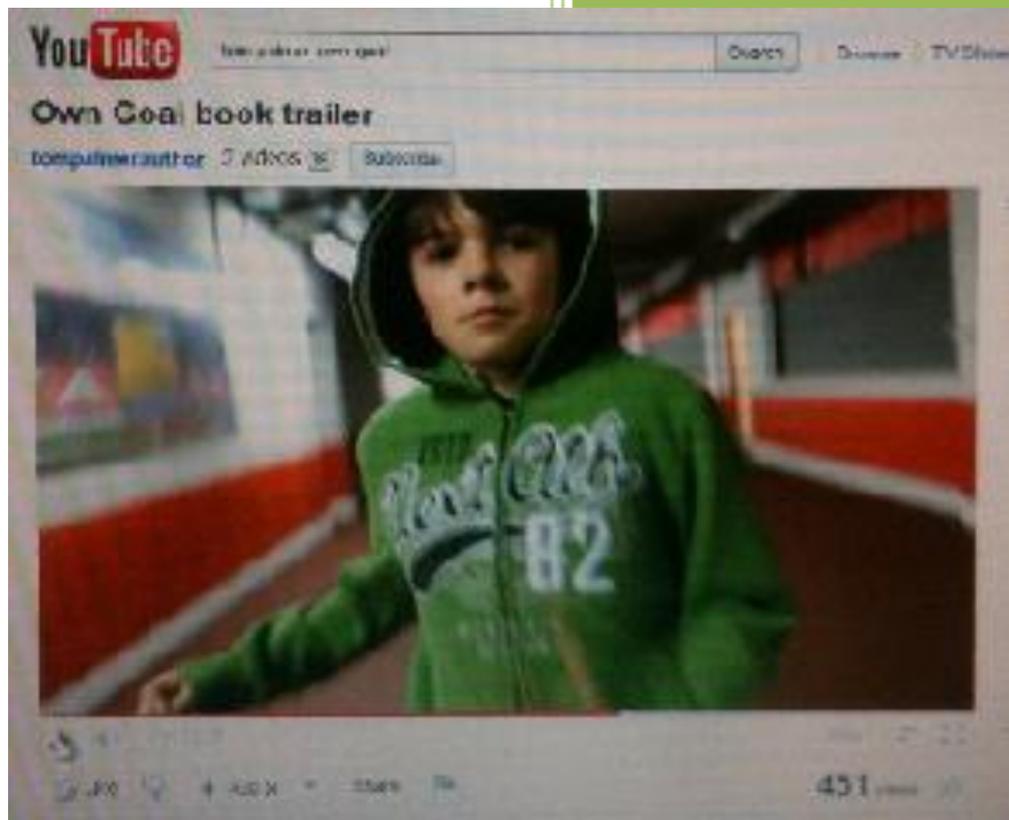


The Ghyllgrove School Football Writers

Filming a Book Trailer to Engage Readers



Diane Baker

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Filming a Book Trailer to Engage Readers:

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By Diane Baker

Nobody quite knows the frustration you feel as a primary school teacher when confronted with pupils who are lively, intelligent and enthusiastic about many things in their life, except reading. Especially reading.

I conceived the Ghyllgrove Football Writers in an attempt to reverse this negative attitude to reading. Set up over three years ago in the Basildon school where I have worked as a teacher for over eleven years, it has gone from strength to strength. Individuals, who avoided reading at all costs, now read for pleasure. Pupils who disliked writing are now proud to call themselves writers.

This year's cohort of sixteen Year 6 pupils has recently completed our latest project: a filmed book trailer for Tom Palmer's newly published book *Own Goal*. They are rightly jubilant and proud of their achievements. And so am I.

As their teacher, I would like to share with you the ingredients that I believe help contribute to our success.

A shared passion

This is not just my vision. Tom Palmer has been our adopted author for over three years now at Ghyllgrove, and along with my headteacher, Jude Gibbon; we all passionately agree that more children should read for pleasure. At the beginning of the academic year we start by discussing and agreeing objectives, the final outcome and how best to involve parents and the wider community. Before a single activity commences, therefore, there is a collective understanding about the aims of the project and how we will best get there. Reading is at the heart of everything we do.

Aims

Simplicity is the key, our main aims are:

- Pupils to read more for pleasure
- Pupils to write with more confidence

The broad nature of these aims allows for more dynamic creative learning experiences.

Parental Involvement

Parents are involved throughout the year. This year they were invited in to meet Tom at the beginning of the project, accompanied all of us on the film shoot to Charlton FC and joined in with the celebrations at the end. This included a private screening of the book trailer with Tom in attendance. As a final activity we asked pupils to design an *Own Goal* postcard and, without their knowledge, Tom and I wrote a joint thank you message on the back and posted these to parents. Having the parents' support is crucial, seeing them become involved in their child's learning is a pleasure. This involvement can only increase the possibility of reading continuing at home after the project finishes.

Hooking pupils in, not letting them go

Pupils are immediately engaged with purposeful and relevant learning activities. At the start of this project, Tom acted as a real-life client and requested their help in making a filmed book trailer for his book *Own Goal*. The pupils then created their own film company, complete with company logo and company name. (*TomDeGenie Films*) Other activities then followed, usually on a weekly basis. Some facilitated by me alone, others with Tom and me working together. Pupils were asked to do the following:

- Read a film production guide and decide what job they would like within the company
- Write to their client – Tom – explaining why they should be considered for a specific job
- Read an email from Tom telling them what job they had got
- Watch and evaluate on-line book trailers
- Read Tom's manuscript of *Own Goal*
- Draw story maps of *Own Goal*
- Develop book trailer storyboards
- Pitch ideas about the book trailer to Tom and their parents
- In role as journalists, interview the villain of the book – Salvatore Fo (Tom in role, complete with Italian accent!)
- Write newspaper reports about Salvatore Fo
- Use cameras
- Film live action scenes at Charlton FC
- Compose music for the book trailer
- Write the text frames for the book trailer
- Write invitations for parents to attend individual sessions
- Read books from the football writers' special library

Activities such as these are successful because they capture the pupils' imaginations but also require them to read and write for a real purpose. This group of pupils were always enthusiastic, motivated and keen to learn. They especially enjoyed the live action shoot at Charlton, where they took notes and photos of the day for their production diaries. Taking a group out into the wider community to learn enriches the whole experience so this is something we try to do within every project. Part of every session with me involves pupils choosing books from our special library. This gives me the opportunity to understand their reading preferences and guide their reading choices.

Working with an author

There is no doubt in my mind that involving an author in the project is what gives us the edge. Working collaboratively with another professional, who is not education based, is a joy. It allows teacher and author the opportunity to learn from each other, which results in greater creativity. Tom also enthuses and inspires the pupils. He can tell them things from an author's viewpoint and they love that. The pupils adore having Tom involved in the work because it makes their learning feel real. He makes them feel good about being a reader.

Celebrating success

A celebratory event is always planned from the start. This year we wanted to have a private screening of *Own Goal* in the presence of Tom, the Football Writers and their parents. In the end we went one better: the final film was premiered on the big screen at a local Empire cinema. It was truly fabulous to watch the wonder on the pupils' faces as they saw themselves on the big screen for the first time. A moment that all those involved will never forget. This kind of celebration is important to validate the final outcome for all involved, as well as make the pupils feel rightly proud about themselves and their achievements.

As a Football Writers' project ends, I'm often asked about impact. How do you know that your pupils have achieved? I admit that I do track data and could give you the necessary quantitative data should you wish. However, it is the qualitative data that excites me the most.

- I'm hounded by pupils asking me when our next lesson is.
- A pupil who didn't mind reading too much, but loathed writing, now openly writes with more confidence. (Attainment has also improved.)
- This year a large number of the group that showed little interest in reading at the start of the project now openly talk about their interest in books.
- All pupils read more.

As I reflect on this year, and look towards next, I become optimistic in the knowledge that some of the Football Writers will now head off to secondary school enjoying reading more. And perhaps one or two of them may even become readers for life...