

Creativity Prompt Ideas for Film

As part of our recent work with Hull City of Culture's "No Limits" strand, which aimed to improve the engagement of children & young people with culture, we created a series of creativity activity ideas. These ideas are practical, adaptable to different ability groups and easy to incorporate into a wide variety of settings. They're very effective at inspiring pupils to think creatively, generate new ideas and use their imagination.

Fear and Love

Fold an A4 sheet in half 3 times. Unfold to reveal 8 squares. Students have one minute to fill each square with a word or drawing of something they are scared of. They then fill the other side with words or pictures of things that they love/enjoy/are passionate about. Pair students up with others who are not their close friends. Share both sides and lead this into a discussion about fear and love. There is no such thing as something that is universally scary and nothing that everyone loves. Vive la difference!

Animate a Face

Animate a face by drawing a circle on card then drawing the features on a different bit of card and cutting them out. Arrange the features on the circle on the floor, position the camera above and move the features whilst taking pictures to animate the face. Now extend this process by drawing different eyes and mouths and replacing them. See how the expression and the face changes and can be adapted and altered to show different moods. Can link this to maths: which ratios of eyes to nose to mouth create which effects.

Fear Flicker

Using scrap paper, get students to fold it into a 10-page rough booklet so that it can be used as a flicker animation pad. Students must draw something they are scared of on the first page – explain that this is not an art competition and any kind of artistic style is acceptable, as long as they can draw it within 2 minutes. They then have to create 9 more drawings on the subsequent pages that show either:

- this fear consuming them: eating them, taking over the world, etc, or
- this fear losing its power and becoming benign

Animate a Historical Character

Students use plasticine to create characters from the class novel/figures from history. They have to consider status and its impact on stance, any repeated or appropriate gestures and the physical attributes of each. Then identify 5 or 10 key moments of development from the novel or key moments in the historical figure's life. They then consider what impact this would have on the plasticine model. This could be an actual change in physicality or an internal shift shown externally (sub-text). Each physical change must be supported by a key line of dialogue or historical fact. If they photograph all 5 or 10 statues they can animate this together and provide voiceover or speech bubbles to show how the character develops through the novel, or how the historical figure's past has influenced them.

Animate a Historical Location

In relation to the above, the same can be done with location. Plasticine is used to create a physical landscape from the novel, or from a historical/geographical location being studied. Just like with the characters, we are interested in the meaning behind things rather than just the naturalistic representations. So a skyscraper could actually be represented as bent and misshapen to represent a fraud that is going on inside it. A grey, featureless community centre could be represented with flowers sticking out of it to represent its positive impact on the community.

Capture an Interest

Load Stop Motion Studio onto a few iPads and give students a chance to explore it so they can use it themselves. Get students out and about around the school and grounds and capturing interesting happenings and environments. It could be just a panoramic video of the playground, or a creative task happening in a lesson, a game at break, or a flight of a bird. Using the Stop Motion software, get them to remove frames, double frames, repeat sequences, anything that highlights a point they wish to make: the grace of the bird flight, the ugliness of the graffiti'd wall, etc. They can add in voiceover, their own music, sound effects. Once familiar with the format, you can give them titles to go and capture and create: 'the creative school', 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', 'joy and pain'. And so on.

Tell a Story, Change Environment, Repeat

Groups of students are given stills cameras and are charged with telling a story within 5 images. Each group member must be actively involved in the project, in either a behind the camera or performance way. The story must:

- reflect a real sense of place – it must capture the atmosphere or purpose of the place, and reflect the physical environment therein. For instance a corridor full of stainless steel should capture a story that is cold, sharp, unfriendly.
- use interesting and inventive camera angles to provide narrative
- not look to resolve everything, hint at a resolution but keep the audience guessing

Once this has been completed, the group should visit a new space and tell the same story but with the different physical environment impacting on the feel of the piece and possibly the narrative. This can be repeated many times.

Humans & Machines

Link to 'One Day, Maybe'. Students find as many images as possible of machines that have replaced humans. Cut them together to electronic music and create a dystopia of an automated world. Now create a similar series of images of leisure pursuits that are available to humans to do with their free time. Cut them together with sounds of nature. And finally another series of images of what humans most commonly do with their free time. Cut it together with whatever music seems appropriate to the students. So whilst some people take advantage of leisure time by connecting face-to-face with humans and nature, others choose to spend more time on their machines. How do students feel about this? Discussion will open up about unemployment, automation, social media, physical exercise, loneliness and much more.