



LIBERI LUDI

International non-profit · Brussels

A METHOD OF SHARED CREATIVE WORK · AGES 8 TO 12

READ, CUT & FILM

THE METHOD IN BRIEF

Turning a story into a film.

Five steps, one or two sessions,
with paper, plasticine or any classroom material.



FILMS MADE BY CHILDREN AGED 8-12



A METHOD OF SHARED CREATIVE WORK WITH CHILDREN AGED 8 TO 12

Read, Cut & Film: brief review

Turning a story into a film

A child takes a myth, a fairy tale or a classic of children's literature, decides with a tutor what the story is really about, makes the characters, films them frame by frame and shows the finished film to other children. Five steps, one or two sessions.

The method does not depend on what the characters are made of. Paper cut by the children, a ready-made kit, building figures, plasticine: the five steps are the same.

What the method is

Read, Cut & Film is a structured creative method through which a child turns a story into an animated film of their own. It sits at the intersection of classical papercraft, animation and storytelling.

The method brings together choosing and reading the story, discussing it and identifying what matters most in the plot, preparing a hand-drawn outline of the future film, making the characters, shooting frame-by-frame stop-motion animation, and presenting the finished film.

It is designed for children aged 8 to 12: the age at which play remains a natural way of getting involved in the world while thinking has already begun to take on more structure. Its creators take the view that technology should extend and amplify a child's creative capacity, not substitute for it by generating the result.

What the method does not depend on

The five steps do not prescribe a material. Children can cut characters out of paper they have drawn themselves, use a printed kit, animate building figures, plasticine, cut-out photographs or objects from the classroom shelf. A group can film a myth, a fairy tale, a poem or a story the children wrote last term.

What has to stay in place is the sequence: a story that is read and argued about, a decision about what the film is for, a plan that can be broken, something made by hand, a shoot that goes frame by frame, and a premiere. Change the material and the method still works. Drop one of the steps and it stops working.

A film shoot is play with a purpose. The stages of this play, of this children's work, do not exist in isolation: each step shapes the next.

AT A GLANCE

Age	8 to 12 years
Group	Pairs, or groups of three. Three or four groups in a session, nine to twelve children in all. Mixed-age groups work particularly well
Duration	One or two sessions of 45 to 90 minutes
Materials	Anything that can be posed and moved by hand
Equipment	One smartphone per group; a lamp with a phone holder for filming flat work from above; a separate tripod if the figures stand up
Staff	No animation background required

The method, step by step

The point of the method is to take material offered to the child and use it to awaken emotion and imagination, channel that energy into a creative process, and bring it to a result the child can both explain and stand behind.

1 Read + Discuss

Children choose a story and read it, or listen to it read aloud, then talk through the plot and the choices the characters make. The question that matters is not only what happens, but at what moment one of them becomes someone else. That moment is the shot the film cannot exist without, and the group names it before anything is made.

2 Imagine + Sketch

The group draws the story out as a plan: what follows what, not only the order of the shots but the order of the actions, and which frame carries the thing that matters most. The storyboard is a graphic plan of the telling, and the children draw it themselves.

Its purpose is to start the imagination working. A story that has been heard has to become the ground for one of their own, pictured their own way. This is why films made from the same story, with the same characters, never come out alike. A plan is needed, sometimes only so that it can be broken: it is a frame, and inside it everyone speaks for themselves.

3 **Cut + Create**

Children make the characters and the place where the action happens. Where the figures come from is not fixed by the method. They can be cut from a set of characters and backgrounds prepared in advance, printed or provided by the teacher. They can equally come out of whatever art practice the teacher already works in: characters the children draw themselves, plasticine, figures made from natural materials. What matters is that the character can change at least a little: not only its place in the frame, but the position of its arms and legs, and ideally its expression as well. Split pins, wire or simple joints give the figures movable parts.

A prepared set buys time and a certain finish. Interchangeable faces, ready backgrounds and props bring the result closer to the kind of cartoon children are used to watching, while staying simpler to handle in a classroom than classical cut out animation. Drawing or modelling the characters instead costs one session more, in the subject of the course or the studio. Either way the characters have to be finished before the Read, Cut & Film session begins.

(Read that way, a Read, Cut & Film session works as an added module to lessons in another art of image and material: drawing, or modelling in plasticine.)

This is the stage at which what was imagined comes alive. The cutting and the making are themselves the pause the imagination needs in order to take concrete form. The child is not simply cutting out: this is when the visual and narrative choices talked over at the earlier stages are thought through.

4 **Film + Edit**

The background is fixed in place and the group shoots frame by frame on a smartphone. Flat characters are filmed from above, with the phone hanging over the table: a desk lamp with a phone holder does the whole job. Figures that stand up, in building bricks or plasticine, are filmed from the side, at their own eye level, and that needs a tripod separate from the lamp. Both the holders and the split pins cost very little and are sold in phone shops, art and craft shops and on the marketplaces. Shooting and editing now happen in the same free app: reordering frames, deleting a bad one, laying music or a voice over the top. These operations are simple enough for a child of eight to do unaided, and nothing has to be bought or installed on a computer.

5 **Show + Share**

The premiere is not an extra at the end. It is the stage where authorship appears: not a pastime and not a set of skills, but a point of view that belongs to the child and can be shown to others. When every group filmed the same story, each team walks the others through the choices it made. When the stories were different, each team presents its own film.

How the last minutes work

Two conversations close a session, and they are about different things. The premiere looks at the idea. The plenary that follows goes back to the craft.

At the premiere

Keep the register light. These are animated sketches, not cinema, and what wins here is a good gag or an unexpected visual solution. In staffroom terms it is an author's chair, not a marking session.

- **Ask the makers:** what did you most want to show? The key moment of the story, or something about the character?
- **Not fault-finding.** Any creative result is a success if it was made in the group's own way rather than by the book.
- **If time allows:** each team draws a poster for its own film. Ten minutes, and the premiere has a foyer.

At the plenary

The last few minutes carry one plain message: getting the result you wanted takes effort and skill. Recap the techniques the groups actually used today and name them, so that the children hear what they can now do. Then set out what is still open, for example how many photographs go into one second of film, and leave it open on purpose. That is where the next session starts.

On a first shoot almost no group goes beyond about six photographs per second. That is not a failure to be corrected in the lesson. It is what a first film honestly looks like, and it is the reason there is a second one.

What makes it work

Making an animated film from a story does not replace lessons or reading. It helps the child, through playing at being a director, make classical narratives their own. Animation here is not the goal but the means.

Learning through play

For children, play is not a reward at the end of learning. It is one of its most natural forms. It is through play that a child more easily takes on complex structures: plot, sequence of events, cause and effect.

Scaffolded creativity

Neither free drawing nor a strict lesson with predetermined answers. Children work inside a given structure but make their own creative decisions at every stage. They are not starting from nothing, and they are not following an instruction sheet either.

Shared authorship

The film is made in a group. Even when the shoot is individual, the child has a tutor to orient towards and an imagined audience in mind. In a group format that experience also includes negotiation, sharing of roles, conflict and agreement.

Material thinking

Understanding comes through action, through the making of something material: the turning of a paper character into a living hero. The cutting that demands focus is the necessary pause after the excitement of having an idea.

Purposeful screen use

The smartphone is used purely as a tool, a camera and an editing desk, while the child's wider creative environment for that time becomes hand-made, analogue and shared.

Read, Cut & Film rests on principles laid down in the classical works of the founders of modern educational thought: Lev Vygotsky, Johan Huizinga, John Dewey, Seymour Papert and Jerome Bruner.

Where the method comes from

What the adult is for

The teacher is not the person in the room who knows how to make the film. Children work this out quickly, and on the visual side they arrive at solutions an adult would not have found.

What the children need from the adult is a steady point to appeal to. Someone who has read the story, knows what is on the table, and can answer the question they actually ask, which almost always takes the form: have I understood right that we should do it this way. Someone who gives a push when a group has stopped. A push, not a solution. The sentence to reach for, whenever a child proposes something: **let us try it the way you thought of it.**

Technique comes second. The one failure seen in the pilot groups had nothing to do with skill: a group started filming without knowing how the story ended, read the instructions for how to film instead of deciding what to film, and never reached the scene the story exists for. First the group says what the film is about and which single shot it cannot exist without. Only then does technique come in, as a way of expressing a decision that has already been made.

Appendix: where the rest of the material is

This brochure describes the method. Three other documents carry what a group actually needs.

Read, Cut & Film: how it works in a classroom

The full material for running a session. Two scenarios, a timed breakdown of each lesson, differentiation, assessment, safeguarding.

Read, Cut & Film: a proof of method

A worked example. The method shown on the pages of one issue of a printed kit, from the story to the last empty storyboard.

Babiling Animation Kit

The material for the session itself: stories, storyboards and filming instructions written for the children rather than for the adult.

About Liberi Ludi

Liberi Ludi is a non-profit association registered in Brussels. We work with children who have found themselves in a new country, and with the schools, cultural centres and communities that receive them.

Making a film does not run on language. A child who arrived three weeks ago cuts, moves and films on equal terms with everyone else. Language comes at the end, at the premiere, when there is something to say and a reason to say it.

- Lesson plans for schools, with two scenarios and a timed breakdown of each session
- Printed animation kits, for those who would rather not prepare the material themselves
- Training and support for teachers and tutors who want to run the method themselves
- Joint programmes with schools, libraries and cultural centres

The method keeps developing. New stories, new shooting techniques and reports from the groups we work with go out through our social media and through the free newsletter on liberiludi.com.

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