

# **ENGLISH AND LITERACY LEARNING OUTCOMES UTILISING FINN CRAGG'S "CARAVAN" ANIMATION AND SUPPORTING RESOURCES**

## **Contents:**

Action Research Summary	Page 2
General Research Results	Page 2
Summary Outcomes	Page 2
"Caravan" Creators: The Resource	Page 3
Appendix 1: Action Research Lessons	Page 4
Appendix 2: Case Studies	Page 6
Appendix 3: Action Research Results	Page 8

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## **ACTION RESEARCH REPORT**

### **Animation Resources and Learning Outcomes.**

Since May 2005 Action Research in WA primary schools has indicated powerful learning outcomes that can be assisted by using short 3D animations, particularly in the literacy area.

#### **Action Research Summary**

Diverse schools were chosen to determine the effectiveness and flexibility of the animations across different demographic student bases: Carnarvon Primary School (Yrs 2-3's and Yrs 4-6's), Forest Crescent Primary School (Yr 4's and Yr 6's) and Saint Hilda's (Primary) Anglican School for Girls (Yr 5's). Trials were also undertaken with individual students (lower primary, middle and upper secondary) and a class of ESL students (ages 16-21).

#### **General Research Results**

*See Appendix 2 for Case Studies*

- The animations were highly engaging and elicited wide ranging discussions in all classes and with each individual student.
- Different teachers utilized the animation in very different ways, reflecting the flexibility of the resource and ability for it to be used as a teacher-driven tool to aid learning.
- Setting the animated story to a soundtrack, rather than have the characters speak opened up many interpretative possibilities for the students.
- With teacher input, the development and use of a storyboard with the animation was found to be a useful (and enjoyable) way of motivating students to write-up their own stories (particularly those above Yr 4). (Note: The storyboard has now been created as a cartoon-line depiction of the animation, with a narration box and dialogue and thought bubbles for the characters and will be provided with the DVD). In some cases students wrote their own back-story, gave the characters names, and wrote a pre-event account and post-event conclusion.
- By having the animation on a DVD it could be played on equipment readily available and easy to use.
- Feedback from the Action Research resulted in the addition of an on-screen version of the storyboard so that teachers could demonstrate the use of the storyboard in front of the whole class before students then worked on their hardcopy versions.
- Further feedback from the research also resulted in the addition of a resource library on the DVD enabling access to unused animation footage and jpeg images for students to use with movie-making software and experience the effect of changing sequences and developing new narrative.
- The 3D images powerfully engaged both male and female students at all levels.

#### **Summary Outcomes Obtained**

*See Appendix 3 for Curriculum-related Learning Outcomes (Literacy)*

The classroom trials have indicated many potential uses of the resource. Some teachers used it for achieving viewing outcomes; others used the animation to inspire creative and descriptive writing, while others have used the animation to generate discussion on themes such as life and death, trust, exploration, personalities and relationships. One year four teacher incorporated the animation in

a study of grandparents that occurred over the entire term (Forest Crescent Primary School). It has also been used as a visual literacy resource (Saint Hilda's). For reluctant learners it was also found to be an effective way to engage students and hold their interest, generating new areas of discussion and a non-confrontational approach to facilitate writing.

### **CARAVAN CREATORS: THE RESOURCE**

#### **Who are the Creators of the "Caravan" Animation Resource?**

The animation has been created in whole (story, animation and soundtrack) by Martin Davidson, who has a background in writing, graphic design and animating Australian art. He established Finn Cragg with business partner Lyn Hawkins, to further develop this line of educational resources in conjunction with teachers and students. After running a workshop during WA's ALEA conference (in May 2005) which focused on the use of animated stories to inspire young writers and achieve literacy learning outcomes over 20 teachers came forward and expressed an interest in the planned trials (Action Research) and the use of the animations in the classroom. As a result of this research much feedback and direction has been received from teachers, literacy consultants, curriculum resource developers, teacher associations, school principals, and the students themselves.

#### **The Resulting Education Resource**

As a result of the Action Research, Finn Cragg Productions will be launching the first in a series of animated education resources.

#### **Animation Resource DVD Package "Caravan"**

Contains:

##### ***A DVD containing 4 on-screen resources;***

- A 5minute, 3D animated lyrical narrative "Caravan" - a beautiful, poignant and emotional tale that has been found to be very powerful not only as a literacy learning resource, but also in cross over areas with art and media.
- On-Screen Storyboard
- Series of montages from the animation with images corresponding to the storyboard
- Movie-making Resources on DVD-Rom

***Printed storyboard 'Masters'*** (hard copy) for student writing and sequencing activities.

##### ***Guide for Teachers' booklet*** including

- how to use the DVD
- suggested applications and activities
- how to achieve various learning outcomes in key learning areas

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PRODUCT DETAILS OR TO OBTAIN AN ORDER FORM  
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## APPENDIX 1: ACTION RESEARCH LESSONS: SUMMARY

School and Date	Level	Teacher Contact	Lesson Description	Outcomes	Teacher Review
Forest Crescent Primary School Term 3 2005	Yr 6	Lorraine Cornish	Students watched the 5 minute animation twice, and worked in groups to write their own interpretations of the story using the storyboards provided. These lessons were followed by students then undertaking an oral presentation of their scripts and narrations. The teacher used the support material provided as a starting point for the sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing</li> <li>• Writing</li> </ul> Also <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Reading</li> </ul>	<i>"The content was both emotive and stimulating which provided students with a focus for discussion and creative and analytical thinking. The production values encouraged students to engage in the visual text".</i>
Forest Crescent Primary School Term 4 2005	Yr 4	Caroline O'Brien	Through the term students explored the theme of grandparents and seniors. Scaffolding using mixed resources, written text and illustrated stories. Caravan animation was used to explore stereotypes, discuss ideas and write conclusions (sequencing). Utilised the blank storyboard page.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossover English (listening, speaking, viewing and writing)</li> <li>• Society and Environment (investigation, communication, participation, place and space).</li> </ul>	<i>"Amazing just how much my Yr 4's got out of this. One boy asked about the use of the piano in the music and another responded that "the piano is used to show the up and down emotions of the old couple".</i>
Saint Hilda's Anglican School for Girls (Primary) Term 4 2005	Yr 5	Robin McKean	Visual Literacy: Caravan animation used as a culminating activity. Students undertook 4 analytical roles (director, film critic, casting agent and producer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Visual Literacy (Viewing)</li> </ul>	<i>"There is just so much you can do with a resource like this. We plan to use the media aspects with our gifted students"</i>

Carnarvon Primary School Term 3 2005	Yr 2-3	Judith Duff	Showed DVD, asked students questions to generate discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing</li> <li>• Speaking</li> <li>• Visual Literacy</li> </ul>	<i>"These young students found it challenging, even confusing, so we had some excellent learning opportunities about reality versus fantasy."</i>
Carnarvon Primary School Term 3 2005	Yr 3-5	Judith Duff	Showed DVD, asked students questions to generate discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing</li> <li>• Speaking</li> <li>• Visual Literacy</li> </ul>	<i>"Following a term focusing on space, we had some fantastic discussion about the content of the animation and the narrative."</i>
ESL Class Trial May 2005	16-21 year olds	C. Walster	Showed the DVD animation in the library, discussed according the suggested class activity, students then completed the thought and speech bubbles in pairs (weak and strong together). In a later lesson, students covered the narrative aspect of the storyboards. Future lessons to include scripting and acting out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narratives as a genre for ESL</li> <li>• Viewing</li> <li>• Writing (esp. vocab as well as spelling and grammar)</li> </ul>	<i>An imaginative and relevant, original resource that provides excellent content for discussion, facilitates writing and motivates students, including the reluctant writers.</i>

## **APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDIES**

### **Case Study 1: Covering the Literacy Curriculum Learning Outcomes**

Over a number of Language programme lessons focusing on the curriculum areas of Viewing and Writing, Year six students (ten-and-eleven-year-olds) from Forest Crescent Primary School were shown the animation "Caravan" and, as a class, discussed their initial and deeper impressions of the story (see Generic Class Activity Structure for the range of interesting questions explored). Their teacher instructed the class on the identification of physical and non-physical clues within the animation in order to explore the variety of literacy and communication tools used by the animator-storyteller. "The background music enhanced the context and provided an avenue for discussion and example when looking at the role and function of music in society." The students worked in groups to discuss their interpretations in order to flesh out, plan and develop their own story by using the Storyboard Masters. Learning about the differences between developing narrative and character scripts assisted students to creatively explore writing from these different perspectives. Each member of the group was then responsible for a separate page (4 final sequences), carefully considering the justification for their sequence development. "The students were able to be creative and 'think outside the square' due to the open ended nature of the text. 'Thinking beyond' was unavoidable." Students then role played the character and narrator parts of their storyboard creations and enjoyed sharing these different interpretations of the animation in front of their class. These lessons introduced new vocabulary to students e.g. animation, dialogue, realism, fantasy, representation, codes, scripts, sequences, stereotypes, special effects, soundtrack and storyboards. Students learnt about the importance of sequencing and storyboards, the role of animation as a text, fantasy as a genre, distinguishing between first and third person accounts, using expressive versus figurative language, and used their imaginations to create their own stories. Even though the teacher's main focus was on the Viewing and Writing outcomes, over the course of these lessons additional curriculum outcomes were evidenced including those in the areas of Listening and Speaking and Reading.

### **Case study 2: Engaging Reluctant Writers**

An ESL teacher with a class of sixteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds remarked on the effect that using the animation actually engaged students who had previously been reluctant speakers and writers. Initial discussions involved all the students at new levels and developed their spoken vocabulary. The lessons covered Narratives as a genre for ESL, Viewing and Writing Outcomes (including vocabulary development, spelling and grammar). Without being confronted by a blank page, the Storyboard Master, was found to sustain concentration, facilitate a wider use of new vocabulary and a greater exploration of ideas and thoughts. By establishing pairs of students to work together (a strong student with a weaker student), this teacher also found that the class dynamics improved and the resulting enthusiasm for more lessons of this kind indicated that in addition to achieving relevant learning outcomes, the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

### **Case Study 3: Challenging Student Paradigms**

A class of six-to-seven-year-olds from Carnarvon Primary School, which has a significant Aboriginal student population, found the Caravan animation challenging and thought provoking. The teacher asked the children what they believed was happening in the animation. Many of their responses indicated confusion about the content, with respect to what was true versus what was fantasy. The opportunity for

these young students to explore the differences between fact and fantasy enabled them to learn about the role of moving images and in particular, animations, in presenting stories and ideas that are not necessarily real nor based in fact. These lessons highlight the importance of challenging student's held beliefs about reality and developing a foundation upon which to build their awareness and understanding about the use of moving images through the media that surrounds us all. By exposing the students to the ability of these images to manipulate and create visual texts, the teacher was able to improve understanding of the nature of these texts, as well as preparing students for potentially exploring these communication avenues for their own storytelling endeavors.

#### **Case Study 4: Developing Narrative Structure.**

With a class of eight-and-nine-year-olds, the five-minute Caravan animation was used to initiate work on narrative structure and story sequencing, focusing on opening and closing of stories. Using a scaffolding approach throughout the term, a range of texts was used exploring the theme of grandparents. The teacher initially engaged students to challenge their stereotypes by exposing them to a range of written texts. They were then asked to identify and discuss their own experiences with senior citizens and grandparents and use their imagination in a number of creative writing exercises. The Caravan animation was then shown to the class and discussed at various levels, with the teacher guiding the process. During the discussion, one child (male) enquired about the significance of using piano music. The response from another (male) student showed a deep insight into use of sound in communicating narrative, "the reason the piano was used, is to show "soft and loud," according to the emotions of the grandparents" was this young critic's response. Students used the Storyboard Master blank sheets to develop their own conclusions, planning their sequenced endings to create a new narrative.

#### **Case Study 5: Visual Literacy**

Year five students at Saint Hilda's Anglican School for Girls used the Caravan animation as a culminating lesson to assist with visual literacy learning objectives. By tapping into students existing knowledge about the stereotypes and symbolism that are embedded in cartoons and comics, a scaffolding approach to learning was achieved. Symbol Scavenger Hunts, cartoon analysis and the development of on-screen cartoons and flip books (exploring onomatopoeia) enabled an emergent understanding of visual language and the techniques used in communicating through visual images. Working in groups, students deconstructed Caravan from the perspective of four roles:-

1. The Director: Utilising an analysis framework focusing on production elements of the animation, including shot types, camera angles, lighting, colour, body language, costumes, location setting and sound track.
2. The Film Critic: Using the discussion manager framework.
3. The Casting Agent: Focusing on the analysis of the characters (characterisation).
4. Producer: Where the students then created their own narrative, corresponding storyboards and produced their own cartoon or animation.

**APPENDIX 3: Action Research Results – Curriculum Learning Outcomes (Literacy)**

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>How it was Achieved (examples)</b>
<b>Understanding Language</b>	As the Animation is a visual image narrative it was shown to be very powerful in communicating ideas and inspiring a range of interpretations. It tells a story without the use of words so students were able to explore aspects of the visual images as a form of language and communication. Discussions related to non-verbal codes such as body language and facial expressions. By using the Storyboards many possibilities were experienced by students exploring the potential of language for expressing their individual interpretations of the story. The differences between thought and speech/dialogue were shown. The art of narration was also covered in some cases and practiced by the students utilizing the narration boxes on the Storyboards and writing their own endings (conclusions). New words were also used in context developing student's vocabulary e.g. animation, animator, angle, close-up, dialogue, director, fantasy, fiction, frame, graphics, mix, realism, representation, script, storyboard, sequence, sound effects, soundtrack, special effects, stereotype. In some classes the visual language of moving images and animations were also covered by analyzing use of colour, soundtrack, character development, setting and visual effects.
<b>Attitudes, values and beliefs</b>	Within the Animations are clues reflecting a range of attitudes, values and beliefs. Students had the opportunity to interpret the attitudes and values of the two characters and relate these to their own. Students were also able to reflect on how they would feel and think if in the same situation. In some instances ideas were compared and contrasted from the perspectives of similarities and differences. As part of visual literacy exercises, underlying attitudes and values possibly held by the storyteller (animator) were also explored.
<b>Conventions</b>	Some students learnt about the conventions relevant to visual communication covering animations, sounds and images, narrative script development, sequencing and storyboards. In some instances moving image conventions were also compared with other literary mediums.
<b>Processes and Strategies</b>	Students were exposed to storyboard creation as a foundation for planning an animation production and developing a story. In some cases a scaffold approach linked this information across alternative formats e.g. comics, illustrations, novels and movies.
<b>Listening</b>	There were numerous opportunities for developing listening skills through teacher instruction and sound analysis exercises (the animation is set to original cinematographic-style music). The classroom talk generated about the animation, the oral presentations and drama productions of scripts also developed listening outcomes. Group work also offered the opportunity for assessing collaborative skills such as listening and teamwork.

<b>Speaking</b>	The open structure of the animation empowered and stimulated students to speak about the animation as the content is engaging and interesting and has multi-layered themes enabling interpretations at many levels. Working in pairs and groups offered opportunities for assessing speaking levels of the students.
<b>Viewing</b>	As a visual literacy resource, the animation, which only runs for 5 minutes, has rich 3D subject material perfectly suited to achieving viewing outcomes. Teachers discussed the ways animations are used as a visual text, compared to other visual texts and non-visual texts. In some cases students deconstructed the animated story in order to fully understand how it was created and to determine the distinguishing features and symbolism used in the animation. In one class cultural and social influences were discussed in relation to gender and age-related stereotypes. The attitudes, values and beliefs reflected in the animation were discussed, even in the younger classes. In addition, the ways in which the codes and conventions (e.g. symbols, characterisation, visual composition, layout, genre, music, story structure, setting and special effects) were used to shape viewer's interpretations were explored.
<b>Reading</b>	Students learnt the importance of proof reading their storyboards, especially when required to role-play the character parts. In a few classes, scripts were developed allowing oral and dramatic presentations e.g. acting out short plays.
<b>Writing</b>	The storyboard sequence sheets provided a different and interesting context for writing, even for the most reluctant learners. This method enabled supported, independent and creative writing to be generated by individual students working alone as well as students working in pairs and small groups. One class of Yr 4's used the blank storyboard master to plan and write their own conclusions. Another writing exercise resulted in the development of student's own short stories.