



*a supplement
to the series*

From the Brothers Grimm



The Guide to
**Making
Grimm
Movies**

Produced by Davenport Films

The Guide to *Making Grimm Movies*

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Introduction

Noted child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim once said that each historical era has an art medium that best reflects the period and whose popularity cuts across lines of class and education. In Athens, this art was the Greek theater; in Elizabethan England, it was the stage of Shakespeare. Today, the popular media is film and television. People from all walks of life often watch the same programs, which become the source of much impromptu, old-fashioned story-telling.



*Producer and Director
Tom Davenport.*

Film and television have become the primary bearers of myth and storytelling in our society, influencing our actions and affecting social change. That's why media literacy is important. When we teach our students textual literacy, we expect them to understand how to read and how to write. There has been an increasing emphasis on teaching students how to criticize, or "read," media. Unfortunately, few people know how to produce, or "write," media.

Movies are made in fragments that are edited together in imaginative ways to create scenes that appear real but are actually highly constructed. Many viewers assume that a dramatic movie is happening like a play and that the camera is simply recording the events as they unfold in real time. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Scenes are shot out of order; real locations and constructed sets are linked together as the same place; the camera "sees" action from impossible positions such as through the back wall of a fireplace or from the sky.

We seem to have a national ambivalence which drives us to complain bitterly about the media while we sit in front of our televisions and continue to absorb a barrage of images. Students intuitively recognize the influence of movies in their lives. Once students and teachers begin to understand how movies are constructed and realize the freedom from time and space that is available to producers, all sorts of creative and playful possibilities emerge. When students start making movies themselves, they become more discerning critics of what they see on television and begin to see the possibilities for heartfelt work within their own communities.

Some Pedagogical Considerations

There are many good media education programs around the country, but many people learn to make movies by doing it themselves. An education in the humanities is one of the best preparations for a future movie maker, and a movie making project can help a student see the

When we teach our students textual literacy, we expect them to understand how to read and how to write. There has been an increasing emphasis on teaching students how to criticize, or "read," media. Unfortunately, few people know how to produce, or "write," media.

The best way to learn movie making is to do it. Pick projects that are close to home and relatively simple. Encourage independent work outside the classroom. When students believe in the potential of their ideas, they can go beyond the limitations of finances and experience.

value of such an education beyond the confines of a classroom. The elements of a traditional liberal education come to life as part of movie projects.

Successful movie makers need to know literature and understand the historical era that they are trying to portray. They need an awareness of light and composition that comes from a study of the old painters. They should have a basic understanding of music and have enough taste and experience to use it to enhance their drama. They should be able to construct sets and design costumes and makeup to fit character. They should have some pragmatic knowledge of electricity and contemporary computer and video technology. Finally, they need to develop exceptional organizational and management skills.

In the past, schools didn't typically encourage such an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach to education. The traditional school schedule was like an assembly line. Students went down the hallway and turned into the biology room at step one, then down the hall to the language arts classroom for step two, and so on, throughout the school day. They received from each specialist teacher a short dosage of distinct information just like a car at a specific point on the assembly line receives a bumper or head light.

Today's schools are changing, which bodes well for the holistic demands of media education. Media projects require unique problem solving. Teachers cannot easily dispense a distinct and limited body of specialized information from a podium. Instead, media literacy teachers are facilitators who help and encourage students as they integrate the unique variety of skills and information that each project demands. They guide students through projects which have much of the uncertainty and unpredictability of real life.

Movie making teaches the importance of cooperation, responsibility, and etiquette. Movie making is a playful and creative undertaking. Students will probably learn as much from each other as they will from an instructor. Teachers are sometimes frightened to embark into the unknown and uncharted realm of the world of movie making. But the best way to learn movie making is to do it. Pick projects that are close to home and relatively simple. Encourage independent work outside the classroom. When students believe in the potential of their ideas, they can go beyond the limitations of finances and experience.

The Digital Revolution

We produced *Making Grimm Movies* using a digital editing system that works on a desktop computer. Digital systems do for videotape editing what word processors do for typing. With a word processor, it is easy to remove a paragraph from an essay. The computer automatically realigns the rest of the text, and your finished document is printed exactly as you want it. Similarly, computer editing systems make videotape editing "non-linear." Editors can input film or video images and sounds into a computer, then move and change them freely and quickly.

Students with video camcorders and desktop editing systems can now make movies that could be done only with cumbersome equipment and expensive film stock in the past. Thanks to their increasing affordability, computer editing systems are already starting to appear in some classrooms. There has never been a better time for teachers to delve into media literacy.

Using the Series

Making Grimm Movies is a series of twenty-minute programs which teach the basic concepts of movie making. The series is aimed at junior and senior high students and based on examples from Davenport Films' award-winning series of folktale adaptations, *From the Brothers Grimm: American Versions of Folktale Classics*.

This guide is intended to amplify the points made in *Making Grimm Movies*. It is unique because director Tom Davenport speaks directly to students about the challenge and excitement of movie making. These are notes from the field, not exhaustive analyses of media topics. We hope to inspire by example.

This guide offers some technical tips for student producers, but we have kept technicalities to a minimum in *Making Grimm Movies*. Technology changes rapidly and students always find a way to adapt their skills to the resources at hand. If you can offer students equipment access and training, that's great. If not, forge ahead anyway. The basic lessons of *Making Grimm Movies* can be taught without any special equipment.

Suggested Curriculum Uses

There are several different ways that *Making Grimm Movies* can be applied in the curriculum. Used in conjunction with the movies in *From the Brothers Grimm*, the series can be a unit in a traditional language arts class. The series can also be the centerpiece of a media production class, or it can be part of an extensive, non-technical media literacy course.

Making Grimm Movies can also be used to equip students for the production of movies for courses such as history and science. For instance, one student might produce a short documentary on the American Revolution while another student might choose movie technology as the focus of a science project. Our recommended approach for the use of *Making Grimm Movies* would last about two weeks, or longer if teachers make major assignments based on the series.



Shooting the dance scene for Ashpet.

Series Objectives

- (1) Teach students to be discriminating viewers of film and television.
- (2) Inspire students to make their own movies, both in and out of school.
- (3) Encourage the integration of diverse curriculum areas such as history, music, and science.

Guide Summary

Prior to Viewing

Background information on *From the Brothers Grimm* with a story synopsis and viewing observations for the five films which appear in *Making Grimm Movies*.

The three core sections of the guide parallel the subject matter of the three episodes in *Making Grimm Movies*.

Part One

Scriptwriting, Casting, Makeup.

Part Two

Locations, Set Design, Sound.

Part Three

Cinematography, Editing, Movie Acting.

Tips for Teachers

Master teachers comment on their experiences in classroom movie making.

Appendix

Information which can be copied for direct distribution to students. We offer samples of a movie treatment, a screenplay scene, storyboards, and camera compositions. The appendix also includes a glossary and a bibliography.

1

Show one or more of the films in *From the Brothers Grimm* which we draw on for examples in *Making Grimm Movies*.

The featured films include *Bearskin*, *Jack and the Dentist's Daughter*, *Soldier Jack*, *Ashpet*, and *Mutzmag*. Use the "Prior to Viewing" observations included in this guide. Students will begin to see the films in terms of their production techniques as well as seeing them as stories. The examples and ideas raised by the viewing observations prepare students for viewing *Making Grimm Movies*.

2

Present the programs in *Making Grimm Movies*.

The three parts of the series are about twenty minutes each, so teachers should have plenty of time for class discussion if each program is shown on a different day.

3

Review the guide sections accompanying Parts One, Two, and Three of *Making Grimm Movies*. Select exercises to use in conjunction with the presentation of each program.

These exercises can prevent costly and demoralizing mistakes when students try to produce their own shows. Because we anticipate *Making Grimm Movies* will be applied in many different ways, the exercises are not ranked according to grade level. Teachers should choose the exercises most appropriate to their own lesson plans. The handouts in the appendix can be copied and distributed to help students consolidate the information they have learned.

4

Assign a major writing or production project based on the *Making Grimm Movies* unit.

Peruse the guide section entitled "Tips for Teachers" for ideas. These essays will be particularly interesting to teachers who are just delving into media literacy. Colorado teacher George Weathers offers his methods for teaching movie making within the structure of traditional school class periods. New York-based artist Betsy Newman describes her experience producing major video projects with classes.

If you lack equipment resources, you can assign script writing, storyboard drawing, or set design. We encourage you to allow students to develop production projects independently. Caution students to start small, since few of them realize at first how complicated, time consuming, and expensive it is to make even a simple movie. A vital component to the success of projects conducted outside the classroom will be supportive parents who sign permission letters, loan camcorders, and drive their children to production sites.

Prior to Viewing

Making Grimm Movies focuses on five of the movies in *From the Brothers Grimm: American Versions of Folktale Classics*, a series of live-action films directed by Tom Davenport. Ranging from fifteen to fifty-three minutes in length, these award-winning films offer dramatic interpretations of American tales and classic folk stories gathered by the Brothers Grimm. *Making Grimm Movies* uses examples from *Bearskin*, *Jack and the Dentist's Daughter*, *Soldier Jack*, *Ashpet*, and *Mutzmag*.

We recommend that classes watch one or more of these folktale films prior to viewing *Making Grimm Movies*. This section of the guide offers a story synopsis and viewing exercises for each of the five featured films. Before presenting each film, alert students to key scenes which are included in our viewing "Observations." You may also use two books which accompany the folktale series. *From the Brothers Grimm: A Contemporary Retelling of American Folktales and Classic Stories* adapts the film series back into printed stories with photographs from the films. *From the Brothers Grimm: A Teacher's Guide* offers analyses and exercises for each of the films.

From the Brothers Grimm brings to life such universal characters as Hansel and Gretel and Rapunzel, offering classroom audiences themes which have survived for generations. The tales all end rather happily, but they are not simple-minded. They often touch on sensitive subjects and acknowledge that maturation is a painful process. Our film adaptations emphasize the relevance of timeless themes in today's world.

Because of their communal origins, folktales appeal to audiences of all ages. While a second grade teacher might use one of our movies to teach "point-of-view," a tenth-grade literature teacher might use the same program to explore ways that the acknowledgment of other points of view contributes to personal development. *From the Brothers Grimm* has been used primarily in the language arts curriculum, but the tales are adaptable to more than one curriculum area when used in conjunction with *Making Grimm Movies*.

Once students begin to understand how our films are constructed, they will complain, as every young apprentice who works for Davenport Films inevitably complains, that a knowledge of how movies are made ruins the fun of watching them. Once students begin to question all of the cuts, special effects, and sets, they lose the willing suspension of disbelief that makes movies so compelling. Eventually students will get over their fall from the Eden of innocence, and their knowledge of the craft will only enhance their appreciation of film and television.



**On location
for Mutzmag.**

Our Community Studio

Folk storytelling is an oral tradition that lends itself to varied adaptations, depending on the style of each teller. All of the films in *From the Brothers Grimm* have been produced in our rural community on the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Northern Virginia.

We have nurtured relationships with helpful local people who lend us props and open the doors of their homes for use as locations. By sticking close to home, we produce films which are both interesting and inexpensive. Our approach may be slow, but it allows us to maintain creative control.



Bearskin

Synopsis

Set after the end of the Civil War, *Bearskin* is about a cocky young soldier who makes a wager with the devil. In exchange for unending wealth, the soldier agrees not to wash or pray for seven years. He accepts the bet with no comprehension of its difficulty. The seven years soon become an awful ordeal of physical suffering and loneliness, portrayed by his increasing filth and social isolation. Nicknamed "Bearskin," the young man is on the verge of despair when he realizes the virtue of giving to others. His new found generosity instills him with strength and enables him to win the devil's wager, plus the hand of a kind young woman.

Observation #1

Lesson: Makeup is an important device for character development.
How does Bearskin's makeup symbolize his development as a character? Does his appearance accurately portray who he is on the inside?

Immediately after his Faustian deal with the devil, Bearskin's appearance is tolerable. He enjoys immense popularity because of his riches. Over time, though, Bearskin loses his popularity as his hair grows long and his skin becomes disgustingly dirty. Bearskin has sacrificed his appearance for the sake of personal riches, and the degradation of his body parallels the decay of his soul. His appearance is an accurate symbol of his character until he realizes the dangers of selfishness and the joy of giving. Then, his body becomes a false mask over his redeemed soul. He is locked into his deal with the devil and wanders the countryside helping the poor and asking them to pray for his soul. Finally, after seven years, Bearskin completes his end of the wager and the devil is forced to wash Bearskin's body so that it becomes clean like the soldier's soul.

Observation #2

Lesson: Knowledge of history is crucial to creating a convincing period film. The goal is to give the impression of an historical setting, not to achieve complete visual accuracy.

The historical setting of a film affects decisions such as character development, costumes, and props. Sometimes movies include "anachronisms," when something from one place in history mistakenly appears in a scene set in a different place in history. Do you see any things in Bearskin which do not belong in the era when the movie is set?

After picking worms from a sore on his arm, Bearskin is chased away from the foot of a bridge by cruel boys who throw rocks at him. As Bearskin runs away, a car drives by in the distance at the top of the frame, an embarrassing anachronism for a film set decades before the arrival of the automobile. The cameraman did not see the car in the camera viewfinder and the editor did not notice it until late in the editing. Fortunately, most viewers do not notice the car. It only appears in the film for a few seconds. Their perspectives are selective, even within the limited space of the film frame. Like the cameraman and the editor, their attention is lower in the frame, watching the retreating form of Bearskin.

Filmmaking is impressionistic, not literal. Producers can get away with some mistakes as long as they are not central to the story. Even if all the objects in a set are authentic, the set will look false if the overall impression is wrong. Museum recreations often seem unreal because they look too neat and manicured for the period that the restoration tries to represent. Movie makers shouldn't miss the big picture by focusing obsessively on little things.

Observation #3

Lesson: Movie acting is performed in small dialogue segments.

The most complex scene in Jack and the Dentist's Daughter is when Jack's father returns the car that Jack has stolen from the dentist. There were many people delivering many lines to a variety of camera positions. It was hard to keep the scene organized and believable. How do you think we created a scene from such chaos?

We didn't shoot the scene in one long take. We shot it in fragments and assembled the pieces in editing. After all, shooting a scene for a film

is not like presenting a scene from a play. We often work as a group to write comical scenes like this one. We went through our list of characters and talked about what they are each most concerned about in the scene, their “motivation.” Jack’s father is worried about the dentist’s car; the dentist wants to back out on his promise that Jack can court his daughter since Jack successfully stole the car; the dentist’s daughter wants to know if she and Jack can get married; the dentist’s wife wants the dentist to get the car out of the road and stop embarrassing the family; the general store crowd wants to be entertained.

Based on these motivations, we went character by character and improvised lines. Our script for the scene ended up as a list of lines and actions under each character’s name. We arranged these in a traditional screenplay form for the master shot, but then isolated each character or group of characters and methodically worked our way through each sub-scene: the dentist, his patient, and Jack’s father by the car; the mother and daughter on the hill; the crowd on the porch of the store. We shot almost every line of dialogue as a separate take. Later, we edited these sub-scenes together, speeding up the action by overlapping lines to create more pressure on the hapless dentist. Because we were cutting back and forth between characters and camera angles, it didn’t matter that the dialogue was shot in fragments.

Observation #4

Lesson: Editing can change the audience’s perception of time and space. In *Jack and the Dentist’s Daughter*, the preacher comes out of his house at night to sneak a drink of whiskey from a bottle he has hidden at the foot of a tree. The preacher is surprised by Jack, who is disguised as an angel in the tree. The actors had busy schedules, and we could not find a night when they both could be on location together. How did the two actors appear in the scene together if they were never at the location together?

First, we set up the camera looking from the preacher’s point of view on the ground up towards Jack in the tree. We actually shot Jack in a tree which was a considerable distance from the house. A crew member stood on the ground next to the camera and read the lines for the preacher, so that Jack seems to talk to the preacher when he is actually speaking to the camera.

A week later, we went back and set the camera up on a pickup truck to simulate Jack’s “point of view” looking down from the tree to the preacher on the ground. A crew member stood by the camera and read Jack’s lines to the preacher, so that the preacher appears to be talking to Jack when he is actually talking to the camera. There was no tree near the preacher’s house, so we cut a branch off a tree and mounted it on a light stand so that the branch is seen in the film frame. This simple detail makes the viewer think that the preacher is standing at the foot of the tree in which Jack is perched.

The key to connecting the two scenes is the “eye line” of the two shots. We composed the preacher in the bottom right of the frame looking up towards the upper right of the frame. Then, we composed Jack in the upper right of the frame looking down towards the bottom right, where the preacher is supposedly standing. In effect, we matched the imaginary eye line of the two actors. In editing, we further connected the scenes by occasionally overlapping sound between visual cuts, so that you see the preacher as you hear some of Jack’s lines, and you see Jack when you hear the preacher. It took nearly a week of editing time to perfect the timing and make the scene interesting. In the end, the audience has no idea that the two actors never met.



Jack and the Dentist’s Daughter

Synopsis

Jack lives in a rural community in the 1930s. He is a poor farmer’s son who wants to marry Emily, the daughter of the town dentist. The dentist will not let Jack marry her because Jack has no money. Jack leaves home to find work. He returns with newfound riches, only to have the dentist test him with three challenges. Jack ultimately passes all of the tests, and the dentist agrees to the marriage.



In this scene from *Jack and the Dentist’s Daughter*, Jack is disguised as an angel hovering in a tree. He is talking to the preacher, who is standing beneath the tree. The two actors never met.



Soldier Jack

Synopsis

After World War Two, a soldier named Jack returns to rural America. Through an act of kindness, he receives two magical gifts: a sack that can catch anything and a jar that can show whether a sick person will get well or die. Jack uses the sack to catch three devils plaguing a small community. Later, he becomes a national hero when he rescues the President's daughter from a fatal illness by capturing Death in the sack. After many years in a world without Death, Jack realizes his mistake and releases Death into the world again.

Observation #5

Lesson: *An understanding of character motivation is crucial to effective scriptwriting.*

One of the most intriguing scenes in Soldier Jack is when Jack gives his last sandwich to a mysterious beggar on an isolated hilltop. What conflict does Jack experience within himself in the scene?

The original folktale version of *Soldier Jack* does not give details of Jack's encounter with the beggar. Jack offers the beggar a loaf of bread and is rewarded for his generosity with two magical gifts, a jar and a sack. After a few failed attempts to shoot this scene, we realized that the scene is more than a mere exchange and decided to expand the original scene.

In the final film adaptation, Jack has already given away one sandwich to a beggar in town and has only one sandwich left. He meets the beggar on the hill and offers him half of the last sandwich. Then, Jack's compassion takes over and he offers the beggar the second half of the sandwich. It is not an easy decision for Jack to make. He is hungry, and he isn't aware of the rewards he will receive for his kindness.

Without showing Jack's internal conflict about giving up his last sandwich, the scene was flat and uninteresting. When we re-shot the scene, though, the actor expressed the conflict he felt in the exchange with the beggar, and the scene became mystical and engaging. Jack's internal conflict and decision to give the sandwich away represents his development as a character. As scriptwriters, we learned that it is important to consider the motivation of the main characters in each scene when writing a script.

Observation #6

Lesson: *Many movie locations never exist as they appear in a film.*

Is the haunted house in Soldier Jack located in the town or in the country?



Soldier Jack and a young boy stand on a rural road, apparently facing a mysterious house. The house was actually miles away from the rural road.

The audience's concept of the house is established when Jack first looks towards the house from a rural road. In actuality, the house is situated along a busy road in a small town. We liked the look of the house so much that we adjusted it to our film's setting by "moving" it to the country with editing and camera work. First, we went to a country location and filmed Jack walking down a dirt road, stopping, and looking across a wire fence towards the house. He questions a frightened young boy about the house. Second, we went to the location of the house to film Jack's "point-of-view" looking at the house. We put up a replica wire fence and shot footage of the house as Jack would see it, with the wire fence in the foreground. When the two shots are edited together, the fence helps create the illusion that the house Jack is standing in front of is in the country.

Observation #7

Lesson: *The development of a character subtext helps actors maintain their roles since film scenes are shot out of order.*

Discuss the background of the Ashpet character Dark Sally. What does she do for a living? What was her life like before the stage of her life you see in the movie? How did she know Ashpet's mother? How did she know about the secret room that contained the mother's party dresses and shoes?

Before filming *Ashpet*, we developed a thorough idea of Dark Sally's background, including her personal history such as where she was born and what her past lifestyle had been. For example, she had been the cook in Ashpet's household before Ashpet's mother died. In most rural southern communities, blacks were tied to whites by economic dependence, and despite differences in class and culture, blacks often became friendly caretakers of whites. As the cook, Sally lived in the "big house" which belonged to the mother's family. As a loved and trusted family servant, Sally told her magical stories to Ashpet's mother. She also helped raise Ashpet.

After Ashpet's mother died, her alcoholic father became distraught and confused. Against Sally's advice, he married a woman who was beneath him in class and education. After the father died, Sally moved out of the house because she could not get along with the new wife. The stepmother and her daughters were afraid of Sally, so they shunned her. She moved into an old tenant house on the home farm not far from the main house. When our story begins, Sally is living in the tenant house and makes her living by selling country remedies and telling fortunes.

This background story is never overtly explained in *Ashpet*, but our thorough character development pays off by making the story more believable. The background of the plot is implied in scenes throughout the film: Sally tells Ashpet that she taught her mother the riddle that Ashpet answers; Sally knows about the secret stairs in the closet; Thelma degrades Sally, saying, "Remember how she used to braid her hair? It looked like snakes!"

Observation #8

Lesson: *Film scenes are usually created in editing, not on location.*
Notice all of the different camera angles in the Ashpet dance scene. Each of the cuts required a new camera set up which required a lot of time. With all of these edits, how did we make the music in the background continuous?

For the dance scene, we had to do more than a hundred camera set ups and lighting changes in two hectic days. We had to prepare carefully in order to work this fast and not forget any important shots. We broke the scene up into separate shots and made a computer data base of each of these shots which included the actors and extras in each shot and the direction that the camera was pointing in the room. Then we had the computer sort the list so that one category included all the wide shots where we needed the extras and the band. Another category included all of the close-up scenes of the main actors. We shot the wide shots on the first day and the close-up shots on the second day. We saved the expense of hiring the band and most of the extras for the second day. We also grouped the shots according to camera direction to minimize changes in the lighting which always take a lot of time. For example, we filmed all the scenes where we were looking toward the band at one time, no matter where they came in the script.

Since we shot the dance scene completely out of order, there was no way for the music to be continuous between all of the short takes which appear in the final scene. There would have been no way to match up the exact points in the music where each of the shots start. And if we had recorded the dance music at the same time as the dialogue scenes, it would have been impossible to hear the actors clearly. We filmed most of the scenes without music, using a "scratch" music track only at the beginning of each take to set the tempo of the dancers. Later, in editing, we added in the clearly recorded sound of a professional band. The music is like a glue that holds together all of the short fragments that we filmed in those two busy days on location.



Ashpet

Synopsis

Set in the rural South in the early years of World War Two, the *Ashpet* story is an American adaptation of Cinderella. Ashpet's mother and father are dead, so she is kept as a servant in her own house by her stepmother and slothful sisters. A conjure-woman named Dark Sally is Ashpet's fairy godmother. She helps Ashpet develop self-esteem, overcome her cruel step-family, and come into her rightful inheritance.



Mutzmag

Synopsis

Set around 1920, *Mutzmag* features a 12-year-old girl who lives deep in the Appalachian woods with her mother and abusive half-sisters. After their mother dies, the older girls leave the mountains to seek their fortune. *Mutzmag* trails along as a servant girl. The girls encounter an evil witch and a simple-minded giant who plot to kill and eat the girls. *Mutzmag*'s quick thinking saves the girls and rids her newfound mountain community of the cannibals.

Observation #9

Lesson: Interiors in a film are often constructed sets which are edited together with exterior shots of actual places.

*Were the locations used in *Mutzmag* real?*

We could never find convincing buildings to use as interior sets, and the shacks we did find were too small for our crew and equipment. So, most of the interior scenes in *Mutzmag* were filmed on sets that we built inside a large community center hall. We built sets with removable walls so that we had a lot of options when positioning the camera. Most viewers do not notice the “unreal” aspects of the *Mutzmag* set that the camera positions imply. In one scene, the girls read advertisements on the newspaper-plastered walls of the shack interior. Where was the camera? How could the camera shoot through a wall if the shack was an actual building? In another scene, the witch and giant stir a cauldron hanging in the fireplace of their cabin. Viewers see the witch and giant through the fireplace itself. Where was the camera when the witch is cooking the squirrels and the salt falls into the pot? How could the camera be inside a burning fireplace? Like the removable walls, the fireplace was constructed so that the camera could shoot from a position which would be impossible in an actual building.

Observation #10

Lesson: Film adaptations of stories often differ from the source stories.

*Why was it necessary to portray the dog as mean in *Mutzmag*?*

In oral and written versions of the *Mutzmag* folktale, the giant's dog is not mean and frightening, as in our film adaptation. The dog in the story is simply one of the giant's treasured possessions, like his honey jar. For our film adaptation, we made the dog into a vicious and threatening character so that the audience would feel that *Mutzmag* was justified in tricking the giant into killing the dog. In America today, we tend to see dogs as pets or even family members, like the sweet puppies who appear in dog food commercials. If *Mutzmag* had killed a friendly dog, even to defend herself from the giant, the audience would have been angry with her. By making the dog mean, *Mutzmag* seems to triumph over a threat to her safety. The audience maintains its perception of *Mutzmag* as a resourceful and likeable heroine.



Professionally trained actress Eve Moenig as Poll, standing on the right.

Observation #11

Lesson: In movie acting, non-actors are sometimes as effective as trained actors.

*Of the three sisters in *Mutzmag*, two were Appalachian natives who had never acted before and one was a professionally trained actress. Which sister was the trained actress?*

We cast non-actors from rural North Carolina in the roles of *Mutzmag* and Nance. Poll, the lighter-haired sister, is played by a trained actress named Eve Moenig. She studied at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, DC, and then went on to major in drama at Northwestern University. Because of her training, Eve was able to adapt to a role which was totally unlike her own life. To develop a believable mountain accent, we sent Eve to visit her counterpart, Michelle Johnson, who plays Nance. Unlike Eve, the non-actors played characters with many similarities to their own lives and cultural setting. Non-actors work best in roles which allow them essentially to play themselves.

Part One

Scriptwriting

Alfred Hitchcock, director of such movie classics as *Rear Window* and *The Birds*, once said that the most enjoyable and creative part of filmmaking is the writing and storyboard stage before the financial and technical demands of production take over.

People often rush into movie projects as soon as they get their hands on a camcorder. They aimlessly film unwritten scenes and then become discouraged because they're not sure how to complete a production from the material they've filmed. A sense of discipline has to accompany that initial enthusiasm. Even for a simple classroom skit, careful planning and organization are very important. The first task of the movie maker is to put ideas into a treatment and script so that they can be shared with other people.



Kelly Mancini
as Ashpet.

From the Director

We spent 18 months producing Mutzmag: An Appalachian Folktale. The 53 minute movie had a budget of \$240,000, about two percent of the cost of a typical Hollywood feature film. We spent the first three months preparing the script and organizing the administration of the project. We spent another five months on preproduction planning, including casting, set preparation, research, and rehearsal. After eight months of preparation, we spent only one month actually filming the production. Then we spent eight months editing the movie, a process that is very dependent on writing and organization. So, in an 18 month period we spent only one month with the camera! That month was the most intense and expensive because there were so many people involved, and it was a success only because of our extensive preparation.

Sometimes people with great ideas never start a movie project because it seems too complicated. Students shouldn't be overwhelmed by thinking of the overall process of making a movie. They should just start small. It is a little bit like hiking up a mountain. If the hiker thinks of the whole mountain, it seems impossible to climb 14,000 feet; but if the hiker just think, "I can go three more feet, three more feet, three more feet," eventually it all adds up, and the mountain has been conquered.

If students have a good story, they've got the beginning of a film. They might come up with something new, or there are many sources for interesting stories, such as a poem, a scene from a play, a chapter from a book, or an historical event. They can be true to the original story or they

The Lessons of *Making Grimm Movies*

The organization of this study guide parallels the three twenty-minute parts of *Making Grimm Movies*. Each corresponding part of the guide amplifies the lessons of *Making Grimm Movies* with explanations and exercises.

Part One
Scriptwriting, Casting, Makeup.

Part Two
Locations, Set Design, Sound.

Part Three
Cinematography, Editing, Film Acting.

Exercise #1**Treatments & Screenplays**

Lesson: How to format and write a treatment and a screenplay scene based on an existing story.

Teach the students the difference between a treatment and a screenplay. A treatment is a short synopsis of a story. It is typically used for early script development and fundraising. A screenplay is a written script of a story.

Help students identify sources of existing stories which they think would make an interesting movie. They can use folktales, short stories, historical events, poems, news items. Working alone or in small groups, have the students develop a one page treatment of their selected story. Then, have them write a script of one scene from the treatment. Ambitious students may want to create an original story, but adaptations encourage the integration of diverse curriculum areas.

A sample treatment and scene from a screenplay are in the appendix. They can be copied for distribution to students. For story sources, we suggest using the folktales in *From the Brothers Grimm: A Contemporary Retelling of American Folktales and Classic Stories*.

Ashpet and William fall in love at first sight.



can just use the old story as a spark for something new.

All of the films in *From the Brothers Grimm* are based on time-tested folktales which are filled with vivid visual images as well as exciting action and conflict. If students want their stories to have the feel of the oral tales, they can adapt the stories in a literal and obvious way, or they can just borrow the essential plot idea of a folktale and then adjust the story to create a realistic movie. For example, *Ashpet* is based on the story of Cinderella, but we adapted the story to the rural United States during World War II and created new personalities for the characters. Students can try making their own adaptations of the folktales which appear in *From the Brothers Grimm: A Contemporary Retelling of American Folktales and Classic Stories*.

From the Director

Stories are often sparked by personal experiences. That's what happened with our movie The Frog King, a story about a talking frog who comes to dinner at an ornately decorated mansion. I already knew the story of "The Frog King" when I visited the dining room of a beautiful old house in his community. The walls of the dining room were covered with the stuffed heads of giraffes, rhinoceroses, and Hungarian wild boar that had been killed decades earlier by the great-grandfather of the house's owner. I imagined the humor and fascination of a talking frog arriving in a room filled with such large, noble animals. That image became the basis for the entire film.

We start out by writing a treatment, a short summary of the story that is usually no more than a page long. Then we move on to the screenplay, the complete script of the movie with all the scenes and dialogue described in detail.

It is difficult to write dialogue that will be natural and believable when it appears on screen. Most people tend to write dialogue that is too long and too grammatically correct. The rule "less is more" is particularly applicable to movie dialogue.

One way to create believable dialogue is to outline a scene and then improvise it with actors or with some friends. Take notes or video tape the improvisation. Sometimes we rehearse the dialogue as we are preparing the lights and camera for a scene. We test it with the actors and make changes if that seems appropriate.

Films are at their best when driven by visual images. Remember that your job is to tell the story through settings and images as much as through dialogue. For example, if you have two characters who are in love, don't just have them say it; have them show it.

In one scene, *Ashpet* arrives at a dance and sees *William* playing the saxophone on stage. The camera cuts back and forth between close-ups of *Ashpet* and *William* gazing at each other. Meanwhile, the camera ignores all of the other people in the room. The audience knows that *Ashpet* and *William* are experiencing love-at-first-sight even though *Ashpet* and *William* have not

spoken to each other. By using images and not dialogue, your story becomes more interesting and more realistic.

Movies are not very interesting when they show every bit of action along the way. When writing for movies, you should bring audiences into each scene late, forcing them to make imaginative leaps. A good example of this approach occurs in *Mutzmag*.

Viewers know that a frightened old couple has offered Mutzmag a reward for killing the evil witch in the forest. Mutzmag has returned and lured the witch into a fierce fight along an isolated cliff. Viewers see the witch's point-of-view as she falls off a cliff to her death. After a brief glimpse of the dead witch at the bottom of the cliff, Mutzmag runs away with a worn-out bucket in her hand, and the scene fades to black.

The next scene begins with the voice of the old man as a close-up shows him counting gold coins: "920... 940...." A cut to a wide shot reveals that Mutzmag is in the kitchen of the old couple, receiving her reward. Viewers see a brief but gruesome shot of the witch's head in the worn-out bucket, which is on the kitchen floor.

It is clear to viewers what has occurred since the last scene. Mutzmag has decapitated the witch as proof of her death, brought the head to the old couple in a bucket, and is receiving her reward. The scene was written and edited to tell the whole story without showing all of the action. Who wants to hear the money counted from zero to 920? It is enough to pick up in the middle of the action and let viewers figure out the rest intuitively.

The initial script often changes based on input from actors, the photographer, the set designer, and others. Sometimes we can't find a location which matches the image you convey in the script. Sometimes it becomes obvious while filming that certain lines of dialogue don't work. Scripts seldom survive the production process totally intact.



Mutzmag gets her reward.

Exercise #2

A Visual Medium

Lesson: Movies emphasize visual storytelling over dialogue.

Most feature films are carried by the visual story, but sound carries most television programs, including news programs and most sit-coms.

Show your students the scene in *Mutzmag* when the girls are eating dinner after arriving at the witch's cabin. Leave the volume off. Discuss the differences between visual storytelling in the movie scene and in television scenes such from sit-coms or news programs.

What shows are sound dependent? What shows carry the story visually? Ask the students to write a brief essay describing the characteristics of a program that emphasizes visual storytelling and one that emphasizes dialogue. You may also want to rent and show scenes from classic silent movies.

Casting

Casting is the process of finding actors for a movie. A lot of directors say that once you've cast a film right, ninety percent of their problems are over. If the actors aren't right, no amount of good lighting and slick camera work will save a production.

Within the average classroom, screen testing may be impractical because you only have a small pool of people and will need everyone, but there are still some basic guidelines you can follow. Student directors shouldn't just pick the class favorite for the lead role. They might look for students with acting experience, but non-actors often work just as well in movies. We even made *Mutzmag* more authentic by casting non-actors from the rural Appalachian locale where the movie is set.

Exercise #3**Historical Context**

Lesson: An understanding of historical context is crucial to character development.

Divide your students into teams and have each team pick a character from a film in *From the Brothers Grimm*, or from a short story or novel that the class has studied.

Have each team research the historical era when the story is set and assess the way that the setting affects the selected character. Then, have them create a summary of the character's life, ending with the character's action in the plot of the film.

We've established our own routine for finding actors for *From the Brothers Grimm*. We go to agents, theater directors, individual actors or high schools with drama departments. We describe the kind of actors we imagine for each part and get suggestions based on the physical types we need. We make hundreds of phone calls, organizing a schedule for auditions. We usually tell the actors something about the story in advance so that they won't come dressed in a party dress for a scene that takes place in a hog pen.

We schedule about five minutes for each audition and give the actors a form asking for their name, acting background, and clothing sizes. Also, we ask them about their availability on the days that we have scheduled the shoot. We put copies of the script treatment and reprints of several important scenes from the screenplay in the waiting room so the actors can read them in advance.

We invite each actor into the audition room and we take a still photo for our records. For the photo, we have the actor hold up a sheet of paper bearing his or her name so we can easily identify them. Then, we turn on the video camera and ask some easy background questions. As the situation becomes more relaxed, we ask the actor to stand and say, "Today is my birthday." The actor delivers this line four times, conveying four different emotions such as happiness or anger.

We discuss the character for which the actor is auditioning and ask the actor to read a short scene from the script. One of our staff members reads the other parts in each scene to help the auditioning actor. If the actor seems promising, we ask him or her to wait and call them in again to read or improvise a scene from the story with another actor. This is a very interesting and creative process where we test our script as we try out the actors. We pay close attention to how well the actors respond to the director.

There is some interpersonal tension in auditions, especially for inexperienced actors. The actors all want parts, and people often get their feelings hurt. At the same time, you want the best person for the role, and some of the people you audition are obviously inappropriate.



It is important to consider physical types when casting. Bart Whiteman, cast as the giant in Mutzmag, had been a college football player at Yale.

From the director

It is easier to "see" a performance on video tape without the social pressure of the live audition. So, we rely on the audition tapes to see how each person looks on film since the camera often changes an actor's appearance. After we have selected our most promising candidates, we arrange a final call-back to test these actors in combinations. It is important not to commit a part before seeing the best actors together. There are a lot of hurt feelings if you promise someone a part and then decide later to change.

Student casting processes probably don't need to be so complicated. Students can simply get a few people to read different parts, but they should still strive to find the best person for the part.

The production process can be difficult for people. Make sure to let everyone know roughly how long they will be needed, and try to pick reliable people. If your main actor decides halfway through shooting that he doesn't want to do the film, all your work will be wasted!

Makeup

Makeup and costuming contribute to the character development of each role in a film, no matter how simple. Just by looking at a character you can learn a lot about lifestyle, age, class, personality, and historical setting.

We cast a high school student named Robbie Sams for the lead role in *Mutzmag*. At first glance, she looks very much like her normal self when she appears in the movie. But a closer look shows how important appearance is in explaining her role. We knew from the setting of the story that *Mutzmag* would wear old, worn-out clothes.



Robbie Sams as Mutzmag.

We also did costume research by looking at photos taken in Appalachia in the early twentieth century. Because she lives in a small shack in the mountains, *Mutzmag* has skin which is dark from work in the garden and from the lack of effective cleaning facilities. Robbie's skin was actually much lighter. She had to arrive early every day of filming and the makeup artist would scrub dirt-like makeup all over her skin and fingernails. Finally, her shiny blonde hair was toned down and braided.

From the director

*Technical skills are not the only key to being a good makeup artist or costume designer. Students usually adapt to whatever resources are available. Foremost, it is important to integrate a knowledge of many different fields in order to develop the look of a character successfully. In the case of *Mutzmag*, it was important to understand the culture of people in the Appalachian mountains during the early twentieth century.*

One of the most interesting characters in the *Brothers Grimm* series is a 206-year-old woman in *Soldier Jack*. The actress was actually only about 35 years old! We used artificial rubber pieces called prosthetics. First, we made a plaster cast of the actress' head, covering her hair with a bald cap. We used the mold to create a full bust simulating the actress. Then, we used clay to sculpt exaggerated wrinkles and sagging skin onto the face. We made rubber prosthetics from the newly sculpted facial features, then applied them in small sections to each part of the actress' face and covered them with makeup.



High schools often have drama or cosmetic classes, so you may want to invite a teacher or an experienced student in to demonstrate simple makeup. Remember that stage makeup is more exaggerated than movie makeup. On stage, makeup is for the back row. In a movie, it has to be believable in a close up. Unless you have a special character, actors need very little makeup. Just use a cheek highlighter, light lipstick and a small amount of eyeliner under the eye. An actor often begins to think about a role intensely when the look of the character is being created. Makeup and costuming are good times to review lines and go over the script. If a performer just gets in front of the camera without this transition period, he or she may feel unprepared.

Students should start simply, with the resources of their kitchens, such as cocoa and ketchup. Halloween is a good time to stock up on nose putty and off-the-shelf makeup kits. We used store-bought, pre-fabricated rubber ears for the little devils in *Soldier Jack*.

Exercise #4

Preproduction Lists

Lesson: Organization is crucial to successful movie making.

This exercise offers a glimpse of the complicated organizational process which precedes the production of movies.

Ask students to write an original treatment or use the sample treatment for *Soldier Jack* included in the back of this guide. They should break the treatment down into the major scenes and number them in order. For instance, *Soldier Jack* would begin with the scene of Jack arriving at a train station, followed by the scene of Jack meeting a beggar on a hilltop, and then the scene of Jack catching wild turkeys in a magic sack. They might want to limit their work to a scene or two rather than tackling the whole story.

Make a scene breakdown form for each major scene, including the following descriptions and requirements:

- Scene number and title
- Location
- Exterior or interior
- Time of day (day or night)
- Actors
- Props
- Special equipment
- Crew members
- Transportation requirements
- Refreshments

Finally, ask students to organize those scenes that have similar requirements. The purpose of this organization is to create the most efficient shooting schedule. For instance, if some scenes require the main actors to be in the same location, those scenes should be grouped. They can be filmed at the same time in order to consolidate resources and save time and money. Then, in editing, the scenes can be assembled in proper order to advance the plot.

Exercise #5

Making Up

Lesson: Makeup contributes to character development.

Divide your students into small groups and assign each group a makeup "effect" to achieve, such as illness, old age, or happiness. Provide each group with simple makeup resources such as grease paint, putty, and hair dressing materials.

The members of each group should assign each other specific roles: Actor, makeup artist, writer, and director. The makeup artist and director can work together preparing the look of the actor. Meanwhile, the writer should talk with the actor to plan a brief monologue.

Let each group operate a camera and lights set up in one corner of the room. The director should guide lighting arrangements and camera framing in order to best achieve the group's effect. Then, the actor should be taped while delivering the prepared monologue.

In the end, reassemble the class as a whole to watch the results. The inevitably humorous results will be a good spark for discussion of makeup and character development.

Part Two

Locations

Looking for a location to film a scene is a lot like casting an actor to play a part. The search for locations often clarifies the story in the mind of the director as the imagined scenes become more tangible. Begin with a general idea of what you want, and then continually adjust your vision based on what is available and affordable.

Research is an important part of developing ideas for locations and sets, particularly for stories set in specific historical time periods. For instance, *Mutzmag* is set in an isolated mountain community of Appalachia in the early twentieth century.

We studied historical photographs of the lifestyle in Appalachia and watched other films that had portrayed the region. Then, we went out in search of a cabin that we could use as a set. We created a scrapbook of photographs showing all the potential locations that we visited. We also kept a video journal describing the pros and cons of each location.

From the director

When we search for locations, we pay attention to practical things. We try to find places close to home and to use only one or two locations for our films so that it's easier to get all of the crew and cast together and work quickly. Since we work with limited budgets, we don't pick movie ideas that need lots of different locations that are far from each other. And we can't forget about simple convenience. Does the set have a bathroom and running water? Does the set have a place for actors to rest between takes? Will the location be too cold or hot to work in? How will property owners be affected? Even small movie crews involve a lot of wires and lights and people everywhere, so we always get permission for use of locations, clean up carefully, and write thank-you notes afterwards.

A lot of people think that the setting of a play is fake, but that the setting of a movie is real because the camera never lies. This is simply not true, particularly in dramatic films. One of the most interesting aspects of movie making is the ability to create new realities by combining things in editing. We needed two main locations for *Mutzmag*: an old shack for Mutzmag's family and a mountain cabin for the witch and



On location for *Mutzmag*:
at left, Director Tom Davenport;
on top of van, Michael Dellala
holds microphone boom over
actresses at right.

**EXTERIOR OF MUTZMAG'S SHACK**

A three-sided facade we built in a field on Director Tom Davenport's farm in northern Virginia.

**INTERIOR OF MUTZMAG'S SHACK**

A set we built in a community hall ten miles from the exterior location. We linked the interior and exterior in editing.

Exercise #6**Making Models**

Lesson: Set design has to include a consideration of camera and crew requirements.

Describe to students the sets that we used for the production of *Mutzmag*. Ask students to design a movie set which takes into account the requirements of camera set-ups and crew members. First, have each student collect a scrapbook of useful images. Second, ask students to make simple floor plan drawings of their imagined set, marking the various locations where the camera and lights can be placed. Finally, have students design a miniature model of their set using cardboard boxes or thin styrofoam boards.

The students should bring their models to class on a selected day. You can provide simple figurines and small objects to represent actors, crew members, and the camera. Allow the students to present their sets one at a time, offering a rationale for their designs. Ask them to locate the miniature actors, crew, and camera in the models to see how successful the designs are.

giant. We found a lot of fascinating cabins in the Appalachian mountains, but they all had logistical drawbacks. They were either too far away from our studio or too small to accommodate a film crew and all of the accompanying equipment.

Thanks to the tricks of movie-making, we created locations that never actually existed. For the exterior of the shack, we built a three-sided facade in an empty field. For the exterior of the cabin, we used the outside of an historically preserved cabin at a nature park. Then, we built the interior of the shack and the cabin inside a large room. We built one set and then decorated it differently for the shack interior and the cabin interior. We designed the set so that we could remove walls and allow the camera to shoot into the set from almost any angle. Then, in editing, we cut together footage of the exterior locations and interior sets, creating the appearance of a shack and a cabin which never actually existed as they appear in the film. For example, at the start of the film, Mutzmag talks to her mother in the field beside their tumble-down shack. Then she walks onto the porch of the cabin and through the door. Next, you see her coming through the door into the interior of the shack. In fact, the actress walked from the porch into an empty outdoor space behind the outdoor shack set. When we edited the shots together, we were able to create the appearance of a real shack. This "linkage" is basic to most of the tricks in movie making.

Set Design

Movie makers must be able to visualize the imaginary space and time that will be created when a scene is edited together. The camera only "sees" what is within the frame of the viewfinder. Set designers don't need to decorate everything as they would when creating a set for a play. They dress up just the part of a location that will be seen in the camera frame.

Color and lighting are two ways that set design suggests the theme and plot of a story. When producing *Mutzmag*, we were able to make the same set appear to be Mutzmag's shack for some scenes and the witch's cabin for other scenes. The shack has light-colored walls and washed out lighting. The witch's cabin, on the other hand, has dark walls and

**EXTERIOR OF WITCH'S CABIN**

A cabin at a nature preserve near Washington, DC, about fifty miles from the interior set.

**INTERIOR OF WITCH'S CABIN**

The same set as the interior of Mutzmag's shack. We used different lighting, props, and decor.

deep red colors that suggest bloodiness and fire. It is full of shadows and mystery. For the witch's cabin we wanted to suggest spookiness. Our crew went to flea markets to find props representing Appalachian culture. Then we added old knives and unusual items such as a hawk's foot dangling from the ceiling. The set designer worked with the actress playing the witch, because she had good ideas for props based on a knowledge of her character. The cabin was decorated as the witch would have done it.

From the director

Sometimes props spark new developments in a movie production. While we were filming Mutzmag one of the crew members brought in an old windup record player. There was no record player in the original story and we hadn't put one into the script, but we decided to use it because it became the focus for some interesting action. The witch brings the record player out to seduce the sisters Poll and Nance, who have only seen record players in a Sears and Roebuck catalog. The scene says a lot about the girls' aspirations for a better life, and the music adds a wacky humor to the scenes in the witch's cabin.

You'll be surprised with what you can come up with if you use your community as a studio. When a student once asked master photographer Edward Weston what to photograph, Weston replied, "Walk around the block." The best things are near at hand. In *Soldier Jack*, we needed American flags for a scene that was set in the White House. We went to the American Legion and the Boy Scouts and got some nice flags on stands, but we found only three or four flags. To make it seem like there were many more, we put the same four flags in the background during every shot. Junk stores and flea markets are good places to find simple resources. In *Mutzmag* and in *Soldier Jack*, we made cobwebs from fiber pillow filling we got at the local hardware store.

Teachers should help students pay attention to important things like sending thank-you notes, acknowledgment in the credits, and distribution of videos to people or businesses that help with a movie. A simple show of gratitude will encourage ongoing collaboration.

Since scenes are filmed out of order, it is important to maintain visual continuity through all of the different takes. Let's say that a set designer decorates a scene in a bedroom by putting a large poster on the wall

Exercise #7**Editing Locations**

Lesson: Movie editing allows the combination of different interiors and exteriors, creating the appearance of one location.

Each student will create a movie location using pictures from books and magazines. Each student should select a picture of the exterior of a building and an interior picture from a different building that matches the selected exterior. The students should cut or copy the selected exterior and interior and paste them onto a page or pages beside each other. Ask each student to write a brief explanation of how the different exterior and interior locations would work together.

In Mutzmag, the sisters appear to read news notices pasted on a wall. In fact, a crew member held up the notices and the camera was aimed over his shoulder towards the girls.



behind the actors. The poster is just a part of the set and is not directly related to the plot. If you come back to the room later to film another scene, you should remember to replace the poster just as it was before. On big film productions, there is a continuity person who takes Polaroids of every shot to make sure that the lighting, costumes and makeup match in all the shots. Don't get bogged down by the details of continuity, though.

Exercise #8

The Camera Frame

Lesson: The only thing the audience sees is what is in the frame of the camera viewfinder.

This exercise is modeled after the scene in *Mutzmag* where the sisters read the newspaper ad on the wall. Students will need a camcorder. Ask them to create a scene where a student walks up to a wall-mounted bulletin board to read a notice.

They should record the scene without sound, and shoot each shot in sequence so they do not have to edit later. There should be a total of four shots:

- (1) Wide shot of the student walking up to read a notice.
- (2) Close up of the student's face while reading the notice.
- (3) Close up of the notice being read.
- (4) Wide shot of the student walking away, from the same perspective as the first shot.

Shots one, three, and four are simple. Shot two is more complicated. How can a camera be located where the notice is on the bulletin board? Simply have the actor move away from the bulletin board for this shot, allowing the camera to move just in front of the bulletin board to shoot the actor from the imaginary "point-of-view" of the notice. Have a crew member hold a notice next to the camera so that the actor will have something to look at while being filmed.

This exercise liberates students from the constraints of space by showing them that the audience only sees what is in the frame of the camera viewfinder (in this case, the close-up of the student's face reading the notice). The audience cannot see beyond the frame to realize that the student actor was not actually reading the bulletin board notice in shot two.

The ultimate goal of set design is to create a persuasive impression of a location. Absolute accuracy is expensive and impossible to achieve. The goal is to create a location that viewers will find believable.

Interior design is often dictated by when and where the story is set. For instance, we knew that the log cabin in the mountains for the film *Mutzmag* would not need a refrigerator. In addition to reading history books and looking at old photographs, it's also good to see how sets are used in related films. You don't have to think up everything yourself! Look at other period films to get ideas about set design, lighting, camera angles, and more.

Sound

All of the movies in *From the Brothers Grimm* were shot on 16mm film. When shooting with film, sound and picture are recorded on separate machines and then synchronized in editing. That's why you always see those big clapsticks clicking at the start of scenes when movies are filmed. The editor "syncs" the image of the clapper hit with the accompanying sound. Because the image and sound are recorded separately in film, there is typically a sound specialist on the crew when the scenes are originally shot. But most people now use video instead of film. Since sound and image are usually recorded simultaneously when using video, people are often so preoccupied with getting a good image that they forget to pay attention to the sound recording.

When you are preparing to shoot a scene, listen to the sounds around you. Every location has its own ambiance. A rural field has the sound of crickets chirping, while a city street has the sound of traffic and sirens. Even rooms have their own unique sound atmosphere, known as "room tone." A newspaper office has the sound of phones ringing and keyboards clicking, but a house may only have the sound of an air conditioner humming faintly in the background.

The atmospheric sound can enhance or interfere with the sound you gather while filming. While we were filming *Mutzmag*, huge airplanes kept flying overhead as they headed towards a major airport nearby. But our movie was set around 1920 in a rural area! Every time a plane started flying over, we had to stop filming. It cost us a lot of valuable time and money.

Microphone placement also affects the character of the sound you record. Let's say your camera is ten feet away from two actors having an intimate conversation in a city park. You are using a built-in microphone on the video camera. During one part of the conversation, you zoom in on an actor who is delivering an important line. The picture shows a character who is only two or three feet away, but it will still sound like the character is ten feet away!

From the director

Instead of using the built-in microphone on a video camera, students should use an external microphone on a "boom." Most cameras will allow users to plug in another microphone. Teachers might need to pick up a microphone extension cable at an electronics store. The sound recordist should attach the microphone to a long pole, or "boom," and hold the microphone near the actor or actors who are speaking in each scene. The sound recordist should check with the camera operator to be sure that the boom is not in the frame of the picture, and be sure not to hold the boom in front of lights that will cause shadows on the actors or setting in the camera frame.

The technique of "sound mixing" is probably best reserved for advanced students. Movie audio is very dependent on the editing process. Students usually don't have access to sophisticated editing equipment, but there's a lot to be learned from the way we edit sound for our movies. The main thing to remember is that it is easier to add sound than to subtract sound. It is easier to work with separate, "clean" sounds that can be added to each other in editing. For example, the dance scene in *Ashpet* is a particularly complicated scene. There are four main types of sound: dialogue, dance music played by a band on the stage, the feet of the actors shuffling in time with the music, and the voices of the crowd.

The most important sound is the dialogue, since that's what drives the plot. We couldn't record the dialogue at the same time as all of the other sounds because it would have sounded like chaos. We wouldn't have been able to prioritize the dialogue by making it exactly the right volume to hear over the other sounds. So, we filmed the scene in fragments. First, we filmed a wide view of the crowd dancing as the music played. Then, we would get the dancers moving to the beat of the music, turn the music off as they continued dancing, and let the actors deliver their lines without interference from the music. We also recorded the sound of the crowd talking as a separate sound component.

Later, in editing, we assembled all of the shots in a convincing order and put the sound elements onto many different audio "tracks." On one track, we laid the dialogue. On another track, we laid down the sound of the crowd talking. On yet another track, we laid down the sound of the crowd's feet as they shuffle on the dance floor.

Finally, we got a group of professional musicians to play the same songs at the same speed as the amateur band that we filmed on location. Then, we laid the sound of the professional musicians onto another track, leaving out the sound of the amateur band entirely.

The final stage of audio editing is the "mix." The multiple tracks are all played at the same time and they are "mixed" down to one single track, which becomes the soundtrack for the movie. As the tracks are transferred, their volume levels are adjusted, so that the dialogue is in the foreground, the music is somewhat audible, and the crowd noise and dancing feet are mere background noise.

In the end, the scene looks very natural and the audience doesn't think about the fact that the scene required a lot of editing.



Microphone boom

The microphone is secured on the end of a long pole with a wire running back to the camera or audio recorder.

The pole allows the microphone to be positioned close to the actors but out of the camera frame.

Exercise #9

Different Voices

Lesson: Voice and appearance work together to create film characters.

In *Hansel and Gretel*, the first film we made as part of *From the Brothers Grimm*, we substituted the distorted voice of a male actor for the voice of the woman who plays the witch. Mix and match your students into unusual pairs such as a softspoken boy and a talkative girl. Have them work together and come up with a short monologue. Rehearse the monologue with one person miming the voice and the other person appearing to speak the part. Let them practice until they are generally synchronized. Then, videotape the mime while recording the voice of the other student. You can use either a lavalier microphone or situate the speaker close to the camcorder microphone but off-camera. You'll end up with some humorous takes which teach the students about simple ways to create unusual characters.

Exercise #10

Microphone Perspective

Lesson: It is import to put the microphone close to the action or dialogue being filmed.

This exercise appears to be about the characteristics of camera work; but it is primarily a lesson about microphone perspective. Don't tell the students this because they will learn it best by doing it themselves.

Divide students into small groups and have each group shoot an interview with three questions. The content of the interview is not important. Each group should have a turn using a camcorder with a built-in microphone. The camera should be situated differently for each of the three questions:

- (1) The camera should be located within a few steps of the subject. The framing should be a medium-close up showing the head and upper shoulders of the subject.
- (2) The camera should be located about ten steps away from the subject. By using the zoom lens, frame the subject the same way as before, in a medium close-up.
- (3) The camera should be located very far away from the subject, zooming far in to once again frame the subject in a medium close-up.

Keep each question and answer in the range of twenty seconds. Watch all of the interviews as a class. Students will quickly notice the change in sound perspective. The size of the subject in the frame will be similar in all shots, but the sound perspective will change radically. This exercise shows the limitations of built-in camcorder microphones and makes it easy to understand why it is often best to use a detachable microphone on a "boom" near the subject.

Exercise #11

Sound Effects

Lesson: Sound effects are a simple way to add to the believability or humor of a movie.

This exercise takes some inspiration from The Three Stooges movies which used humorous sound effects. Divide your students into small groups and ask each group to select a potentially humorous action such as flushing a toilet, squeezing someone's nose, hitting someone on the head, falling down, blowing through a musical instrument, or writing with a pen. Have each group identify several humorous sounds which could be substituted for the actual sound the action would make. For instance, the sound of a someone blowing through the instrument could be replaced by the sound of a loud human shriek.

If students have access to editing equipment, they can film the actions and then "insert" the sounds in editing. Another good bet is a camcorder with an "audio dub" feature that allows you to record new sound over existing images. Students can also do the actions live with the sound effects crew off camera but close to the microphone.

Part Three

Cinematography

Decisions about where the camera should go, what lens to use, or how high the camera is off the ground all influence the audience's understanding of the story. One of the most important tools of a cinematographer is the camera lens.

Professional photographers choose from many lens options, and ordinary camcorders offer a similar option with the zoom lens. The two extremes of the zoom have very different characteristics. The wide angle has great depth of field, which means that objects in the foreground and objects in the background are both in focus. It is useful for emphasizing the distance between an object or actor in the foreground and an object or action in the background. The image is easier to keep steady in wide angle shots, making it the best option for handheld photography. The telephoto option, when you've zoomed in on something, has entirely opposite characteristics from the wide angle. When you've zoomed in, objects tend to appear close together.

Ashpet is a good example of the way lens selection helps convey meaning in a film. The director imagined the story in two parts. First, *Ashpet* is abused by her sisters and lacks self-confidence. Second, she is given a new dress and discovers her own self-worth. The cinematographer designed a look for the film which would reflect these two parts of the story. To make the wicked sisters appear intimidating, the camera looks up at them, supposedly from *Ashpet*'s point-of-view.

Meanwhile, the camera looks down on *Ashpet*, from the sisters' point-of-view, which symbolically reduces *Ashpet*'s strength. These early scenes were shot with wide angles, which makes the characters appear isolated from each other. Later, the camera encourages viewers to see *Ashpet* in a new way. At the dance scene, the scenes are seen through a telephoto lens which makes people appear close together. We were able to use just a few extras to create the impression of a crowded dance floor, which becomes a warm and inviting atmosphere for *Ashpet* to enter. The camera is at *Ashpet*'s eye level so that we are no longer looking down on her. She has gained self-confidence and has risen to the same level as her sisters.

For a big feature movie, most of the cinematographer's time is spent on lighting. Since a camera does not see as the human eye sees, even the simple goal of illuminating action becomes complicated. The conventional lighting technique is a three-point system which includes a bright key light aimed at the front of the actor's face, a softer fill light from 45-



The camera looks up at the mean sisters, giving the impression that they are looking down on Ashpet.

degrees to the side of the face, and a high backlight on the back of the actor's head to add dimension. "High key lighting" is the typical look of television news and sitcoms. It is quite bright and lacks shadows. "Low key lighting" is the typical look of horror movies, when the key light is often placed low to create shadows and mystery. By mastering these basics, you can experiment with using light to help convey the mood and meaning of a scene.

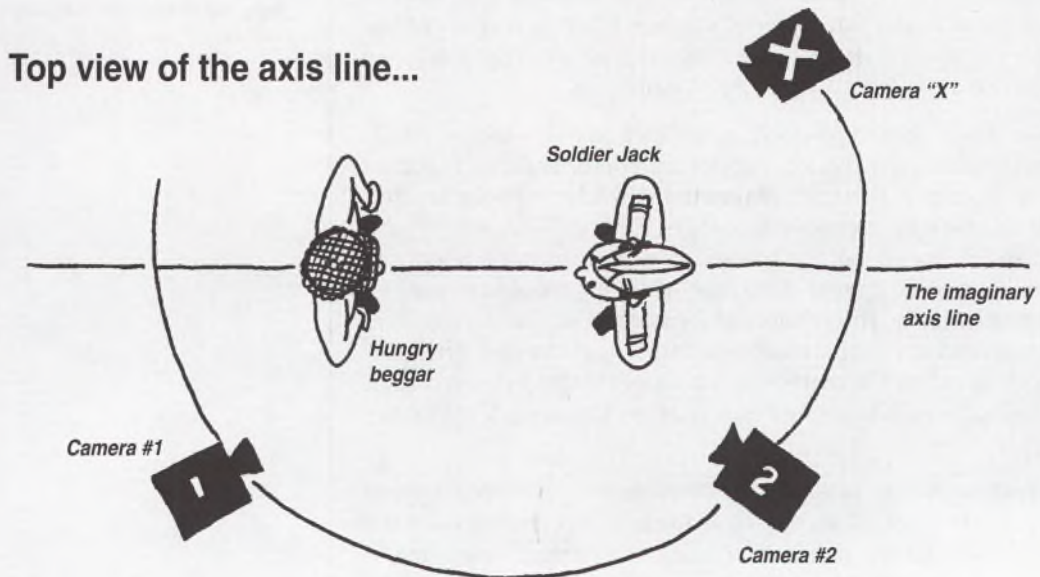
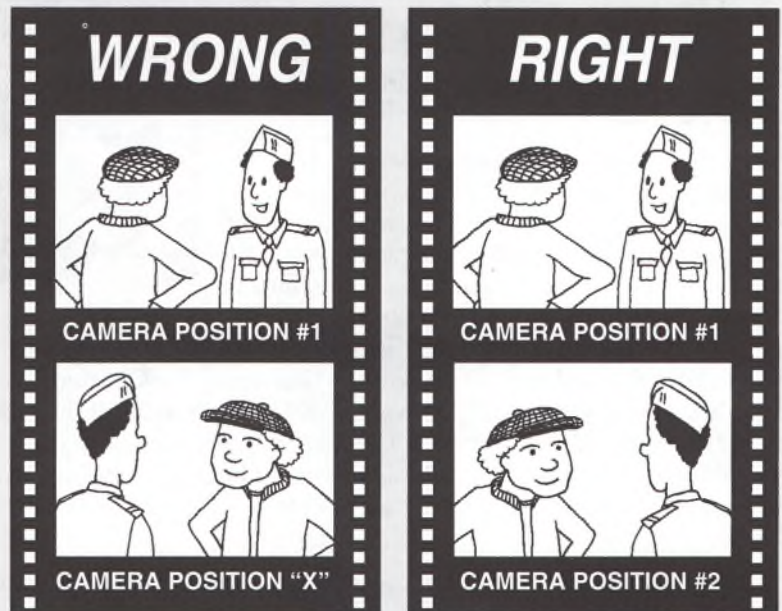
Usually the cinematographer has lots of tools to control light. The lights are on adjustable stands and the lights are covered with "barn doors" which can be positioned to direct the light. Diffusion material can soften light; wire mesh screens make the light less intense; flags, which are usually simple pieces of card board, are used to block light from a specific area of a set.

The Axis Line

When filming a conversation between two actors, it is important not to cross the "axis line," an imaginary line between the two actors which limits the camera position to a 180-degree area on one side of the actors.

In this example, Soldier Jack talks to a hungry beggar. Camera position #1 shows Jack in frame right as viewed over the beggar's shoulder. Camera position #2 shows the beggar in frame left as viewed over Jack's shoulder. When the two shots are edited together, it is clear that Jack, facing from right to left, is talking with the beggar, facing from left to right.

Camera position "X," across the axis line, would not work because Jack and the beggar would not appear to be facing each other.



From the director

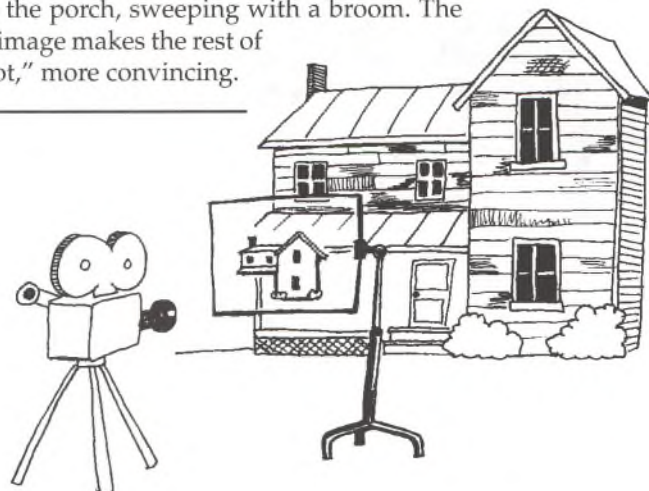
Light is very evocative. It can bring things out, but it can also hide things. If you hold back and include shadows and uncertainty, meaning can emerge from what isn't there. In *Mutzmag*, the lead actress is trapped in a small shack where there are only strips of light beaming through the gaps between dilapidated pieces of wood. The lighting helps convey the fear of being isolated and trapped.



There's an imaginary "eye-line" that establishes what an actor is looking at in a scene. In *Mutzmag*, there is a scene in which Mutzmag and her sisters arrive at the house of a scared lady. The girls walk up into the yard. Poll calls out, "Anybody home?" The woman opens the door and converses with Poll while remaining in the doorway. We filmed the speakers in the scene at different times, paying close attention to body position, camera position, and lighting. We shot the girls on location at a cabin in rural North Carolina. Six months later, we shot the scared lady's end of the conversation hundreds of miles away in Virginia. At the doorway to our production studio, we nailed up boards to match the wood of the cabin in North Carolina. Then, we lined up the camera where the girls would supposedly be standing and had the actress playing the scared lady look to the side of the camera as though she were talking to the girls. One of the crew members stood-in for the girls to give the scared lady a focus point. We made sure that the actress' "eye-line" matched the location where the girls would have been standing. In editing, we combined the two parts of the conversation, and audiences cannot detect the months and miles which separated the actresses.

Glass shots are one of the most common special effects techniques and also one of the oldest. They work because the space in a movie is two dimensional and distance is established by rules of perspective, such as convergence and atmospheric perspective. We used a glass shot in *Soldier Jack* to show the transformation of a haunted house into a repainted, livable house. The house we used as a location was badly deteriorated, and we it would have cost thousands of dollars to actually have the house repainted. Instead, we took a photograph of the house and had an airbrush artist paint the enlarged picture of the house. Next, we mounted the touched-up photo on a piece of glass.

We went to the house location and set the movie camera up in roughly the same location where we had taken the still photo of the house. Then, we put the glass-mounted photo in front of the camera, arranging it carefully so that the painted photo exactly covered the image of the house as seen through the camera viewfinder. We had cut out the house porch from the photo so that the actual porch could be seen through the photo. We situated an actor on the porch, sweeping with a broom. The action in one part of the image makes the rest of the house, the "glass shot," more convincing.



Exercise #12

The Glass Shot

Lesson: Simple special effects can save money and add drama to movie projects.

Try out a glass shot with your students. You can add a new top story to the school; build a castle on a distant hillside; or even land a rocket in the school yard. Use paints or existing photographs to create the image you want. Magazines are particularly good sources for crisp photos.

You will need a piece of clear glass about 20 x 16 inches. Affix your image to the glass using rubber cement. It would be a good idea to ask some students with access to a workshop to build a wooden mount for the glass and a way to hang it from a stand or put it on a tripod.

Place the glass at an angle instead of directly in front of the camera. Black cloth can be used to shield the glass from glare and prevent unwanted reflections.

Exercise #13**Editing Experiments**

Lesson: Editing allows filmmakers to create new meaning from footage.

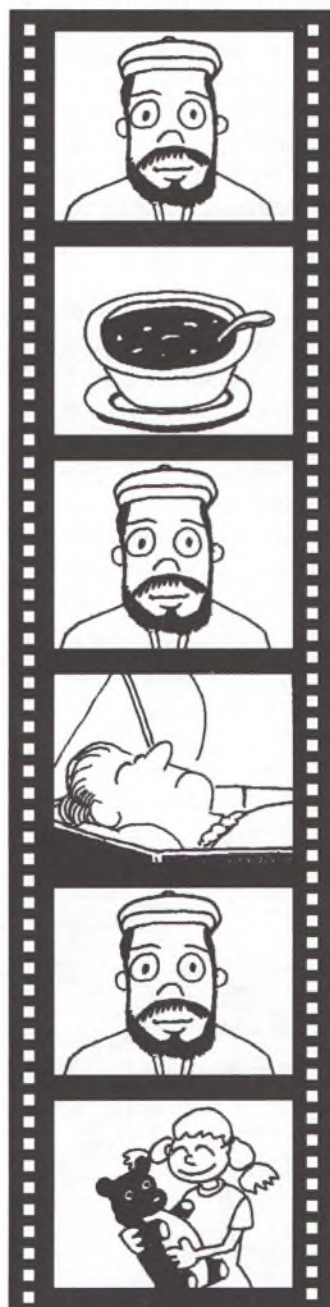
Early Soviet movie makers thought a lot about the differences between theater and film. Theater incorporates live actors and large stage sets. Movies, in contrast, are recorded scenes that can be shortened, altered, and assembled according to the editor's will. By combining these pieces, the editor creates an unreal, but persuasive, filmic time and space. For example, director and theorist Pudovkin recounts a celebrated experiment in silent Soviet cinema. You might try to recreate it with your students, adding appropriate music to each of the constructions:

"We took from some film or other several close-ups of the well-known Russian actor Mosjukhin. We chose close-ups which were static and which did not express any feeling at all. They were just quiet close-ups. We joined these close-ups, which were all similar, with other bits of film in three different combinations.

"In the first combination, the close-up of Mosjukhin was immediately followed by a shot of a plate of soup standing on the table. It was obvious and certain that Mosjukhin was looking at this soup. In the second combination, the face of Mosjukhin was joined to shots showing a coffin in which lay a dead woman. In the third, the close-up was followed by a shot of a little girl playing with a funny toy bear.

"When we showed the three combinations to an audience which had not been let into the secret, the result was terrific. The public raved about the acting of the artist.

They pointed out the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked on the dead woman, and admired the light, happy smile with which he surveyed the girl at play. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same."



Editing

Because of budget and equipment limitations, most amateur films are shot in sequence; but an understanding of editing can help with writing, directing, camera, movie acting, and set work. Professional movies are shot out of order and assembled in editing. Putting one shot next to another usually means that these shots will seem to be happening at the same time and in the same space when they really might have been recorded months and hundreds of miles apart. Editing is much more than simply putting a movie in order. It is the heart of movie art.

One of the best examples of the power of editing is a scene in *Mutzmag* when Mutzmag and her two sisters, Poll and Nance, arrive at the house of a mysterious woman. The woman invites the unwitting girls into her small cabin, where she seats Poll and Nance at a table and serves them dinner. The witch brings out a wind-up record player, puts it on the table between Poll and Nance, and starts the music. Poll and Nance are entranced with the music; the woman has them under her spell.

Mutzmag, forced to be a servant girl, is in the background throughout the scene. As Poll, Nance, and their hostess focus on the record player, Mutzmag looks around the cabin and observes objects which make her suspicious of the friendly woman. She sees a hawk's foot hanging from the ceiling, strange cult symbols and bones on the mantle, and chalk marks which seem to be some sort of tally. The audience sees the frightening objects from Mutzmag's point-of-view, knowing that the other characters don't see what Mutzmag sees. This impression was completely constructed in editing.

First, we filmed the wide view of the scene, including the action with record player. Second, we cleared the other actors off the set and filmed just Mutzmag. We shot a close-up of Mutzmag's face as the director guided her through the scene, asking her to look around the room in various directions. Then, the cinematographer filmed close-ups of the objects which Mutzmag was supposedly looking at.

In editing, we cut together the wide shot of the scene with the close-up of Mutzmag's face. Then we cut back and forth between Mutzmag's face and the objects in the room. We took care to keep the eye-line straight. For example, after the shot of Mutzmag turning her head up towards the ceiling, we cut to an upward view of the hawk's foot hanging from the ceiling. The camera's point-of-view matches Mutzmag's point-of-view. We made the scene continuous by adding the sound of the record player music. In the movie, Mutzmag's suspicions prove correct: the strange woman turns out to be a witch!

Movie Acting

Movie acting is very different from stage acting. Professional actors who have been trained for the stage must "unlearn" certain things, especially "projection." In a movie close up, the slightest facial gesture is as big as an actor walking across the stage in the theater. Movie actors also have to be able to do their scenes in small fragments that are often out of order. Because of this, it is important for both the actor and the director to understand where the character is coming from in each of the shots. Movie work is a little like doing a play backwards.

ACTING STYLES OF MOVIES VERSUS THEATER

<i>trait</i>	<i>movie style</i>	<i>theater style</i>
<i>voice</i>	natural conversational	project for audiences diction important
<i>body control</i>	controlled movements agility and subtlety	exaggerated movements
<i>energy</i>	maintain natural tone	physical and vocal energy
<i>comic ability</i>	editing can enhance limited humor of actor	cannot be taught; must come comfortably
<i>acting skills</i>	helpful in major parts not needed for many roles	essential
<i>direction</i>	must follow direction to stay on track through disparate takes	essential to maintain unity among characters
<i>grasp of character</i>	important since scenes are shot out of order	essential to persuading audience of role

Exercise #14

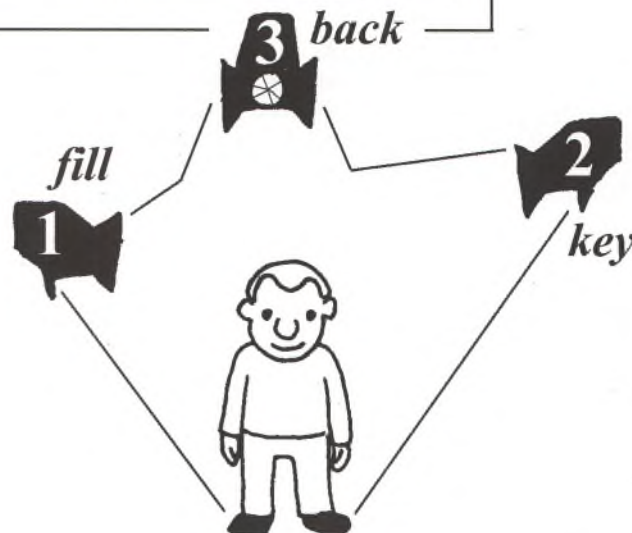
Lighting Basics

Lesson: Lighting contributes to character and story development.

For this exercise, you need simple movie light. Connect a video camera to a classroom monitor. Situate a student on a stool in an isolated area away from any walls which might show shadows. Focus the camera on the shoulder and head of the student on the stool. Turn off the overhead lights in the room.

Move a single "key" light around the student's face from both low and high positions. Point out that the camcorder has difficulty portraying the contrast that would be easy for the human eye to discern. Add a soft "fill" light from the general direction of the camera by bouncing a light into a white piece of cardboard. Point out the contrast is softened with the fill light and the lighting seems more natural.

Now add a small "backlight" aiming from a high angle down onto the back of the student's head. Adjust the key, fill, and back lights until you achieve a balanced look that matches television conventions. Try changing the lights to achieve unconventional effects, such as making the actor look spooky. To create a fire-like effect, for instance, tape strips of aluminum foil onto a small ruler and wave the strips in front of an orange-colored light.



Exercise #15

Introducing the Camera

Lesson: Creative use of camera perspective enhances productions.

Curriculum units on media production often seem to come to life when students first get their hands on the camera. This exercise lets your students enjoy the camera while learning how camera perspective changes the appearance of actors and objects. Connect a camera to a video monitor that all of your students can see.

The actors for this exercise are Mr. Hand and Mr. Chin. To create Mr. Hand, let students draw a face on the fist, using the thumb and index finger as the mouth. Have each student write a 15-20 second news "spot." Shoot each student's acting hand delivering the prepared news spot in a comical or disguised voice. Reward students for conciseness, originality, and writing style.

Mr. Chin is created by turning the camera upside down. Many tripods allow the central post to be inverted so that the camera can be held securely. Frame the chin and mouth are of Mr. Chin so that the top of the chin appears to be the top of a person's head. Watching your work on the monitor, use markers and paste to design a face on Mr. Chin. Try adding hair or a hat onto Mr. Chin's "head."

Exercise #16

Improvisation

Lesson: Improvisation is a useful way to develop dialogue.

Create an interesting scenario such as a scene when a boyfriend has just told his girlfriend that he has been unfaithful. The scenario should involve conflict. Then, pick two students to improvise one of the scenarios in front of the class. Stop after a few minutes and let everybody comment on what is believable about the scene and what isn't working. Maybe there was a conceptual error, or maybe the actors are not persuasive. Write down the best lines and continue improvising and writing until a simple scene is written.

Exercise #17

Creating Characters

Lesson: Because movie scenes are usually shot out of order, it is important for actors to have a strong sense of their characters.

Have each student select a character to portray. Students can create original characters, or they might try using well-known characters from a class novel or folktale characters such as Cinderella.

Walk the class through a brainstorming session which helps students begin to understand their characters. Students should take notes along the way. Begin in the present: Who? What? When? Where? The answers can begin simply. "My name is John Doe. I am a detective in New York. It is the summer of 1955 and I am attempting to solve a murder." Next, encourage students to reach deeper into their characters. Why did John Doe become a detective in the first place? Why did he get involved in the murder case?

Ask students to use their notes and write a one-page biography of their character. From the very beginning, students should refer to their characters as "I" so that they can personalize the role.

Divide the class into pairs and have students interview their partner, who is playing the role of his or her character. Students might want to use investigative journalism techniques which force students to make decisions about the personality of their character.

Then, have a class discussion in which students speak as their characters would speak. The teacher can start things off. For instance, the teacher might say, "My name is Jack and I'm afraid of the giant." Proceed through the classroom, asking students to introduce themselves and give one sentence to describe themselves. After one round, the class should begin to feel a sense of rhythm. Continue the discussion as each student offers one sentence to build on previous comments and offer a sense of character.

Tips for Teachers

Imagine yourself teaching the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in a high school English class. You make a point one Friday about the “Hemingway code hero,” and mention *The Virginian* as an ancestor which the kids might like to examine. Come Monday, three or four of your students have rented copies of Wister’s novel from the libraries. Their whole family has studied it together, looking for the things you mentioned. They’re full of insights and questions. Sound unlikely? This sort of thing happens regularly in my classes, except I don’t teach novels. I teach films. And my students don’t rent books; they rent movies!

I teach a high school course which introduces students to the fundamentals of filmmaking. Early in the course, my students learn about montage, sets, locations, angles, lighting, framing. In short, they learn the unnatural art of making film look so natural. Once students begin to get a sense of visual grammar, I have a curriculum unit which allows each student to write and direct a video vignette.

Each vignette runs from one to three minutes finished length on tape. I also encourage longer, more elaborate outside-class productions using the camcorders which so many families now own. True, Hollywood has much more money and hardware to work with than my classes do, but every creative filmmaker chafes at his limits and exploits his strengths. Today’s wonderful home camcorders let students do some things that Hollywood itself couldn’t do just a few years ago, and computer-linked tools keep cropping up with fancier features and lower prices.

Writing and Shooting a T-script

Each student writes a script and draws a storyboard of the vignette she or he will direct. Two-column T-scripts are the best method for visualizing a vignette. The audio is written in the left column of the page and the corresponding visuals are described in the right column. This helps students understand the visual nature of writing for movies. Once the director has written a good T-script and drawn a good storyboard, the cast and crew can be managed with a minimum of head-scratching and time lost.

The skits are shot in the classroom with classmates for cast, using only props which the director can bring in. Also, the auto shop in school gave me an old steering wheel for all those in-car scenes that kids write! My students shoot in a classroom with a curtain around two sides. We use two cameras and a switcher, Lowell lights and a simple Radio Shack sound mixer with clip-on mics. Then we have access to a video editing bench later. If you’re seeing some of our taped skits, you couldn’t quite do some of what we’ve done with only a camcorder.

Student Skits in Media Instruction

by George Weathers

George Weathers has taught film and television in high schools for over twenty years, most recently at Smoky Hill High School in Aurora, Colorado. He has a doctorate in film and electronic communication and a 1990 Governor’s Award as one of the top educators in Colorado. Some of his former students now work as camera operators for network television, producers for major film companies, and writers for *From the Brothers Grimm*.

Rules for Directors

Don't try to steal commercials or scenes unchanged from television or movies. Commercials, even of phony products, are much easier to script and shoot than scenes, so they only count as 50-point projects for this 100-point assignment. If you want to write a parody, fine; but the scripting should be your own. Write in a strong conclusion. Don't just let your skit trail off.

Not counting the establishing shot, don't use more than six shots or fewer than three. Keep the takes short so the actors won't have difficulty remembering lines. With limited equipment, cutting speaker-to-speaker during dialogue doesn't work very well. Try shooting over one person's shoulder, with the less important character off-camera. Also, don't cut away too quickly at the end of a shot, especially the final shot of the skit, which I call the "button." Leave time for audience response, including reaction shots of characters.

Format your story using a T-script and storyboard. Remember that the T-script should have the following: the shot number, the visuals described on one side of the T-lines, and audio information put on the other side of the line. On the storyboard, don't draw everything as wide shots of full stick figures. Think in terms of wide shots, close-ups, and point-of-view, and draw the figures accordingly. Don't even think about trying to combine T-script and storyboard on one piece of notebook paper.

Direct from what appears on the monitor, not from what you see on the stage. It's very tempting to watch the performers, but the only thing that really counts is what the camera's feeding the VCR to put on the tape. That's what you see on the monitor. Make sure you put microphones on anyone in a shot with dialogue. Use masking tape marks on the floor if necessary to position your performers. You'll also need to keep a microphone off-camera for any sound effects you want to include.

I begin by directing a sample skit of my own, picking the cast from class members just as each student director will. I tell the class that students who volunteer to direct early can expect me to grade them more leniently. This offsets the natural reluctance to go first. With the ground rules set, we make a schedule. We shoot about three skits per class hour, and four on a very good day. The first director each day gets first choice of classmates as cast. The second director rehearses her cast while we shoot the first skit, the third rehearses while we shoot the second, and so on. If a student misses his assigned time for any reason, he has to take pot luck. Those who miss their day or who want to direct extra skits for extra credit write skits which require minimum props, since they'll just have to carry props, T-Script, and scoreboard with them until a time opens. Then they'll pick a cast, rehearse, and step right in!

Students get credit for their vignette, but they also earn points for performing in other people's skits or working on the crew. Because we do so many skits, everyone who wants to appear usually gets at least some chance. I work as floor director myself, doing all I can to help each director. No, I'm not available as a performer! I pick and train my crew fresh every day, including camera and sound people. I use crew work as a way of involving students who aren't getting as much cast work as other students. As it is in Hollywood, we have lots of talented people who don't get a chance to work as much as they should. We also have some students who desperately do not want to appear on-camera, and I respect that. They can work crew.

Reviewing Our Work

Whenever we have less than 15 minutes until class ends, I show the class as many of the skits as time permits. I usually teach three sections of high school movie classes, a total of about 100 students. As other classes begin to see standout skits and performances, notoriety ripples around the halls. Hollywood's "star system" kicks in, on a limited but noticeable level. Students in one of my classes also put together a weekly half-hour show on public access cable television. (It's usually easy to arrange. Just contact your local cable provider.) Some of the film class skits wind up on the show. We need to respect the rules of the National Association of Broadcasters, so profanity or bad taste automatically means a skit will not make it on a show. For my classes, at least, I am the final arbiter of good and bad taste!

We have improbable stars who emerge every time we do this unit. The skills involved in video communication differ from those involved in reading, writing, and test-taking. Halfway through the unit, I always see heavy negotiations going on as student directors try to secure particular people for particular roles in their projects. ("If he's going to be in the first skit, can I go third and use him too?") At the end of the unit I give out "Georgies," our version of the Oscar. The Georgies also carry a point award. It is difficult to score video productions, but it is usually best to reward effort and innovation.

I try not to censor what students want to do, though some interesting discussions have grown out of the content of certain vignettes. A performer must do whatever the director tells him to do. If a problem arises, the performer may appeal to me. If I rule that it's in bad taste, I'll simply void the skit, and the director has to start over. Most directors check with their cast members in advance if there's any potential problem, such as a kiss. Directors should never video tape another student actually breaking a school rule. Firearms, liquor, and the like must all clearly be simulations.

In my sample skit, I have a girl slap a guy. I wrote the skit that way



T-script

<p>1 MIMI: Hey, BJ! BJ: Hey, Mimi!</p> <p>2 SID: Hey, girl! MIMI: What do you want?</p> <p>3 SID: I want to touch your hair...</p> <p>4 MIMI: What!? SID: And I'm taking that shirt off of you...</p> <p>5 (sound FX) SLAP. BJ(off-camera): Oh!</p> <p>6 SID: What'd I do?</p>	<p>Wide shot: Mimi and BJ walk to each other. Sid walks behind Mimi. Mimi and BJ share a high five.</p> <p>Medium shot pan: Sid beside Mimi.</p> <p>Medium shot: Sid runs hand across Mimi's hair.</p> <p>Medium shot: Sid grabs Mimi's shirt at the shoulders.</p> <p>Medium shot over Mimi's shoulder. Mimi slaps Sid. Sid goes down.</p> <p>Mimi and BJ's POV: Zoom away from Sid on the floor.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FADE OUT</p>
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not to encourage violence, but because there was already so much violence in the skits which students were writing. In filming that sample skit, I can show students how to fake a slap. We do a lot with the issue of violence in the film class. Currently I show scenes from mainstream movies to discuss our cultural fascination with violence and its role in story. I recommend facing the issue and talking about it rather than adopting a totally non-violent, and perhaps naive, course content.

For a while, I stopped doing video production in my media course because it's so dependent on hardware. But a few years ago Hollywood had a writers strike which shut everything down for a while. I've taught film a long time, and I now have several ex-students working in the industry. The ones who came back to visit during the writers' strike were adamant. They learned more from doing the vignettes that anything else in the curriculum. So the vignettes are here to stay.



Movies With a Classroom Crew

by *Betsy Newman*

Betsy Newman is an independent video producer and educator. She makes videos with grammar and middle school teachers and students in New York City and is on the faculty of the Department of Education at New York University. One of her many productions, "Great Stuff," has won a Gold Apple Award at the National Educational Film and Video Festival.

Two things come to mind right away when I talk with teachers about how to begin making a video with students. First, you need a basic knowledge of video equipment. Second, you must expect an active classroom environment with a somewhat higher level of chaos than you might be used to. Once these requirements are fulfilled, you and your class can have a lot of fun making a video and achieve academic goals at the same time.

It's not hard to learn to operate video equipment. A camcorder is user-friendly, a lot like a car. Most of us don't know how a car works, but we can drive one with no problem. All we have to do is get over our initial fears, read the manual, and practice. From there on, it's easy. There's only one problem with video equipment, as with a car: Once you teach your kids how to use it, you'll have to fight to get your hands on it again.

My point regarding the active classroom is probably redundant to many teachers since the cooperative learning style is quickly replacing the old model of teacher-as-lecturer. Away with rows of desks and the teacher at the front of the room! The old-fashioned, nineteenth century style classroom saw children like plants, rooted in one spot all day, tended by the nurturing teacher. This kind of learning doesn't meet the needs of students today. Now kids need to get up and move around in lots of different ways. A video project is one very appealing way to teach today's students a wide range of subjects.

Filmmaking is a collaborative enterprise, whether in a school or in Hollywood, and making a video as a class teaches kids how to work cooperatively. One look at all the credits at the end of a movie shows how many people have to work together to achieve their common goal. While the traditional classroom isolates each student at a desk, making a video demands teamwork. You've got to push the desks all over the place. Or borrow the couch from the principal's office and create a set in a corner of the classroom. Or leave the classroom altogether.

You begin by deciding what kind of project to do. I usually do one of three kinds of videos: documentary, dramatic, or magazine-style, which can incorporate elements of both of the others. Any of these can be educational and fun to make. For the purposes of this discussion I will focus on creating a dramatic video with students, based on a story written by the class. I have made a number of tapes this way and have found it to be a good method for getting the whole class involved in writing, studying story and screenplay construction, and developing the skills of collaboration and cooperation.

See Yourself on Camera

To prepare the class, the first thing I do is introduce the video equipment, the marvelous carrot which is able to get even the lowest-achieving students involved. I usually spend all or most of a period with the equipment, showing the students how it works and letting them try it out. I do this with the camera hooked up to the television monitor so that the kids can see themselves, and I let them operate the camera one at a time.

I don't spend a long time explaining how things work. I have found that my students remember this information better if I explain it as we go along, during production. At first, I think it's best to just let them enjoy the thrill of seeing themselves on television. Then they'll be more ready to settle down to work.

The reaction of a class when they see themselves on the monitor can be disconcerting. It certainly was to me the first time. As soon as I had

everything hooked up and took off the lens cap, all hell broke loose. Kids who appeared to be asleep came to life, everyone was laughing and hogging the lens and one kid yelled out, "Hey, I look like a kid!" I thought I had lost control of the class for good. In desperation I replaced the lens cap and the screen went dark. They quieted down instantly, eager to cooperate, and I realized the power of the camera. The equipment is always the carrot. If things ever get out of hand, cover up the lens and wait for the class to calm down.

Video Brainstorming

After introducing the equipment, I put it away for awhile and don't use it again very much until the story is completed. Next, I take some time to show the class some tapes that other students and independent producers have made. I do this primarily to give the class a realistic idea of what can be expected from a school project. Kids today are very sophisticated viewers. Many of the technologically complex movies are made for the youth audience, and many students want to replicate wildly expensive special effects. The limitations imposed by the school production situation (no money and limited time) can be disappointing to ambitious young producers. Showing a class the successful efforts of their peers (and of independents who also produce on limited money but boundless creativity and imagination) can help students proceed more confidently with their own projects.

After viewing and discussing some tapes, we begin brainstorming. This is the first step in the cooperative writing process. First we talk about genre, including drama, comedy, science fiction, legend, horror, and so on. We decide which genre we might like to focus on, with the understanding that our story might have elements of several. Next, we discuss the components of a story: main idea, character, plot and setting. We concentrate on the development of our main idea. I ask each student to think and write privately for awhile, jotting down their suggestions for a main idea stated in one or two sentences: "A boy has a terrible day in which everything goes wrong." "A group of kids throw their cafeteria hot lunches in the trash. The lunches burn a hole in the earth and the kids fall in and have adventures." "A girl whose parents are getting divorced feels terrible. An angel comes to her in a dream and tells her it's not her fault."

As the students write, I go around the room and talk to them individually, encouraging them and making suggestions. After about fifteen minutes, I usually begin to see lots of papers waving in the air, and I ask the students to share their ideas. This is an important juncture in the process of writing as a class because emotions run high around story ideas. I see my role primarily as chairman of the meeting, monitoring vocal responses so that no one gets trounced. I want to help the students see that some of the wackiest ideas can turn out to make the best stories.

After a sometimes rather lengthy process of synthesis and elimination, we arrive at a consensus on a central story idea. I don't mind if this takes a class period or two because I think it is an important learning experience in itself and helps prepare the class to cooperate during shooting. If it is getting tedious, we take a break, and I haul out the camera and let the kids practice shooting.

Ground Rules

I go over the parts of the equipment, and lay down some ground rules about handling it:

- (1) Do not drop the camera. (None of my students ever has.)
- (2) Do not tighten tripod screws so that you need a wrench to loosen them.
- (3) Do not swing the microphone by the cable. (They will anyway!)

With the help of Betsy Newman, New York City teacher Veloise Hines and her students produced a video called Dreams in Remembrance of Martin Luther King.



Colors of Love

Scene One

Where

In the hall in front of the water fountain.

When

During a class break.

Who

Hakim, Caridad, best friends and classmates.

What

Hakim bumps into Caridad and she drops her books. Hakim picks the books up for her, their eyes meet and they fall in love.

Scene Two

After preparing the first scene, we decide that the next two scenes will show both protagonists telling their best friends about their new feelings. Scene Two is a phone conversation between Caridad and her best friend, Nancy. This requires a split-screen effect which we will achieve by shooting the girls sitting on either side of a shelf divider.

Where

Caridad's living room,
Nancy's living room (split screen).

When

That evening.

Who

Nancy and Caridad,
Caridad's mother off camera.

What

Caridad is telling Nancy she has a crush on Hakim. Nancy teases her a little. Caridad's mother calls for her to hang up the phone and come do the dishes.

Developing a story

In order to best describe the rest of this process, I am going to use the example of a video called *Colors of Love*, which I made with a seventh grade class in the South Bronx. The class came up with a main idea something like this: "A black boy and a Puerto Rican girl fall in love, but their parents object and don't want them to see each other." They named the two main characters Hakim and Caridad. Additional characters included Hakim's and Caridad's parents and the couple's best friends and assorted classmates. As soon as we had named the characters, the class wanted to cast them. I would have preferred to wait until we had written the story, but I decided to go with the will of the class. I try to step out of the decision-maker role as soon as possible. After all, it's their project and sometimes they don't do things the way I would.

What about casting? Those of us who tried out for the school play as kids probably have memories of hurt feelings and bitter classroom rivalries which can still make us cringe. I don't think there's any way to entirely avoid the pain of casting, but it seems to work best when the students make the choices themselves. I find that they do a good job generally, especially if we discuss the attributes of each character beforehand. Then I ask them to make their choices by secret ballot and I tally the votes after class, with the understanding that I have veto power. I usually don't exercise this power, but it gives me the latitude to make changes if I need to.

The producers of *Colors of Love* made solid casting decisions. Then we were ready to move along to the heart of the writing process: the creation of the scenario. A scenario is a detailed outline of the script, a list of scenes in the order in which they occur. To begin, I describe the 4 "W's" that make up a scene: When, where, who and what. As we create the scenes, I write the scenario on the board and the students copy it in their notebooks.

The first thing that happens in *Colors of Love*, the "what" of the first scene, is that Caridad and Hakim meet and fall in love. How do they meet? She drops her books in the hall during a change of classes, and he picks them up. They look into each other's eyes and they fall in love.

So far I haven't written anything on the board because I want to get the ideas first and then organize them into the outline form. Now I explain that for each of the scenarios we first have to state the "where" because a scene is defined by where it takes place. When we change location, we change the scene. That's why we have to know exactly where each scene takes place before we can proceed. At this point I begin writing on the board.

The scenario develops into nine scenes. As we proceed, I am actively involved, making suggestions and monitoring the discussion. At times I ask the class to stop and think about what they are saying in the story. For example, at one point some of them wanted to show Caridad's parents objecting to her choice without showing Hakim's parents objecting to his. I pointed out to them how this would fundamentally change the main idea of the story and we proceeded from there.

We couldn't decide on an ending for *Colors of Love*. There seemed to be an infinite number of ways to conclude the story and by scene 9 we had made our point: the unfairness of the parents' prejudices. So we stopped writing and began preparing to shoot. It wasn't until we finished shooting all nine scenes that we decided to end the piece by posing a question to the audience, "Do you think you should have the right to love the person of your choice?" Whenever I show this tape to a class, there's a loud "Yes" in response to the question at the end.

We did not write any dialogue for *Colors of Love*, and in fact, I rarely write dialogue with a class. I have found that improvised dialogue rings truer than scripted words and that most kids are wonderful improvisers. Improvisation also cuts down on writing time and it means that students don't have to memorize lines. And improvising for the camera is far different from improvising on stage because a scene can be done over and over, and usually is.

The process of improvising dialogue is one way I flesh out a scene with a class. After we have designated our location or created a set in a corner of the classroom and have assigned jobs to the crew, we rehearse the scene a few times. After each rehearsal students who aren't in the cast or crew make suggestions about what the actors say and do. Suggestions are weighed and we rehearse some more. Once we tape the scene we play it back and the class makes more suggestions. In this way all students in the class are involved in the shooting even if they aren't acting in the scene or working in that day's crew.

Assigning a Student Crew

Once you have the story, you face the problem of how to shoot it, which is an entirely different process from writing but one for which I believe the students have prepared themselves for through collaborative writing. While we have been writing we have been practicing working together and listening to and respecting each other's ideas. And I have been letting go of my role as the authority, attempting to let the students take ownership of the project and make it truly their own. This isn't always easy for me or for them because it means they are ultimately responsible for the video. But it also means that the finished product will truly reflect the students' concerns and points of view.

The words, the ideas, the themes will belong to them, and the learning process will reach deeper and last longer than if I had tried to shape the project to my own taste. This is not to say that I don't have input, but that I hand the mantle of director/producer over to the class as soon as possible and become an advisor to the project. One way I facilitate things is to assign jobs on days that we shoot. I like to rotate these jobs so that everyone has at least one chance to be on a crew and as many kids as possible get to shoot.

Editing in the camera

Once the shooting is completed, does that mean the project is finished? This depends upon how your class has shot the story. Although professional films are always put together after they are shot, it is possible to edit in-camera, and in many ways it is preferable for a class project. Editing, while a fascinating part of filmmaking and an art in itself, can be difficult to do in a school setting. Few schools have editing equipment, though with the advent of computer editing everything is quickly changing. Also, a serious lack of time and money is the norm in most schools, and, when there is equipment available, only a few students can edit at a time, closing the rest of the class out of the process.

On the positive side, editing allows for a more complex finished product, and shooting-for-editing demands a more sophisticated approach to the production phase of the project. But with careful planning and imagination your class can make an excellent video entirely in the camera. Scenes are shot sequentially, in the order of the script or outline, from title page to closing credits. This allows everyone to take part in the entire process, and the class can watch the story grow from scene to

Classroom Crew

Director

Maintains order, call the shots, gives this sequence of commands and questions when we are ready to shoot each scene:

"Quiet on the set."

"Is the camera ready?"

"Are the actors ready?"

"Stand by."

"Roll tape"

Then the director waits for the camera operator to indicate by a nod that the tape is rolling, at which point the assistant director takes over. At the end of the scene the director calls "Cut!"

Assistant Director

After the director calls, "Roll tape," the assistant director gives the countdown to the actors, silently counting "5-4-3-2-1" and pointing for "Action!"

Camera operator

Occasionally I have worked with classes in which one or two magnificent camera operators emerge and take over. When this happens, I try to remain sensitive to the class, to make sure it's all right with everyone, but I really don't like to limit the opportunity to shoot to a few students. Usually just about everybody wants to get their hands on the camera, so I like to give them all the chance.

Sound recordist

The sound person has to stand as still as possible and point the microphone toward the person who is speaking, without getting the mic in the shot. To get the mic closer to the actors, I usually tape it to a broom handle or any other available pole. If you are recording music while you shoot, it's a good idea to assign the job of running the audio tape to another student. Sometimes a group of students create sound effects as we shoot, using portable keyboards, desktops, sheets of cardboard, or whatever's at hand.

Technical crew

Two or three students to set up the equipment, carry it around while we're shooting, and put it away at the end. I always ask the technicians from the previous session to teach the new ones the camera set-up.

I relinquish the notion of myself as director and let the class take ownership of the project. The finished program is more interesting to their peers, and I can enjoy the process more since I don't have to be in charge all the time.

scene. This process only works for a scripted video, though. A documentary program, by its very nature, has to be edited after it's shot.

Successful in-camera editing requires some practice with the camcorder you will be using. When the tape starts to roll in a camcorder it backs up a little before it begins to go forward, a process called "pre-roll." Then, when it is going forward it takes a while for the tape to lock into the precise timing necessary for recording. This is called "getting-up-to-speed." Pre-roll and tape speed can vary widely among camcorders.

When the tape stays in the camera for the entire period of the shoot, such as when you are shooting a birthday party, pre-roll and tape speed are adjusted for automatically. But when a class makes a video the shooting period may extend over several weeks, with the tape being taken out of the camera and rewound and viewed many times. Each time you shoot you have to cue-up the tape for the upcoming scene, taking the pre-roll into account.

This is the tricky part of editing in-camera and is the one thing I usually do myself, at least until the students are very familiar with the process. I put the tape in the camera, press play and watch the last scene we have shot through the view finder. When it comes to the end of the action, I let it roll a little further (depending on the camera's pre-roll), press pause, and put the camera into record mode. Don't roll past recorded video or you will have a glitch (area of static) between the scenes. And don't press stop because this releases the tape from the heads and changes the edit point.

Practicing shooting, rewinding, and taking the tape out of the camera between scenes will give you and the class a sense of how your camera's pre-roll operates. If you are chopping off the end of the previous scene, you are cueing the tape too far back and need to cue-up a little later. If you are getting a glitch between scenes you are leaving too much room and need to cue-up earlier.

When I am editing in-camera with a class, I always tell the director to keep the tape rolling for a slow count of ten at the end of the scene, which allows some latitude when you cue-up for the next scene. This is especially important if you shoot more than one take. Remember: Every time you reshoot you overlap a little bit more of the previous scene. For this reason, you should rehearse each scene several times on-camera, but without the tape rolling. It is also helpful to keep in mind that, because of the pre-roll, the action should not start the instant the recording begins. This is why the assistant director gives a silent countdown to the actors after the tape is rolling. That way you don't risk recording the assistant director's voice, and you are sure to catch the beginning of each scene.

Making a video with a group of students can be exciting and rewarding for everyone involved. I find this to be especially true if I, as the teacher, am able to relinquish the notion of myself as director and let the class take ownership of the project. Then the video reflects the students' points of view, interests, concerns, and aesthetics. The finished program is more interesting to their peers, and I can enjoy the process more since I don't have to be in charge all the time. I am convinced that when students feel truly engaged in making a video, they learn better, and their knowledge gives them confidence in their creative powers. And I believe it is critically important that young people today have a basic understanding of television because it has so much influence on their lives. By giving our students the opportunity to make their own video programs we can help engage them in an active, imaginative, and cooperative media-making process.

Appendix

We've prepared special handouts which can be copied and distributed to students:

- (1) The treatment we wrote for *Soldier Jack*.
- (2) A scene from our screenplay for *Soldier Jack*.
- (3) Sample storyboards from *Mutzmag* plus blank storyboard frames for students to use. Ask students to create their own ending to the scene from *Mutzmag*, or have them use the blank frames for their own projects.
- (4) Sample camera compositions which show the basic "vocabulary" of cinematography. Encourage students to use a variety of compositions when drawing storyboards and shooting their own productions.
- (5) A glossary of basic movie-making terms used in the guide.
- (6) A bibliography of resources which educators have recommended to us based on curriculum application. Sources on media literacy and video production are in flux due to technological and curriculum changes. The best bet is to check with a local library.



TREATMENT

...a brief summary of a movie story written in present tense. This is usually the first stage in formalizing a movie idea. The treatment provides a foundation for writing the script and drawing storyboards. The treatment is also a good way to introduce an idea to others. Here's the treatment we wrote for Soldier Jack.

At the end of World War II, Soldier Jack gets off a night train at a lonely station in rural America with nothing but a duffel bag and two sandwiches. He gives one of the sandwiches to a hungry beggar just outside the station. Jack travels on, and the next day, tired and hungry, he sits down at the foot of a large oak tree to eat the remaining sandwich. Suddenly a little old man appears out of nowhere. The man is very hungry, and Jack begrudgingly gives the old man half of the sandwich which he was about to eat. Jack starts to leave, but his kind and generous nature gets the best of him, and he gives the old man the remaining half of the sandwich.

The strange man thanks Jack by giving him a burlap sack which he claims can catch anything and a glass jar which he says will allow Jack to know the fate of sick people. Jack, of course, is incredulous until he catches three wild turkeys in the sack. Jack trades the turkeys for a meal, a bed, and some change at a local cafe.

The next day Jack passes a spooky house with a sign that reads "Free House." He learns from the owner, Mr. Bliven, that the house is haunted and that it is free to anyone who can successfully spend the night there. Jack accepts the offer even after he learns that three other men have died in the house.

In the middle of the night, Jack is surprised by three little devils who want to play cards with him. The devils cheat and Jack learns that they plan to kill him when his money is gone. Jack turns the tables on the devils and they attack him. At the end of a wild chase, Jack catches the devils in his magic sack. He fixes up the house and settles down as a hero in the local community.

One day he learns from a radio report that the beautiful daughter of the President of the United States is sick and that the President is desperately searching for someone to cure her. Jack arrives at the White House with his sack and jar. The President has his doubts about Jack, but nevertheless lets Jack see his daughter. Jack uses the magic jar to see if Death is standing at the head of the girl's bed, but the President decides that Jack is a charlatan and has him thrown out by his body guards. But Jack escapes and saves the President's daughter by catching Death in his sack.

Jack becomes a national hero and marries the President's daughter. People get older and older but don't die because Jack has kept Death tied up in the sack and hanging from a tree limb. One day, Jack meets an old woman behind his house. She painfully tells him that she is 206 years old and can't die because Death is unnaturally tied up in a sack. Jack realizes his mistake and hires a boy to get the sack out of the tree. When Jack opens the sack, he's the first one Death gets.

SCREENPLAY

...the written script of a movie, including dialogue and descriptions of locations and action. Unlike most novels or short stories, screenplays are best when they emphasize visual storytelling over dialogue. Screenplays are often written through collaboration between cast and crew members.

This scene is from Soldier Jack.

Early in the story of *Soldier Jack*, Jack gives a sandwich to a hungry beggar and is rewarded with a magic jar and a magic sack. Jack catches three wild turkeys in the sack and sells them to a local restaurant, where the customers congratulate him for his catch. The next day, Jack sets out from the small town on foot...

SCENE 6

EXTERIOR. COUNTRY ROAD. LATE AFTERNOON.

JACK *is walking along the road tossing a coin in his hand, and weighing his good fortune. He soon comes to an old house that seems like it was once a nice place, but it now appears run down and spooky. JACK stops to read a sign mounted on the fence in the front yard of the house.*

JACK: *(Reads sign.)* "Free house. Inquire at the drug store. Mr. Bliven. Not responsible for mishaps on premises."

(He looks at the house. A SCHOOLBOY runs hurriedly past the house.)

JACK: Hey, son! Is this sign true?

SCHOOLBOY: *(The SCHOOLBOY is visibly frightened and breathless.)* Ah, yes, sir. It is.

JACK: Where can I find Mr. Bliven?

SCHOOLBOY: Well, he works down the road about three miles. *(The SCHOOLBOY is already starting to hurry away from the house.)*

JACK: Well, what do I have to do?

SCHOOLBOY: He'll tell you all about it. *(The SCHOOLBOY quickly runs away.)*

JACK: *(Calls after the boy.)* Well, hey! Hey! Why would he want to give away a free... *(JACK's voice trails away since the SCHOOLBOY is already far away.)*

JACK *looks back at the house, smiles, and sets off to find Mr. Bliven.*

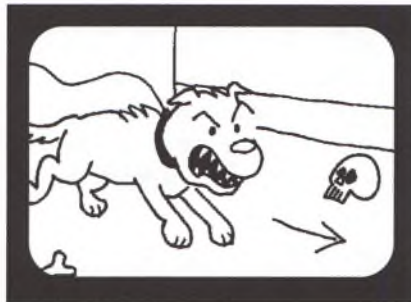
...and in scene 7, Mr. Bliven explains to Jack that the house is haunted, and the story continues.

STORYBOARDS

...simple drawings which help translate a written script into a visual story. Storyboards allow you to try out different camera angles before going on location. Stick figures are all you need. Comic books are a particularly good source of ideas. Here are some storyboards we drew for Mutzmag, plus some blank frames for you to use.



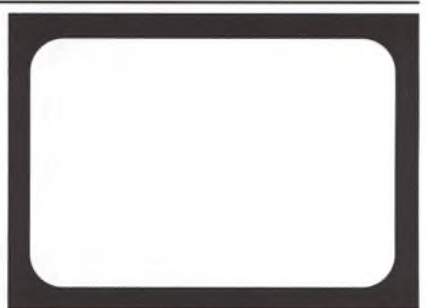
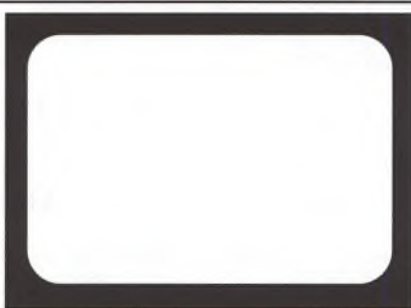
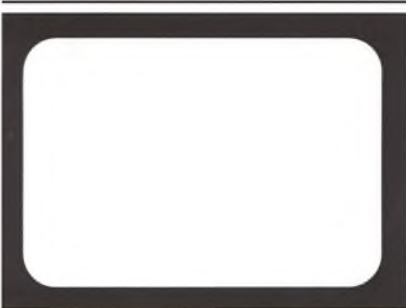
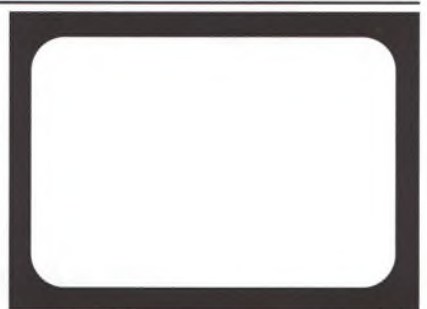
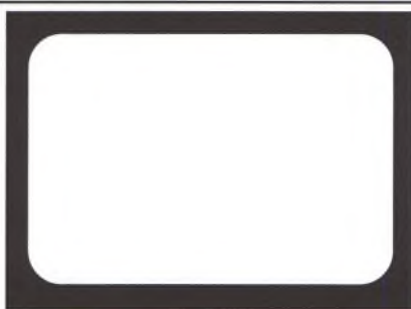
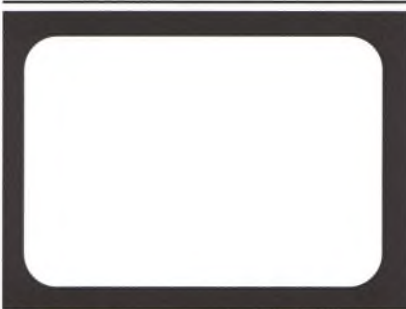
Girls cautiously approach the mysterious cabin
(VIEW OF GIRLS FROM CABIN PORCH)



Viscious dog attacks
(MEDIUM-WIDE SHOT)

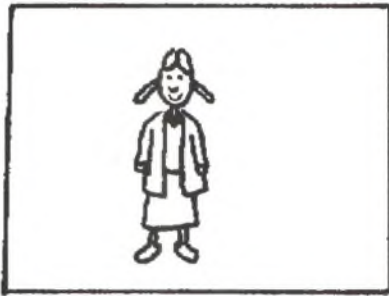


Girls are frightened
(VIEW OF GIRLS FROM DOG'S POINT-OF-VIEW)



COMPOSITION

...the art of arranging actors and objects in the camera frame. There are standard camera compositions which are used in movie production. They are like a visual language which helps tell the story of a movie. Storyboard drawings are best when they include a variety of compositions, like the standard shots below.



WIDE SHOT (WS)



MEDIUM SHOT (MS)



MEDIUM CLOSE-UP (MCU)



CLOSE-UP (CU)



EXTREME CLOSE-UP (ECU)

GLOSSARY

Adaptation A movie story which is “adapted” from an existing story such as a novel, folktale, or short story.

Ambience The sound characteristics of a movie location, such as the chirping of crickets in a rural field or the sound of traffic in a city street. Also called “room tone.”

Backlight Illumination from behind a character or object, and opposite from the camera.

Casting The process of selecting actors for movie roles. After the first round of auditions is complete, the next round is referred to as “call backs.”

Cinematography The art of movie photography. The “Cinematographer,” or “Director of Photography,” is responsible for lighting and camera work.

Composition The way objects and actors are arranged when viewed through a camera viewfinder.

Continuity The maintenance of visual consistency of sets and costumes throughout a production.

Cutaway A neutral shot of an object or location that is peripherally connected with the overall event so that the scene can cut from the action to neutral shot and back.

Cut Director’s cue to end filming of a take. In editing, refers to the instantaneous transition from one shot to another.

Dialogue The lines delivered by an actor.

Diffusion When light is softened by covering the light source with inflammable paper or fabric.

Dolly shot The camera is physically moved during the shooting process, usually rolled on a dolly.

Editing The process of rearranging shots into a completed production.

Establishing shot A shot which orients viewers to the general location and context of a scene, such as a wide view of a school building before showing students in a classroom.

Fill light Additional light usually used opposite the key light to illuminate shadowed areas, usually by using floodlights.

Also called a “bounce light.”

Flags Large pieces of cardboard used to shield areas of a set from lighting or to bounce light from a white reflective surface into certain parts of a set.

Frame The parameters of what is seen within a camera viewfinder, also called the “camera frame.” Also describes a single frame of motion picture or video.

Improvisation The process of intuitively developing dialogue for movie scenes.

Key light Principal source of lighting in a shot. “High key” refers to high-intensity illumination, when a scene is well-lit as in most television situation comedies. “Low key” refers to low-intensity light as in horror films.

Location The place where a movie scene is filmed.

Microphone boom A long pole with the microphone attached to one end so that the sound engineer can extend

the pole close to actors delivering dialogue while also keeping the microphone out of the view of the camera.

Motivation The unspoken outlook of a movie character that determines how the character will respond in given situations.

Movie As used in this guide, describes any dramatic film or video production.

Pan Camera movement along a horizontal plane.

Period film A film set in a specific historical era (such as the Civil War) that affects set decoration, character development, and societal context.

Point-of-view (POV) A shot taken from the perspective of a particular character in a scene. For instance, if a young child meets a tall adult and the camera films down on the young child, the camera is representing the tall adult’s point-of-view.

Postproduction The final stage of movie making, after the film has been shot, when the movie is edited and prepared for release.

Preproduction The preparatory stage of movie making, including budgeting, scriptwriting, casting, rehearsal, set preparation, and scheduling.

Production The stage of movie making when the movie is actually filmed, usually only a short time of the overall movie making process.

Reaction shot Reaction of a character to action or dialogue of others, such as a frightened look on the face of someone who has just heard a gunshot.

Rehearsal The process of actor preparation before shooting a scene. Usually minimized in movie production since scenes are shot in short segments.

Scene A sequence of action occurring in one place without a break in time. May include a several different camera shots.

Script The detailed storyline and dialogue for a movie. A “T-script” is a script which is divided into parallel columns describing audio and video elements.

Sets Arrangement of scenery and props to indicate the physical locale and mood of a story.

Storyboard Drawings which represent the camera shots to be used when photographing a story.

Subtext The background story which underlies and precedes the action revealed in a movie plot; also refers to the underlying and unspoken meaning of a scene.

Telephoto Refers to a camera lens or an application of a camera zoom lens. Gives a close-up view of something located relatively far away from the camera.

Tilt Camera movement along a vertical plane.

Treatment A brief present tense summary of a movie.

Voiceover Usually refers to narration that is heard over various images or action.

Zoom lens A lens that can change from a wide shot to a close-up, or the reverse, in a continuous transition.

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From the Brothers Grimm

From the Brothers Grimm is a series of live action film translations of folk and fairy tales produced by Davenport Films. The films transform the deceptively simple language of the original folktales into highly-charged screen images set in the American landscape. Winners of numerous prizes including Parents' Choice Gold Seal Awards, "Best of Festival" from the Chicago International Film Festival, and the Golden Apple from the National Educational Film Festival.

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The Frog King. 27 min. The classic tale of a princess' promise to a frog is set in a 19th century dining room. Includes **The Making of The Frog King**, a fascinating peek at how the movie was produced.

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Mutzmag. 53 min. A plucky girl overcomes adversity in the Appalachian mountains of the 1920s.

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Making Grimm Movies.

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Books

From the Brother's Grimm: A Contemporary Retelling of American Folktales and Classic Stories. 105 pp. B&W illustrated. The Brothers Grimm movie titles faithfully translated back into written tales. According to *The Book Reader*, "The sheer storytelling power heightened by the spectacular pictures weaves an atmosphere of inexhaustible delight."

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