

# DREAMWORKS ANIMATION THE EXHIBITION

**JOURNEY FROM SKETCH TO SCREEN**

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Written By Bridget Hanna and Susan Bye



*Kung Fu Panda, Wu Dan Mountain. Artist: Max Boas. Digital paint.*



An ACMI touring exhibition  
developed in partnership with  
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# DREAMWORKS ANIMATION: THE EXHIBITION

## About The Exhibition

*DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition* provides a unique insight into the creative process behind the company's on-screen magic, and a rare glimpse into its collaborative, artistic and visionary approach to animation.

Showcasing DreamWorks Animation's creative legacy from the first feature film *Antz* (1998) to the yet-to-be-released *How to Train Your Dragon 2* (2014) and *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* (2014), the exhibition draws on the studio's archive of rare and never-before displayed models, photographs, posters, maps, props, concept drawings, storyboards and original artwork. Featuring over 400 objects alongside seven highly immersive and interactive digital experiences, this is the largest, most diverse exhibition ever created showcasing the art of animation.

DreamWorks Animation SKG was founded in 1994 by director and producer Steven Spielberg, music executive David Geffen and former Disney executive Jeffrey Katzenberg. DreamWorks Animation has grown to become the largest animation studio in the world and is renowned for creating a range of entertaining and immersive feature films that include *Shrek* (2001), *Madagascar* (2005), *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), *Puss in Boots* (2011) and *The Croods* (2013).

Part of the Melbourne Winter Masterpiece series, the exhibition is a collaboration between DreamWorks Animation and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). Celebrating the studio's remarkable commercial and creative success over the past 20 years, *DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition* presents the first ever in-depth exploration of the studio and its groundbreaking animated films.

The exhibition is structured around three key sections: Character, Story and World.

With a focus on DreamWorks Animation's distinctive approach to these three core aspects of filmmaking, each section follows the creative journey from the initial idea through to a fully realized animated film. The first section, Character, traces the evolution of iconic DreamWorks Animation characters from original concept drawings and sketches to fully developed personalities. The middle section, Story, explores the process of constructing a feature-length narrative from original inspiration or idea to final script. The final section, World, focuses on the magical landscapes that are such an integral part of the DreamWorks Animation design and details the challenges of incorporating characters into the setting and allowing the world to unfold.

*DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition* introduces visitors to the complex and creative animation process underpinning each of the studio's distinctive and original productions.



*The Croods, Coral Plain. Artist: Paul Duncan. Digital paint.*

## About This Resource

The resource begins with a range of discussion questions and activities that can be completed prior to visiting the exhibition. It then explores the three sections of the exhibition and the key ideas that underpin them.

For each section, Character, Story and World, an overview of the main films and installations in the exhibition is provided, along with focus questions to prompt thinking and discussion during an exhibition visit.

At the end of each of these three sections creative activities, discussion questions and worksheets (accessed through the DreamWorks Animation Worksheets document) are provided to help teachers follow up the *DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition* experience back in the classroom. These are organized into the categories, Reflect, Explore and Create.

## BEFORE VISITING DREAMWORKS ANIMATION: THE EXHIBITION

### Exploring DreamsWorks Animation Films

Students of all ages will benefit from some preliminary discussion about the DreamWorks Animation films they have seen and the characters they recognize before visiting the exhibition. As a class, complete the following tasks and discuss the following questions:

- List the DreamWorks Animation films students know about or have viewed.
- Do these films have things in common? (3D computer generated animation, animal characters, humour, inventive use of color, music and songs)
- Which are the students' favorite DreamWorks Animation films? What do they like about these films?
- List favorite characters. What is special or memorable about these characters? Describe what they look like: facial features, body shape, color, costume. What is special about their gestures and expression?

- Most DreamWorks Animation characters are funny and make us laugh. Choose a couple of characters and think about what makes them funny. Is it their look, dialogue, mannerisms, behaviour or something else?

Before visiting the exhibition ask students to choose a film from the following list to focus on when visiting the exhibition.

- *Shrek* (2001),
- *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002)
- *Madagascar* (2005)
- *Kung Fu Panda* (2008)
- *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)
- *The Croods* (2013)

Explain to students that after visiting the exhibition, they will report on what they learned about their chosen film and its development.



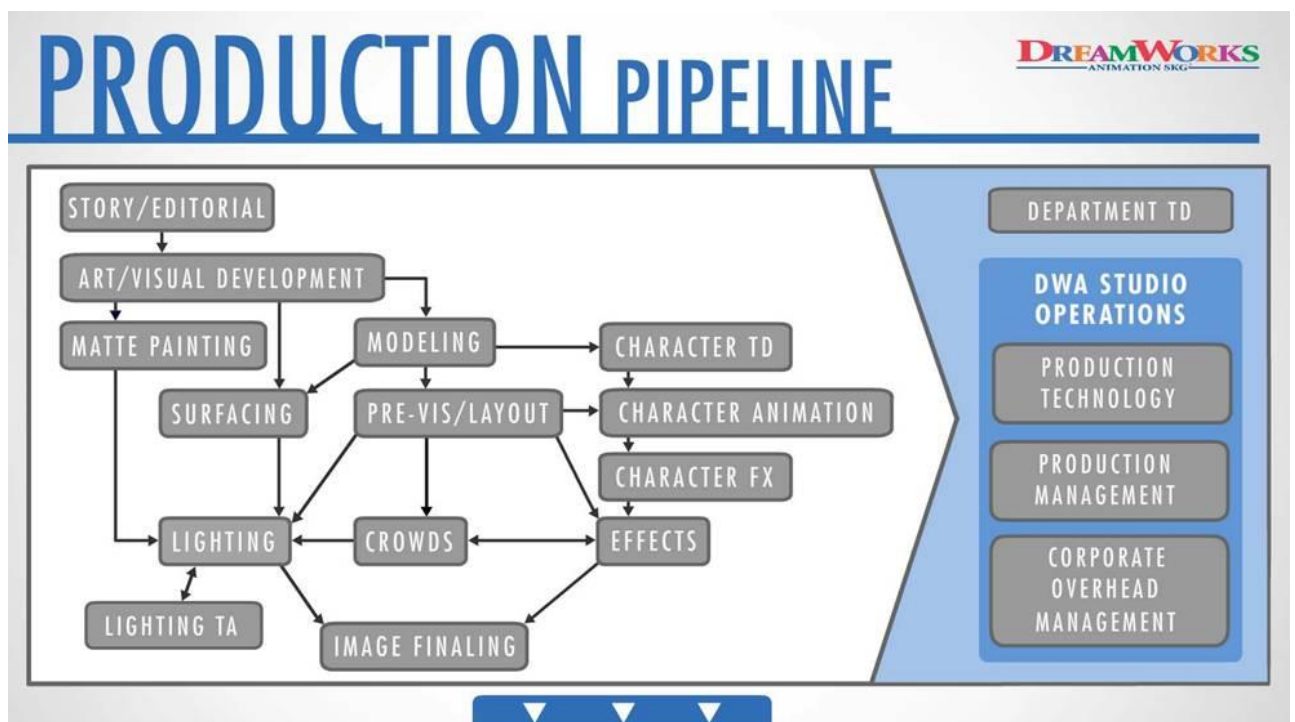
## The Animation Process: Character, Story and World

Ask students to explore the creative and collaborative process of telling a story using animation.

- The Idea: Develop a story outline as a class - perhaps brainstorm first in groups. (You might like to choose a familiar story such as a fairytale to get the ball rolling).
- Character Design: As a class, choose your main characters. Decide on the most significant aspects of the characters' personalities and appearances.
- Planning: Ask students to create concept art by drawing their own version of these characters and compare one another's work. Explain to students that this is an important part of the collaborative process and, as a class, you might like to amalgamate the physical traits that most appeal. You can then consider how facial expressions, gestures, movement, voice and dialogue will add to these characters.
- Telling and Structuring the Story: Individual students or students in groups can then storyboard a range of different scenes using ACMI's [Storyboard Generator](#).
- Design a World: What are its main features? What colors will dominate? Will colors represent certain moods or appear when a specific character is on screen?

This is just a tiny part of the production process for a feature length CG animation. Visit the [Production Process](#) DreamWorks Animation page to introduce students to the whole process.

DreamWorks Animation calls this the Production Pipeline. In the film industry this is more commonly known as the production process. As a class, discuss the image below that charts the DreamWorks Animation production pipeline from initial story idea to the final film.



You may also like to introduce relevant vocabulary before visiting the exhibition. Students and teachers can work together to find definitions for the following terms: pre-production, production, post-production, director, scriptwriter, production designer, art director, voice actor, sound designer, maquette, concept art, art design, 2D and 3D animation, CG animation, diorama, storyboard, prop,

pitch, armature, wireframes. If there are any words you remain unsure of, keep an eye out for how they are used in the exhibition.



To find out more about the exhibition before coming to the MAC, visit the MAC website in class with your students.

You may also like to watch the following:

- [DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition Introduction to DreamWorks](#)
- [DreamWorks Animation: Interview with Jeffrey Katzenberg](#)
- [DreamWorks Animation: Interview with Bill Damaschke](#)

Ask students to analyze the above four marketing posters and think about the following questions:

- Why do you think these specific characters may have been chosen to represent *DreamWorks Animation: The Exhibition*?
- What do the characters and colors communicate to the audience?
- Who do you think is the target audience of the exhibition? Why do you think this?

After visiting the exhibition, encourage students to contribute to a school blog using a similar format and language. They can also reflect on their experience by completing Worksheet 16.



*Kung Fu Panda, Po Study. Artist: Nicolas Marlet. Pencil and marker.*

## CHARACTER

This section of the exhibition tracks the intricate evolution of a number of well-known DreamWorks Animation characters, taking students on a journey from the original sketches through to fully realized animated personalities. Characters are the culmination of creative input from art designers, actors, animators, story artists, directors, costume designers and more – all working together to create a final character.

DreamWorks Animation characters are distinctive in the way they harness the existing relationships audiences have with well-known creatures and animals, before playfully disrupting this familiarity.

In this section students gain insight into the various stages of character development in the pipeline and see the diversity of material and research that inspires DreamWorks Animation artists.

When exploring this section, students can also engage with the Face Poser interactive exhibit exploring facial features and expressions.

A central installation of more than 80 individual character maquettes from a wide range of DreamWorks Animation films highlights the studio's innovative approach to character design.

## Exploring Character Before and During Your Exhibition Visit

### *SPIRIT: STALLION OF THE CIMARRON*

*Spirit* explores the clash between the American wilderness and the forces of colonisation and settlement. Refusing to be tamed or defeated by the invaders, the wild stallion, Spirit, is a combination of strength, tenderness and determination.

Director, Lorna Cook, states that, “There is something wonderful about the character of Spirit, who can endure so many trials and tribulations and still maintain his strength and courage” (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 60).

Spirit’s story is recounted as a voice-over in the first person (voiced by Matt Damon) but within the world of the story the animals do not speak. The emphasis is on presenting the wild animals within their natural state and the animation team used real horses as a reference for designing and developing the horse characters. The challenge for the animators was to create characters with which audiences could identify, but also to depict the dignity and beauty of the real-life animals being portrayed. As Spirit begins his story, he tells the audience that it is up to them to decide “whether the west was won or lost”.

While DreamWorks Animation is known for its innovative approach to 3D animation, *Spirit* is a blend of 2D hand-drawn animation and 3D digital animation. DreamWorks Animation CEO, Jeffrey Katzenberg, describes this approach as “tradigital animation”.

When visiting the exhibition, students will be able to track the development of the Spirit character from delicate early drawings, through to animators’ sketches, oil paintings and character maquettes. Interviews with Jeffrey Katzenberg (DreamWorks Animation CEO), Kathy Altieri (production designer) and James Baxter (senior animals supervisor) who worked on *Spirit* provide insight into the creative decisions made by the team as part of the design process.



*Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron, Spirit in Profile. Artist: Luc Desmarchelier. Acrylic.*

*Prompt* - Ask students to list possible challenges of creating the wild horse characters. As well as the look of the animals, what other qualities and features contribute to the creation of a character with which audiences can identify?

## MADAGASCAR

*Madagascar* tells the story of four animal friends, Alex, Melman, Gloria and Marty, who travel far away from their home at New York's Central Park Zoo and end up on the island of Madagascar.

The characters featured in *Madagascar* were designed to look cartoon-like and were inspired by children's picture books from the 1950s. The simple design of the characters determined the design of the world they inhabit: slightly askew with straight lines against curves.

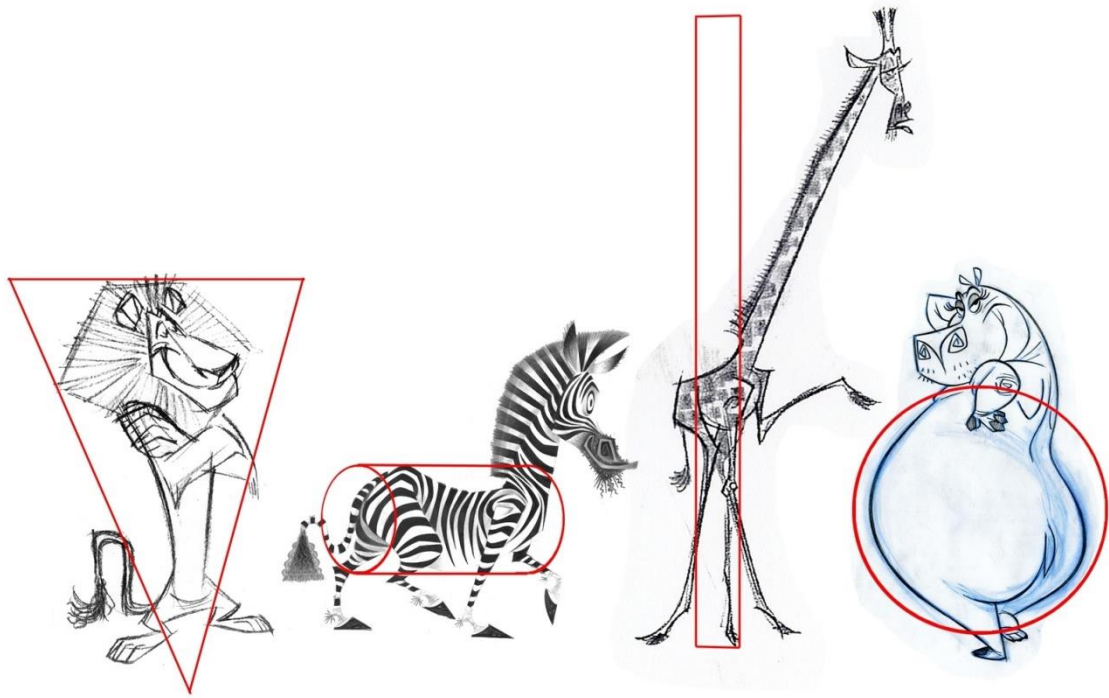
As well as adding to the comedy of the characters and the retro 2D style of the film, the simple character design also gave the animators freedom in their use of the classic "squash and stretch" technique (where characters keep their volume no matter what crazy positions they are stretched into). As producer, Mireille Soria outlines, "The design is definitely more cartoony than anything we've done before. We applied that style to the characters and to the overall design of the movie" (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 102).



*Madagascar* screenshot, squash and stretch technique.

The four main characters are caricatures and are each based on a simple geometric shape: Alex is an inverted triangle, Marty a cylinder, Melman a stick and Gloria a circle. Each has a particular personality trait that is communicated through the visual design. Alex's posture and mane communicate his self-confidence, Marty's huge and expressive mouth and eyes communicate his upbeat personality, Melman's skinny body and large facial features highlight his phobic character traits, while Gloria's full-figured gracefulness is linked to her strength and stability.





*Madagascar Zooster Shape Study. Artist: Craig Kellman. Graphite and marker.*

The material displayed in the exhibition unpacks the development of these four key characters and includes color gouache portraits, pencil sketches detailing anatomical poses and movements as well as large-scale character masks.

Interviews with Craig Kellman (character designer), Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin (production designer) and directors, Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell add to students' understanding of the creative process.

*Prompt* - The characters in Madagascar are comical caricatures. Ask students in pairs to write a definition of caricature. Ask students to take note of the shapes and colors used and the features that have been exaggerated and what this tells us about the characters. How do the characters complement each other visually?

## KUNG FU PANDA

Inspired by the traditional art of kung fu and set in ancient China, *Kung Fu Panda* tells the story of Po, a panda who loves kung fu more than anything else in the world. This unlikely hero is voiced by actor Jack Black who describes Po as “an innocent, chubby dreamer on a quest to find his destiny” (*The Art of Kung Fu Panda*, p. 6).

Chosen by Grand Master Oogway over the Furious Five (characters based on different styles of kung fu fighting: monkey, snake, crane, tiger and praying mantis), Po must prove himself to be the true Dragon Warrior. To do this, he needs to use what is special about him as a panda – his size, shape and ravenous hunger – to defeat the terrifying snow leopard Tai Lung.

Character designer, Nicolas Marlet, worked with the natural shapes of the animal characters. As production designer, Raymond Zibach states, “The way Nicolas designs, he looks at the actual animal and tries to distill down what’s there into something that works for the film” ([Academy of Art Character and Creature Design Notes](#)).

Po’s soft, round panda shape influenced the overall character design in which “good things were round and soft”. His large and unwieldy body contrasts with the elegance of the settings and opened the way for much visual humour. Body shape is also used to great comical effect in the relationship between Po and his father, Mr Ping, a duck.



*Kung Fu Panda, Mr. Ping Study. Artist: Nicolas Marlet. Pencil and marker.*

Because of the decision to adhere fairly closely to all of the characters’ natural animal silhouettes, costume was a particular challenge. The traditional Chinese costumes and robes that were part of the original concept art had to be pared down so as not to interfere with the natural animal-like movements of the characters. The character design also had to allow for the characters’ individual and distinctive fighting styles.

The display traces the development of Po from early concept art to the final character design, presents key drawings of each of the Furious Five characters by artist Nicolas Marlet and includes an interview with Raymond Zibach (production designer).

*Prompt* - Ask students to explore both the importance of shape in the character design for *Kung Fu Panda* and the connection between the characters and the actual animals they are modelled on. Specifically, ask students to discuss how body shape is used to create humour. As a class, describe the relationship between Po and his father, Mr. Ping.



## SHREK (INCLUDING PUSS IN BOOTS)

The *Shrek* films are inspired by William Steig's story about a smelly ogre who finds true love when he saves a magnificently ugly princess.

The DreamWorks Animation team fleshed out the story and amplified the crazy humour by populating the film with eccentric fairytale characters. As well as making *Shrek* a fractured fairytale epic, the team also had to meet the challenge of creating an appealing protagonist out of an ugly smelly ogre.

Director, Vicky Jensen outlines that "The story is all about self-acceptance and that things aren't always as they appear. We definitely turn the concept of beauty on its ear which I think is a powerful theme" (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 55).

In the exhibition students can track the gradual evolution of the look of the character; the original designs are closer to the character in Steig's picture book and gradually developed into the lovable character that we all recognize. Shrek nevertheless remains undeniably ugly and it was up to the animation team to communicate his true nature through the use of facial expressions.



*Shrek, Shrek Squat. Artist: Carlos Huarte. Pencil graphite.*

Shrek's vulnerability and lack of self esteem is integral to his characterisation and to the audience's response to him. This aspect of Shrek's character is central to the moment when Shrek mishears a conversation between Fiona and Donkey and thinks Fiona is repelled by his ugliness. Producer Aron Warner explains "There was something about that moment that spoke to his delicate vulnerability as a character. Everyone related to it, and you had immediate compassion for him" (*Shrek: From the Swamp to the Screen*, p. 21).

In *Shrek 2*, Shrek continues to be haunted by his lack of self-esteem and insecurity and drinks a magic potion to transform himself into a handsome hero. In transforming Shrek, the character

designers focused on retaining some of the original ogre within the handsome features of the new-look Shrek. Character designer Tom Hester solved this challenge by using “toned-down aspects of his ogre features, like his squared-off nose and under bite, and gave him the body of a football player – big, strong and developed, but, with a softening layer of body fat” (*Shrek: From the Swamp to the Screen*, p. 85).

Fiona posed a similar problem, with the beautiful princess becoming an ugly ogre after the sun goes down. In both versions of Fiona, the character was defined by her beautiful eyes and sweet expression.

In the exhibition students can explore the design process and the development of Shrek and Fiona’s characters through clay maquettes and early developmental drawings, and can hear from Guillaume Aretos (art director and production designer).

*Note to teachers:* Professor Jack Zipes’ blog on William Steig’s original picture book *Shrek* gives a great introduction to the story that inspired DreamWorks Animation’s *Shrek* films: [On Re-Reading William Steig's Book Shrek!](#)

*Prompt* - One of the many challenges of designing and animating Shrek’s character was striking a balance between Shrek as ogre and Shrek as hero. Ask students to look at the early character sketches and consider which ogre-ish attributes were retained and which were rejected in the final version of the character. Ask them to think about why some things were abandoned (such as body shape and facial features).

# Exploring Character Back in the Classroom: Questions and Activities

## REFLECT AND EXPLORE

These general questions have been developed to assist students to explore each of the DreamWorks Animation feature animations.

Use these prompts and worksheets to support a focused study on a single film.

List the main characters and describe their role in the story.

Who is your favorite character? What is the role of that character in the story? What is he/she like? Why are they your favorite character?

Who is your least favorite character? Why?

How important are humor and comedy to the design of the characters in this film? (What makes your character funny?)

How important are the names of the characters? Do the names tell you anything extra about their roles or personalities?

How important is the voice artist to the creation of the characters? Explain your ideas.

Students use Worksheets 1, 2, 3 and 4 to think about character design.

## EXPLORE

As a class, discuss what character development means. Consider also why it is so important in a film narrative.

Character development is crucial in any film narrative for many reasons. Mainly, if characters do not develop, the narrative will not move forward and it will be less engaging. If characters remain the same throughout an entire film the audience can lose interest.

- What would happen if Po from Kung Fu Panda never left his job at his father's noodle shop?
- Would How to Train Your Dragon be interesting if Hiccup only wanted to become a strong Viking and take down a dragon for the whole film?
- Would Madagascar still be engaging if the animals never left the zoo?

In small groups, ask students to focus on a single character from a selected film and complete Worksheet 5.

## REFLECT

DreamWorks Animation is known for creating animated animals that audiences around the world fall in love with. As part of the character design process they incorporate human characteristics into the animal characters to make them understandable as well as appealing and amusing. This is referred to as anthropomorphism.

Ask students to select an animated animal character and list its 'human' characteristics.

## CREATE

Ask students to design their own animated character. Begin by asking students to plan their character by considering the following questions:

- What does your character look like?
- How old is your character?
- What gender is your character?
- Where does your character live?
- What does your character do?
- What does your character wear?
- What is your character's name?
- What sort of personality does your character have?
- Who are your character's friends?
- Who are your character's family?
- What are your character's dreams?
- Does your character have a defining moment?
- What are your character's biggest fears?

Stereotyping means that we create an oversimplified and often biased version of someone from a particular group. Stereotypes can be useful in animation because they help an audience understand your character. Many DreamWorks Animation characters contradict stereotypes. For example, Po from *Kung Fu Panda* is chubby and unfit and we initially think he is unable to fill the role of Dragon Warrior. However, we learn that we shouldn't judge people on their appearance or love of food when Po successfully trains to be a Kung Fu master, turning his weakness for food, into his strength. As a class, discuss and list a range of stereotypes and ask students to think about the following question:

- Will your character reflect or contradict common stereotypes?

It is important to remember that animated characters need to be kept simple enough to be drawn over and over again. Some of the most interesting animated characters are drawn using simple and basic shapes. The four main characters in *Madagascar* are based on a simple geometric shape: Alex is an inverted triangle, Marty a cylinder, Melman a stick and Gloria a circle. Each of these characters has a particular personality trait that is communicated through the visual design. Students may like to base their character's figure on a certain shape. They can do this by answering the following questions:

- What does this shape communicate about the character's personality?
- What does this shape communicate about the character's movements and gestures?

Ask students to design their own animated character using pencils and paper. The DreamWorks Animation character drawing tutorial with artist Zoro Rodriguez may be helpful: [DreamWorks Drawing Tutorial – Shrek](#).

Share the character designs as a class and see if students can guess the shape each character is based on.

## REFLECT

In media texts different groups of people are represented in certain ways. Whether this is by cultural group, age, gender or another defining factor, these representations are constructed by the media and are strongly linked to the construction of stereotypes.

As a class discuss the term 'representation' with a focus on how the characters in DreamWorks Animation films are represented. Ask students to answer and complete the following questions and activities:

- How are males and females represented in DreamWorks Animation films? Create a table with the similarities and differences in traits between male and female characters.
- How are cultural backgrounds represented in DreamWorks Animation films? Research the voice actors from each character and explore how their cultural background is represented in the characters they voice.
- How are characters of different ages represented in DreamWorks Animation films? Think about the positive and negative connotations that are associated with different age groups.
- Do the DreamWorks Animation films challenge the media's representations of cultural groups, age or gender? List the characters that break these moulds and discuss how these interpretations ask the audience to question media representations.

## REFLECT AND CREATE

When creating *Kung Fu Panda* the design team wanted to adhere fairly closely to the characters' natural silhouettes. This made costume design a particular challenge. The original concept artworks had a much greater focus on traditional Chinese costumes and robes but were pared down to avoid distracting from the natural animal-like movements of the characters.

The way we dress and present ourselves says a lot about who we are and our personal identity. Ask students to think about the way the characters in DreamWorks Animation films are dressed and answer the following questions as a class.

- How does costume design reflect the character's personality and character traits. You may like to focus on the characters from *How to Train Your Dragon*, whose clothes reflect their various Viking demeanours.
- Look at the animal characters from *Madagascar* and *Over the Hedge* who do not wear clothes. If you were to design costumes to reflect each character's personality and character traits what types of clothing would they wear? What colors would their clothes be? What accessories would they wear? What shops would they buy their clothes from?

Ask students to choose one of their favorite animals and draw or find a picture of this animal. This could be an animal character from a DreamWorks Animation film or a real animal. For example, students might like to choose a pet or a wild animal. Have students create a costume for this animal which reflects the animal's behavioural characteristics and personality. Using a range of materials ask students to stick or draw the costume onto their picture. Share the final creations as a class, asking students to explain why they made certain costume design decisions and how the costume reflects the personality of the animal.

## REFLECT

As a class watch the interview, [Madagascar: Character Design](#) with Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell (directors), Craig Kellman (head character designer) and Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin (production designer) and as a class answer the following questions:

- Why did the DreamWorks Animation team deliberately try to make the *Madagascar* characters look unrealistic? How did this add to the humour of the films?
- What are some of the planning techniques mentioned by the animators? How did these techniques help them to design the characters' shapes?
- What do the animators say about the squash and stretch technique? Can you think of moments from the *Madagascar* films where this technique is used?

## CREATE

The Viking characters in *How to Train Your Dragon* share character and personality traits with their dragons. Look at the *How to Train Your Dragon 2* marketing posters that explore this relationship and as a class reflect on the connections between rider and dragon.





How to Train Your Dragon 2, DreamWorks Animation marketing posters



Ask students to think about their own personality and appearance and design a dragon they would train and ride. For example, if you wear glasses your dragon might have detailed scales around its eyes, if you are a good runner your dragon might have huge wings so it is able to fly fast, if your favorite color is blue your dragon might be completely blue. Ask students to label and explain the choices they made when designing their dragon. Students can also choose a power for their dragon, based on their personality, skills or dreams. For example, your dragon may catch fire because you're hot tempered, or shoot spikes at its enemies because you have good aim.

## CREATE

Ask students to design their own monster characters in ACMI's Story Monster.

Story Monster is a fun, online literacy game that uses the moving image to promote student learning.

In the game, students design a hungry monster who loves to gobble up words. But the monster will need help with what to eat; he can only be fed well-structured sentences.

When a complete sentence has been eaten, the monster will act it out for you. At the end of the game, you can add your monster to a gallery for others to admire.

After they have created their monster, ask students to answer the following questions:

- Why did you choose that particular head, wings, eyes, body, tail, feet, jaw, teeth and nostrils?
- What do these features say about your monster's personality?
- What colors did you choose for your monster's skin and highlights?
- How do these colors reflect your monster's personality?

There is also a [Story Monster Education Resource Kit](#) available with suggested activities for emergent, beginning and fluent readers.



*How to Train Your Dragon Training, The One. Artist: Pierre-Olivier Vincent. Digital paint.*

## STORY

When DreamWorks Animation filmmakers begin developing stories for their films, they often look towards traditional storytelling techniques before contradicting or subverting them.

It is not simply about adapting a pre-existing script or developing a new script from scratch, but also about finding a breakthrough moment that encapsulates a character's motivations and fills the story with imagination and surprise. DreamWorks Animation stories almost always contain key scenes where audience narrative expectations are playfully undercut.

In this section of the exhibition students can investigate three enormous, open diorama cases that invite them to explore the story-making process of *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Kung Fu Panda* and *Mr Peabody & Sherman*.

Students can also watch the energetic pitch from director Conrad Vernon of the 'interrogating Gingy' scene from *Shrek 2* and learn about the experience of a working story room at the *Over the Hedge* animated sculptural installation.

## Exploring Story Before and During Your Exhibition Visit

## HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

*How to Train Your Dragon* follows the story of a young Viking named Hiccup, whose village is constantly under attack by dragons. Hiccup aspires to bring down one of the dragons to prove that he is a strong Viking to his father and village. However, in an attempt to achieve this dream, Hiccup becomes the unlikely best friend of a young dragon, Toothless, a terrifying Night Fury, and learns there may be more to the creature than he first assumed.

The inspiration for this franchise was a series of books by British children's author Cressida Cowell. The DreamWorks Animation team reworked the material, significantly changing the plot and characters to transform it into a coming-of-age story aimed at children, pre-teens and teenagers.

Some might say the story team had the most difficult task of the film crew. If the story was not solid then everything else would consequently fall apart. The story team began by first developing the emotional storyline and then letting the comedic moments fall into place. However, it was crucial that these humorous moments were aptly timed as they did not want them to undercut the drama of the scene. As director, Chris Sanders, outlines, "Our humour comes from the heart of the characters, their unique personalities and characteristics, more than anything" (*The Art of How to Train Your Dragon*, p. 141).

The 'forbidden friendship' scene is a pivotal turning point in the film. This scene marks the beginning of Toothless and Hiccup's friendship and is filled with both comic and adorable moments of innocent curiosity. Many DreamWorks Animation films feature a similar turning point scene that changes the narrative's direction and keeps the audience enthralled by the story.



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*How to Train Your Dragon 'Forbidden Friendship' Storyboard. Artist: Chris Sanders. Pencil.*

In this section of the exhibition students will find interviews with directors Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois. These sit alongside storyboards and visual development material that focus on the key 'forbidden friendship' scene, which was pivotal to the story's transition from book to film.

*Prompt* – The 'forbidden friendship' scene shows Hiccup learning to understand Toothless. How is communication explored in this scene? Focus on Toothless' eyes and ears. How are these used to communicate his emotions?

## KUNG FU PANDA

Set in the Valley of Peace, a fictional village in ancient China, *Kung Fu Panda* tells the story of Po the Panda who loves kung fu. Despite his cuddly appearance and lack of martial arts training, Po is chosen to be the Dragon Warrior and protect his village against the evil snow leopard, Tai Lung. He trains with Master Shifu, one of the most skilled kung fu artists in the land, who teaches him to use his love for food to perfect his martial arts skills.

*Kung Fu Panda* is rare amongst DreamWorks Animation films in that it did not originate from a primary source; rather it was developed within the studio from the simple idea of a panda that loves kung fu.

The story is centred around the film's title and the premise of featuring one main character, Po. In the creation of *Kung Fu Panda* a compelling character design came first and then an equally compelling personal tale followed. As Nicolas Marlet, character designer, outlines, "My process is to develop the shape first and personality comes out of that later" (*The Art of Kung Fu Panda*, p. 29).

One of the most important relationships in the film is the relationship between Po and his father, Mr. Ping. The story team wanted to create a 'warm and fuzzy' relationship between these two characters (*The Art of Kung Fu Panda*, p. 40).

It is clear to the audience that Po is adopted however this is never addressed in the film. There is a point where Po needs an emotional boost and Mr. Ping announces that he is going to tell Po his greatest secret. Although the audience is led to believe the secret is that Mr. Ping is not Po's real father, it is just a soup recipe that never-the-less inspires Po to believe in his own abilities.

Heavily influenced by the kung fu principles of balance and the Yin Yang concept, the film incorporates the use of contrast in order to tell Po's story and strengthen its effect on the audience. This is illustrated through the principle storyline where Po, a clumsy Panda is given the heroic role of Dragon Warrior.

The 'dumpling chopstick' scene in which Shifu teaches Po the basics of kung fu with chopsticks and dumplings sets up the relationship between these two contrasting characters. This scene was central to how the story developed and has been described as the 'lightning rod' moment that created the narrative momentum.



*Kung Fu Panda, 'Dumpling Chopstick' Storyboard. Artist: Phil Craven. Pencil.*

This section of the exhibition display explores the 'dumpling chopstick' scene in detail and includes storyboards, process-related ephemera and an interview with Bill Damaschke (executive producer), Jennifer Yuh Nelson (head of story *Kung Fu Panda*; director *Kung Fu Panda 2* and *3*) and Phil Craven (head of story *Kung Fu Panda 2* and *3*),.

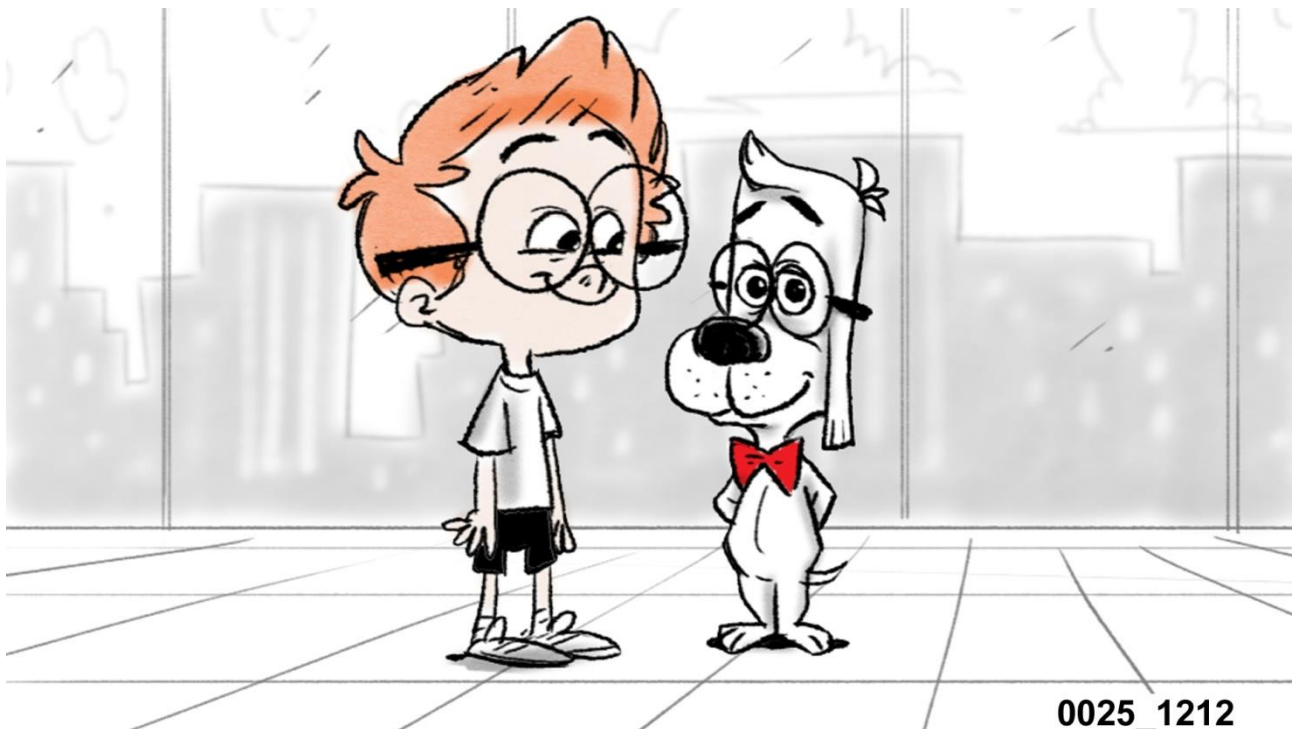
*Prompt* – Ask students to focus on the 'dumpling chopstick' scene. Why do you think the 'dumpling chopstick' scene is considered a pivotal or turning point scene in *Kung Fu Panda*?

## MR. PEABODY & SHERMAN

*Mr. Peabody & Sherman* follows the actions of Mr. Peabody, the smartest dog in the world, and his adopted boy Sherman. Together, using the WABAC machine (Wayback machine), they are able to travel back in time and experience world-changing events first-hand. However, time travel is not all it is made out to be and they find themselves in a race to repair history and save the future.

This film is based on the characters from the Peabody's Improbable History segments of the classic 1960s animated television series *The Rocky & Bullwinkle Show*, created by Jay Ward.

Featuring clips from the original cartoon alongside the DreamWorks Animation film, this display explores how the directors and story artists worked with their primary source material to create a film that resonates with today's audiences. This section of the exhibition includes an interview with director Rob Minkoff, storyboards and visual development materials.



*Mr. Peabody & Sherman, Storyboard. Digital paint.*

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*Prompt* – Focusing on segments from the primary source material, ask students to think about how the short segments from *The Rocky & Bullwinkle Show* were used by DreamWorks Animation to create a feature length narrative film.

## SHREK

*Shrek* turns the classic fairytale formula upside down. After Shrek's swamp is overrun by fairytale characters seeking refuge from Lord Farquaad, Shrek and his trusty sidekick, Donkey, travel to Farquaad's palace. Farquaad agrees to remove the fairytale creatures from the swamp, but only if Shrek and Donkey rescue Princess Fiona.

After reading the William Steig children's picture book on which the film *Shrek* is based, DreamWorks Animation co-founder Jeffery Katzenberg found what was special about this particular tale, "Irreverence, humour, and a wonderful heart" (*Shrek: From the Swamp to the Screen*, p. 10).

The book, of the same name, tells the story of an ogre who is more disgusting than any other creature. Shrek is kicked out of home by his parents and forced to explore the world. Upon hearing a witch's prophecy that he will marry a princess with the help of a Donkey, Shrek sets out to find the Donkey and his hideous princess.

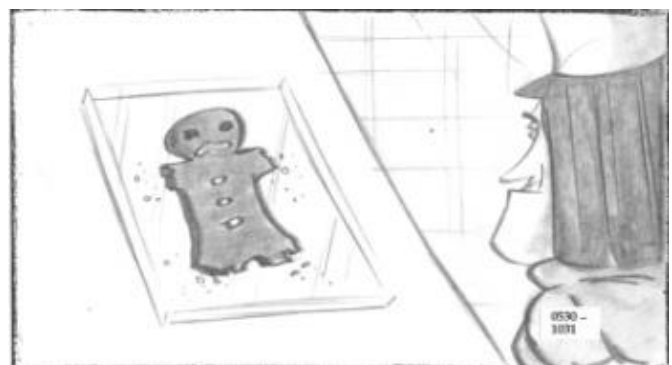
As the original text is only a short children's picture book, the film is much more than a simple adaptation. The characters and basic plot remain similar to the original text however the addition of multiple fairytale references and the idea of flipping the entire fairytale world upside down was original to DreamWorks Animation.

Developing the story for the film was an extremely difficult process and proved to be challenging as the book's plot needed to be expanded to cover the length of a feature film. It was through the process of trial and error that the narrative of *Shrek* began to take shape.

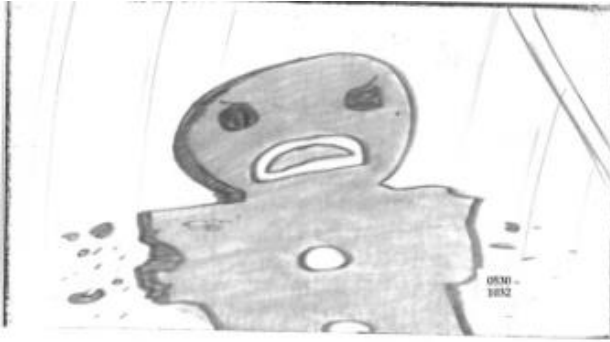
The pre-production process began in 1994 and at the end of 1999 an entire rough storyboarded version of the film was shown for the first time. After editing the storyboards the crew would watch the reel every four to five weeks to keep them on track. This illustrates the importance of planning and structure that are essential to the pre-production process, especially when working with a large team.

Story development was not an easy task but the focus was placed heavily on the reworking of the fairytale genre. As director, Andrew Adamson, outlines, it was a task of "deconstructing traditional fairytales and reconstructing a new fairytale" (*Shrek: From the Swamp to the Screen*, p. 14)

In this display, one wall is covered with storyboards from the iconic 'interrogating Gingy' scene in *Shrek 2*. The installation has a projection overlay where director Conrad Vernon is energetically pitching the scene.







Shrek 2 'Interrogating Gingy' storyboard. Artist: Conrad Vernon.

*Prompt* – Focusing on the 'interrogating Gingy' pitch, ask students to think about the importance of planning and sharing ideas in the pre-production stage of film making. Why is communication so important when working within a collaborative environment?

# Exploring Story Back in the Classroom: Questions and Activities

## REFLECT

All storytelling relies on establishing a setting, introducing and developing characters and constructing a plot that will hold the interest of the audience.

Narratives are conventionally organized into three sections; beginning, middle and end. In the beginning we are introduced to the main character or characters. In the middle their world is disrupted in some way, usually as a result of a complication or a problem. The story then typically concludes with a problem being solved.

However, in many of the DreamWorks Animation films the middle of the film is centred on one key scene that features a reveal, change or twist. In the case of DreamWorks Animation films, the film ends with the reveal, change or twist being accepted by other characters.

Ask students to select a DreamWorks Animation film and complete Worksheet 6.

## EXPLORE

Watch the 'forbidden friendship' scene (27:42 – 33:13) from *How to Train Your Dragon* and the 'dumpling chopstick' scene (53:38 – 58:48) from *Kung Fu Panda*. Conduct a class discussion around the following key questions:

- Which aspects of these scenes stand out?
- How did these scenes make you feel? Did they make you happy, laugh, angry, upset or sad? Discuss.
- These scenes are said to be pivotal or turning point scenes, do you agree? Why, why not?
- How are the audience's expectations playfully challenged in these scenes?
- How do these scenes help develop the story? What changes after this point?
- How does the music contribute to these scenes?

You may like to watch the interview, [Kung Fu Panda: How Po Finds His Inner Dragon Warrior](#) with Bill Damaschke (DreamWorks Animation Chief Creative Officer), Philip Craven (story artist) and Jen Yuh Nelson (head of story).

The structuring of time in film narratives operates within codes and conventions and, as the audience, we view screen texts with an understanding of these conventions. Audiences are generally familiar with the conventional, linear presentation of time in which we see the story unfold from beginning to end, but at times filmmakers can challenge these conventions. The use of montage in film has come to be a well known convention for moving time forward in a story. The 'dumpling chopstick scene' from *Kung Fu Panda* is shown in montage. As a class, discuss the following questions:

- What is a montage?
- How does this scene work to move time forward?
- How does it help progress the story?
- This scene goes for a certain amount of time. How much time in the duration of the narrative world does the scene represent?

## REFLECT

As a class watch the interview, [How to Train Your Dragon: Fiery Friends](#) with Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders (directors).

- Dean and Chris state that Hiccup's double life was one of the most exciting aspects of the story. How did this double life contribute to the action in the film?
- How do Dean and Chris describe Toothless? What is unique about his character?
- Dean outlines the power of silence. How is this used in the 'forbidden friendship' scene?
- How does silence contribute to memorable scenes? Think about how silence is used in other DreamWorks Animation films.

## REFLECT

Watch a similar scene from *Spirit* (1:01:48 - 1:03:06). As a class discuss the similarities between this scene and the 'forbidden friendship' scene from the film *How to Train Your Dragon*. Hold a class discussion around the following key questions:

- What does the touching of the hand to nose symbolize in each of these scenes?
- What does this scene communicate about the relationship?
- What does it tell the audience and how does this simple movement move the narrative forward?

## REFLECT

The opening sequence of a film aims to capture the audience's attention, introducing them to the narrative world of time and space in which the story takes place. The closing sequence of a film brings the narrative to its conclusion. It brings the plot and sub-plot to a point of climax. It is important to remember that the closing sequence aims to leave a lasting impact on its audience so they continue to think about the film after they finish watching it.

Compare the opening and closing voice-over narration from the film *How to Train Your Dragon*:

In the opening scene of the film Hiccup narrates: "This is Berk. It's twelve days north of Hopeless and a few degrees south of Freezing to Death. It's located solidly on the Meridian of Misery. My village. In a word? Sturdy. It's been here for seven generations, but every single building is new. We have fishing, hunting, and a charming view of the sunsets. The only problems are the pests. You see, most places have mice or mosquitoes... we have... dragons."

In the closing scene of the film Hiccup narrates: "This is Berk. It snows nine months of the year, and hails the other three. Any food that grows here is tough and tasteless. The people that grow here are even more so. The only upsides are the pets. While other places have ponies or parrots... we have... dragons."

As a class, discuss these opening and closing lines. What do these quotes tell us about the changes in the film's narrative? What is different and what remains the same in these two descriptions of Berk? Why do you think these lines are used to open and close the film?

## REFLECT

*The Croods* opening tells us the family's back story through an animated sequence created to mimic cave paintings. The film *Shrek* begins with Shrek narrating the story of *Sleeping Beauty* accompanied by turning pages from an illustrated book. Both *Kung Fu Panda* and *Madagascar* begin with a dream sequence from the perspective of the main characters, Po and Marty respectively. As a class discuss the link between these different forms of storytelling:

- Why do you think different techniques are used in these opening sequences?
- Why do *The Croods* and *Shrek* reference different forms of storytelling? What is the significance of this?
- Why do we dream? In *Kung Fu Panda* and *Madagascar* what do the opening dreams tell us about the main character?

## REFLECT

Many narrative films feature both a plot and a sub-plot. The plot is the main story in a narrative and a sub-plot is a secondary plot strand that usually supports the main plot. Sub-plots may connect to main plots and often involve supporting characters.

It is often difficult to distinguish the plot and sub-plots in many of the DreamWorks Animation films, as they are intricately linked and are equally important. For example, *Madagascar* tells the story of Marty who lives in the zoo but wishes to escape to the wild. It is also a story about the unlikely friendship between Alex and Marty, and the Madagascan lemurs' fight against the foosa.

Ask students to think about plot and sub-plot by completing Worksheet 7.

## REFLECT

Every narrative story features key plot points and a series of cause and effect events to keep the story entertaining and interesting for its audience. Cause and effect is a narrative function. Everything that happens in a story must happen for a reason. There must be a cause for there to be an effect (result/consequence). For example:

- Cause – Hiccup wants to kill a dragon
- Effect – Hiccup shoots down a Night Fury
- Cause – Hiccup discovers the captured Night Fury
- Effect – Hiccup must decide to kill the Night Fury or set it free

Ask students to complete one of the following tasks in small groups.

- List the key plot points of the film *How to Train Your Dragon*?  
or
- Ask students to write ten key plot points of the film OR cut up the screen shots on Worksheet 8 and ask students to put them in the correct order.

## REFLECT

When developing the story for *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* the DreamWorks Animation team had to decide where in history the characters were going to travel to using the WABAC machine. If you could travel back in time to any event or place in history where would you go? As a class, negotiate a list of five moments in history that you would like to travel to.

## REFLECT

Animation is a well known and accessible form of moving image that appeals to a broad audience. It can be a great platform for expressing ideas or communicating a moral message.

Every great animation begins with a great story and animated stories start as a concept, with thoughts about genre, moral, message, setting, characters and the journey. Animators used scripts, storyboards and story reels to develop the narrative during preproduction.

Scripts are the written directions and dialogue for the film. Storyboards look like comic strips and are a visual representation of the script, and a story reel is a rough draft of the film. It uses the rough drawings, the storyboards, temporary dialogue and soundtrack.

Ask students to choose a script, and create a storyboard using the resources available on [ACMI's Generator](#).

Students can also write their own scripts and create their own storyboards following the correct conventions using the following [Generator Production Resource](#).

## CREATE

The simplest animations can be created using paper and pencils. Flip books are an easy way to see how basic animation works and show a sequence of events, similar to a storyboard.

Ask students to create their own flip books using post-it notes, the edges of pages in an exercise book, a small note pad, or small pieces of card that are stapled together. To make a flip book, create a series of sequenced drawings showing some movement, such as a rocket blasting to the moon. Draw your first picture on the first page, turn the page and use that picture to help you draw your second picture by tracing it and adding slight changes. You will need approximately 15-20 pictures for your flip book to work. You can find more information in ACMI's [Flip Book Resources](#).

## REFLECT

The film, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* tells the story of a horse in a very different way to most DreamWorks Animation films. Although the film features an animal as the main character, similar to other DreamWorks Animation films, the animal does not talk or act like a human.

In *Kung Fu Panda* and *Puss in Boots* the main characters, a panda and cat respectively, wear clothes, walk on two legs and talk and interact with other characters, but this does not happen in *Spirit*. The story of *Spirit* is told through minimal voice-over narration, a mix of 2D and 3D animation and a fantastic film score.

Watch the following scene from *Spirit* (10:56 – 16:22) and lead a class discussion focusing on the following questions:

- How did you know how the horses were feeling at different points of this scene?
- How were you able to understand Spirit's emotions? How do you know what he is feeling?
- How did the animals communicate in this scene?

## REFLECT

As a class, discuss the question: What is a parody? A parody pokes fun at a familiar story. It takes something that we recognize and changes it to make us laugh. For example, *Shrek* parodies many well-known fairytales.

*Shrek* can also be considered a fractured fairytale. Fractured fairytales are slightly broken fairytales. They will include all the common fairytale characters and story elements but they will change them slightly. Hence, there are both similarities and differences between an original classic fairytale and a fractured fairytale. It is the differences in the fractured fairytale that usually make the text funny and entertaining.

As a class, discuss and list the stories parodied and referenced in *Shrek* (*Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Dumbo*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Three Little Pigs*, *Peter Pan*, *The Pied Piper*, *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*, *Pinocchio*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Robin Hood*, *The Muffin Man* nursery rhyme, *Three Blind Mice* nursery rhyme).

Discuss the similarities and differences between the classic fairytales and the way they are presented in *Shrek*. Ask students to create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between *Shrek* and these fairytales. List elements that only appear in the classic fairytales on the left hand side and things that only appear in *Shrek* on the right. Features shared by both texts can go in the middle.

It makes us laugh when we recognize the story or character being made fun of in a parody. Ask students to choose three examples where this happens in *Shrek* and explain how the original fairytale has been changed and why this change makes us laugh.

## CREATE

If you have access to filming equipment (cameras, tablets, smart phones etc.) ask students, to create a short film in groups that parodies a well known narrative. When undertaking this activity complete pre-production tasks such as writing a script and storyboarding. (For more information and interactive resources explore ACMI's [Generator](#)).

Once all film parodies are completed, screen each film to the class (without discussing which narratives were being parodied). Can the students recognize the references in each group's parody?

## REFLECT

Embedded in many film narratives is a moral or a message. As a class, discuss the following quotes from *Shrek*:

- Shrek: "It's the world that seems to have a problem with ME! People take one look at me and go 'Aargh! Help! Run! A big stupid ugly ogre!' They judge me before they even know me – that's why I'm better off alone."
- Donkey: "I don't wanna go back there, you don't know what it's like to be treated as a freak! Well, maybe you do... but that's why we gotta stick together! You gotta let me stay!"
- Fiona: "Maybe you shouldn't judge people before you get to know them?"

What do these quotes teach us? What is the moral or message of *Shrek*?

## CREATE

Many DreamWorks Animation films are based on other texts. *Over the Hedge* is based on T. Lewis and Michael Fry's syndicated comic strip of the same name, *How to Train Your Dragon* is inspired by a series of books by British children's author Cressida Cowell and *Shrek* is loosely based on the children's picture book by William Steig. This is very common in the film industry and can be related to the Hollywood filmmaking notion of 'high-concept'.

High-concept films deliberately aim to attract an audience by focusing on three core features: the book, the hook, the look.

The book refers to taking an already successful narrative that provides an audience already interested in the film.



The hook refers to the tagline or main plot of the film. Director Steven Spielberg, one of the founders of DreamWorks Animation, once said, "I like ideas, especially movie ideas that you can hold in your hand. If a person can tell me the idea in twenty-five words or less, it's going to make a pretty good movie" (*High Concept Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*).

The look refers to the cross-promotional and elaborate marketing campaigns, big-budget special effects and famous actors to build audience anticipation of the film.

Keeping this in mind, ask students in groups to prepare a film pitch of a story idea to present to the class. Your students may want to base their story on another text. This might be a favorite novel, picture story book, television series or even a sequel to a DreamWorks Animation film. The pitch may include:

- Film title and tagline
- Plot and sub-plot, no more than 25 words
- Main characters: Including short descriptions and picture of ideal actors/voice actors
- Target audience
- Intention
- Genre
- Photographs or sketches of ideal locations

Or you may like to ask students to prepare a storyboard pitch, similar to Conrad Vernon's pitching of the *Shrek* 'Interrogating Gingy' scene on display in the exhibition. This would be for a single scene. Students may like to create a scene to be added to a DreamWorks Animation film or a scene for a new film altogether.

Based on the above task ask students to use the social media site, *Twitter*, to pitch and market their film to an audience sticking to the 140 character restriction. Ask students to search and add the hashtag *#ACMIDreamWorksEducation* to keep up to date on other groups and schools pitches.



*The Croods, Jungle Development. Artist: Margaret Wuller. Digital paint.*

## WORLD

This section explores world-building, focusing on the collaborative work of directors, production designers and concept artists in creating fantastical and authentic worlds.

When it comes to world-building, nothing exists already. Every element of a film's environment needs to be imagined; every detail needs to be considered and made. The challenge for the filmmakers is to create a fully realized imaginary space that resonates with the audience, and supports the story and character evolution. DreamWorks Animation characters navigate multiple worlds, all of which pose new creative and technical challenges for their makers.

This section highlights the depth of research, imagination and detailed decision making that underpins the environments within all DreamWorks Animation films. It is divided into a series of immersive, semi-circular spaces. Students walk around and into these spaces, encountering unique and diverse worlds at every turn. Artworks and moving image content are displayed both on the inside and outside of these spaces.

When exploring this section, students can engage with the Ocean Simulator, Lighting Director and Animation Desk interactive installations. Students can also go on an immersive visual ride in the *How to Train Your Dragon* Dragon Flight presented in 180-degree panoramic projection and explore *The Croods* Production Designer's Desk that playfully recreates the desk of a DreamWorks Animation production designer.

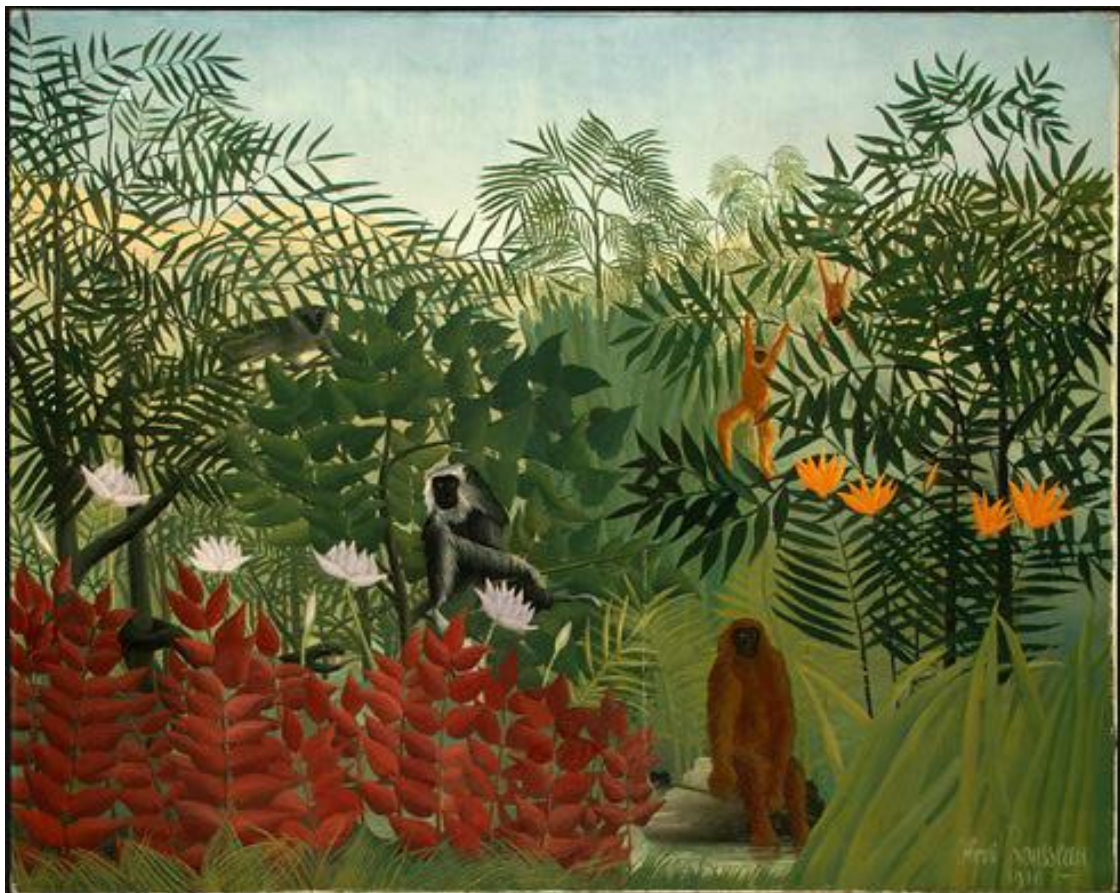
## Exploring World Before and During Your Exhibition Visit

### MADAGASCAR

Spanning three feature films, the lands created in *Madagascar* take us all around the world. From the enclosures of Central Park Zoo to the busy and hectic New York City, from the lush and unique Madagascar to the African jungle and a journey across Europe with a travelling circus. Each of these locations is unique in style, color and technical execution.

The New York Central Park Zoo is based on the actual zoo from the 1960s, not the modern-day zoo you can visit today. As *Madagascar* director Eric Darnell outlines, “We also knew that the backdrop was going to be a stylized New York” (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 107) and the 1960s zoo layout allowed for a more classic feel to the buildings and provided a very concrete and enclosed location for the animals. Yet even through the enclosures are confined, the zoo is presented as a resort-like home for the animals in the first film.

The Madagascan jungle was inspired by famed French artist Henri Rousseau who painted many jungle landscapes. Rousseau has a childlike view of a jungle with the inclusion of multiple colors, flowers and fruit. As *Madagascar* director Eric Darnell outlines “For the island parts of the movie, we looked at the paintings of Henri Rousseau to bring that magical quality to the location. We actually never went to Madagascar for research” (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p, 107).



*Tropical Forest with Apes and Snake, Henri Rousseau, 1910. Sourced from: [NGV Kids](#) .*

One of the biggest challenges was creating the entire continent of Africa for *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*. The world had to be both different from the Madagascan jungle but also feature the artistic



design established in the first film. Unlike the first film, the team was able to go to Africa for inspiration. They wanted audiences to recognize the location as Africa but they also wanted to retain the childlike qualities using bright, loud colors so the film was driven by the characters exploring the world. The color palette was centred on golds, yellows and oranges, and the sky became a much bigger element than in the first film.

For *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* the characters explore Europe with a travelling circus. The director, Eric Darnell, discusses how in this film they were able to bring the characters back to the human world. This meant photographing every street and sidewalk to use as a reference when building the massive environments, however this task was not as easy as it sounds. As Darnell outlines, "One of the conceits of the *Madagascar* franchise is that there are no parallel lines, so things are always a little askew. We did that with our character designs, but also carried it out in our buildings and streets.... they all have this off-kilter, unbalanced look, so that every window, every detail is unique" (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 245).

The three-part *Madagascar* display is the largest in this section, encompassing the distinct worlds of New York City's Central Park Zoo, the Madagascan and African jungles, and the travelling European Circus. From city, to beach, to jungle, to circus - the locations are unique in style, color and technical execution. Students will see models, reference photographs, sketches, digital paintings, posters, book illustrations, maps, props and more.



*Madagascar Jungle (After Rousseau). Artist: Shannon Jefferies. Acrylic paint.*

*Prompt* – Ask students to focus on the real places and artwork that inspired the creations of the animated worlds in *Madagascar*. What are some of differences and similarities between the inspiration and animated worlds?

Focus on the three worlds displayed in the *Madagascar* World Display: Central Park Zoo, Madagascar and the Circus. Ask students to list adjectives they would use to describe each of these landscapes.

## HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

The two main worlds created in *How to Train Your Dragon* are amazingly detailed, enticing and frightening. The Isle of Berk and Dragon Island are tough and unforgiving places where only the strong can survive, yet the latter's infernal, volcanic atmosphere is more stylized than the Isle of Berk, which carries the weight of reality.

The Isle of Berk is based on the family holiday location of the author of the *How to Train Your Dragon* book series, Cressida Cowell. When she was a child her family would spend the summer on a small, remote, uninhabited island off the west coast of Scotland.

The world created in the film is a lush, sweepingly whimsical, and natural wonderland inhabited by the Vikings. The village consists of a range of askew log houses adorned with dragon statues and was placed on a sloping field. As art director, Pierre-Olivier Vincent explains, "It's as if the Vikings thought 'flat fields are stupid, and we are big and strong and don't need that'" (*The Art of How to Train Your Dragon*, p. 113).



How to Train Your Dragon, Village Sea Statues. Artist: Pierre-Olivier Vincent. Digital paint.

The Isle of Berk seems like a challenging place to occupy given it is surrounded by rocky cliffs and rough sea, and features mountainous forests, huge rocky peaks and un-traversable landscapes. It is a dangerous environment created to emphasize how brave the Vikings are to inhabit such a world. Director Dean DeBlois outlines that the design team aimed to make Hiccup feel small in his world, so everything was made to appear larger than life. He states, "This world is filled with peril, but it's rendered in a very believable way" (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 196). The film's animators strived to give the film a live-action feel which was achieved by manipulating the camera's movements through the detailed environments.





*How to Train Your Dragon, Berk Island. Artist: Pierre-Olivier Vincent. Digital paint.*

Dragon Island is an undiscovered location for the Vikings. It is composed of jagged, black, lava-formed structures that blend into dark skies; it is an eerily imposing and ominous environment. Production designer Kathy Altieri outlines, “The environments in the film portrayed that dynamic eruptions of a volcanic land, characteristic to the Northern European geography, but stylized to give them a unique flair” (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 189).

This section of the exhibition focuses on the distinct environments created in *How to Train Your Dragon*, with concept sketches, backdrops, set pieces, models, props and ephemera representing the development of both worlds.

Students can go on an epic visual tour through the *How to Train Your Dragon* Dragon Flight presented in 180-degree panoramic projection. Students experience the creative evolution of this environment starting from a simple text description from the script, moving through storyboard sketches, wire frame, animation and finally into a fully realized CG environment full of effects and theatrical lighting. Students finish with an exhilarating ride on the back of Toothless flying through the Viking village of Berk.

*Prompt* – Focusing on the creative evolution experienced through the *How to Train Your Dragon* Dragon Flight, ask students to think about the design process when creating animated worlds. How long would this process have taken?

## THE CROODS

DreamWorks Animation creates three beautifully diverse worlds in *The Croods*: the desert, the jungle and the tropics. *The Croods* turned the traditional filmmaking workflow on its head. Whilst the world-building process usually follows the development of a film's storyline, in the creation of *The Croods* the relationship between the art department and the scriptwriters was much more fluid. In many cases the story was adapted to accommodate the extraordinary landscapes and creatures created by *The Croods* art department.

The animators strived to integrate the look of the characters and the worlds in the film. Markus Manninen, *The Croods* VFX supervisor, discusses the importance of lighting when making this link between characters and worlds. He states that every material and texture had to be lit by one singular light source to create the illusion of the two elements living together. Manninen states, "We wanted the characters, the family, to feel the world, to participate with the world" (*The Croods: Welcome to the Jungle*).

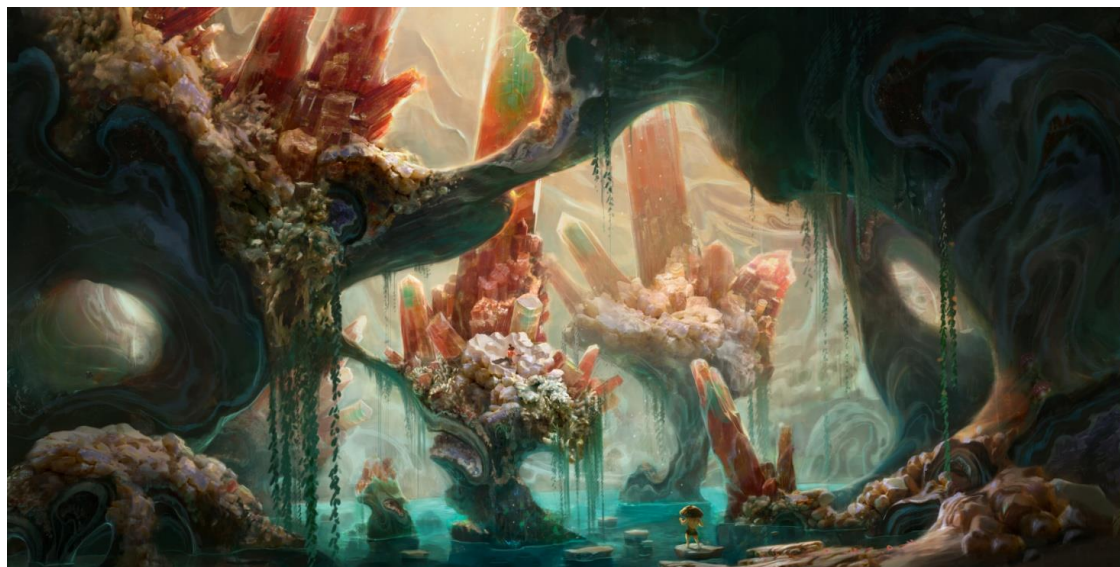


*The Croods, The Tundra. Artist: Paul Duncan. Digital paint.*

The production team did not want to anchor the film in a world with known animals like mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, as this would not allow the audience to see things for the first time. As director, Kirk DeMicco, outlines, "We wanted our audience and the characters to be seeing things for the first time together. In our version it's like 'Oh, look here are some cute birds, oh man, wait, they're not cute birds.' I think that's what kept the audience involved in it" (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 268).

*The Croods'* director, Chris Sanders, explains that the artists were excited by the challenge of creating a prehistoric world from scratch: "In a way, everything was going to come from a place of

fantasy, so it was going to fully engage everyone’s imagination. So on the one hand it was an exciting prospect, a world without boundaries where we could indulge ourselves. But very quickly we learned the curse of such freedom – no boundaries, no template, so no clear place to begin” (*The Art of DreamWorks Animation*, p. 265)



*The Croods, Crystal Cave. Artist: Takao Noguchi Margartet Wuller and Ron Kurniawan. Digital paint.*

In this section of the exhibition students see concept artwork, developmental sketches and film excerpts to provide insight into the organic production design process.

*The Croods* Production Designer’s Desk is a dramatic, animated sculptural installation that playfully recreates the desk of a production designer. Students encounter early developmental artwork, sketches and research material, and watch it magically evolve into fantastical worlds, shape-shifting plants, insects and sea-creatures.

*Prompt* – This section of the exhibition illustrates the diversity explored in *The Croods*. Ask students to compare the developmental sketches and concept artwork to the film excerpts. Ask them to think about how much changed over the pre-production and production process. Do they agree that the right changes were made? Why, why not?



## KUNG FU PANDA

The textured, picturesque worlds within the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise were inspired by Asian color theory and the contrasting principles of yin and yang. Majestic hillsides, sweeping valleys and grand palaces draw the viewer into an accessible yet imaginative space, rich in detail and thoughtful in its portrayal of an elegant historical culture.

Po's home, the Valley of Peace, is a breathtaking, open landscape with an air of brilliance. The village, inhabited by many different animals, is located at the bottom of a valley with a magnificent grand temple at the top looking over the village. The huge number of stairs up to the Jade Palace emphasizes Po's difficulty in reaching his goal throughout the film. Firstly, as he climbs up the stairs to attend the Dragon Warrior ceremony and then later in the film when he arrives, puffed out, but just in time to save Shifu and take on the evil Tai Lung.



*Kung Fu Panda, Golden Valley of Peace. Artist: Tang Kheng Heng. Digital paint.*

The peach tree is also one of the most important locations in *Kung Fu Panda*. In Chinese culture the peach represents longevity, immortality and the season of renewal and rebirth – spring. The peach tree is positioned upon a single rocky ledge above the clouds, and is commonly shown during night scenes emphasising the beautiful contrast of the pink peach blossoms against the dark blue night sky. High above the clouds, the peach tree has a spiritual connection and is used as a place where

characters come to seek assistance or guidance. It is the location of Po and Oogway's first conversation after Po is chosen as the Dragon Warrior and it is also the location of Oogway's departure.

Throughout these locations the animators have incorporated mist, a common motif in Chinese painting. Especially prevalent around the temple and peach tree the mist adds magic and mystery to the landscape.



*Kung Fu Panda, Wu Dan Mountain. Artist: Max Boas. Digital paint.*

Asian color theory was also extremely influential when creating the mood of the film through the landscape. In an interview, production designer, Raymond Zibach discusses the 'power colors' used throughout the film and how the team working on the film, "actually decided what every color would mean". This strong vision meant that at times the sky would be orange to symbolize Po's goodness, fire may be blue to illustrate Tai Lung's evil power, green represents Oogway's wisdom and brown would be used in the background to show Shifu's strong work ethic.

In this section students find concept sketches, backdrops, film clips and ephemera from the Valley of Peace, Gongmen City and Po's arresting Dream Sequence.

*Prompt* – Focusing on the artwork and sketches on display in this section, ask students to think about how color in the worlds is used to insert meaning into the story.

## Exploring World Back in the Classroom: Questions and Activities

### REFLECT

It is important to establish the sort of world your character inhabits. One of the beauties of animation is that stories can take place wherever you like. The only boundary is your imagination. Some animated worlds are based on real places, while others are entirely fictional. Many are a combination of reality and fantasy. The important thing is that once you have created your world, it needs to have consistencies in order to be believable. So, it needs to belong to one time in history, or



the future, unless of course you can use time travel like *Mr. Peabody & Sherman*. Designers need to decide on what the world is like, what the boundaries and rules are, and stick to those decisions.

In thinking about animated films ask students to consider the worlds from their favorite animations. Ask students to choose two worlds created in DreamWorks Animation films to compare and answer the following questions:

- What shapes, colors and styles are used?
- How are differences between friendly and hostile environments depicted?
- What are the rules that guide the depiction of these worlds?

## REFLECT AND EXPLORE

The worlds created for the *Madagascar* film franchise present the vivid contrast between the city, the beach, the jungle and the circus. As a class watch the interview, [Madagascar World: Wack Factor](#) with Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell (directors) and Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin (production designer) and answer the following questions:

- What is the 'wack factor' developed for the *Madagascar* films?
- How do the DreamWorks Animation team describe the different worlds created in the films?
- How did the DreamWorks Animation team use real life locations to inspire the worlds they created?
- Each of these created worlds are very different. Focus on the following screenshots and describe how different worlds are represented in these scenes? What is the audience encouraged to focus on? What is the focal point of the shoot? Consider the use of color and lighting.



*Madagascar screenshots, color and lighting.*

The animated versions of New York City and Madagascar are based on real locations. Investigate these locations and in groups create a poster that compares images and descriptions from the real life locations with the animated worlds created in *Madagascar*.

## EXPLORE AND CREATE

Animated worlds can be based on real locations or imaginary worlds.

Ask students to complete Worksheet 9 which looks at the different worlds created in *Madagascar*, *Shrek*, *Spirit: The Stallion of the Cimarron*, *The Croods* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

## CREATE

Watch the opening scene from *How to Train Your Dragon* (00:34 – 8:38) as a class and ask students to complete one of the following tasks:

- Write a journal entry about how it feels to be an observer of the initial scene of the film. Include descriptive language and focus on the landscape.
- Imagine you are the main character, Hiccup, write a letter to a friend describing what you like and don't like about Berk.

## CREATE

Cressida Cowell, author of the book that provided inspiration for the film, *How to Train Your Dragon* suggests that creating a map is a good way to start a story. Create a map of your own imaginary world. Label the places on the map where you think key scenes would take place. You may like to write a script and/or draw a storyboard to further develop the action that takes places in these locations.

Choose one of the following films: *Madagascar*, *Shrek*, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* or *The Croods* and create an illustrated map of the main character's journey throughout the film. You may like to focus on the character's movements during one section of the film (for example, you could focus on Marty's movements around Madagascar) or you could focus on the journey depicted throughout the entire film. Use a key to identify the different areas where important scenes take place.

## REFLECT

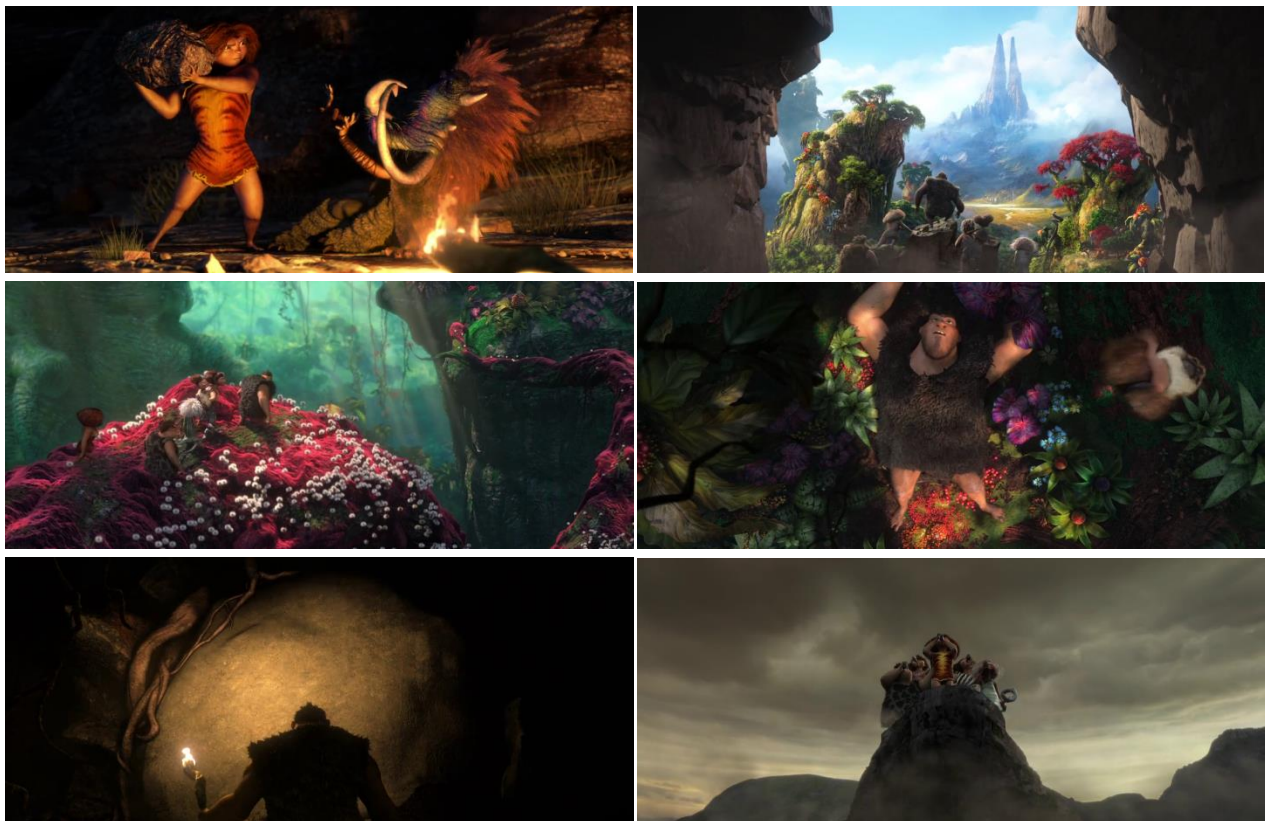
As a class watch the interview, [How to Train Your Dragon: To Berk and Beyond](#) with Pierre-Olivier Vincent (art director and production designer) and discuss the following questions:

- What does Pierre-Olivier say about scale, space and drama when placing the Viking characters in the *How to Train Your Dragon* landscapes?
- What does Pierre-Olivier say about the shape of Dragon Island? What is the significance of the shape in the film narrative?
- How was lighting used to enhance the dark scenes that were important to the mood of the film?

## REFLECT

DreamWorks Animation creates three beautifully diverse worlds in *The Croods*. These are the desert, the jungle and the tropics. There was a strong emphasis on integrating the characters within the worlds created and the use of light was very important when making this link. As a class watch the interview [The Croods: Welcome to the Jungle](#) with Christophe Lautrette (production designer) and Markus Manninen (VFX supervisor). As a class discuss the following questions:

- Can you think of specific scenes from *The Croods* where the characters and landscape are intricately connected? Describe the connection.
- What different techniques were used to create the link between character and world?
- There is no bad guy in the film and as a consequence the world takes on the role of the evil character. How is this achieved?
- How does Markus Manninen describe the animation of water sequence and the final destruction of the world? Why do you think these effects were so important when creating the world?
- Explain how lighting plays an integral role in connecting characters to landscape. An analysis of the following screenshots might help you to respond.



*The Croods* screenshots, lighting.

Guillaume Aretos the *Shrek* production designer also makes the link between crazy characters and beautiful worlds. The emphasis in *Shrek* was to produce a realistic animated world. Like Lautrette and Manninen, Aretos states that light was the binding agent that allowed the crazy characters to be linked to the realist world. Ask students to find similar screenshots from *Shrek* that use lighting to make the connection between the characters and world.

## CREATE

Ask students to think about all the different textures and materials they see in *The Croods*. Creating a world is a difficult process. A world is like a character itself. It needs to have a personality. This is achieved by adding fine details and using textures and lighting. Ask students to complete one of the following activities to see how difficult this process is:

- Find a textured object that is interesting and try to recreate the look and feel of this object in a drawing or painting.
- Think of the ways you could create a desert, jungle or tropical landscape. Draw a picture that represents this landscape focusing on detail, light, shade and texture.

## REFLECT AND EXPLORE

In the *Kung Fu Panda World* display students learn how influential Asian color theory is in creating the mood of the film. The landscape features majestic hillsides, sweeping valleys and grand places with intricate and elegant detail that draws the viewer into this realistic yet imagined space.

In an interview, *Kung Fu Panda* production designer, Raymond Zibach talks about the “power colors” used throughout the movie and how the team working on the film, “actually decided what every color would mean”. As a class watch the interview, [Kung Fu Panda: From Mr Ping’s Noodle Shop to the Tower of the Sacred Flame](#) with Raymond Zibach (production designer) and Teng Kheng Heng (art director).

Using the interview and knowledge gained from the exhibition ask students to align the following colors to characters or moods.

- Gold/Yellow (Good, Po)
- Blue/Grey (Bad, Tai Lung)
- Green (Wisdom, Oogway)
- Brown (Hard work, Shifu)
- Red (Power, Tigress and Rhino Guards)



*Kung Fu Panda, Opening Dream Sequence. Artist: Tang Kheng Heng. Digital paint.*



As a class, watch the opening dream sequence from *Kung Fu Panda* (00:24 – 02:38) and discuss how the color powers are established in the opening scene. Use your knowledge of the sketches and inspiration for the dream sequences displayed in the exhibition.

In small groups ask students to discuss the color used in the world of *Kung Fu Panda* and answer the following questions:

- How is color used in the landscape to signify different moods and characters in the following screenshots?



*Kung Fu Panda* screenshots, power colors.

- Yellow/Gold/Orange always surrounds Po, yet Tai Lung's eyes are deliberately yellow. Zibach points out that this decision was made so the audience would see the possibility of something redeeming in Tai Lung. When watching the film did you recognize this?
- Zibach also states that red signifies joy in Chinese culture. In Western culture it would usually be the color associated with the 'bad guy'. Why do you think it is used as the color of power in the film? Do you think the artistic team was trying to balance the traditional colors used in China for the Western audience?
- The *Kung Fu Panda* production team drew on various paintings, photographs and films that inspired their use of color in film. Spend time searching for traditional Chinese paintings, photographs of Chinese architecture or landscapes and kung fu films that incorporate a similar color palette as *Kung Fu Panda*.

## REFLECT

The film *Shrek* creates beautiful and realistic landscapes filled with magical and crazy characters. In the interview *The Shrek Characters: Emerging from the Swamp* featured in the exhibition, Guillaume Aretos, the *Shrek* production designer, states, “In any animated movie there is that luxury we have, that is, the audience is going to look at it and by default not really questioning it because they’re just giving into a world that we imagined and that’s a fantastic power. I mean, it’s one of the reasons why we do this is because you create worlds that don’t exist and the audience is going to take it all in as if it was, you know, an obvious world, even though what you’re showing is madness”.

Aretos discusses how he created the world of *Shrek* and how he transformed the film world to try to mimic the reality of medieval times but added in technology that did not exist in that time period. He says the team had to ask itself, “Where was the limit of anachronism that we could actually go to?” As a class discuss the following questions:

- What is anachronism?
- Can you think of any uses of anachronism in *Shrek*? Think about the use of technology, such as the automatic photo booth that Shrek and Donkey set off in Duloc.



## REFLECT AND EXPLORE

The Music and Sound display demonstrates the ways that music enhances the emotional power of DreamWorks Animation films, and provides texture and tone to the animated worlds. It examines the close collaborations between filmmakers and composers, and contains an interview with the celebrated composer Hans Zimmer, as well as behind-the-scenes footage of sound recording sessions and composers at work.

Music plays an integral role in any film. It has the emotional power to set the mood and adds a level of meaning to crucial scenes. The music used in DreamWorks Animation films includes both popular songs and magical film scores that help to transport you to the imaginary world created in the film.

Ask students to choose their favorite DreamWorks Animation film and find a song that describes the world or mood created in the setting for someone who has not seen the film.

Refer to the original motion picture soundtracks and play the following songs and film scores to the class without telling them which film they are from and ask students to match the music to the relevant DreamWorks Animation film:

- *Kung Fu Panda* - Kung Fu Fighting – Cee-Lo and Jack Black
- *How to Train Your Dragon* - Forbidden Friendship – John Powell
- *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* - Here I Am – Bryan Adams
- *Madagascar* - I Like To Move It – Erick Morillo and Sasha Baron Cohen
- *Shrek* – I'm a Believer – Smash Mouth
- *The Prince of Egypt* – When You Believe – Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston
- *Shrek* – Fairytale – Harry Gregson-William and John Powell

After this activity discuss the following questions as a class:

- How did you recognize this music?
- Did you think some songs were easier to match to a film than others? Why, why not?
- What do you think about the power of music in film after completing this task?
- Did you visualize the scene in the film in which this song appears? If so, why do you think you are able to recognize it?

## CREATE

Give students one of the descriptions of landscapes from DreamWorks Animation films (found in Worksheets 10-14) without telling them the film it is from. You may like to deliberately separate students who are drawing the same descriptions to compare interpretations later on.

- The island is composed of jagged, black, lava-formed structures that blend into dark skies; it is an eerily imposing and ominous environment. It has an infernal, volcanic atmosphere and is rather stylized. It is a tough and unforgiving environment where only the strong can survive. (*How to Train Your Dragon* – Dragon Island)
- It is a small round island which contains many interesting geological landforms. It is a lush, sweepingly whimsical, and natural wonderland. It is a tough landscape to inhabit, but carries a weight of reality. A village can be found on a gentle slope and it is filled with houses with

architectural references to the monsters that torment the occupants; however, they are very mismatched as they are constantly being rebuilt. (*How to Train Your Dragon* – Isle of Berk)

- This textured, picturesque world was inspired by Asian color theory and the contrasting principles of yin and yang. Majestic hillsides, sweeping valleys and grand palaces draw the viewer into an accessible yet imaginative space, rich in detail and thoughtful in its portrayal of an elegant historical culture. (*Kung Fu Panda* – Po's Village)
- The island is isolated in the middle of the ocean covered in forest, ranging from lush, colorful tropical rainforests to cooler, dense and grimy evergreen forests and sparse and muddy woodlands. There is a wide variety of wildlife living amongst these different habitats. The island also features a rocky terrain and a beautiful open lake where many of the native wildlife go to drink. (*Madagascar* – Madagascar Island)
- The swamp is green and murky and contains both small and big ponds of muddy, bubbly brown water. The swamp also contains the wooden cabin of an ugly, monstrous creature. It is a horrid place where only the most disgusting and slimy insects and bugs feel comfortable. (*Shrek* – Shrek's Swamp)

After completing this activity ask students who received the same description to compare their drawing in groups. Ask them to explain their reasoning to the other members of the group and to choose the drawing that best represents the description to present back to the class.

## EXPLORE

Characters and worlds are intricately linked in DreamWorks Animation films. Different types of shots are commonly used to show this relationship between the world and characters.

Ask students to complete Worksheet 15 and explore this concept.

## LIST OF DREAMSWORKS ANIMATION FILMS

*Antz* (1998)  
*Bee Movie* (2007)  
*Chicken Run* (2000)  
*Flushed Away* (2006)  
*How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)  
*How to Train Your Dragon 2* (2014)  
*Kung Fu Panda* (2008)  
*Kung Fu Panda 2* (2011)  
*Madagascar* (2005)  
*Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa* (2008)  
*Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (2012)  
*Megamind* (2010)  
*Monsters vs. Aliens* (2009)  
*Mr. Peabody & Sherman* (2014)  
*Over the Hedge* (2006)  
*Prince of Egypt* (1998)  
*Puss in Boots* (2011)  
*Shark Tale* (2004)  
*Shrek* (2001)  
*Shrek 2* (2004)  
*Shrek the Third* (2007)  
*Shrek Forever After* (2010)  
*Sinbad : Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003)  
*Spirit: The Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002)  
*The Croods* (2013)  
*The Prince of Egypt* (1998)  
*Rise of the Guardians* (2012)  
*The Road to El Dorado* (2000)  
*Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005)  
*Turbo* (2013)

## DREAMSWORKS ANIMATION FILM SYNOPSES

### *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)

A young Viking named Hiccup, whose village is constantly under attack by dragons, aspires to bring down one of the dragons to prove that he is a strong Viking to his father and village. However, in an attempt to achieve this dream Hiccup befriends a terrifying Night Fury and learns that there may be more to the creature than he first assumed.

### *Kung Fu Panda* (2008)

Despite his cuddly appearance and lack of martial arts training, Po, a panda, is chosen to be the Dragon Warrior and protect his village against the evil Tai Lung.

### *Madagascar* (2005)

Four animals who know nothing outside their life at the New York Central Park Zoo, unwittingly assisted by four penguins, find themselves in Madagascar, a remote island full of a group of hilarious lemurs and evil foosa.

### *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* (2014)

Mr. Peabody and his adopted boy Sherman are able to travel back in time using the WABAC machine to experience world-changing events first-hand. However, time travel is not all it's made out to be and they find themselves in a race to repair history and save the future.

### *Over the Hedge* (2006)

This film tells the story of a scheming raccoon, RJ, who tricks a mismatched family of forest creatures into helping him repay a debt of food under the illusion he is assisting them in the collection of food for hibernation. The group work together to invade a new suburban housing estate and RJ learns a lesson about family.

### *Puss in Boots* (2011)

A tabby cat, together with Humpty Dumpty and Kitty Softpaws, fights against Jack and Jill, who in this fractured fairytale are two murderous outlaws, for ownership of legendary magical beans.

### *Shrek* (2001)

This film turns the classic fairytale formula upside down. After Shrek's swamp is overrun by fairytale characters seeking refuge from Lord Farquaad, Shrek and his trusty sidekick, Donkey travel to Farquaad's palace. Farquaad agrees to remove the fairytale creatures from the swamp but only if Shrek and Donkey rescue Princess Fiona.

### *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002)

This epic western follows the adventures of a wild stallion as he travels across the frontiers of the Old West. In his adventure he makes enemies with humans and befriends a young man named Little Creek.

*The Croods* (2013)

A family of cave men must trek through unfamiliar and dangerous landscapes after their cave is destroyed, with the help of a clever and inventive young man.

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[How to Train Your Dragon: Fiery Friends](#) interview with Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders (directors)

[How to Train Your Dragon: To Berk and Beyond](#) interview with Pierre-Olivier Vincent (art director and production designer)

[Kung Fu Panda: How Po Finds His Inner Dragon Warrior](#) interview with Bill Damaschke (DreamWorks Animation Chief Creative Officer), Philip Craven (story artist) and Jen Yuh Nelson (head of story)

[Kung Fu Panda: From Mr Ping's Noodle Shop to the Tower of the Sacred Flame](#) interview with Raymond Zibach (production designer) and Teng Kheng Heng (art director)

[Madagascar: Character Design](#) interview with Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell (directors), Craig Kellman (head character designer), and Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin (production designer)

[Madagascar: Wack Factor](#) interview with Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell (directors) and Kendal Cronkhite-Shaindlin (production designer)

[The Croods: Welcome to the Jungle](#) interview with Christophe Lautrette (production designer) and Markus Manninen (VFX supervisor)