

Rockford's Rock Opera is a unique ecological musical story with clear audio narration, songs and wonderful sounds for children of all ages. The website also includes beautiful animated videos, amazing background information, song & lyric sheets, downloadable resources and teaching aids for all ages.

Teachers, parents and children across the world are united in their praise for Rockford's Rock Opera and its original, thoughtful, environmental message.

What's it about?

Far away in the Sea of Tranquillity lies the island of Infinity, home to the last one of every extinct species. Here, beneath a mystical swirling sky, live the world's lost creatures. And the creatures have a secret for the world.

Using Rockford's Christmas Song as a multimedia approach to writing:

Increased knowledge of camera angles, sound, colour, shape and light and their combined effect in film has an impact on the ability of children to manage, manipulate and improve their writing.

This sequence of teaching below can be applied to every video in Rockford's Rock Opera (**go to: www.rockfordsrockopera.com/video**).

But this lesson plan is based around Rockford's Christmas Video

It can be adapted for children at all stages in primary school.

It relates closely to the Literacy Framework.

Digital technology and ICT texts will not replace traditional literacy. Since they are increasingly part of children's everyday experience, however, they need to be integrated into the framework in order to maximize children's potential for literacy and learning.

When children come to express ideas in the classroom they readily draw on their experience to create multimodal texts using words, diagrams, pictures, sound and layout. The texts children read on screen influence their writing, acting as models and examples of possible ways to express ideas and information.

From Multimodal ICT digital texts paper literacy framework.

Camera Angles

The study of camera angles gives insight into how the director reveals information and makes the viewer feel a certain way. Knowing the function of different angles allows more understanding of the film as a text and how scenes are constructed. This information translates well to different types of writing and links well into authorial intent.

The Different Angles and how these relate to writing.

Long shot

These set the scene, introduce a new setting or when action transfers from one setting to another.

This often translates to writing description of settings with the use of longer compound and complex sentences, simile and metaphor. Children should be encouraged to consider all their senses when writing.



Medium shot

These move the action along. They show one or more characters from the waist or knees up.

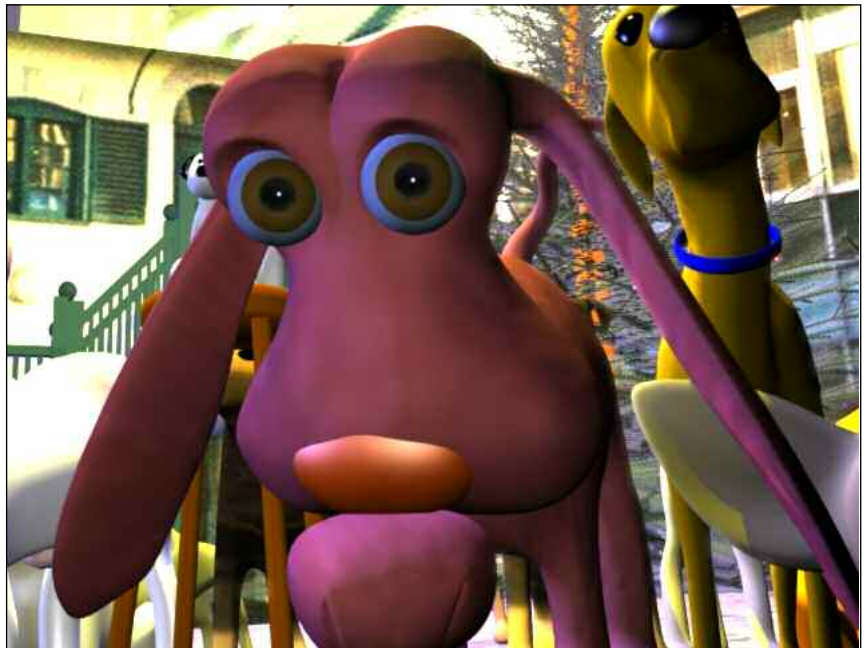
They show action or dialogue. This translates into action and/or speech to move the story along.



Close-ups

These often show character's facial expression and allow the viewer to share feelings and mood, often in responses to other characters or events.

Short sharp sentences can be effective here to convey emotions or a description of facial features. Close up can also be used to highlight an important object and can be used to build tension or reveal clues to the reader.



Point of view shot

These build empathy because you are seeing through the eyes of a character you feel closer to them.

Sentences will need to convey mood and response as well as action. Writers need to use precise description with adverbs and specific verbs to 'get inside the character's head.'

[Show pupils a short sequence from the video - [pov.mov](#)]

Low angle shots

These exaggerate size and make a character appear more powerful and menacing. A similar effect can also be used with buildings or trees to emphasise their height and size.

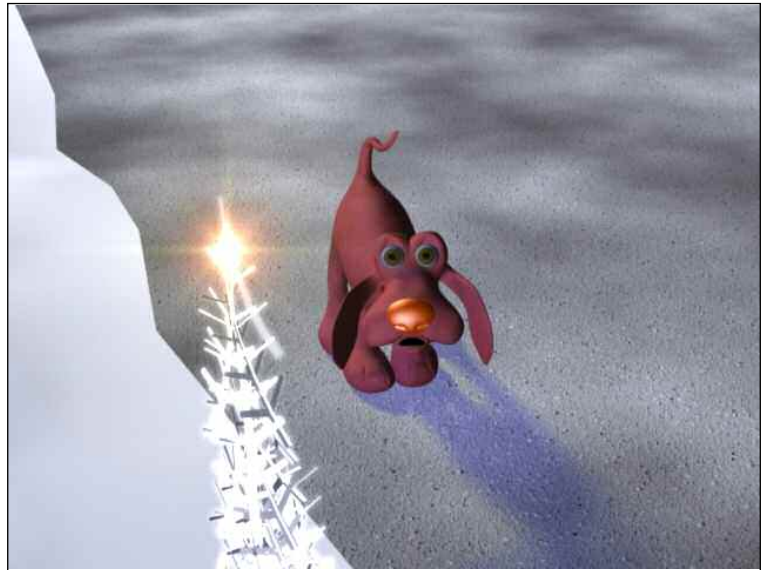
Sentences need to use a very broad vocabulary, including simile and metaphor, to communicate size.



High angle shots

These make a character appear vulnerable or isolated because the viewer looks down on them.

Use emotive language to convey how the character feels. Consider the physical responses to intimidation, embarrassment, loneliness and fear.



Pans

These show movement or expand on settings. The camera is on a fixed stand then gradually moves left, right, up or down. It moves slowly.

This translates to detailed description of an action or location.
[Show pupils a short sequence from the video - **panning.mov**]

Tracking shots

These follow a character or object as it moves. It builds empathy with the character because you are sharing the same experiences. It can often be used to increase tension as in a chase or a fall.

When writing often the use of repetition can be used to suggest continuous action or a series of events or actions.

[Show pupils a short sequence from the video - **tracking.mov**]

Aerials

These show additional information and allows a wider perspective on the setting or action. In writing they can almost be treated as an aside.



Teaching sequence:

- **Observe**
Learn camera angle types and functions through looking at the video and looking at stills taken from the video. Use digital cameras to produce different angles.
- **Identify**
Sort, label and sequence stills. Consider reasons for choosing camera angle.
- **Annotate**
Compose sentences to go with each still using different angles in a short sequence. E.g. a point of tension
- **Re-tell from a single still**
Compose a longer paragraph from a single still, focusing on setting or characterisation.
- **Retell from a still series**
Use stills taken from whole video to compose story using a story planner
- **Plan**
Create a story board with either drawn or digital pictures, incorporating angles to plan own scene or story.
- **Compose**
Write using own storyboard taking account of camera angles.

Sequence of lessons based on camera angles and Rockford's Christmas Video

Resources :

- Rockford's Christmas video - available to stream and download FREE at www.rockfordsrockopera.com/videos
- Copies of stills taken from video showing different camera angles
- Worksheets
- Interactive white board
- Digiblu or similar simple video camera
- PowerPoint software

Objectives

- Comment on how the story is presented and how interest or excitement is created, for example the use of music, sound effects, voices for different characters.
- Use a range of strategies to explore their understanding of characters, plot and events.
- Explore familiar themes and characters through improvisation and role-play.
- Identify information in text about appearance and behaviour of characters.
- Write character profiles using pictures, words and captions, based on evidence from text and additional information from role-play.
- Use their own story-boards, to write their own stories.
- Use ICT to enhance learning
- write story and compose multimodal text on the computer, combining images, sound effects and spoken words.

Session 1: Observe

- Watch Rockford's Christmas Video through completely.
- Explain the different camera angles to children and distribute information sheet about each one.
- Children, in small groups, use a digital camera to take different pictures showing camera angles [not panning or tracking] of themselves.
- Divide children into groups and give each group a set of stills from the video. Ask them to try and identify each camera angle and label using small post-it. Ask children to then sort pictures into 3 groups: character, setting and action.
- Plenary: Discuss if any camera angles seem to go with each of these.

Session 2: Identify

- Watch Rockford's Christmas Video through completely.
- Divide children into pairs and give each pair a different camera angle. Watch through video again [may take more than one showing] and children ask for film to be paused when they think their camera angle is being shown, capture these and print. Discuss why the animator/director chose to show that part of the story using that shot.
- Complete worksheet 1
- Plenary: Discuss their responses on the worksheet.

Session 3: Annotate

- Remind children of the difference between a simple sentence, a compound sentence and a complex sentence using a still from the video as a stimulus.

Rockford went for a walk in the park. [simple]

Rockford went for a walk in the park and it began to snow. [compound]

As Rockford was walking through the park it began to snow. [complex]

- Ask how these sentences could be improved. Perhaps they could add adjectives or adverbs; perhaps they could use a simile or a metaphor.
- Show another still from the video. Ask children with talk partner to come up with the best and most interesting sentence they can about the still. Write on white boards. Share results.
- Children then complete Worksheet 2

- Plenary: Ask children to share their sentences for each of the stills. Do different camera angles produce different types of sentences?

Session 4: Re-tell from a single still

- Choose a single still showing a long shot and display on IWB
- Brainstorm words and phrases to extend descriptive vocabulary.
- Use ideas to model writing a scene setting paragraph.
- Then show extract from the video which includes that still without the sound. Replace soundtrack with a voice over reading the descriptive paragraph.
- Children evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness and changes are made if necessary.
- Children now write own paragraph based on another still.
- Plenary: choose a couple of children to voice over appropriate part of the video.

Session 5: Re-tell from a still series

- Remind children of their work in session 3. They are now going to use their sentences with additional sentences to tell the story of the video. But they are going to choose their own camera angles to suit their story. Decide on a colour for each camera angle and put on board as a key.
- Model the beginning of the story using colour coded sentences to show how each bit of the story was shot.

In the dark room a Christmas tree, its green branches laden with small sparkling lights, shines forth a Christmas message. Above the roaring fire, stockings hang expectantly, waiting to be filled on Christmas morning. The light now blazes through each pane of the high sash window.

Long shot = black text

Medium shot = red text

Close-up = blue text

- Give children the stills and order them. Then with a partner they write the story using the colour coding decided on. Say this will be used as a voice over to the whole video.
- Plenary: play video again with the sound just audible and ask various pairs to read their story as a voice over.

Session 6: Plan and compose

- Divide children into small groups to improvise a short scene about Christmas.
- They decide on how this would be shot and the camera angles needed for each bit.
- They take a series of stills with different angles, using a digital camera and use these to write the story as in session 4. This will become the voice-over.
- They then combine with another group and take it in turns to become the film crew and the actors make a short video of their Christmas scene. Using the camera angles decided upon. Remember there is no sound track at the moment so it all has to be done by mime.
- Rehearse actions.
- Film using Digiblue or simple video camera
- Edit and add voice over and maybe some Christmas music.
- Share with others, maybe at a school assembly. You could even email them to Rockford so his creators can share your excellent work.

If you have enjoyed using Rockford as a stimulus to writing, this sequence of lessons can be adapted for any of the other videos on www.rockfordsrockopera.com

Further lesson plans will shortly be available on other aspects of multimodal texts.

| Still from Video | Camera Angle | Purpose |
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| Camera Angle | Still | My Sentence |
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| Camera Angle | Still | My Sentence |
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| Camera Angle | Still | My Sentence |
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