

2D Cut Out Animated Poetry

with Britta Pollmuller and Martin Sercombe

A full explanation of how to support animation in the classroom is beyond the scope of this worksheet. Teachers wishing to lead an animation class will need a basic understanding of techniques and access to appropriate stop motion hardware and editing facilities. An ideal handbook on the subject is *The Teachers Animation Toolkit* by the two workshop leaders, published by Continuum. Further details here:

http://www.mediaprojectseast.co.uk/projects/index_animation_teachers.html

This one day workshop supported 16 students, who each brought a finished poem ready for animation. The students worked in teams of four, each with an animation rostrum. The following notes provide guidance specific to making an animation built around a short poem.

Screening

The session began with a screening of a series of 2D animated poems. (For examples, please refer to the Resources section of the web site.) The students looked at a range of techniques, and discussed which ones would be achievable in a single day.

Storyboarding

Hand out an A4 template showing a basic storyboard format to each student. (Available in Worksheets section of the web page.) Suggest that the students scale up their storyboards to A3, to give themselves plenty of room to write and draw.

Tips for animators: Each film can have up to 6 shots of around 5 secs each. Use one storyboard frame per shot. Draw a key moment in the action for each frame, showing the type of shot you are planning to use. A simple stick man drawing style will suffice. Include a good mix of wide, medium and close up shots. Change shot type between shots to avoid jump cuts. Do not include zooms or pans, only static shots.

Describe the action (what the camera will see) for each shot in a few words on your storyboard, and give a shot length. Add the line of poetry which accompanies your visuals below each frame as well. Speech averages 3 words per sec, so a 5 sec shot can cover no more than 15 words from your chosen poem. Don't confuse this with the action, keep the two clearly separated.

Preparing Characters and Backgrounds

Working in teams, create the characters or props needed for each animation, using coloured card, paper, newsprint, magazine cut ups or cut out drawings. Backgrounds can also be drawn or made from collage elements.

Rostrum Animation

Shoot each animation and review work with the rest of your team. It takes 10 - 15 mins to animate one shot, depending on its complexity. It is important to rehearse each shot before you start to get a sense of its pace, and how much to move each character between each exposure. Avoid the classic mistake of rushing the action, resulting in very short, confusing shots. Convey one clear, simple idea per shot and stick to the storyboard. If a shot is too short, the poem will not fit to it! Make the most of movement, transformation and gesture to create a visual narrative.

Shoot 2 frames per exposure, resulting in an animation that runs at 12 frames per second. 12 clicks (and movements) will make one second of animation.

Voice Overs

Record your poem to a video camera in a quiet room. This can then be edited to the finished animation in post production.

