

Book Talk Saturday April 25, 2009

At the Home of Kim Fetterer, Valdosta, GA; in attendance: 4 teenagers from 7th grade and 1 from 10th, roughly 11-13 in age, three girls two boys. Avid readers last seen reading "Twilight" which I thought was a little out of their age range but oh well. Kitchen table was used to present talk with teens seated around the table so they could see me at the head of the table and also so they could see the computer monitor.

I was asked to have a theme by my cousin's daughter so the theme was Books, Illustrations and Movies. I used the following materials in my book talk:

The Invention of Hugo Cabret: A Novel in Words and Pictures, Brian Selznick, Scholastic, 2007 Hardcover edition. (illustrated by Brian Selznick)

A Trip to the Moon, Georges Melies, 1902 (shortened 8 min version)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGZilAMKtgA&feature=related>

A handout from Wikipedia about Georges Melies and specific information about the film *A Trip to the Moon*.

Coraline, Neil Gaiman, HarperCollins, 2002 Paperback edition. (illustrated by Dave McKean)

Coraline (The Graphic Novel Adaptation based on the novel, *Coraline*, by Neil Gaiman), adapted and illustrated by P. Craig Russell, HarperCollins Publishers, 2008 Hardcover edition.

These clips were shown from www.youtube.com and discuss a bit about how the movie *Coraline* was made.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO3n67BQvh0&feature=related> Coraline trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cayVMHSRHZI&feature=channel> Coraline set

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEr2qAWWgzE&feature=channel> Coraline puppet movement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCDOs5DxJPY&feature=channel> Coraline hair stylist

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5VTE9MZlW&feature=channel> Coraline knitter

Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas, Frank Thomas, Hyperion, 1993 Hardcover edition.

Howl's Moving Castle, Diana Wynne Jones, A Greenwillow Book, 2008 Paperback edition.

The Art of Howl's Moving Castle, A Film by Hayao Miyazaki (based on the Studio Ghibli Film from the novel by Diana Wynne Jones, screenplay written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki), VIZ, LLC, 2005 English Hardcover edition.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hbntEofuT0> YouTube trailer

A handout of the books and materials used for the book talk and given to the teens as they left.

The booktalk started with introductions and an explanation of the theme while I pointed out the various books we would be discussing. I brought along extra copies of *Coraline* (the graphic novel) but only had single copies of all the other books.

I started with *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Book talk: Hugo has a knack for gears and mechanical workings like those you would find in a clock or windup toy; he learned how they work from his father. Unfortunately his father is no longer around and Hugo is stuck living above a train station with his uncle who is responsible for keeping all the station clocks working. His uncle put Hugo to work helping with the rounds throughout the station, but one day Hugo's uncle never came back to the small room where they lived.

Not wanting the station master to figure out that his uncle was not around, Hugo took up his uncle's duties and kept the clocks in perfect working order. Hugo stole food as he needed it and kept a pretty low profile until the day he found the machine his father had been working on the day he died. This machine was something special and Hugo knew he could get it to work again, he hoped the machine would have a message for him from his father.

In order to get the machine working he would need small mechanical parts like the ones used by the toymaker in the station. Hugo begins stealing the little mechanical toys until he gets caught by the grumpy old toymaker. The toymaker demands Hugo empty his pockets and upon seeing the notebook from Hugo's father with sketches of the machine, the old man takes it as payment for the theft of the toys. Hugo is devastated and this is where the story really starts.

In order to get his book back, Hugo must work off his debt with the toymaker for the other toys he has stolen. He befriends the toy maker's granddaughter, and together they find a way to get his father's machine working again.

I read this passage on page 237:

"The children watched as the clockwork gears and levers inside the man began to engage. They whirred and turned and spun. Hugo's heart raced. He didn't care anymore that Isabelle was sitting next to him. It didn't matter at all. The only thing that mattered now was the message...pg 241: Hugo and Isabelle watched, wide-eyed in wonder, as very cautiously the man's miniature hand began to move..."

I showed the illustrations on page 238-239 (illustration of kids watching man) and on page 252-253 (illustration of moon).

Then I explained that the image of the moon is what the machine draws and that this is a famous image from a film by one of the first silent film makers to use special effects. I did not want to spoil the ending of the book but I explained that the second part of the book talks about this film maker and let them watch the film *A Trip to the Moon*, so they would have a better idea of what it meant when they read the book. I then gave them a hand out about the film maker and the film *A Trip to the Moon* and I

passed around the book so they could see the other types of illustrations and film stills that were included in the book.

The next book was *Coraline* (the novel):

Book talk: Coraline is bored. Bored, Bored, Bored. Her parents are no help either; they are both working and too busy to amuse her. Her dad tells her to go count the windows and doors in their new house and her mother tells her to go bother the neighbors. She counts all the windows and doors and finds a locked door; and she meets the old ladies downstairs who used to be actresses. She finds a black cat, an old well, and a strange Russian man who lives upstairs and says his mice can sing.

Coraline asks her mother about the locked door and is shown an old black key that opens the locked door. Together they open it, but there is nothing but brick behind the door; a door to nowhere or so it seems. Very curious about the door, Coraline is drawn to get the old black key and open the locked door while her mother is not around and finds that this time the brick are gone and a passage way has appeared.

She decides to explore and finds that the passage leads back to her house, but it is different, better even. Coraline smells dinner cooking and hears her mother in the kitchen but is surprised when her mother turns around to face her and in place of eyes has shiny black buttons. The mother with the button eyes explains that she is Coraline's 'other' mother and that she is so happy Coraline has finally come 'home'. The other mother invites Coraline to explore the house and tell her other father it is time for dinner.

Everything seems too good to be true when her 'other' parents ask her to stay with them for good; there is a condition..Coraline must sew on black buttons for her eyes.

I showed the illustrations on page 23 (the other mother) and 148 (the spider hand). I asked them to remember how they envisioned the scene in their head while I read. I then showed how the same passage with the other parents was covered in the graphic novel on pages 49-51. I passed out the graphic novels and let them look through them.

I explained how most of the movies they have grown up with were at one time books and that in order to get the movie a series of illustrations were done to help lay out the real time action. These illustrations are similar to the graphic novel or comic layout and are called story boards. Beyond storyboards many artists are used to make paintings or drawings of how they think the scene from the story would look. In the case of *Coraline* (the movie directed by Henry Selnick), model makers were brought in to make the stop motion film with mechanical puppets, but the story still had lots of drawings and a storyboard that helped them lay out the look of the movie. I explained that Henry Selnick is the man who also directed the *Nightmare Before Christmas* and *James and the Giant Peach*.

I then showed the clips from the *Coraline* movie trailer and behind the scenes, and left off with some images that show how the puppets were made from *Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas* book on the making of the film.

Lastly I discussed *Howl's Moving Castle* and how it was translated into an animated feature using both traditional drawings and 3D computer drawings.

Book talk: Sophie is a plain girl who makes wonderful hats. What she doesn't realize is somehow she bewitches the hats into doing things for the wearer like making them more attractive or bringing them wealth. Her hats are so successful that the Witch of the Waste thinks Sophie is trying to compete with her. The Witch of the Waste is angry and puts a spell on Sophie that makes her really, really old. Part of the spell is that she can't tell anyone she is under it or anything about it. So Sophie must set out to find the arrogant, girl chasing, Wizard Howl and his crazy roving castle in hopes of finding a way to remove the spell. Sophie gets more that she bargains for in her quest and the Wizard Howl find that he has a heart indeed.

The book is great and is slightly different from the movie, but the movie is just as good. In the book, *The Art of Howl's Moving Castle*, you can see how this story is translated first to storyboard, then drawings, and finally to a full out animated scene.

Then I showed them the trailer web site for the movie and afterwards we had sandwiches, oatmeal cookies and strawberries.

Conclusion: I felt that the book talk was pretty successful based on the table full of chattering teens that quieted down and showed genuine interest in what I was showing them. At the start I asked if any of them had read the books or seen any of the movies we were discussing. The oldest boy said the *Coraline* trailers were scary and that the 'cut off' hand in particular turned him off, but he had seen the movie *Howl's Moving Castle*. The youngest boy had actually read the novel *Coraline*. The girls had not read or seen any of the material.

What made this book talk work was that it was not just me reading or lecturing to them, I mixed it up by using the visuals from the books/graphic novel and the 'how they made it' books on the movie and animated feature; and we were able to watch the 1902 film *A Trip to the Moon*, the behind the scenes on *Corline* and the trailer for *Howl's Moving Castle* using the computer I brought. When watching the 1902 film, the kids were able to ask questions and make comments since it was silent, I was able to explain how the film was the forerunner of modern science fiction and fantasy films.

At the end of the talk, the oldest teen curled up in a corner and was reading *Coraline* the graphic novel and one of the girls was begging me to loan her my copy of *Howl's Moving Castle*. So I guess it got them interested in the books and that was point. Later in speaking with one of the parents, it was suggested that the schools would be very interested in someone coming into the schools and giving these type of presentations to the kids (something above and beyond the "AR's").

I wouldn't change a thing, but I would remember to make my list of books and their corresponding movies.