Curriculum links

This module, 'Coraline', engages directly with the following Strands and Sub-strands:

	Examples
Language	
✓ Language variation and change	• identifying some of the ways in which language evolves and adapts through the process of transformation of text form
✓ Text structure and organisation	• understanding that authors innovate with text structures and language for specific purposes and effects
✓ Expressing and developing ideas	• comparing and contrasting vocabulary choices in different text types
Literature	
✓ Literature and context	• evaluating the ways in which characters and themes are presented in different text types
✓ Responding to literature	• reflecting on and discussing responses to literary text types and the ways in which these texts are constructed
✓ Examining literature	• analysing text structures and language features of different text types
✓ Creating literature	• taking an existing text and creating an interpretation of it
Literacy	
✓ Texts in context	• identifying, comparing and creating relationships between texts
✓ Interacting with others	• identifying and commenting on omissions of information in different texts
✓ Interpreting, analysing, evaluating	• evaluating how the same story can be presented in different mediums

Text types and skills

Throughout this module, students will engage with the following text types:
- personal writing
- fiction
- graphic novels
- game reviews
- interview
- film stills
- web extracts.

By engaging with these text types, students will develop skills in the following areas:
- comparing versions of texts
- describing language and visual effects employed by creators
- comprehending new and unfamiliar vocabulary
- writing reviews
- creating and justifying an adaptation of a text.

Coraline

The multi-award-winning writer Neil Gaiman is a perfect example of the modern creator. He has written novels (*American Gods, Stardust*), picture books (*The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish, The Wolves in the Walls*) and graphic novels (the *Sandman* series, *Batman: Whatever Happened to the Caped Crusader?*). He has also written screenplays for major films (*Beowulf, Mirrormask*) and has a significant online presence, interacting with his legion of fans through blogging and regular website updates. There is even a tribute CD dedicated to him, *Where's Neil When You Need Him?*, which was produced by well-known singers and songwriters.

Neil Gaiman

About Neil Gaiman

Neil Gaiman's work exists across many media formats, transformed from one form to another, utilising the best features of each format.

Coraline is one of Neil Gaiman's most highly praised works. This creepy, spooky and disquieting book for young people is written as a modern-day fairytale. It is deceptively simple. An enormous success, *Coraline* has been transformed from its original novel form and into a 3D animated movie, a graphic novel, a stage musical and a computer game. It is an excellent example of how, in today's world, a single work can end up in many different forms.

Throughout the novel, Coraline Jones's everyday experiences gradually become more and more sinister. Eventually, the commonplace becomes a nightmare. *Coraline*, first published in 2002, is part of a long tradition of creepy fairytales. Many of the best known were darkly disturbing in their original form. They feature themes such as murder (*Red Riding Hood*), child abandonment (*Tom Thumb*, *Snow White*), mutilation (*Cinderella*, *Little Mermaid*) and even cannibalism (*Hansel and Gretel*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*).

During the nineteenth century, many fairytales were 'cleaned up' by concerned adults who went through and rewrote the stories, deleting what they viewed as inappropriate material. Most fairytales written today continue this approach.

American psychologist Bruno Bettelheim insists that reading fairytales to children as they were originally written is important. He says that if children hear stories about serious problems and drastic, dangerous events, it can help them imagine useful responses that could be helpful in their later lives. According to Bettelheim, dark fairytales show children that they can triumph over adversity and can have a chance of living happily ever after.

DID YOU KNOW…

For all you need to know about the various versions of *Coraline*, follow the links to Mr Bobo's Remarkable Mouse Circus (which premiered in New York in May 2009) on **Pearson Reader**. You can also look for video interviews with Neil Gaiman in which he talks about *Coraline*.

Web Destination

FACT FILE

The **Victorian era** (during the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837–1901) saw an emphasis on the importance of family, sexual restraint, strict social codes of conduct and the belief in the existence of a criminal class that deserved harsh punishment.

Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990) was an Austrian-born American psychologist who immigrated to America after surviving German concentration camps Dachau and Buchenwald, during the Second World War. He is best known for his work with emotionally disturbed children. In his 1976 work, *The Uses of Enchantment*, he argues for the importance of fairytales in child development.

WEB DESTINATIONS

Visit the web destinations at **Pearson Reader** to access Neil Gaiman's blog, which provides some interesting insights into the daily work of a successful writer.

Web Destination

DID YOU KNOW...

Follow the links on **Pearson Reader** for a comprehensive internet source of annotated original fairytales, with different versions from many different cultures, plus a thoughtful discussion forum.

Web Destination

ABOUT CORALINE THE BOOK

By Neil Gaiman

More than ten years ago I started to write a children's book. It was for my daughter, Holly, who was five years old. I wanted it to have a girl as a heroine, and I wanted it to be refreshingly creepy.

I started to write a story about a girl named Coraline. I thought that the story would be five or ten pages long. The story itself had other plans …

It was a story, I learned when people began to read it, that children experienced as an adventure, but which gave adults nightmares. It's the strangest book I've written, it took the longest time to write, and it's the book I'm proudest of.

Source: Mouse Circus, the Official Neil Gaiman Website for Young Readers, 2010

Coraline the book

In the following extract the Jones family have just moved into a new house.

CORALINE, CHAPTER 1

By Neil Gaiman

Coraline went over to the window and watched the rain come down. It wasn't the kind of rain you could go out in, it was the other kind, the kind that threw itself down from the sky and splashed where it landed. It was rain that meant business, and currently its business was turning the garden into a muddy, wet soup.

Coraline had watched all the videos. She was bored with her toys, and she'd read all her books.

She turned on the television. She went from channel to channel to channel, but there was nothing on but men in suits talking about the stock market, and sports programmes. Eventually, she found something to watch: it was the last half of a natural-history programme about something called protective coloration. She watched animals, birds and insects which disguised themselves as leaves or twigs or other animals to escape from things that could hurt them. She enjoyed it, but it ended too soon, and was followed by a programme about a cake factory.

It was time to talk to her father.

Coraline's father was home. Both of her parents worked, doing things on computers, which meant that they were home a lot of the time. Each of them had their own study.

'Hello, Coraline,' he said when she came in, without turning round.

'Mmph,' said Coraline. 'It's raining.'

'Yup,' said her father. 'It's bucketing down.'

'No, ' said Coraline, 'It's just raining. Can I go outside?'

'What does your mother say?'

'She says, "You're not going out in weather like that, Coraline Jones"'

'Then, no.'

'But I want to carry on exploring.'

'Then explore the flat,' suggested her father. 'Look—here's a piece of paper and a pen. Count all the doors and windows. List everything blue. Mount an expedition to discover the hot-water tank. And leave me alone to work.'

'Can I go into the drawing room?' The drawing room was where the Joneses kept the expensive

- What are the features of fairytales? Make a list of common elements or characteristics as a class (e.g. 'Once upon a time …').
- Are fairytales inappropriate for children or 'helpful' as Bettelheim claims? Use a PMI chart (Plus, Minus, Interesting) to help you answer this question.

WEB DESTINATIONS

Visit the web destinations at **Pearson Reader** to access an interactive application to help students write their own fractured fairytales, with themes and messages that have modern appeal.

Web Destination

QUICK 5

Ask students to look at the cover of *Coraline*. Ask: What do you think this story might be about? Have them explain the clues that help them to predict the atmosphere, events and characters of the novel.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Starter activity

This activity is designed to stimulate students' imaginations and heighten their awareness of the ideas and themes associated with this module. Before they read the *Coraline* extract, ask them to predict what they think the story is about, based on the image on the cover of the book on this page.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

legion a huge number
It was decided that they would send a legion of soldiers to stop the rebels.

disquieting giving rise to feelings of anxiety
The silence in the house was disquieting.

sinister harmful or evil
His tone hinted at a more sinister intent.

mutilation disfigured or spoiled
Nadia winced at Clint's mutilation of the Italian language.

adversity difficult circumstances
They had to overcome great adversity to win their Olympic medals.

Extension

Transform a scene from Chapter 1 of the *Coraline* novel into one page of a children's book. Include text of no more than fifty words and one large illustration on your page. Select one of the following key events in the chapter to transform:

- a bored Coraline observing the rain
- Coraline exploring the flat
- the locked door
- dinner
- investigating noises in the night
- the shadow
- Coraline's dreams.

HELPFUL HINTS

You could allocate one of the scenes listed in the Extension activity above so that four or more students from the class will be working on each of these key events. Once completed, match up all of the scenes into booklet form and you will have a number of transformations of Chapter 1 as a picture book to examine and discuss as a class.

QUESTIONING

- What age group do you think this novel is pitched at?
- How do you know?

Students will need to support their responses with evidence from the extract.

QUICK 5

1 Say to students: Keys are magical objects that open things. They open cathedrals, safes, Ferraris. Close your eyes and imagine a key. What does it look like? How heavy is it? Where did you find it? Is it obvious what it opens? Write a story about that key and the thing that it opens, using precise nouns and verbs, and exaggerating details just a little.

2 Ask students to brainstorm adjectives to describe Coraline and explain why they are fitting descriptions of her.

(and uncomfortable) furniture Coraline's grandmother had left them when she died. Coraline wasn't allowed in there. Nobody went in there. It was only for best.

'If you don't make a mess. And you don't touch anything.'

Coraline considered this carefully, then she took the paper and pen and went off to explore the inside of the flat.

She discovered the hot-water tank (it was in a cupboard in the kitchen).

She counted everything blue (153).

She counted the windows (21).

She counted the doors (14).

Of the doors that she found, thirteen opened and closed. The other, the big, carved, brown wooden door at the far corner of the drawing room, was locked.

She said to her mother, 'Where does that door go?'

'Nowhere, dear.'

'It has to go somewhere.'

Her mother shook her head. 'Look,' she told Coraline.

She reached up, and took a string of keys from the top of the kitchen doorframe. She sorted through them carefully and selected the oldest, biggest, blackest, rustiest key. They went into the drawing room. She unlocked the door with the key.

The door swung open.

Her mother was right. The door didn't go anywhere. It opened on to a brick wall.

'When this place was just one house,' said Coraline's mother, 'that door went somewhere. When they turned the house into flats, they simply bricked it up. The other side is the empty flat on the other side of the house, the one that's still for sale.'

She shut the door and put the string of keys back on top of the kitchen doorframe.

'You didn't lock it,' said Coraline.

Her mother shrugged. 'Why should I lock it?' she asked. 'It doesn't go anywhere.'

Coraline didn't say anything.

It was nearly dark now, and the rain was still coming down, pattering against the windows and blurring the lights of the cars in the street outside. Coraline's father stopped working and made them all dinner.

Coraline was disgusted. 'Daddy,' she said, 'you've made a *recipe* again.'

'It's leek and potato stew, with a tarragon garnish and melted Gruyère cheese,' he admitted.

Coraline sighed. Then she went to the freezer

and got out some microwave chips and a microwave mini-pizza.

'You know I don't like recipes,' she told her father, while her dinner went round and round and the little red numbers on the microwave oven counted down to zero.

'If you tried it, maybe you'd like it,' said Coraline's father, but she shook her head.

That night, Coraline lay awake in her bed. The rain had stopped, and she was almost asleep when something went *t-t-t-t-t*. She sat up in bed. Something went *kreeee*…

…*aaaak*.

Coraline got out of bed and looked down the hall, but saw nothing strange. She walked down the hallway. From her parents' bedroom came a low snoring—that was her father—and an occasional sleeping mutter—that was her mother.

Coraline wondered if she'd dreamed it, whatever it was.

Something moved.

It was little more than a shadow, and it scuttled down the darkened hall fast, like a little patch of night. She hoped it wasn't a spider. Spiders made Coraline intensely uncomfortable.

The black shape went into the drawing room and Coraline followed it in, a little nervously.

The room was dark. The only light came from the hall, and Coraline, who was standing in the doorway, cast a huge and distorted shadow on to the drawing-room carpet: she looked like a thin giant woman.

Coraline was just wondering whether or not she ought to turn on the light when she saw the black shape edge slowly out from beneath the sofa. It paused, and then dashed silently across the carpet towards the farthest corner of the room.

There was no furniture in that corner of the room. Coraline turned on the light.

There was nothing in the corner. Nothing but the old door that opened on to the brick wall.

She was sure that her mother had shut the door, but now it was ever so slightly open. Just a crack. Coraline went over to it and looked in. There was nothing there – just a wall, built of red bricks.

Coraline closed the old wooden door, turned out the light, and went back to bed.

She dreamed of black shapes that slid from place to place, avoiding the light, until they were all gathered together under the moon. Little black shapes with little red eyes and sharp yellow teeth.

They started to sing:

RELATED READING

Brian Selznick, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Scholastic, 2007

Shaun Tan, *The Lost Thing*, Lothian, 2000

Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, Bloomsbury, 2008

Brian Lee O'Malley, *Scott Pilgrim Versus the World*, Fourth Estate, 2010

> *We are small but we are many*
> *We are many, we are small*
> *We were many, before you rose*
> *We will be here when you fall.*
>
> Their voices were high and whispery and slightly whiny. They made Coraline feel uncomfortable.
>
> Then Coraline dreamed a few commercials, and after that she dreamed of nothing at all.

Source: Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002

Breakaway tasks

Remembering
1 Where do the Joneses keep their best furniture?
2 What does Coraline think about spiders?

Understanding
3 Why doesn't Coraline like her father's cooking? What does this tell us about her?
4 Who is singing at the end?

Applying
5 Draw a bird's-eye view of the Jones's house.

Analysing
6 How many sentences have fewer than five words? What is the effect of these short sentences?
7 How is Coraline different from her parents?
8 Find the colons in the extract. How do they add to the sentences in which they are used?'
9 What do you think the shadow in the text might symbolise? Brainstorm the possibilities as a class and decide on the most likely.

Evaluating
10 Rank the three sentences from the chapter that you like best, then write a sentence for each explaining why you like it.
11 Which character would you like to know more about? Why?
12 Would you read another novel by Gaiman based on the extract? Why or why not?

Creating
13 Create a menu for a meal made by Coraline's father.
14 Create a TV guide entry for the natural history program Coraline watches. You must include the title of the program, the running length and a short summary.

Coraline the graphic novel

In 2008, *Coraline* became a graphic novel. It was adapted by the original author, Neil Gaiman, and illustrated by Craig Russell.

GAIMAN TALKING ABOUT CRAIG RUSSELL

By Neil Gaiman

I've been a fan of P. Craig Russell's work since I was about fifteen, when I persuaded my school to let me write about an episode of *Killraven* in my English exams. He's one of the most elegant and beautiful artists working in comics today, and one of the things he does better than anyone is to adapt things into comics form. He's adapted operas and Kipling stories, he's even adapted short stories of mine, and I've always loved what he did.

So when I was asked by Harper Childrens who I would like to see adapt *Coraline*, my scary children's novel, into a graphic novel, I said 'P. Craig Russell, please'. I knew it would look good, I knew the adaptation would be faithful and the art would be beautiful.

I wasn't expecting how good either would be. Craig's adaptation of *Coraline* is a two-hundred page graphic novel, coloured by Digital Chameleon, that's gorgeous and haunting, and, most importantly for me, a real book in its own right.

Source: Mouse Circus, the Official Neil Gaiman Website for Young Readers, 2010

Learning strategies

Making judgements

MI: intrapersonal

There is a commonly held perception that comics are not literature and, more, that they are a lesser form of both art and literature. Ask:

- Is this your impression?
- Do you think a comic could be as valuable as a novel?
- What are the features of a comic that have given people that impression?
- What does a novel have that makes it universally admired as a form?
- If you had written a novel would you be happier to have it made into a comic or a film or neither? Why?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the graphic novel as a medium?
- Are they easier to read than a text-only novel?
- What skills are demanded of the reader when reading a graphic novel?

QUICK 5

1. Research the current graphic novels bestseller list. Identify the following:
   - title
   - author and illustrator
   - genre
   - target audience
   - if it has been transformed from another format or is an original
2. Select some dialogue from the panels on these pages. Write it in the style of Neil Gaiman, using short sentences, very few adjectives and paying particular attention to showing rather than telling.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Teaching tip

Graphic novels use language differently to normal novels. They try to capture spoken language as it naturally occurs, including hesitations, trail-offs and slang. *Coraline*, the graphic novel, can be used to expose EAL/D readers to the ambiguity of spoken English, through its use of ellipses, contractions, non-verbal language, colloquial phrases and dialogue.

Pages from the graphic novel *Coraline*

EAL/D SUPPORT

Reading strategy

Discuss with students the order of how the speech bubbles should be read in a graphic novel—left to right, top to bottom. After reading the frames on these two pages, have students summarise their understanding of the story, by writing a narrative (story) from the third person perspective (i.e. refer to Coraline as 'she', 'her').

WEB DESTINATIONS

Visit the web destinations at **Pearson Reader** to access an online magazine that contains interviews, news, reviews, blogs and discussion forums. Browse the site and select one graphic novel that looks interesting. What has attracted you to the text? Discuss the range of genres that the graphic novel is produced in.
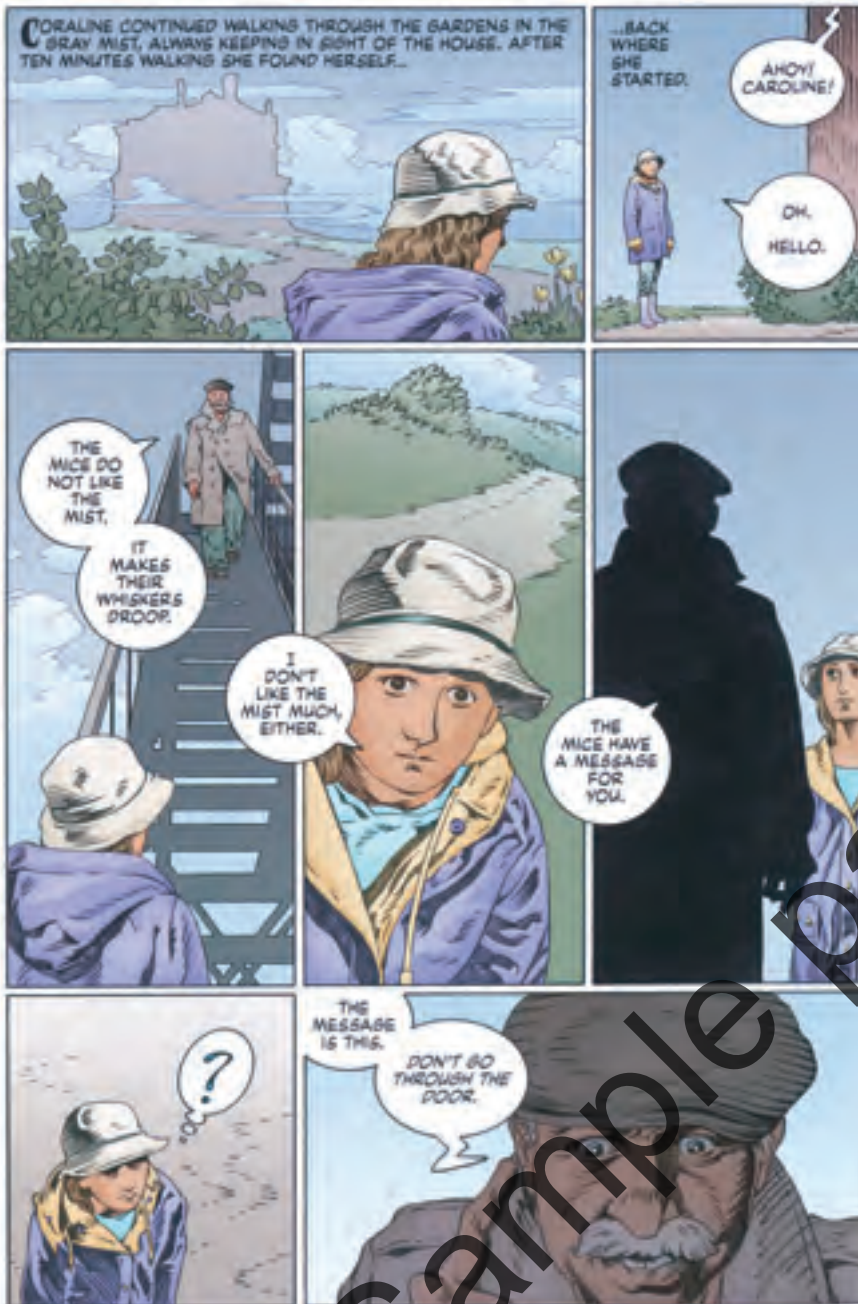
Web Destination

Assessment

Extension

One advantage of a graphic novel is being able to 'see' rather than just read about characters and events as they unfold in a story. In pairs, discuss which panel has the greatest impact in this version of Chapter 2. Which features within the panel have created this effect? Consider use of colour, facial expressions, height and space within the frame, use of foreground and background, the design of speech bubbles, as well as the text within them, etc. Hold a class vote on the most effective panel and discuss how this visual impact was created.

QUICK 5

1 In the last panel on this page, have students identify the things that the illustrator has done to create a sense of mystery and urgency. (For example, the popped collar and trench coat reminds us of detective stories.)

2 Ask students to choose a book they have read that they would like to transform into a film.
   • Why would this novel make a good film?
   • Select the cast using current actors. Describe the character you are casting and the reason for your choice of actor.
   • Which elements of the novel might you have to cut when shooting the film? Why?
   • Which elements might you change? Why?
   • Select two songs for the soundtrack and explain your choices.

3 Hold a class debate: 'Books are always better than the film version of the book.' Divide the class down the middle of the room. In three minutes of silent writing, each side must come up with a list of arguments for or against the proposition. Use a 'talking stick' (a whiteboard marker, glue stick, or whatever is handy!), thrown from speaker to speaker as each side of the room takes turns arguing their case.

FACT FILE

Henry Selick (1952–) is an American stop-motion director and producer. His first feature-length film, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), was the first full-length stop-motion film to be made by a major American studio.

WEB DESTINATIONS

Web Destination

Students who have an interest in designing their own graphic novel can be directed through web destinations at **Pearson Reader** to a site with free software for digital illustration, which is a good option for a differentiated task.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Scaffolding task

Breakaway task 4 asks students to describe Coraline's mother's tone of voice. 'Tone of voice' means the attitude we use when we says something and what the words sound like when they come out of our mouths. Give students the following list of tone words and ask them to clarify any unfamiliar words using a dictionary before deciding which one best describes Caroline's mother's voice: pragmatic, imploring, matter-of-fact, intense, worried, forthright, assertive, harsh.

BREAKAWAY TASKS: ANSWERS

Go to pages 278–9.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering
1 How many highland terriers is Miss Spink taking for a walk?
2 How long does it take Coraline to walk around the house?
3 Why don't the mice like the mist?

Understanding
4 Describe Coraline's mother's tone of voice in the second panel.
5 Both the old woman and the old man call Coraline 'Caroline'. Why do you think they do this?

Applying
6 Look at the second panel. What other advice do you think Coraline's mother might give Coraline before she goes out?
7 Write a thought balloon for the second panel by answering this question:

   What do you think Coraline is thinking when her mother is giving her all that advice?

Analysing
8 How does the mist add to the tension?
9 Why is the man in the third last panel presented as a silhouette?
10 How old do you think Coraline looks?
11 What is Coraline thinking in the second-last panel?

Evaluating
12 Which panel do you like best? Why?
13 Do you think all three versions of *Coraline* have the same purpose? Brainstorm the changes that would need to be made for a different purpose.

Creating
14 Draw a map of Coraline's explorations. The house should be in the centre. Label where Coraline met Miss Spink and where she met the crazy old man. Draw and label anything else she may have come across, based on the panels of the graphic novel.

Coraline the film

The film version of *Coraline* was released in 2009. Transforming a book into a film is a challenge. Many, many films based on books have been disasters simply because the two forms are so different. Whenever a book is made into a film, changes must be made, and often these changes result in a story that is significantly different from the original. A common, almost necessary, change is that some parts of the book will be cut out or not filmed. This is simply because filming most novels in their entirety would make a film much too long.

And then there's the issue of casting. When we read a book, we create an image of the characters. When a film is made, the appearance and sound of the characters is presented to us—and sometimes the choice of actor is completely different from what we have in our imagination.

Henry Selick, the director of the film version of *Coraline*, understood the challenges of turning a book into a film, and here he shares some of his experiences.

DID YOU KNOW...

Follow the links on **Pearson Reader** for the official *Coraline* film trailer.

Web Destination

HENRY SELICK IN CONVERSATION
By Scott Macaulay

Henry Selick arrives at the FilmInFocus office carrying a Coraline puppet, and it sits on the table shooting a bemused and quizzical half-scowl the director's way as we conduct our interview. That Selick could do that—bring an actual Coraline from the film's production and not just a replica created by a toy merchandising company—speaks to the old-fashioned, artisanal pleasures of his unique animated film. Mixing stop-motion animation—the kind we all remember from Saturday afternoon mythology-and-monster pics—with digital

Writer's TOOLBOX

bemused: confused
quizzical: questioning
artisanal: craftlike

Still from Henry Selick's animation of *Coraline*

shooting and 3D technology, Selick has created a thoroughly modern picture that, in telling the story of the lonely young Coraline and her frightening journey into a beckoning fantasy world where all seems good, combines the comforts of the familiar with the surprise of the completely new.

Coraline is Selick's fourth feature. After attending Cal Arts and working as an animator for Walt Disney Studios and, later, MTV, Selick captured the attention of Tim Burton, who produced his debut film, 1993's stop-motion *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Following were *James and the Giant Peach* (1996) and *Monkeybone* (2001), both of which mixed stop-motion with live action. After contributing stop-motion animation to Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic*, he directed a short film using CG animation (*Moongirl*) and became the supervising director for feature film development at the Portland, Oregon animation studio LAIKA, where *Coraline* was produced.

How did you wind up getting involved with *Coraline*?

I was introduced to Neil Gaiman eight years ago and was given the pages; it was not yet a published novel. I read it immediately, and as I read it I could already see it as a film. The chemistry of Neil's creative mind seemed to be in tune with what I was looking to do as well as my own chemistry. But it was a very long journey from that first meeting to finally mounting the film.

Did you ever give a thought as to whether it should be an animated film or a live action film?

A lot of people read the book and saw it as live action, and originally there was some intention

DID YOU KNOW...

Follow the links on **Pearson Reader** for a video of the Henry Selick interview.

Web Destination

to go that route. But I always thought it would be best served as an animated film, and best served as a stop-motion animated film. The challenge is simply that these characters aren't talking animals. *Coraline* may be a fairy tale, but it is set in our times, modern times, and stop-motion animation brings a charm, a warmth—it takes a little bit of an edge off the darkest, most troubling parts of the story, I think, and adds a little creepiness to parts that might be too sweet.

Stop-motion animation is a style I associate with my childhood—watching Saturday afternoon movies broadcast by the local TV station. What were the seeds of your interest in stop-motion?

I was four or five years old and my mother took me to a Ray Harryhausen film, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. He is the master of stop-motion. There is an incredible Cyclops [in that film]—it seemed absolutely, totally real, and it stayed with me my whole life. And then there were the Rankin Bass Christmas specials—*Frosty the Snowman, Rudolf the Red-nose Reindeer*.

As a director who repeatedly works in stop-motion, do you find yourself having to justify the choice of stop-motion in a world in which CG animation is dominant and Pixar has had such great success?

The reasons I love stop-motion today are not the things people want to hear when they are selling a film. They want what's new, what's cutting edge,

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FACT FILE

Ray Harryhausen (1920–) is a pioneer in the field of stop-motion animation, animating in Hollywood since the late 1940s. In his films, animated characters interact with live actors.

Rankin Bass Productions was a company started by Arthur Rankin Jr and Jules Bass in the early 1960s; the animated feature films they produced are recognisable for their doll-like characterisation.

Pixar is an animation production company that is known for its CG animation and clever storytelling. Its films (including titles such as, *Finding Nemo*, *Toy Story* and *Cars*) have made over US$6.3 billion worldwide.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Oral rehearsal

Have students read the interview questions and responses on the next three pages. They can then take it in turns with a partner to ask each other the questions asked of Henry Selick in the interview. Students will need to use their memory and skills of recall to verbally answer their partner's questions; however, they must not refer to the written responses for help. If students cannot remember Selick's answers, they can make up a completely new answer, as long as it sounds realistic.

RELATED READING

Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*, Penguin, 2010
Charlie Higson, *Silverfin*, Penguin, 2008
Nicki Greenberg, *The Great Gatsby, A Graphic Adaptation*, Allen & Unwin, 2007
Gareth Hinds, *Beowulf, A Graphic Novel*, Candlewick Press, 2007
Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Penguin, 2008
Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted*, HarperCollins, 1998
William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*, Bloomsbury, 2008
J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter Series*, Bloomsbury,
Robin Klein, *Hating Alison Ashley*, Penguin, 1994
Louis Sachar, *Holes*, Bloomsbury, 2007
Pittacus Lore, *I Am Number Four*, Penguin, 2011

FACT FILE

Dakota Fanning (1994–) is an actor who got her 'break' in 2001 in the film *I Am Sam*. She has worked consistently since then, appearing in many films including *Man on Fire*, *War of the Worlds*, *Charlotte's Web* and the *Twilight* series.

Adam Elliot (1972–) born in Berwick, Victoria, has won an Academy Award for his stop-motion animation film *Harvie Krumpet* (2003). He uses clay to create his animated characters and draws on the stories of his friends and families to write bittersweet films.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

hang-up (colloquial) feeling of unease or anxiety
Miranda had a hang-up about the size of her nose.
lubricate to minimise friction to allow smooth movement
The engine's cylinders were well lubricated.
render to represent or translate something artistically
While the portrait was beautiful, it was a surrealist rather than life-like rendering of my cat.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Context explanation

Ask students to explain what they think Travis Knight is doing in the photograph on the next page. Refer them to the Writer's toolbox on this page to help them answer this question.

Dakota Fanning, the voice of Coraline in Henry Selick's animation of *Coraline*

Writer's TOOLBOX

Stop-motion animation is where small figures are created (often from clay or plasticine) and then shifted in tiny movements. Each movement is filmed, and when put together this creates the illusion of motion. The *Wallace and Gromit* films, and the films of Australian director Adam Elliot are made this way.

and I think that it is a terrible hang-up in the United States. New is always equated with 'better' and in most of the world, it is not. When CG animation came into being, Hollywood said, 'That is the way all animated films should be made [from now on]'. And even though Disney had great successes with a couple of 2D films, like *Brother Bear* and *Lilo and Stitch*, they shut down all [the rest] of their 2D. But over in England, when CG came on board, it was seen as another tool—stop-motion animation and 2D animation continued. They didn't think of shutting down these other ways of telling stories. Stop-motion isn't sexy unless you like things that are real and hand made, and I like to see the hand of an artist. I don't like airbrushed photorealism, that totally lubricated image of 3D animation. Stop-motion is flawed, its textures are real, and I think it invites the audience to work a little to make it happen in their minds. As for Pixar, it has the best story department of any animation studio in the world. I could clip off my fingernail, and they could do a feature on that fingernail. They would take six years developing the story, they would come up with a world and context, and they would make a great movie. Their films are a marriage of [CG and their story department].

How does the practice of stop-motion differ from the other forms of animation?

Traditional animation is a really long process and there are many stages. You draw your characters. You rough them in, and there are pencil tests. Assistant animators do the in-between, and you do the clean up, and then it goes to electronic ink-and-paint. And then those things get composited. Backgrounds [are added]. In CG, there are even more stages—wireframe forms, etc.—and it is not until the end of the process that all those images get rendered and output and you can see the lighting and what [the whole image] finally looks like. One of the things that I love about stop-motion is that there is an immediacy; there are not many steps at all from the concept to the finished film. We sketch out the entire movie in storyboards, which are cut together and then [we build] story reels that we run in real time. We sometimes use temp voices and music. We cast the film and cut in real voices, and then these storyboards become the plan for the film. You figure out the sets and the number of puppets, and it becomes a fluid thing—these [early elements] are not perfect. They are somewhat rough. Then from these storyboards you build the elements, and when you finally shoot it, you put the puppets on the sets.

Although you classify the film as stop-motion, you also used digital technologies in your filmmaking process. How did you integrate the two?

We used modern technologies to assist us. Shooting digitally allowed us to share images more quickly and to review shots as soon as they were in. I loved that process. [Shooting] digitally allowed us to manipulate images, to do our paint-outs of the face cracks, to remove the rigs, composite skies, and take the cotton we stuck on the ground in the

banana slope scene and shift it around a lot more easily. And we did replacement facial animation, which has been done in TV commercials for a very long time. We split Coraline's face so that we would have more control of her brows and eyes separate from her mouth. There would be this big line [bisecting her face]. For a while I preferred leaving it in because it lets you know that this is a hand made movie, and I found that within four minutes people didn't notice it. But there was a concern and fear that it would be distracting so we did paint that out. When Coraline jumps in the air, she has to be supported by a rig—a very simple thing with a base and an arm that is adjustable mechanically by hand—and that got painted out too. I had to fight, however, to keep the scenes that most people would have done in CG as stop-motion. The mouse circus—we have a series of replacement mice, each one hopping, which is something George Pal invented 60 years ago with his Puppetoon films. I had to fight to make all the Scottie dogs, all 500 of them, in stop-motion. And when those scenes were done all those people were happy I fought for those scenes. It plussed the movie—it was in tune with the soul of the movie. There were shots where there were also [visual] effects, where we shot green screen and comped in the action, but for two thirds of the film what we shot first was 90% done. So we did use [digital] tools, but we tried to keep them from overwhelming the process.

What was a typical day like for you in production?

We would start with the animators looking at storyboards. I might act out and do sketches, and they might act out and do sketches. What are we thinking of? What is the essential thing in the shot? While the animators can do beautiful work, there is always an essential story point that if it is not conveyed, then the shot is no good. So we would discuss the shot and talk about how the character might move. Then the camera [department] comes in separately, and we would talk about a basic scheme for lighting. Then there was blocking. You 'find the marks' just like live action [shooting]. We would do a little rehearsal and then launch the shot. I would check in on the animators while they were animating, see if the shot could work better with a little adjustment. And I would spend a ton of time in editorial; there were two edit rooms going like crazy, I would jump back and forth as animators and lighters would come in, and I would be out on the stages walking six to eight miles every day. Out on the stages is the most fun because you are in the trenches

Travis Knight, head animator on the set of *Coraline*

QUICK 5

1 Using all the information available on these pages, have students make a timeline of the production process for a stop-motion animation film.
2 Make a list of all the jobs that are involved in the process described here.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Reading strategy

Have students reread Henry Selick's answer to the last question, 'What was a typical day like for you in production?' Students can summarise Selick's answer using a series of steps to simplify the process. For example:

1 Animators look at storyboards.
2 Selick and the animators act out and do sketches.
3 They discuss the shot and talk about how the character might move.