



Interview with Miriam Schembri about the 2008 entry Five Little Ducks

I teach a preschool class of four year old children and am involved in eTwinning projects with other teachers from all over Europe. Part of this project was to encourage



children to learn number rhymes. Because they loved the rhyme '5 little ducks' so much, I decided to do a stop-motion animation of this rhyme. As a result this rhyme was very effective in aiding their learning process of counting numbers backwards because the children could actually see the numbers and count the ducks. The children were also involved in the creation of the stop motion project and this triggered their imagination and creativity as well as capturing their attention and interest. It was a class project which involved twenty children working in groups and it took one week to complete.

For the preparation stage of this stop motion project the children were required to draw the various stages of the storyboard which were then glued to form a sequence. We then modelled 5 little ducks and a mother duck out of plasticine.



One particular parent was a patisserie and had expertise in modelling so I invited him to come to our classroom to spend some time with the children. With his expertise, the job was made to look easy and the children were then keen to try modelling themselves. We helped the children model the ducks and then proceeded to work on the background and scenery for the project. To create a background, we sourced a large book from our library which we opened and popped up and to create a raised platform we used some wooden blocks which we covered with drawings of a hill. The process of the shooting was very simply taking shots of each movement of the animation film and I performed a lot of the editing at home.

The animation software and webcam we used was provided by our eLearning Department, "Monkey Jam" was the freeware software used and the webcam cost

twenty euros. One of the tasks performed in the production of this project involved a child clicking the mouse to take the shots while the other children moved



the models. They all took turns to move the mouse and click. The children learnt how to wait for the movements and then take a shot and over time they grew familiar with the software and when to click and move the mouse. The video clip of this project can be accessed on our project's website and on YouTube and can also be accessed at home with the parents' supervision. It is used regularly in our preschool classes as part of our pre-maths education and has become a children's favourite.

For my next project, I definitely would use a better webcam to improve on the image quality and my main challenge in this project was the music copyright. The

recording company didn't reply to my e-mails and after seeking advice from a songwriter, I proceeded with the project as the copyright belonged to the author of the nursery rhyme who is unknown. For future projects I might invite more parents to help me with the supervision of the groups or I may do a joint project with a colleague. I have worked on other stop-motion animation with my class in school and some examples of these are writing numbers, mixing of colours and thematic video clips. Recently we entered a local children's Carnival competition for animation and we won second prize.

My advice for anyone considering entering a Digital media project to the MEDEA awards 2009 would be to get the students involved in stop-motion animation. Let them be creative and have a good time like we did. They will associate learning with "fun". There is no age barrier to using stop-motion and it will be a school day that the children will always remember!