LESSON PLAN FOR ISTOPMOTION

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This is basically accomplishing three things: teaching kids the process and technology involved with stop-motion animation, working on the editing side of making a movie, and creating two projects (one to practice application and one synthesis).

This lesson uses a Mac, iStopMotion software, and iMovie software. It is likely possible to transfer the movies made in iStopMotion to a PC (to be edited in another program like MovieMaker or Premiere), I just haven’t ever tried it. iStopMotion is not free, but it is fairly inexpensive provided you already have the rest of the setup which requires a Mac and a video camera that is compatible with the iStopMotion software (they have a list on the website). It is also implied here that as the teacher, you know how to work with iMovie or another video editing program. If your students already know how to edit video, that is a bonus. With iMovie, it takes some demonstration and a quick trial, and students can pick it up fairly quickly.

iStopMotion:  http://www.boinx.com/istopmotion/overview/

One of the best materials for stop-motion is Model Magic. It’s fairly cheap if you order in bulk from NASCO, and there are some tips below on how to use it. Stop-motion can be made with anything, though--even pencil and paper.

Lastly, if you are going to get this all set up, I highly recommend going through the entire movie making process on your own once, just to work out your own strategies and be ready to answer questions and solve problems with the student projects.

PART ONE: LEARNING THE ROPES

1. Watch example stop-motion videos:
   •  http://vimeo.com/114744: Clay animation story
   •  http://vimeo.com/10376423: Clay animation words, paper animation
   •  http://vimeo.com/1205731: Animation using clay, paper, and cellophane
   •  http://vimeo.com/8925830: Clay animation based on Hamlet scene
   •  http://vimeo.com/9981003: Drawing on paper animation
   •  http://vimeo.com/9164899: Lego blocks animation
   •  http://vimeo.com/9838434: Paper cut-outs animation
• **http://vimeo.com/138844**: Clay and construction paper butterfly animation

2. Begin an “example” group project. This is where you teach kids how to take the shots and position using onion-skin (or overlays) in iStopMotion. Using white construction paper and crayons/markers, or black construction paper and construction paper crayons, have each student in the class take a turn filming a stop motion of them writing their name. Have them write a letter, take a picture, write another letter, take a picture, and so on. For each letter they can fully decorate it, or slowly have the letters decorate “themselves” by taking in between shots. Watch the Vimeo link above (1205731) and see the filmmakers do this at the end of the movie, which is where we got the idea. This takes some time! About 5-10 minutes per kid.

3. When the iStopMotion part is done, take the raw footage and distribute it to the kids from the central Mac connected to the camera onto the computers where they will be editing. I’m not going to go into iMovie specifics here, but you will likely need to show them some things about iMovie if they’ve never used it before. Here’s the timeline:

   1. Students learn how to import the video footage from the desktop into iMovie.
   2. Learn how to take footage from event library and put it into the media editor.
   3. Learn how to select parts of the footage and copy/paste for action cycles.
   4. Learn how to add titles.
   5. Learn how to add transitions.
   6. Learn how to add music.
   7. Learn how to export as Quicktime.

4. When you’re done, students have helped create a stop-motion movie while learning how to use the program and equipment. They have also learned how to take the footage and make a finished version using iMovie. Although all the kids get the same footage, each version of the movie will be different. This is also a great project because if you give the kids a DVD, it has everyone’s name with their picture, and that’s good to have for memories years down the road.

**PART TWO: MAKING STOP-MOTION MOVIES**

1. Plan project using storyboards, lists, and lots of discussion with group members/partners/teacher. Emphasize to the students that they really need to plan with pictures/diagrams, and they need to consider the movement. Each second could require 3, 4, 5 or more pictures.
2. Begin building objects, characters and sets for stop-motion filming. If you use Model Magic, you can put objects or characters that you want to stay pliable inside a ziploc bag, otherwise, leave out the stuff you want to get hard overnight at least. I highly recommend Model Magic over something like clay. For one, it’s less messy, and you can mix colors very easily. Great color mixing lesson for kids, too. To make colors lighter, mix in a little white.

3. Once planning is done, and all construction is finished, begin filming. Try to stay out of the way as much as you can and let them go to town. A group that is ready and waiting can help film while the group that is active fiddles with their sets and movement. You’ll find even the best planning goes down the tubes once the first group realizes the scope. It’s good to project the computer where the iStopMotion is running so the rest of the class can see what’s going on while they work. It’s also good to show playbacks for the group working to redo parts or make adjustments instead of having to crowd around the computer.

4. As each group finishes the filming, they need the footage transferred to the computer where they will edit in iMovie. Once they put the finishing touches on it, be sure to collect the export. Gather all the finished projects to a DVD or single computer and have a film festival.