LESSON PLAN

Animagination: Sightseeing from the Blackberry Boat

Inspired by William Sidney Mount's *The Blackberry Girls* & William Joyce: Guardian of Childhood (temporary exhibition on view January 16–May 15, 2016)
Created by Peggy Reinecke and Becky Hermann, two faculty members who teach digital media at Metropolitan Community College
Grade Level This lesson can be adapted to engage any grade level.

Joslyn Tie-In

The title of the workshop, *Animagination: Sightseeing From the Blackberry Boat*, comes from William Sidney Mount's genre painting *The Blackberry Girls*. Two young girls are sitting in a landscape, one is holding a leafy bowl of blackberries and the other girl is holding a sprig of blackberries. Both girls convey a sense of childhood splendor and remind us of our own happy days. Mount focused on children in his most famous genre paintings. After the beginning of the American Civil War in 1861 people were drawn to images of children, especially in the countryside, because it reminded them of a time that they thought was pure and innocent. William Joyce has written and illustrated numerous evocative and imaginative books for children, creating images that are born from unexpected sources such as childhood "heroes" (Santa Claus, the Sandman, Jack Frost, and the Tooth Fairy).

Overview

Discover the rich opportunities for re-inventing the ordinary through observation, memory-mining and simply messing around with materials under a camera. Designed by Becky Hermann and Peggy Reinecke this animation adventure joins the work of William Joyce *(The Guardians of Childhood)* and William Sidney Mount *(The Blackberry Girls)* into a magical moving mash-up of marvelous mysterious mystery-making. Can be adapted to utilize artwork or photographic material from any period.

Anticipatory Set

The Blackberry Boat is an artificial vehicle chosen for the purpose of taking participants on a memory journey while simultaneously learning basic animation principles. There is an imposed process that does not give participants a chance to prepare, just act. With the help of prompts, memories and thoughts are represented in different materials and/or drawn. They then add another level to their experience when they move the memory objects under the camera and the result is motion.

Objectives

- Students will write creatively.
- Students will create an animation that requires group participation/contribution.
- Students will work in groups.
- Students will investigate time and motion.
- Students will investigate materials.

Supplies

- Camera and copy stand with lights if available- may accomplish with iPhone or iPad and appropriate tripods or holders and applications.
- Drawing materials, printed photocopies of target artwork, materials to create backgrounds, lined paper for memory clouds, materials to cut up and assemble memory objects to fly through camera frame
- Glue sticks
- Animation registration pegboard and punched paper/acetate or registration bars made from cardboard/matt board

Vocabulary

- Persistence of vision
- Touchstones
- Animation
- Textures

Lesson Outline

1) Create assets

   The assets created for this can be anything: drawings, paintings, cut paper, etc. An important part of this process is that it works better if it is timed, allowing the participants to focus only on the task at hand and not overthink their writing or drawing. Spontaneity is encouraged here, creating opportunities for different relationships of words and images to present themselves.

2) Move them under the camera

   Choose a number of frames for each participant to move their "assets" under the camera. This part of the process works well for small groups, as each person is learning on the spot what to do. The next person in line can learn from the previous movement.

   Choose a rate of speed to play back the frames shot.

3) Add sound

   Sound is a LARGE part of this process. The whole project can be based on an audio track or music or sound effects or the sound can be added after all frames have been put into a movie.

Extensions

Almost any subject can be the focus of this project: historical periods, representative art and artifacts, mathematics and formulas and their originators, poetry and creative writing, book reports and science projects. The possibilities are only limited by imagination.

About the Stop Motion Animation

Stop motion is an animation technique that physically manipulates an object that appears to move on its own. The object is moved in small increments between individually photographed frames, creating the illusion of movement when the series of frames is played as a continuous sequence.

We use Dragonframe stop motion (http://www.dragonframe.com/) but that is probably overkill and too expensive for your project (it's a professional level software). There are many ways to accomplish your goal on a budget.

You can also just prop lights at the appropriate angle (just "eyeball" it and take a few test shots to check the results). However, turn off fluorescent overhead lights if you can and also avoid natural light (from windows) because both cause flickering and inconsistent exposure.

Possibly invest in a remote shutter trigger to attach to your phone. That way the position of the phone won't be jiggled each time a shot is taken. Digipower RC-1P Digipower Camera Remote Shutter Release for iPhone –iPad work: although the facilitators have never used this brand it's on Walmart's website for about $10.00

As far as software goes, stop motion animation is really just a group of still shots shown in order. You could take your stills and put them in iMovie as very short clips and play them sequentially. QuickTime 7 (not the current version) allows a sequence to be opened with a limited number of frame rates and saved as a movie. If your school has access to Adobe Photoshop (a lot of high schools subscribe to the Adobe Creative Cloud suite- I'd check with yours...an upperclass student might be willing to work with your students for service hours or extra credit) then doing animation through Photoshop is also possible. And also Adobe AfterEffects world well & with a quick tutorial you could make movies. All of these possible softwares allow you to add sound too.

There are also lots of apps out there for stop motion- StopMo and iMotion are just two. Check their reviews and tryout their free versions. They might be just the blackberry boat your students need!

Memory Shapes for the Blackberry Boat Animation Workshop:
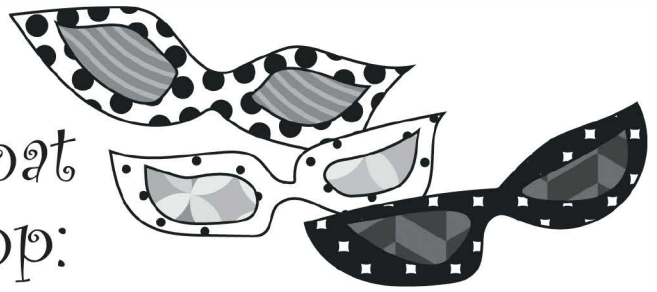
We live in a time when photographic images surround us. If we want to remember someone or a special occasion, we probably capture it with a camera. William Sydney Mount's painting of the Blackberry Girls captures just such a moment but with all of the grit and reality edited out which for today's viewer tinges the image with the cloying sweetness of overripe fruit.

William Joyce's books present a grittier version of childhood- characters are bored, threatened, made fun of and have boogers. That childhood needs guardians indicates that beneath the often sweet and sentimental surfaces real challenges and uncertain gambles exist.

We ask you to answer these prompts simply and quickly (no fact-checking necessary!).

1.   What was your least favorite vegetable when you were growing up?

2.   What was your first pet?

3.   What was the first family car that you recall?

4.   What was your favorite TV show as a child?

5.   What was your least favorite chore when you were a youngster?

6.   What was your favorite toy/stuffed animal when you were a kid?

7.   What games did you like to play as a child?

8.   What was a memorable song for you before you were a teenager?

9.   Did you have a favorite book when you were smaller?

10.   What was your first Halloween costume that you recall?

Choose one of your answers.

Simplify the image in your mind- not the entire Halloween costume, just a representative element shape- a mask, the princess hat, the sword.

Create that shape out of the materials in front of you- don't focus on details, just the shape. And it can be a wonky cartoony version of that shape- it needn't be recognizable to others.

Then create two variations of that shape (doesn't have to be exactly a tracing of the shape, just generally the same), possibly using some or all different materials. We will use these in a cycle sequence of the animation.

If you finish before the end of the time, begin on a second memory shape.

Memory Clouds
for the Blackberry Boat
Animation Workshop:
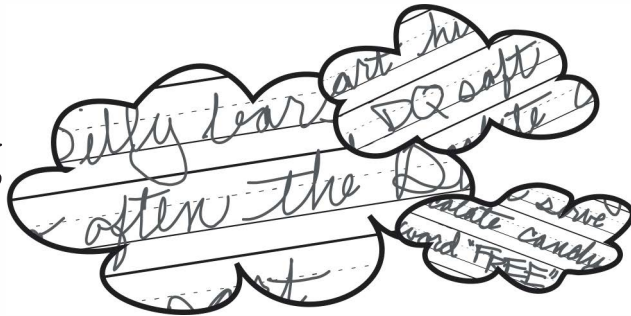
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Memories and stories get along together very well- they transform each other.
We ask you to follow these directions (no fact-checking necessary!).

1. Think of a special childhood memory that you recall in vivid detail.

2. Take a sheet of the lined paper and write down your memory in your best handwriting or printing.

3. Include any part of the memory that appealed to your five senses (the smell of your grandmother's banana bread baking, the feel of hitting a tether ball, the taste of popsicles on a hot summer day, the sound of your favorite TV show's theme song, the way your best friend's bike looked).

4. Cut (or tear) cloud shapes out of your sheet of paper. Make certain they are a variety of shapes and sizes, but also be certain that they are no larger than about 3 inches by 3 inches.

5. Go to the station where the blue sky background sheet is laying. Attach your clouds (scattered about and overlapping others) along the entire expanse of the sheet but not too close to each end.

If you finish before the end of the time, begin on a second set of memory clouds.

Quotes from the books of William Joyce:
"AT FIRST IT WAS AWFUL.
THEN…
ARTFUL."

"Everyone's story matters…"

"Ever since I was a little kid I loved stories about people who were the wrong size."

"The sea shells had more to tell."

And finally, some magic words from A bean, a stalk and a boy named Jack :
"Give it a go. Give it a go. Give it a go."