

Sundorne Infant School

Spring 2011

This was an amazing, creative and exciting project.

The brief was to work with 14 Year 2 boys to inspire them to be excited by reading and writing, but also to create a buzz around words, reading and creative writing throughout the whole school.

The Artists

Amy Douglas (lead artist): a vibrant storyteller with a passion for traditional stories and riddles. Experienced in creative collaboration with artists from a wide variety of disciplines.

Michelle O'Connor (lead artist) a community artist with an MA in Public Art and Qualified Teacher Status. Experienced in site specific designs, installations, mosaics and murals.

Kat Quatermass (trainee artist): storyteller and creative games designer with a background in Arts Management. She is interested in bringing her experience in the field of live role play (which involves creating participatory games in outdoor settings, often using tolkienesque elements) together with other skills more traditionally used in arts education.

Immersion Day

The theme for the term was Fame and Famous. We wanted to look at interesting ways of becoming famous; these also became aspects of qualities needed for an adventurer. We decided that we would begin the project with a great adventure. The boys were invited into the hall where we had laid out six stalls, each reflecting different types, aspects and ways of being adventurers: Archeology, Media, Exploration, Challenge, Storytelling, Invention



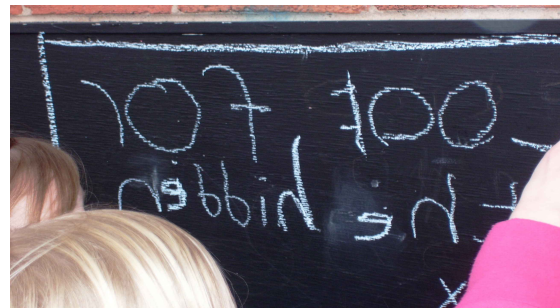
The boys were given a card with a number of challenges on – information to find out on the stalls, challenges to take part in and an object to collect. Challenges were along the lines of attempting to break the world record for the number of spoons you could hang on your face; finding countries on a globe; presenting an item of breaking news on a cardboard cut out television; using magnets to find buried treasure etc.



On each stall amongst all the other explorers, inventors, record breakers, archaeologists etc were references to the famous 'Captain B' who had last been seen 100 years ago attempting to fly a hot air balloon to the moon.

After we had gathered together to discuss the stalls, we revealed to the boys that that very day, a charred letter had appeared at the school – a letter from Captain B. He had found another world above the clouds. It felt to him as though he had only been gone a year, but when he tried to come back he soon discovered 100 years had passed here and so he was stuck – he couldn't land or he would disintegrate into dust, but he didn't have enough power to boost himself back to his new world. He needed help. He set the boys a series of challenges to prove they were clever and practical enough to help him get the power source without destroying it or themselves.

The boys were led on a trail through the school and grounds with all kinds of challenges.



Clues came on charred letters, written on paper aeroplanes, they had to decipher mirror writing, find clues they could only read with magnifying glasses, they had to get to clues written in water on paving slabs that would evaporate if they took too long...



Eventually they pieced together the last clue – literally, piecing together colour coded pieces of paper plates to get an important number, which turned out to be the padlock code on a trunk hidden in forest school. They took the chains from the trunk to find chains and a pulley, activated the fluorescent power source and hoisted it up into a tree where it was high enough to charge Captain B's balloon and one last charred letter of thank you came drifting down to earth. Each of the boys was given a medal from Captain B and also a journal for charting their own adventures.

The boys were crucial in deciding where to go next. They drew around each other to make six human outlines. From the six stalls we made six superheroes – journalist, explorer, archaeologist, record-breaker, inventor and storyteller. They drew and annotated these with all the special skills they would need and how they do things.



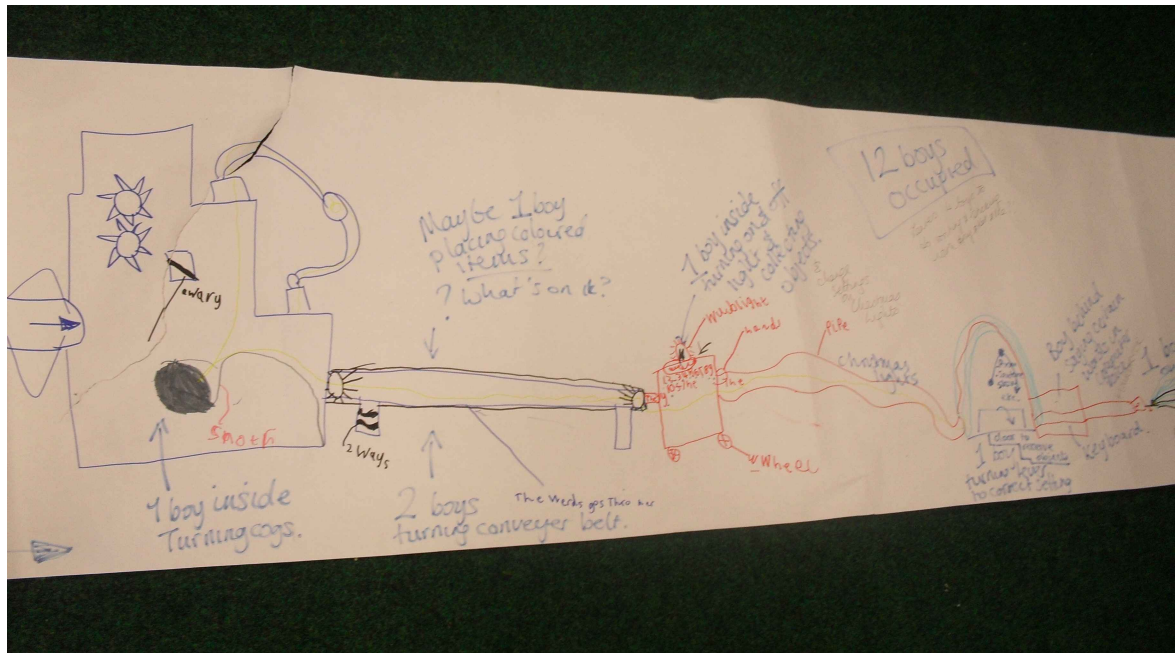
Through discussions and voting, the boys decided that they particularly wanted to be adventurers, explorers and inventors.

We decided to invent a huge and amazing word machine. All the classes in school were asked to donate parts to the machine.

Our boys set up trails and adventures for other classes which gave them sets of words for the machine.



The machine was designed, described and annotated by the boys.



It had three settings: sentence, poem, riddle



In the grand finale we set up the word machine and showed it to the other classes. There were lots of moving cardboard parts, but there was a substantial amount of human power and theatrics too.



First the setting was chosen, then the words were fed into the mouth. The action went along from left to right, with moving parts, conveyor belts, lights, whistles, whirrs, groans etc, until the timer went at the other end and the words were spat out again in the form of a poem, sentence or riddle.



After the great Captain B adventure day, we had some time to reflect. With the objects they had been given, letters and photographs of the day they made and annotated a timeline of their adventure.