

Rango



Directed by: Gore Verbinski

Certificate: PG

Country: USA

Running time: 107 mins

Year: 2011

Suitable for: The activities are suitable for pupils between ages 7–11 years; activities cover literacy, PSHE, science, numeracy, music, MFL, geography and art and design

SYNOPSIS

When we first meet Rango, he is a pet chameleon living in a glass terrarium. Safe, but bored, he invents wild stories and scenarios for himself through the power of his imagination.

His world is turned upside-down, literally, when his terrarium is sent flying through the car window when it goes over a bump in the road. His home is shattered into a thousand tiny pieces, and he finds himself alone and vulnerable in the soaring temperatures of the desert highway. He comes across a wise armadillo, who advises him to find the nearest town – called Dirt. Pursued by a hungry hawk, Rango embarks on his journey to find civilisation.

Finally, he arrives at the dusty, desert town called Dirt. Thirsty, he goes into the local bar. He decides to adopt the alter ego of one of his imagined personalities and he manages to convince the townspeople that he's a notorious gunslinger with a lightning-fast trigger finger.

Convinced that Rango really is who he says he is, the Mayor, decides to make him the new sheriff of Dirt. Rango enjoys his new, tough-nut, status and he swaggers around Dirt like he owns it, until one day when bandits arrive, scaring the occupants of Dirt and stealing the town's entire water supply. 'Sheriff' Rango forms a posse in order to get it back.

Can Rango stand tall against the evil gang who are trying to ruin the town of Dirt and its people? To save the town, he must face a whole range of baddies, including a nasty piece of work called Rattlesnake Jake who shoots from the tail, rather than the hip. And he rarely misses.

TEACHERS' NOTES

These study notes provide teachers with ideas and activity sheets for use prior to and after seeing the film *Rango*. They include

- background information about the film
- a cross-curricular mind-map
- classroom activity ideas – before and after seeing the film
- image-analysis worksheets (for use to develop literacy skills)

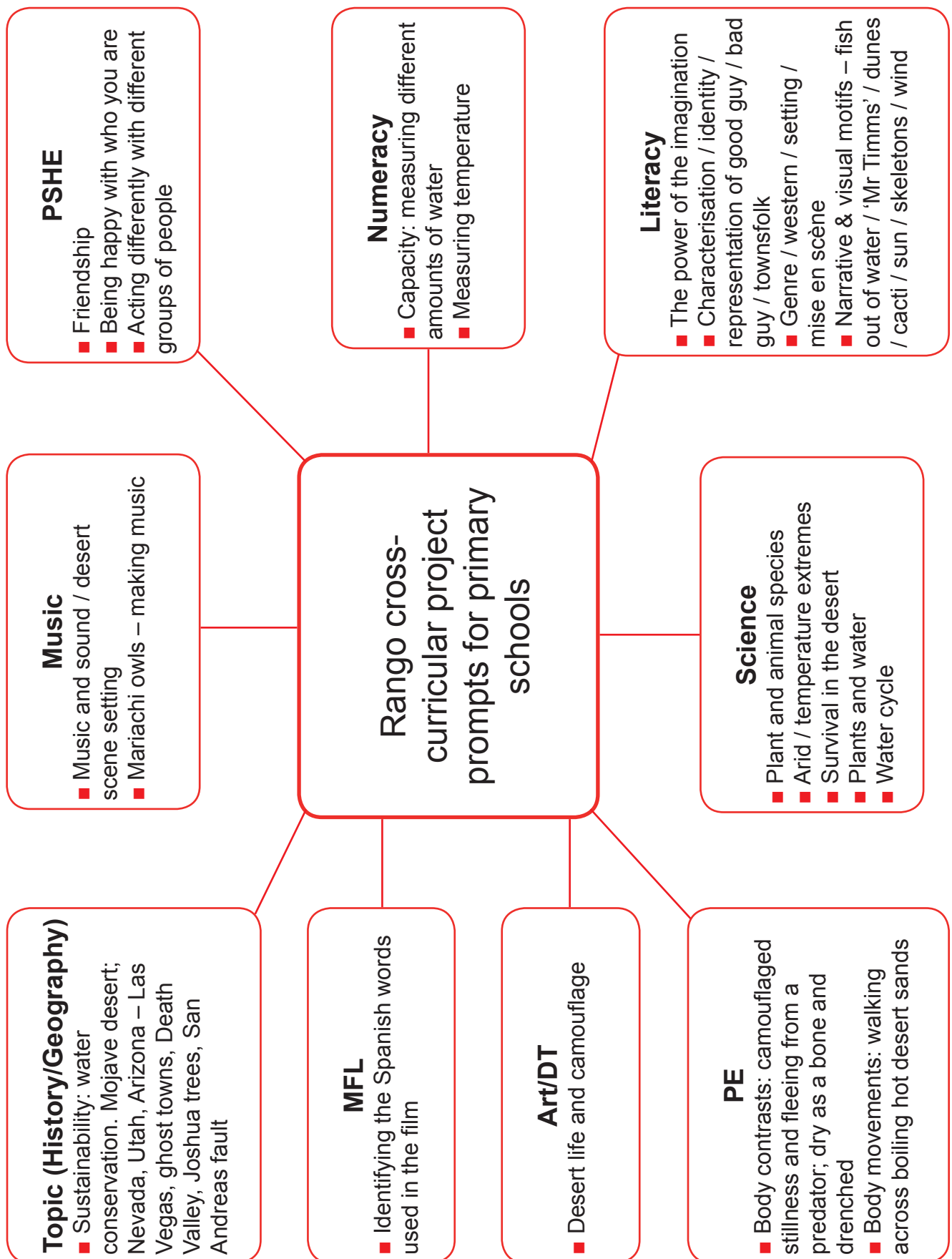
These activity ideas can be adapted to suit the timescale available – teachers could use aspects for a day's focus on the film, or they could extend the focus and deliver the activities over one or two weeks.



Rango's face is deliberately a-symmetrical

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- *Rango* was awarded an Oscar™ for Best Animated Feature in 2012. The film's director, Gore Verbinski, also directed the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films
- *Rango* is a traditional western, although all of the characters are animals. Rango himself is a chameleon. Beans, his female friend, is a lizard. The bad guys are rattlesnakes, hawks and tortoises. The rest of the cast is made up of porcupines, armadillos and other desert-hardened critters.
- Before Rango arrives in the desert, he is a pet chameleon living in a glass terrarium. His only friend is a wind-up goldfish called Mr Timms, with whom he acts out many imagined adventures.
- 130 unique characters were created in visual effects.
- The first character that the visual effects team created was Priscilla, the little girl with big eyes. The animators started work by sculpting the character from clay, then moving her into computer software created by Industrial Light and Magic (the special effects team behind the *Lord of the Rings* films and many more). This is where the character comes to life: where the face becomes animated.
- When it came to modeling Rango, the animators found it hard to animate his face, mainly because of his eyes – which are tiny, in great big rotating sockets.
- The director wanted the characters to look quirky, so he instructed his team to avoid any symmetry in the faces.
- The actors recorded their voices together, rather than each actor recording their lines individually in a sound booth. The actors wore costumes and worked on real film sets. Their movements were captured by tiny cameras.



BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT WESTERNS

Rango is in the style of a classic western – although, instead of human cowboys and indians, all of the characters are animals.

Discuss the 'Western' genre using examples from classic films such as *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) and *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956).

The basic ingredients of a classic western are:

- a good guy who is highly skilled at shooting and who is incorruptible
- a bad guy who has no moral code, but who often has lots of power and money (they may own ranches, or railroads)
- a harsh, hot, dusty, desert landscape
- a showdown!

Ask the children what their expectations are. Who do they think will enjoy the film the most? Boys or girls? Why? The fact that Johnny Depp lent his voice to the main character will be enough to get some people interested in seeing the film. Discuss star-factor and the appeal of certain actors and actresses.

WATER

Lack of water is a theme of the film – especially when Dirt's water supply is cut-off by bandits. Water conservation is a hot topic at the moment, and pupils will have some idea about the importance of saving water.

Ask pupils to keep a water-usage diary for two days, from brushing their teeth in the morning to taking a glass to bed with them at night. Can they estimate how much water they use in a day – in litres? Children will need to find out what a litre of water looks like before they carry out this activity. Make sure they include things like washing up, dishwashers and washing machines, as well as the obvious showering and drinking water. They might be surprised to find out that the Environment Agency (as of 28 July 2012) estimated that the average person in England and Wales uses 150 litres a day – with toilets using about 30% of that total. How would having no water supply affect their daily lives?

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

DESERT OPERA

Talk about the use of sound in the film. What sounds can pupils remember that signified the desert? Digitally and / or using instruments, create the sound effects for a desert scene. How can children recreate the 'sound' of the searing sun's rays? Or the shifting desert sands? Or the creatures scampering across the hot surfaces? Perhaps they could compose a sand storm. Create a 'Rango Sound Recount' composition, using the desert and the sounds of the desert as the central theme. Record your composition – if you would like it to be showcased on Film Education's website, email a sound file to primary@filmeducation.org

RANGO WORKSHEET

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; 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 *Rango*, we are privy to Rango's innermost-thoughts in the voiceover. Write down what is going through his mind as he is waiting on the bench.

Shot two

Compose the lyrics to the chorus of a song that the Mariachi owls might be singing about Rango and his story.

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



Shot Two

