

Eleanor's Secret



©SODA PICTURES

Directed by: Dominique Monfrey

Certificate: U (contains occasional mild threat and scary scenes)

Running time: 75 mins

Release date: 2 March 2011

Synopsis:

Seven-year-old Nathaniel still isn't a confident reader. When his eccentric old Aunt Eleanor dies, she leaves her house to his parents and her huge book collection to the young boy. Nathaniel discovers that the books serve as a shelter for all the heroes found in children's literature. Among them are Alice in Wonderland, Puss in Boots, Pinocchio and Little Red Riding Hood and they are counting on him for protection: if they leave the library, they will disappear along with their stories forever! When his parents start selling off the books, Nathaniel is shrunk by the evil witch Carabousse and must brave everything to save his tiny friends.

Genre:

Eleanor's Secret is a story set in an imaginary world where storybook characters come to life. Nathaniel's fears and low self-esteem about not being able to read will resonate with many children who will identify the struggle with literacy. The important point to make with children who are emerging readers is that they are not alone, and that sometimes all it takes is the realisation that someone is expecting you to come up trumps.

Suitable for:

The activities in these study notes address aspects of the curriculum for Literacy, Art and Design and Personal, Social and Health Education for pupils between the ages of 5 and 11.

BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

Narrative

- From what you have read in the synopsis, why do you think the film has been given the title *Eleanor's Secret* – and what do you think the secret is?
- Swap Eleanor's name for your name and try to think of a new idea for a film. What would *your* secret be? Design a film poster for a film about your secret.
- Look at the image from the film on the first page of this guide. How would you describe the animation style? What are the main colours used? Why do you think these colours are used and not brighter colours such as in the *Toy Story* films?

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

- In *Eleanor's Secret*, we see the words and characters from the pages of books come to life. Draw a picture, in the style of the film, of the words and characters escaping from your favourite book.
- The film shows what it feels like when you are learning to read. The main character, Nathaniel, is frustrated that he can't read very well at the start of the film. Can you remember what it was like when you were learning to read? Create a montage sequence (drawings of five film shots from different times in your life) showing how you first discovered reading. This could be reading bedtime stories with grown-ups when you were a baby; reading magazines with friends; learning to read the text on a website; checking the sports pages of newspapers or learning to read at school. Draw five pictures in boxes side by side showing you reading at different stages in your life.

Try to show how you felt in each picture – were you frustrated, excited, happy? In films, this would be called a 'montage sequence', because it skips forward in big chunks of time, even though the clip itself only lasts a minute or so.
- Nathaniel finds himself having adventures with Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* and Puss from *Puss in Boots* to name but a few. Which story character would you like to have an adventure with and why? Draw yourself in mid-adventure mode with your favourite book character.

SHOT-PAIR-SHARE Activity 1

We are going to decode an image from the film to find hidden clues about the story.

NB Teachers: pupils will need a copy of this image in A4 or A3 size, plus some sticky-notes.

Shot

With a partner, explore this film still for clues about the story.

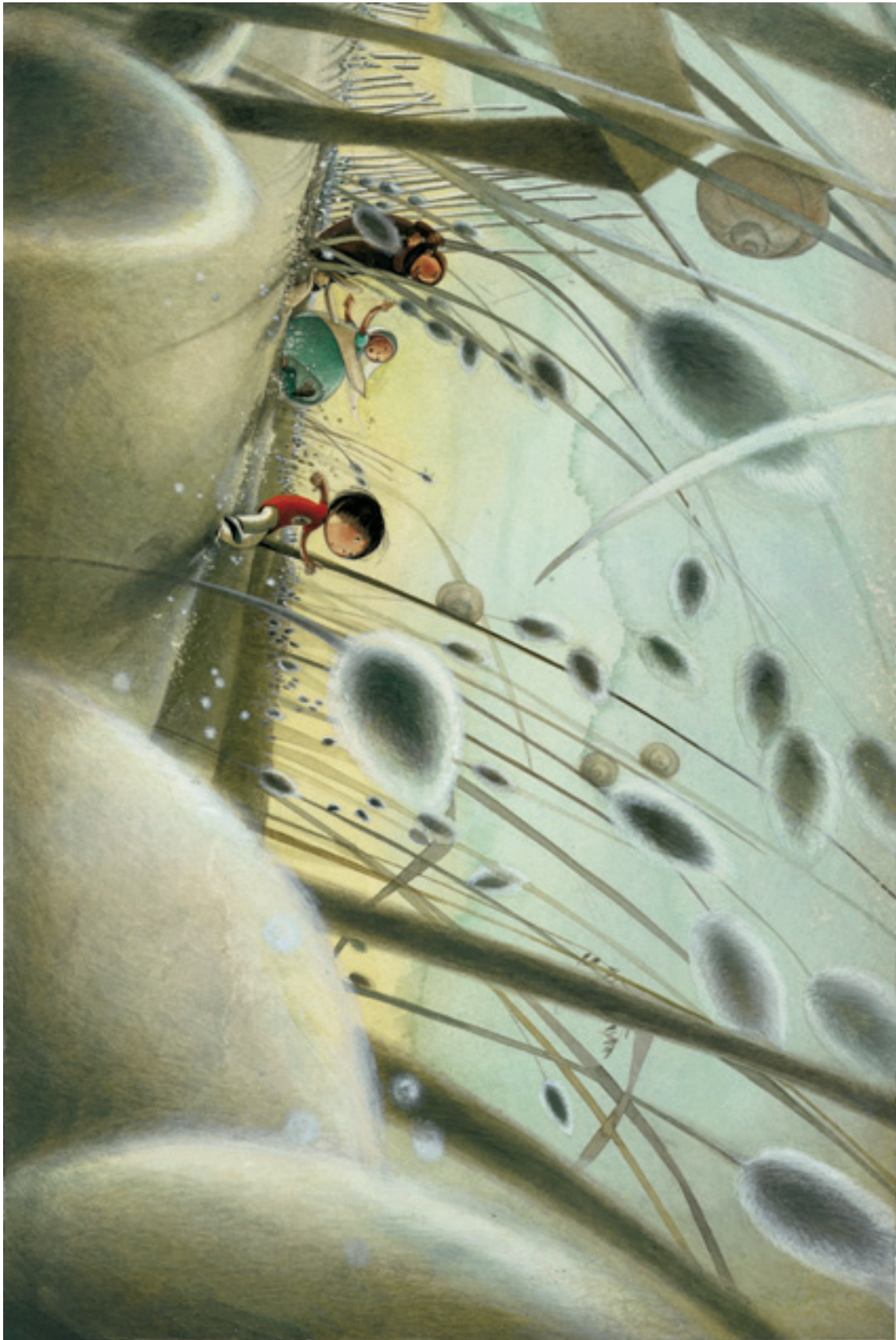
Explore the image, and then talk about it with your partner for 5 minutes.

Success criteria:

MUST: describe the image in terms of what you can see

SHOULD: describe the image in terms of the characters and what they are doing in the image

COULD: describe the image in terms of camera angle; lighting; use of colour (is possible) and mise en scène (all that you can see in the frame – the characters, where they are standing in relation to each other and in the frame, their body language, any props, the setting etc.)



©SODA PICTURES

SHOT-PAIR-SHARE Activity 2

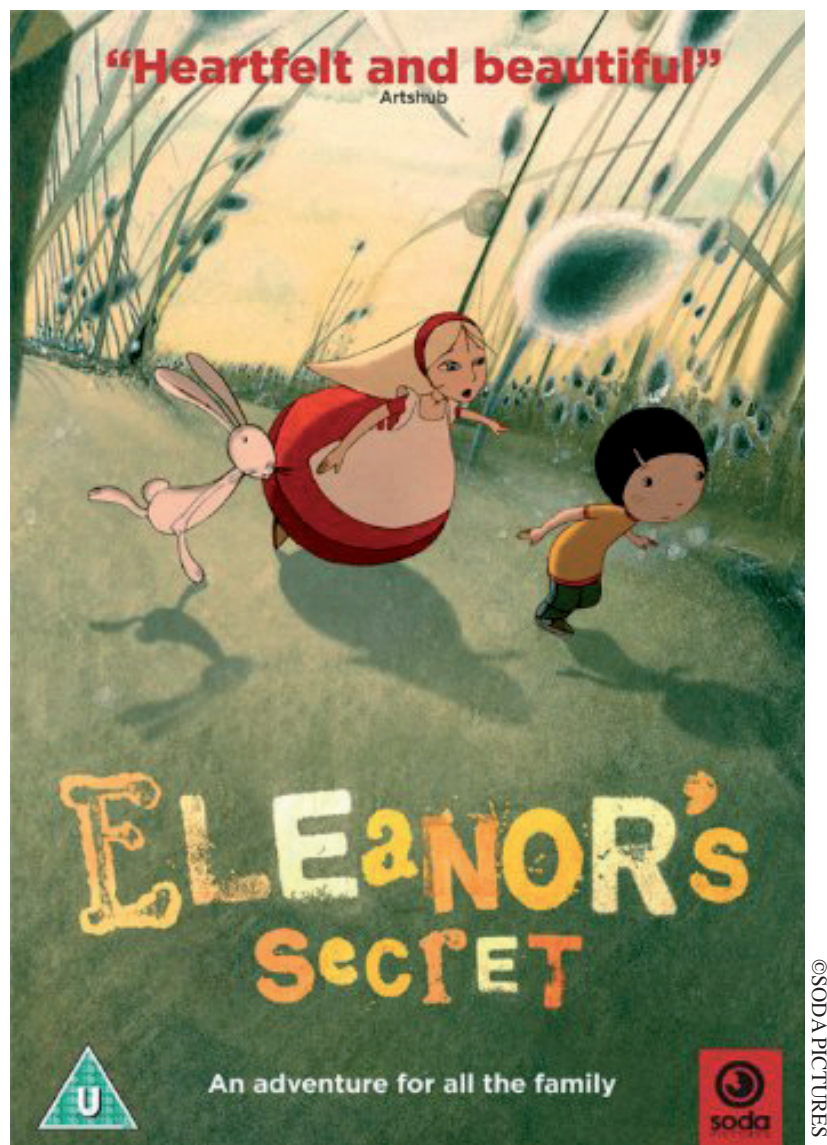
Pair

Using sticky notes, annotate the film picture with answers to these 'Where, What and Why?' questions:

- Where is the camera placed to take this picture?
- What can you see in the picture? What is going on outside the frame?
- Why is the camera taking the picture from there and not from a different position?
- Which characters can you see? How do they feel towards each other? How can you tell?
- How is the shot lit? Are there any shadows? How does the lighting of the shot affect how we read the information?
- Storyboard a sequence of five shots to show how these two characters got to be where they are in this shot. Use the storyboarding template to help you. Your success criteria are on there.

SHOT-PAIR-SHARE Activity 3

Now look at this image of Nathaniel with Alice in Wonderland, from the DVD cover for the film.



Share

Imagine a dialogue between Nathaniel and Alice in Wonderland. What do you think they might be saying to each other at this moment in the film? Write down their dialogue, remembering capital letters, full stops, adjectives and speech marks.

Success criteria:






MUST: you must include details of camera angles and why you chose them

SHOULD: you should include details of sound effects that would enhance the story

COULD: you could include details about the type of edit you will have for each shot: how will you cut the shots together? How long will each shot last? Explain your choices.

Teacher: showcase the work of those who have come up with an original storyboard that includes an awareness of the audience's needs.

Storyboard template

SHOT	DIALOGUE / DESCRIPTION
	
	
	
	

Written by Julie Green