

Beauty and the Beast



film education

STUDY GUIDE

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Tales As Old As Time

Before You See The Film...

The fairytale, on which this action packed film 'Beauty and the Beast' is based, has fascinated both storytellers and children for hundreds of years. But, just what do we mean when we say that a story is a 'fairytale'? In order to help you think about this, first choose a partner and together make a list of all the fairytales you know.

Here is a set of features which many fairy stories possess:

- * the young heroine or hero has to overcome some difficulty caused by an evil adult
- * the story takes place in an enchanted, faraway place
- * straightaway you can tell the good characters from the bad ones and they are either totally good or totally bad
- * in the end good triumphs over evil

Check to see if the stories you listed obey these rules. Are there any more features which all fairytales have? Do some fairy stories break the rules? Do you think these stories help very little children learn about life? Were you ever scared of anything in a fairy story when you were younger?

Try to predict what these four characters are like from their appearances. When you have seen the film check to see you were right.



Which of all fairytale characters would each member of your class choose to be and why? Who are the three most popular female characters and the three most popular male characters? Conduct a survey in your school to see which one of these six characters the children would most like to be and make a graph of the results. Did the girls always choose to be female characters and the boys always choose to be male? Did more children identify with the good or the evil characters?

A Decision-making Drama

After you have seen the film make a list of some of the immoral actions and then a list of the praiseworthy actions taken by characters in the movie.

Mrs Potts, the enchanted teapot, knows that the Beast can be saved by the love of Belle and so she is pleased that this beautiful woman is in the castle. Maurice is very sad to leave his daughter. In groups of four, pretend that you are one of these characters (Belle, Beast, Mrs Potts, Maurice). Make up a drama which deals with decisions which need to be taken by them. You can change the story as much as you like. Here are some ideas to help you.

Should Mrs Potts really be pleased for Belle to be a prisoner or should she help her to escape? Remember that Mrs Potts changes back into her human form when the spell is broken. Should she inform Belle that the Beast is really a prince? Would that ruin everything?

Should Maurice leave his daughter to rot in the Beast's castle and take his own freedom? (Bear in mind that he is an old man and Belle has her whole life before her.)

Should the Beast allow Belle to visit her sick father and risk losing her love?

Before making up your play you will need to think carefully about the character you are going to be. Try to imagine you are that character rather than yourself. In your group, spend some time talking about each person's role. When you are all clear how to behave, start your drama at the point where Belle reaches the castle. When each group in the class is ready, take it in turn to perform your plays.

Now consider the following questions:

- * What were the moral decisions you had to make?
- * Did the characters always choose the right option?
- * If you had been in role as yourself would you have made the same choice?
- * What were the consequences if a bad decision were made?

Beauty and the Beast

Some of you may have heard other versions of the story 'Beauty and the Beast'. If so tell them to your class. It is a very old story and has been changed through the ages to match the social life of different periods of history. The story was first written down in 1740. In 1987 there was a popular television series about a modern 'Beauty and the Beast'. Go to your local library and ask the librarian to help you find as many different versions of the tale as possible. Remember that not all of them will be in the medium of a written story. Some may be films, books, poems or picture books. Think how the various ways of telling the story would make it different.

This version of the fairy tale was told in 1756, in French by Madame Le Prince de Beaumont.

A wealthy merchant who had three beautiful daughters, lost all his money through misfortune. Hearing of one of his cargo ship's safe return, he set off to sort out his affairs. The elder daughters asked him to bring back for them many costly gifts, but Beauty – who was the loveliest of the girls – asked only for a rose. After a fruitless journey, the merchant turned homeward but he got lost in a storm and discovered a magical palace from where he plucked a rose from the garden. This theft aroused the anger of a terrible Beast, who demanded that the merchant forfeit his life or give up his youngest daughter. Beauty insisted on sacrificing herself but she grew to like the Beast. In spite of this she missed her ailing father and asked permission to care for him. Once at home her sisters prevented her returning to the palace but she missed the Beast who, in her absence was almost dead with grief. Just in time she returned to say that she loved him. On hearing this the Beast transformed into a handsome prince and he and Beauty were then married.

Make a list of the ways in which this story differs from the film and a list of the ways in which it is similar.

Unlike Beauty in this version, Belle bravely searched for her father, also she is clever and reads a lot. However, she is not like a modern woman; for example she doesn't have a job and she wears only pretty dresses. Try writing a completely up-to-date version of 'Beauty and the Beast' for yourself. When you have created your stories, display them in the classroom for everyone to read. Would your story be a suitable basis for a film? Do the stories still work as fairytales? Now think about the film; did the storyteller alter the tale (enough/not enough/too much)? Share your reasons with the rest of the class.

Maurice the Inventor

Maurice, Belle's fussy, absent-minded father, is an inventor who creates some eccentric machines. Design a new gadget which could be made from scrap materials.

Gaston and the Mob

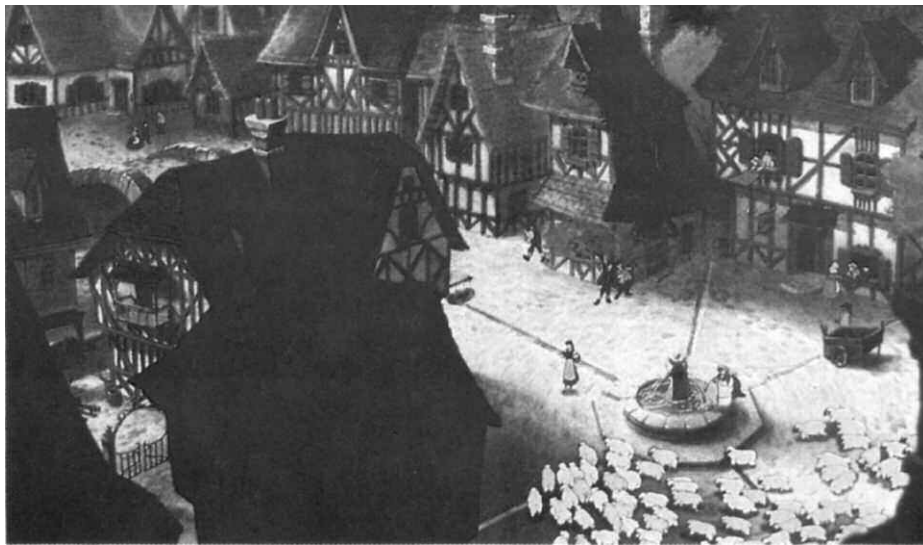
As a class make a list of words (adjectives) which describe Gaston. Go back to the list of fairytales that you made earlier. Can you think of any other characters from these stories who is like Gaston? How does this affect the storylines?



Imagine the film ended differently: that the mob succeeded in capturing the castle and that Gaston persuaded Belle to marry him. Create some comic strips to describe episodes in their life together. Have half the class tell the story from Gaston's viewpoint and have the other half tell it from Belle's. Display the comics in the classroom and discuss how the stories differ.

The Setting

Because the original story of 'Beauty and the Beast' was French, the filmmakers chose the Loire Valley in France for the setting of the movie. Find the Loire Valley on a map. Borrow some books on France from the library and find out what is special about this part of the country.



Even if you had not been told that the film was set in France, you may have guessed from the names of some of the characters. Use a French/English dictionary to find out what Lumière, Le Fou and Belle mean.

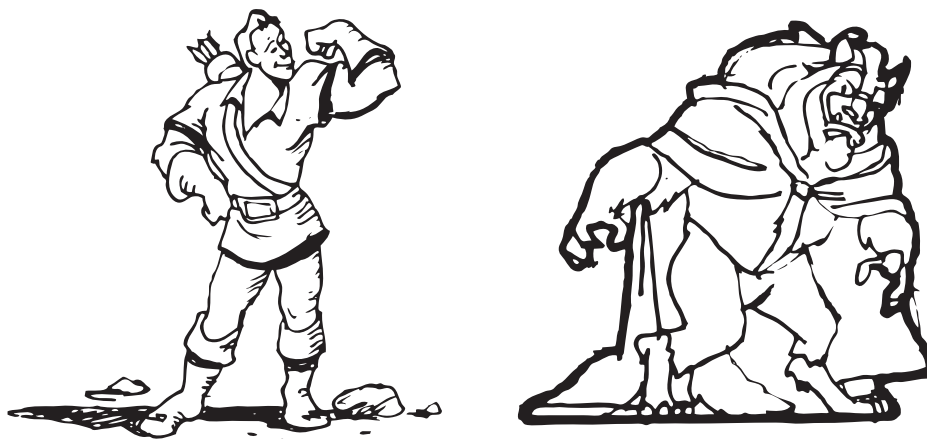
Is the story set in the 1990s? How can you tell?

The Language of Colours, Clothes and Images

The creators of 'Beauty and the Beast' have been very skilled in how they used colours, clothes and images to help make the story's meaning clear. Can you remember how Belle was the only character in the village to wear the colour blue and that her dress was very plain? All the other girls wore a more sophisticated style of dress and in different colours; red, yellow and green. Why do you think the artists chose to do this?



In the film the colour blue is also used to indicate cold weather and night time and there is a sparkle of blue fairytale magic to complete the movie. Ask your teacher to make some photocopies of the line drawings below.



Now colour them in using just a range of pink shades, then try blues and finally experiment with browns. Which were the most suitable colours and why?

Do you think particular colours have special meaning? Go round the class saying in turn what each of the following colours signifies to you: red, green, gold, brown. Do you all agree?

Collect some old colour magazines, and working with your friends, cut out objects which are green and make a green collage. Other groups of children could make red collages or a blue one. Now make a list of sayings involving these colours. They can be similes ('as green as grass') or other figures of speech ('the gardener had green fingers'/'he was green with envy'). Think how these sayings may have come into our language.

The Seasons

The film 'Beauty and the Beast' spans the seasons of autumn, winter and spring and the seasonal colours help the storyline along by making us feel in particular moods. Your class will need to be divided into four groups each of which adopts a season. Get some very large pieces of paper and, working in teams, paint seasonal backdrops for the movie. Remember to think about the colours and shapes of the trees and the state of the countryside and the sky. When these backgrounds are completed use smaller pieces of paper and draw the characters from the film. Remember how the colour of Belle's dress changes after she has fallen in love with the Beast. Cut out your characters and stick them onto the background to tell the story, and create a lovely frieze for your classroom wall. As the film ends with spring, you will need to imagine a new storyline for the summer scene.

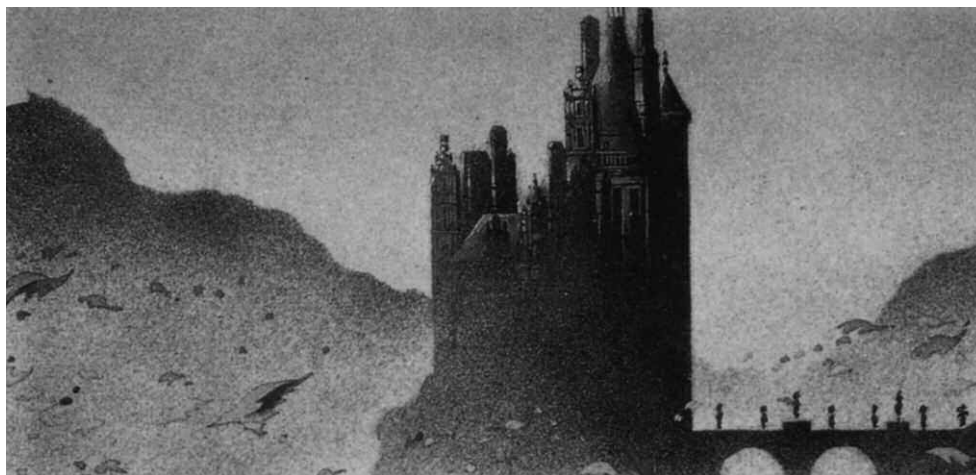
The Songs in the Film

The songs in 'Beauty and the Beast' were performed at special moments. Can you remember them? If there had been no songs in the film how would this have altered the story?

Try composing a song to accompany the summer section of your frieze. Start by writing the words then create the tune with any instruments which you have in the classroom. You could record your song.

Silhouettes

The Beast's castle is often shown in silhouette. What is a silhouette? How did the word originate? You will need a big dictionary to help you find out the answer.



Painting a silhouette castle can be fun but it is a very messy activity so make sure that you wear your art overall. First choose some light coloured chalks and rub these into a large piece of white sugar paper using your fingers to blend in the shades. You can make a sunrise, a sunset or a winter night time sky. Now mix some black paint and paint your castle into the background.

Fine Feathers Make Fine Birds

The presence of Belle in the Beast's castle gradually affects the way the Beast behaves and feels and as winter melts into the spring the romance is definitely blossoming. As the Beast learns to control his horrible temper he becomes more like a human being. The filmmakers let us know this by the clothes in which they dress him in. We see him wear a cloak and a white shirt, then a smart jacket and trousers. When he has finally won Belle's love he has a cravat and a waistcoat and he takes a bath and has his hair styled.

Clothes are a very important way of telling other people what we are like; or are they? Draw a picture of yourself in the clothes you are wearing today. Now write by the side of each item of clothing how it may give a clue to your personality. Don't forget about your hairstyle and accessories. Draw another picture of yourself in the clothes you would choose if you had lots of money and if your parents let you wear whatever you wanted. Now label this picture in the same way as the first one. Are the clothes which you and other people wear sometimes very misleading? Should we judge from appearances?



The Beast

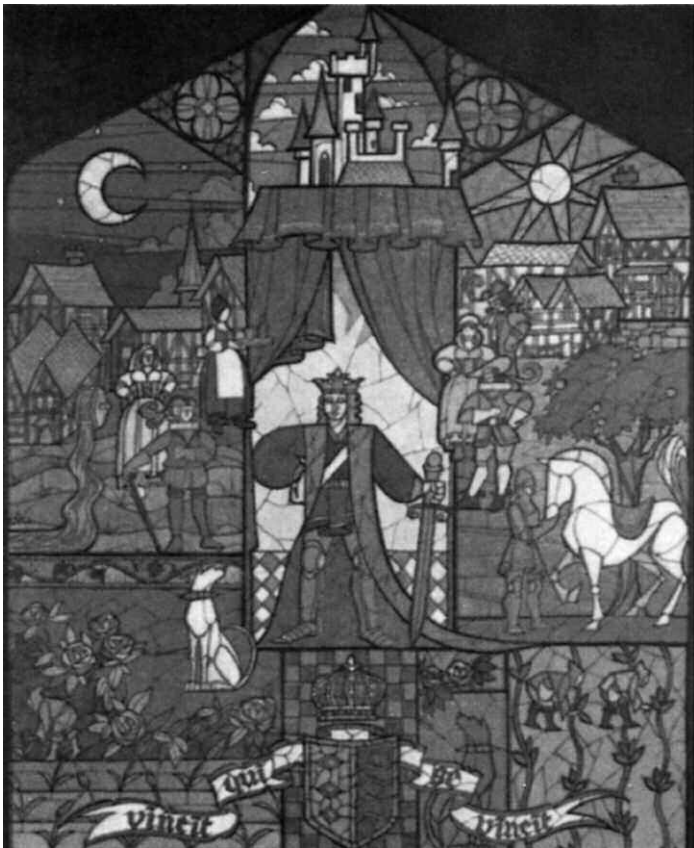


Even towards the end of the film the Beast is still a ferocious, terrifying monster. Do you think very young children would be afraid of him? How do the animators make him so frightening? What kind of animal is he? Think about how he fills the screen and how his voice sounds.

Make a list of frightening characters from other films which you have seen. How does the Beast compare with them?

Stained Glass Windows

At the very beginning of the film we see a picture of a stained glass window from the Beast's castle and the movie ends by showing another window which we guess is new. Each of these windows helps us to fill in more of the details of the fairy story. Look at both windows very carefully and describe them. The questions may help you.



The first window

- * What kind of life does the Prince live?
- * Who are the workers in the bottom panels and what are they doing?
- * What do the shields and motto signify?
- * Which animals are shown and are they pets?

The second window

- * How has the Prince changed?
- * How can we tell that it is a new window?
- * Why is the rose shown in the background?



If your school is near a church or a chapel which has stained glass windows you could ask your parent/guardian or teacher to take you on a visit. Try to discover when they were created and by whom and who paid for them and if they have any special significance.

Make some stained glass windows from black paper and various colours of tissue paper.

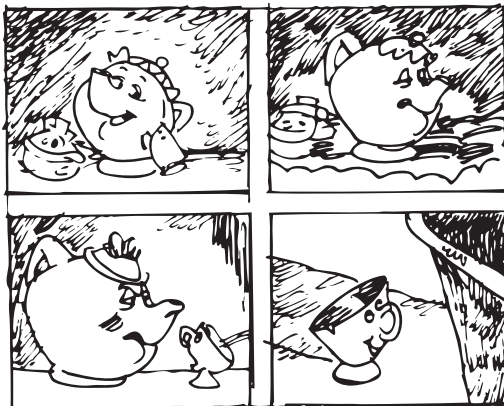
First draw a very simple picture onto black sugar paper and decide which sections you can cut out to contain the coloured tissue. Draw around these sections very carefully before cutting them out. When this is done, put newspaper onto your tables and mix some wallpaper paste. Cut out each empty section in tissue, making sure that it is a tiny bit bigger than the hole. Now stick it into position. In between completing each piece, pick up the window to make sure that it isn't sticking to the newspaper. Glue each piece of the tissue paper to the same side of the black paper. A shield would be a good subject for your first attempt at making a window.



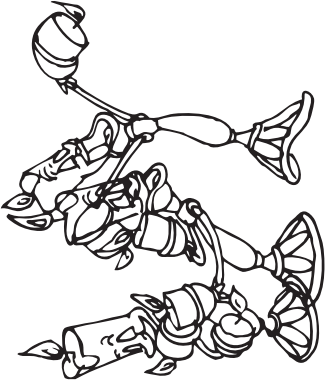
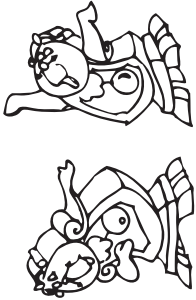
You could create a coat of arms, designing each section to symbolise a particular characteristic of your own family. For example, the main colour could be the colour that your house is painted and if you have some special possession or pet, that too could feature on the shield. Read some history books on heraldry as these may give you some ideas. Once your windows are dry, fix them onto the classroom windows with Blutack.

Be Our Guest

When the prince fails to help the enchantress and is transformed into the Beast, the spell also changes the castle's servants into everyday objects. There is Lumière, the hot-blooded candelabra. Cogsworth is the tightly wound mantel clock who attempts to run things like clockwork although he is easily alarmed and has to be ticked off. Mrs. Potts the bubbly teapot spouts motherly advice and starts the romance brewing. There is Chip her son, the cup, not to mention the can-canning forks and the footstool dog. Imagine that your classroom has been enchanted and that everyone has been changed into an object. Your teacher could be a book, your best friend a football and the caretaker a mop, and so on. Think out a short adventure for these enchanted people and imagine that the story is to be made into a film. Draw a storyboard to show the filmmakers how you want it to appear on the screen.



Storyboard



Camera position

What is happening

What is being said

Sound effects

Camera position

What is happening

What is being said

Sound effects

Camera position

What is happening

What is being said

Sound effects

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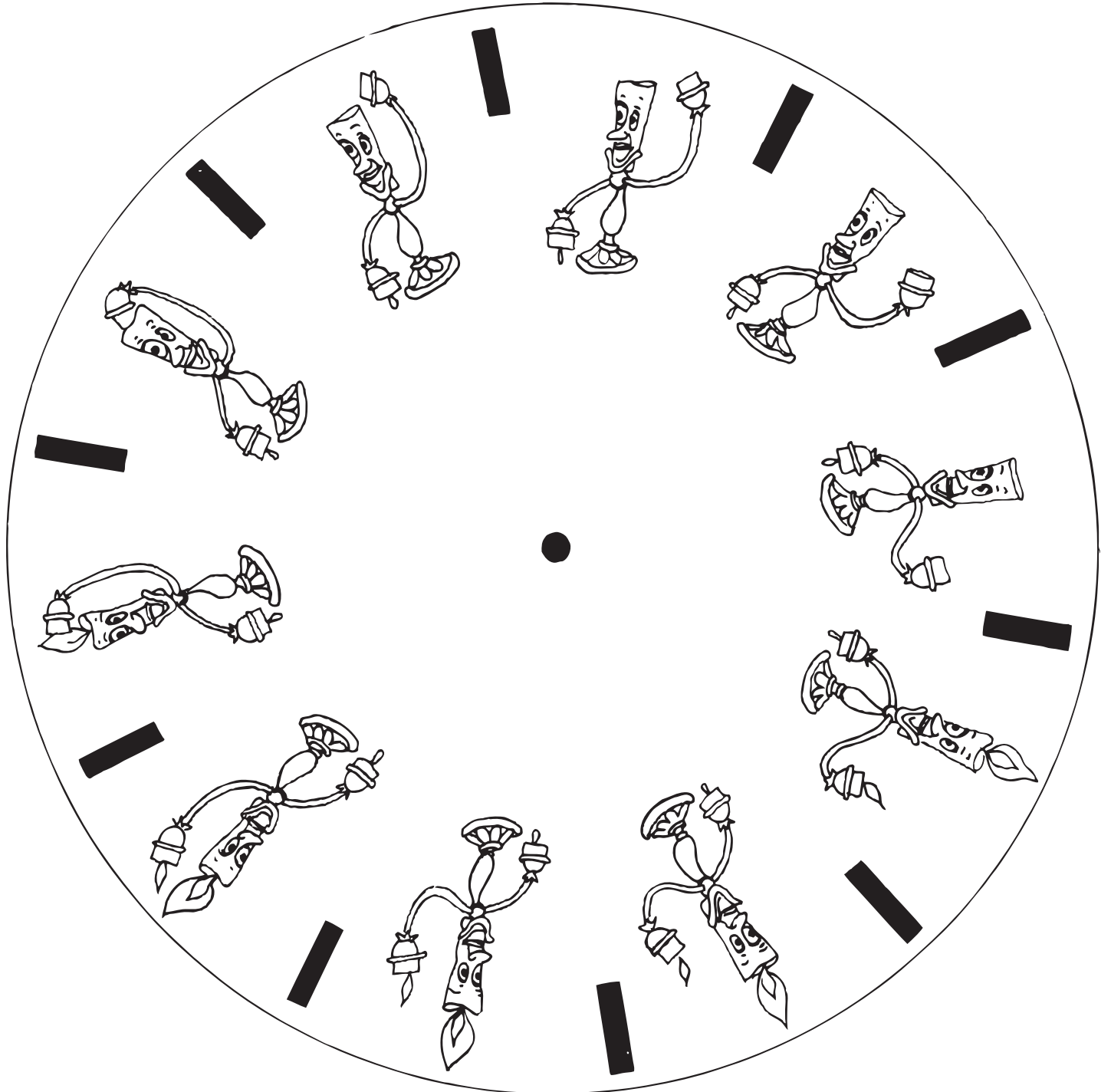
Animation

Because 'Beauty and the Beast' is an animated motion picture it is worth spending some time thinking how such films are made. There are many different animation techniques but they all rely on the fact that an image stays in our mind for a fraction longer than it exists in reality. Scientists have found that the image in our brain lasts for between 1 tenth and 1 eighth of a second. An animated film consists of a series of still drawings, each slightly different from the ones before and after it, and when they are run through a projector at the rate of 24 each second it appears that they move.

You can prove this for yourself by making a phenakistoscope. The phenakistoscope was created in 1833 by Joseph Plateau. The word is made out of two Greek words 'phenax' which means 'deceiver' and 'scopein' which means 'to see'.

Colour-in the pictures of Lumière, keeping the colours consistent and very bright.

- * Mount the circle onto card and stick a sheet of black paper onto the back
- * Cut out the circle and the slots
- * Punch a hole in the centre, push a knitting needle through this hole and make sure that it moves round easily
- * Hold the phenakistoscope at eye level, in front of a mirror so that the pictures are reflected
- * Spin the circle round until you see Lumière move





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