



A Forgotten Landscape project Bringing to life the Severn Characters at Woodstock School

This was a project commissioned by the A Forgotten Landscape partnership project and generously funded by Heritage Lottery Fund.

Culture Force team delivered the project at Woodstock School during November 2016 following a consultation period with the school. Resources to accompany this case study are available on the A Forgotten Landscape website. Access to free Stop Frame Animation software is on the web.

Contents:

Pages 2-3	Introduction with contributors and participant profile
Page 3	Objectives
Page 4	National Curriculum 2014 (NC) Links
Page 5	What we did
Page 6-7	The Outcomes
Page 8-10	The Learning Points

Who is this case study aimed at?

This case study has been created to inspire other schools to run the same or similar project. The emphasis is on working within a special school context. It can also be used by teacher trainees or researchers.

INTRODUCTION

This project merged two smaller projects into one cohesive project that joined up children's learning in a clear outcome, yet was still very focused on the processes and telling stories of the Severn Levels. This project was very much about the animals and **people** who live, work and visit the Lower Severn Levels; both past and present.

Project Manager Rebecca Bennett chose to broaden the reach of the project and engage with a special school, although not specified a target group this was a more inclusive approach to the project.

WHO WORKED ON THE PROJECT?

1. A Forgotten Landscape Project- commissioner:

[A Forgotten Landscape](#) is a large-scale natural and cultural heritage project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme. The project seeks to conserve and enhance the Lower Severn Vale Levels, while improving community access to and engagement with the area's unique natural and cultural heritage.

2. Woodstock School, Rectory Gardens, Bristol- partner:

[Woodstock School](#) is part of the Woodway Federation and caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues from Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

All pupils have a statement of special educational need.

The proportion of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium ¹ is well above average as a school at almost three quarters. Of the two classes we worked with 12/17 children, **71% were eligible for free school meals** in essence three quarters of pupils are considered to have a deprived background. The staff at Woodstock had prepared the delivery team for a high level of disadvantage and lack of engagement with the arts.

More about the pupil profile at Woodstock School:

- A small minority of pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions.

¹ The **pupil premium** is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged **pupils** of all abilities and to close the gaps between them and their peers.

- Many pupils have been out of school for some considerable time before they start at the school.

We worked with two classes Oak with 8 children **and** Apple with 9.

3. Culture Force- creative delivery team:

[Culture Force](#) a South West based arts and learning company were commissioned by A Forgotten Landscape to delivery high quality learning experiences.

- Michael Loader- Storyteller (also qualified teacher)
- Helen Horler- Artist Illustrator (also qualified teacher)
- Angela Frankham- Animator (trained animator)

OBJECTIVES- common objectives, each session had their own.

1. Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity:

1. Children have had fun creating their own characters
2. Some children have taken inspiration from the artist and or resources

2. Activity, behaviour and progression:

1. Communicate creative thoughts and ideas.

3. Knowledge and Understanding:

1. Learn how to make a character/model suitable for model animation
2. Learn how to make an animated film using stop frame animation.
3. Develop a basic understanding of animation software and equipment.
4. Learn about the people & wildlife found in & around the River Severn.
5. Learn about and deepen understanding of local historical and mythological stories e.g. stranded whale and the legend of Sabrina the goddess of the River Severn.

4. Skills

1. Develop collaboration and team working skills- listening to others.

Woodstock strives to increase their pupil's access to the curriculum. These are Generic Learning Outcomes from the Inspiring Learning for All Framework.

CURRICULUM LINKS in green:

Art:

- ✓ 'produce creative work exploring their ideas and recording their experiences' and
- ✓ 'with a range of materials' modelling (sculpture), drawing,
- ✓ Use these to 'develop ideas, experiences and imagination'
- ✓ With a 'wide range of art and design techniques' Pupils work with an illustrator to exaggerate character features and explore
- ✓ 'the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers'

English:

Children listen to stories, played with story formats, create their own and can tell them both individually and working collaboratively.

Pupils should be taught to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently...They should learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others....
Pupils should be becoming increasingly familiar with and retelling a wider range of stories, fairy stories and traditional tales (NC 2014)

Children learn about myths and legends which they could retell.
Children compose their stories and 'discussing their favourite word and phrases' The storytelling session can be used to stimulate an assessed written piece. Similarly, the same could be created using the storyboard for visual and written inspiration and reference.

Maths and computing

Children use animation software and work with units of time.

Geography

Children hear about and pour over varying landscapes within maps of the Severn Levels making connections. They:

- ✓ Enjoy increasing their place & locational knowledge
- ✓ use basic geographical vocabulary.

History

- ✓ Local study - History beyond 1066- [films available](#)
- ✓ Significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.

WHAT WE DID:

We ran four sessions for two classes:

Storytelling



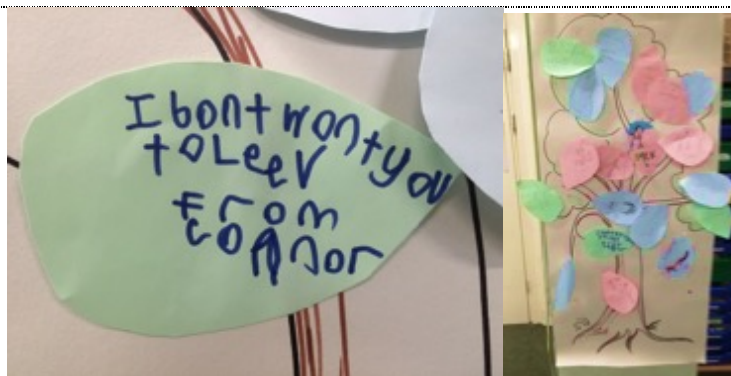
Character development, Intro. to animation & Storyboarding



Animation



Reviewing



Pupils were tasked with 'selling' their product. Again, working together to form sentences was new:

Apple: *This film is brilliant because we've got colourful characters in it. (they also described it as awesome, cool and amazing!)*

Oak: *Come and see an animation of epic proportions with peaceful sounds of the Severn.*

THE OUTCOMES

This is an example of one of the stories by the children highlighting their need to link to contemporary world of popular culture; one they understand.

JS: Darth Vader and Were Wolf wanted to control Goddess and Giant so they went to Black Horse Wood to find two hearts.

The Black Horse gave Darth Vader a ride and Were Wolf ran alongside to the sea.

They caught a ship which took them to a desert.

Films available online- please click the links.



Link to Apple's film [here](#)



Link to Oak's film [here](#)

You will see from the images and films that the children chose to accessorise their characters with 'street' or 'gangster-style chains'. Angela says this is common and makes sense that children want their characters to appear 'cool' and aspirational.

Reviewing

This session the pupils worked together as one group; this is quite unusual. Popcorn was given to all the pupils and they were made audience of their own films. They developed skills in:

- ✓ Critical thinking
- ✓ Shared learning and collaboration
- ✓ Expressing themselves, 'the best experience ever'
- ✓ In creating a thank you card pupils were encouraged to think of the project as a whole and the successes as well as further art.

Pride

The number of 'likes' the pupils could gain for their films was important. Children assigned themselves special names for the project and were able to share their films with family and carers at a Christmas event. Their pride was visible and they enjoyed the audience reactions.

This project was never about reaching large numbers of children but providing high quality educational experiences for a smaller number of children who need additional support. To give them opportunities they may not usually access in or outside of school.

LONG TERM RESULTS

'I liked using the computer to make the film' Jack

It was difficult to judge how many pupils knew about stop frame animation, it seemed approximately 4 out of 17 at the start but they were not aware of armature modelling techniques and didn't know how to do it. *'Angela encouraged pupils to use the software as well so their ability has increased tremendously throughout the project'.*

Anthony, Teacher.

Unexpected benefits

The stories were subsequently used to inspire a graded writing assessment for the pupils. One class were asked to create figures with split pins 2D animation so really good to see how the 3D animation was being extended into 2D without prompt from us.

Teachers reported times of calmness and benefits of external facilitators leading it and as 'they are calm we are too'. A rare opportunity to observe learning and class dynamics.



One of the split pin animals

LEARNING POINTS

Children needing to be removed from the classroom meant that one case a child was taken out of class and although he modelled his character didn't get a chance to animate it. Although this is a consequence for him I wonder if this could be mitigated.

All Culture Force practitioners felt that the ideal approach would be to take the children to the landscape for some 'fieldwork' just being in the environment they were effectively interpreting. The school felt this would have been possible for one class but too difficult for the second as they already struggled in the outside environment at school during Forest School. The storyteller was concerned about over stimulation.

We would like in future to consider ways to **bring the environment into the classroom** like a bowl of sand, a washed-up tree trunk.

We asked the pupils, 'what did you enjoy most?':

'Characters in our minds'

'Achieving lots by getting to read the stories'

'Playing it out with Connor and acting it out'

'Showing interesting working together.'

'I like the bit where the guy pulls out the fish and I like a bit of Keira's film'

'It was sensible and very, very nice. Hilarious.'

Teacher Feedback was equally positive, exceeding expectations:

'Super impressed with how it's come out and inspired to continue with animation'

'Just fabulous' 'Right from the first start they have been really engaged. To be honest I didn't know how it would go.'

'It took off in a direction but Michael let them so they could be expressive'

'From the first minute they really enjoyed it and I was initially sceptical.'

Issues to consider for future animation based projects

- Working away from storyboards and basing their stories on the set which may be very different.
- Pupils super keen to use props.
- Children use unconnected ideas- just roll with it!
- Work two at a time on a set and have a second activity for the others.

How did we meet the objectives and needs of children with SEN?

- ✓ Small groups.

- ✓ Character building
- ✓ Creating story step by step e.g. Storyboarding
- ✓ Modelling expressions and feelings
- ✓ Using expert teacher knowledge of teaching children with SEN and their knowledge of each individual child.

The group had attachment issues where forming appropriate relationships with adults and peers is extremely difficult. They require regular reminders of acceptable behaviour and a safe environment. Some have witnessed emotional abuse and neglect in their earlier years. There are children that because of these traumas family life continues to be a challenge. The school aims to provide a nurturing, interesting and safe environment in order that they can access the national curriculum.

A very important consideration is that children who have suffered trauma as a young child may not have the usual ability to sequence, this connection was not made during brain development which makes storyboarding challenging.

Practical points

- Be fully aware of the school day structure and be lead by the teachers as to the best time for the activity to maximise learning.
- As a specialist school, most children come to the school by taxi, some from quite a distance and are highly likely not be from the locality itself. This may be a great opportunity to learn about their surroundings. Be aware that local knowledge is limited.
- These groups were progressions groups. Already working below the expected level for their age, some two years under. One class were deemed to be more 'year three' than four.



Teacher with his students enjoying the experience together rather than being teacher lead.

- We provided interactions with adults beyond teacher community. Many children we worked with talked passionately about computer games. We used this as a way of connecting to animation. However, Bruce D. Perry M.D., Ph.D. is an American psychiatrist, currently the Senior Fellow of the Child Trauma Academy in Houston, Texas talks about the importance of having adult

interactions, conversations and discussions and how over use of electronic devices have an impact on child development. During this TV interview² he shares that children today have just 1/24th human relational contact compared to primitive hunter gathers and the negative impact this is on relationship building and language.

Culture Force recommend using experienced consultants to facilitate specialist new skills. A resilient facilitator is needed, one who won't be overly surprised by more physical behaviour but also the ability to turn what could be a negative such as repetitive drumming noises in class to recognising that the child just wants to drum so turning what could be a problem into a solution, 'hey would you like to make a soundscape?' Michael storyteller was happy with the level of physicality and the children had ideas of a fight scene which with support they were about the direct their ideas into a mini play. Just setting a couple of rules such as no touching and that it must be in slow motion set boundaries and allows the dispersal of tension.

Future developments

- We would have liked to have offered this to more children.
- Would want to use copies of old maps, some available [here](#).
- We think making links to the following curriculum areas could build on this work: Music, PE and fieldwork.
- As this is a character based project, we would recommend exploring [Therapeutic Storywriting](#) this works on the metaphors that children write in their stories and helps children talk about feelings in a way that is safe because they are talking about characters in the story. [Research](#) commissioned by the South-East Region SEN partnership shows that it can help pupils to process difficult feelings, develop social skills and improve pupils' engagement with writing
- We have recommended to the school they consider submitting the children's work for accreditation for the **Arts Award**.
- Would definitely provide a way of sharing the links in the community and for parents and carers that increase the number of views and 'likes'.

In summary, this project shows that carefully planned arts based projects engaging Special Education Schools can be entirely positive and can help make connections to landscapes children haven't yet visited. We all hope that they are inspired to go and explore and discover more about stories from 'A Forgotten Landscape'.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vak-iDwZJY8>

'Dr. Bruce Perry, Childhood Development on Living Smart with Patricia Gras' (5.30 minutes in).