

Days Like These

Ways into autobiography using short animation



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Stop! Read me!

1. What does this EMCdownload publication include?


This EMCdownload publication includes two separate PDFs.

- A PDF called DaysLikeThese_Print.

This PDF includes the full publication in a **print-friendly form** for your reference or to use as worksheets for students. The A4 printable activity pages look like this:



- A Video PDF called DaysLikeThese_Screen.

This Video PDF includes all the video clips referred to in the activities. Activities which use a video clip are indicated with this icon in both the print and screen versions:  Clicking on this icon in the screen-friendly Video PDF will take you directly to the video page.




The Video PDF also provides a **screen-friendly version of the publication** for showing on a whiteboard via your computer and data projector. The screen-friendly versions of the activity pages look like this:



2. How do I play the video clips?

First make sure you have saved the file to your desktop.

To play the video clips you need to open the file in Adobe Reader 9 or above. NB: The video files will not display or play if you open the PDF in Adobe Reader 8 or below. You can download this free application by clicking here. 

Follow the instructions to install the latest version of the Adobe Reader program. Once it is installed and you have agreed the license, open the program.

Go to 'File – Open' and navigate your way to the Video PDF you have downloaded: 'DaysLikeThis_Print'.

Move your cursor onto the video image. Click and the video will begin to play within the page.

To play the video clips to a class you will need a computer, data projector and screen.

3. How can I play the video clips full screen?

Position the cursor on the video image. On a PC: right click. On a Mac right click or 'Control+click'.

4. How do I stop the video clips playing?

Either move to another page in the PDF or click the Play/Pause button on the control panel, as shown here. NB: The control panel is visible only when you move your cursor over the video image.

5. What do I do after the video clip has finished playing in full screen mode?

To exit full screen mode, press the escape button on your computer.

Contents

Sections	In this print PDF	In the screen PDF	
	Print pages	Activity screens	Video screens
Teachers' Notes	2	iv	
Option 1 – A prompt for telling stories	3	1	
The Blue Chopper, Jam Tarts, Ocean Walking	3-7	1-9	Video 1, 2, 3
Option 2 – The Blue Chopper	8	10	
Using a short film to think about the way stories from life can be structured	8-14	10-23	Video 1
Option 3 – The Big Match: Making a Poster-Story	15	24	
A visual approach to storytelling	15-21	24-39	Video 4, 5

Teachers' Notes

The three separate activity sequences in this resource share a common theme: they draw on a series of short animated oral narratives, *Days Like This*, from BBC Northern Ireland, to offer various different approaches to autobiographical writing. The four films provided in the resource each deal with the memory of a very special day, presented through words, sound and moving images, represented in very different visual styles. You can watch further films in the series, and read about the production processes behind them, by visiting: http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/dayslikethis/video/tv_index.shtml

NB: You might like to know that the title of this unit comes from a song by Van Morrison, recorded in 1993, and later adopted as the theme-song of the peace campaign in Northern Ireland. The lyrics are easily available online.

The options

Each of the three options is self-contained, and they are not intended to be sequential; there are elements of overlap, particularly between options 1 and 2. For maximum flexibility, you may wish to use them across different year groups, or to adapt one or more of them upwards for use as prompts for Creative Writing at GCSE level, particularly focusing on the 'Me, Myself and I' or 'Writing from Film' options for AQA. Similarly, each sequence has a different focus and outcome.

Option 1: A prompt for telling stories (Speaking and Listening focus)

- This invites pupils to taste three short films, and to use the transcripts of the original spoken word reflections on which they were based to discuss their interpretations and preferences.
- They explore ideas about what makes a good spoken story, and then go on to develop their own ideas for an autobiographical oral narrative, sharing stories with other members of the class.

Option 2: The Blue Chopper (structuring stories from life) offers a closer look at 'The Blue Chopper', one of the films included in the previous option.

- From a selection of images from the film, pupils are asked to predict the type of narrative they are about to see, and then to compare their responses to the complete film, focusing on its meaning, and the ways sound, image and movement are used to construct mood and interpretation.
- They then explore the structure of the film by analysing the use of wide-angle/long-shots and close-ups on screen, and their impact in creating 'big-picture' impressions and more detailed intimate reflection
- They experiment with using screenshots to re-sequence and re-draft the first few paragraphs of the film as a written narrative.
- Finally, pupils apply the approach to a short piece of autobiographical writing based on their own experience, using notional wide-angle and close-up screenshots on post-it notes to help them structure and add detail to their stories.

Option 3: The Big Match: Making a Poster-Story (a visual approach to storytelling) approaches a previously unseen film from a media perspective. The outcome is the production of a different, multimodal kind of text: an A3 poster-story, combining images, memorabilia, and close-detail memory-writing.

- Pupils start with a focus on the 'voice' of the story with a sound-only reading of the narrative. They predict the sorts of images which might accompany the text onscreen, compare their assumptions with the actual film, and comment on the emotional impact of images and sound.
- They identify and orally re-tell a special personal memory, and research personal images to illustrate their experiences (if none exist, found images can be used from magazines, newspapers or online). Using these as prompts for detailed writing, they draft and refine short descriptive paragraphs to recreate the atmosphere of the event
- They experiment with layout, design, font and colour to assemble a montage of images and text which represents their experiences. The results can be displayed, compared, and evaluated both as story and as artwork.

This sequence builds on elements of options 1 and 2, and could be developed in a number of ways as a preparation for Media Studies work – for example, as a slide-show presentation with voice-over; a still-image video using PhotoStory, PicturePower or iMovie, or a short video.

Option 1 – A prompt for telling oral stories

Watching three short films



1. Watch these three short films, in which people tell a little story about an event or experience that happened to them as a child. In each case a small incident ends up having quite a big significance for the person, when they look back on it:

- Blue Chopper
- Ocean Walking
- Jam Tarts



2. After watching each one, individually write down one sentence in answer to the question, 'What's it about?'

Talking about the stories

3. Share your sentences. What have different people in the class chosen to focus on? What ideas emerge about what's important in each of the stories?
4. Which one did you like best? Why? Come up with three or four reasons for liking one of them most. It could be something about the way it's told, the images that go with the stories or a combination of the two.
5. Now think just about the words, rather than the images. Look at the transcript of the story you liked best on a print-out. Annotate it or highlight it, to show which bits you liked and why.
6. Share your ideas across the class. For example:



I really liked the way the woman in 'Jam Tarts' created a picture of...' or 'I really liked the way he described his feelings at the end of 'The Blue Chopper' because ...

7. From your discussion of the stories, share what you think makes a good spoken story and display these ideas on a whiteboard or on the wall. Here are a few ideas to start you off.
 - It's good to have a bit of what different people said.
 - It works well to build up a visual picture of what was happening, with a bit of detail to set the scene.

The Blue Chopper

I'm from Turf Lodge and it was 1975. There wasn't an awful lot of money about. You knew there wasn't an awful lot of money about. The word poor wasn't mentioned but you knew that you hadn't got a lot. Anyway I was just in from the school, going down the stairs and all I could hear was, 'Gerard there's somebody at the door.' So I ran out the door and there was a mate of mine Stan at the gate. And there was this brand new Raleigh Tomahawk bike, gold in colour. And he was throwing his leg over the bike. And just as at 11 or 12 the first thing out of your mouth is, 'Give us a go.' And he says, 'No,' he says, 'My da says nobody's allowed on this bike.' So away he went and I'm looking down the street after him pedalling away. Little did I know that my eldest brother had been watching the whole thing from the kitchen window. He was sort of like the father figure at the time. And my brother came into the room and he says to me, 'Come on in, come on in d'you see.' So I went into his room and I remember him putting his hand under the bed, pulling out this tin. And he put it on his bed and there in this tin was all these ten pound notes, five pound notes, one pound notes, 50ps. And he started to count it all out properly. And he says, 'Come on, we're going into town to do a wee message.' Now there was a place in the town called Smithfield. You could buy anything from a nail to a record player. So we went into this shop and he turns round to me and he says, 'Have a look at that,' and all these Raleigh Tomahawk bikes on the right-hand side, all these Raleigh Choppers on the other side. So we're standing there and he says to me, 'If you had a choice about any one of those bikes,' he says, 'what would you take?' And I can remember just scanning them all down. There was every colour imaginable and I pointed to this blue Raleigh Chopper bike. The Raleigh Chopper was the bike to have. And the next thing he turns round and says to me, 'I's gonna buy that blue one for you today.' And I remember thinking, 'Oh he's the best brother in the world.' So I gets the bike onto the bus up to the Turf Lodge and terminus roundabout and as soon as the bus stops I'm away out down and past my house down into this cul-de-sac, stopped right outside my mate's house, the one that had the Raleigh Tomahawk. And I bounced in through the gate. As soon as I rapped the door, I run back out to get to the bike again. I didn't want to leave it for two seconds. And he comes out and he says, 'Where did you get that.' I says, 'My brother bought it today for me,' and he said to me the same words I said to him, 'Give us a go,' and I said, 'No'. I says, 'My ... my brother says I'm not allowed to get anybody else on this bike.' He didn't just buy me a bike. He actually gave me everything he had.

Jam Tarts

We always were sent to confession on Saturday. For some reason I was on my own that day and I went into confession. When I came out again the sky was very overcast and I just got down past the beautiful thatched house when the skies opened and the rain came dashing down. So I began to run down the road. And I was coming down past Greenfield's Estate. And the door of the gate lodge was opened. And the lady was standing at the door. And she said to me, 'Come on in wee Mckellen.' She said, 'You'll be dripped to the skin. You can wait here until the rain goes over.' And I went into the house – it was like a furnace because the big range was on and she was baking. And she said to me, 'Sit down there by the fire dear. Get yourself dried.' It was a big black range with a rack above it. She took me shoes and socks off. And she dried me feet and she hung me socks up over the rack of the stove. She took the bow off me hair and she dried me hair with a towel and then she combed it. And by the time she did that the ribbon was dry. She put me hair ... put it back in me hair and tied it. Oh she was just the loveliest woman you could ever imagine. And she was very pretty. Very, very pretty and plump. Not fat. Plump. And she had dimples on her elbows as she worked the dough in the bowl. And every so often she would just brush her hair back and so she had a piece of flour on her face. She said to me, 'Would you like a wee drop of milk?' and I said, 'Yes please.' She brought this milk up in a lovely wee flowery cup. And then she gave me not one but two jam tarts. This was the war and one jam tart was a luxury but two jam tarts were riches beyond measure. But I sat and I was, I was in heaven. And they were delicious jam tarts, lovely and crumbly and buttery and the jam was as sweet as honey. Beautiful. Whenever the rain went over she put four jam tarts in a blue sugar bag and she gave them to me to take home to the rest. And I went down the road and I thought I was in heaven. And I said to meself when I grow up I'm going to be kind and good and lovely like Mrs King.

Ocean Walking

I went to Australia for my son's wedding which was in New South Wales. And after all the celebrations were over we headed up to Queensland, to Cairns. And my daughter left the apartment. When she came back she announced that she had booked us all for a trip to the Great Barrier Reef for the following Saturday. I was a bit apprehensive about it. I have a sort of an issue with water. But on the Saturday we left and boarded a catamaran. It took three hours to get out to the reef and on the way out there were various announcements about what you could do when you got there. And when I heard of Ocean Walking I thought, 'That sounds very interesting, I wonder what that is?' So my husband went off to the office. He came back and said, 'You won't get wet, you can keep your specs on and you'll see the reef and all the sealife down there. You get a really good view.' And I agreed that that'd be great and so off he went and booked it. So we arrived out at the reef and we were directed to a check-in point. And I thought we'd be going down a corridor, maybe a glass corridor and that's why we were going to stay dry but there was a German guy who was in charge and his first question to me was, 'What size shoe do you take? And there's the wet suits.' And the penny started to drop that I was going to get wet. There was nowhere to run to or I would have run away. The worst part came next when I had to put my feet into the water and started to descend these steps. And after about six steps, a helmet came over your head and then you had to make a descent nine metres down and that was terrifying. I was clinging to the rails and I had a flashback to the last time I had been underwater and that was 50 years previously when I had fallen out of a boat into Loch Gowna. So I thought I would never get to the bottom. But when I got to that platform everything changed and I was just overtaken with the wonder of what I saw. And it was just creation and the reef was so beautiful and the fish and these strange creatures that I'd never seen before. And I forgot that I was ever afraid of water. And then it was time. We were signalled to come back up again. And my body felt very very heavy but my heart was light because something in my life had changed. It had taken 50 years to change it but it had changed in like five minutes.

Your own spoken story

1. Think about something that happened to you, a small incident that, looking back, had some importance for you. It could be:
 - a present that really meant something to you, like the man in 'The Blue Chopper'
 - a time you were really frightened of something or overcame a fear of something like the woman in 'Ocean Walking'
 - a 'food' story – a moment when something seemed more delicious than you could ever imagine, like the woman in 'Jam Tarts'
 - a story of kindness, when someone helped you out, or came to your rescue, like the woman in 'Jam Tarts'
 - something else that suggests itself to you, sparked off by this work.
2. Tell your story to a partner, once. Ask your partner to tell you what they specially liked about your story. Ask them for any ideas about what they'd have liked to have heard more about. Think about the list of ideas you shared about what makes a good spoken story. Jot down a few ideas about how you could develop your own story.
3. Now try telling it again, to two or three people, or, if you're feeling brave, to the whole class. This time, see if you can expand on interesting bits and find ways of making it enjoyable, like your favourite storyteller in 'Days Like This'. Get some feedback from your audience.

If you like, you could record the stories as they are being told and pick some of them to share with a wider audience, for instance in school assembly, or to share with pupils in another class.

Option 2 – The Blue Chopper

Using a short film to think about the way stories from life can be structured

‘The Blue Chopper’ is part of a series called ‘Days Like This’, broadcast on Radio Ulster, in which ordinary people tell stories of important things that have happened to them. Though originally written for radio, in 2009 some of them were animated. ‘The Blue Chopper’ is Gerard Rea’s story of something that happened to him when he was a small boy.

In this unit you’re going to watch the film and talk about it. You will use your ideas about the words and images as a way of helping you to think about how stories are structured.

Before viewing the film

1. Look at the screenshots on page 9, taken from the film ‘The Blue Chopper’. From looking at the screenshots, try to predict the story that will be told. Jot down a few notes.
2. Listen to each other’s predictions.

