

Case Study 8:

Cin literacy Day at a Norfolk High School, Year 9 Art and Design

Key Stage 3

The objectives for the day were:

- to look at animation history.
- explore animated drawing exercises for warming up.
- learn character development.
- learn about storyboarding and film grammar.
- use the skills learnt through the day to plan 'Green Animations'.

The class was first given their assignment to produce animated sequences to promote 'Green Issues' or 'Going Green', before exploring a range of styles shown in short extracts.

Animation History

The practitioner screened a short sequence from Monsters, Inc, then invited the students to name their favorite animations. Answers included Disney and Pixar productions, Wallace and Gromit and of course the Simpsons. (We noticed that boys tend to like The Simpsons and girls tend to like Disney style animation, e.g. Pocahontas or Cinderella.)

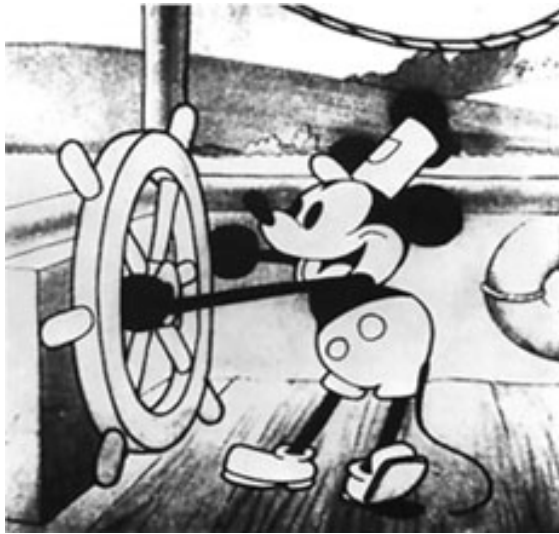


Pupils were given a sheet with a brief visual summary of animation history.

On the whiteboard pupils watched Gerti, by Winsor McCay.

In discussing the history of animation, we referred to the first 'animated pictures' on ancient wall paintings, and buffalo paintings using more than one set of legs to show motion. We looked at the sequential drawings on ancient Egyptian columns, which, when passed by on a chariot, appeared to move. Finally the practitioner explained persistence of vision. Moving onto Victorian optical toys, pupils had the chance to look at flick books, a zoetrope and magic wheel. These toys are always very useful for demonstrating the optical phenomena underlying animation. The practitioner talked about the first Disney animation using sound, and showed an image of Willy and the Steamboat.

Pupils were then asked to list the animation techniques they know of, and different answers were collected on the board, such as drawn, cut-out, CGI, stop-motion, puppet, clay and pixillation.



Steamboat Willy, Walt Disney



Tom Hanks in Polar Express

The first activity was for students to make their own thaumatrope to help them understand persistence of vision. This exercise was well received, and students enjoyed giving a Victorian toy a modern look. They had the following options: to draw a bird & cage, a bald man & wig, a goldfish bowl & goldfish, or a tree & leaves.



How to make a thaumatrope

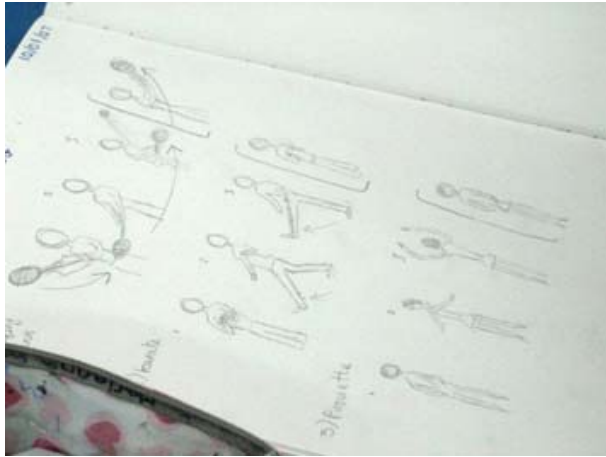


Pupils make their thaumatrope

In lesson two the practitioner played a variety of animated sequences from Ardman's Chicken Run, to Miyazaki's Spirited Away, and the work of Len Lye and Lotte Reiniger. These prompted a general discussion on animation technique. Students discussed model, drawn styles such as Manga, painting onto 35mm clear leader and cut-out styles.

Key Frame exercise: extreme poses of a movement.

Four pupils were asked to perform sequences of movement in front of the group, e.g. sitting down, bowling, karate and a ballet turn. The class was asked to draw three key frames for each movement performed. The pupils were shy and inhibited about drawing, but the practitioner encouraged the group to work in stick man style. This quickly helped the pupils to focus on analysing movement rather than draftmanship.



Sketchbook work



Performance of movement, ballet.

Having watched a short sequence from *Spirited Away*, pupils were led to think about articulating facial expressions. They were asked to use the top right corner in their sketchbook to draw a small flicker book. The first page contained a happy face, the fifth page a sad face. Their task was to think carefully about the in-betweens, to keep drawing in same position and to create five sequential drawings.

Character design

The practitioner then talked about character and the importance of designing convincing characters. She stressed the importance of getting inside a personality and acting the part. A character should become 'real' and believable for its audience, so that its moves and actions are convincing. The practitioner showed an example of a professional character development sheet to introduce the character: Melvin the Mole, who wears yellow rubber gloves, because he does not like the dirt. Students copied the template for a character sheet in their sketchbooks, including a variety of expressions specific to the character, a walk cycle, a biography, likes and dislikes.

The practitioner showed the title sequence from *The Simpsons* to support visually a discussion of characters and their development. The group discussed how each of the character's personalities and roles are defined clearly and differently. She then asked the pupils to pick one of the Simpson characters and quickly note down their main characteristics. Pupils were also asked to draw the physical attributes that underpin each character. Pupils then explained their ideas to the camera and class, and generally found the exercise easy and engaging.

Storyboard exercise

Students were quizzed on their knowledge of storyboarding and its purpose. They discussed its use in planning sequences, pace, camera angles, character positions, movement, set design and lighting. The practitioner showed one of her own storyboards, for a 3 minute 'infomercial', then screened the finished animation. She handed out copies of the storyboard, in which the order of images had been randomised. The task was to cut out the frames and place them in order, to assess how well students had understood the relationship between storyboard and finished film. They achieved this without problem.

Next each student produced a six frame storyboard for a simple infomercial on a green theme. They worked from templates, and a reference page containing basic film grammar and standard symbols. The students produced some interesting ideas, including fairies that recycle waste, and a reminder to replace forestry. The exercise provided the students with the tools and confidence to develop more sophisticated ideas for their extended classroom assignment to follow.