

Introduction

This resource aims to build upon children's natural enthusiasm for film to develop an awareness of the art of storytelling. The resource will explore the relationship between the oral storytelling tradition and films seen at the cinema in the digital age. The films chosen as part of this strand include myths, legends and fairy tales, cultural and traditional tales, fantasy and adventure stories and book to film adaptations.

All Dogs Go To Heaven

Running Time: 89 minutes Cert: U

Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, P.S.H.E and Citizenship

Website: www.mgm.com/title_title.do?title_star=ALLDOGS

Synopsis

When a dog named Charlie finds himself in heaven after being bumped off by his rival, Carface, he decides he wants to settle the score. He scams his way back to the land of the living with the understanding that any mischief will land him in Hell. Upon his return Charlie gathers a team to help him: his old partner Itchy and an orphan girl who can talk to the animals. Can Charlie make the right choice and prove he is worthy for Heaven? Or will he succeed in his revenge and take the route down to Hell?



Film Facts

Charlie, the casino-owning dog who ends up in Heaven before his time is voiced by Burt Reynolds, an actor who famously played the Bandit in the 1977 film *Smokey and the Bandit*.

Pre-viewing activities

1. 'All dogs go to heaven because, unlike people, dogs are naturally good and loyal and kind.' Do you agree with this statement? Which other animals do you think may deserve to go to heaven?
2. If you could talk to animals, which ones would you want to speak to and what would you ask?

Post-viewing activities

1. How does the style of animation help to tell the story?
2. Talking animals are featured a lot in children's stories. Why do you think this is? In *All Dogs Go To Heaven*, how is the story helped along by the fact that the orphan girl can talk to animals? If she weren't in the story, what would have happened?

Borrowers, The

Running time: 89 minutes Cert: PG

Suitable for: KS2 Literacy, Art and Design, Design and Technology

Synopsis

The Borrowers is a charming, whimsical family adventure about little people who live in the walls and under the floors of big people's houses and support themselves by stealing — ahem, 'borrowing' - the necessities of life. Their needs are small: one pea is enough to make a cup of pea soup. The unique world of the four-inch-tall Clock family is rocked by the risk of having their home destroyed by evil estate agent Ocious P Potter, who wants to build luxury apartments in its place.



Film Facts

The Borrowers is based on books by Mary Norton. The film was made in 1997. It is set in a fictional country that contains elements of Britain, France and America. Two of the movie's other actors, Tom Felton and Mark Williams, went on to appear in the Harry Potter films.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Imagine you are four-inches high, like the Borrowers. What would your classroom look like from your perspective? Choose a section of your classroom to draw from your point of view.
2. The Borrowers use the things that they find to help them move about and live. If you were a Borrower, what would you use to build yourself a bicycle, a hairbrush and a lunch box?

Post-viewing activities

1. How did the filmmakers show how small the Borrowers are?
2. Create a 'story graph' for the film, plotting the film's high and low points. Use 'time' as the label for the horizontal axis and 'events' as the label for the vertical axis. Add notes to your graph to show what your peaks and troughs represent.

Bugsy Malone

Running time: 93 minutes Cert: U
Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, History

Synopsis

Alan Parker's musical gangster comedy is set in 1929 with all of the parts being played by children. Partnering Bugsy is a young Jodie Foster starring as blonde femme-fatale singer Tallulah. Cream-firing 'splurge guns', car chases and a huge custard pie fight are strung together by jazzy tunes in this classic children's film.



Film Facts

Bugsy Malone was made in 1976. It's a musical, set in Chicago, Illinois in the Prohibition era (when it was illegal to sell alcohol) when gangsters ruled the streets.

Written and directed by Alan Parker and produced by David Puttnam, the film stars Jodie Foster as sassy singer Tallulah. All the songs on the soundtrack were actually performed by adults and lip-synched by the cast made up entirely of children.

During the film the characters are seemingly killed whenever they are 'splurged' (shot with a splurge gun or hit with a custard pie in the face). However, after the final shootout where everyone gets splurged, no one dies but instead everyone starts singing the final song.

Pre-viewing activities

1. What kind of story do you expect to see in a musical?
2. Find out about life during the Prohibition in 1920s America – why is it known as the 'gangster era'?
3. A lot of the action takes place in Fat Sam's Speakeasy. What do you think a Speakeasy is, and who do you think Fat Sam could be?

Post-viewing activities

1. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to use child actors? How would it have been different if the characters were played by adults?
2. The songs in *Bugsy Malone* are set to jazz music, which was popular music in America in the 1920s. Find out about the origins of jazz – and about modern jazz musicians today.
3. *Bugsy* provides a 'voice-over' in the film. He is like a storyteller – he holds the story together. Write a voice-over of your daily routine at school in the style of *Bugsy Malone*.

Cat in the Hat, The

Running time: 82 minutes Cert: PG
Suitable for: KS2 Literacy, P.S.H.E and Citizenship
Websire: www.thecatinthatmovie.com/

Synopsis

Based on the hugely successful and popular book by Dr Seuss, The Cat in the Hat is a live-action version of the exploits of the Cat and his assistants, Thing 1 and Thing 2. First published in 1957, The Cat in the Hat is still a favourite, and is often used as a book to encourage reluctant readers.



Film Facts

Feline Facts on Dr Suess

- Dr Seuss' real name was Theodor 'Ted' Seuss Geisel.
- In 1957, he was asked to write a children's first reading book using 220 new-vocabulary words. He called it The Cat in the Hat.
- Later, his publisher had a bet with him that he couldn't write a book using 50 words or less. He took up the challenge and wrote Green Eggs and Ham.

Feline Facts on Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat movie

- 24 houses and 22 garages were built to create the fictional town of Anville where Conrad and Sally live.
- 500 gallons of lilac paint were used for the houses.
- Three cat suits were made out of angora and human hair.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Find out as much as you can about Dr Seuss. Create a display of his books.
2. Write a story in the style of Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat – using no more than 220 new-vocabulary words!
3. Learn a section of The Cat in the Hat and perform it in front of your classmates.

Post-viewing activities

1. Write a review of the film in rhyme!
2. Re-count the story like a storyteller would, using voice and gestures to keep the audience interested.
3. Discuss the differences between the book and the film. Which did you prefer and why?
4. Write a treatment* for a different Dr Seuss book that you think would make a good film and write letters to the actors who you think would be good in the film, design a poster, and write a film script. Act it out with your friends and work out how you would film it.

* A 'treatment' is a version of the story as if you were going to turn it into a film.

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory

Running time: 106 minutes Cert: PG

Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, P.S.H.E. and Citizenship

Website: www.warnerbros.co.uk/movies/chocolatefactory/

Synopsis

Adapted from Roald Dahl's classic novel, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory follows Charlie, a good-hearted boy from a deprived family who lives in the shadow of eccentric Willy Wonka's extraordinary factory. When Wonka launches a worldwide contest for five children to visit the factory, Charlie dares to believe he could be lucky. Five children, including Charlie draw golden tickets from Wonka chocolate bars and win an exciting and surreal journey through the famous candy-making building that no-one has seen in years. One will be selected to be the heir to Wonka's marvellous world.



Film Facts

Roald Dahl's book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory has sold 13.7 million copies since it was published in Britain in 1964. The narrative of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory has a classic fairy tale structure. The underdog (Charlie) meets with a fantastic piece of luck (finding the magic ticket) and has a wonderful time. On the way he encounters the baddies (the other children) who all receive their comeuppance. His not-of-this-world mentor is Willy Wonka who guides and protects him in the factory, although it is Charlie's own virtue that leads to success and ends with him inheriting the chocolate factory.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Describe the yummiest sweetie you've ever eaten in a way that convinces your classmates to try it.
2. Devise a recipe for a new kind of sweet or chocolate bar that you think Willy Wonka could make at his factory, like: lickable wallpaper for nurseries; cows that give chocolate milk; hot ice-creams for cold days.
3. Read the synopsis from the back of Roald Dahl's book, and then the synopsis from the film and compare the two descriptions. What expectations do you have about the book and the film from their synopses?
4. Compare Charlie's story (as outlined in the Activity Notes above) with Cinderella's. It will help to tell the Cinderella story out loud. What are the similarities?

Post-viewing activities

1. Write a newspaper review of the trip to the chocolate factory from the point of view of each of the golden ticket winners.
2. List the details that you noticed about the settings of (a) Charlie's house and (b) the factory. How did Tim Burton (the film's director) show the differences?
3. Discuss the differences between the book and the film. Which did you prefer and why?
4. A great deal of tension is built up in the book. One example of this is the reawakening of the chocolate factory and puzzles about who is in there: shadows in the factory, but the gates remain locked; smoke coming out of the chimneys; tiny shadows no taller than an adult's knee. Then of course, there is the search for the golden tickets. How would a storyteller convey this feeling of tension? How did Tim Burton do it in his film version?

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Running time: 144 Cert: U

Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Art and Design, P.S.H.E. and Citizenship

Website: www.mgm.com/chitty/home.html

Synopsis

Adapted from Ian Fleming's popular children's story. Wacky inventor Caractacus Potts invents an amazing flying car, which drives by itself. It takes the family to Vulgaria where the evil Baron Bomburst steals it. Caractacus must come to the rescue! The film is notable for some sing-along songs, especially the catchy, and Oscar®-nominated, title tune. The real star of the movie is, of course, the car. Not only can it fly, but also it is capable of turning into a boat.



Film Facts

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: The Magical Car was originally a children's story written by Ian Fleming for his son Caspar in 1964. The story was made into the musical film Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in 1968. Roald Dahl wrote the film screenplay. Following the film's release, the flying car itself gained a celebrity status with its own registration GEN 11.

Pre-viewing activities

1. These are some of the key words to describe the story of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: sweets; inventor; toy maker; single-parent family; wonder car; breakfast machine; flying car; kidnapping. Make up a story that incorporates all of these words. Tell your story to the rest of the class.
2. One of the original tag lines for the film was: 'The most fantasmagorical musical entertainment in the history of everything!' What do you think is meant by 'fantasmagorical'? Make up some more fantasmagorical words by putting other describing words together.
3. Find out about Ian Fleming. What other famous books did he write?

Post-viewing activities

1. Turn your family car into a film character based on the noise it makes, like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

2. Write about your favourite song from this list:

- You Two
- Toot Sweets
- Hushabye Mountain
- Me Ol' Bamboo
- Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
- Truly Scrumptious
- Lovely Lonely Man
- Posh!
- The Roses of Success
- Chu-Chi Face
- Doll On a Music Box/Truly Scrumptious

3. What do you think Chitty Chitty Bang Bang would be like without the music? What does the music add to the story?

Corpse Bride

Running time: 76 Cert: PG

Suitable for: KS2 Literacy, Art and Design, P.S.H.E. and Citizenship

Website: <http://corpsebridemovie.warnerbros.com/>

Synopsis

As with *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, Tim Burton combines comedy and creepiness with this tale of a good-natured Victorian gentleman, Victor, who accidentally marries a mysterious corpse bride instead of the beautiful Victoria. Victor discovers that the Land of the Dead is much more fun than he imagined and begins to fall in love with his lifeless bride. A race against the clock sees Victoria being swindled and Victor trying to make the right decision while both cling on loosely to their mortal lives.



Film Facts

The *Corpse Bride* uses stop-motion animation to tell the story. Stop-motion characters can be very realistic as the animators study how people and animals move so they can reproduce the actions using the clay models. Sometimes the actor who will be providing the character's voice inspires the character's movements and looks. In Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* the main character, Victor, has been created to look like his voice provider, Johnny Depp.

The puppets in the film were made from stainless steel armatures covered with silicone skin. It took the animators twenty-eight separate shots to make the bride blink. The film *Corpse Bride* was been inspired by a nineteenth century Russian folk tale.

Pre-viewing activities

1. When animators design their characters they need to draw them from a multitude of angles, as they will be seen in different positions in the film. They need to give their character a personality by using real life features but also exaggerate these to create a caricature. Choose a picture of a famous person and draw them as an animated character from different angles.

2. It isn't difficult to decide which genre the story of the Corpse Bride fits into. Even the title suggests that it is a type of horror story. Ask the children to turn the first few lines of the story into an appropriately chilling opening shot:

'Once there was a young man who lived in a Russian village. He was to be married and he and his friend set off on a two-day walk to where his bride lived.

At night the friends decided to camp by a river. The bridegroom spotted an unusual stick in the ground that looked like a bony finger. The men joked about the stick and the bridegroom took the wedding ring from his pocket, placing it on the strange-looking stick.'

Post-viewing activities

1. Plot a story graph for the story of the Corpse Bride showing the high and low points in the narrative.
2. Find out about the original Russian fable/folk tale on which the film is based. How was that story passed down from generation to generation? Why do you think the story is still being told?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of telling a story using stop-motion animation?

Dog Days

Running time: 67 minutes Cert: PG
Suitable for: KS2 Literacy, Art and Design

Synopsis

Dog Days is an animated feature film, made as a homage to the classic Agatha Christie crime stories. Sture the dog borrows his master's car and sets off on a road trip together with his friend, the dachshund Picasso. They intend to travel to Paris, but instead they end up in an eccentric hotel near the heathland of Dartmoor. The hotel turns out to be filled with mysterious characters and strange events begin to happen as Sture's and Picasso's holiday turns into a madcap adventure.



Film Facts

Dog Days is a Swedish animation film. The Swedish title of this film is Hundhotellet. This movie is a 'whodunit' tale with twists and turns. The main character is Sture, the dog. He goes on holiday with his friend and ends up at Hotel Rosebud. There, a mystic story in true Agatha Christie-style unravels.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Find out about the author Agatha Christie and the books that she wrote.
2. What is meant by a 'whodunit movie'? What type of film do you expect to see?

Post-viewing activities

1. This film has fun with stereotypes. Which characters do you think were stereotypes? (Hint: think of American Mr. Big and the nervous hotel manager).
2. Describe the 'twists and turns' of the story.

General, The

Running time: 75 Cert: U
Suitable for: KS2 Literacy

Synopsis

Buster Keaton's action-comedy classic centres around the young Johnny (Buster Keaton), a brave engineer working on a Rail Road running through Georgia, America. The Civil War is declared and when Johnny tries to enlist he is told that he is more valuable as an engineer. When his train containing his girlfriend Annabelle is stolen by Union spies, Johnny takes another locomotive and the most memorable chase in silent film history ensues.



Film Facts

The General is a 1927 silent comedy about a bumbling train driver who pursues the thieves who steal his beloved locomotive, The General. Buster Keaton starred in the film and co-directed it. It was adapted from the memoir The Great Locomotive Chase by William Pittenger. Keaton did his own stunts in the movie – which included running along the roof of the moving train and jumping from the moving train to a boxcar.

As a toddler, Joseph Keaton received the nickname 'Buster' after falling down a flight of stairs without apparent distress or injury. A 'buster' was slang for a big fall.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Find out when the 'silent era' of cinema was. Who were the stars of the silver screen?
2. How do you think stories can be told without sound? Try telling the story of Little Red Riding Hood without sound. How would you do it?
3. The General was made in 1927. How old does that make it?

Post-viewing activities

1. The scene at the end of the film when the train runs over the bridge as it collapses was one of the single most expensive shots in motion picture history at the time. Why do you think it was so expensive?
2. Buster Keaton was famous for his deadpan expressions – this means he didn't use his face to express his emotions like most actors do. How did this help or hinder the story of *The General*?
3. Which was the most impressive of Keaton's stunts in *The General*?

Haunted Castle 3D, The

Running time: 45 minutes Cert: U

Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Art and Design

Website: www.nwave.com/hauntedcastle/synopsis/

Synopsis

An animated 3D film about a young man called Johnny and his dearly departed mother. Johnny's mother was a famous, yet reclusive, rock star who spent her final days isolated in a mysterious old castle. Upon her death, Johnny is summoned to his mother's castle in accordance with her final wishes. Upon his arrival, Johnny begins to discover that things are not as they appear. The castle begins to come alive as materialising spirits lead him to Mephisto, the ghoulish henchman to Mr D, the castle's custodian of evil. Mephisto informs Johnny that Mr D has been waiting for him and that all of Johnny's questions will soon be answered. But when Johnny ventures further, the ghost of Johnny's mother warns her son to take heed: an evil presence lurks deep within the castle.



Film Facts

The story of the Haunted Castle is told almost entirely in the first-person point-of-view, literally putting the audience in the middle of the action.

The decision to tell the story this way presented many challenges for director Ben Stassen and his team, but it was a decision easily justified by the end result. Stassen explains, 'Creating a film like this is indeed challenging - there are almost no edits; there are virtually no jumps in time - but it also offers an opportunity to create a sense of place, which is critical since the main character of the film is the castle itself - it's the space. Large format 3D cinema is about the exploration of space and with it we have an exciting opportunity to transport the audience within the filmic environment.'

The chance to create the surreal underworld of the castle gave the Brussels-based team of computer animators an excuse to let their minds run wild. Animator Jérémie Degruson explains, 'Not everyone has the opportunity to create movies shown on screens that are over eight storeys high. As animators, we are responsible for every aspect of the image on the screen, so the pressure of having to fill the giant screen helps to push us and focus us on making the most spectacular images that we can conceive.'

Pre-viewing activities

1. Find out about the IMAX film experience: www.imax.com/ImaxWeb/welcome.do

How is the IMAX experience different from watching a film at the cinema?

2. The title of the film: The Haunted Castle tells you that the film is going to be scary. What kinds of images do you think you'll see in 3D?

Post-viewing activities

1. The Haunted Castle begins with a sweeping high angle shot of the European seaside. Eventually we see a car making its way towards a mysterious castle. Why is a high angle shot used so often at the start of a film?

2. After this high angle opening shot, the point of view shifts from third to first person, which means that we see what the main character sees. If point of view remained with the 'third person' (i.e. as if you are someone observing the action from outside), how would this affect the story development? What do we see, or not see, through the eyes of the main character?

Howl's Moving Castle

Running time: 119 minutes Cert: U
Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Art and Design
Website: www.howlsmovingcastlemovie.co.uk/

Synopsis

Howl's Moving Castle is a fantasy film based on the book by children's author Diana Wynne Jones. Sophie Hatter, the eldest of three daughters, lives with her stepmother and her two sisters. After the girls' father dies, Sophie works in her family's hat shop but is discontented with her life. She attracts the attention of The Witch of the Waste who puts her under a curse that turns Sophie into an old woman. Sophie is cursed to be physically unable to tell anybody she's under a spell so she travels to the one place she might be able to get help – the moving castle on the hill which belongs to the dreadful wizard, Howl, whose appetite, they say, is satisfied only by the hearts of young girls...



Film Facts

The film's director, Hayao Miyazaki, widely regarded as one of Japan's greatest animation directors, is the founder of 'Studio Ghibli' – Japan's leading animation studio and producer of 'anime' films.

The film is loosely based on the novel of the same name written by Diana Wynne Jones.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Diana Wynne Jones is known for her fantasy novels. The success of J K Rowling's Harry Potter series has meant that there has been a surge of interest in stories about magic and fantasy. Why do you think this is? What do people find so entertaining about stories like Howl's Moving Castle?
2. Who or what do you think Howl is? And how does his castle move? Draw pictures to illustrate both.
3. Howl's Moving Castle is set in a magical land called Ingary. The castle also turns up in Porthaven and Kingsbury. Imagine that Howl's castle turned up in your school playground. Draw a storyboard to show how the school children and staff would react.

Post-viewing activities

1. Studio Ghibli is famous for producing imaginative and emotional anime films like Howl's Moving Castle and Spirited Away. What makes their films different to animated films produced in the UK or the USA?
2. Read Dianne Wynne Jones's novel and note down the similarities and differences between that and the film.
3. Create a character profile of the Witch of the Waste.

