

Ice Age: Continental Drift



Directed by: Steve Martino, Mike Thurmeier

Certificate: U

Country: USA

Running time: 88 mins

Year: 2012

Suitable for: primary literacy, science, geography (changing landscapes), history (how the world was formed)

Key words: ice age, continental drift, pirates, iceberg, journey, survival, family love

SYNOPSIS

Ice Age: Continental Drift is a computer-animated comedy-adventure film set in the ice age. It's the fourth in the series of *Ice Age* films.

All of the *Ice Age* gang is back: Manny the woolly mammoth and his wife Ellie are having trouble with their teenage daughter, Peaches. Sid has been lumbered with his annoying Granny and Diego the sabre-tooth tiger is his old, grumpy self.

When Manny catches Peaches hanging out with her best friend, Louis (a mole-hog) in a forbidden area, he reprimands her and embarrasses her in front of her friends. They argue and she stomps off.

In the middle of their argument, a seismic shift happens in the ground and a massive rift appears between Manny and the rest of his family. Manny, Diego and Sid, standing precariously on an iceberg, start drifting off into the ocean. As they go, Manny vows to return to his family and to help them escape from the encroaching landmass that is threatening to push the animals into the ocean. He tells them to go to a bridge of land that will take them to the new continent. He says he will meet them there.

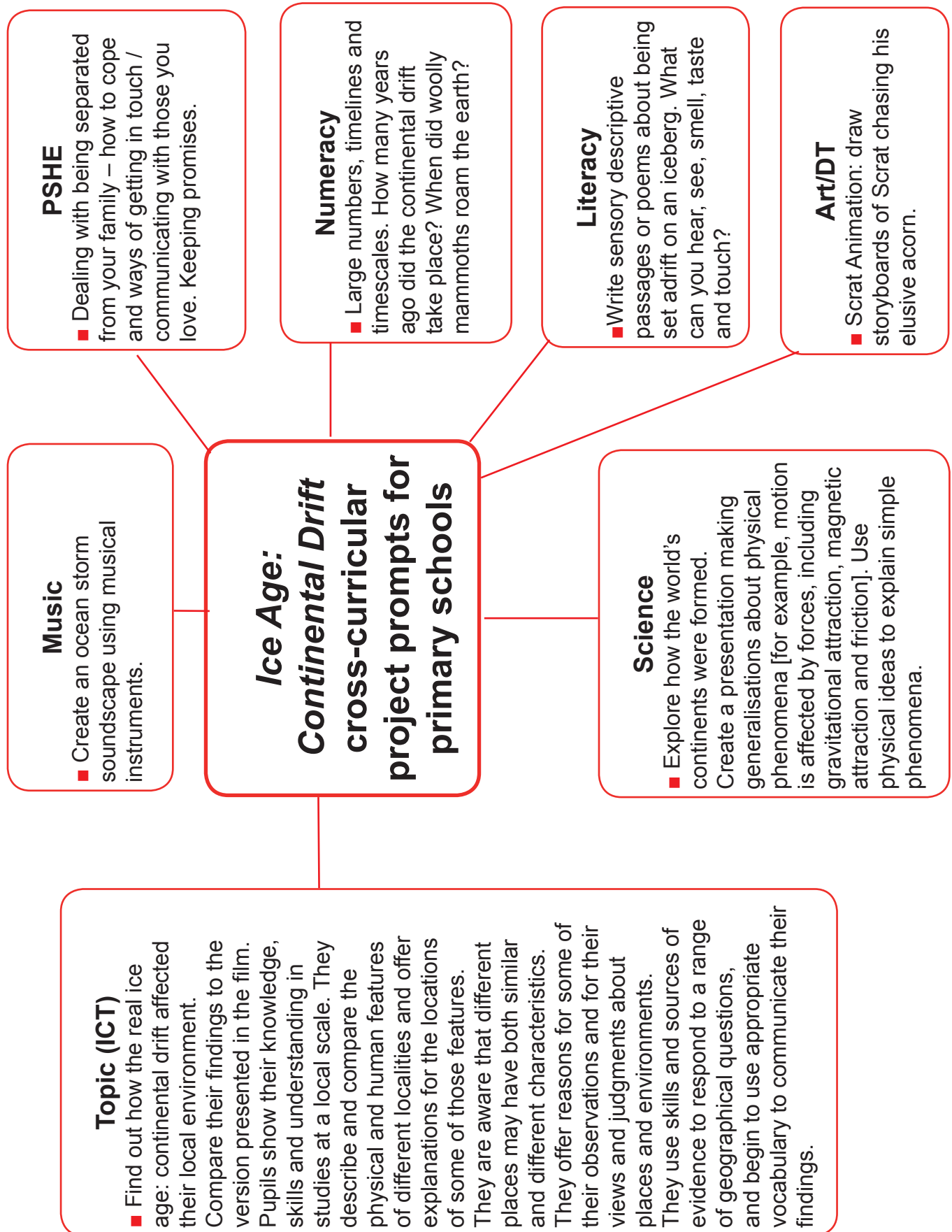
Set adrift, Manny and his friends survive a sea storm, only to find Sid's Granny who has been asleep in a tree trunk the whole time. Their plans to return to Ellie and the rest are scuppered when they are captured by a group of pirates led by a Gigantopithecus named Captain Gutt and a sabre-toothed tiger named Shira. When Manny refuses to join the pirates, Gutt forces him and his friends to walk the plank, but they manage to escape, taking Shira with them. They set off back to their herd, chased by Gutt and his crew.

Meanwhile, Ellie, Peaches, Louis and the herd of animals have reached the land bridge, only to find Gutt and the pirates waiting there. Manny, Sid and Diego arrive just as Gutt captures Peaches and threatens to kill her. Manny offers himself to save his daughter, but Gutt says he will kill his family anyway. Just at that moment, Sid's Granny's 'imaginary' pet, which turns out to be a real giant blue whale, arrives to save the day. The herd and the other animals, freed from the threat of the pirates, manage to walk safely to another continent.

Throughout all of this: Scrat the sabre-toothed squirrel is still searching for his acorn. In fact, it's his search for an acorn that triggers the continental drift and creates the seven continents that we know today. He too is set adrift on the ocean, where he manages to find a map showing a treasure of acorns. In his eagerness to find them, he ends up in Scratlantis, a floating city filled with sabre-toothed squirrels and acorns. In a frenzy, Scrat eats as many acorns as he can, including one that is plugging a hole. As he eats it, the ocean drains away and he finds himself in a desert, without any acorns!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- There is a ten-year gap between the first *Ice Age* movie and *Ice Age: Continental Drift*.
- The ocean and storm shots caused problems for the animators – they had to create a computer programme that could simulate the motion of the sea surface.
- The motion of the ocean was so realistic, that the film's creators were worried that the audience would get seasick whilst watching!
- The *Ice Age* skies created by the art and design team give the films their unique look. The computer programme used to create them uses models of real skies and clouds, and then they make them look more 'cartoony'!
- The animators had to make sure that the sky was the right colour and that the sun was in the right place according to where we are in the story: if it is early morning, the sun needs to show that. If it's evening, the sun needs to have moved and the sun should be setting.
- The clouds were created like a pop-up book. Each one was fully 3-dimensional cloud floating around in the sky!
- Three computer animators worked on *Ice Age: Continental Drift* to create 963 unique skies.
- The Character-Simulation Department worked for many months on details of character, including: granny's fur shawl; Captain Gutt's beard; blubbery seal Flynn's wobbly bits and Peach's hair!



BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT

Continental drifts

Pupils who have watched the film's trailer will be aware that the sabre-toothed squirrel, Scrat has inadvertently had a hand (paw?) in starting the earth's continental drifts, whilst chasing his elusive acorn.

Combine images of their local area with images of Scrat in order to create the 'unofficial' narrative of how and why their own country became the way it is now. Perhaps use images captured from a field-trip images.

Families

Manny is separated from his family and he does all he can to get back to them. Sid's family is mean to him and he ends up looking after his Granny, who is kind. Diego has no family, but he is very loyal to his friends.

Discuss what 'family' means to you. In pairs, imagine that you have been set adrift on an iceberg. Write a short play that shows how you feel about your family – who you would miss the most and what you would do to get back to them.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

- Create a multisensory poster of Manny, Diego, Granny and Sid adrift on an iceberg, with 3D mages of the sea-life swimming below them.
- Scrat can't help himself when he finds himself in Scratlantis. He is so excited to find the treasure-trove of acorns, that he gets greedy. He eats the one acorn that he's not meant to and ends up in the desert without anything. Write down what the moral of his story is.

TEACHERS' NOTES

Shot, pair, share

Explore and analyse the two images on the next page as a way of critically evaluating the film.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The frame

Describe what you can see in the shot.

Colour / light

How is the scene lit? Are there contrasts between light and shadow? Why is it lit this way? What are the key colours in the scene? Do any colours stand out more than any others? Why? What does this tell us about the mood of the scene and the character?

Mise en scène

This means, 'everything in the frame', or the way information is communicated through a single shot. Describe the props, furniture, body language and facial expressions. Look at the details of the shot. Describe how each detail gives us information about the character and the scene's place in the film's narrative.

METHODOLOGY

Shot

Discuss each shot as a class. Ask for pupils' initial reactions: what does each shot tell us about the film?

Pair

Ask the children to annotate one or both of the shots in pairs, focusing on framing; colour and light or mise en scène (or all three).

Share

Each pair should then share one or two key observations about the shot.

15-MINUTE WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Shot one

In this shot, we see Manny, Diego, Sid, Granny and the escaped pirate, Shira trying to escape from Captain Gutt and his pirate crew.

Describe each of the characters on Manny's iceberg. What do their facial expressions and body language say about each character and their role in the film?

Shot two

In this shot, we see Scrat being taunted by the pirates. Why is this shot funny? Write a screenplay or create a storyboard showing how Scrat manages to escape from this scenario.

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



Shot Two

