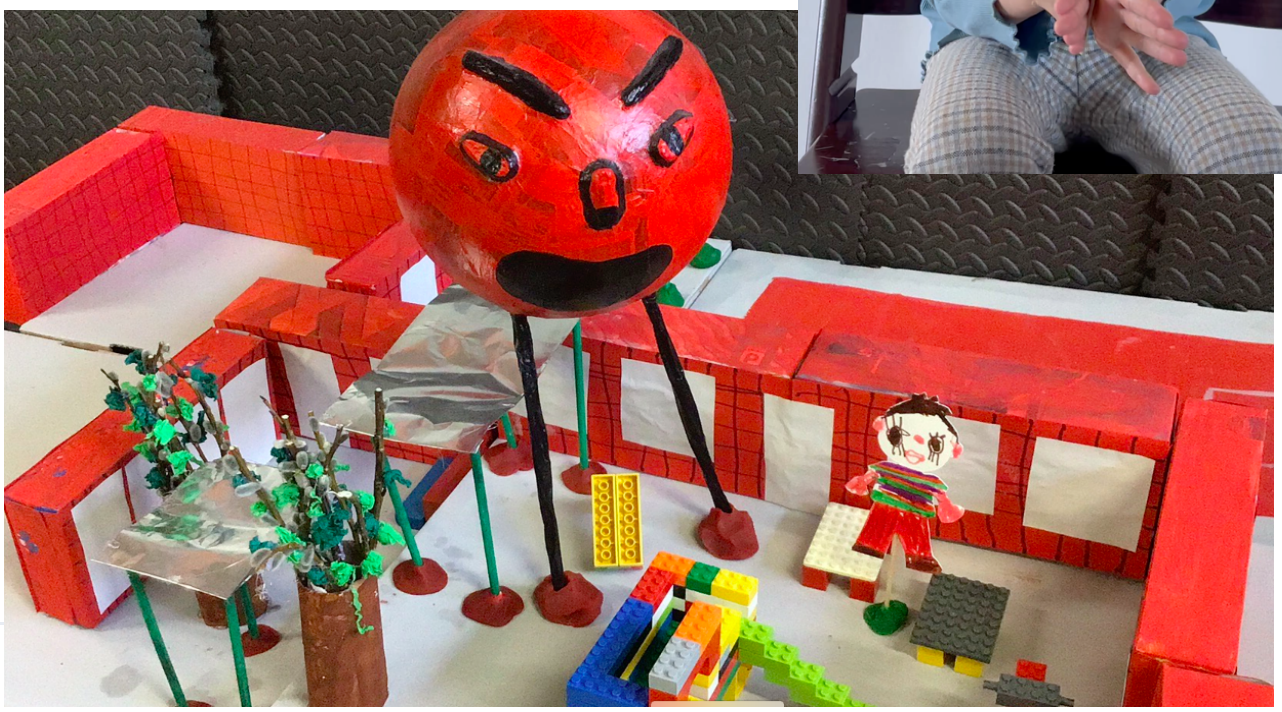
DA #21

Belgium

A Stop Motion Film



A Stop Motion Film

An idea from:

Florence Fery, Belgrade municipal school – Belgium, in co-design with **Média Animation ASBL**

Age: 5-6 years

Keywords: #language #photography #movement #stopmotion #sound #animatedmovie #mediaeducation

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Key question: *How can animated images become a film?*

General objectives:

- Distinguish between a still and an animated image
- Understand how movement is created using still images
- Illustrate the milestones of a story
- Discover and understand the stages involved in making a small object animation movie (commonly known as *stop motion*): choosing the scenario, making the characters and set, taking the shots, recording voices and sounds.
- Recognise, create and handle the right material to breathe life into the story and share it with others

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Time: 10 activities for a total of 10 hours in school, and 3 activities at home.

Materials

At school	At home
• Smartphone or tablet, or digital camera • Plain backdrop (flat cardboard surface, A3 sheet, boards) • Creative material: scissors, glue, coloured paper, etc. • Mascot or characters created with the children (modelling clay, paper, etc.) • Decorative elements: natural materials, toys, papers, modelling clay, etc. • Lighting: desk lights, spotlights, etc. • Tripod to stabilise the device used to photograph • Projection system • Optional: Dictaphone or sound recording app	• Camera, or tablet or smartphone equipped to take photos • Internet connection and device to receive the educator's instructions and share the productions

Software/Apps:

The animation technique suggested here is stop motion. It consists in taking pictures of objects, moving them slightly between each photo, then putting all the photos together as a film sequence to create the illusion of movement. The greater the number of photos, the better the illusion of movement. Using a stable camera device and frame is essential and contributes to a good result.
There are free applications specifically dedicated to stop motion technique. They can be downloaded on smartphones or tablets, used offline and make shooting and editing videos much easier. If the educator does not have a smartphone or a tablet, he or she can use a digital camera and then the slideshow feature of the photo viewer on a computer.

Stopmotion Studio	**Stickbot Studio 2.0**
Objective: Shoot and edit a stop motion film	**Objective:** Shoot and edit a stop motion film

Media: Smartphone or tablet **Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cateater.stopmotionstudio&hl=fr&gl=US **iOS:** https://apps.apple.com/be/app/stop-motion-studio/id441651297?l=fr	**Media:** Smartphone or tablet **Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.zingglobal.stikbot2&hl=fr&gl=US&pli=1 **iOS:** https://apps.apple.com/us/app/stikbot-studio-2-0/id1466188122

Short Presentation

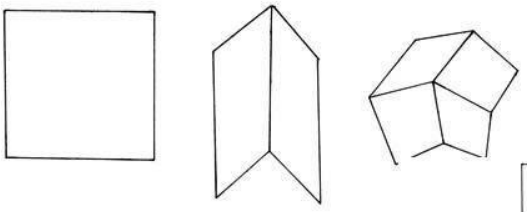
Is it possible to make a film using pictures taken in class? The answer is yes! In this workshop, children will first learn how to distinguish still images from animated images and play with moving images by creating a folioscope and a thaumatrope. After learning how to take photos, the children will be invited to make a small stop motion animation film. The scenario of this small film can build on a story the class knows and appreciates, such as a children's album. In class or at home with their family, the children will imagine a scenario and make the characters (modelling clay, toys, paper) and the set. With the educator's help, the children will photograph the images that make up the story, put these photos in a sequence and animate their film.

Step by step

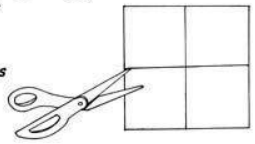
Preparatory step	*The educator prepares several still images (to print or project) and their animated version: i.e. images from a movie or a cartoon (it is possible to capture a moment in the film by freeze-framing) or images that can be set in motion using a folioscope or thaumatrope (see below).*
Step 1 --- *At school*	**What are the differences between still images and animated images?** The educator invites the children to carefully look at still images that are projected on a screen, or at printed photos they can handle. Discussion: - *What can we see in the images?* Invite the children to name the elements represented in the image. - *Is anything moving? Is it static?* Then, the educator shows how, placed one after the other, several photos can become animated through the use of thaumatropes and folioscopes. Discovery and explanation in simple words of the concept of retinal persistence: an optical illusion whereby the eye records an image for a very short period of time. The memory of the image in question is superimposed to the next image. By showing still images one after the other very quickly, the eye sees this succession of still images as if they were moving. Discussion: - *What do you see?* - *How is this different from the images showed earlier?* - *Is there any movement?* - *How is movement created? (cf. explanation of the concept of retinal persistence)*

	Other leads: - Take a series of photos in burst mode to illustrate an action (starting with photos of oneself, or of a toy), then project this photo sequence in fast motion. - Compare a photo of oneself with a video of oneself
	For distance learning The educator forwards the still images and edited animated images (either as a video, fast slideshow in stop motion, filming of a folioscope or of a thaumatrope, etc.). The parents and children are then encouraged to discuss the following points: - *What can we see on the images?* - *Is there any movement?*
Step 2 --- *At home*	**Making a folioscope and/or a thaumatrope at home** The children are invited to make their own thaumatrope and/or folioscope with the assistance of their parents. They will be able to experience the optical illusion created by their production to animate still images. The educator prepares patterns to cut out and assemble, as well as specific instructions for the parents. Many fabrication examples are available online. To create a folioscope:

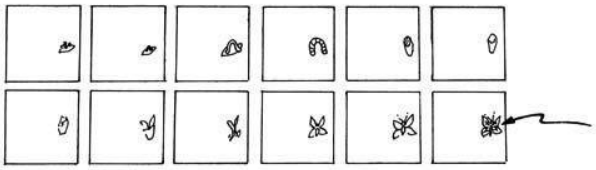
Making a Life Cycle Flip Book



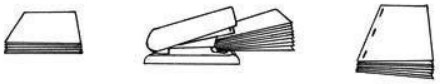
Fold 3 sheets of construction paper into four squares each and cut up.

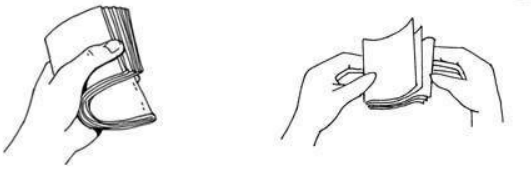


Glue each of the 12 stages of the life cycle you have colored and cut out — on the right side of the the squares.

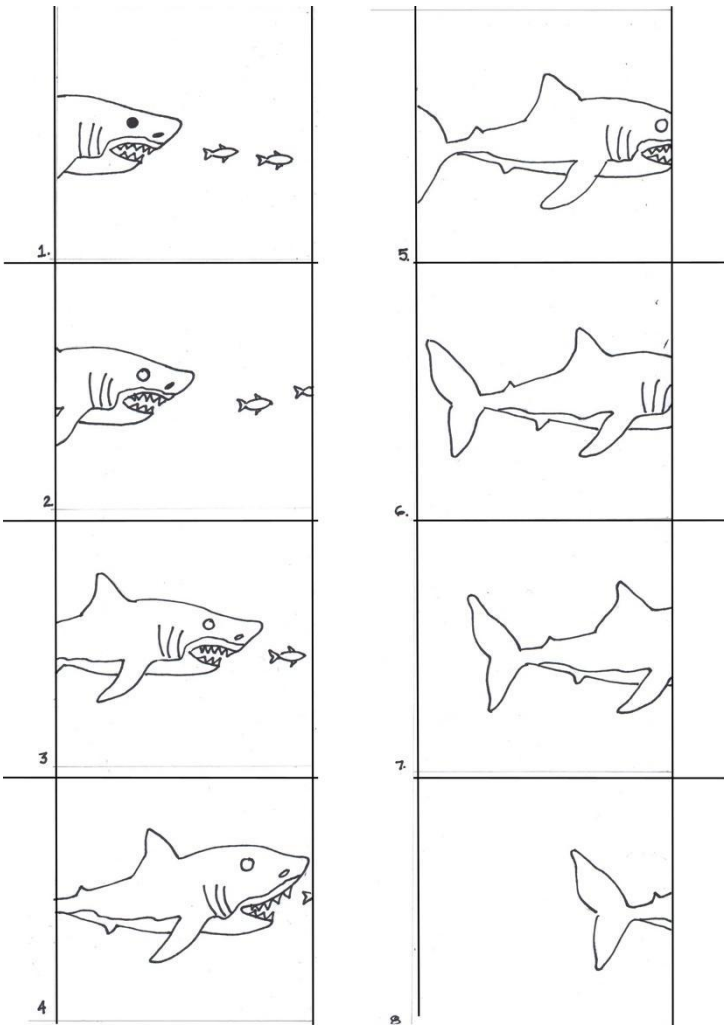


Put them together in order and staple them together on the left side.

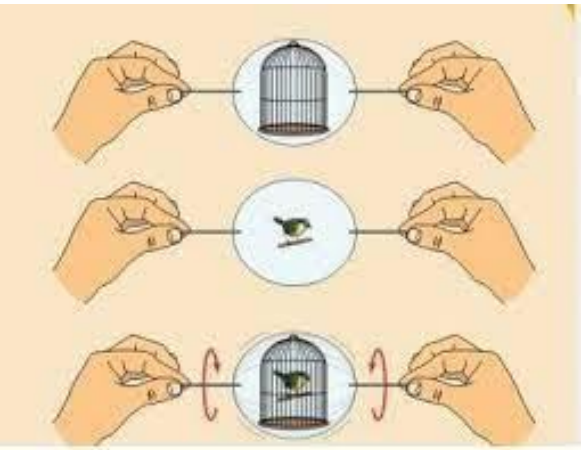


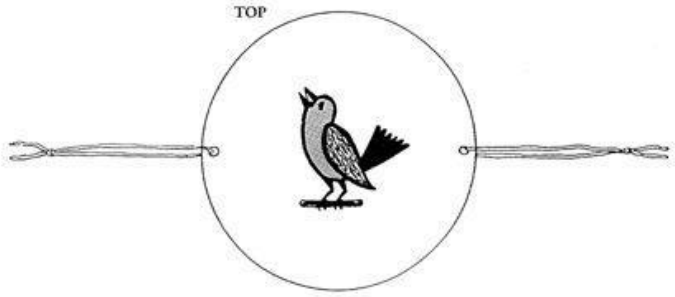


Squeeze your book into a C-shape with your left hand so that the edges of all the pages show, then flip through the pages with your right hand and watch your creature grown and develop.



To create a thaumatrope:

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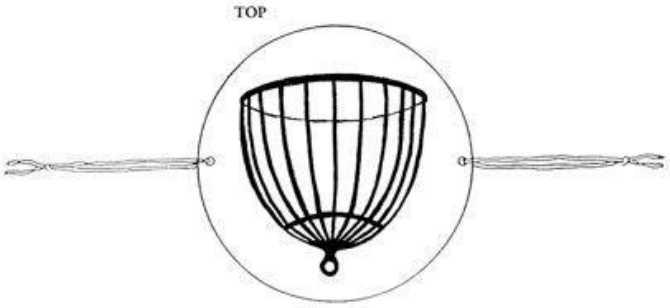
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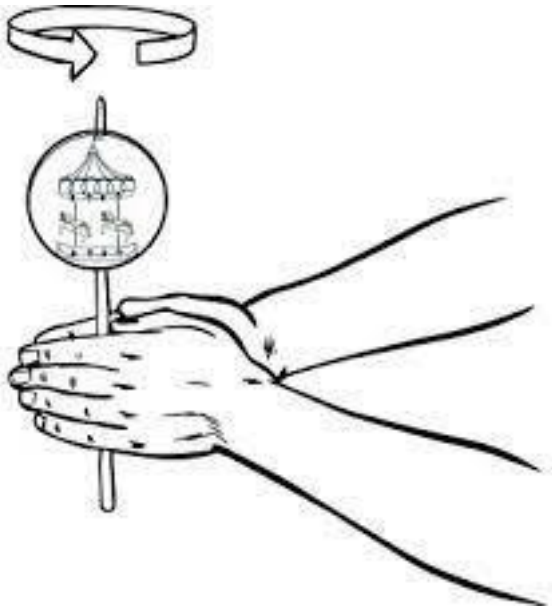
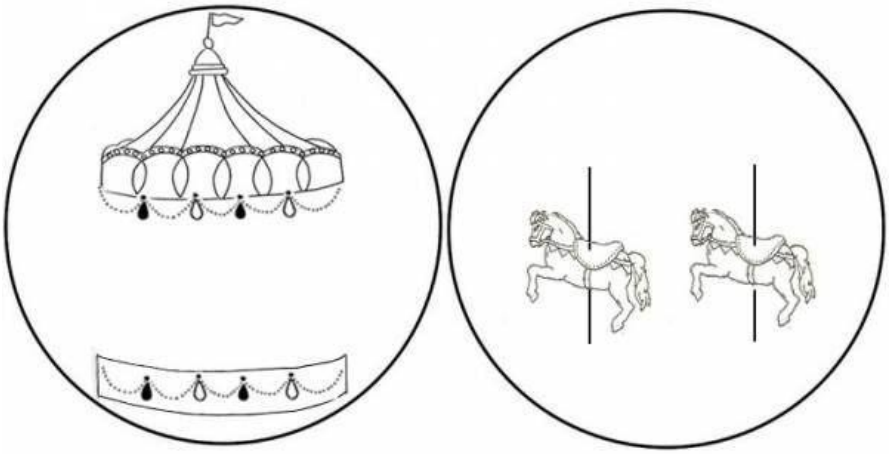




The children bring their creation to school.

Optionally, the educator may ask the parents to film their child using his or her production, and thus film the moving image. Parents will then forward the videos to the educator.

Figure 3: Making a thaumatrope at home, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium.

Step 3

At school

Discovering the productions

Each child presents his or her homemade thaumatrope and/or folioscope to the rest of the class. Videos sent by the parents are also projected.

The children are reminded of the principle of image animation through the fast succession of still images.

Step 4

At school

Discovering the stop motion films
The educator shows the children the different stop motion films created by other children.

Some examples of *stop motion* videos:

- Film in stop motion *"Le monstre mangeur de prénoms"* (The Monster That Ate Names) directed by Belgrade municipal school, Belgium: https://tube.tchncs.de/w/eVoUze1Tg3SiKk7c39hAsy
- With stuffed toys: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nu8k9d9IYE0
- With modelling clay:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxOaFzUe3co
- https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xj2yof

On the examples shown, and possibly using freeze-frame, the children are invited to identify:
- *Who are the characters?*
- *Where does the story take place?*
- *What is happening?*
- *How were the characters made?*
- *How was the set made?*
- *Is there any music?*
- *Is there speech?*

This step is designed to help children identify the media characteristics of the video (content, technique, formatting, etc.), discover the meaning of the story, understand the timeline of the narrative and the interactions between the key elements of the story.

Step 5

At school

Developing the narrative: Choosing the story
The educator tells the children that they will make their own animation film in stop motion.

- *What will we talk about? What will the story be?*

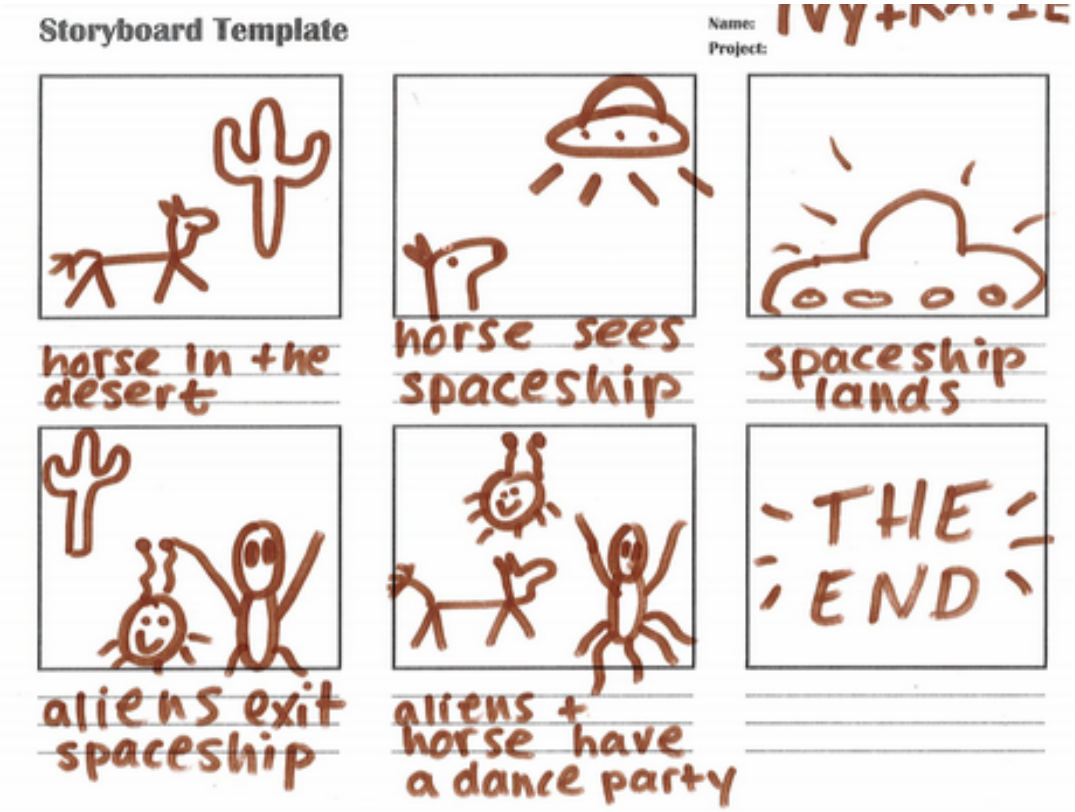
The class may take inspiration from an existing story, a children's album for example, or a story whose hero is the class's mascot, etc.

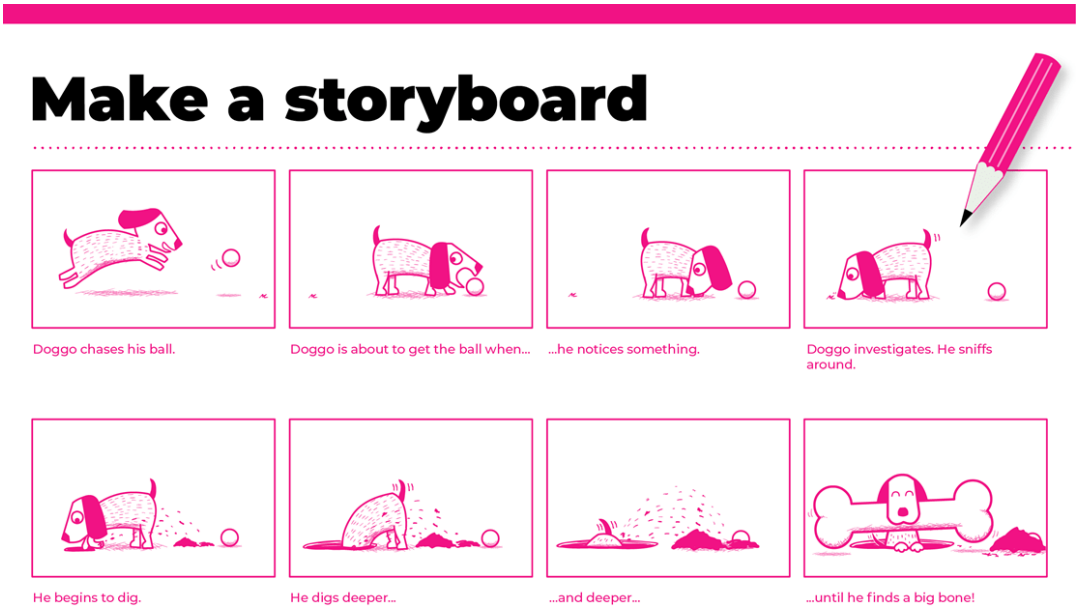
The educator makes up the story with the children by identifying the key elements:

- *Who are the characters?*
- *Where does the story take place?*
- *What is happening?*
- *What decor?*
- *What props are needed?*

Using these elements, the children, with the help of the educator, create a simple *storyboard* for this story which will illustrate, through drawings or diagrams, the key stages of the story. Creating a storyboard will help the children visualise the different stages of the story, what elements are needed for the set and the images to be photographed later.

Storyboard examples:





Step 6

At home

The story develops through the contributions of the families

The educator forwards the first or first few stage(s) of the story in writing or via the storyboard to the families and invites parents to discover it with their child and add on to the story. For example, parents may be asked to discuss with their child to choose names for the characters, to imagine how they are dressed, to invent a new situation, etc. Together,

	they complete the storyboard with the elements regarding which the educator requested their contribution.
Step 7 --- *At school*	**Completing the scenario** The educator and the class discover the elements imagined at home and may complete their storyboard with these new propositions (use details from what the children envisioned: an additional character, a setting, props, etc.). One piece of advice, however: always make sure that the scenario stays simple. The class validates the scenario developed. The children realise that creating a story in video, just like any other media content, requires real "writing" efforts and that there is more to it than just pressing on a video recording button.
Step 8 --- *At school*	**Identify, create and gather the material** The educator asks the children: *What will we need to tell our story in pictures?* - Our characters - Photos - Material to illustrate the action (paper, toys, various objects) - Material to illustrate the context using a set (plain backdrop + paper, toys, natural elements, various objects) The educator chooses how to represent the story using available materials or planned activities (modelling clay, salt dough, paper mache, cut-outs, etc.) Leads: - Creating, collecting material specific to the context of the video (autumn leaves to represent the woods, sand for a beach or even paper elements to represent trees, birds, grass, etc.) Use the material available in the classroom: Legos, building blocks, stuffed toys, puppets or any other prop available. Possibly complete with elements recorded and photographed inside the school itself (lavatory, sound in the school cafeteria, etc.)
Step 9 --- *At home*	**The families' contribution to material elements** With a view to a collective preparation, the educator distributes the various material preparations needed among the children and requests the parents' contribution at home: parts of the set, collection of symbolical elements, objects, character creation, collection of natural elements, etc. consistent with the story.

Step 10 --- *At school*	**Making the set and the characters in class** The educator gathers the various elements prepared and collected at home. The various elements required to tell the story are made with the children during creative workshops, using the chosen methods. 
Step 11 --- *At school*	**Choice of the sound universe** A stop motion short film can be silent by nature, either because the action filmed is sufficient in itself to tell the story, or because it animates words. A simple option then would be to leave it silent or to add a soundtrack (music, nursery rhyme, etc.) to the film chosen with the children, or a song recorded by the group. It would then be interesting to explain the soundtrack choice, specifically the impact of this choice on emotions and the meaning behind the story. If the story needs to be told, it is highly recommended that the educator records it him or herself with a Dictaphone, so as to integrate this sound file during the editing stage or to play it at the same time as the slide show. It is also possible to read the story live while projecting the film. However, in a more advanced stage, the pupils may also narrate the story themselves. In this case, the children should be taught to each memorise a short passage. Still using the Dictaphone feature on a tablet or a smartphone, the children's voices can be recorded and edited to accompany the story.

Step 12 --- *At school*	**Installing the set and shooting** With the help of the children, the educator organises and installs the filming set: plain backdrop, tripod for the filming device, lamp. We recommend downloading a special stop motion app on the tablet or smartphone used for filming (see app section at the beginning). If the photos are taken with a digital camera, the educator shall upload them to a computer for the editing phase or place them one after the other and use the "fast slideshow" mode. The roles should be distributed among the children in the class: one pupil to prepare the scenes, one to check the storyboard, those who shoot or take care of the lighting, those who move the characters and the elements of the set. We recommend working on small sequences at a time and varying the roles from one sequence to the other. The various objects are placed against the plain backdrop and, following the storyboard, should be moved slightly depending on the scene, and photographed after each small movement. Through this production, the pupils build a media representation of a story using photo and video media features to produce meaning and emotions. They match the contents of the photos with the different stages of the story in order to situate the action in time.
Step 13 --- *At school*	**Editing the film by sequence** After each shooting session, the educator asks the children what they thought of the quality of the sequence completed: - *Is the picture in focus?* - *Is the movement seamless?* - *What could be improved during the next shooting sessions (i.e., the movement of the set, the lighting for the main character, etc.)* The educator carries out the final edits, includes the soundtrack, using either a stop motion app or a fast-forward slideshow.

Step 14 --- *At school*	**Projecting the result at school for the class or other classes** The educator asks the children what they think of the final result and invites them to evaluate the work: - *Does the film correspond to the story imagined?* - *Are the characters present and recognisable?* - *Is the story understandable?* - *Can we see the images well?* - *What about the choice of music and/or sound atmosphere?* Assessing the process: - *Was everyone able to participate in this production?* - *What was your favourite moment?* - *What was the easiest step? The most difficult one?* - *Etc.*

Conclusion

There are many ways to adapt the different stages to making a stop motion film to classroom learning. The children have discovered that imagining a story and its representation entail many a decisions and considerations. In the future, why not use this narrative process to bring some of the pupils' handiwork to life or to illustrate lessons (the story of numbers, the story of the human body parts, the story of emotions, etc.)? Or even to tell the story of a school outing using photos (or a short film), a visit, caring for the school animals or any other class project?

Presence	**Virtual**
Screening the movie for the class or for other classes. Possibility of organisation a screening session for the parents.	Digital transmission of the film produced.