**CINECITY**
**DUKE OF YORK'S CENTENARY**

## SCHOOLS GRAPHIC DESCRIBER PROJECT

The Graphic Describer project was launched as part of the Duke of York's 100th Birthday celebrations in 2010 by Cinecity. In partnership with Patcham High we commissioned animator Tom Hillenbrand to run a narration and performance workshop with Year 8 pupils, which was also audio recorded to produce a sound track that was edited with archive footage from the Screen Archive South East collection.

**Suitable for Year 8 & 9 Pupils**
**Half-Day Workshop**
The lesson plan below is for a half-day workshop, but could be extended across a number of sessions.
**Learning Outcomes**

- Get the students to interact with archive (old) films
- Contemporise archive film with practical learning and acting
- Engage with the films as part of Brighton's heritage & pupils' local history

**What is a Graphic Describer**
A Graphic Describer is someone whose role is to enhance the viewing experience for the cinema audience given the absence of synchronous sound by providing narration or character voices during the screening. When the films were screened prior to the invention of sound in movies, there would also have been live music accompaniment – often a piano and maybe a string quartet.

**Practical Workshop**
Our tasks in this workshop are to add a different, contemporary dimension to the film as well as to create an alternative history for the films.

The class teacher or facilitator ~~to~~ demonstrates Graphic Describing with a performance to the class at the beginning of the session. S/he will be required to add voices & sound FX to the *Hove Station* film.

## SCHOOLS GRAPHIC DESCRIBER PROJECT

**Breakdown of lesson plan**

- Explain Graphic Describer's role
- Explain Story Structure
- Improvisational story telling game
- Explain Timecode & how to list details of actions/events/characters
- Class watch archive films
- Develop ideas for alternative narratives in groups
- Write scripts in groups
- Sound FX
- Groups' final performance to the class, whilst the sound is recorded

**Equipment required**

**For recording**

- MP3 audio recorder

**For sound FX**

- Swannee whistles
- Bass drum
- Triangle
- Cymbals
- Any instruments that the children are proficient at playing (if there's an opportunity to find out prior to the session)

**Films watched** (on this occasion)

- *Flying the Foam*
- *Temperance March*

## SCHOOLS GRAPHIC DESCRIBER PROJECT

**Full Project break-down**:

**Smith and Williamson**

- Hove based filmmakers.
- They were magicians, mad scientists.
- Hove was like Hollywood at the birth of Cinema.

**Early Film Pioneers**

James Williamson could have been just another chemist but thanks to his association with George Albert Smith, he went down in history. The two men were among the early pioneers of film, operating late in the nineteenth century. Smith had a studio in St Ann's Well Garden, then privately owned, and Williamson had his shop in Church Road, Hove.

Born in Scotland, in 1855, Williamson moved south as a young man and was in Hove in 1886. Both he and Smith were members of the Hove Camera Club and Williamson was happy to give exhibitions. He went full time into films in 1898 and made 39 films that year alone.

**Innovative silent films**

Smith and Williamson made short, silent films, which were innovative because they had a story line. Some of them were also comic. Williamson became a major producer in the first decade of the twentieth century with a thriving export trade to the USA. He made 50 films a year in the decade from 1902 and eventually moved to London after establishing a works in Cambridge Grove, Hove. In the capital he ran a successful business manufacturing film apparatus and developing film. He died in Richmond in 1933.

## SCHOOLS GRAPHIC DESCRIBER PROJECT

### Definition of Story structure

The definition of story structure is how to build a story, understanding the relationship between the parts and the whole.

A story should have:
a Beginning
a Middle
an End

### Improvisational Game

Setting the mood. Get pupils to walk about the room and shout out the wrong names for the first ten things that they lay their eyes on. This may help when it comes to writing their story outlines by making spontaneous stories about the items as they go along - can they get a beginning, a middle and an end into their short stories?
N.B. The aim of this exercise is not to write a story per se, but to get them to free up their inhibitions about performing in front of the group. It is also intended to help them to think up unexpected ideas for the films that they will be working with.

### Suggested Story Line

To narrow the requirements in a half-day workshop suggest an outline storyline for all pupils to work with.

### E.g. QUEST

Pupils are to plan and tell an adventure story that includes a main character, who goes on a journey to find a valuable item that will save the community. (Suggestion for *Flying the Foam*)

Show the students the films then get them to watch their respective films again in their groups. They should write down any ideas that occur to them as they happen.

Ask pupils to choose the main protagonists and decide the main themes and events fitting them into a beginning, middle, and end or resolution structure if possible.

With a narrative in place, ask pupils to use both narration and voices to tell the story.

## SCHOOLS GRAPHIC DESCRIBER PROJECT

Introduce new tasks as the workshop develops in order to retain the students' interest.

- Add vocal content
- Add sound FX
- Add music

Useful Reference: The Staggering Stories of Ferdinand de Bargos. Youtube.

Pupils will have to make their story fit to what they see on screen it may tricky but should also by funny. Have a couple of run-throughs with the films, making the content relate to what's happening on screen. Have fun with it!

**Last Hour Performance**
Students to perform their piece to the rest of the class at the end of the session. As Patcham High did, performances can be audio recorded and edited together with the film and posted online.

If your class would like to undertake this project please email info@cine-city.co.uk.
Quoting 'School Graphic Describer Films' plus your postal details and we will put a dvd in the post for you.

If you would like to hire in specialist Tom Hillenbrand to lead your session, email beautness@btinternet.com for his prices and availability.

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