

***La Belle et la bête* (dir. Jean Cocteau, 1946)**

Lesson by Amy Buchanan, Teach First

Key Stage 2

Literacy

A lesson in which students consider the role of setting to establish mood, focusing specifically on Belle's entry into the castle for the first time in Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête*. Students will write their own descriptions of this scene. This lesson focuses on scenes with limited or no dialogue, enabling them to focus on the visual aspects of the film to improve the standard of their descriptive writing.

Curriculum Links

- Identify how character and setting are created
- To broaden their vocabulary and use it in inventive ways
- To imagine and explore feelings and ideas, focusing on creative uses of language and how to interest the reader
- Use dramatic techniques to explore characters and issues, such as hot seating and flashback

Lesson Objective

To write a description of a setting using different senses

You will need...

- **Trailer:** Screen shots from the castle scene
- **Main Attraction:** DVD of 'La Belle et la bête'

Activities

TRAILER: GOTHIC MISE-EN-SCENE

Prompt students to recall the agreed definition of 'gothic' generated last lesson.

Display two screen shots on the board that illustrate different settings from the film – Belle's townhouse and the beast's castle. Explain that 'mise en scene' is a French term, which means 'what's put in the scene', often used to discuss the setting within films. Ask students to compare the two images, focusing on aspects such as:

- Lighting
- Props
- Expression/gesture

Discuss:

- How does the 'mise en scene' affect the mood?
- Which would they say is more 'gothic' and why?

MAIN ATTRACTION: BEING BELLE

Play the film from 28:08 to 30:52 min. Explain that students are going to re-watch this scene and imagine that they are Belle entering the castle for the first time.

Re-play the scene and pause it at key moments, using a whole class freeze-frame activity in which students have to replicate Belle's expression and body movement.

- Tap selected students on the head and ask them to use an adjective to describe how they are feeling – e.g. afraid.
- Repeat, this time focusing on a verb to describe how they are moving – e.g. floating. Collect responses on the board.

Now divide the class into four groups and explain that each will respond to one of the following questions to explore the castle setting using their senses:

- What can Belle see?
- What can Belle hear?
- What can Belle touch?
- What might Belle smell?

It may be necessary to allocate touch and smell to higher ability groups as these senses require a greater degree of inference and imagination.

Provide students with screen shots from the scene and give them time to discuss their responses.

- Groups should then annotate the screen shots, using appropriate and ambitious vocabulary (this may require modelling beforehand)
e.g. Belle can see... a flickering, mouldy candle.
Belle can hear... her quick footsteps on the creaking floorboards.

Create new groups consisting of one 'envoy' from each focus area to enable students to share their ideas. Feedback as a class and gather ideas on the board under the four headings.

Combining and applying these ideas, model how to write a description of Belle's entrance in the castle, focusing on different openings and ambitious vocabulary. Draft sentences orally before writing them down and encourage students to offer further suggestions. Remind them that gothic settings need to create a feeling of suspense and dread!

e.g. Tiptoeing nervously through the enormous, murky hallway, Belle glanced up at the flickering candles. She almost let out a scream when she noticed withered hands holding out the candles with tightly clenched fists!

Students can then create their own descriptions independently, drafting sentences on whiteboards before writing their final versions.

END CREDITS: ENTER THE CASTLE

Students should be given the opportunity to read their final descriptions aloud and peer assess.

If there is time, finish by playing the scene where Belle's father enters the castle for the first time (15:55 to 20:10 min). Discuss:

- How is the castle portrayed here?
- What are the similarities and differences between the two scenes?
- Who appears more scared? How do you know? Look at facial expression, movement and dialogue.
- What conclusions can you make about the characters of Belle and her father?

Extras

Read

- *La Belle et la bête* by Mme de Villeneuve(1740).
- *The Blue Fairy Book: 'Beauty and the Beast'* by Andrew Lang (1889).

Watch

- [La Belle et la bête](#) (dir. Jean Cocteau, 1946)
- [Beauty and the Beast](#) (Walt Disney, 1991)
- [La Belle et la bête – Criterion Trailer](#)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N6Nmf-tVDo>