

WEBSITE RESOURCE W17.6

Analysis of Max and Caroline's storyboards

This class of ten and 11 year olds were designing storyboards to make a promotional trailer for the film *Dinosaur*. Both Max and Caroline show many of the features of 'assured, experienced and independent' multimodal text makers (see Website resource W16.8) who have internalised the qualities of persuasive filmic text.

Chapter 16 outlines the elements that mark progression in multimodal text making as the ability increasingly to:

Decide on mode and content for specific purpose(s) and audience(s):

- choose which mode(s) will best communicate meaning for specific purposes, for example, deciding on words rather than images or gesture/music rather than words
- use perspective, colour, sound and language to engage and hold a reader's/viewer's attention
- select appropriate content to express personal intentions, ideas and opinions
- adapt, synthesise and shape content to suit personal intentions in communication

Structure texts:

- pay conscious attention to design and layout of texts, use structural devices (pages, sections, frames, paragraphs, blocks of text, screens, sound sequences) to organise texts
- integrate and balance modes for design purposes
- structure longer texts with visual, verbal and sound cohesive devices
- use background detail to create mood and setting

Use technical features for effect:

- handle technical aspects and conventions of different kinds of multimodal texts, including line, colour, perspective, sound, camera angles, movement, gesture, facial expression and language

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- choose language, punctuation, font, typography and presentational techniques to create effects and clarify meaning
- choose and use a variety of sentence structures for specific purposes

Reflect:

- explain choices of modes(s) and expressive devices including words
- improve own composition or performance, reshaping, redesigning and redrafting for purpose and readers'/viewers' needs
- comment on the success of a composition in fulfilling the design aims
- comment on the relative merits of teamwork and individual contribution for a specific project.



Figure W17.6.1 Max's Dinosaur trailer storyboard

Max's opening shows an assured multimodal text maker at work who makes **decisions about the content** to manipulate the audience, starting with 'When . . .': *When an egg is stranded on an island populated by limers (lemurs) anything can happen. A tale of laughs, thrills, chills and much more.* In this voice over Max shows that he has thoroughly grasped the features of the genre of a trailer, orienting the narrative as on an island but only hinting at what is likely to happen. His use of 'laughs, thrills and chills' shows good awareness of how trailers work. He integrates the modes not only to create interest, but narrative tension and atmosphere. The details of the dramatic action are created by the images, music and sound effects: using close-up and long- shots of happy dinosaurs, threatening predators and a frightened Aladar he keeps the viewer interested in the action of the film. Similarly, he hooks the viewer in by the stomping sound effects and 'dinosaur type music' before showing the images of the dinosaur and lemur and uses 'dramatic music' and 'happy music' to complement the images.

The **structure of the text** is given, in that this is a promotional trailer but Max makes selections from the action of the film, choosing to focus on the different dinosaur

characters, rather than the setting or the other animals or, in fact, the meteor storm that drives the family to find new nesting grounds. He paces the narrative of the trailer by slow, deliberate introduction of the egg, the island and Aladar in frames 2, 3 and 4 before increasing the pace with Crone roaring, Emma laughing and the baby iguanodon running and laughing (frames 5, 6 and 7) and moving into full action in frames 8, 9 and 10, ending abruptly in a cliff hanger with a blank screen with just the word DINOSAUR to tempt the viewer to see the film. Max maintains cohesion largely through colour (green for Aladar and red and browns for the other more predatory dinosaurs) and through his choice to focus on the dinosaurs rather than any other element of the film. He gives visual descriptive detail about the dinosaurs – there is no doubt which is which.

Max's **technical features** are very filmic, with varied shot lengths, juxtaposing close-ups of the peace loving Aladar and the ferocious Crone for dramatic effect and showing long shots of the dinosaurs as the action unfolds. He has made a series of choices in this storyboard: the focus of interest (for him, the different dinosaur characters); to give spare voiceover in exactly the right tone for a trailer; and to use music to underline the emotional content. He also shows that he knows when effects might not be needed, particularly in the final frame where he leaves it to the viewer to take in the impact of the film's title.

As these two examples are single pieces of work it is not possible to capture the children's reflections on their work. There is more to be said, however, about both Max's and Caroline's intentions as text composers. Where Max has chosen to emphasise the actions of the dinosaur characters, running, laughing, preying on one another, Caroline focuses on the relationships between characters and the fear of losing their home.

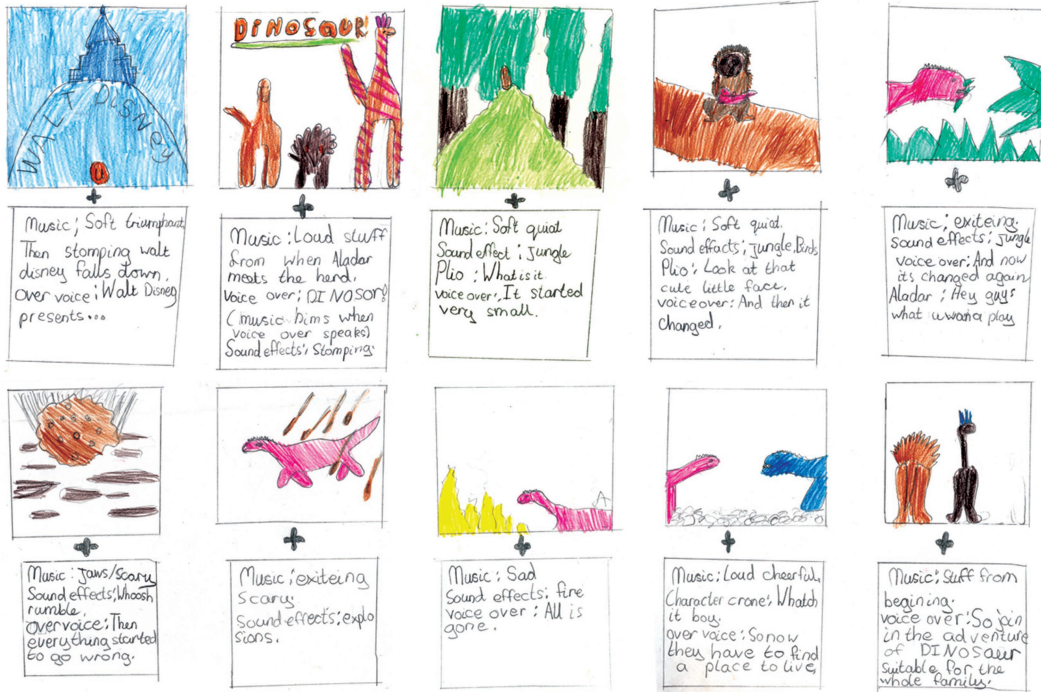


Figure W17.6.2 Caroline's Dinosaur trailer storyboard

Although the modes are given, Caroline makes assured **decisions about content** for the specific purpose of engaging the interest of prospective film goers. She integrates the modes of words (voice over), images, sound (music and sound effects) and animation and implication to intrigue the viewer: 'It started very small. And then it changed . . . and then everything began to go wrong. . . . So now they have to find a place to live.' Although she is not composing the narrative of the film, for this trailer she makes choices about narrative perspective, using close-up, mid-shots and long-shots for specific elements of the narrative – the effects of the elements and the relationships between characters. In frame 5 she shows an astute sense of what will engage a viewer's attention with soft, quiet music, birds singing in the jungle and the character's voiced words: 'Look at that cute little face.' Then the voice-over saying 'And then it changed.' And in the final frame she encourages 'the whole family' to see the film with a direct invitation 'So join in the adventure of Dinosaur.' In appealing to the interest of the viewer, she chooses to present the time sequence of the story in words and the emotional and atmospheric content through image: frames 6 and 7 are good examples where she alludes to everything going wrong but uses the images to show the devastation and Aladar's panic.

As with Max's storyboard, the **structure of the text** is given, but within that structure, Caroline uses colour, sound and words for cohesion: the jungle animals are depicted in warm browns; the setting is green and lush until the meteor storm; the dinosaurs are depicted in non-natural colours of pink and blue. The music varies from soft to loud, exciting to sad, according to the dramatic tension of the scene depicted in each frame, returning to the opening music at the end of the trailer and the sound effects support the mood of each scene. The voiceover follows a coherent, if allusive, narrative: *Walt Disney presents . . . DINOSOR! It started very small. And then it changed. And now it changed again. Then everything started to go wrong. All is gone. So now they have to find a place to live. So join in the adventure of Dinosaur.* To add atmospheric detail she uses direct quotations from some of the characters: 'Hey guys what u wana play' and 'Whatch it boy'. In terms of design and directionality, Caroline has understood that images on the left (in Western narratives) indicate what is expected (the 'given' information) and anything entering from the left suggest conflict or disturbance as in frames 7, 8 and 9 where Aladar is fleeing from the meteorites, facing a conflagration and then in conflict with a bigger dinosaur. Where characters are simply presented to the viewer, as in frames 2, 4 and 10, she places them in a neutral central position.

Caroline's uses **technical features** skilfully. She makes discriminating use of colour, particularly contrast: the different hues of the animals, the lush greenery of the jungle and the brown and grey of the landscape after the meteor storm as well as the yellow flames. Her choices of music and sound effects echo the action in each frame: in frame 2 she specifies dimming the music when the voice over speaks and in frame 7 she decides to have no voice over as the sound effect explosions and the actions of Aladar trying to avoid the meteorites needs no explanation. In the written part of the text Caroline shows that she can use punctuation appropriately: she uses colons to introduce each of the elements of the text – music, sound effects, voice over and capital letters and exclamation marks in frame 2.

What both composers have in common is a fundamental understanding of the modes of communication and how they interact to carry the meaning they wish to convey. They use auditory, visual and verbal means to communicate with the viewer efficiently in the short space allowed by a trailer.

(Images taken from: Miners, M., Wolstencroft, H., Johnson, S. and Wenden, D. (2005) *Remote Control: learning through the lens*. Chelmsford: Essex County Council.)