



LIBERI LUDI

International non-profit · Brussels

A METHOD OF SHARED CREATIVE WORK · AGES 8 TO 12

READ, CUT & FILM

A PROOF OF METHOD

Turning a story into a stop-motion movie sketch with the
Babiling Animation Kit, page by page.



FILMS MADE BY CHILDREN AGED 8-12



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

Read, Cut & Film: a proof of method

*Turning a story into a stop-motion movie sketch
with the Babiling Animation Kit*

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, cuts the characters out of paper, films them frame by frame and shows the finished film to other children. Five steps, one or two sessions.



Frames from films made by children with the Babiling Animation Kit

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 paper characters, shooting frame-by-frame stop-motion animation, and presenting the finished film.

It works in two ways. It can be run with our purpose-built kits, developed by child psychologists, professional editors, artists and animators. It can equally be run from scratch by tutors and educators in art classes, after-school clubs and similar settings, following the core principles of the method.

The method 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.

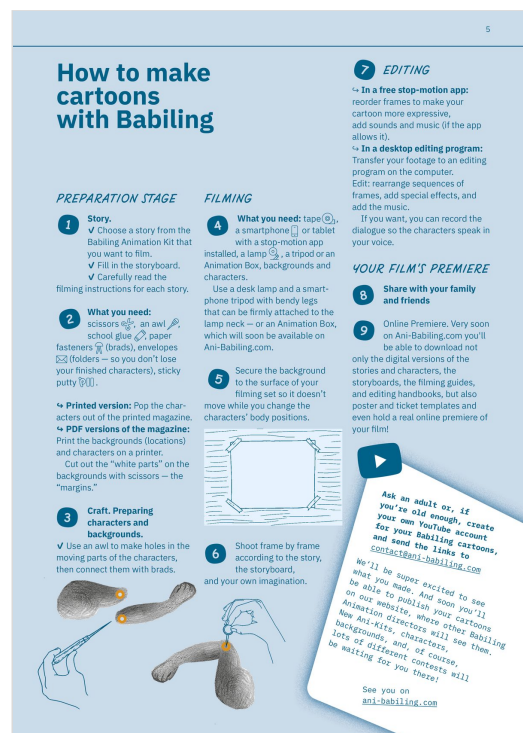
Fig. 1

The whole method on one page

Nine numbered steps, from choosing a story to the premiere, written for the child rather than for the adult. Everything a group needs is listed here: scissors, an awl, glue, split pins, envelopes, a phone, and a lamp with a holder that keeps the phone above the table.

This page is the reason no animation background is needed from the teacher. The instructions are addressed to the children, and children work through them themselves.

Babiling Animation Kit, issue zero, page 5



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
Equipment	Paper, scissors, split pins, one smartphone per group, a lamp with a phone holder
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.



Fig. 2

The story, as the child receives it

A full page of narrative with its own illustrations. The text is short enough to be read inside a lesson and complete enough to be argued about.

The stories are myths, fairy tales and classics of children's literature. For a child who has just arrived in a new country, a familiar plot works as a mediator between the world they knew and the one they are in now.

The Little Mermaid and the Sea Witch, page 17



Fig. 3

Four stories in one issue, and they grow in difficulty

Four groups can work on four different stories in the same room, or all of them can take one story and compare the results. All four suit the whole eight to twelve range. What changes from one to the next is not the reading age but the difficulty of the job: more characters, stronger feelings, a harder thing to show on screen.

Babiling and the Dragon's Heads · The Little Mermaid and the Sea Witch · Heracles and Antaeus · Battle with the Giant Squid

2 Imagine + Sketch

Children decide what their film will be about: which moments to put first, where to place the emphasis, what visual means to use. The storyboard is not a technical brief. It is how the group agrees on the meaning and the look of the future film.

Fig. 4

A storyboard that is deliberately unfinished

Here the child works out what follows what: not only the order of the shots but the order of the actions. The last box is left empty. It is the ending, and the group invents it. That is why films made from the same story, with the same characters, never come out alike.

The tutor's job is one nudge: this is the place where you decide. The note printed in the corner, plans are made to be broken, means exactly that. The storyboard is a frame, and inside it everyone speaks for themselves.

Babiling and the Dragon's Heads, page 11



3 Cut + Create

Children make their characters, cutting them out and giving the figures movable parts with split pins. 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. In a child's hands paper characters come to life, and this is the moment when what was imagined comes alive.

Where the figures come from is not fixed by the method: a prepared set of characters and backgrounds, characters the children draw themselves, plasticine, figures made from natural materials. This document describes the stage through one particular set, because that is where our own experience lies. Each story in it comes with its cast, with faces that can be swapped to change an expression, and with the objects the story needs. That brings the finished film closer to the kind of cartoon children are used to watching, while staying far simpler to handle in a classroom than classical cut out animation.

**Fig. 5**

Actors, printed and waiting to be cut out

Bodies, limbs, props and interchangeable faces. Arms and legs are attached with split pins, about eight to a figure, so that it can be posed frame by frame. Faces are swapped to change an expression between shots.

Everything on this page is paper. The cutting and the making are themselves the pause the imagination needs in order to take concrete form: this is when the choices talked over at the earlier stages are thought through.

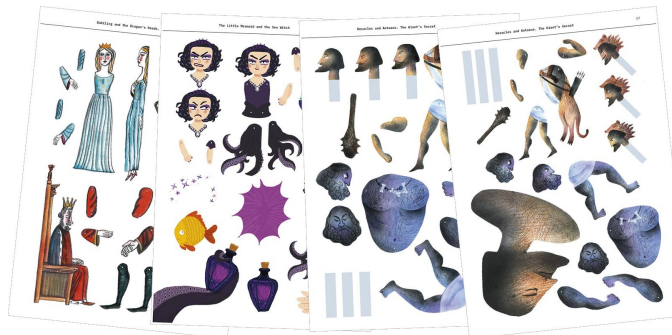
Characters for Babiling and the Dragon's Heads, page 43

Fig. 6

Every story brings its own cast

Kings, jesters, a sea witch with her octopuses, a giant and a hero in three different sizes. Roughly half the issue is character sheets, and each set is drawn by the artist of that story.

Character sheets for all four stories, pages 43 to 67

**Fig. 7**

Locations, printed as full pages

A throne hall, the open sea, a seabed, the deck of the Nautilus. The background is taped down to the table and becomes the location where the whole scene happens.

This is the one thing at this stage a child cannot recover from afterwards: if the background or the camera shifts during the shoot, the frames no longer match. Tape it down before the first photograph.

Backgrounds, pages 36 to 42

4 Film + Edit

The background is fixed in place and the group shoots on a smartphone, moving the characters frame by frame. The story, already settled in the imagination, is translated into the language of film.

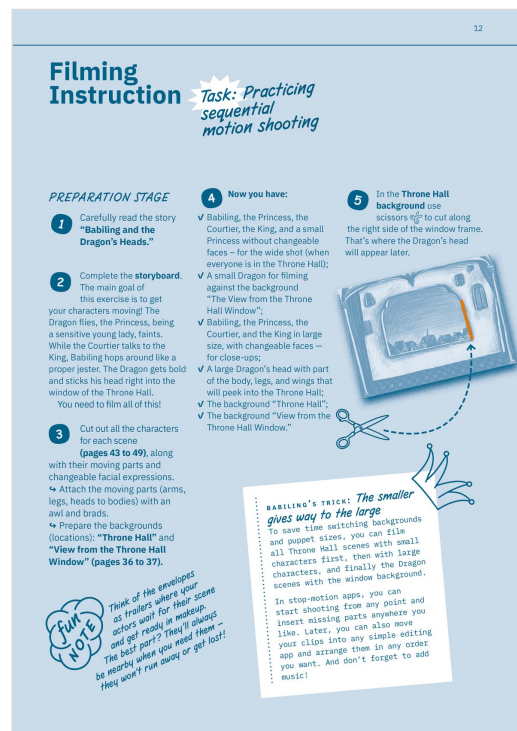
Fig. 8

Shooting instructions, scene by scene

Every story in the kit carries its own filming instruction with a named task. Here it is first movement: getting the characters to move at all, in a readable order. The instruction is written as a construction set. It says what to prepare, what to fix down and what to film, and leaves the solution open.

Shooting and editing now happen in the same free app on the phone. Reordering the frames, cutting a bad one, laying music or a voice over the top: all of it is inside the app the group is already filming with. These operations are simple enough for a child of eight to do unaided, and nothing has to be bought or installed on a computer.

Filming Instruction, page 12



Frames from films made by children. Left to right: Babbling and the Dragon's Heads • Heracles and Antaeus • The Little Mermaid and the Sea Witch • Battle with the Giant Squid

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.

Two ways of running it. 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. Either way the makers speak about their own work.

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.

Closing the session

Fig. 9

The plenary: from what we made to how we made it

The premiere has just looked at the ideas. The last few minutes go back to the craft, and they carry one plain message: getting the result you wanted takes effort and skill.

An ordinary plenary does it. 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.

The teacher does not have to supply this material. It is already in the kit, on the pages shown in Fig. 10.

Keeping the Pace, page 34

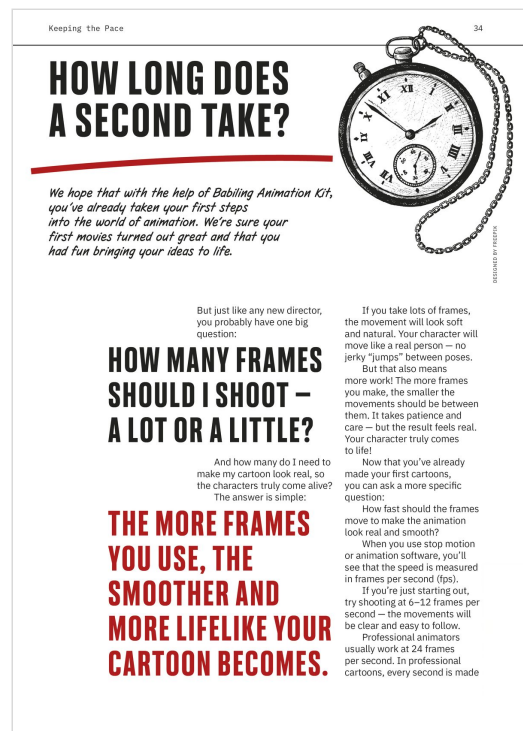


Fig. 10

Where that material comes from

Between the stories sit short sections on how animation works. A zoetrope, the daddy of animation. A knight whose frames have to be put back in the right order and filmed. A page on rhythm and pace. And, inside the shooting instructions, why a scene alternates between what is far and what is close.

Each of these is one plenary: a technique to name, and a question left open for the session after.

Zoetrope, page 14 • The Knight to the Rescue, page 15 • Your own rhythm, page 35 • Alternating close ups and wide shots, page 32



A first film is usually under a minute long. What stays with the child is not the length of it

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. Paper, scissors and the cutting that demands focus are 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 paper-based, 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.

What a group works with

The pages shown in this brochure come from the zero issue of the Babiling Animation Kit. One issue carries four stories, and four groups can work on them in parallel in the same room.

Story	Level	What is practised	The shot the film cannot do without
Babiling and the Dragon's Heads	Starter	First movement. Getting the characters to move at all, in a readable order	The dragon arrives and the court reacts. The princess faints
The Little Mermaid and the Sea Witch	Advancing	Animation magic: things transform and disappear. The background moves instead of the character	Her tail turns into legs
Heracles and Antaeus	Advancing	Apparent size. To make one figure look bigger, you make the other one smaller	Heracles stops and thinks: the giant is a son of the Earth
Battle with the Giant Squid	Confident author	Wide shots against close ups, as the way feeling is carried towards the action	Nemo grieves for the men who died

The levels describe the job, not the reader. All four stories suit the whole eight to twelve range, and a group usually works through them in this order.

Fig. 11

One issue, four stories, four techniques

Each story comes with its own storyboard, its own set of characters and backgrounds, and its own shooting task. Between the stories sit short sections on how animation works: the zoetrope, the frame, the pace.

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The last pages are empty on purpose

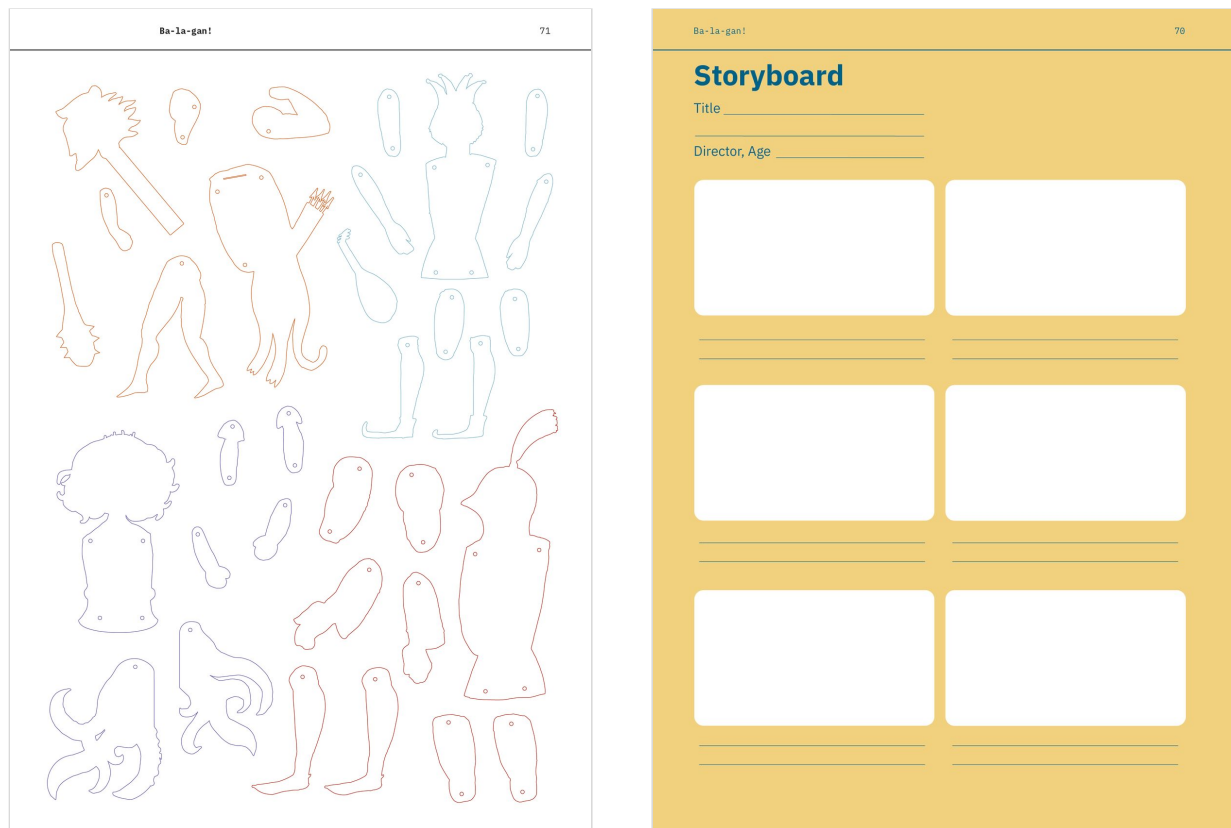


Fig. 12

Outlines to fill in, and a storyboard with nothing in it

Outlines of the characters from all four stories, waiting for the child's own drawing, and a blank storyboard with the frames left empty.

Four stories teach four techniques. The fifth removes the frame. Characters from different stories can meet in a film nobody has written yet, and everything learned about shooting gets used on a subject the child has chosen. This is the point at which a directed exercise turns into work of one's own, which is what the whole method is built towards.

Ba-la-gan, pages 71 and 70



Six frames, six different films, all made by children aged eight to twelve

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.

What we offer

- Printed animation kits with storyboards and character templates ready to use
- Lesson plans for schools, with two scenarios and a timed breakdown of each session
- 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

Read, Cut & Film is not a finished manual. The association works on it continuously, with teachers, artists and animators in several countries, and each new issue of the kit adds material that came out of real sessions with children.

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. Subscribing is the simplest way to keep the method up to date in your own classroom.

Credits and rights

Illustrations	Pages of the Babiling Animation Kit, prologue edition No. 1/1, and frames from films made with the kit.
Artists	Victoria Popova, <i>Babiling and the Dragon's Heads</i> · Olga Levina, <i>The Little Mermaid and the Sea Witch</i> · Tatiana Laponkina, <i>Heracles and Antaeus</i> · Anna Bessonova, <i>Battle with the Giant Squid</i> · Maria Tochkina, storyboards.
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