

Pre-production

1 The Story

Class level	First class upwards
Learning Objectives	The child will be enabled to – Recognise how the story is told in films
Methodologies	Group work
Resources	Suggested films downloaded on laptop
Time	40-minute class session
Curriculum links	English —Developing cognitive abilities through language. <i>Writing; Different genres of writing; storytelling</i> Visual arts —Drawing of characters. SPHE —Myself and the wider world. <i>Media education; Exploring storylines from books and films</i> Drama —Exploring and making drama. <i>Character role-playing, interviews with characters</i>
Suggested films	<i>ET, A Bug's Life, Inside Out</i>
Film portfolio	Samples of stories, character profiles, drawings



Introduction

Creating the Story can be the most collaborative part of Pre-Production. There are numerous ways to incorporate each and every student in the class and make the most out of group work.



Character Development

The strength of the character is integral to a strong story. Think about how many films are character based over plot based. Getting the students to come up with different characters and character ideas is a creative and involving way to get the children thinking in storytelling terms.

Try **Activity 1** (page 4), a group exercise to stimulate good character development.

Discuss

- What’s your favourite story (or fairy tale)?
- Why do you like this story most of all?
- Who is your favourite character?
- Is there a character in the story who does something wrong?

Try **Activity 2** (page 5) to get the children writing in the characters voice, and getting inside the character’s head.



Genre

The genre of the film is very important to establish early on in the writing process. There are numerous types and associations.

The **Activity 3** (page 6) is designed to get students thinking what each genre is associated with.



Development

Explain to the children that most stories have a similar structure: they have a beginning, middle, and end. They usually have good and bad characters, just like fairy tales. Films are stories too, except that the story is told through moving images instead of the written word.

Activity 4 (page 7) is a template of how a classic dramatic narrative develops.



Further Extension Work

This is an example of the story structure of *ET*. Compare it with the activity above, and get the children to apply to films they are familiar with.

We meet the characters

Mother, Eliot, Gertie, Michael.

Something goes wrong

Eliot finds ET and tries to keep him a secret.

The story tells how the “goodie” (hero or heroine) tries to solve the problem

Mike and his brother save ET from the scientists and escape to the forest to contact ET’s family.

The problem is usually solved at the end.

ET’s spaceship lands and brings ET home.



Junior Activity - Improvising the story

- The class is divided into five groups. Each group deals with one section of the storyline, as outlined above. For example; Group 1 will work on the scene where Mammy Pig asks the three pigs to move out, Group 2 will work on the scene where the three pigs build their houses, etc.
- In their groups, the children decide who acts out each part. For example; In Scene 5, where the third little pig tricks the wolf, you can have extras acting the role of neighbours, apart from having a wolf and the third little pig, etc.
- Each group is given time to improvise its scene from the story.
- Each group performs its scene in front of the class.
- Groups record their scenes, and submit this to the teacher. For example;

Scene 1: Mammy Pig asks the three pigs to move out.

1. Mammy Pig tells the pigs to sit down.
2. She tells them they are all grown up now, and it's time to move out.
3. The three little pigs are not very happy about it.
4. The third little pig is confident.
5. The three pigs leave and build houses for themselves.

Take it scene by scene, and use the same approach as shown above to refine the story. Dialogue can also be added here. The teacher collates the written submissions of scenes from the groups. This document is called “work in progress.” The children will understand that it will take several drafts before a final script is ready for filming.



Activity 1—Character Development

This will help you to flesh out your character ideas

Name:

Date:

Name:

Age:

Gender:

How does your character look?

Where does he/she live?

What are his/her interests?

What does he/she want in the story?

What does he/she do to get it?

Draw a picture of your character



Activity 2—Character Diary

This will help you to get in to your character's head

Name:

Date:

Today I am feeling...

Because...

My absolute favourite thing is when...

What drives me really crazy is when...

My favourite person is...

My least favourite person is...



Activity 3—Film Genres

There are different genres of film. Go into your groups and write down words that would describe plots, characters, settings, feelings, images or words for each type of film.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Horror

Ghosts
Scary
Haunted house
Frightened
Afraid
Not real

Comedy

Musical

Animation

Adaption

Action/Adventure

Science Fiction

Historical

War

Documentary

Thriller

Romance



Activity 4 - Plot Diagram

Name: _____

Date: _____

