Case Study 1: Cut out Animation

A Norwich Middle School, Norfolk

Key Stage 2

As part of the literacy research we invited Hannah Giffard, of Red Fox Productions to lead two cineliteracy days at two middle schools in Norfolk. She talked to 35 pupils, (aged 10) about the Red Fox books and the creation of the Pablo animation series. She demonstrated the entire production process, from storyboard to animatic to the final animation episodes. Hannah also talked about the different techniques of animation, and moving image language employed.

On both days Hannah worked with the pupils and classroom teachers on storyboards for a new animation project, which followed in June 2006. The theme at this school was 'Stories from Different Cultures', using 2D cut out animation.

Pupils explored and interpreted the poem 'Little Red Riding Hood by Roald Dahl. Hannah Giffard works with pupils on their individual storyboards, using 8 plot points. Pupils were encouraged to include wide, medium and close up shots to visualize the poem and to familiarize themselves with film language.

Pupils explained their ideas and storyboard to the camera.

Evaluation and Observation:

It was a very successful and creative day. Pupils were engaged and listened carefully. The documentation clearly indicates how pupils can adopt new language within a few hours. The footage also demonstrates pupils' confidence in using new words, such as frame, close up, medium shot, zoom, storyboarding, etc. Most importantly, pupils were able to critically analyse their own work, constructively applying media language.

Key findings

- The class engaged immediately with animation as everybody knows Pablo.
- Teachers grew more and more confident and supportive as they learned alongside pupils.
- The communication between teacher, Hannah and the pupils was highly effective.

Suggestions

- Provide practical activities after each 30 minute block of theoretical teaching (see evaluation by classroom teacher below.)
- Each lesson should conclude with a group discussion to underpin what has been learned.
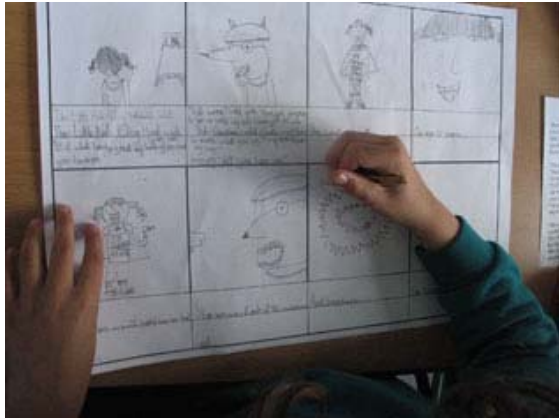
Storyboarding 'Little Red Riding Hood'

A 'close up'

Together with their teacher, pupils developed their ideas and storyboards based on tales from different cultures.

Pupils animated their tales from different countries, using cut-out models.

Feedback and evaluation from pupils

On the 28th April 2006 at Sprowston Middle School, 4B spent the day with the writer of Pablo the Little Red Fox. It was our first time with Hannah. We started off the morning watching some 2D animation. I learnt a lot about how to do 2D animation and the differences between 2D and 3D. Next Hannah came to talk to us about Pablo the Little Red Fox and she showed us some programmes from the television series. Hannah talked to us about what inspired her and why Pablo is a fox. After break we ate popcorn and watched lots of different animations. After lunch we all wrote a storyboard for Little Red Riding Hood. It was a really good day and I learnt so much and enjoyed all we saw and heard.

Talitha

1. I know how to do a storyboard
2. A wide, medium and close drawing
3. And to do 3D and 2D animation
4. 24 clicks is a second in animation
5. You can do rough drawings when you are doing animation

Marcus

1. I've learnt that you can draw different expression on eyes.
2. I've learnt that you always put the darkest colour first on backgrounds.
3. I have also learnt that you can do animation with cut outs.
4. I have learnt hat you follow a story board so you have to make it colourful.
5. I've learnt that animation can be about anything.

Lydia

1. I learnt that a story and a TV show needs a storyboard.

2. I learnt that Pablo the Little Red Fox was 2D.
3. I learnt that you can use shadow puppets for animation.
4. I learnt the stories 'Red Fox' and 'Red Fox on the Move'.
5. I learnt that you can do animation on a computer.

Chelsea

Dear Britta
I loved the animation. We had to use a special camera and lights. I moved the characters and I worked the computer. I learnt that 2d and 3d are different, because 2d is flat and 3d sticks out. Thank you for what you taught us.
From Connor A

Last week on Tuesday everybody in 4B had a project on different cultures. I loved it when I was moving the characters and I hated it when our shadows got in the picture because then we had to go and do it again that took ages, but everyone in our group worked as a team because when you have finish moving the character say done and then they will click it twice on the computer and they say done. I wish we could do that again.
From Jazmin.

Quotes from teachers' evaluations

I would like to do animation with every year group (3 classes make up the whole school!). I am really enthused, and the beauty of animation is that it will fit into any subject. E.g. I can do space for science, bible stories for RE, bullying for PSHE, football match for PE, shapes for Numeracy, a volcano for Geography. In fact, I could do nothing but animate my lesson!'

I think animation lends itself really well to literacy. Storyboards are often used in literacy and stories, play scripts or poems can be animated. In fact you could animate non-fiction and fiction. Developing writing and speaking and listening could be used in animation.

The children get so engrossed in what they are doing that they get to know their subject well. The children develop their sequencing skills which is a great tool to use across the curriculum. Working in teams is a valuable skill. Patience! The amount of people that have to be involved gives the children a real life perspective into the animation process. Animation is a very creative process. It is an inclusive activity, not exclusive. Therefore it, engages those children who find writing difficult, or those who don't like literacy because they see no value in it. It is a kinaesthetic activity at times, and many children learn by doing and not by listening, looking and sitting at a desk.

We need at least 6 camcorders if we want to do whole class work and that is working in about groups of 5. I don't think the Nelson project would have been as successful if I hadn't enlisted the help of a parent per group, mainly because of the age of the children. Year 4 often need a lot of guidance. The actually filming can take a long time and this needs to be taken into account.

What could have been done differently?

For the CineLiteracy day, I would have had a 30 minute listening/teaching activity followed by the children doing something. Or if there is a need to speak for an hour, engage them more in what you are doing.
1. Involve them more in the listening by constantly asking them questions. E.g. Why do you think I did this? What do you think this is? How could I have done it differently? What would you have done?
2. Sometimes to engage the whole class I say 'You have 30 seconds in pairs to discuss……. Or come up with three ideas/answer to ……' This way all children are involved. When visitors come in to school they tend to ask the children with their hands up and this can be very boring for the rest of the class.
3. The children have wipe boards and pens in their desks. Teachers use them to engage everyone. Write and show. E.g Write me three words to describe this scene.

4. Give the children a focus when watching anything visual and make them take notes. You could ask groups to focus on different things. E.g For Britta's first animation, one group could take notes on all the sounds heard, another on all the animals.
5. They also have notebooks for jottings and sketchbooks. Hannah could have said draw me your own fox and given them 1 minute. It may not be of any use to the animation process, but the children are more engaged and joining in.
6. You could have brought in some jointed men, bendy men or plasticine models and got the children to create a short dialogue and animation on their desks in groups and fed back to the rest of the class. This could be a quick 30 minute activity as long as it focussed.

Findings

Evidence from this collaboration has shown that the integration of animation into teaching and learning has the potential to enhance learning across the curriculum. It particular it can:

- Increase pupils engagement and interest with the curriculum
- Integrate and develop new effective learning styles
- Motivate and engage a wider range of pupils than traditional teaching methods, so providing greater access to the curriculum
- Encourage teachers and schools to update or extend the curriculum
- Create a positive working environment
- Improve student self-esteem and behaviour
- Stimulate and support the development of other skills, such as, problem solving, teamwork, negotiation, thinking, planning, reasoning, management, appraisal skills and risk-taking

Particularly noticeable was the rapid adoption of technology based tools. All pupils picked up instruction fairly easy and within a short time. This age group already showed knowledge of computer usage, such as cut and paste, delete, ctrl, Alt, esc and general file management. The capture software used, **Cinecap** http://www.alternaware.com is especially user friendly and as the pupils can immediately replay their scenes, this boosted their confidence.

However the pupils found it more difficult working in teams and reaching group decisions. The main reason is that each pupil had many more ideas than could be explored, and much time was wasted arguing over which ideas should be selected, and who should adopt which role. This problem was seen to increase with group size, especially with teams of 5 or more. However, by the end of the day, many pupils had come to understand the importance of negotiation, delegation of tasks, and evaluation of results as a team.

Good storyboard preparation helped the pupils to stay on task and focus clearly on each scene in turn. Even so, there was a constant temptation to hurry through the shooting process, add new scenes and digress from the adopted plan!

Some pupils found it difficult to keep to a steady, patient pace while moving their characters, and would hurry through a scene, only to find they had to reshoot it. Communication grew stronger during the day as pupils learnt they must talk to each other if they wished to improve their work! Pupils had no difficulties listening and responding to constructive criticism. Pupils did not resent being asked to repeat a scene, as they were all eager to get a good result.

In Middle schools parents are often present to support busy activity days. Here we see one grandparent watching and helping out. This was a fine example of intergenerational learning. The additional support was found to be invaluable.