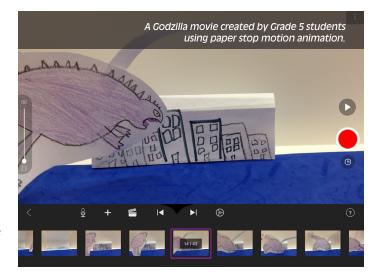# Connected
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Movies and television bring creatures to life. Many of these creatures are able to move and interact through the magic of stop motion animation. In 1898, the founders of Vitagraph Studios, J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith, created the first stop motion animated short entitled *The Humpty Dumpty Circus*. Since then, many films have used the medium. In 1933, *King Kong* roared onto the big screen using stop motion and in 1993 Tim Burton and Henry Selick brought the eclectic character of Jack Skellington to life in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (**stopmotionmagazine.net**). Though Computer Generated Imaging (CGI) is used more often now, stop motion is still a valuable animation technique for students to explore and the Library Learning Commons is a perfect place to introduce the skill.

Whether using paper, clay, Lego or other toys and objects, students can use stop motion to show their learning in many different subject areas. I recently worked with a group of Grade 2 students and their teachers to create stop motion public service announcements (PSAs) for healthy living. The students researched a topic of their choice, made a plan by putting together a storyboard and then created plasticine characters and props for their project. We used a stop motion app that included a green screen feature, allowing students to choose a background image for their PSAs. This meant they didn't have to create the sets themselves. Once the students were ready, we began filming.

During the process, the students used several of the 21st Century Competencies:

Critical Thinking: Students used critical thinking and problem solving to work through issues that arose during the creation of their stop motion projects. It took a few tries before the students figured out how to make the characters look like they were moving smoothly. Some students wanted to have characters fly or show two characters throwing a ball back and forth. They discovered that using green straws, green string and even pencil crayons helped to achieve this effect. Students also figured out that slowing the frame speed down would make their characters look like they were moving naturally.

A few of the students were challenged by the fact that their

A Godzilla movie created by Grade 5 students using paper stop motion animation.

narration was longer than the scene they had created. Their solutions included adding extra titles, slowing the animation down further and adding more stop motion images.

Communication: Throughout the stop motion process, students needed to think about how to communicate their message clearly to the audience through the use of images, titles, sound effects, music and narration.

Collaboration: The students had to work together in order to complete the project. They quickly figured out it was much easier for one student to act as the camera person, while others moved the characters and stayed on the lookout for images that included student hands. These would need to be deleted. They brought different strengths to the table and soon realized that working together was the most efficient way to achieve the best product.

Creativity and Innovation: Stop motion is a great medium for creativity and innovation. It was fascinating to see the different approaches that the students took. One group used a green straw to show a character walking up the stairs. Another group made a mouth with teeth and moved the toothbrush gradually, shot by shot, over the tooth so it looked like it was being brushed. Several Grade 2 students got creative with the end credits by adding images as well as text to show who made the film.