

Sample Lesson Plan 2: Analyzing a Good Story...

Goals of this project

First some background. While participating in some industry visits over the summer, two specific job skills were mentioned with uncanny frequency.

The first skill is the ability to write—but not just write, as in a proposal or expense account. The skill that comes up over and over is the ability to tell a story through writing. What this means is that nearly every aspect of your job can be helped by cultivating good storytelling skills. For example, when you are pitching an idea to your boss, how you describe the idea involves storytelling. Similarly, when you are developing an idea for a client, storytelling not only helps you make the idea compelling, it also helps you explain the idea and interact effectively with the client.

The second skill is the ability to work well in a team situation. While the nuts and bolts of animation are often crafted alone (late at night in dark rooms...) the product you produce needs to work with products that are being simultaneously being generated by others. So being able to work together and reach agreement with other people is absolutely essential to not only keeping your job but advancing in your field of work. No one will hire you again if you aren't able to work well with others. To be blunt, no one wants to work with a jerk when someone else is congenial and a team player.

This particular assignment focuses on learning what makes a compelling story, and also asks you to critically describe what techniques directors and cinematographers use to make viewers react a particular way.

Assignment part one...

Here's the overview of what you'll be doing. The specifics are below.

- Choose a short animated film (short means less than 10 minutes). If you like, start here for ideas: <http://www.pixar.com/shorts/index.html>
- After watching the film several times, create an outline of the basic story in the film you have chosen. Who are the characters? What happens to them? Just the basics, which can usually be summarized in a paragraph or less. Don't go into details.
- Next, the details. What happens to the characters that makes us invest ourselves in them? In other words, why do we want to watch? Why care?
- Note any specific details that contribute to the story. For example, at some point does the camera switch from an outside point of view to the point of view of one of the characters? How does this change affect our perception of the story?
- Develop an effective way to document your findings and turn in to complete the project.

Assignment part two...

- Choose a filmed fight scene from a film you particularly enjoy. Start at the beginning of the scene, and storyboard each cut for the first 3 minutes of the scene. Sketch each cut and list any camera moves or transitions from one cut to the next. As in the previous assignment, pay attention to the camera moves and POV shots and note how they craft what we believe is happening and manipulate us into believing what we all know is fake. What makes us buy into the scene?
- Finally, analyze the scene verbally (as a narrative but include any cinematic descriptions necessary to describe the scene effectively).
- Prepare a presentation to the class describing your analysis. Bring the clip and/or a DVD as you will need to take us step by step through the scene, describing what you found.
- Turn in the storyboard and attach the narrative to complete the project.

Relevant CTE standards applied in this project

2.0 Communications

Students understand the principles of effective oral, written, and multimedia communication in a variety of formats and contexts.

2.2 Writing:

- (1.6) Develop presentations by using clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies.
- (1.7) Use systematic strategies to organize and record information.
- (2.6) Deliver multimedia presentations:
 - a. Combine text, images, and sound and draw information from many sources (e.g., television broadcasts, videos, films, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMs, the Internet, electronic media-generated images).
 - b. Select an appropriate medium for each element of the presentation.
 - c. Use the selected media skillfully, editing appropriately and monitoring for quality.

2.3 Written and Oral English Language Conventions:

- (1.1) Demonstrate control of grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage.
- (1.2) Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization.

4.0 Technology

Students know how to use contemporary and emerging technological resources in diverse and changing personal, community, and workplace environments:

- 4.2 Understand the use of technological resources to access, manipulate, and produce information, products, and services.
- 4.3 Understand the influence of current and emerging technology on selected segments of the economy.
- 4.4 Understand digital applications appropriate to specific media and projects.
- 4.6 Know how technology and the arts are interrelated in the development of presentations and productions.
- 4.7 Understand how technology can reinforce, enhance, or alter products and performances.

5.0 Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

- 5.1 Apply appropriate problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills to work-related issues and tasks.
- 5.3 Use critical thinking skills to make informed decisions and solve problems.
- 5.4 Use the elements of the particular art form to observe, perceive, and respond.
- 5.5 Understand the application of research and analysis skills to the creation of content.

10.0 Technical Knowledge and Skills

- 10.2 Articulate the characteristics of various art forms from past and present cultures and analyze similar themes used by various cultures in a variety of arts settings.
- 10.5 Define the factors that could affect creators, performers, and others involved in the production and presentation of the arts.
- 10.6 Know the appropriate skills and vocabulary of the art form.
- 10.7 Understand and analyze the elements of the art form.
- 10.10 Use technical applications in the creative process, where appropriate.
- 10.11 Know the ways in which literature builds an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., intellectual and philosophical, moral and ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
- 10.12 Use a variety of strategies (e.g., personal experience, discussion, research) to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate source and technical documents and materials.

Grading rubric

Grading assessment:

Documentation, visual/design assessment, part one	35 points
Accuracy of content, part one	15 points
Effectiveness of presentation, part two	25 points
Accuracy and depth of content, part two	25 points
Total points possible:	100 points

Jay Schultz, Palomar College Art Department
jschultz@palomar.edu