

Acknowledgements

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The United Kingdom Literacy Association

Access the website and enter the password to reach the downloadable materials.

Beyond words:

Developing children's response to multimodal texts

Contents

Introduction		4
	Describing progress	4
Section One	The <i>Reframing Literacy</i> research project	5
	Findings	5
	Using the website and booklet	6
Section Two	Progression in reading, analysing and responding to multimodal texts	7
	Multimodality	7
	A note about social, cultural and historical contexts	7
	Multimodal Progression Focuses	8
Section Three	Case Studies	12
	Introduction	12
	Case Study EYFS Responding to a non-mainstream film	12
	Case Study Year 1 Reading websites: digital understanding	15
	Case study Year 2 'It's seriously comic': reading and making comic strips	17
	Teaching Sequence	20
	Case study Year 3 Guided Reading with a complex picturebook: <i>The Lost Happy Endings</i>	22
	Teaching Sequence	24
	Case study Year 4 Researching the Beatles using the internet	27
	Teaching Sequence	30
	Case study Year 5/6 A short film - <i>El Caminante</i>	32
	Teaching Sequence	34
	Case study Year 6 Bringing a story to life: making an Alternate Reality Game (ARG)	37
	Teaching Sequence	41
Section Four	Resources and useful websites	43
References		44

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1 Features of comic strips

Figs 2.2 and 2.3 Annotating comic strips

Fig. 2.4 Photograph annotated with children's own words from role play

Figs 2.5 and 2.6 Using notes to work on final versions

Fig. 4.1 Year 4 drama - the Beatles

Fig. 4.2 Zones of relevance board

Figs 5.1 *El Caminante* sculptures and *El Caminante* - the classroom.

Fig.6.1 The Web of Clues

Fig. 6.2 Cressida's webpage

Fig. 6.3 Imogen's and Edward's reply to the Y5s on the message board

Fig. 6.4 Cressida's artefact

Fig.6.5 Cressida's Webcam footage

Contents of the *Reading Film* microsite www.readingfilm.co.uk

1. Contents

2. Introduction

Context, summary and time-frame of the *Reframing Literacy* project.

3. Commentary

Analysis of the insights and issues that emerged in the course of the *Reframing Literacy* project, contextualising the material on this website.

4. Teachers' Handbook

This Handbook was intended as background information to support teachers' own thinking about film as well as their pupils' discussion and analysis of *Baboon on the Moon* and other films. It was also hoped that it would help them in their observation and recording of classroom talk and activity by providing a shared frame of reference.

5. Description of *Baboon on the Moon*

The film that was used as the basis for much of the work in *Reframing Literacy*. This description provides basic information to contextualise the work described in Items 7-11.

6. Two PowerPoint summaries of *Baboon on the Moon* work in Lincolnshire

Includes examples of Year 1 and EYFS children's talk, writing and drawing in response to the film; links to Early Years/Foundation Stage Case Study in booklet.

7. *Baboon on the Moon Two* (3D model animation by Year 1/2 at Peter Wall Metheringham School, Lincolnshire)

3D model animation by children that extends the story of *Baboon on the Moon* (no sound track).

8. *The Iron Giant and the Train Crash* (3D model animation by Year 1/2 at Peter Wall Metheringham School, Lincolnshire)

Further creative work in 3D model animation by the same children demonstrating a more complex and extended narrative.

9. 'Emerging Insights' grid

The first column of this grid shows the issues around which discussion clustered at the second team meeting. Each gave rise to a number of questions which the team explored in the second phase of work.

10. Further Guidance for Teachers

This guidance was written after the first stage of the project, when it became clear that some teachers lacked the confidence to listen to pupils and engage in more extended dialogue about the films they were watching. It offers one way of approaching *Baboon on the Moon*.

11. Description of *The Lucky Dip*

The film that was used by the Leeds teachers as the basis for the second phase of *Reframing Literacy*. This description provides basic information to contextualise this phase of the work.

12. PowerPoint summary of *The Lucky Dip* work in Leeds

Summary of Year 1 And Year 5 children's responses to *The Lucky Dip*, emerging from the 'Emerging Insights' grid (see item 9) and from the Further Guidance (see item 10), adapted to *The Lucky Dip*.

13. Children's talk about *The Lucky Dip* in Leeds

Transcripts of three discussions by Year 1 children in response to a viewing of *The Lucky Dip*, in the course of creative activities (see Item 14), and after a re-viewing following their creative activity.

14. *The Scary Night* (atmospheric sequence by Year 1 children in Leeds)

Photo Story 3 document 7.7 MB

The group of children who had watched and discussed *The Lucky Dip* went on to make a 'film' together using an assortment of images and music provided by the teacher, which were then selected and edited almost entirely by the children using Photo Story 3.

15. Acknowledgements

Beyond words:

Developing children's response to multimodal texts

Introduction

It is widely recognised that children experience of a range of texts every day, most of them involving a combination of modes. Increasingly, also, teachers include multimodal texts in their classroom teaching. However, we do not yet have clear frameworks for describing progress in children's understanding and response to multimodal texts.

This booklet and accompanying website are designed to provide practical guidance in identifying progression in reading texts from a multimodal perspective. The materials build on the work of the QCA-funded *Reframing Literacy* research project which identified the issues involved in describing progress in children's learning about film. They then extend to describing progress in reading and analysing other multimodal texts, with a suggested progression, Case Study accounts of work and Teaching Sequences designed to promote children's developing ability to read and respond to a wider range of multimodal texts.

The website contains resources for teachers including a Teachers' Handbook for analysing film, examples of work produced by pupils, material outlining the teachers' emerging insights from the *Reframing Literacy* research and Further Guidance, which was written after the first stage of the project to support teachers in their continuing work.

Describing progress

Freebody and Luke (1999) argue that effective readers draw on a 'repertoire of practices' which allows them to:

- break the code of texts
- participate in understanding and composing meaningful texts
- use texts functionally
- critically analyze and transform texts acknowledging that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral (adapted from Freebody and Luke, 1999).

These practices can be equally applied to all multimodal texts. The QCDA Reading Assessment Focuses broadly align with such recognised typologies of reading practices. However they can be easily adapted to take account of multimodal texts. This booklet expands on the Assessment Focuses and the associated APP frameworks to include response to multimodal texts.

The materials show different aspects of making progress in multimodal analysis, including the increasing ability to:

- engage with, understand and respond to narrative and non-narrative texts, poetry and drama
- deduce, infer and interpret texts; respond to characterisation: (i.e. read facial expression, gesture and posture in moving and still images and understand character as expressed in dialogue and description); make judgements about the modality (i.e. reality status) of texts
- compare the structures and effects of different kinds of text, the different elements that make up a text and the authorial and editorial decisions that contribute to structure
- understand how elements of composition and stylistic devices combine in contributing to meaning, for example, lighting and focus (in sound or in images); shape and timing in animation; layout and font in printed texts
- discuss authorial intent, for example in decisions about framing and point of view in communicating with the reader/audience
- identify and discuss genre features
- relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts
- articulate a personal response and comment reflectively and critically on the text.

text
image
sound
gesture

The *Reframing Literacy* project took place over a period of seven months in 2008/9. This action research project was underpinned by three propositions derived from work in the area of film:

1. That moving image education is an important and attractive cross-curricular strand in creative learning and is an area in which teachers would welcome support in developing subject knowledge and pedagogies (Marsh and Bearne, 2007).
2. That progression in moving image work tends to be poorly conceptualised.
3. That moving image education, as an element in creative learning, needs to be embedded in the core curriculum of schools and, in particular, in the progression frameworks for literacy.

The project aimed to begin mapping children's response to film and identify the implications for curriculum and pedagogy. It began with three research questions:

1. **What is involved in pupils learning to understand and use key elements of film language?**
2. **What is the relationship between this learning and the development of literacies?**
3. **What subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge do teachers require in order to teach film language?**

A description of the project's structure and progress is provided on the website (item2).

Findings

What is involved in pupils learning to understand and use key elements of film language?

Some of these issues related to skills, knowledge and understanding that are not specific to film but others were more generic, reflecting issues of pedagogy more generally (see website items 3 and 13). In addition, children's out of school experience was relevant to understanding how to support children's learning about film language. Key findings arising from observational and discussion were:

Teachers' understanding of what is meant by 'film language'

- The phrase should not refer to a narrow set of descriptors isolating specific aspects of film, such as use of sound or camera, but instead refer to the 'grammar' of films - the codes and conventions used by filmmakers to create meaning and guide affective response.
- Teachers' own experience of film is a crucial factor, as is their experience of watching films with children in informal contexts. If they have little experience of critically analysing films at their own level, and reflecting on their own personal responses, they may fall back on superficial approaches to films which fail to take account of their constructed nature and do not help children to articulate their own interpretations and questions.

Children's prior experience

- It is difficult to gauge children's prior film viewing experience but their responses to, and engagement with, a film that is different from their prior experience may differ to some extent from their engagement with a film they already know.
- Children are able to recognise many elements of film language in year 1 but in most cases they do not have the vocabulary for naming them, although they can deploy some of them in creative work; by year 5 increasing numbers of children can both recognise and use more elements of film language.
- Lack of dialogue may be attractive to some children and especially helpful for bilingual children in the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language; it also helps to focus children's attention on the filmic qualities of the text.

Context of viewing

- The teachers found that the nature of the children's discussion was very different when they watched the film as a whole and were asked open-ended questions as opposed to a more structured viewing that required attention to specific aspects of film language before they had had opportunities to express and reflect upon their responses to the film, or parts of the film.
- Individuals were affected by group responses when watching with others.
- The quality of the projection/sound affected response to the film.

Home/school links

- Work on film at Early Years Foundation Stage offered some parents an opportunity to build on their own interests/ experiences and contribute to the project (e.g. father who produced a computer game; parents bringing in artefacts for settings of films children were making).
- There may be parental concerns if a film upsets a child. This suggests the need for careful communications with homes since it may be that families where viewing is restricted may have anxieties about the possible bad effects of film/TV. Findings indicated that children with limited experiences of film and television may be especially affected emotionally by films; this could be regarded as an advantage rather than a problem.

What is the relationship between this learning and the development of literacies?

In line with previous studies (PNS/ UKLA, 2004), teachers found that work on film promoted learning, talk and writing. The difference in this research project was that the films were the central focus for the analysis, not the written products that emerged from an analysis of them. However, even when the films themselves are the central focus, inevitably a rich range of literacy skills, knowledge and understanding is developed. The teachers also found that:

- Learning is shaped by prior knowledge but it is not always possible for teachers to discern this.
- Knowledge can be constructed in the process of the analytic activity.

What subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge do teachers require in order to teach film language?

In order to approach the work of this project, teachers required an understanding of film language which was developed to some extent by repeated viewings of the film *Baboon on the Moon* and group discussion and using supporting materials developed by the BFI (*Starting Stories* and *Look Again*). Pedagogical knowledge was also needed so that children's responses to film could be traced. In particular, teachers needed to provide scaffolding to enable children to demonstrate their understanding. This scaffolding had to move away from traditional 'Initiation-Response-Feedback' questioning frameworks to be truly open-ended and exploratory in nature. Some important issues were identified from observation and discussion:

Reflections on pedagogy

- The teachers found that it was difficult not to lead the children in discussions, implying 'right' answers by showing approval, or by formulating questions that indicate expectations about the answer.
- The formulation of questions can be confusing. For example, "why is that there?" could be interpreted within the terms of the film world, or as authorial intent.
- There were questions about the degree to which a teacher needs to 'break down' and simplify the focus of the viewing for very young children. Assumptions about children's prior experiences can lead the pedagogical approach and sometimes inhibit full response from children with home experience of film.
- A play-based/exploratory approach in the Nursery (FS1) enabled a rich range of responses to the film to emerge over time.
- Film-making activity happening in parallel to film analysis supports the development of analytical skills and the appropriate use of technical language and offers teachers another way of assessing children's confidence.
- Attention to film editing can support evocative writing. Attention to salience of props and discussion of lighting supported the children's understanding of symbolism and descriptive detail in writing. However, this is more likely to happen where children are encouraged to reflect on the differences and similarities between film and written texts (see also Parry, 2010).

Teachers' subject knowledge

- If the teacher is less experienced in film analysis it is harder to listen for indications of children's emergent film knowledge in their talk/responses.
- The project enhanced teachers' confidence and motivation as their subject knowledge increased.
- Viewing the film a number of times enabled the teachers to develop deeper understanding at their own level.

Implications for assessment

- The project produced a rich range of data with implications for policy and practice in a number of areas, most particularly in Assessing Pupil Progress (APP).
- Teachers' developing expertise in observing and assessing children's wider literacy learning through film and in eliciting and listening to children's accounts of their experiences outside school could make new contributions to how pupils' learning is tracked and understood.

Using the website and booklet

The materials on the website and in the booklet can be used by teachers and schools to develop understanding of the different aspects of film and other multimodal texts and the ways in which these might be used in the curriculum.

The website *Reading Film* relates to the *Reframing Literacy* research project and gives a rationale for using film in the classroom in its own right, not as a means to develop aspects of print literacy. It includes an introduction to film terminology, accounts of classroom talk, and examples of children's own film making. These materials would be ideal for schools wanting to develop approaches to reading film. They might be used as a basis for discussion and planning in professional development sessions and as a basis for an extended project designed to develop the use of film in the school.

The booklet looks at multimodal texts more generally, describing progress in children's reading, analysis and response to multimodal texts drawing on findings from the research project and the Reading Assessment Focuses (AFs). The Multimodal Progression Focuses add to a school's understanding of the variety of reading experiences offered by multimodal texts and how children's experience and achievements with these texts might be described and included in regular assessment. The Case Studies and Teaching Sequences give examples of work using multimodal texts throughout the primary phase. These will support schools and individual teachers who want to develop multimodal approaches in their literacy teaching.