

Winter Ted

This is a short animation about a teddy bear in winter, going into the snow. His objective is to get hold of a scarf he likes and we follow him as he tries different ways of obtaining it. This is a classic plot line for a childrens' story because the genre is adventure, which links with the psychographic needs of a child.

My animation is targeted at children age 3 to 10, similar to "Winnie the Pooh". I have chosen this age group because my plot line is simple and easy to understand. It has a quite friendly character to follow, automatically making the audience feel safe and comfortable. It has lots of twists and turns, for example Ted trying to get the scarf one way and then having to try something else, it keeps the audience guessing and entertained. We also have the theme of winter and snow. Children love winter because of the fun they have in snow (which Ted experiences) and associations of Christmas. This is a happy theme for children, something they like and can relate to.

When designing the character of Ted I looked at "Wallace and Gromit" for inspiration. These characters are unique and produce great performance. It is a style we recognise straight away and an associate with Aardman's work. Seeing this I decided to base part of my production loosely on his work. As the narrator says, Ted "could not speak because his mouth was just stitches" I came up with the idea, of using this technique which Aardman used for Gromit, just like this character, Ted cannot speak. Therefore Aardman used the eye brows to give facial expressions. This was a great idea because people relate more to body language and facial expression, especially children. Knowing my character would be a teddy bear I gave him features that would be recognised. Teddies are stuffed furry toys, with buttons for eyes and nose, and have mitten paws. Although I could not use fur because I worked with plasticine, I gave it all the others features signifying the main character as a teddy bear. Especially because when the audience first sees Ted he is sat on the windowsill, a stereotypical place for a teddy.

When making the film I wanted the audience to be part of the story as though they were right next to Ted. To create this effect the camera shots consisted of medium shots, to focus mainly on him but also to take in the surroundings; close ups to see facial expressions; and long shots to give an overall view of the place. Through the film, not only were the audience along side him, but they could also see from his point of view. This was done to make the audience feel like they were there but also to understand and see what Ted could see, for example the snowman and step ladders. In some cases when Ted is looking through a window the camera cuts to a shot of him from the other side to see it from another point of view and then cut again to what he can see. This makes the scene look better because the viewer can see his face and not the back of his head, and creates a quiet sense of anticipation. To really make the audience feel like they are Ted I even made it as though the viewer is his size. For example, when Ted bumps into the snowman it cuts to a perspective

shot and then the camera tilts up to reveal the tall big snowman, when actually the snowman is one foot. The same technique is used with the washing line.

When making the sets I based them on everyday houses and gardens in the country. The countryside is often been represented as calm and peaceful place, a perfect setting for a child. This is why the film starts off by showing a little village in the countryside, to create this feeling straight away. To represent a house I showed scenes of windows with curtains, stairs, a kitchen with tiled flooring and a cat flap, this shows traditional family values. As for the garden this is created by the classic green garden shed, washing line and hedge. By looking at all these features the viewer can see that this is a house in which a normal happy family lives, clean and tidy. This creates solid and recognisable values for the audience.

The theme of this film is winter. To create this setting of a cold magical wonderland, I covered all the props and set in snow, brought to life with a blue lit light to create a frosty feel, along with the black sky. To show winter from a child's point of view I have included the snowman and the scarf. Snowmen are one of the favourite things for a child when it snows and usually will bring the whole family together, creating a pleasant family atmosphere. The scarf, as Ted finds out, is warm and cosy, there for it gives a sense of happiness.

To make the story come alive I used sound effects, music and a narrator to tell the story. At the beginning of the film I used music to start it off like many childrens' films do. With the theme of winter and snow, the film starts off with a medium shot of snow falling onto the ground and spelling out "Winter Ted". To link with this atmosphere the music is gentle and has a magical twinkling sound, easily associated with falling snow. Through the rest of the film there is no more music. The technique of creating atmosphere is continued by the narrator and the sound effects. The narrator tells the audience exactly what is going on so the audience understands and can follow the plotline. The sound effects bring his words and the images alive. This not only creates atmosphere, like when he walks through the snow or goes into the creepy shed, but also creates humour, for example when Ted trips and buries his face into the snow and when the snowman's head hits the cat flap. Putting the image, words and sound together makes the audience smile and laugh, a key area that children love.

Altogether the work gives happy friendly images and atmosphere. It is suitable for my audience and links with their needs and gives all the codes and conventions it should.