Young V&A

Teachers' Guide
KS1 – KS3

12 Feb–15 Nov 2026

Inside Aardman

Wallace & Gromit And Friends

V&A

Teachers' Guide

This Teachers' Guide will introduce you to Young V&A's exhibition, *Inside Aardman: Wallace & Gromit and Friends*. It outlines what you can discover on a trip with your class.

In this resource you will find:

- an introduction to the exhibition's themes and content
- a description of the **exhibition interactive** activities
- suggestions for **student prompts** and **back at school** activities, which could lead to the creation of a simple stop-frame animation project or standalone classroom activities
- curriculum links

Booking a visit

Free exhibition tickets are available for school groups on weekday mornings (Monday to Thursday) during term time. Visits outside these times require paid tickets. Free entry must be pre-booked, and lunch timeslots can be selected when booking. To book, register for an account by scanning the QR code below, or visit vam.ac.uk/schools.

The exhibition is designed for KS2 and KS3, but all year groups are welcome. The space is compact, and we recommend allowing around 45 minutes to complete all interactive activities and enjoy the exhibition. Schools are also welcome to enjoy a self-guided visit to our permanent galleries – *Play, Imagine, Design* – before or after the exhibition. If you have any questions about planning a visit, please email yvaschools@vam.ac.uk

At the end of this guide, you can find the following printable resources. These are to print at school and won't be available in the exhibition. We highly encourage you to bring pencils with you.

- **Exhibition sketchbook template** – for students to record their ideas and drawings during their visit. Cut and fold this before you arrive, as scissors won't be available or allowed onsite.
- **Storyboarding template** – students can use this create a storyboard for ideas for a stop-motion animation.

Supporting school workshop

Sound Designers: Make some noise!
KS1–KS2, £100, 60min

Join us for this lively 60 min workshop, where children will be able to apply their scientific knowledge of sound and materials, to create interesting audio effects for iconic stop-motion footage, such as *Wallace & Gromit*. Children will learn to identify and select materials, based on the sound vibrations they produce. Through play, testing and self-expression- children will build their creative confidence, collaboration skills and communication skills. Book using the QR code to the left.

Key Curriculum links: Design & Technology, English, Science

About *Inside Aardman: Wallace & Gromit and Friends*

Through this exhibition, teachers and students will discover the incredible stop-motion world of Aardman. This exhibition reveals the magic behind the scenes at Aardman's studios, showing how their expert teams of directors, artists, animators, model makers and more make their cracking creations.

Who are Aardman?

Aardman began over 50 years ago when two school friends, David Sproxton and Peter Lord, started making animations on their kitchen table. Later, a young Nick Park joined Aardman to complete his student project, the first *Wallace & Gromit* film. Today Aardman are the UK's largest and most successful animation studio and have made some of the world's best-loved animated films.

Before you visit: Why not watch an Aardman animation together as a class? Perhaps the *Shaun the Sheep Movie* (KS1), *Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers* (KS2) or *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!* (KS3)? Have a class discussion about the process of creating stop-motion animation. We also have a screening room in the final space of the exhibition where you can watch Aardman short films.

Class stop-motion activities

Taking inspiration from the exhibition, have a go at creating a stop-motion animation with your class. This can be supported by encouraging your students to take part in the different **exhibition interactives, student prompts** and **back at school** activities throughout this resource. Children can:

- develop characters, worlds and stories
- design puppets, sets and models
- try out different camera shots and lighting and get animating
- add voices and sounds
- consider special effects

You can try out all activities or whatever you have time for. We suggest students work in small teams of 4 to 6 to create their animations.

Download *Stop Motion Studio* app, or another free app on a device or tablet and follow the in-app tutorials to create simple stop-motion. Please share your animations with us via @young.vam

How stop-motion animation works

Aardman use stop-motion animation in many of their works. Stop-motion animation captures individual still images of objects, in different positions, then plays them together in quick succession to create the illusion of movement.

Exhibition interactive: Have a go at spinning the praxinoscope to see how stop-motion works. Discuss with others how light and mirrors allow us to see the images inside the device.

Later in the exhibition you will also find Kinora (similar to a flip book) and other optical toys.

Back at school: Have a go at making a simple flip book using either drawing or photography.

Praxinoscope interactive: Teacher notes

1. Light energy is emitted from the gallery lights (light source). Remember light always travels in a straight line.
2. Light is reflected off the different images, into the mirrors.
3. Light is then reflected off the mirrors, directly into our eyes.
4. When we spin the praxinoscope, the images are seen together in quick succession. This can be called stop-motion.

Stop-motion animation process

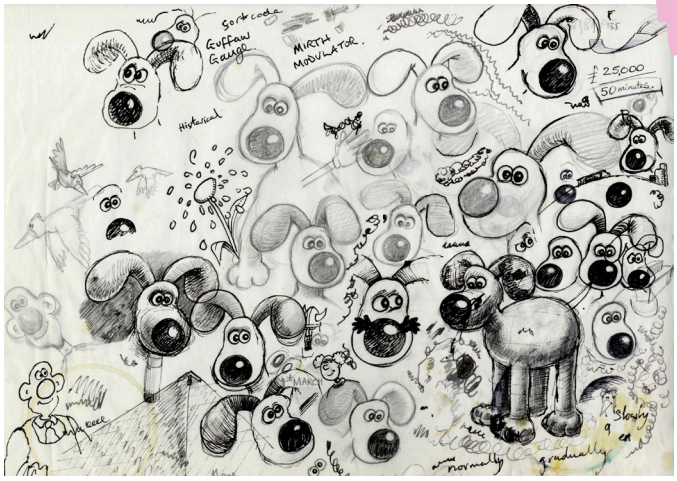
Creating a stop-motion animation is a process that brings together many creative and technical skills across four main stages – ideation and storyboarding, model making, production and post-production. These stages can be applied to all forms of stop-motion animation.

Student prompt: Find out about the different creative roles there are in an animation studio. Think about your skills, hobbies and personality – which role would you be most suited to? Director, model maker, writer or sound artist?

Section 1: The Big Idea

Like all stories, animations start with a cracking idea. Artists and directors fill sketchbooks with ideas. Sometimes these come from the world around them – their favourite places, their family, their friends – or they might just use their imagination.

Even if their sketches don't become stories straight away, sketching helps artists come up with endless ideas. Even the little ones can turn into a grand adventure.



Characters

Aardman's animations are full of lovable characters and iconic villains. Some of their most famous characters come in duos, like Wallace and Gromit or Morph and Chas. Pairing together odd couples leads to all sorts of fun. Sketches show how Aardman artists dreamt up the characters who are now the stars we see on screen. Some of their biggest heroes started out on a scrap of paper.

Exhibition interactive: Have a go at designing your own character using the exhibition worksheets. How will they move, what adventures will they go on? Don't worry if your first sketch doesn't work out! You can try out a few different ideas until it looks right. Look at the different sketches around you to see how different Aardman characters have evolved through iteration.

Where it all happens

Aardman's adventures are set in varied places: from the moon and the high seas to a chicken coop. Artists often base the settings on real places. They fill their sets with loads of incredible details, so even when the films are set miles away from ordinary life, they still feel believable.

Student prompt: Can you think of a story idea for a new animation based on your local area? What adventures could happen in your school, at the park, in the museum? Try bringing together ordinary life with your wildest imagination Sketch and note down your ideas in your exhibition sketchbook.

Atmosphere

Artists create 'concept art' to show how the film will look and feel – the mood, the tone, the texture. Is it dark and spooky? Is it sleek and futuristic? Concept art uses visual ideas from films, books and drawings to give animations the style that the director wants.

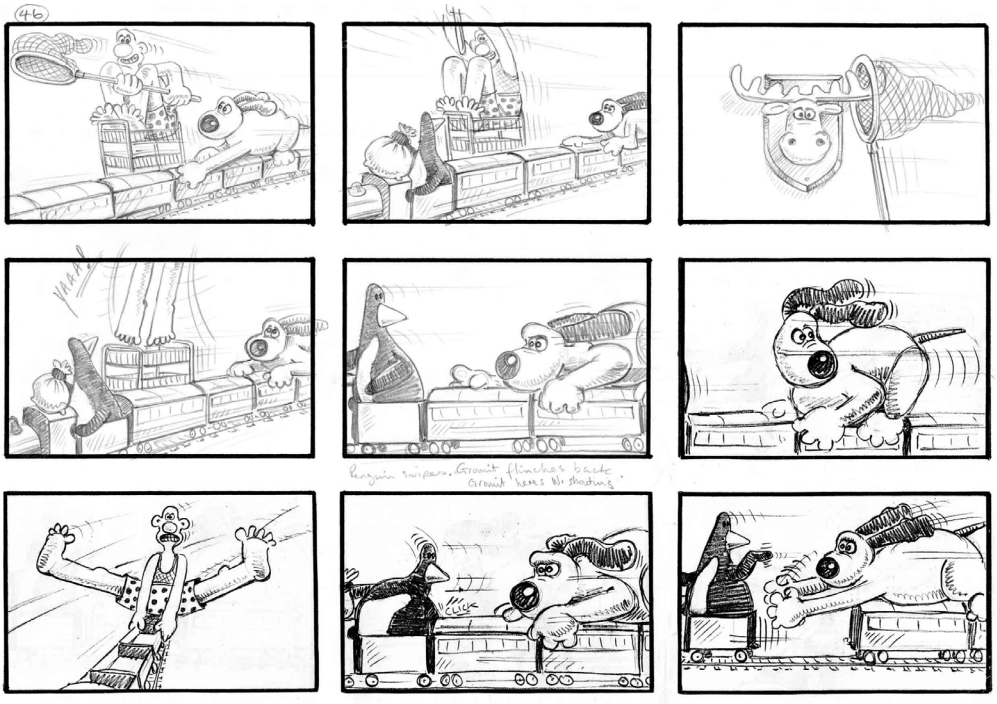
Student prompt: Think about the story of your journey to the museum today. What was the weather like? What colours were around you? What was the mood of your group? Now reimagine your journey with a different atmosphere. How does this change the story? Draw or describe the two versions in your exhibition sketchbook.

Creating a story

With the characters in place, it's time to decide what scrapes and adventures they might get up to. Who are the heroes of your story? What kind of story is it – a scary one or a comedy? At Aardman, writers turn ideas for stories into scripts, which turn into drawn 'storyboards', and then animated storyboards called 'animatics'.

Back at school: Taking inspiration from the exhibition and objects in the Young V&A Imagine Gallery, have a go at creating storyboards with your class. What will happen at the beginning, middle and end? Capture the key moments in your storyboard.

Teachers!
Use the template at the end of this resource to support your students with storyboarding.



Section 2: Making a Scene

Now the story is set, model makers take the ideas off the page and into the real world. In stop-motion animation, everything you see is designed and handmade. Aardman's first models were made by one or two people. Nowadays there are big teams of people making complex sets, full of funny and hidden details.

Bringing puppets to life

The models of characters in stop-motion animations are called puppets. They are like the actors in a film. Directors, artists and model makers work together so that puppets look, move and feel just like they want them to. Every detail, from fingers to faces and wigs to wellies, is researched and tested before the final puppets are made.

Student prompt: Get hands on with models of Wallace and Gromit in the touch interactive. Discuss the processes you think the model makers had to use, like cutting, shaping, joining and finishing. Look at the tools on the model making desk nearby to get some ideas.

Making a puppet

Aardman's early puppets, like Morph, were made entirely from clay. This made it easy to mould him into other shapes and objects. But some puppets need to do trickier movements, so nowadays Aardman's model makers use lots of techniques to make this work. Understanding the character's storyline and what they get up to helps model makers decide how to build the puppet.

Exhibition interactive: Check out the armature interactive. Many model makers add armature (a bit like a metal skeleton) to puppets, to strengthen them for the different movements they need to make. What different actions can you make with the armature?

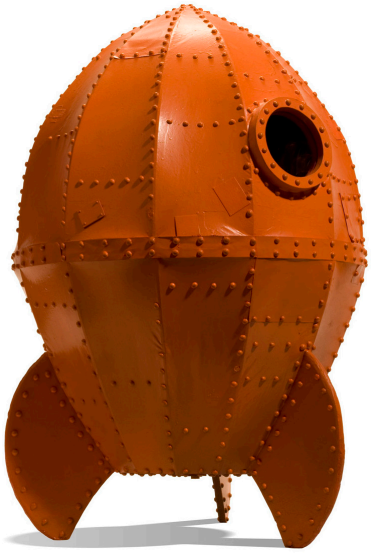
Back at school: Using plasticine, clay or recycled materials, have a go at making a puppet. Try using wire to build 'armature' to make your puppet stronger when moving it. Think about how to position your puppet in different positions – are they running, jumping, skipping? Try acting out these different actions as you move your puppet. Experiment with some quick prototypes before adding detail.

Sets and models

Sets are often the largest and most complicated models used in animations. When we see them on screen they look like complete rooms, buildings or environments. In real life the set designers will only make the parts which will be seen by the camera. If a scene takes place indoors, this might be as simple as two walls and a floor.

Exhibition interactive: Get hands on with the different sets and models in the touch interactive. Describe the different textures you can feel. Why do you think the model makers selected these materials? Are they flexible, rough or shiny?

Student prompt: Wallace's creations are usually a mix of advanced technologies, like robotics or artificial intelligence, with something more old fashioned, like levers and pulleys. What invention could you design to support a friend or family member to do a simple action like brushing their teeth or making a cup of tea? How might you use gears, pulleys and levers to make it run? Look at the surrounding models for inspiration and research. Create a quick sketch in your exhibition sketchbook.



Back at school: Have a go at making some sets and models for your stop-motion. You could do this through drawing, painting and/or sculpture – it's up to you! Try adding unexpected materials from the recycling or dried food cupboard to add interesting textures to your designs. Think about the functional properties of the materials you are using (are they strong, bendy or light), as well how they look (shiny, old or rough). How do the materials you are using compare to the materials you are trying to imitate?

Worldbuilding

The world around us is packed full of small objects and little details. Animations also need these little details to help their worlds feel real and lived in – whether these are pictures hanging on a wall or adverts on a bus.

Aardman's animations are alive with these small, everyday things, many of which contain hidden jokes that you might not notice the first time. Keep an eye out for cheese-y puns...

Student prompt: Check out the small props such as newspapers, signage and posters, designed to bring comical detail to Aardman animations. Pretend to be a news presenter and read aloud some of the newspaper headlines. Change the volume and tone of your voice to add drama.

Section 3: Lights, Camera, Animate!

With the puppets, props, and sets ready, it's time to put all those ideas into motion.

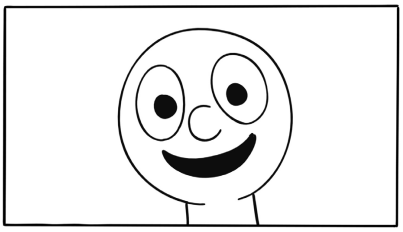
It takes a whole team at Aardman to bring everything together. As well as animators, who move the puppets, there are the teams lighting the sets, operating the camera and keeping everything running.

Basic camera shots

Different camera shots make a film more interesting to watch and help with storytelling

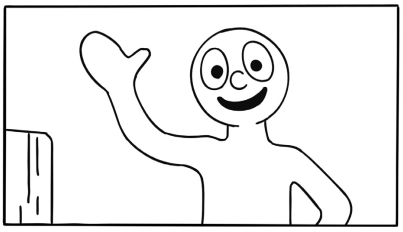
Close-up

Use this for a dramatic moment, to focus on a character's feelings



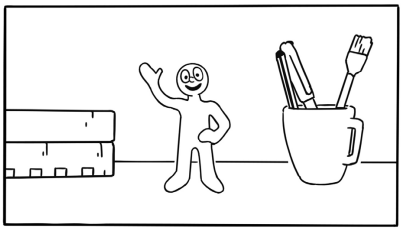
Medium shot

Usually shot waist upwards, and is good for dialogue



Wide shot

Lets you see the whole character and establishes the environment



Getting equipped

To start filming, the main bit of kit you need is something to take photographs, like a camera or a smart phone. If you can shoot lots of images, you're good to go. Aardman's early animations were made using an old-fashioned film camera, but they have experimented with new technology to find different ways of filmmaking.

Student prompt: Check out the Mitchell 35mm camera which Aardman used to film many different animations on. How does it differ to other cameras you have seen or used?

Now look at the drawings nearby of *Chicken Run* and the *Shaun the Sheep* TV series. These are ideas for different camera shots. Discuss how they have been sketched from different perspectives – is it close-up, from afar or from above? How does this change the scene?

Back at school: Once you have selected which camera you are going to use to film your animation, have a go at different basic types of camera shots to bring different perspectives to your story. Close-up, wide shot, medium shot... the choice is yours. Try the shots out on your favourite toy or object first. Try a few different options before you make your final decision.

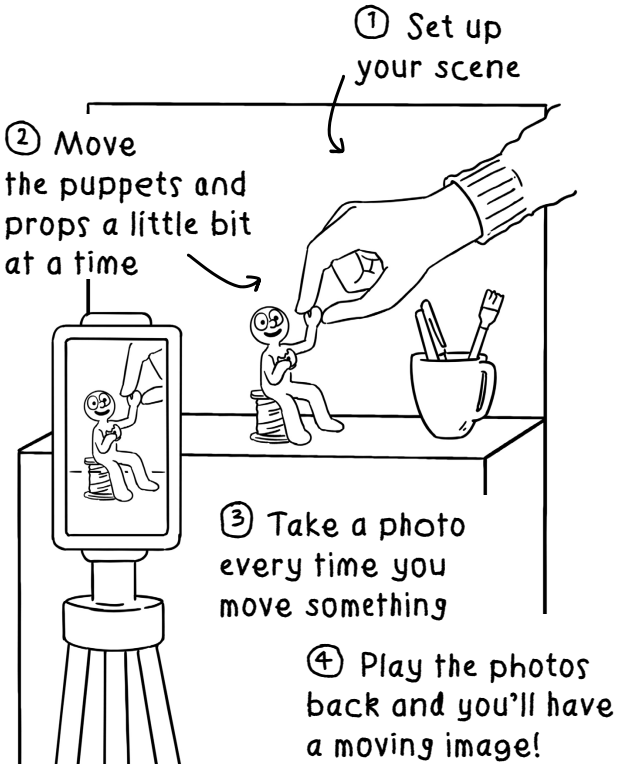
Lighting design

Lighting transforms the feel of a set. It can make scenes warm, cold, moody or bright. Most lights are placed off-camera and can't be seen on screen. 'Practical lights' are part of the animated world, like a lamp or a candle. A well-lit moment can also illuminate key scenes. A bolt of lightning makes viewers jump, and spotlights draw attention to a character who's up to no good.

Exhibition interactive: Have a go changing the lighting of a real Aardman set – Feathers McGraw in prison, from *Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl*. Play with the sliders to change the lighting. How does the colour and temperature of the light change the mood of the scene?

Back at school: Try out different everyday lighting (floor lamps, desk lamps, torches) to bring drama to your sets and puppets. Try adding different colour acetate or films to your lights to change the mood of your story.

How does stop motion work?



Animating

The stage is set and the lights are on – it's time to get animating! Animating is the slow process of moving the puppets bit by bit between taking photos. It's all about the small expressions and movements which make the puppets' performances believable. Just like actors, some animators are better suited to certain characters than others.

Exhibition interactive: Step into the role of animator in the stop-motion interactive. Try bringing life to different objects to create a short animation.

Exhibition interactive: Animators often act out and record the scenes they are about to film, to practise timings and figure out what kind of performance they want the puppets to give. Try out the Live Action Video (LAV) interactive and have a go at different acting prompts in front of green screen, e.g. *pretend to be... Gromit...making a cup of tea!* Watch your performance back and think about how you can improve it.

Back at school: Now you have your story, puppets, sets and camera, it's time to start animating! Decide as a team your different roles. You will need someone to direct the camera, move the puppets and keep an eye on the storyboard. Try working together as team to make the process as smooth as possible. Remember animation takes a lot of patience – Aardman average making six seconds of stop-motion per week!

Choice of voice

Actors provide the voices for characters on screen. It's a bit like when you read a book and you hear the character's voice in your head. What characters sound like is as important as what they look like, so actors find a voice to match their characters' appearance and personality. They might try different accents or do physical acting to make it sound realistic.

Exhibition interactive: Have a go at the mouth shapes interactive. Look at how your mouth moves when you speak. How many different sound and mouth shapes do you use? Try saying aloud *'Wens-ley-dale'* (one of Wallace's favourite cheeses!) Check out the different mouth shapes model makers have created for Wallace. Compare them to your mouth shape.

Back at school: Think about recording the voices and sounds of your classmates to bring your different characters to life. How do your characters speak – quickly, slowly, loudly? Do they have accents? What mood are they in? Are they human?

Section 4: Final Touches

As they say in the film industry, 'That's a wrap'. Production is now complete – the actors have recorded their dialogue and the animators are finished filming – but there is still a lot to do. These last stages are called post-production. Final edits are made and sound, music and visual effects are added. These final touches bring it all together to make the finished films we know and love.

Sound

Sound in animation is about much more than just voice acting. Music can help tell a story or stir an emotion, while sound effects can make us jump or shudder. Good sound effects can be made by experimenting with objects around you. Crunching cornflour in a tea towel can sound like walking through snow and frying bacon mimics the sound of rain.

Exhibition interactive: Try out the sound interactive to hear different instruments used for the characters in *Robin Robin*. Can you match the sound to the different characters?

Exhibition interactive: Try out the foley station interactive to create the sound effects using everyday objects for *Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out*. How might you create the sound of walking down the stairs?

Back at school: Try making different sound effects with some everyday objects made of different materials.

Teachers!
Check out our new ***Sound Designers: Make some noise!*** workshop for KS1–KS2.
See page 1 for more details.

Visual effects

Certain effects, like rain or explosions, can't easily be made using stop-motion techniques. This is where visual effects (or VFX) come in to help realise the director's creative vision. It's hard to spot when Aardman use VFX. Nowadays, using digital techniques are part of all their films. This could be green screens or combining computer-generated images (CGI) with stop-motion animation.

Student prompt: Check out the set of *Early Man*, which uses a green screen. Find the image nearby of how this set is transformed using visual effects. Discuss the use of visual effects in stop-motion – how can it be used to enhance the storytelling?

Back at school: Review and reflect on your ideas, storyboards and/or animation footage for stop-motion. Imagine and discuss how you might use visual effects, e.g. green screen or CGI technology if you had access to this technology. Let your imagination run wild as the possibilities are endless! Sketch and write down your ideas.

Section 5: Screening Room

In the final section of the exhibition, you can kick back and relax and watch some of Aardman's short films, music videos and adverts. These include *Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* and the *Shaun the Sheep Movie*.

Student prompt: Step into the role of film critic. What's your favourite film? Why? How would you review the film in three words? How many stars would you give out of five? Check out the short stop-motion film by Young V&A Collective who created an animation inspired by play.

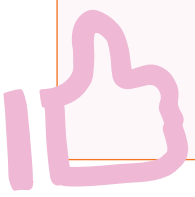
Back at school: Create a poster to promote your film to others. Who are the main characters? What is the title? Do you have a strapline to entice the viewer?

Reviewing your creations
Host a screening of your stop-motion films for other students in your class or school. If you don't have a film, no worries, show off your storyboards, sketches and/or models. Did your final outcomes come out as you originally intended? Ask for feedback from your peers. Review and discuss your feedback. How might you use this feedback to improve your work?

Primary Curriculum Links

These links have been drawn from the lower KS2 curriculum but can be adapted for KS1 and upper KS2 as needed.

Subject	The exhibition provides opportunities to:	Where can you do this in the exhibition/resource?
Art & Design	• Use a range of materials creatively to design and make a product. Use drawing, painting and sculpture to develop and share ideas, experiences and imagination	Characters, page 3 Making a Puppet, page 6 Sets and Models, page 7 Animating, page 9 Screening, page 11
	• Practise drawing techniques	Characters, page 4 Creating a Story, page 5
	• Learn about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the differences and similarities between different practices and disciplines and making links to their own work	Stop-motion Process, page 3
	• Create sketchbooks to record their observations and use them to review and revisit ideas	Opportunities throughout the exhibition, use the printable resource to support this.
Design & Technology	**Design** Use research and develop design criteria to inform the design of innovative, functional, appealing products that are fit for purpose, aimed at particular individuals or groups	Sets and Models, page 7
	Generate, develop, model and communicate their ideas through discussion, annotated sketches and prototypes	Opportunities throughout exhibition
	Make Select from and use a wide range of tools and equipment to perform practical tasks accurately (for example, cutting, shaping, joining and finishing)	Bring a Puppet to Life, page 6



	Select from and use a wide range of materials and components, including construction materials, textiles and ingredients, according to their functional properties and aesthetic qualities	Sets and Models, page 7
	Evaluate Investigate and analyse a range of existing products	Screening Room, page 11
	Evaluate their ideas and products against their own design criteria and consider the views of others to improve their work	Reviewing your Creations, page 11
	Technical knowledge Apply their understanding of how to strengthen, stiffen and reinforce more complex structures	Making a Puppet, page 6 Sets and Models, page 7
	Understand and use mechanical systems in their products (for example, gears, pulleys, cams, levers and linkages)	Sets and Models, page 7
English	• Develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding what they read by discussing words and phrases that capture people's interest and imagination	Characters, page 4
	• Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by drawing inferences such as understanding characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions and justifying inferences with evidence	Characters, page 4
	• Plan their writing by discussing and recording ideas	Creating a Story, page 5
	• Draft and write by composing and rehearsing sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures	Worldbuilding, page 7 Animating, page 9

Science	**<u>Everyday materials</u>** Identify and name a variety of everyday materials, including wood, plastic, glass, metal, water and rock	Sets and Models, page 7
	Compare the uses of everyday materials in and around the school with materials found in other places (at home, the journey to school, on visits, and in stories, rhymes and songs); observing closely, identifying and classifying the uses of different materials and recording their observations	
	Find out how the shapes of solid objects made from varied materials can be changed by squashing, bending, twisting and stretching	
	<u>Sound</u> Identify how sounds are made, associating some of them with something vibrating	Sound, page 10
	Recognise that vibrations from sounds travel through a medium to the ear	Sound, page 10
	Find patterns between the pitch of a sound and features of the object that produced it	Sound, page 10
	<u>Light</u> Use the idea that light travels in straight lines to explain that objects are seen because they give out or reflect light into the eye	Praxinoscope, page 3
	Explain that we see things because light travels from light sources to our eyes or from light sources to objects and then to our eyes	Praxinoscope, page 3

KS3 Curriculum Links

Subject	The exhibition provides opportunities to:	Where can you do this in the exhibition/resource?
Art & Design	• Develop a critical understanding of artists, architects and designers, expressing reasoned judgements that can inform their own work	Opportunities throughout exhibition
	• Use a range of techniques to record their observations in sketchbooks, journals and other media as a basis for exploring their ideas	The Big Idea, pages 4 & 5
	• Increase their proficiency in the handling of different materials	Making a Puppet, page 6 Sets and Models, page 7
	• Analyse and evaluate their own work and that of others, in order to strengthen the visual impact or applications of their work	Screening Room, page 11
Design & Technology	**Design** Develop and communicate design ideas using annotated sketches and detailed plans	Making a Scene, pages 6 & 7
	Make Select from and use specialist tools, techniques, processes and equipment	Opportunities throughout exhibition
	Select from and use a wide, more complex range of materials and components, taking into account their properties	Worldbuilding, page 7
	Evaluate Analyse the work of past and present professionals and others to develop and broaden their understanding	Opportunities throughout exhibition
	Understand developments in design and technology	Opportunities throughout exhibition

Image credits

Front Cover: Aardman characters

Page 2: Morph

Page 3: Nick Park using a Mitchell camera on set, *Chicken Run*, 2000 © DreamWorks LLC, Aardman Features Ltd & Pathé Image 2000

Page 4: Lighting on the set of *Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death*, 2008 © Aardman Animations Limited/Wallace & Gromit Limited 2008

Page 5: Gromit character study by Nick Park, 1989

Ginger and Rocky in the pie-making machine, *Chicken Run*, 2000 © DreamWorks LLC, Aardman Features Ltd & Pathé Image 2000

Page 6: Concept art for *Robin Robin* by Matthew Forsythe, 2021

Storyboard panel for *Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers* by Nick Park, 1993

Page 7: Timmy the sheep

Preparing puppet mouth shapes after 3D printing for *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!*, 2012 © 2012 Sony Pictures Animation Inc

Page 8: Rocket ship model, *Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out*, 1989

Wallace's bed, *Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death*, 2008 © Aardman Animations Limited 2008 ©

Page 11: Peter Sallis recording dialogue for Wallace with Nick Park © Aardman / Wallace & Gromit Ltd 1993

Page 12: Orchestra performing the music for *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon*, 2019 © 2019 Aardman Animations Limited and StudioCanal SAS

Needle-felted puppets, *Robin Robin*, 2021 © 2021 Netflix Worldwide Entertainment, LLC

Page 13: Background spectators added into the scene using VFX in *Early Man*, 2018 © 2018 StudioCanal SAS and The British Film Institute

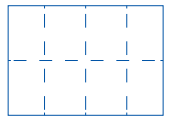
Page 14: Wallace and Gromit and Norbot, *Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl*, 2024, © Wallace & Gromit Limited 2024

Page 19: Drawing of Wallace & Gromit on the moon, *Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out*, 1989

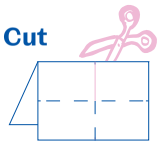
Fold and cut

Use your sketchbook to record your ideas, thoughts and drawings. Cut and fold your sketchbook at school before you arrive at the museum.

1 Fold!

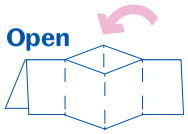


2 Cut

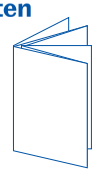


3 Fold!

4 Open



5 Flatten



Name:

Storyboarding template

Create your own storyboard for an idea for a stop-motion animation. What will happen at the beginning, middle and end? Capture key moments in your storyboard through drawing and writing.

1	2	3
4	5	6