mystery science

Lesson: “How do they make silly sounds in cartoons?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

EXPLORATION VIDEO 1

Hi, it's Doug! Have you ever accidentally discovered something that makes a funny sound? Like, here's one I found the other day. Maybe you've done this before, or sometimes you might just find something that sounds interesting, like this. Making a funny or interesting sound, it might make you smile. But do you know what? There are some adults whose job it is to discover ways to make new and interesting sounds. Like, have you ever thought about when you watch a show or you see a movie? If it's a cartoon, not only did everything you see in that cartoon have to be created by an artist, but people also have to create everything you hear in cartoons, like any of the characters in your favorite movie. They're created, which means their voices have to be created too. The words are read by actors. If you've seen Finding Dory, you'll remember there's one scene where Dory talks about having a tag on her fin. But we can go behind the scenes, and we can see who's the person creating Dory's voice. Watch.

[Video clip from *Finding Dory*]

-What tag? There's a—[GASP] there's a tag on my fin.

-How could you forget you have a tag on your fin?

-Oh, no. Okay. Sorry, I suffer from short term memory loss.

-You don't remember what we were talking about?

-Hmm-mm. Nope. Not a clue. What were we are talking about?

It's fun to see someone who does a voice of the cartoon characters that you know. But now, what about all the other sounds that are needed for a movie? Not just the characters, but when things are happening. Like in Star Wars, when spaceships are flying around and shooting lasers. Listen to all those sounds, the laser sounds. They sound like pew pew pew. Listen again. And you might wonder, how do they make those sounds? Well, these sorts of sounds, the ones that aren't the voices of characters? We call those sound effects. Watch how a sound effect artist creates the laser sound using—guess what? A metal Slinky! Ready? Listen. Whoa, let's see that up close. So that's how it's done. Now, what if you had a cartoon about frogs, and you needed the sound of frogs croaking to go along with a cartoon? How would you make those? Well, you don't need the sound of real frogs in order to make a sound for this. Watch what this sound effects artist does. So you see, the sound effect artist was just rubbing one string across another string that was really tight in order to create the sound of frogs. Now, what if you needed wind for a cartoon that shows a windy day? How do they do that? Again, you don't need the real sound of wind. Watch and listen now. And if this were a cartoon about a storm, how would they make the sound of thunder? Check this out. Do you see that? He's just vibrating a big metal sheet and banging against it. You might notice that for a lot of these sounds, sound effect artists find it helpful to do a back and forth movement of one thing rubbing or hitting against another. And we call something going back and forth a vibration. Different kinds of vibrations make different sounds. Like when the door spring goes back and forth or vibrates, it makes a silly sound. And vibrating a tight string back and forth, we saw, makes the sound of a frog. And vibrating a big sheet of metal back and forth makes a deep rumble, like thunder. Now, say that your job was to come up with sound effects for a cartoon or a movie. Let's say, for example, that you had to come up with the sound effects for the rain during a storm. I have a question for you. I sent it to your teacher so that you can read it together.

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION VIDEO

In today's activity, you're going to make all the sounds of a cartoon rainstorm just like a sound effects artist would do. First though, let's listen to the sounds of a real rainstorm. So go ahead and close your eyes now and listen closely to the sound of the rain that I'm about to play. Are your eyes closed? Okay, I'll start playing the sound. Now, a storm starts with the wind. And then a light rain begins to fall. You hear the sound of small drops of water. And then raindrops, more and more of them begin to fall, making a sound that gets louder and louder. Lightning flashes. Thunder rumbles. Then the storm starts to pass over you. Then the thunder stops. Now fewer drops fall. The sound of the rain gets softer and softer then the rain stops. It's quiet. The storm is over. Now that you've listened to a real storm, are you ready to be a sound effects artist? Go ahead and open your eyes. Now, since a rainstorm is made of many small drops of water, it helps if you have a group of people all making sounds that add up to a storm. But even if you're working alone, you can make a small storm. I'll walk you through it, step by step.

ACTIVITY STEP 1

Before we begin, let's stand up and practice making the sounds of rain. Afterward, you'll match it to the video. Okay, so stand up and follow along with the screen. Rub your hands together like this. This will be the sound of the wind through the trees right before it starts to rain. Now, slowly tap two fingers against your hand. This will be the first few raindrops slowly falling. Third, clap a little faster than you tapped. This will be the sound of the rain falling harder. Fourth, clap and stomp your feet like this. This will be the sound of the rain pouring down. All right, good job! If you're done practicing, press the arrow on the right. Otherwise, this video will repeat so that you can practice again.

ACTIVITY STEP 2

Now, we'll show you a storm, and you'll be the sound effects artist. This part of the screen will show where the storm is happening. And this part will remind you what to do. Are you ready? Make sure you're standing up. Okay. The wind is coming in. The wind is blowing, make the sound of wind. Oh, now, we've got a few raindrops starting to fall from the sky. Oh, here comes more rain. It's getting heavier. Oh, now the rain is really heavy. Now the rain is pouring! Oh, the storm is at its worst. Lightning strikes! The lightning is over. Now, the rain is starting to get a little less heavy. Back to just a few drops. Oh, the rain is over and we're back to just wind now.

ACTIVITY STEP 3

What are some other ways you can make it sound like a storm? Come up with some ideas. And if you want to give them a try, just go back to the last slide and replay the video. Otherwise, go to the next slide when you're done for a new challenge.

ACTIVITY STEP 4

Okay, your next challenge is to make sound effects for this bouncing ball. Now, it's pretty boring without the sound. I think this bouncing ball needs a silly sound when it bounces. Maybe something more like this—watch. Boing, boing, boing. All right, go to the next step. Let me show you something.

ACTIVITY STEP 5

Here at Mystery Science, we figured out how to make a nice silly boing sound using a ruler. You hold the ruler on a table. And with your other hand, you push the end down and let it go. Here, listen to what it sounds like. [BOING] All right, go to the next step now so that you can try it out.

ACTIVITY STEP 6

Get a ruler and go to a table. You have one minute to find your favorite "boing" sound for the bouncing ball. To get a great sound you have to experiment, you might want to change how much of the ruler is sticking off the end of the table. Or change where you're holding the ruler on the table. Okay. Go get a ruler and experiment for one minute.

ACTIVITY STEP 7

Now try to match your ruler-sound to the cartoon. Play it every time the ball hits the ground. When you've tried it a couple of times, click the arrow to go to the next slide. Okay, are you ready? Go!

ACTIVITY STEP 8

Did you make the sound stop completely when the ball stopped bouncing? I'm talking about right at the end, right here. Try it again. Make the sound stop completely when you see the stop sign.

ACTIVITY STEP 9

Discuss these questions.