

UNCC: Critical Consumers of Film

Workshop plan for school out day, March 6th, 2015

Summary

Students will examine various short, nearly wordless, animated films and begin to discuss them in a critical way. Our first question will be to ask “What is the story?” and list out various elements (beginning, middle, end, climax, and problem of story). With the story fleshed out, students will then look at how the film was made and how the production enhances the story. Three elements will be looked at in the film production: sound/soundtrack/music, pacing, and camera angle.

Learning Objectives

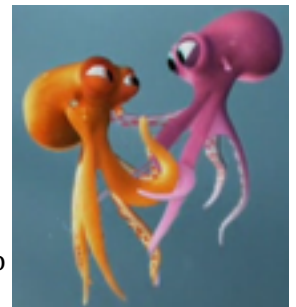
Students will:

- Diagram a story, describing the beginning, middle, end, climax, and problem/conflict.
- Begin to understand how the production of a film contributes to how the story is told and understood.
- Be able to watch excerpts of a film and point out various film techniques such as camera angle, use of sound, and how pacing effects the storyline.

Group One: K-2nd graders

First film watched: Oktapodi

- Film is about 2:30 and very funny for this age group.
- Discussed storyline, defined story arc. Discussed potential climax & how film ended.
- Moved discussion to talk about how the film was made, focusing on sound, pacing, and camera angle. To explain camera angle it worked to talk about how I see the kids as they sit in front of me (small) and how that perspective changes when I get close to the ground and they stand up (they loved being bigger than me).
- Rewatched film. Since they had already seen it, I pointed out elements like sound or camera angles they might not notice the first time around.
- Continued discussion, allowing for more opinions about the film.
- Looked closely at beginning of film, stopping to ask questions to push on more connections and observations.
- Also looked at these two sequences:
 - 1:07: the music briefly pauses. Man has face in front window. Have they escaped?
 - 1:07-1:25: music begins again and speeds us as man gets closer. Brief slow down as octopi hit water
 - 1:45-1:56: music continues to speed up, octopi get away. Music stops as van goes off cliff and then a resolution.
 - 2:02: Escape is short lived, music begins again with bird taking octopus away.



From *Imgarcade*

Second film watched: Presto

- Film is about 5:15, requires a bit more concentration to watch.
- Discussed storyline, mapping out the story and the various elements. This one was harder because the film was longer and a bit more complicated. Discussion evolved into more of the “mean” bunny and dislike for this character. These opinions opened the opportunity for looking at what the problem of the story was and how the characters (the bunny and the magician) were portrayed.
- To get at the character’s intentions, watched the beginning of the film (before the magician goes on stage). Discussed the attitude of the magician (through his movements) and his treatment of the bunny.
- We also examined the end of the film, when the magician is falling from the top of the stage. Good places to stop and think about camera angle. As we watched the end, we could also discuss how the magician and bunny feel towards each other by the end. Were the bunny’s actions justified?

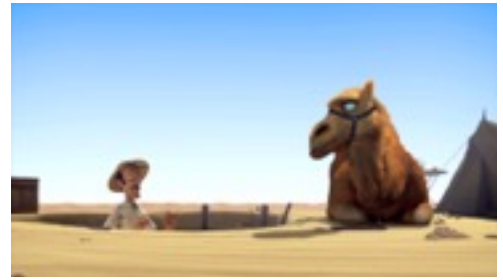


From *CG Animation blog*

Group Two: 3-5th graders

First film watched: Egyptian Pyramid

- Film is about 3:30 and funny for age group.
- Discussed storyline, defining story arc and climax. Diagramed story out on whiteboard.
- Moved discussion to talk about how the film was made, focusing on sound, pacing, and camera angle. To explain camera angle I used the same big/small example I used with K-2, but this time had them move around to see how perspective changes when they move around.
- Rewatched film, occasionally pointing out additional elements that might have been missed first time around.
- Continued discussion, focusing on additional elements to tell the story through film.
- Went shot by shot at the end of the movie for some deeper discussion.



From YouTube

Second film watched: One Man Band

- Film is about 4:30 and good for discussion on music in film.
- Split students up into four groups. Each group was in charge of two elements of the film: beginning, middle, end, problem, climax, sound, pacing, and camera angle. Had students chose groups and assigned categories.
- Allowed students to discuss their ideas and then write their conclusions up on the whiteboard. Worked extensively with one group (who were having some behavioral issues). That group had climax and camera angle. I really tried to ask questions and get students to expand beyond just a simple answer with no support/evidence.
- Once all groups had written their answers, we got back together as a group to discuss our findings. Good discussion. Went back a few times to watch individual frames but not as structured as done with previous films in this workshop.



From DVD Beaver

Observations and Recap

- Overall, thought workshop went well. The students had interesting things to say and enjoyed the movies as well. This workshop was good for me because I got to ask questions constantly (my favorite type of teaching method). We were able to both examine the story and see how a medium (film) could help in telling a story.
- Having over 10 K-2 students was a bad idea. Hard to keep them all focused and on task. If did again with this age group, would break up into two smaller groups.
- Another addition I might make to this workshop would have some activity at the end of the two films to incorporate what they have learned into making something. I had previously thought about making short films on some sort of theme/emotion/lesson where the students could not talk. Did not quite have the time or attention span to play that idea out. Still thinking of other ways to having the students produce something to showcase their critical thinking and storytelling skills.
- Other potential films to use for a similar workshop:
 - Boundin': About five minutes in length. Does have talking (a musical of sorts). But good for discussion on music in film. Good message as well.
 - Lifted: About five minutes. The story is about an alien who just can't seem to get a human out of their house into the UFO.
 - Carrot Crazy: A film lasting 3:30. About two hunters who are determined to get a bunny who loves carrots, in any possible way. An unexpected ending which lends itself well to good discussion. For more emphasis on sound and how it affects how a story is told in film, check out [this same video with different soundtrack music](#).
 - Home: Around 10 minutes. Meant for older kids but using homes in place of people to examine deeper topics and issues regarding life. Good message and excellent film techniques.
 - Slimetime: Eight minutes in length discussing ideas behind body image. Meant for an older audience.
 - Broken: Rock, Paper, Scissors: About 4:30 and could be used with younger audience. A story that can be discussed and also option for what fails in the storyline (not always clear).