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THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA

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What We're Watching



Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

Welcome to the latest installment of “What We’re Watching.” Twice a month the education department reaches out to the community with tips and ideas for consuming media with kids by highlighting different themes that connect to two selected programs, one for younger viewers and one for older viewers, each with related activities and resources.

Watching media alongside your kids is a perfect jumping-off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. You can [view our first newsletter about media literacy best practices archived here](#). We also recommend the [National Association for Media Literacy Education's Parents Guide](#)—it's a terrific introduction!

What We're Watching: Stop-Motion Animation

Stop-motion animation, or the art of animating objects by moving them in tiny increments between individual photographic frames, is the oldest style of animation on film. Since *The Lost World* (1926) and the [Ray Harryhausen](#) days, the art form has made great leaps in model building and storytelling quality with films like *Coraline*, *Wallace and Gromit*, *Wendell & Wild*, and [Marcel the Shell with Shoes On](#). In education, we love any opportunity to teach with a piece of stop-motion animation. A department favorite has perennially been Claymation work from the world-famous creators at Ardman Animation who after twenty years will be releasing a sequel to *Chicken Run*, titled *Dawn of the Nugget*. You will find it streaming on Netflix on December 15. We hope to encourage you to get your hands on some modeling clay, action figures, or felt scraps and make a stop-motion film of your own after watching this week's recommendations.

This Week's Recommendations for Younger Viewers

The Kite (2019)

Recommended for Grades 2+

[Available on Youtube](#)

The wind takes a young kite-flier on an unexpected journey with his grandfather in this beautiful stop-motion short by illustrator and animation director Martin Smatana. The story addresses the concept of death and loss through a metaphor that is accessible to children, using the kite, weather, and materials as a way to broach a difficult but important topic. In the film, death is a natural part of life, but it doesn't mean the end of our journey.

Viewing Questions

- Describe where the story takes place and who you meet there?
- What kind of materials were used to make this animated short?
- How could you tell what was going on even though no one was talking?
- When the boy and his grandfather first flew the kite, what did you notice about the old man's arms?
- How do we know that time has passed in the story?
- How are grandpa's arms different before the wind blows him away?
- What happens when the boy flies the kite on his own towards the end?
- How do you think he felt after that experience and why?

Extension Activity: Make a Stop-Motion Movie

You can make your own stop-motion animation with some adult help. [Visit Tinkerlab](#) for easy instructions.

Additional Resources

Visit

[Andrea Animates](#)

[Martin Smatana's website](#)

[How Stop Motion Movies Are Animated at Aardman](#)

Watch

Chicken Run (2000)

Fantastic Mr. Fox (2009)

Kubo and the Seven Strings (2016)

Marcel the Shell with Shoes On (2021)

Peter and the Wolf (2006)

Pingu (1986)



This Week's Recommendations for Older Viewers

The House (2022)

Recommended for Grades 9+

Available on Netflix

This British stop-motion animated anthology was written by Enda Walsh and tells three different stories spanning different times and species set inside the same house. A warning to those that do not like scary movies, the first two stories are extremely dark but fans of Mia Goth will be pleased to hear her as the voice of Mabel in part one. The third story, about a cat landlord named Rosa, ends on a somewhat lighter note as we root for her to steer the house, which has become surrounded by rising water, away from its foundation. Each short deals with themes of madness, wealth, the dangers of owning a house, and the desire for a happier life. The stunning sets and meticulous animation is

worth the price of a month of Netflix.

Viewing Questions

- What is similar about all three stories?
- What big themes does the anthology attempt to explore?
- In each story, what is the relationship of each of the characters to the house like?
- How did you feel at the end of each story and why?
- Which story did you think was the creepiest?
- Which story or character did you like the most and why?
- What comment do you think the writer might be making about wealth or materialism overall?
- Was there a moral to any of the stories? If yes, which one/s and what was it?

Extension Activity: Make a Stop-Motion Movie

Older students can visit [Wistia](#) or [Stop Motion Central](#) for a slightly more complicated tutorial on how to make a stop-motion movie.

Additional Resources

Read

[How Netflix Built *The House*](#)

Watch

[Claymation at its best \(2010\)](#)

Coraline (2009)

Isle of Dogs (2018)

Junk Head (2017)

[Humdrum \(1998\)](#)

King Kong (1933)

[The Magic Portal \(1989\)](#)

Pinocchio (2022)

Wendell & Wild (2022)

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at eduny@paleycenter.org.

Happy viewing,

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Manager of Education

Photos—*The Kite*: Martin Smatana; *The House*: Netflix



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visionary TV professionals

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Program @**PALEY**

Made possible by generous support from:

Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Alliance	The Berlanti Family Foundation
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The Peter Roth Internship Program, named in honor of the legendary television executive, offers a paid internship for 20 talented undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds and underserved communities who are interested in a career in television.

Interns will work for the Paley Center where they will be provided practical experience and valuable understanding of the television and streaming industries. Using the renowned Paley Archive and unmatched collection of

television programming, the Paley Center offers a comprehensive and inclusive course for students to recognize the value of diversity both in front of and behind the camera.

Spread the word to the students in your life!

The deadline to apply is Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

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