



Li'l Elvis Jones & The Truck Stoppers

Education Resources



11 Teaching Resources

based on the

Li'l Elvis Jones & The Truck Stoppers TV Series

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Summary of *Li'l Elvis Jones* Teaching Resources

1. Anything Goes (P. 7)

Resource Description

Using the experiences of the characters in Li'l Elvis as a springboard for analysing their own experiences and sense of self, students discuss and reflect on aspects of their own identity.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

Themes: [relationships](#), [self](#)

2. From TV To Book: Interpreting the Screen Story (P. 15)

Resource Description

Students view a tv program and read the tie-in book then compare and differentiate the techniques used to tell the story in each medium.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

3. God's Gift To Television (P. 19)

Resource Description

These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on media.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Ethical Understanding](#) Themes: [justice](#), [values](#)

4. Great Expectations (P. 25)

Resource Description

These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on families.

5. I Want, Therefore I'll Have (P. 31)

Resource Description

These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on trust, responsibilities or needs and wants.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#)

6. I Will Survive (P. 37)

Resource Description

While these activities may be carried out individually, they would be more effective as part of an extended unit of work on the topic of 'Survival'.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
Themes: [relationships](#), [self](#)

7. Introduction to Animation (P. 43)

Resource Description

These learning activities introduce aspects of the animation process and provide students with opportunities to investigate and extend their knowledge of animation.

Curriculum Study Areas: [Drama \(The Arts\)](#), [English](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#), [Music \(The Arts\)](#), [Visual Arts \(The Arts\)](#)

8. Love, Who Needs It? (P. 47)

Resource Description

These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on relationships.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [family](#), [relationships](#), [self](#)

9. Making A Flip Book (P. 53)

Resource Description

In this lesson students experiment with using different animation techniques and compare the production processes and effectiveness of these techniques.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [Drama \(The Arts\)](#), [English](#), [Media Arts \(The Arts\)](#), [Music \(The Arts\)](#), [Visual Arts \(The Arts\)](#)

10. My Little Town (P. 59)

Resource Description

These activities draw upon students' observations of the physical environment portrayed in the series and also encourage them to consider issues related to their own local environment.

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#), [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

11. The Hero Within (P. 67)

Resource Description

This set of activities explores the concept of the hero. Who are heroes? Can anyone be a hero? What about the unsung heroes?

Year Level: [Middle Years \(5-9\)](#) Curriculum Study Areas: [English](#) Themes: [heroes](#), [relationships](#), [self](#)



Anything Goes

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Growth and Development; Self and Relationships; Narrative Structure
Description:	Using the experiences of the characters in Li'l Elvis as a springboard for analysing their own experiences and sense of self, students discuss and reflect on aspects of their own identity.
Resources:	You Can't Buy The Playground ep 6 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> . Magazine photographs of people from a range of backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles, etc. People bingo cards (described below) Compliment cards - blank index cards (described below)

Lesson plan:

Exploring our identity

No such thing as normal

As a class

View the opening scene of the episode **You Can't Buy the Playground**. Here Spike accuses Elvis of not being able to do things that 'normal' kids can do — saying the only thing he can do is sing.

Pause the episode at this point and ask the children to attempt to draw and/or describe their image of a 'normal' person. Give them only a few minutes before stopping to ask how they are feeling about the task.

Ask the students: who is finding this difficult? Why? What have you drawn so far? Do you have those features? Is there any such thing as 'normal'? What do you think Spike means by 'normal'? Why does he say this to Li'l Elvis? Under what kind of pressure does that put Li'l Elvis?

Allow time for students to discuss their views. It is important that sensitive and inclusive language is modelled to them during this discussion.

These pictures may be re-visited at the end of the sequence of activities as a basis for reflection on how the students' ideas have changed.

Just like me

As a class

View the whole episode **You Can't Buy the Playground**. At the beginning, Elvis is made to feel different from the other children because he cannot play soccer as well as they can. Building on the initial discussion, this activity challenges students' perception of 'difference' and encourages them to see ways in which we all share common attributes.

Individually

Provide students with photographs (from magazines, etc.) of people who may be different to them in some way — for example, a young, female student from an Anglo background may be given a photograph of an indigenous male adult to examine. The aim of the exercise is for the student to consider the similarities between themselves and the person in the photograph.

Ask students: how are you like the person in the photo?

For example:

This man has a big smile — just like me

In pairs

Students work in pairs to discuss the similarities they have found and to suggest ideas to each other. Responses are shared with the whole class.

This activity may be extended by asking students to identify aspects of the LI'L ELVIS characters that remind them of themselves. How is Janet just like you? How is Li'l Elvis just like you? How is Spike just like you?

Through the eyes of others

These activities continue to develop the concept of identity, but where the previous activities involve students in thinking about themselves, the focus now shifts to the ways they see others and others see them. This episode emphasises the fact that we all have special talents or abilities — yet we may not recognise them or value them in ourselves. For example, while Elvis is praised for his abilities as a singer, he only focuses on what he can't do. (This theme is also taken up in LI'L ELVIS ep 9 **Bearing All** where Roy Reno and Li'l Elvis discover they are regarded as heroes by each other.)

As a class

Character profiles: who are they and how do we know?

Discuss with students how we get to know each character as we watch the series. Well constructed characters soon begin to seem like real people with real personalities, strengths and weaknesses. Of course, all of these animated characters have been created by the people who developed the story, and they use many ways to do this. Discuss and list the ways in which the audience gets to know characters in a series such as Li'l Elvis. Key points include:

- appearance — what they look like and what they are wearing
- facial expressions
- actions
- what they say and how they say it
- other features such as sound effects and music.

Make a list of the main characters in the LI'L ELVIS series such as Li'l Elvis, Lionel, Janet, Grace, Len, WC Moore, Duncan and Spike, and briefly note the key features of each character's identity. Li'l Elvis is an 'expert' singer and this is a key feature of his personal identity, Lionel is an expert soccer player and so on.

In pairs

With students working in pairs, allocate a character from the series to each and ask them to create a more detailed character profile. Re-watch the episode with each pair concentrating on their own character and finding out as much as they can about this character. Following this, ask them to draw up a character profile such as the following:

Character's name:	What we can see and hear:	The impression this gives us:
Physical attributes:	red hair hair quiff clumsy	stubborn, naughty, likeable unusual, like Elvis, quirky can't catch or kick the ball
Personal qualities:		
Relationship to other characters:		
Skills:		

As a class

Compare these profiles and discuss the techniques used to communicate information about each character. Did everyone see the same things? Why might there be different interpretations of a character?

Students may then create a similar profile of a friend using a similar process.

What you see in me

These activities continue to develop the concept of identity, but the focus now shifts to encouraging students to identify the talents they perceive in their classmates, and what their classmates see in them. These activities are excellent for team building and exploring the concept of identity and belonging.

People bingo

Prepare a simple sheet with 10–15 boxes on it. In each box, write a simple instruction beginning with the phrase 'Find someone who...' and focus on fun/positive attributes. This list of instructions will be influenced by your knowledge of the students. For example:

- Find someone who can name all the AFL football teams
- Find someone who can do 10 push ups
- Find someone who has lived overseas
- Find someone who can speak another language
- Find someone who can play a musical instrument
- Find someone who can look after a baby brother or sister
- Find someone who can recite a poem

Students move around the room with their bingo sheets, finding a match for each square. Whenever they find 'someone who...' that person must sign their name in the relevant box. At the end of the session, share the results and even ask for some demonstrations where appropriate!

Compliment cards

Give each student a set of cards — one to represent each student in the class. Their task is to write an anonymous compliment on each card — telling their classmates what they think they are good at, what they like about them and so on. For example:

Kirsten: I like the way Kirsten always helps other kids with their spelling

Mario: Mario is a really good illustrator

Each student then collects their cards in an envelope — students end up with a set of compliments they can read through anytime they are feeling low!

Once students have read through their compliment cards, ask them: ‘was there anything that surprised you? Why? How did reading the cards make you feel? How did writing the cards make you feel?’

There are several points that may be reinforced here, for example:

We tend to make initial judgements of others based on their physical appearance.

We don’t always recognise or value the talents or qualities in ourselves.

Sometimes others see us very differently from the way we see ourselves.

Acknowledging the strengths in others is a good way to build trust, friendship and respect.

To finish, make a list of encouraging phrases that can be used in the classroom and playground to make others feel good about themselves. For example, Lionel tells Elvis that his soccer skills were ‘much better than last time’. Ask students: what other things can we say to encourage each other?

Building and shaping identities

What makes us feel the way we feel?

As a class

One of the key aspects of the episode is Elvis’s dissatisfaction with himself — despite being a talented musician we see him losing his confidence. Ask students to think back to the story and to what triggers these feelings in Li’l Elvis. How do we know he is losing confidence? What happens once Elvis does lose confidence in himself?

Ask students to brainstorm the aspects of Li’l Elvis’s identity that should satisfy him. Apart from his musical abilities, what things could Elvis be satisfied with? (E.g. his friendships, his relationship with his parents, etc.)

Individually

Ask the students to write two, short reflective pieces. One should be about a time when they have felt really confident or good about themselves, the other, about a time when they have felt uncertain or like a failure. This level of disclosure requires a trusting and supportive environment and one of the best ways to make students feel safe in this kind of activity is for you to share two events from your own experience. Students should also be given the choice as to whether they share their personal experiences or keep it to themselves. The answers may be more generic in nature, for example, ‘We feel good about ourselves when someone praises us’.

In pairs

Once students have had an opportunity to reflect on this individually, if appropriate, ask them to meet in pairs and read their accounts to each other. Now, construct a class chart summarising some common issues arising from their reflections.

We feel good about ourselves when...

We lose confidence when ...

Images and expectations

As a class

Elvis sees Lionel and other kids being able to play soccer well and wants to be like them. Ask students: why do you think Li'l Elvis wanted to be good at soccer? What made him think that it was important for him to achieve in sport? Discuss the role of peer pressure on our expectations of ourselves.

Discuss the role the media plays in presenting images of 'successful young people'. To develop this further, video tape and view some television advertisements or excerpts from TV programs depicting children. Ask students: what images are portrayed? What do these advertisements or television programs promote as being a 'successful' young person?

Make links back to the first activity No such thing as normal and ask students: What do television images tell us about a 'normal' child?

The children in *Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers* have been deliberately constructed to represent gender and cultural diversity. Ask students:

- How are young people portrayed in the series?
- How have the creators of the cartoon tried to represent different kinds of young people? Look at how they look, behave, speak and relate to each other.
- Can you find examples of other television programs or advertisements that represent a diversity of young people?

OK to lie?

The issue of personal identity and image is also explored in terms of the roles others may play in protecting us from the truth about ourselves. When Janet and Lionel find out that Li'l Elvis has been made to look good by the remote soccer ball, they are confused about what to do. On one hand, they think Li'l Elvis should know the truth but, on the other hand, they can see how happy he is and don't want to hurt him. The following activity helps students explore this more complex theme through role-play.

In threes

Divide the class into groups of three. Each student in the group is given a letter A, B or C. Person A becomes one voice in Janet/Lionel's conscience — arguing to tell Li'l Elvis the truth, C becomes the opposing voice, arguing against telling him. Person B becomes the final decision maker and must listen to both sides of the argument. A and C sit either side of B and take it in turns to make a point on their side of the argument. After a set time, stop the class and ask the 'Bs' to make a decision. Then, ask each B to explain their reasons for making this choice.

As a class

Discuss: 'Is it ever OK to lie? Have you ever lied to protect someone or yourself? How did you feel? What would you have done if you were Janet or Lionel?'

'Three Times One'

The final song in the episode, acknowledges the power of friendship and, in particular, the benefits of being part of a team.

Lyrics & Music: Tony Naylor & Russell McKenna

Aah, three times one most times makes three,
But not with us, you can take it from me!
When there's three of us it's worth one more
So one and one and one makes four
Get your feet to the beat, Didgibilli's taken over the floor.
Take a crazy kid with a hot guitar
And way cool licks in every bar
Add a ridgy didge with a heavy blow
So eight to the bar and go, man go!
Take a rhythm and beat as tough as can be
'Cos these drums used to carry TNT
When we start to play it's dynamite
That Didgibilli's gonna rock ya tonight!
Three times one most times makes three
But not with us, you can take it from me!
When there's three of us it's worth one more
So one and one and one makes four
Get your feet to the beat, Didgibilli's taken over the floor.
Aah, three times one most times makes three
But not with us, you can take it from me!
When there's three of us it's worth one more
So one and one and one makes four
Get your feet to the beat, Didgibilli's taken over the floor.

As a class

Share the lyrics of the song with students and ask them to comment on why the song might have been chosen to close the episode. What is the main message in the song? Do you agree with it? Why or why not? This culmination of the episode acknowledges that the different talents and skills we bring to a group is what makes the group 'work'. There are many activities that can be carried out with students to emphasise the enjoyment and value of team work. For suggestions, see:

Wilson, J. and Edgeberg, P. (1990), *Co operative challenges and student investigations*, Nelson, Vic.

Dalton, J. (1987), *Adventures in Thinking*, Nelson, Melbourne, Vic.

Related lesson ideas:

I Want, Therefore I'll Have, middle primary

From TV to Book: Interpreting the screen story

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 4 to Year 8
Curriculum Study Areas:	English
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure; Film Language
Description:	Students view a tv program and read the tie-in book then compare and differentiate the techniques used to tell the story in each medium.
Resources:	Monkey Sea, Monkey Do ep 8 vol 2 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Book: Monkey Sea, Monkey Do and It's A Dog's Life, retold by Steve Marker, illustrated by Peter Viska, (1998) Angus&Robertson, Australia. Available from good bookshops throughout Australia.

Lesson plan:

1. View the TV version

Screen the scene: Outside shop

Begins with: Li'l Elvis, Lionel and Janet looking in shop window

Ends as: Lionel says, 'Li'l Elvis, I don't trust nothing that doesn't have an on-off switch'.

Dur: 30"

Screen the scene several times for students and discuss the characters, the story so far and any other information they observe.

2. Students write responses

Students list the key elements from the scene which give them information about what is happening - for example the location, costumes, body language, dialogue, and sound effects.

They can record what they have found out about each character (puppy included) and the location and how they know it. For example they may observe that Li'l Elvis has red hair, Janet wears glasses etc.

3. Explore the transfer from TV to print medium

Discuss with students how a writer might re-write this scene for a book. Students need to consider what information they can, and must include, and which character's perspective they can take.

4. Students work individually

Students individually write a draft of the scene.

5. Class discussion about process

Discuss the process students went through in translating the story to book form. Discuss how difficult or how simple they found the task.

6. Read the book version of the scene

Read aloud the scene as it is written in pages 1-2 of the tie-in book or ask students to read it themselves.

The puppy in the window of the Dove sisters' general store really believed that now, at last, his loneliness might end. He had remained in the window for what seemed like centuries. The Dove sisters were kind to him but nothing could hide the fact from the puppy that he had neither owner nor name. And now, three children were staring at him. One was a girl with mauve-tinted glasses, another a boy with a red bandanna across his forehead, and the third an odd looking child with thick orange hair but kindly eyes. It was this third child who, in the puppy's opinion was the person most likely to rescue him. He opened his eyes and tried to look as appealing as he could. 'He's so cute, isn't he?' sighed Li'l Elvis Jones to his friends Janet and Lionel. Lionel shook his head. 'Li'l Elvis, I don't trust anything that doesn't have an on-off switch.'

7. Class discussion

Discuss with your students how this scene has been written.

- From whose perspective are we seeing this action?
- What information has been included and how has it been presented? For example - location, costume, the way in which the puppy's feelings are explicitly described.
- Is the same information conveyed in the animated version?
- How is it done?
- What are the key differences between the print and the TV versions?
- What does this mean for someone who's been given the job to write a tie-in book?

8. Rewrite another TV scene as a print narrative

View some more of the episode Monkey Sea, Monkey Do and ask students to select a very short scene to re-write as a narrative.

9. Compare student work

Students compare their versions and discuss the differences and similarities in the way they interpreted and presented the scene.

10. Compare student's responses with the tie-in book

Students can then find the same scene in the tie-in book and compare. Discuss similarities and differences in the various approaches.

11. Compare the TV tie-in book with the TV story

Students view the whole episode and read the whole short story then compare the two.

- What are the strengths and weakness of the book?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the animated version?
- Which version do you prefer?
- Why?

Further lesson plans

Opening Scenes years 3-8

Translating comedy from screen to text, years 4-8



God's Gift to Television

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure; Ethics, Values, Justice; Stereotypes; Humour and Satire
Description:	These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on media.
Resources:	I Hate My Own Birthday ep 5 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i>

Lesson plan:

View a caricature

View the whole episode **I Hate My Own Birthday** and ask students to focus on the character of Dick Collingwood while they are watching. After viewing the episode, discuss this character with students, explaining that Dick Collingwood is a caricature of a media personality.

Discuss with students the meaning of the word caricature. Give examples of illustrations such as political cartoons, posters. What has this character been constructed to represent?

As a class, list all of Dick Collingwood's characteristics observed so far. Discuss how students arrived at these impressions.

When creating a caricature, script writers and animators have to consider how they will construct a humorous image. In the case of Dick Collingwood, much effort has been put into making him a large and overbearing character through the use of a number of humorous devices.

Re-view the first scenes (without sound) with Dick Collingwood in Li'l Elvis's bedroom. The students can take notes of the symbols and humorous devices used to create the character. Look at:

- his appearance and how aspects of this may have been exaggerated
- his facial expressions
- his actions
- his body language and the way he relates to other characters

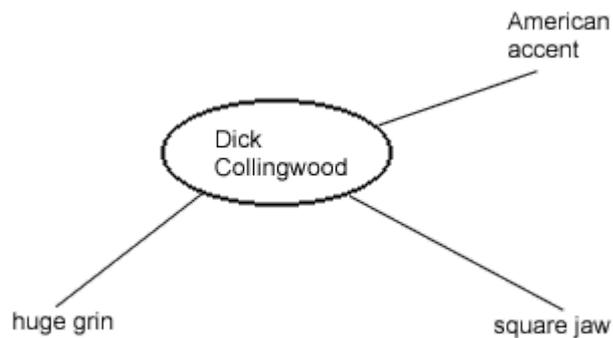
- the camera techniques used
- the props, such as the huge caravan, the bath etc.

Now re-view this scene again with the sound added and look at how the dialogue, music and sound effects add to the information collected about Dick Collingwood's character. The cell below could also be examined for further detail.



Dick Collingwood interviews Li'l Elvis

Collate this information on an 'ideas web' as begun here:



What do all these elements tell us about this character? Ask students to write a short paragraph describing Dick Collingwood to someone who knows nothing about him.

Identifying caricatures

In pairs, students assemble a list of caricatures they have seen either in animation, television, film, video or on CD-ROM material. Results can be shared with the whole class.

As a class, examine the combined lists of caricatures to discover if there are any common features. For example, are they mainly male? Do they speak with American accents? Do they have a huge grin?

Ask students to identify the purpose of the caricature, that is, what are the creators of the caricature attempting to do? Why do we laugh at caricatures?

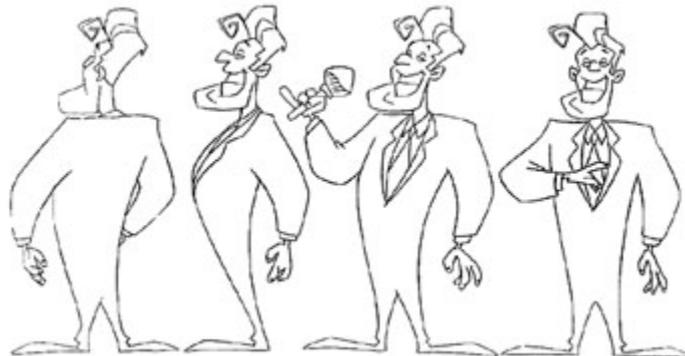
Role-play a caricature

In pairs or groups of three, students brainstorm the features of a caricature of their choice. This caricature may be a media personality like Dick Collingwood or a celebrity or someone the students know well. They then role-play this caricature to the whole class to see if others can guess whom they are portraying.

Creating a caricature

Students may wish to create a caricature of themselves. Firstly they can complete an 'ideas web' and list some of the humorous, or 'quirky' things they do. They can then draw themselves as a caricature using some of the common symbols listed in the earlier activities where appropriate.

Students create a caricature of a media personality. To do this firstly look at some examples of the character design for Dick Collingwood.



Once students have designed their character they can write a short script of no more than ten lines telling a story about this character in a particular context. For example the caricature may be 'The Coolest Grandma' who rides her motorcycle around Australia. Students create a story board for the story.

As an extension of this activity, students could animate the character by creating a flip book or using multimedia software (e.g. Kahootz).

The cool quip

A caricature is enhanced by the language and gestures they use. Dick Collingwood makes a habit of speaking in quips. For example, when he arrives in Little Memphis and explains the reason for his

visit, he says: 'I'm here for the Truth'. God's gift to television wants to interview you.' Later, when he is hypnotising Grace and Len he remarks: 'When I say the word "ratings"— awake'

Re-view the episode and locate other quips which Dick Collingwood or other characters use as comedy devices, that is to add humour to the episode. Add these to a table such as this.

Name of character	Quip
e.g. WC Moore to Li'L Elvis	My friend, my meal ticket

In a whole class discussion, students can share the quips they have noted. Ask students to reflect on what they were doing when they viewed the episode again with a set task in mind: When you viewed this episode for the second time, what were you conscious of? What strategies did you use to view the video at the same time as locating the characters' quips?

Students can then list notable quips from comedy programs with which they are familiar. For example, they could list the things that Bart Simpson is famous for saying, such as: 'Ay Carumba!!' and 'Cool dude'.

The power of media

Twisted tales

The program 48 Minutes is a parody of current affairs programs. Discuss the concept of a parody with the students, emphasising that a parody sets out to imitate and ridicule the original work. (Roald Dahl, 1982, *Revolting Rhymes*, J. Cape, London, 1982 could be read at this point as an illustration of the concept.) Students then brainstorm other parodies with which they are familiar.

List current affairs programs with which students are familiar. Ask students to view one or two for homework. Video tape and view some examples as a class. Discuss the purposes of these programs with students. What features are similar across the shows? List the common features of the genre.

Look carefully at the presenters. Do they have any common features? List these features and compare them with the features listed for Dick Collingwood.

View the episode **I Hate My Own Birthday** for a second time, taking particular note of the ways that current affairs programs are parodied. Students share their observations with the whole class.

Following this, students work in groups of three or four to parody other television programs such as news broadcasts, family dramas, game shows and so on. These parodies could be presented to the whole class. After these presentations, students discuss and evaluate the process they undertook to design the parody and imitate the original.

We're going to be on television

Grace, Len and WC Moore are excited about the prospect of appearing on 48 Minutes and impressed that Dick Collingwood is in town. Students discuss the ways these characters behave in front of television cameras, especially noting their reactions to Dick Collingwood.

Ask students to devise a theory for why some people may become awe inspired by television and television personalities and why some people may be highly motivated by the prospect of appearing on television. Students work with a partner to devise their theory. These theories are shared with the whole class and grouped according to their similarities.

Exploring media ethics

When the episode of '48 Minutes' goes to air on television, WC Moore represents Li'l Elvis as a victim of psychotic foster parents. In doing so, he is being dishonest about Grace and Len and ultimately misrepresents them.

As a class, students share anything they have read or viewed in the media which they have subsequently discovered to be untrue. They discuss the role of the media in representing and misrepresenting people.

Read ***The True story of the Three Little Pigs as told by A. Wolf*** by John Scieszka, 1989, Viking Kestral, New York. In this story the Wolf argues that he has been framed and misrepresented. Students reconstruct a famous fairy tale or story in the same style.

Media ethics

Video tape and view an episode of Media Watch on the ABC as a reference point for a class discussion on media ethics. Discuss why there may be a need for a program such as this, and whether or not the students believe it to be effective. Students could become media 'watchdogs' for one week and share any instances of what they perceive as unethical journalism.

Misrepresenting the media?

Dick Collingwood is an unpleasant caricature of a media personality. He represents someone who should not be trusted and as he is only concerned about his own image. Ask students to consider how caricatures may misrepresent people in the media. Look for current examples of someone in the media such as a current affairs announcer, a newsreader, an actor or a famous politician who may be being misrepresented and students can take on their role. Acting as this person, students can write a letter of complaint to the television station outlining the way they have been misrepresented and arguing why this is an unfair or inaccurate representation.

Extension

Behind the laughter

Humour is a powerful device to make us laugh at ourselves and the world around us. It is often said, however, that behind the laughter there is a strong opinion or belief. Ask students: What is the message behind the humour in **I Hate My Own Birthday**. What might the audience learn from this?

Review the daily newspapers and locate and collect cartoons that depict caricatures of politicians, celebrities and ordinary people.

You may wish to invite a newspaper cartoonist to the school to talk to the students about their craft and the decisions behind the images they create.

Great Expectations

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Families; Film Language
Description:	These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on families.
Resources:	D.I.V.O.R.C.E. ep 11 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i>

Lesson plan:

Setting the scene

Have your say

In six groups

This activity can be done prior to or following viewing of **D.I.V.O.R.C.E.**

Several key words are used throughout this episode to depict the dilemmas facing the children and their parents. These include divorce, independence, control, freedom, responsibility, and expectation.

Divide the class into six groups. Each group receives a large sheet of paper with one of these words written in the middle. Within a set time limit, students explore the meaning of the word and some of the contexts in which it may be used. They may write other words, phrases or draw pictures around these words to demonstrate their understanding.

Sheets of paper are passed from group to group — students adding new ideas each time. These 'graffiti sheets' can then be displayed and added to throughout the sequence of activities.

A focus on families

Family snapshots

As a class

Look at the families in **LI'L ELVIS**. In this episode, many different kinds of families are

portrayed. Ask students to recount the different families represented in the episode and list them, describing each in a few words. For example, Janet and her mother (a sole parent) are rarely together; Suzie Q's parents are 'hippies'; Lionel lives with his mother and grandfather, and so on.



Spike and his family



Li'l Elvis and his family



Janet and her family



Lionel and his family

The myth of the 'perfect family'

As a class or individually

Students can investigate the portrayal of families on television in general — in programs and advertisements. How are they portrayed? Ask students to complete the following simple table:

Advertisement/TV program	Who is in the family?
My impressions of this family are.. because....	

Discuss these points with students: how do advertisers use the myth of the 'perfect family' to sell their products? What similar characteristics do these families have? Are the impressions given similar or different? Introduce or revise the term 'stereotype'. Students work in groups to design and present their own advertisement using the features associated with the 'stereotypical family'.

Compare this list with the information collected about the *LIL' ELVIS* families in the previous activity. Discuss the differences.

My family

As a class

Looking at the lists of TV families and *LIL' ELVIS* families, ask students which family is most/least like their own?

Give students four-six blank, postcard sized cards. Their task is to represent their own family in six 'snapshots'. This may include activities the family does together, celebrations, portraits of family members, etc. Students give each 'snapshot' a title or a caption.

Students meet in groups and share their snapshots — looking for similarities and differences.

Ask them to focus on the way they have positioned themselves in the pictures: what are the roles you play in your family?

Display the snapshots and encourage students to bring real photographs in to the classroom to add to the display.

Ask students to make some generalisations about families: What do our photos and snapshots tell us about families? What is a family?

Great expectations

As a class

WC Moore claims that the children in Little Memphis are weighed down by impossible expectations by their parents. Ask students to recall what each child in the episode was expected to do, for example, Lionel's homework and Janet's forced independence. How do the viewers find out these things about each of the children? What film techniques are used? What symbols are used? Lionel for example, is laden down with an impossibly high pile of books and his computer. Discuss the exaggerated way all this family information is presented.

Why did the writers and animators do it this way?

Discuss with students: what are 'expectations'? Why do parents have them? Do children have expectations of parents?

Students work to consider the nature of expectations that parents and children have of each other.

(a) Draw up a simple table for students to complete:

What do our parents expect of us?	Why do they expect these things?
What do we expect of our parents?	Why do we expect these things?

Individually

b) Using the ideas in the table, students work individually, to classify the 'expectations' into the following categories: reasonable expectations, unreasonable expectations and impossible expectations. Share results and discuss reasons for different viewpoints.

(c) In the final courtroom scene, L'il Elvis defends parents when he says they are 'not guilt - imperfect, sure...' Ask students: what does this statement mean? Why would Li'L Elvis defend parents this way? What has he learned?

Taken for granted

As a class

Janet feels that her mother ignores her and takes her for granted. Discuss this situation with the students. Students can also consider the expectations Janet has of her mother. Ask students whether they think their parents ever feel taken for granted and whether they may have unrealistic expectation of their parents. (This would be a good time to read Anthony Browne's *Piggy book* (1986), Knopf, New York.) Look at words and pictures which depict roles/importance in this family. Students may interview their parents about times when they feel 'taken for granted'.

Ask students to reflect on the way their own parents/caregivers care for them. Students can write a letter to one or both parents/caregivers acknowledging some of the things they do for them.

Class Debate

Rhonda Rort persuades the children by saying to them: 'Do you need them or do they need you?' Organise a class debate around the proposition that 'Parents need kids more than kids need parents'. Delegate the responsibilities such as the role of chairperson, team selection and organisation to the students. The debate may be carried out in front of other classes and votes taken to determine the most persuasive argument.

Spike and the Judge

How embarrassing!

Suzie Q wants to divorce her parents because she is embarrassed by them. It is common for children to be embarrassed by the antics of their parents (and vice versa!). Ask students to search for children's books that explore similar themes.

Some examples:

Cole, B. (1984), *The Trouble with Mom*, Coward McCann, New York.

Dahl, R. (1980) *The Twits*, Cape, London.

Gleitzman, M. (1992) *Blabbermouth*, Piper, Sydney, NSW.(1991) *Misery Guts*, Piper, Sydney, NSW. (1994) *Puppy Fat*, Piper, Sydney, NSW.

Malony, J. (1995) *Swashbuckler*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, QLD.

Carey, P. (1995) *The Big Bazoohey*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, QLD.

Fine, A. (1988) *Crummy Mummy and Me*, Malin in association with Deutch, London, UK.

Ask students to look at the ways in which the parents are illustrated in these books and compare with those in **D.I.V.O.R.C.E.**

Extension

Typecast!

Rhonda Rort is a prominent character in this episode. As a class, brainstorm and list all her main characteristics such as sly, cheating, sneaky, evil, mean and so on.

Why do we understand Rhonda's character and role in this episode so quickly? How has she been created? Discuss and list the many clues to this characterisation including her name; her manner of speech; her clothing; her physical features and so on. Explain how these symbols are shortcuts to quickly creating her character. Look at the list again and discuss the devices used by the animators and writers. For example — the use of colour (red); her snake-like features; her hissing speech; and her snake-like movements. Ask students to consider the significance of the snake-like representations. Ask students: Would this character have worked if it was a male? Why do you think a female character was chosen?

Ask students to come up with a definition for the word 'rort' as it relates to Rhonda Rort. Share these, then compare them to a dictionary definition. Discuss the decisions made by the script writers to name the lawyer this way. What are they saying about lawyers through the character of Rhonda Rort? Is this accurate? A stereotype? A myth? Unfair?

Discuss with students the role of this character in this story. Why was she created in this way?

What is her purpose?

Ask students to design an alternative character as the lawyer, using other symbols to create a personality opposite to Rhonda. For example, they may represent her as a kind, warm character using different animal features, colours, etc. Thinking about the use of colour, clothing, facial expression and body shape draw this new character and create a new name. Students present their new lawyer characters in small groups. Discuss the different impressions these new characters create and what messages they give. Discuss how this may impact on the story of **D.I.V.O.R.C.E.**

I Want, Therefore I'll Have

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure
Description:	These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on trust, responsibilities or needs and wants.
Resources:	Monkey Sea, Monkey Do ep 8 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i>

Lesson plan:

Setting the scene

As a class

Watch **Monkey Sea, Monkey Do** ep 8 *Li'l Elvis*. Briefly discuss the story with the students. Some questions could be: What is it about? What is the key message in this story? What do you think of Li'l Elvis?

I want it!!

At the beginning of story, Li'l Elvis tells Jane and Lionel that he wants a puppy. He says 'I'm gonna get a pet no matter what.'

Ask students to consider the confident attitude evident in Li'l Elvis's statement: why do you think this statement is made at the very beginning of the story? What is its purpose in relation to the whole story?

Students can think of alternative titles for this episode that capture the moral dilemmas central to the narrative. For example:

You can't always get what you want

It will get you in the end

That's not fair!!!

In his attempts to get a puppy, Lil' Elvis tries to 'wrap Grace around his finger'. Grace, however, is determined that she will not give in to Lil Elvis, as is evident in the following piece of dialogue:

Li'l Elvis: Mum, I told you I'd clean up my room.

Grace: That was two years ago Li'l Elvis. There are life forms in here that I'd prefer not to have in the house.

Li'l Elvis: Speaking of life forms, can I have a puppy?

Grace: No! You have no sense of responsibility at all. You can't even keep your own room clean. You certainly cannot look after a puppy.

Li'l Elvis: Then what about a kitten...?

Grace: No.

Li'l Elvis: A guinea pig?

Grace: No.

Li'l Elvis: A highly disciplined earwig?

Grace: No. Now out of my way. I have to get a mop.

Li'l Elvis: Rats!

Grace: No.

Li'l Elvis: Rotten rubbish!!!!

Grace: (has fallen on the floor) RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

Li'l Elvis: Suppose a gold fish is out of the question?

Grace: RRRRR

View this part of the episode again and discuss the dialogue between Li'l Elvis and Grace. (NOTE: This dialogue could be put onto an overhead transparency.)

Draw students' attention to the particular language features of this dialogue such as:

- The entree — how Li'l Elvis begins the conversation with Grace. Students could demonstrate the intonation Li'l Elvis uses to soften up his mother for what is to come.
- The quick and resolute responses provided by Grace —for example she says 'No' repeatedly. What does this indicate?
- Li'l Elvis's attempt to bargain with Grace — what does this show about his desire for a puppy? Will he settle for anything? What does it say about his responsibility for pets?
- The closure — how has Grace ended Li'l Elvis's capacity to bargain with her? How does she indicate that the conversation will not continue?
- The humour — what makes this exchange funny? Discuss features such as the humorous play on words. For example, when Li'l Elvis says: 'Speaking of life forms...' and 'Rats...', how does this add to the exchange?

Students can create and write a script for their own dialogues, using the model above from *Monkey Sea, Monkey Do*, to demonstrate a situation when they have been determined to get something they have wanted.

A focus on responsibility

Not responsible

As a class

Grace is very sure that Li'l Elvis does not have any sense of responsibility and is therefore unable to look after a pet. Discuss the concept of responsibility for pet ownership by completing the following:

<p>What is good about being responsible for a puppy?</p>	<p>What is difficult about being responsible for a puppy?</p>
---	--

Individually or in pairs

Following this discussion, students can write a list of rules for owning a pet, taking into account the points raised about responsibility in the activity above. These lists can be completed individually or in pairs and can be shared with the whole class. Students can search for similarities in these lists and consider: What do our lists tell us about taking responsibility for owning pets? Discuss: 'Pets are for life, not just for Christmas'.

Ask students to consider Li'l Elvis's behaviour in light of this information. How do we know if Li'l Elvis will or will not be a responsible pet owner? What information does the episode give the viewer about this?

Unwanted

Li'l Elvis is disappointed when he finally receives the sea monkeys and complains that he has stolen '20 bucks for those worms'. This signals the end of his responsibility for the animals. Students can complete a 'timeline of neglect', recalling how Li'l Elvis mistreats his pets.

1. Kicked dirty sock into tank.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....

Exploring consequences

Bad dreams

As a class

Part of the story is about how Li'l Elvis is taught a lesson for doing harm to others and neglecting and mistreating his pets. The script-writers and animators use the 'dream sequence' to show the audience what is taking place in Li'l Elvis's subconscious.

Review the dream sequence and discuss the concept of a 'sub conscious' with the students; drawing attention to the way this has been conveyed in the animated sequence and the script.

Look at techniques such as:

Camera: framing of shots, camera angles, camera movement

Design: setting, lighting, costumes, casting, props

Editing: selection of shots, pace, transition between sequences

Sound: dialogue, voice-over, music, sound effects, silence

Performance of actors including their body language.

Ask students to write a brief summary of what messages about his behaviour are being conveyed to Li'l Elvis through this dream. Discuss the concept of dreams revealing subconscious thoughts. Can any of the students recall a time when something has been revealed to them subconsciously?

Individually

Students design a 'dream sequence' in a storyboard that shows something being revealed to them subconsciously. They can also create a one line comment to capture the essence of the dream as Li'l Elvis did with: 'Gotta make amends or I'm gonna die'.

Learning the hard way

In threes or fours

After discussing the dream sequence, students can recall times when they have learnt a lesson the hard way and share these recollections in groups of three or four. After sharing, the group can choose one person's story to role-play to the whole class.

Reflecting on trust

Please forgive me

As a class

Len and Grace trusted Li'l Elvis . When Li'l Elvis spent Len's money on the sea monkeys he showed that, in this instance, he could not be trusted. Discuss the importance of trust with the students, using the following questions as a guide: who do you trust the most? Who do you think trusts you the most? Have you ever broken someone's trust? Have you had your trust broken by someone else? How do you mend the damage?

Ask students to define the word trust by writing their own thoughts on this, using the model below to flesh out their definition:

Trust means ...

Encourage the students to share their definitions with the whole class.

Promises, promises

Individually and in pairs

Li'l Elvis learns a difficult lesson about honesty, trust and responsibility. Students can reflect on their own lives and some things which they need to take more responsibility for. After sufficient time for reflection, and perhaps sharing ideas with partners, students write a contract of things they need to be responsible for.

Students consider these questions: what do you promise to do? To whom will you give this contract to?

Discuss the nature of these contracts with the students to decide if they should be displayed for others to see or kept private.

Extension

True confessions

Li'l Elvis is a character with very human failings and in this episode he behaves in dishonest and irresponsible ways. With the students, consider Li'l Elvis's behaviour and the possible reasons why he is presented this way in this story. Why haven't the writers made Li'l Elvis good and likeable all of the time? (Reasons could include that he is a funnier, more realistic, more interesting character this way.)

Drawing on what they know of Li'l Elvis from this and from other episodes in the series ask students to work in groups to brainstorm and list all of Li'l Elvis's good points and his bad points. A spokesperson from each group is nominated to share these responses with the whole class. These can be recorded as a composite list and students are then asked to discuss the similarities and differences in their responses. Which characteristics do we usually see? Is Li'l Elvis's behaviour in **Monkey Sea, Monkey Do** normal for him or is he behaving 'out of character'?

Invite students to share a time when they really wanted something and went to great lengths to obtain this; perhaps behaving 'out of character'. You may wish to recall and share an event from your childhood to show that most children will be tempted at some time. Naturally, this level of disclosure requires a trusting and supportive environment. One of the best ways to make students feel safe in this kind of activity is to share events from your experience. Students should be given the choice as to whether they share their personal experience or keep it to themselves.



I Will Survive

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Resilience
Description:	While these activities may be carried out individually, they would be more effective as part of an extended unit of work on the topic of 'Survival'.
Resources:	Wandering Star ep 4 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> The activity sequence is organised into four sections. The first section focuses more closely on the episode itself and the physical survival of the three 'Truckstoppers' lost in the desert. The second section challenges students to examine survival issues in the wider community. The third extends the concept to the survival of culture; and the fourth draws conclusions.

Lesson plan:

Tuning into survival

One thing leads to another

View the episode **Wandering Star** in which Li'l Elvis and his friends end up lost in the desert through a series of unexpected events. Revise the events in the episode by asking students to prepare a story map showing the key events in sequence. The maps can consist of a series of small pictures or scenes from the episode with arrows showing one event leading to the next. Dialogue bubbles or captions could also be used summarising the main events. These maps will be a useful reference point for the following activities.

Word association

Ask students:

- What do you think of when you hear the word 'survival'?
- What images come into your mind?

Students draw or paint an image connected with the word survival. Share the images and discuss the reasons for our different interpretations and feelings about the term. These ideas could be revisited at the end of the sequence of activities

Fearful moments

Li'l Elvis, Lionel and Janet have a terrifying experience in the old mine. How do we know when they are frightened?

Re- view this mine scene again without sound and ask students to list all the visual techniques used to create the atmosphere and emotion.

In a class discussion, ask students whether they have ever been in a situation where they felt vulnerable or frightened — either physically, emotionally or both. Give them some time to write a reflective account of that time, focussing on the feelings and sensations they experienced. Students could be invited to share their recollections with the class (although they should be given a choice, as some may not wish to reveal the experience to others). Now make a class list of the feelings (both emotional and physical) that we experience when we sense we are in danger, for example, sweaty palms, shaking, a dry mouth. Ask students why they think we have these sensations? Discuss the role of 'instinct' in helping us survive.

Survival in the desert

When Lionel, Janet and Li'l Elvis are stranded in the desert, their basic needs for food, water and shelter are threatened. Ask students:

- What methods did they use to meet these needs?
- What else could they do?
- What other methods do you know of for aiding survival in the outdoors?

Students may research techniques used by some desert-dwelling people around the world to keep cool, find shelter, food and water. Investigate the traditional methods used by Australian Aboriginal people in order to live in, and with the natural environment.

Desert Dilemma

Ask students to imagine they are going to live in the desert in a remote part of the outback and they are allowed to take five items with them. They can then list, draw or cut out pictures from magazines to illustrate their chosen items. Once they have decided on five things, ask them to discuss their items with a partner.

As a class, discuss popular items and ask individual students to explain their reasoning behind the selection of certain items. How would these items have changed if your destination was alpine country or a rainforest?

In pairs, students reduce their combined selection of ten items to five. Pairs join with other pairs and share their results.

As a class, discuss the sort of items that were taken and the ones that were left behind. Encourage students to challenge each other. Why did you choose these things? Why did you leave these behind?

Now ask students: can we group our items according to those that fulfil needs and those that fulfil wants? Why do some of us have different needs and wants? In small groups, ask students to decide on a list of the basic things that all human beings need for survival.

Going further: investigating survival

Media hype

As the community becomes aware that the 'Truckstoppers' have gone missing, various people's responses are depicted — Grace's distress, Len's rescue plans and so on. Ask students:

- How might such a story be represented in the evening news.
- What sort of headlines would appear?
- Who is likely to be interviewed?

In small groups, students can come up with a mock current affairs program responding to the news that three children are missing in the Australian outback (perhaps employing the character of reporter Eilleen Inyaface). This might also be done as a newspaper report or a radio program.

Against the odds

There are countless stories of people who have survived life-threatening situations. The media is quick to celebrate such victories and such people often become heroes overnight. Recent examples of this phenomenon in Australia include Tony Bullimore, the English yachtsman, who survived days at sea in an upturned boat in the Southern Ocean in January 1997, and Stuart Diver who survived the Thredbo landslide in NSW in August 1997.

In small groups, students can choose someone similar to investigate (either an historical or contemporary figure). Students can write a biographical piece about their 'survivor'. These may be compiled into a class book. As information is gathered, consider any patterns or similarities in people's experiences.

- What are some of the more common reactions?
- How do people say the event affected their lives? Why?
- Why do we regard such people as heroes?
- Why do we like hearing these stories?

Students can make a list of books and movies which portray situations where people's survival is at risk, for example, disaster movies. Ask the students:

- Why do you think this is such a popular genre of movie?
- What does it say about us as people?
- What are some of the common features of such movies?
- Why would this type of story be popular with the writers of Li'l Elvis?
- What are the appealing features?
- What other type of stories would have good audience appeal like this?

Rescue me!

WC Moore's attempts to stage a dramatic rescue fail despite having a helicopter and radio. Dex Dexter uses his wisdom and experience to find the friends. List the reasons why Dex succeeded and why WC Moore failed. To find out more, students could investigate organisations and individuals who are in the 'rescue' business. These may include emergency services, disaster relief organisations, fire fighters, ambulance, etc. Choose a 'rescue' occupation to research and provide information to others in the class. Collect examples of texts that instruct people about physical survival in unsafe situations. Students may then come up with their own pamphlets or posters on an 'emergency' topic of their choice.

Lost in the crowd

Running away from home

There is a lot of pressure on Li'l Elvis and the 'Truckstoppers' to perform even when they would rather be outside having fun. This is a strong theme throughout the series. Discuss the reasons why Li'l Elvis, Lionel and Janet run away.

Happily ever after?

Although Li'l Elvis, Janet and Lionel run away because they feel under pressure and unable to perform, they are eventually rescued and the episode has a happy ending.

Discuss the reasons for this resolution with the students. For example this is episode four of a 26 part series. What influence would this have on the way the episode ends? (Along with the main ongoing series plots, each episode of Li'l Elvis has its own plot which is introduced and resolved during the episode.) If Wandering Star were a movie rather than a series episode, what differences might there be to the way it ends?

Do stories like this always have a happy ending in real life?

Teenage homelessness

In the real world, increasing numbers of young people are running away from home — sometimes for similar reasons- only to wind up struggling to survive on the streets. This is a sensitive but important issue to explore with the students. Ask students: have you ever felt

like leaving home? Why? What do our homes and our families provide us with? Begin the discussion by reading:

Way Home by Libby Hathorn and Gregory Rogers (1994), Random House, NSW. Use CD-ROMs (put out by major newspapers), Internet search engines or other search tools to find newspaper articles about homeless youth.

Use De Bono’s **Six Thinking Hats** to explore the issue of teenage homelessness. Divide the class into six groups and assign a different ‘hat’ to each group.

White hat	List the facts which you believe to be true about the homelessness of young people.
Red hat:	How does the issue of homelessness make you feel? What emotions are associated with this issue?
Black hat:	What do you see as the dangers or disadvantages of young people leaving home and having nowhere to go?
Yellow hat:	What might be some of the positive reasons for, or outcomes of, young people leaving home — even if they struggle to survive?
Green Hat:	What do you think needs to be done to address the issue of homelessness?
Blue Hat:	What other (social) issues do you think are related to homelessness?

A different kind of survival

‘Seems like some of my stories got stuck in the kid’s noggin’.(colloquialism for ‘head’) In *Wandering Star*, the narratives told by Dex ultimately help the ‘Truckstoppers’ survive. Lionel acknowledges that ‘Dex showed me heaps of things when I think about it’ The stories he tells his grandson keep the wisdom of his experience alive — passing from one generation to the next.

Ask students whether their parents or grandparents have any favourite stories that are told over and over to the family. Share some of these. If possible, students could make audio recordings of a relative telling such a story and bring it to school to share with others. Ask students: do the stories have lessons in them for future generations? Why do people feel the need to tell their stories? Students could consider something they have learned from an older relative and write a letter of thanks to them.

Survival of cultures

Survival can be examined from a physical and emotional perspective, but the word is also often used in the context of culture and history. Ask students to consider how their families have passed certain rituals down through the generations. For example this might be a particular song sung at birthdays, a particular prayer said before meals or special family games.

Ask students: how do people help their culture to survive? They might list music, stories, dance, festivals, rituals or art, as vehicles for sustaining culture and passing on culture from generation to generation. In keeping with the focus of this episode, students may research traditional stories from a range of cultures and analyse the messages or lessons these stories are passing on to others.

Students may then write their own narrative with the intention of passing on important information to future generations. Discuss how this information could be stored and passed on, for example, in a time capsule buried in the school ground.

In conclusion

The big picture

By engaging in several of the activities above, the students will have examined the notion of survival from various perspectives. Students could now construct a Concept Map to show what they have understood about the topic.

If introducing children to concept mapping, the following steps can be carried out using a very familiar topic. The procedure is then repeated for the unit topic.

- Give each student approx 10 small cards;
- On one card, they write the word 'survival';
- On the remaining cards, they write/draw other words that they consider to be most relevant to the topic;
- On big sheets of paper, the cards are arranged in a way that makes sense to the student;
- Students must then show the way the ideas relate to each other. Lines or arrows are drawn between the related ideas. Words or connecting phrases are written on the line or arrow to make the connection clearer. Ask students to share maps and see if they can 'read' others.

Generalisations may be written on the basis of these Concept Maps.

There are many worthwhile fiction stories depicting resilience/survival such as Gary Paulsen's 'Hatchet'

Introduction to Animation

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Technology; The Arts
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure
Description:	These learning activities introduce aspects of the animation process and provide students with opportunities to investigate and extend their knowledge of animation.
Resources:	Wandering Star ep 4, vol 1, <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i>

Lesson plan:

1. Tuning into animation

Before viewing **Wandering Star**, ask students to reflect on what they know about animation. In small groups or as a class, students can consider these questions:

- What is animation?
- How do you think a cartoon is made?
- Do you like animation?
- Why? Why not?
- Why do you think it appeals to all age groups?

2 On the board

Make a class list of all the different animation programs students can recall.

3. Class discussion

Discuss each example and ask students to describe what they think are the special features of each animation. For example, they may comment on the style of artwork, colour, the fantasy elements etc.

Discuss the different types of animation available

- 3D computer animation such as *Toy Story*, *James and the Giant Peach*
- 3D Claymation such as *Wallace and Grommit*
- 2D animation such as *The Simpsons*, *Mickey Mouse*, and *Road Runner*.

Different methods of animation noted may include line drawings, cutouts, drawn and painted characters, computer drawings, puppets, silhouettes, sand, plasticine, collage and so on.

Students could also bring along some different examples of animation to view. Segments can be discussed and compared. Add any further information noted about each example to the list already made.

4. View an episode

View the episode **Wandering Star** and ask students to note some of the unusual or special aspects of animation they see, eg

- WC Moore's watch zapping his driver Duncan
- WC Moore's Berkonium ring capturing all the marbles
- the desert mirages
- Dex's dream sequence
- the mine trolley shooting through the sky with the children inside
- reporter Eileen Inyaface hanging off the flying helicopter, interviewing WC Moore
- the way no-one is ever badly hurt despite what is done to them such as Eileen Inyaface being squashed by WC Moore's helicopter.

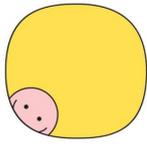
Discuss the students' observations of this episode and add the features of **Li'l Elvis** to the list compiled in step 2.

Examine the list again and ask students to write a summary of some of the special features that make animation different from other forms of film production.

Related lesson ideas

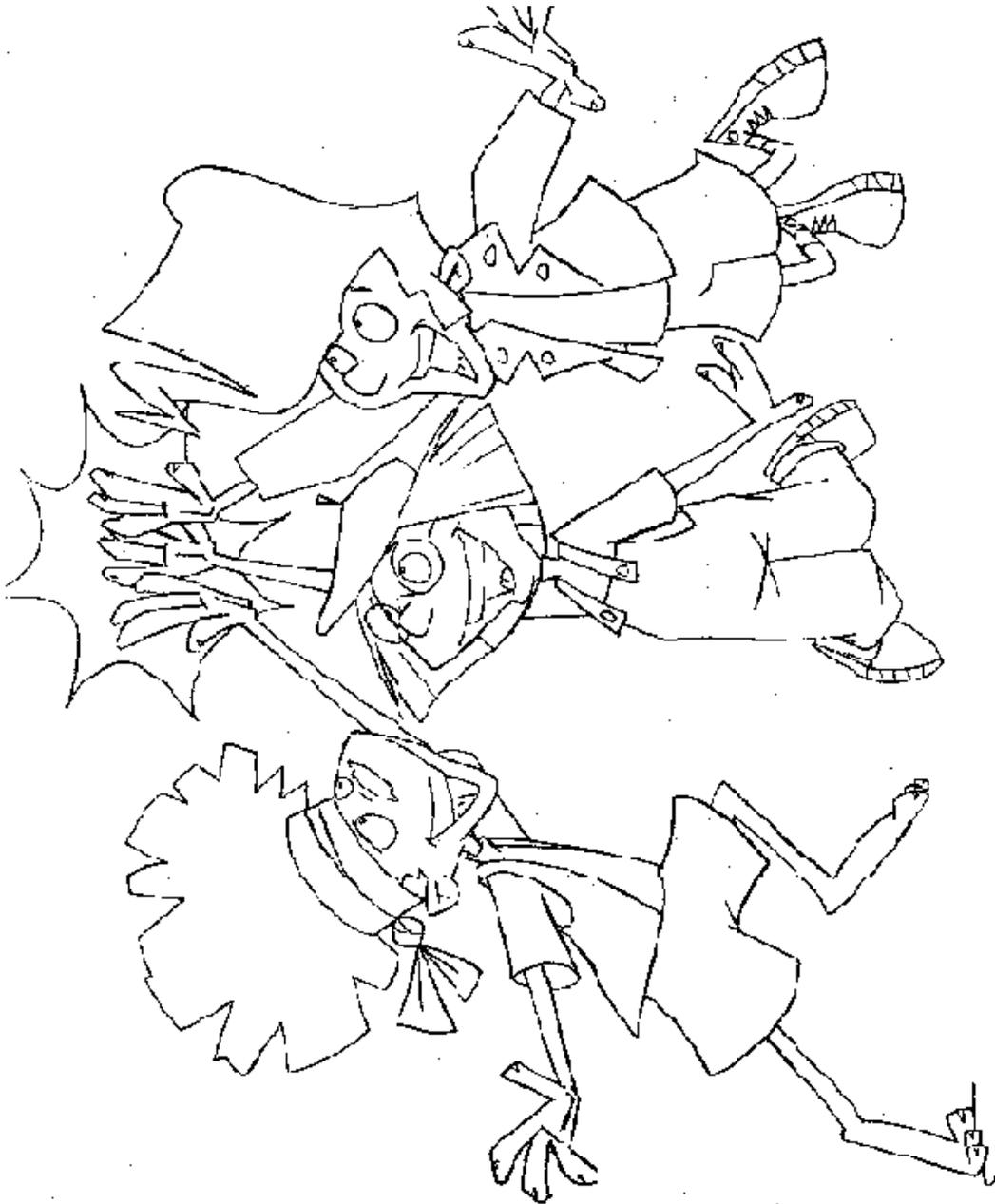
Drawing cartoon characters

Making animations



Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers Lesson: Drawing animations

Li'l Elvis characters - colour their personality!



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Love Who Needs It

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Healthy and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Growth and Development; Families
Description:	These activities may be selected and taught individually. They would, however, be most effective if incorporated into a broader unit of work on relationships.
Resources:	Li'l Memphis P.T.D. ep 3 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> .

Lesson plan:

Setting the scene

School days

Pre-study investigations

A Parent/Teacher Day at the school provides the central theme for this episode; with teacher, students and parents having differing expectations of the day. Before viewing, ask students to recall Parent/Teacher Days they had when they were young and how they felt about their parents coming to school. Students can interview an older brother/sister; mother/father; or grandparent about the feelings they had about Parent/Teacher days. Students share their information with the whole class. It would be interesting to chart the things that have changed and the things that have remained the same about Parent/Teacher Days after sharing this information, using the model below.

Recollections of Parent/Teacher Days:	
Things that have stayed the same
Things that have changed

Tuning into relationships

Relationship audit

The series *Li'l ELVIS* and the episode *Li'l Memphis P.T.D* depict a range of relationships between the characters. The relationships between the child characters and their parents are of particular interest. *Li'l Elvis* is an adopted son; Lionel is the child of a sole parent; and Janet is the child of an absent parent.

Individually and in pairs

Ask students to 'map' the relationships they have with their family and friends. This activity is similar to the design of a 'sociogram', where students show their best friends by drawing lines that connect to the people in their closest circle, etc.

Students then exchange their 'maps' with a partner who tries to 'read' the relationships that are represented.

Surveying relationships

Repeat the above activity using the characters in *Li'l Elvis*. Make a list of all the characters in the series and, as a whole class, 'map' the relationships each character has firstly, with *Li'l Elvis*, and secondly, with the other characters in *Little Memphis*. Encourage students to justify the connections they make between characters, as no doubt this activity will stimulate discussion and perhaps some debate.

Exploring a range of feelings

No worries, it's cool

As a class

Janet tries to 'act cool' about her mother not coming to Parent Teacher Day, suggesting to the others that Parent Teacher Day is no big deal. When Janet sees other families relating closely, her own loneliness and feelings of being let down are exaggerated. She says sarcastically: 'Happy families...pukesville'. Here Janet is masking her true feelings. Ask students: What is Janet attempting to say here? What mask is Janet wearing? What is Janet hiding? The mask Janet is presenting in the following cel could also be discussed.

With the students, discuss the concept of 'masking ourselves' and how we often do not reveal our true feelings to others. Invite students to share times when they have worn a mask to protect their true feelings, or to protect others from knowing their true feelings.

Spike plays on people's vulnerabilities. He says to Janet: 'It must be tough having a Mum who loves her semi more than you'. Discuss the concept of an 'Achilles' heel' with the students and how this applies to Spike's comment to Janet.

In saying this to Janet, Spike is unaware of her inner feelings and that she is behaving differently on the outside to how she is truly feeling inside.

Discuss this situation with students. After this discussion, students can reflect on times when they have had a different 'outer and inner self'.

In pairs

Students can perform 'instant mimes' of the masks that hide their true feelings. Each pair is given a scenario, written on a card, to discuss and prepare to mime to the whole class. For example, one pair is given the scenario of **THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL**. In pairs, the person in front mimes the mask (which may show a happy, eager face) and the person behind mimes the true feelings (which may be fear and resentment). Students can experiment with the placement of their bodies, gestures and movements to convey these feelings to the audience. Other scenarios might include: moving house; being overlooked in selection for the basketball team; making up with a friend; and receiving a present from a grandmother.

Disappointed again

Individually

Janet feels let down by her mother (again) and in her quieter moments, reflects on how she is feeling. Ask students to complete some personal, reflective writing where they recall, and try to come to terms with, a time when someone close to them let them down.

Taking it out on someone

Janet takes her frustration with her mother out on Grace and is rude to her, hurting her feelings. She apologises to Grace in the episode, but it is a fleeting aspect of the narrative. Ask students to take the time to consider an appropriate apology from Janet to Grace. Students can write a 'letter' or card from Janet to Grace, explaining the reasons for her behaviour.

Turning points

As a class

When Janet's mother, Mama Rig, arrives for Parent/Teacher Day and tells Janet she wants her to come 'truckin' with her, this marks a turning point in their relationship. List examples of classic turning points in people's lives, for example: beginning school; leaving home; turning 21, etc. Ask students: do we have control over these turning points?

Students describe a time in their life when there was a 'turning point' in a significant relationship. These descriptions could be published in the form of a book or displayed for a wider audience to read.

I need you

Janet tells her mother that she loves her, but that she is needed in Little Memphis. Ask students to make a list of the people they need and why, and a list of the people they think need them and why. Students can write to one of the people on the list telling them how and why they need them.

The 'Perfect Family'

The Brady Bunch

As a class

Janet accuses Li'l Elvis, Len and Grace of behaving like the Brady Bunch. If possible, show students some excerpts from the series *The Brady Bunch* and ask students to consider these questions:

- Who is the Brady Bunch?
- What type of family is portrayed in *The Brady Bunch*?
- What relationships are portrayed in this family?
- Is this a realistic portrayal of a family?
- How do you think *The Brady Bunch* has become synonymous with the unrealistic family?

Why is this reference to *The Brady Bunch* included in the episode *Li'l Memphis P.T.D?*

Looking back at the *Li'l Elvis* relationships' maps, ask students to compare the types of family relationship portrayed in *The Brady Bunch* and *Li'l Elvis*. The main families are presented in the following cels which could be made into overhead transparencies for use in a classroom discussion.

What I REALLY think

As a class

The series *Li'l Elvis* depicts different types of families, a range of family issues, and different means of conflict resolution. It also depicts a range of friendships and other relationships. The overriding theme in the series, is that relationships are not perfect. Encourage the students to share their opinions on whether or not *Li'l Elvis* is successful in respect to its portrayal of family and other relationships.

Individually

Ask students to locate and cut out pictures and advertisements from magazines depicting the 'perfect family'. Students create a caption for a 'thought bubble' to be placed over the head of each person in the picture to convey what they really might be thinking. For example, the mother in the picture might say:

'I am tired of being taken for granted.' The father might say: 'I work too hard and I don't feel I am a good enough father.'

Students share their thought bubble in trios or groups of four and compare and contrast their responses.

Not good enough

As a class

In this episode, Lionel's mum Lillian seems unusually tough on him. Lionel says that: 'Nothin' I ever do is good for her'. Who does the audience identify with most — Lionel or his mother? Whose side are we on? Which character do we feel the most sympathy for? The creators of LI'L ELVIS have tried to encourage the audience to identify closely with particular character's feelings. Discuss and identify the techniques which have been used to give us Lionel's perspective.

Discuss with students:

- (a) How does Lionel's mother relate to him?
- (b) Why might she relate to Lionel in this way?

Students role-play a 'conversation' between Lionel and his mother, Lillian. Divide the class into groups of four. Half of these groups prepare a defence for Lionel and the other half prepare a defence for Lillian. Pair each student from the Lionel group with a student from the Lillian group and let the characters discuss the situation

Some possible comments from Lionel might include:

'You never praise my school work; I give up trying; It isn't easy not having a Dad around.'

Some possible comments from Lionel's mother include:

'I am raising you on my own; As a female Aborigine I have had to try extra hard in this world to be successful — so can you.'

Extension

Allegory: the skull symbol

In the episode **Li'l Memphis P.T.D.**, there is a story within a story. Janet tells a story of her mother's battle with the 'skull truck', the apparition she must confront on her journeys. The 'skull truck' is an allegory; a 'symbolic narrative'. An allegory is used to treat one subject under the guise of another. Discuss the concept of an allegory and ask students: what does the 'skull truck' symbolise in this episode?

Students can discuss and research examples of allegories in film, television and literature that are familiar to them.

Students can create an allegory for film, television or literature to symbolise any of the following:

fear;
guilt;
jealousy;
desire;
happiness.

Making a Flip Book

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 9
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Technology; The Arts
Themes/Topics:	Narrative Structure
Description:	In this lesson students experiment with using different animation techniques and compare the production processes and effectiveness of these techniques.
Resources:	This lesson follows on from <i>Introduction to animation</i>

Lesson plan:

1. Explain how animation works

Share and discuss this information on animation with the class. The Li'l Elvis Animation Guide has more detailed background information on the animation process.

Animation is about creating illusion. It is the art of making still drawings appear to move on film. Nothing is real, nothing exists as it does in live drama - yet we are able to relate to animation characters as if they were real, and we can believe in the world where these characters live.

All films, including live action films, are actually created by joining together a sequence of still images called frames, with very small changes in-between progressive frames. A sequence of frames appears to move and to be alive when run through a TV, film projector or VCR. This happens because our eyes cannot keep up with the speed of change between each photograph and so naturally join all the images together. This is called persistence of vision.

Animated films are created by filming individual drawings. Each single drawing is called a set-up and is filmed in sequence for a certain number of frames. When twenty-four frames per second - each one slightly different - move in front of our eyes, we 'see' the picture moving. This movement gives us the impression that the characters are really moving and it brings the cartoon stories to life

6. Students create animations

In these four activities students experiment with different animation techniques. They may make a flip book, a thaumatrope, or try pixilation or face-mation techniques. The whole class might try each activity or four groups of students might select one each to do.

Flip books

Flip books, where small movements are recorded frame by frame, are one of the easiest ways to create the illusion of movement and are a good place to begin exploring the principles of animation.

You could show students an overhead transparency of a sample series of pictures to give them an idea of the task.

Materials

- Scrap paper for storyboard
- 10 small blank pages
- stapler
- fine black liners
- gouache paints.

Procedure

1. Plan the character and the story or sequence you wish to show.

It is important to start with a simple ideas such as a sad face, then a smiling face alternating, or a stick figure jogging, a ball bouncing or a rocket launching. Make a sequence of up to ten pictures.

2. Map out this sequence roughly on scrap paper before actually starting to draw in the flip book.

This can be done on a grid with 10 squares, using each square to show the element of the drawing which is to change on each page to keep the sequence going. This is called a storyboard and it is like a comic strip planning the sequence of the story.

3. Staple the blank pages carefully and firmly together along the left side to make a booklet.

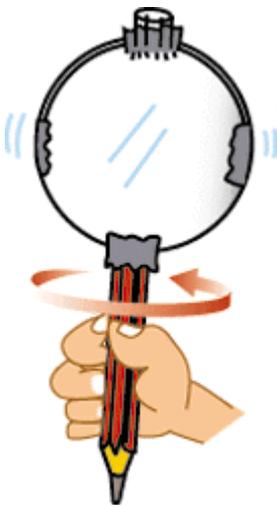
The binding of the flip book acts as the registration system - this is the way animation artists keep their drawings precisely sequenced and lined up so they will move smoothly.

4. Draw each picture on one of the small blank pages. When drawing it can be easier start with the last page of the book.

When the next page falls forward you will be able to see the previous page beneath. Trace or redraw most of that image changing a section of it slightly to give the illusion of movement.

Continue to flip and cover and redraw until the action sequence is complete.

Keep the figure as close as possible to the edge of the page.



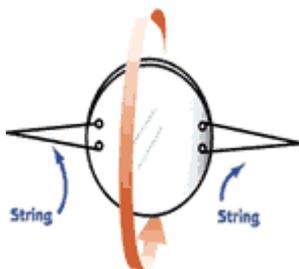
Slightly change the action of one part of the drawing only on each page.

Add colour in one moving section only, for example the tail of the dog wags or the tongue hangs in and out.

5. Flip through the booklet and watch the animation - magic! Hold the flip book in your left hand and flip the pages from front to back with your right thumb. Now you could create a suitable sound effect to accompany the flip book.

Thaumatrope

A thaumatrope is a simple animation technique created by a spinning device that has two parts of a drawing, one on either side of a disc. When the device spins, the drawings combine to make a complete picture. See instructions for making a thaumatrope.



Make a thaumatrope

Materials

- rubber bands or string
- one light cardboard disc - 10cm in diameter,
- drawing equipment
- ink or poster paint.

Procedure

Start drawing with black and white on one side of the disc. Check and see if the design works. When it works, add colour. Reinforce the area with sticky-tape then punch a small hole in the top and bottom edge of the circle and thread the rubber bands or string through.

Now wind the rubber bands/string up together and then release the pressure and watch your picture 'come to life'.

Pixilation

Pixilation is when a few frames of something is filmed in one position and then the object's position is changed slightly and filmed again for a few frames and so on. The camera and the background always remain in the same position. When screened the object will appear to move of its own accord while the background stays static.

Resources

Video camera

Procedure

Using a video camera, create a pixilation with the class. Sit someone on the ground and press 'Record' for the shortest possible time. Move the person forward slightly and then film them again using the same process without moving the camera. (It is important that the background and the distance from the camera stays the same). Continue filming the person as they move across a room or the playground. When screened, the person will appear to speed across the ground without moving their arms or legs.

Face-mation

Face-mation is a type of pixilation which is made using somebody's face to create a funny moving picture.

Resources

Video camera

Procedure

Working in pairs, one student (the actor) can stand in front of the video camera keeping the same facial expression, while the other student films their face for as short a time as possible. Stop and the actor changes expression and is filmed quickly again.

Plan for costume changes e.g. wigs, hats, false noses, moustaches, glasses etc., and for a series of different facial expressions.

Front, back and side views can also be included.

Keep the background the same and the distance from the camera the same through the entire filming process.

7. Students evaluate their technique

Students who created an animation with the same technique form groups to discuss these questions.

1. What are the good things about the technique you used? Consider:

- how simple/difficult it was to use
- how easy/difficult it is to view the animation
- how portable the technique is
- what equipment you need to view the animation

2. Who might use or view an animation made with this technique (little kids, adults, people in remote communities/big cities)?

3. What difference does their location make?

4. Is this technique appropriate for presenting all sorts of animated stories or is it for simple stories, no story, giving information?

8. Class discussion

Ask a student from each group to:

- briefly outline to the class how they used the technique to produce their animation
- what they thought of the technique (from step 7)

Encourage discussion by students about the effectiveness of the various techniques.

An extended class activity

A long-term class project could be to film a flower growing or a building being erected. Film a few frames each day over a period of time, ensuring that the camera remains in the same position. A stills camera could also be used to shoot a sequence of photos if a video camera is not available.

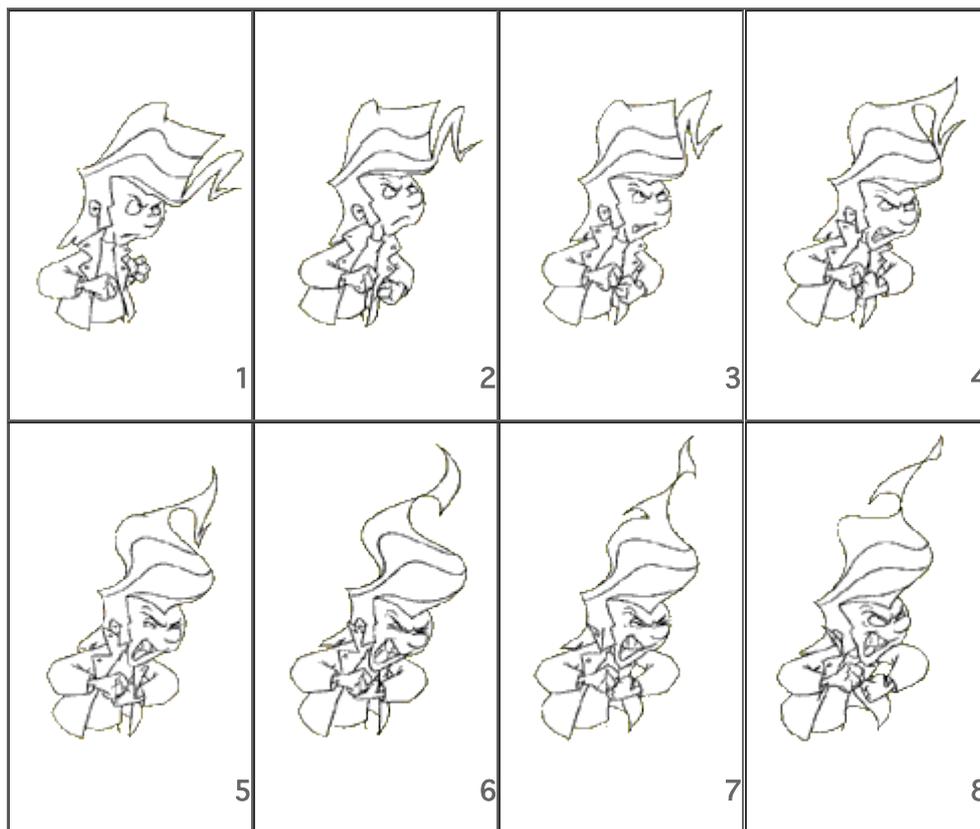
When screened at the end of filming, it will appear that the building went up in a few seconds, or the flower grew instantly.

Related lesson ideas

Introduction to animation,
Drawing cartoon characters

Lesson: Making animations

Overhead transparency master: sample pictures for a flip book



From drawings by Peter Viska, Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers, ACTF, 1998

My Little Town

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 1 to Year 8
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Humanities and Social Sciences
Themes/Topics:	Our Place in Space and Time; Environment; Change
Description:	These activities draw upon students' observations of the physical environment portrayed in the series and also encourage them to consider issues related to their own local environment
Resources:	Caught In A Trap ep 01 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Boggled ep 02 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Li'l Memphis P.T.D. ep 03 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Wandering Star ep 04 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i>

Lesson plan:

Think, pair, share

Ask students to individually make a list of as many features as they can think of in the place in which they live. This may be their town, suburb or district. The list should include both natural features such as waterways, hills, mountains and valleys, and human made features such as buildings, parks and playgrounds. Individuals now meet in pairs to share their ideas and create a common list. Pairs share their lists with the whole class and a large, cumulative list is made of special places.

Map making

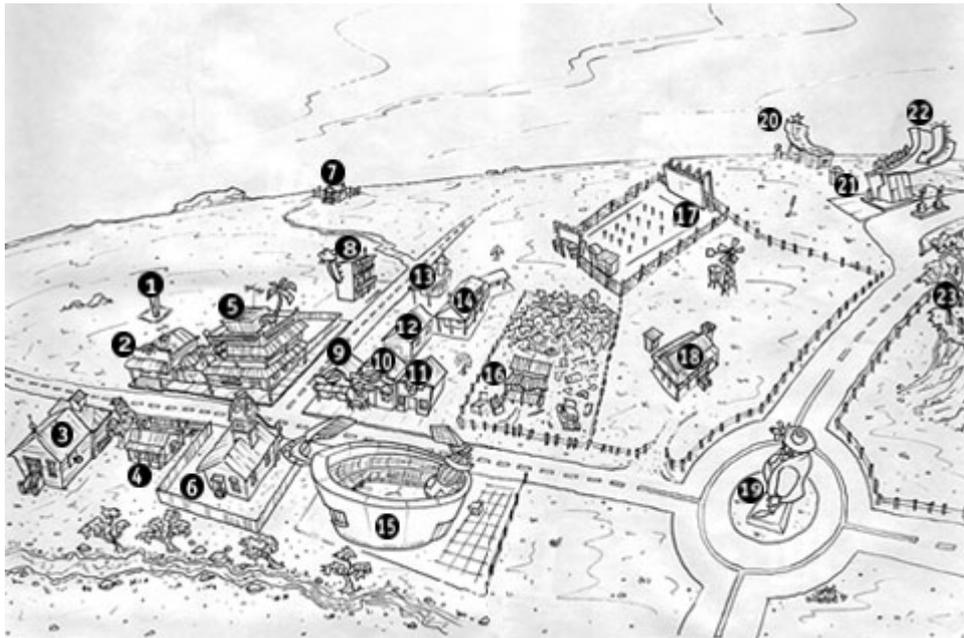
Students now try and draw a rough map of their local place — including the features that have been listed. This may be more effective if carried out on large sheets of paper in small groups (of two or three students). Demonstrate some examples of such maps — the students may choose to do a 'birds-eye' view, a street directory type map or a simple drawing. Once the maps have been completed, students could compare their impressions with each other. Ask students: How are our maps different? Why?

If possible, obtain a map of the local area (perhaps from local council offices or the municipal library) and ask students to compare it to their own maps. What have we left out? How do our maps differ in terms of the way they represent the town?
Don't forget Google maps can locate your house in your street.

Wandering around Wannapoo

View **Caught In a Trap**. Ask students to take notes while viewing of as many features of the town of Wannapoo as possible. Following this, students can attempt to draw as much of the town as they can remember. Share drawings in small groups and discuss the features that are most commonly included.

Review the first five minutes of the episode again and ask students to revise their maps. Now students can compare their maps with the map of Wannapoo/Little Memphis below.



Map of Wannapoo/Little Memphis

Legend

1. War Memorial	2. Craft Shop	3. School House	4. The Dexters' House	5. Heartbreak Hotel
6. Town Hall	7. Moore Mansion	8. Flying Pig Motel	9. Doves' General Store	10. Paragon Cafe
11. Laundry	12. The Court House	13. Police Station	14. Hospital	15. Soccer Stadium
16. Viska's Junk Yard	17. Drive In Theatre	18. The Dougals' House	19. WC Moore Statue	20. Old Roadhouse
21. Dunny	22. New Roadhouse	23. One Tree Hill		

With the whole class, devise a table comparing the features of Wannapoo with the features of the place where the students live.

Natural features of Wannapoo	Natural features of _____	Human features of Wannapoo	Human features of _____

Ask students to list key adjectives to describe each place. What is similar between them? What is different? Why? How do the natural features of places influence the places that humans build?

Discuss with students what they think might be the advantages and disadvantages of living in a place like Wannapoo. Reflecting on the similarities and differences between Wannapoo and their own place, students may write an exposition about the place in which they would most like to live and the reasons why.

Way out back

Li'l Elvis is set in outback Australia. View Wandering Star and ask students to note all the outback images and symbols they can see, for example red earth, no trees, flat landscape, red sun, types of buildings, etc. Discuss and begin compiling a class list.

Review a desert segment from Wandering Star and a town scene from **Caught In a Trap** — without the sound. Use the freeze frame occasionally so students can study a scene in detail. Ask students to concentrate on the images/symbols that the designers have ‘borrowed’ about outback Australia in creating the town. Add to the class list. The following backgrounds from the series can also be used for this activity.



The desert



The town

Ask students to search through magazines or travel agent brochures to find images that they think have something to do with a place we call 'the outback'. Paste these images to a large sheet of paper and add others by drawing items such as water tanks, verandas, junk yards, deserts, roadhouses, signs to towns pointing in several directions, long, straight roads, etc. Pictures may also be gathered from travel agencies, airlines, etc. Display this collage.

Ask students to collect photos, postcards and other examples of visual images of outback Australia. Visit an art gallery or examine illustrations on books about Australian art to look at the ways painters have portrayed the harsh conditions of the outback. Compare non indigenous artists' works with the portrayal of the land by indigenous artists.

Contact schools in remote parts of Australia, and write to or e-mail the students, asking about life in the outback. The Schools of The Air might also be an interesting resource to contact. The Internet may be a useful tool for this research.

Designing the Land

Creating Wannapoo

The town of Wannapoo/Little Memphis is a fictitious place developed by the creators of the Li'l Elvis series. While the images used have borrowed from common symbols of outback Australia, the town itself has been created from the imaginations of the writers, the designers and the animators. Ask students: What do you think the creators of this series would have had to consider in designing this new town?

Compile a list. This should include considerations such as:

- What natural features would there be?
- What buildings would be part of the landscape?
- Would the town have a school, a hospital, a church etc?
- What colours would dominate the landscape?
- What would the town's name be?
- Where would different characters live?
- Which places would be the main sites for the stories?

Discuss features of other towns/places that have been developed for an animated series such as Springfield in The Simpsons; Bedrock in The Flintstones; Gotham City for Batman.

You be the designer

Now ask students to imagine they are to design a town for a new Li'l Elvis cartoon series, but this time the setting is somewhere completely different. The series may become Li'l Elvis By The Sea or Li'l Elvis On The Farm. The students can work in small groups and can select from the following settings for their new town:

- seaside;
- inner city;
- farm/rural;
- snow country;
- space.

Once they have selected their broad setting for their town, their task is to:

- decide on a name for their town;
- paint an appropriate backdrop;
- decide on some key features — both natural and human, that might be found in their town (these may be drawn and pasted to the back drop or listed). The human features may be similar to the ones found in the series but will be given a new look in this setting. For example, what might the cafe look like if the series was set in space?
- consider a secret place for children in the town to meet (like the mine shaft);
- modify some characters to suit their new environment. Would their clothes need to change?
- suggest outlines for some stories that might take place in this new LI'L ELVIS series.

Students will need to work on their towns over several sessions. At the end of this time, each group makes a presentation to the class. This presentation might be in the form of a mock oral submission to the Australian Children's Television Foundation — each group vying for the rights to produce a new series of LI'L ELVIS in an alternative setting.

Changing the Land

A town transformed

In *Caught In A Trap* the town is called Wannapoo. By the end of **Li'l Memphis P.T.D**, WC Moore has transformed the town from Wannapoo to Little Memphis and certain changes occur to its physical appearance as highlighted in the following backgrounds from the series. View the episode **Li'l Memphis P.T.D** and ask students to note some of those changes by comparing these images with those in **Caught In A Trap**.



The old roadhouse



The new roadhouse

In my day

Ask students, 'Has your town always looked like it does today?' Students can interview an older person who has grown up in their town and has seen changes occur. Create a time line to show major changes in the area. If possible, look at old photographs or maps of the town for comparison. (Two useful references here are Wheatley, N.1987. **My Place**. Collins Dove. Melbourne and Baker, J. 1991. **Window**. Julia Macrae Books. London.)

Look at these changes and discuss why they have happened. Do you think they have benefited the place and the people who live there?

Caring for our place

Students can scan through the local newspaper for examples of similar issues about the care or use of places in the local area. Find out about the current issues affecting the development of the area. Students may be able to interview a local councillor or conservation planner about how decisions are made in respect to caring for the town.

Progress waits for no one

WC Moore is making change happen very quickly in Wannapoo and he is a constant threat to the town. WC's character represents the ways in which 'enterprise' and 'development' can have negative effects on places if they are not carried out in consultation with residents. This is explored in **Boggled** where he claims that 'progress waits for no-one.'

With students, examine and discuss the following illustration from the series which highlights the changes between the old Wannapoo and the new.



The old and new

Watch the town meeting scene in **Boggled** (after the new town hall is dropped into the town by WC Moore). Here WC Moore reveals his plans for buying Wannapoo and turning it into 'A theme town dedicated to the Golden Age of Rock'n'Roll. Welcome to the future! Welcome to Lil' Memphis.'

Look at how the different characters react to the announcement. What is initially appealing to the townspeople about the changes? What are their concerns?

Set up a new scenario involving a threat to Wannapoo. For example:

WC Moore wants to buy the Li'l Memphis Cafe and develop it into a casino. Many of the residents of Wannapoo are opposed to the idea and a town meeting has been called to discuss the situation.

Assign one of the following roles to each student in the class:

- WC Moore (arguing for the development as it will make lots of money);
- Grace (arguing against the development — she likes the cafe the way it is);
- Duncan (the practiced 'yes man' who agrees to anything WC says, supports the casino of course and wants to go to gamble there);
- Janet (who is concerned that the kids will lose their cafe and are not able to go into a casino);
- Viska (who thinks the place should remain unchanged and claims that he was 'here before there was nothing');
- Eilleen Inyaface (reporter who thinks the centre will attract more life to the town and make it a more interesting place to be).

Once roles are assigned, students with the same roles meet in groups to develop their arguments.

The meeting is then called to order and the class will be organised into several meeting groups — each with a representative of each role. The groups are given a set time to discuss the issue and try to come up with some recommendations.

At the end of the session, ask the groups to share their feelings about the role play. What were the main issues arising? How did you feel trying to argue your case? Did you come to an agreement? How?

Where to now?

If possible, return to the local maps made at the beginning of the sequence of activities. Ask students to re-draw their maps — this time imagining what their town might look like in 20 – 50 years' time. Discuss their impressions and ask them how would you feel about living in the place you have created? Is this the kind of place you want to live in? If so, what part might you play in creating this place? If not — how might you help change the way the town will develop? Students may also consider how the town of Little Memphis might look in 50 years' time.



The Hero Within

Program:	Li'l Elvis and the Truckstoppers
Year Level:	Year 5 to Year 7
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; Health and Physical Education
Themes/Topics:	Self and Relationships; Heroes
Description:	This set of activities explores the concept of the hero. Who are heroes? Can anyone be a hero? What about the unsung heroes?
Resources:	Goondianna Smith, <i>The Wonder Years</i> ep 7 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Bearing All ep 9 <i>Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers</i> Other: newspapers and magazines

Lesson plan:

Tuning into Secrets

Keeping secrets

As a class

In the episode **Bearing All**, both Li'l Elvis and Roy Reno have a secret — a teddy bear that they depend on and want to keep private. After watching this episode, encourage the students to talk about experiences they may have of wanting to keep things private. You may begin by sharing a story from your own childhood. Students also may be more comfortable talking about something they cherished as a younger child.

For example, when you were younger, did you have special toys, activities or games that you didn't share with others? Why was this important to you? Why did you feel you needed to keep it secret? Did you ever reveal these to someone? What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Discuss the complexities in keeping personal secrets and the difficulties we have in revealing them.

Losing control

As a class

Spike is heavily persuaded by WC Moore to spy on Li'l Elvis. He photographs Li'l Elvis with his teddy and discovers his secret. He then uses those photographs to blackmail Li'l Elvis into taking him to the soccer game. How does Li'l Elvis feel? List his thoughts and feelings. What techniques have been used to help us identify with how Li'l Elvis is feeling?

Brainstorm thoughts and feelings that we experience when people discover things about us that we didn't want them to know, humiliation, embarrassment, fear, defensiveness...

Li'l Elvis's initial response to Spike sets off a series of events that he can't get out of — the events snowball beyond his control. Ask students to consider how the characters might have responded differently in the scene. For example, Elvis might say: 'So what!' I don't care if people know about my teddy!'; or Spike might choose to show the photos to WC Moore instead of keeping them to himself. Students work in groups to act out alternative pathways for this scene.

Heroes

Who are our heroes?

Individually -->partners-->as a class

Li'l Elvis and Roy Reno regard each other as 'heroes'. Ask students to write on separate cards, the names of people they regard as heroes. On the back of the card, ask students to list the reasons of choosing each hero. They then share their heroes with a partner and note names they might have in common. Encourage students to justify their choices to each other. As a whole class, pool the cards and then classify them in some way, for example: sports heroes, musicians, political heroes, women. Discuss: which is the largest group? Why? Which is the smallest group? Why?

Are there people or groups that are not represented? What are the characteristics that these people share?

What makes a hero?

1-3-6

Ask students to review their list of personal heroes and the reasons for their selection. Use a 1-3-6 consensus strategy to define the characteristics of a hero.

Individually

Students can complete a response to the phrase, 'A hero is someone who...' In trios, they can share their ideas and come up with a draft definition. Trios meet to form groups of six and finalise a definition to be presented to the whole class.

As a class

Ask students to talk about the process they went through in coming to an agreement and why they might have had varying interpretations of the term 'hero'.

The students could further explore heroes – internet, library etc

Larger than life

As a class

Roy Reno is depicted as 'larger than life'. What does this mean? Ask students to consider the decisions made by the animators in developing this character. List the features of the Roy Reno character. For example, he is portrayed as white, blond, male, muscular and athletic, and lacking in intelligence. What do these features symbolise? Write a description next to each feature, such as: muscular = strong, tough...

Compare this listing with heroes in comic strips. Who are these heroes? What are their features? What do these features symbolise? Why do you think comic strip heroes are like this?

What would happen if some of the characteristics of these heroes were changed? For example what if Roy Reno was female or Superman, a black woman? Would she still be a suitable hero? What effect do you think this would have on the story? How do you think the audience might respond?

Provide students with newspapers and magazines. Ask them to search for images of people who may be considered to be heroes, celebrities or famous in some way. Students could focus on the physical attributes of these people and make some suggestions as to the relationship between a person's physical features and their status in the eyes of others.

Using the criteria developed in the earlier activity What makes a hero?, students may create their own animation hero.

Unsung heroes

Li'l Elvis is surprised when he finds out that Roy Reno sees him as a hero. Many everyday people do 'heroic' things and go unrecognised by the public. For example, someone may be regarded as a hero within their own family because they saved the family pet from being run over by a car! Many communities have 'quiet achievers' who work voluntarily to help others. Such people can be regarded as local heroes but may not be recognised beyond their immediate friends or associates.

A survey?

Students can carry out a simple survey of parents, grandparents and friends to find out about unsung heroes. These questions might be used:

- Who would you regard as heroes in your life and why?
- Are there other people that you admire or that have had a big influence on you and who are not necessarily known by the public?
- What have they done to make you admire them?

Students could tape record their interviews, transcribe the main points and then compare the ideas looking for common features. The information might also be presented using art work or other visual means.

Return to the definitions 'A hero is....' developed in the earlier activity What makes a hero? and reconsider in the light of new information. Students may modify or add to their definitions.

Exploring Trust

Something to sing about

As a class

The Truck Stoppers play a song at the end of the episode about the importance of trusting yourself and being true to your nature or identity.

'Don't Hide Your Teddy'

Lyrics & Music: David Cheshire

Whatever you do
He is with you
Whatever they say
It's okay
Just show them you care
Don't hide your Teddy Bear
Be your own hero today

Wherever you go
He will follow
The higher the height
It's alright
He'll always be there
Don't hide your Teddy Bear
Be your own hero tonight

You don't have to hide
Deep down inside
Trust in yourself
Come what may
Believe and you'll find
New strength of mind
To be your own hero each day

Whatever you do
He is with you

Whatever they say
It's okay
Just show them you care
Don't hide your Teddy Bear
Don't hide your Teddy away
Be your own hero today

Ask students to consider the significance of the song to the episode. What is the song saying about heroes and our self-worth?

Students can investigate other songs about heroes or about trusting yourself — what are the messages contained in these lyrics? What perception of 'heroism' does each songwriter have? Some examples:

Mariah Carey *Then a hero comes along*

Bette Midler: *Wind beneath my wings*

Elton John: *Candle in the wind* (Marilyn Monroe) and *Goodbye English Rose* (Diana Princess of Wales)

Paul Kelly: *From little things, big things grow*

Tina Turner: *Simply the best*

Students could follow this activity by working in pairs to write the lyrics for a song about one of their heroes (or a hero they have found out about from the survey). Students may even try to compose a melody for their song, or use an existing, familiar melody and write new words to it.

Trust in yourself

Individually

Students construct a visual image of themselves as a 'hero'. This could be done by using photos of students' faces around which they draw themselves engaged in some kind of 'heroic' deed (now, or in the future). Repeat this activity — this time drawing someone else in the class as a hero. Share drawings and ask:

- How does the way we see ourselves compare with the way others see us?
- How does this image convey what is special about you as a human being?
- Which features of our images are similar? Which are different? Why?
- Are you comfortable talking about what is special about you? Why? Why not?

Extension

Biographies

Read to students a selection of biographies about famous people. For example:

Leigh, V. (1986) *Elvis Presley*, Wayland, USA.

Clarke, M. (1972) *Pastor Doug: the story of Sir Douglas Nicholls*, Landsdown Press, Melbourne, Vic. (Aboriginal leader).

Nicholson, J. (1997), *The Kimberley Warrior*, Allen and Unwin, NSW 1997 (The true story of Jandemurra).

Bursztynski, S. (1995), *Potions to Pulsars*, Allen and Unwin, NSW (biographies of women in science).

Lamond, M. (1995), *Going for it*, Allen and Unwin, NSW (biographies of famous sports people).

Dutton, G. (1981) *The Australian Heroes*, Angus and Robertson, Australia.

Students now gather information about someone they regard as a hero (either a famous person or an 'unsung' hero). Using this information, they construct a biography. Collate into a class book.