Case Study 3: Animated Music Videos

Techniques: Cut Out, Draw Animation, Pixillation

A Secondary School, Norwich, Norfolk

Key Stage 4

Cineliteracy Day

Students were introduced to the history of music videos and watched examples, such as Madness, Aha, Peter Gabriel, Tom Tom Club, Gorillaz and Nizlopi. Clips were interspersed with critical discussion. Why are Gorillaz famous whilst others less successful? What techniques of animation were used? Which cost more to make? Which would they be more prepared to spend money on?

The students also tried some simple exercises, such as making instant music videos in the style of Bob Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues. In the afternoon they worked in small teams, developing an idea for a band, its style of music, and how they would market it. The day provided a theoretical base upon which to develop the assignment which followed.

Seventeen Year 10 GCSE Art and Design students attend Animation Cineliteracy Day at Norwich School of Art and Design on Monday 19th June 2006 (Funded by Creative Partnerships)

Each group prepared a five minute presentation describing how they will develop their virtual band.

Students were introduced to ACID Pro and easily composed their first musical ideas.

Schooltoons week: 26th June – 30th June 2006. Funded by ESCalate

Assignment
Students were given the task to create a virtual band and then make a 1 minute promotional music video to sell their band to record companies, managers and TV stations.

During the week students were given demonstrations on how to animate using software packages, such as CineCap and Pinnacle. Examples of animation were shown alongside technical demonstration such as:

- Cut-out animations (Lotte Reiniger)
- Drawn animation (Tom Tom Club)
- Pixillation, using the body, face, hands, feet, or/and objects (Peter Gabriel)
- Blue screening using Pinnacle Studio

The demonstrations also covered the basics of film language.

Students were taught about composition and how to write a successful song! They explored lyrics, scanning and verse structure, keeping standard, how to maintain rhythm and construct words within a beat structure, etc They worked on paper, using instruments and vocals, timing the work to 25 frames per second in animation terms.

'With any teaching project which is heavily technology-based it is important that the equipment is fully functional and the recording session on the Monday went off with only a couple of minor (and quickly resolved) software glitches. Steering the students away from endlessly auditioning sounds in ACID was not as difficult as I had anticipated and nearly all the groups had a strong sense of what they wanted by this stage. Most groups had an initial reluctance to record real sounds of their own, especially voice, but overcame this with varying degrees of encouragement.' Jonathan Lambert
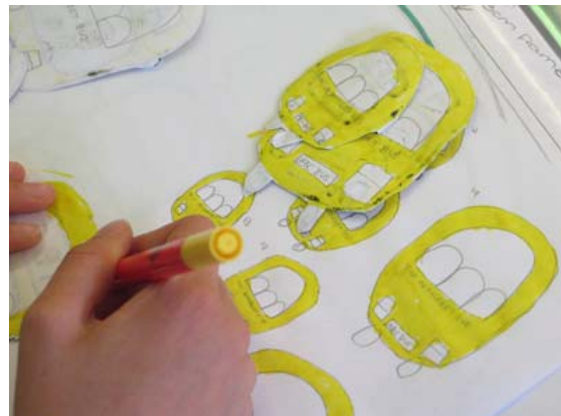

Pupils composing their songs, working with professional musician Jonathan Lambert

Pupil using Acid Pro to record soundtrack

Pupil working in drawn animation

Pupil working in cut-out animation

Evidence from this collaboration has shown that the integration of animation into teaching has the potential to enhance learning in music lessons. 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
- Stimulate teachers and schools to update 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

Integrating animation into art and design education ensures that pupils gain experience in a range of media, including two and three dimensional work in set building, and time based work through music composition and animation.

The week provided a good example of a programme of study in practice. It showed exceptional performance in relation to particular aspects of the KS 4 level descriptions. For example, one team developed an outstanding animation around their own song, designed to help young people learn their alphabet. The genre selected was entirely appropriate to their selected audience. They exploited the possibilities of animation in a manner befitting their selected theme. They gained in confidence remarkably over the week. On the first afternoon they were completely tongue tied when trying to explain their ideas. At the end of the week they were able to talk for 15 minutes about the subtleties of their concept!

Hethersett High School will integrate animation in their GCSE Art and Design curriculum from September 2006.

National Curriculum in Action: http://www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/art/levels.htm
Exceptional performance
Pupils explore ideas, critically evaluate relevant visual and other information and make connections between representations in different genres, styles and traditions. They initiate research, and document and interpret information in visual and other ways appropriate to their purpose and audience. They exploit the characteristics of materials and processes to develop ideas and meanings and realise their intentions. They extend their ideas and sustain their investigations by responding to new possibilities and meanings. They identify why ideas and meanings in others' work are subject to different interpretations, using their understanding to extend their thinking and practical work. They communicate their own ideas, insights and views.

Pupils working in sketchbooks to collect and develop ideas. This will be credited as part as their GCSE coursework. The project allowed pupils to work from first hand observation, experience and imagination, and to explore ideas.

Preparation work. Pupil projecting an image of a car onto cardboard. They were encouraged to use a range of materials and processes, including painting, collage, print making, digital media, textiles and sculpture.

Pupils prepare a green screen for pixillation work.

The animation rostrum is set up on a table surface, easily accessible by pupils and a safe working environment.

Rostrum work is very efficient, one or two pupils animate, a third oversees the capture software, and assesses the quality and smoothness of animation movements.

Pupils import clips into Pinnacle Studio to fit with their soundtrack. They discuss and evaluate work in progress, making sure the animation fits the music in pace, timing and mood.

A pupil edits her animated sequence to the music soundtrack, using Pinnacle Studio.

Jonathan supports during more difficult tasks.

Pupils present and evaluate their work in front of the class and camera. They review what they and others have done and say what they think and feel about it.

Pupils identify what they might change in their current work or develop in their future work.

Students made the following comments:

- 'I really enjoyed having something to work on for a whole week'
- 'I will never watch cartoons on TV the same way again'
- 'I looked at work from different artists which made me think about how many possibilities there are within animation. I also started to think about how long it must have taken them to do it'
- 'I learnt to be organised, work effectively and to work in a team'
- 'I found that using the camera and DODCAP was a lot easier than I thought'
- 'It was a lot of hard work but when we got the final result it was definitely worth all the effort'

Evaluation written by Head of Art and Design, Hethersett High School, Norwich

''*In a world where children are exposed to animation on a daily basis through television, the internet, mobile phones, and cartoons, research by experts in partner institutions suggests that computer animation is a suitable learning instrument for children across all subject areas in the classroom. In addition, the technique has been shown to be a suitable learning method to integrate pupils who are not traditional learners or those who experience learning difficulties in traditional classroom situations*'' Frances Meredith, Bristol School of Animation

Pedagogy:

The animation project encouraged different kinds of learners to participate. All groups had at least one type of learner (1) in their group enabling the groups to work well together and to develop a range of skills.

- Collaborative team work
- Problem solving skills,
- Research skills,
- Public speaking
- Cross curricular skills
- Communication
- Computer skills
- Organisational skills
- Media skills
- Time management

By working in this way students could see other ways of learning that would not be their own initial method, thereby extending each individual student.

The groups whose product achieved all the aims (2) did so because they embraced all the opportunities available to them. Those whose work lacked ideas and/or skills did so because either they lacked a specific type of learner in their group and so missed out on a valuable contribution, or because they had a fixed idea and missed the creative opportunities.

In terms of software, the students are becoming increasingly literate through experience both in school and at home. They quickly grasped the Acid Pro software and the image capture software. A few students commented that they would have liked more time on the final editing stages.

In line with national averages, of the 17 students involved 4 have some kind of learning difficulty. The animation project enabled these students to achieve in a way that I had not witnessed before. They became confident and articulate, in part due to working within a safe environment for a concentrated amount of time, but also due to the high expectations placed upon them and their loyalty to 'the group'. In addition the methods of learning were so diverse that they could access the project at a level they felt comfortable with.

Literacy:

Everything today is represented in the media and the moving image is becoming increasingly evident. Often this is seen as a negative influence on students' learning. Projects such as the Schooltoons week enable students to improve their critical media literacy, to use the processes available to explore a range of learning outcomes.

Learning is about connections, about understanding the way people and knowledge are interconnected and interdependent, it's not about just storing information. Blooms taxonomy (3) puts forward the thesis that education focuses too much on basic knowledge; recall of facts, whereas the higher levels of attainment relate to evaluative processes. All of the students reached the *synthesis* stage with a few achieving *evaluation*. The visual arts in

particular, whether still or moving images, allow for students to access this stage of their learning in a way that other areas of the curriculum are less accessible.

Media literacy is an excellent way of raising achievement and helping students understand the relationships between different areas of the curriculum. By incorporating music, narrative, art, technology etc, the use of animation crosses curriculum boundaries and can be seen as both supportive and discrete.

Creativity:

Creative decision-making is called "creative" because it generates new plans. It considers a potentially endless list of possible outcomes. In this way, the decision-making process leads the decision-maker to discover possibilities that weren't listed at the beginning of the process. In a nutshell: if, at the start of the project, you can see your way right through to the end, then it's almost certainly too easy.

Working on their animations the students were at times in a seemingly constant state of creative decision making. Some students stuck rigidly to their initial plan, others seemed to have no plan at all. The differing personalities within the groups affected the level of creativity. Those who had a strong 'leader' with fixed ideas achieved a competent outcome, as did those who had no apparent 'leader' or fixed ideas. The better work came from those who managed to combine open and creative decisions within a loose framework.

The moving image empowers students to explore a wider range of outcomes than would be available with a still image, to take more risks. Because work can be easily edited and re-arranged, mistakes can be removed or used as 'happy accidents'.

Creative decision making allowed the students to learn about themselves and others, to explore a range of outcomes and become risk-takers

Appendix

1. Three types of learners

VISUAL LEARNERS
Visual learners learn primarily through the written word.
They tend to be readers who diligently take down every word.
AUDITORY LEARNERS
Auditory learners learn primarily through listening.
They focus their ears and attention on your words, listening carefully to everything you say.
They like to talk rather than write and relish the opportunity to discuss what they've heard.
KINESTHETIC LEARNERS
Kinesthetic learners learn better by doing.
This group learns best when they can practice what they're learning.
They want to have their hands on the keyboard, the hammer, or the test tube because they think in terms of physical action

2. Aims

Content is relevant to theme of assignment
Clear and evident introduction of theme and content.
Student used creativity in the planning for inclusion of sound
Topic was relevant and imaginative
Images relate well to the content
Students work was original in nature
Student work showed significant evidence of inventiveness
Students used time wisely
Production showed planning
Subject knowledge evident throughout project

Project completed within time set.
Students have demonstrated transferable skills for future work.
Overall synthesis of the project

3. Blooms Taxonomy

In 1956 Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation.

1. ***Knowledge***: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.
2. ***Comprehension***: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate,
3. ***Application***: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.
4. ***Analysis***: analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
5. ***Synthesis***: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.
6. ***Evaluation***: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate