

A Monster in Paris



Directed by: Bibo Bergeron

Certificate: U

Country: France

Running time: 90 mins

Year: 2012

Keywords: Paris, chemicals, inventor, projectionist, monster, singing, chase, escape, Sacré Coeur, Eiffel Tower, Montmartre

Suitable for: primary literacy, science, modern foreign languages (French), music

SYNOPSIS

At the beginning of the film, we see an old-fashioned newsreel showing how Paris became the flooded city that turns into the setting for the story. It's 1910.

Shy Emile works in the cinema as a projectionist. He loves romantic movies and secretly pines after Maud who works near the cinema. His friend Raoul is an eccentric and loud deliveryman and inventor. His delivery truck is testimony to his ability as an inventor. Named Catherine, the van is more than your average vehicle. Lucille is Raoul's childhood friend and a beautiful singer at the cabaret club. They share a love-hate relationship. Lucille's Aunt Carlotta is keen for her to marry Maynott, the Police Commissioner, a proud, rude man. Understandably, Lucille resists.

One evening, Raoul and Emile drive Catherine over to the Botanical Gardens to make a delivery. Whilst they are there, Raoul can't help but have a look at the laboratory. He plays with a mixture called 'Atomize-a-tune' that turns people into opera singers and 'Super Fertilizer' – that turns a sunflower seed into a giant sunflower in an instant. When the plant topples over, it knocks the two mixtures together and an explosion occurs. Raoul and Emile leave quickly, unaware that a flea has got caught up in the explosion. The frightened flea flees the scene and is caught on camera by a newspaper reporter. The next day, he is a sensation and the people of Paris are convinced that the flea is a monster living in their town.

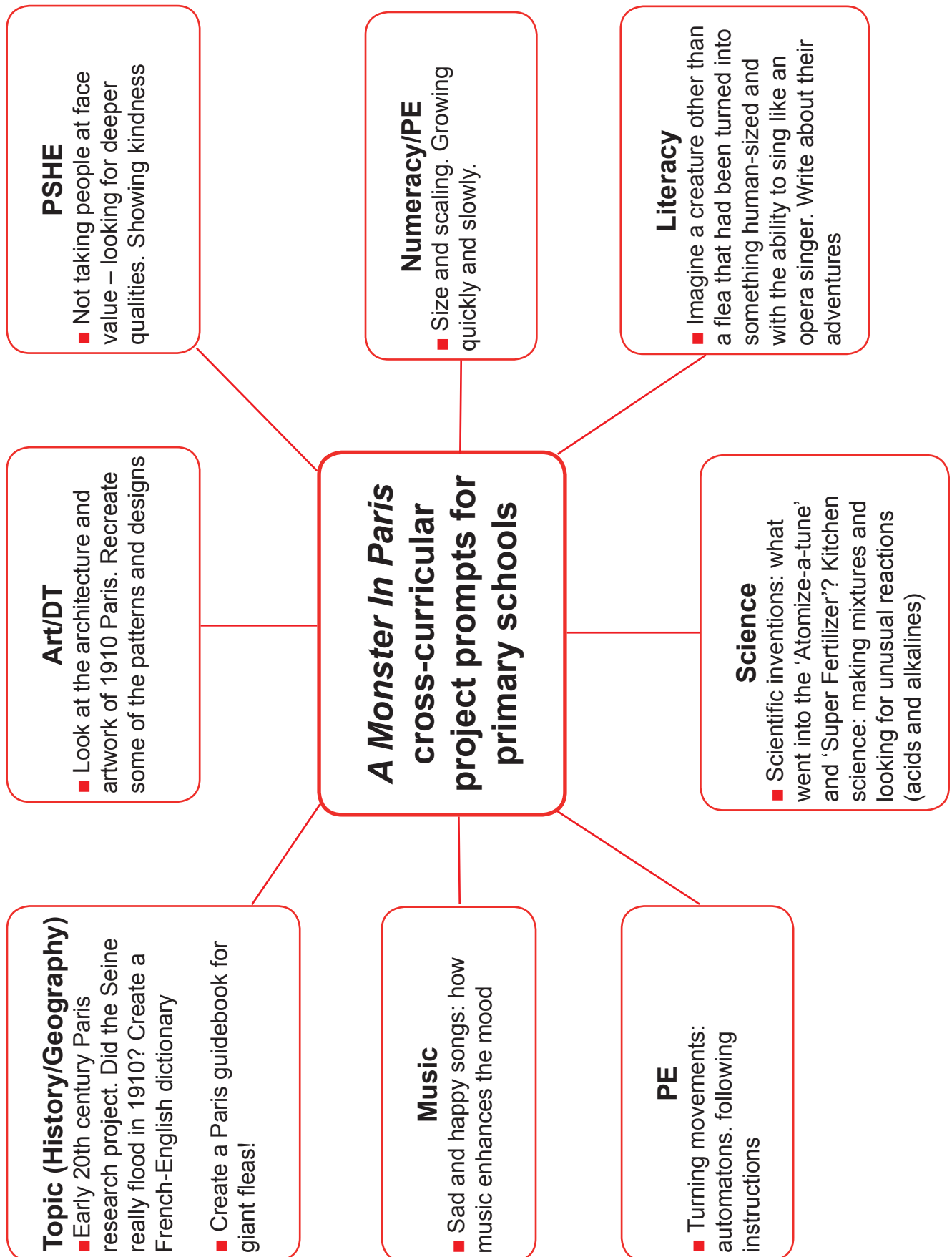
When Lucille stumbles across the creature she is initially terrified, but then she hears him sing like an opera singer, and she realises he is frightened. She disguises him as a singer with the band and brings him on stage to perform with her. The audience is wowed by the beautiful duet, and the flea is grateful to Lucille for her compassion and ability to see past his monstrosity.

Lucille shares the secret identity of her new co-singer with Raoul and Emile. They decide to stage his death to throw Maynott and the police off the scent of the 'Monster'. When things go wrong and Maynott discovers Francoeur's hiding place, Lucille, Raoul and Emile manage to escape and a massive chase ensues, ending with them all precariously at the top of the Eiffel Tower.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Lucille, the cabaret singer, names the flea-monster 'Francoeur' which means 'honest heart' in French
- The film's budget was 27 million Euros – a relatively small amount in the world of filmmaking
- The French actress who voiced Lucille, Vanessa Paradis, played the lead in both the English and French-speaking versions of the film
- The cabaret where Lucille sings is called 'L'Oiseau Rare' – 'The Rare Bird'
- The botanical gardens are guarded by a proboscis monkey named Charles
- The film is made by the same team that created *Shark Tale*



BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT

Inventions and experiments

Raoul crafted his vehicle, called Catherine, himself. He also designs a coat made out of hay when he can't afford to buy a new one in the cold winter months. Discuss the unusual materials you would use to make yourself a coat. Draw your design and label it.

Cinema projectionists

Explore the history of the cinema and find out about the important role of the projectionist. It is his or her job to make sure the film is being screened correctly each time it is shown. Before the days of television, the projectionist had a very important job, as people would not only come to the cinema to see a film, but also to watch a newsreel which told them all about worldly matters.

Paris

The city of Paris almost plays a part in this film, as the backdrop to the fast chase sequences and generally in the story. Children could create a map of Paris, looking for and pointing out the Eiffel Tower, Montmartre and the Sacré Coeur.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

Add to the map of Paris that the children created, highlighting the other key areas that featured in the film.

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. Where is the camera placed? Why is it placed in this position? Why not high up? Or low down? Or from far away? Or close-up? What is not shown 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

Town Police Commissioner, Maynott looks at himself haughtily in the mirror.

In the style of a 20th century Parisian tailor, pretend to flatter the commissioner, by describing how wonderful he looks. Include details about his outfit, facial expression and body language.

Shot two

Lucille, dressed in a beautiful winged gown, hides in the dark. A thin strip of light shows up her beautiful profile.

Write a letter to the actress who plays Lucille (Vanessa Paradis), outlining the strengths and qualities of Lucille's personality they will need to convey through their voice-acting.

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



Shot Two

