

P8: THE ROLE OF ANIMATION SOFTWARE IN HELPING TO INCREASE BOYS' CREATIVITY IN STORY WRITING.

Charlotte Ashton, Class Teacher, Hartside Primary School, Durham Cluster

Aim

To investigate whether the use of ICT software helps to increase boys' creativity and imagination in story writing. This was to link in with an overall development area within the school: boy's underachievement in writing.

Background – School, teacher and classroom context

Hartside Primary School has been using Animation software since September 2003. I am a newly qualified teacher (NQT) and have also been using it within my Year 3 class for the same period. The children who were involved in this research had seen the animation equipment being used before, but had not used it themselves. The research was carried out over a period of time from December 2003 – March 2004 to allow the different stages of the research to fit in with available curriculum time.

The Research

- December 2003 – All children within the class were given the task of writing a story about monsters, and they were encouraged to produce very creative ideas. I focused my attention on a group of four mixed ability boys.
- February 2004 – All children within the class were given the task of creating a storyboard about monsters in preparation for creating a 'Moving Monsters' animation video. I once again focused my attention on the same group of four mixed ability boys.
- March 2004 – The same four boys who had created a storyboard began to create an animation video, using plasticene models previously created in Art. I introduced the practical side of what they needed to do, and the classroom assistant then observed and discussed with the children while they worked.

Collection of Data

During the first stage of the research I oversaw the whole class, but at the same time wrote down any comments that the four particular boys made, and also took photographs of the children working.

During the second stage of the work I observed the four boys and took notes of anything significant which they commented upon. I also interviewed them afterwards and asked them for their feelings about their work e.g. "I feel proud of it" / "If I thought about it a bit more it could be better".

In the final stage of the research the classroom assistant made detailed observations of the children working on the animation. I also informally monitored part of the discussions.

My conclusions regarding the Animation software

Improvement in creativity and imagination?

As regards discussion work amongst the children, there was an increase in creativity and imagination. Conducting literacy / story work through animation allowed a lot more

discussion time for the children, with views clearly being expressed about the monsters' thoughts and feelings.

As regards written work produced by the children, I would question whether or not there had been any improvement, as there is not enough evidence (as of yet) to allow conclusions to be made. This is due to the fact that children were rushing to get onto the computer part of the task and thus rushing the storyboard stage of their work. Consequently, the first storyboard 'story' had no event. Thus, from a teacher's point of view, extremely careful and thoughtful planning is needed. For example, explaining the importance of content and structure, and taking time over the planning stage to ensure that the transition onto the computer stage is as smooth as possible.

Increase in Motivation?

The use of the animation software definitely increased the motivation of **all** boys, with the normally lower attaining boys asking to stay in and do more work at playtime. The enthusiasm of the boys was much greater than in a 'normal' literacy lesson.

I believe that my own motivation and enthusiasm will have also been evident to the children, as the use of animation has opened up a more creative and innovative teaching style, through the use of different resources.

Increase in personal / social skills?

It was commented upon by two children within the final stage of the research that in previous literacy work they had been working on their own and achieved nothing, but now that they were working as a team and taking turns they could be thoroughly focused, making the whole aspect of story writing much more appealing. The time allowed for increased discussion and team work was an invaluable experience for these four boys, who on other occasions have found it difficult to work in a group situation.

Final thoughts

The use of animation as a different approach to story writing has certainly proved to be successful in this instance, leading to: increased social skills, working as a team, and highly motivated and enthusiastic children. These identified benefits are necessary conditions in order for creativity to flourish, and although there is no definite proof that creativity in written work has improved, through conducting animation work, some of the major barriers that inhibit creativity have been removed. I believe that with more time to use animation within a classroom environment, when children become more confident with the ICT skills that they need, research could show, over a longer period of time, improvement in boys' creativity and imagination.