

Kirikou and the White Beast

Running time: 75 minutes Cert: U

Suitable for: KS2 Geography, Literacy

Website: www.kirikou-lefilm.com/kirikou.htm (French Language)

Synopsis

Kirikou is back, and in these four new action-packed episodes again outsmarts the evil sorceress Karaba, who threatens his African village. African textiles inspired the film's palette of ambers, and brightly coloured patterns, and the film's soundtrack brings together several acclaimed African musicians, including Cameroon's Manu Dibango.



Film Facts

Kirikou's Grandfather says that the story of Kirikou and The Witch was too short, so he proceeds to explain more about Kirikou's accomplishments.

Pre-viewing activities

1. What do you think the 'white beast' of the title could be?
2. Find out about the colours and styles of the African textiles that are said to have inspired the film. Create a classroom display of your findings.

Post-viewing activities

1. What did Kirikou go on to do after his battle with the witch in Kirikou and the Sorceress?
2. What do you think will happen to Kirikou next? Do you think there will be a third Kirikou film?

Lassie

Running time: 100 minutes Cert: PG
 Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Geography
 Website: www.lassiethemovie.com/

Synopsis

Finding themselves in desperate need for money, the Carraclough family is forced to sell Lassie, their treasured dog, to the Duke of Rudling. When Lassie is transported five hundred miles away to live in the Duke's remote castle on the northern coast of Scotland, she sets off on a perilous journey to return home. An incredible adventure ensues, which sees Lassie facing dangers both natural and human while finding help in unexpected places. The touching bond between the Carracloughs and Lassie is clear as she makes her way across the country, trying to reach home in time for Christmas.



Film Facts

'The world's most famous dog', Lassie, a Rough Collie, has been starring in films, TV shows and books since 1938. The new film was made with eight-year-old Lassie the ninth, and three other non-related collies.

The character of Lassie was created by British-American author Eric Knight in Lassie Come Home, published as a short story in the Saturday Evening Post in 1938 and as a novel in 1940. The first Lassie film was made in 1943. Lassie is one of only three dog characters to have been awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The 2005 Lassie film tells the story of Lassie Come Home.

Lassie Filmography

- Lassie Come Home (1943)
- Son of Lassie (1945)
- Courage of Lassie (1946)
- Hills of Home (1948)
- Challenge to Lassie (1949)
- The Magic of Lassie (1978)
- Lassie (1994)
- Lassie (2005)

Pre-viewing activities

1. Do you know of any other stories about dogs? Why do you think dogs make good subjects to write about?
2. Lassie is associated with words like 'loyalty, courage, beauty and grace'. Find out what these words mean and use them to create a 'tagline' for the poster for the new Lassie film.

3. The filmmakers behind *Lassie* have to work out ways of showing humans interacting with the dogs that played *Lassie*. How could you tell a story with a character who can't speak? How could you use the camera and the other characters to show what is going on?

Post-viewing activities

1. The new *Lassie* film is based on the original *Lassie* story, *Lassie Come Home*. Look at the list of films (above) that have been made about *Lassie*. Make up a title for the next *Lassie* film and write a synopsis that tells the essence of the story in no more than fifty words.

2. *Lassie* was filmed on location in Ireland, England, the Isle of Man and Scotland. How important was the setting in the story? How did it help or hinder *Lassie's* journey home?

3. The film is set during the Second World War (1939). How do you think *Lassie* would manage in a modern-day film? What adventures would she have in your locality? Write a story about *Lassie* in the twenty-first century.

Laurel & Hardy

Suitable for: KS1/2 Geography, Literacy, History

Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy began working together in 1926. Between 1927 and 1940 they starred in over forty short films and twelve feature films.



Double Bill

Sons of the Desert (1933)

Running time: 68 minutes Cert: U

In *Sons of the Desert*, Ollie pretends to be ill so that he and Stan can attend a convention. Telling their wives they are going on an ocean voyage, the boys end up in trouble, as usual.

Helpmates (1939)

Running time: 20 minutes Cert: U

Helpmates is another of Stan and Ollie's short films. Ollie's house is in a mess after a wild party, and his wife is coming home at noon. Stan comes to help him clean up, and miraculously the boys finish the job before Ollie has to leave to collect his wife. Unfortunately, Stan has one last finishing touch which doesn't go as planned.

Double Bill

Laurel & Hardy: Way Out West (1937)

Running time: 65 minutes Cert: U

In *Way Out West* (1937), Stan and Ollie try to deliver the deeds of a gold mine to the owner's daughter, but are hampered by the greedy Mickey Finn who is determined to keep the mine for himself.

Music Box (1932)

Running time: 30 minutes Cert: U

The *Music Box* (1932) is an Oscar®-winning short film.

Film Facts

Laurel and Hardy were an American-based comedy duo who became famous during the first half of the twentieth century for their work in movies. The pair are considered among the most famous double acts in cinema history.

Sons of the Desert was made in 1933, and is widely considered to be one of Laurel and Hardy's greatest films.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Laurel and Hardy's style of comedy is described as 'slapstick'. What do you think this means?
2. Laurel and Hardy were stars during the Golden Age of cinema, when they and fellow comedians, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd had audiences rolling in the aisles. Who or what makes you laugh today? What was the last film that you saw that made you chuckle?

Post-viewing activities

1. What is the meaning behind the title of Sons of the Desert?
2. How do Stan and Ollie cause the explosions that damage the house in Helpmates?
3. The song 'On the Trail of the Lonesome Pine' featured in Way Out West is a famous Laurel and Hardy song. Why do you think they made it so famous?
4. In Music Box, Stan and Ollie, working for 'The Laurel and Hardy Moving Co' have to deliver a piano up a very steep and long flight of stairs. This scene is considered to be one of the funniest in cinema comedy history. With a friend, re-enact the scene, miming carrying the heavy piano between you.

Jour de Fête

Running time: 70 minutes Cert: U
[Mostly silent, some subtitles]
Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Geography

Synopsis

Directed, written by and starring Jacques Tati, *Jour de Fête* (1949) is a classic physical comedy based around the arrival of a travelling fair in a small French town. Tati plays François, the local postman, who is a figure of ridicule amongst the locals, and due to his naïve self-importance ends up in various ridiculous scenarios, which showcase Tati's talent for visual humour.



Film Facts

Jour de Fête is set in the little town 'Sainte-Severe-sur-Indre'. Many of the locals had roles as extras in the film. It tells the story of a French postman who is easily distracted.

The actor Jacques Tati was famous for his visual comedy. The story of *Jour de Fête* is told almost entirely without the aid of dialogue.

The film features occasional short bursts of colour, hand-coloured by Tati directly onto the frames. The rest of the film is shot in black and white.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Where is the town 'Sainte-Severe-sur-Indre'? Does the town still have an annual fete?
2. Find out about the other films that Jacques Tati made.

Post-viewing activities

1. Whilst it is true that *Jour de Fête* has little dialogue, sound plays a key role. Describe how sound effects and background voices are used to make the film funny.
2. How does the newsreel about the American postal service affect the French postman's outlook on his job?

Monster House

Running time: 90 minutes Cert: PG

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

Website: <http://sonypictures.co.uk/movies/monsterhouse/index.html>

Synopsis

Three kids, DJ, Chowder and Jenny, discover that the house across the street from DJ's is alive and is eating anything that goes on its property. They try to convince the babysitter, her boyfriend Skull, and the police but no one believes them. When the owner, Mr Nebbercracker dies, the kids venture into the house to try to unravel its mystery and prevent it from eating everything in sight.



Film Facts

The film's characters are animated using performance capture animation. Performance capture means that actors have wires attached to their bodies so that their movements and facial expression can be captured into a computer at the same time. The same type of animation was used in *The Polar Express*.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Is there a scary house in your neighbourhood that could be a 'monster house'? Draw a picture of it as if it were alive.
2. If your house were alive, what type of character would it be?

Post-viewing activities

1. Does the style of animation help or hinder the story?
2. Which was your favourite character? Why?
3. The film is rated a PG for 'scary images and sequences, thematic elements, some brief crude humour and language.' Do you agree with this rating?

Railway Children, The

Running time: 104 minutes Cert: U

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

Synopsis

Based on the novel by E Nesbit, and set in the early twentieth century, *The Railway Children* tells the often emotional and now classic story of a middle class family from London, seen through the eyes of the three young children. When their father is wrongfully imprisoned, the family eventually move to a cottage in the country where they fall on hard times. Essentially about a man in search of his wife and family, the film depicts how the mother demonstrates bravery and a cheerful disposition for her children, who are still able to amuse themselves and help others.



Film Facts

The Railway Children is based on a book by Edith Nesbit.

The Keighley and Worth Valley Railway and its station at Oakworth were used as the film's location.

The film went on to be a great success with critics and audiences alike. In 1999, the British Film Institute named the film as sixty-sixth in its list of the Top 100 British films.

Sally Thomsett, who played Phyllis, the younger sister, is actually two years older than Jenny Agutter who played big sister Bobby.

Pre-viewing activities

1. The trains featured in *The Railway Children* are steam trains. Thinking of the trains of today, what would happen in a modern-day version of a story called 'The Railway Children'?
2. What other books did Edith Nesbit write? Have any of these been made into films?

Post-viewing activities

1. Who provides the voiceover at the start and end of the film?
2. How do the children prevent the train crash?
3. Do you think the film deserves its rating as one of the best children's films of all time? Which films would be in your top ten?

Roi et L'oiseau, Le [The Master and Mister Bird]

Running time: 87 minutes Cert: U [Subtitled]

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

Synopsis

The Kingdom of Takicardie quakes under the rule of the tyrannical King Charles V-et-III-font-XIV, whose favourite pastime is shooting birds. The King falls in love with a young shepherdess painting whose heart already belongs to a young chimney sweep painting on a close table. The King tries to separate the young lovers but how will they escape from the tyrant? Le Roi et L'oiseau is a timeless classic.



Film Facts

The film is based on the fairy tale The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep by Hans Christian Andersen.

Le Roi et L'oiseau is considered to be one of the true classics of animation in France; it has been a source of inspiration to many of the current generation of Japanese animators.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Find out what happens in the story of The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep.
2. Find out what the words 'Le Roi et L'oiseau' mean.

Post-viewing activities

1. Create an image from your favourite fairy tale in the style of the animator behind Le Roi et L'oiseau, Paul Grimault.
2. How is the story of Le Roi et L'oiseau similar or different to the story of The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep?
3. How would you update the story for a modern-day audience?
4. Describe the fantastical settings of the film.

Sing-a-long-a-Joseph

Running time: 120 minutes Cert: U
Suitable for: KS1/2 R.E., Literacy, Design and Technology

Synopsis

Sing-a-long-a-Joseph follows the original stage show, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, and gives it the inimitable 'Sing-a-long-a' treatment. We see the story of Joseph, the favoured son of Jacob, who is betrayed by his jealous brothers and sold into slavery. Joseph battles the odds through wit and faith and becomes the Governor of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. All this sets the scene for when he meets his brothers who have come to Egypt to purchase food.

Film Facts

This film is an adaptation of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's classic family musical. It's based on the story of Joseph from the Bible.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Read the story of Joseph in the Bible.
2. Draw a design of Joseph's coat as you imagine it could look on the big screen.

Post-viewing activities

1. Which was your favourite song to sing along to and why?
2. How does the musical version help you understand the story on a different level?
3. What are the main differences between watching a stage show and watching a film? How does the film version of Joseph represent these differences?

Sky High

Running time: 102 minutes Cert: PG

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

Website: <http://disney.go.com/disneyvideos/liveaction/skyhigh/>

Synopsis

At Sky High, a secret school in the sky for superheroes and sidekicks, the student body throw flames with their footballs and study Villainy with their Chemistry! Amongst them, Will Stronghold, the son of the world's most legendary superhero, struggles with the pressures of living up to his family name and status, as well as dealing with the pressures of teenage life. Life is not easy for Will, when he holds no superpowers of his own and is relegated to a 'sidekick'. However, when an evil villain threatens his family, friends and school - can Will save the day and prove himself a hero worthy of the family tradition?



Film Facts

In Sky High, the school in which the film is set is a high school campus (complete with gymnasium and other buildings) that is placed on a flying island. The school's hull is equipped with anti-gravity technology that allows it to hover above the city, at an altitude above the cloud layer so it cannot be seen from the ground. The school keeps changing position, and the location is only known by few individuals, including the bus driver, Ron Wilson.

Pre-viewing activities

1. What types of lessons do you think they do at Sky High? Write a timetable for a typical Monday.
2. What types of children do you think attend Sky High? If you went, what would your super power be?

Post-viewing activities

1. How do the heroes' classrooms differ from the sidekicks'?
2. Describe the 'Save the Citizen' game.

Spellbound

Running time: 97 minutes Cert: U
Suitable for: KS2 Literacy
Website: www.spellboundmovie.com/

Synopsis

Spellbound presents the intense, real-life experience of the National Spelling Bee as illustrated by the stories of eight driven, young spellers who compete for the top prize. The audience shares the private lives of the students as they train for and compete in the ultimate intellectual showdown, discovering not only their individual personalities, their obsessive study habits, their sometimes heart-breaking, sometimes inspiring family dynamics, but also the story of America itself. Spellbound follows the dramatic journey of these eight anxious, yet courageous, young competitors as they wrestle with the impossibly difficult words and enormously big dreams that define the National Spelling Bee.

Film Facts

The documentary film is set in 1999 at the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee. The competitors include Harry Altman, Angela Arenivar, Ted Brigham, April DeGideo, Neil Kadakia, Nupur Lala, Emily Stagg and Ashley White. The film's director is Jeffrey Blitz. Disney is planning to adapt the film for Broadway.



Pre-viewing activities

1. Discuss the differences between watching a fictional film and watching a documentary. What are your expectations as a member of the audience?
2. Hold a spelling contest in your classroom. Who is the best at spelling?

Post-viewing activities

1. How did the film show each child's experience of the competition?
2. With which child did you empathise the most?

Thief Lord

Running time: 98 minutes Cert: PG
Suitable for: KS2 Literacy
Website: www.warnerbros.co.uk/thieflord/

Synopsis

Based on the fantasy novel by Cornelia Funke, *Thief Lord* is a magical tale about two young boys, Prosper and Bo, who flee to Venice after being orphaned and dumped in the care of a cruel auntie. Hiding in the canals and alleyways of the city, the boys are befriended by a gang of young urchins and their enigmatic leader, the Thief Lord. From their home base of an old cinema, the children steal from the rich to support themselves and soon capture the interest of a bumbling detective. However, a greater threat to the children is something from a forgotten past, a beautiful magical treasure with the power to spin time itself...



Film Facts

The *Thief Lord* is based on a children's book by German author, Cornelia Funke, whose books have been published in many other languages.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Who do you think the Thief Lord is and why does he/she wear a mask?
2. Find out about the author of the original novel, Cornelia Funke.

Post-viewing activities

1. Draw the old cinema theatre that is used as a base by the street urchins. Pretend to be one of those urchins and write a diary entry for a typical day and night.
2. What role does magic play in the story?

Zathura: A Space Adventure

Running time: 113 minutes Cert: PG

Suitable for: KS1/2 Literacy, Science

Website: www.sonypictures.co.uk/movies/zathura/index.html

Synopsis

Based on the children's book by Chris Van Allsburg, Danny and Walter are two brothers who drive their parents mad with their squabbling. The brothers manage to cooperate enough to play an old mechanical board game named Zathura. However, after their first move, they find that the game has apparently flung them, their sister and their entire house into outer space. Furthermore, the brothers surmise the only way to return home is to finish the game. However, with almost every move, new dangers arise as the siblings find themselves learning to cooperate in ways they never expected as they realise what they mean to each other.



Film Facts

Zathura is an illustrated book by Chris Van Allsburg as well as a film based on the book. In this book, two boys, Walter and Danny Budwing, home alone in a large American Craftsman house, discover a space-themed board game where everything inside it becomes real. The boys are eventually drawn into an intergalactic adventure when their house is magically hurled through space.

While the film was being made, Jonah Bobo (the child actor who plays Danny) lost four teeth, so the filmmakers made 'flippers' or false teeth that he wore, since the movie takes place in only a day.

Pre-viewing activities

1. Imagine if one of your board games came to life as you were playing it. What would the consequences be?
2. Do you squabble with your brother or sister? Write down some 'coping mechanisms' to avoid the squabbles. What could you do to prevent them?
3. Zathura is not the first Chris Van Allsburg book to be made into a film. Find out which other books have been made into films.

Post-viewing activities

1. Describe the meteor shower scene as if you are a storyteller. You must find ways of keeping your audience interested.
2. How does this film compare to its predecessor, Jumanji?