films seen at the cinema.*	**AF7** – relate films to their social, cultural and historical traditions.

ANIMAGINE

This booklet offers you three resources:

- A general teaching guide to talking about films in the classroom.
- Advice on easy, 'entry level' animation for children to try out in the classroom.
- Detailed synopses and teaching suggestions for each of the 12 films in the first ANIMAGINE DVD collection.

The booklet also provides an extensive 'cribsheet' that explains the technical terms used in filmmaking and film analysis, giving you the confidence to listen to children's talk about films and help them develop critical and creative skills.

A simple Assessment Framework is based on the Reading Assessment Guidelines used in many primary schools in England, but adapts it for assessing children's responses to films and relates them to the skills they need to deploy when reading. Like the cribsheet, the assessment framework provides examples from the films in the DVD collection.

A key message for teachers in this resource is that children's skills in interpreting, discussing and making animated films may be well ahead of their attainments in traditional literacy. This can be regarded as an advantage rather than a problem, and can help you to approach literacy teaching in a more integrated way. At the same time, these films offer children a broader cultural experience, raising their expectations about what animated films can offer.

This booklet is also available as a free pdf download at www.filmworkshop.com.