

A Story over a more extended period

Plan 1 Dick The Fiddler – storytelling and music

Ceri's Story —a solo project over three months done out of school time

Ceri chose this story as it gave her the chance to include some music alongside her telling.

Ceri researched on the internet and found three written versions of the tale. She then talked to her family about the similarities and differences between the versions. She used these discussions and the story précis to break the story into five main scenes.

She identified her three main characters: Dick, his wife and his Landlord, and thought about how each of these would react in the scenes in which they played a part. She decided to use dialogue to get their characters across.

Then Ceri worked on the detail: Her goal was to perform the story at the Young Storyteller of Wales Festival, held in November 2019, so she decided to set the dénouement of the tale at Christmas – to keep it topical. She was worried about her Welsh pronunciation, so she decided to only use Welsh for the names of the towns.

Most importantly, she researched on the internet for the folk tune mentioned in the source book, “The Blackbird’s Wing”. She found a version on the internet she thought she could learn, bought the sheet music and persuaded her violin teacher to help her get it right.

Ceri practiced telling her story aloud. First the individual scenes, then the whole tale from start to finish, then incorporating the music. She told the finished tale to an audience of friends and family before telling the story in the competition.

Plan 2 The Magic Cauldron – Shadow Puppets

The Magic Cauldron is a magical story celebrating a famous mythical Welsh bard, Taliesin. There is huge scope for visual imagery, imagination and description

Working with the Newtown Club Y6 - Y9 pupils over eight one-hour after-school sessions

One of the drawbacks of this way of working is that not all pupils attend each session. In reality between 4 and 9 pupils were present at any one time.

Session 1 – Hearing and Retelling The Story

Pupils listened to the story.

Discussion: What they thought about the story and why they liked it.

Retelling the story: Using Swoosh, a physical way of retelling and embodying the story. The group stand in a circle. One child is asked to volunteer to begin retelling the story (allow help from other children as needed). As they tell, go round the circle clockwise, each child moves into the middle to contribute to a freeze-frame from the story – this includes characters, but also trees, chairs, roads, houses etc as the narrator introduces these aspects to the story. When every child except the narrator is in the freeze-frame, everyone says ‘swoosh’. The freeze-frame is dissolved, the children return to standing in a circle, a different narrator is chosen to continue the telling and a new freeze-frame begun. Continue until the whole story has been retold.

Session 2 – What are Shadow Puppets?

Showed the pupils examples of short shadow puppet films on Youtube and 'here's one I made earlier' shadow puppets.

The group helped make a shadow puppet screen using a clothes rail and an old sheet and set it up with a projector.

The group experimented with example shadow puppets and tried out different materials (card, cellophane, feathers, etc) to see how they looked on the screen.

Session 3 – Making Shadow Puppets

Pupils retold The Magic Cauldron, each telling a line or two before handing the story on.

Discussion : What characters do we need to make shadow puppets for? Do we need to do shadows for the whole story? Can we tell just some of the story and create shadow scenes to accentuate parts of the story?

We decided that we particularly wanted to work on the transformation and chase part of the story with the shadow puppets.

We used black card for the shadow puppets to reinforce the idea that you only see the silhouette – then added embellishments using coloured cellophane, or hinges to enable body parts to move.

Session 4 – Creating a Potion for The Magic Cauldron

We played a version of consequences to generate recipes for the magic potion. The students wrote a line in response to a question, folded over the paper and passed it on. The questions were:

What is it? (Choose an interesting body part)

Who or what does it come from?

When and how is it gathered? (A time such as 6 O'clock was not allowed – they were encouraged to be inventive – acceptable times were along the lines of 'moonrise', 'when the larks sing loudest', etc.)

From where and at what season?

The recipes were read out, they chose their favourites, then set about combining objects and materials that would make appropriate shadows for them.

Session 5 – Keeping Going

The pupils revisited Swoosh, retelling the story and embodying the story – but this time behind the screen and trying to make shadows with their bodies for the story.

We continued work creating the shadow puppets for the main characters.

We talked about background and made simple sets for the chase.

Session 6 – Puppets and words combine

We worked on telling the story with the puppets.

There was lots of laughter and lots of working out how to make shadows clear; the right size in relation to each other and the importance of keeping your head out of the way!

Session 7 – Chanting and practice

We practised the story with the aid of a new self-appointed backstage director, who took responsibility for getting the correct shadow-puppet into the correct hand at the correct time.

We recited the potion recipes as a group chant and added bubbles and sounds to the scene.

We experimented with how to make material look like the sea for the final part of the story.

Session 8 – Recording the story

Telling the story to camera – the joy of putting on special black t-shirts and the difficulty of remaining calm and not getting the giggles when things go wrong.