

Who Gave SpongeBob His Square Pants?

Written by Quentin Hancock

Friday, 14 November 2008 12:23 - Last Updated Monday, 06 July 2009 07:48

Aside from the celebrities who lend their voices to big budget productions by Pixar, voiceover artists are some of the least known people in Hollywood. Yet these are the very people who are so instrumental in the creation of animated characters that we all know and love, from SpongeBob to the Family Guy to Remy the Rat in *Ratatouille*.□

In this MediaLit Moment, students get to discover what it takes to create an animated character.

AHA! Somebody had to create this character before he ever came to life! SpongeBob is the result of someone's imagination.

CML Key Question #1: Who created this message?

CML Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed

Grade Level: 3-6

Materials: DVD player, DVD of The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie, or access to Tom Kenny in Central Park at www.nick.com/turbonick/video

Activities: Ask students what they know about the making of cartoons. How are cartoons created? Who decides what the character looks like, what he says, what he wears, where he lives, who his friends are? Who is your favorite cartoon character? Why?

For any of the SpongeBob DVDs, play the special features which discuss Tom Kenny's role in creating the SpongeBob character. Make sure to include live shots of Kenny voicing the character in studio. Or see the link above for Tom Kenny in Central Park.

Ask students questions to assess their comprehension of the feature they've finished watching. Who is Tom Kenny? What does he do? How important is Tom Kenny's voice to the character of SpongeBob? What did Kenny and others do to turn SpongeBob into the character we see on the screen?

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Extended activity: Can you draw a cartoon character? What would the voice of your character sound like?

CML Key Question # 1 for Producers: What am I authoring?

Materials: "Animatics" special features on SpongeBob DVDs. The animatics features re-play voice tracks from the DVD while displaying just the storyboards for the corresponding scenes. Or access the Inside Nicktoons Studio with SpongeBob SquarePants at www.nick.com/turbonick/video You'll find a link there to a video of an artist drawing the characters.

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