

Tales of the Night (Les contes de la nuit)



Directed by: Michel Ocelot

Certificate: PG (contains mild threat and natural nudity in a tribal setting)

Running time: 84 mins

Country: France

Release Date: 25th May 2012

Suitable for: The activities in these study notes address aspects of the curriculum for literacy, art and MFL for pupils between ages 7–11.

SYNOPSIS

Tales of the Night is a collection of short stories. The film features six different tales, each told in such diverse settings as Tibet, medieval Europe, an Aztec kingdom and the African plains. They are stories of enchanted lands, princes and princesses, dragons, werewolves, sorcerers and giant bees!

GENRE

Celebrated animator Michel Ocelot made such unique animated classics as *Kirikou and the Sorceress* and *Azur & Asmar: The Princes' Quest*. With this collection of fables and fairy tales he returns to the style of his early film *Princes and Princesses*. Black silhouettes are set against backgrounds full of vibrant colour and intricate detail, creating the feeling of a shadow puppet theatre.

BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

NARRATIVE

Tales of the Night is in French with English subtitles. Revise some basic French with your class. Do they know the numbers to ten? Colours? Learn these French words for animals and see how many they can spot/hear during the film.

un loup – a wolf	un serpent – a snake
un hibou – an owl	un lézard – a lizard
une abeille – a bee	un papillon – a butterfly
un ours – a bear	un poisson – a fish
une chauve-souris – a bat	un oiseau – a bird
un cheval – a horse	

Tales of the Night is a collection of shorter stories that could be described as fairy tales or fables. Make lists of fairy tales and fables that pupils know and recap the definitions of these genres using these questions

- What kind of characters are usually in these stories and what are they like?
- Where are these kinds of stories usually set?
- What exciting events are often in these stories?
- What kind of language is used to tell these stories?
- How do these stories usually begin and end?

Visit Film Education's online resource for Michel Ocelot's previous film *Azur & Asmar: The Princes' Quest*. The resource provides lots of background information about Ocelot's animation style and filmmaking process as well as a wide collection of film stills and activities suitable for the following areas:

- Stories from other cultures
- Film narrative and shot types
- Persuasive texts
- PSHE and art

<http://www.filmeducation.org/princesquest/>

In the film library you will also find a guide for Ocelot's classic, *Kirikou and the Sorceress*.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

Take inspiration from your favourite story within the film and create a fairy tale of your own about a hero or heroine going on a journey or quest. Answer these questions to help you plan your story:

- Who is your hero or heroine?
- Where do they go on their journey and why?
- What other characters and magical creatures do they meet?
- What tasks must they compete?
- How do they accomplish their goal?
- What is their reward for completing their journey?

In this guide you will find a selection of film stills that show the vibrant, vivid colour and detail used to create settings for each short story. Look at them on your interactive whiteboard and discuss the use of colour. Do the colours make the location appear cold or hot? What time of day does it seem to be? Does it seem dangerous or a place you'd like to be?

Provide pupils with large sheets of paper. Give pairs or small groups black paint and then a choice of just two or three more colours to work with. Ask them to paint a story setting from their imagination fitting to two or three of the following descriptions:

dawn
hot
dangerous

dusk
warm
beautiful

daytime
cool
quiet

night
cold
noisy

Tales of the Night is animated in the style of shadow puppet theatre with black silhouettes for the characters. Research shadow theatre and create cardboard figures shaped like princes, princesses and magical animals as in the film. Use lamps and a white sheet to perform behind or paint colourful scenes on large paper or card (see previous task) and perform with the puppets in front.

SHOT, PAIR, SHARE – ACTIVITY ONE

In this guide there is a selection of stills from the film. Pupils will choose (or be given) an image and investigate it, making observations and predictions about the story.

NB Teachers: pupils will need a colour copy of their image, plus some sticky-notes.

SHOT

With a partner, explore the mise en scène in your film still and look for clues about the story. Mise en scène is a film phrase that means all that you can see in the frame. This can be any of the following details:

- the characters, costume, position, body language and facial expressions
- the setting and location
- the props, objects and anything else you can see in the frame
- the camera position, angles and what they make you focus on
- the use of light, dark and shadows
- the dominant colours that stand out

Look carefully at every detail and then talk about it with your partner for five minutes.

Success criteria:

MUST: describe what you can see

SHOULD: make predictions about the characters

COULD: describe the image in terms of camera angle, lighting and colour

SHOT, PAIR, SHARE – ACTIVITY TWO

PAIR

Using sticky notes, annotate your chosen film still with answers to these '5W' questions:

- Who can you see and what can you tell about them?
- What are the characters doing and what does their relationship seem to be?
- Where are they and what is it like?
- Why have the dominant colours been chosen? What effect do they have?
- When during the story do you think this scene happens?
- What do you think happened before and what might happen next?

Success criteria:

MUST: share your opinions with your partner

SHOULD: share with another pair

COULD: present your thoughts to the class

SHOT, PAIR, SHARE – ACTIVITY THREE

SHARE

Use your chosen image as the beginning, middle or end point for your own story. Decide on who the characters in your chosen image could be, the journey they go on and the problem they solve.

Plan each stage of your story. A simple story structure might include:

- an opening – introduce your hero/heroine
- build-up – send your main character on a journey. Who do they meet?
- problem – give your hero a task to complete or a problem to solve
- events – describe your hero's struggles. This is the most exciting bit!
- resolution – your hero succeeds and reaches the end of his journey
- ending – your characters live happily ever after!

Now choose a way of telling your story to the class:

1. Write your story and read it out
2. Write a script and perform it with friends
3. Create a picture book with illustrations for each stage of your story in the same style as the film still you started with
4. Perform a puppet theatre with a backdrop and cutout silhouettes

Success criteria:

MUST: include a beginning, middle and end to your story

SHOULD: include appropriate language for story genre

COULD: include a moral or twist at the end







Storyboard template

SHOT	DIALOGUE / DESCRIPTION