



NATIONAL FILMBOARD OF CANADA

1251 Avenue of the Americas

New York, N.Y. 10020

The Sand Castle

(13:12 min. color) 16 mm \$140

rental \$20 Video \$140



ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION

AWARDS Blue Ribbon, American Film Festival 1977

Annecy 1977

Gold Hugo 1977

Academy Award 1977

Subject Areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, Creative Dramatics, Art, Music, Filmmaking

Suggested Audience: Elementary to Adult

Film Content:

A sandstorm whistles across dunes leaving a calm but barren beach scene. A smiling figure emerges from the shifted patterns of sand and begins to shape a menagerie of friendly creatures, each distinctive in shape, ability and emotion. The community of characters energetically set out to build a sand castle. One is the designer, another a builder. One shapes while another smooths. One bores holes while another embellishes. Harmoniously, they complete their project and share in an exuberant celebration of a job well done. Their delight in their work and in themselves comes to an abrupt end, however, when the wind returns and blows across the sands — levelling the castle and leaving the viewer much more aware of the fleeting nature of life. A film children will revel in and adults will ponder, THE SAND CASTLE won the 1977 Academy Award for the best animated short subject. One viewing will confirm that choice.

Suggested Activities

Before viewing the film:

1. (For younger students)

Take your students on an imaginary trip to the beach. Accompany this journey with music to get

them into the mood of the beach scene. Play a piece of music that relates to the summer or the sea. For example, use Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" or Debussy's "La Mer". Follow with an activity:

a) Have them ACT out their day on the beach. Draw from their experiences or dreams: "What do you see?" "What do you hear?" "How do you feel?"

b) Have them select an animal or object that lives on the beach or in the water. Have them TELL or WRITE about a day at the beach from the point of view of the animal or thing they have selected.

c) Hand out a piece of paper and have them DRAW their "dream sand castle".

2. (For older students)

Play "La Mer" or "Watermusic"

As your students listen to the music, have them imagine being at the beach during any time of the year. The beach can be stormy or calm. Give them time to conjure images of what they do and see. At the end of the record, ask them to write their thoughts freely. Share the responses. (Hint: This is a good way to teach the use of adjectives and active verbs in descriptive writing).

3. Introduce the filmmaker and *briefly* explain his techniques. Leave the following detailed description of his process until *after* the film has been viewed:

How Co Hoedeman Made THE SAND CASTLE

The texture of sand makes it easy to move but difficult to control. When animator Co Hoedeman used sand to make his Academy Award winning film THE SAND CASTLE, he wanted to compensate for its fragile texture. He had to make the 3 dimensional sand "puppets" strong and agile, and a castle of sand, durable.

The bodies were sculpted from foam rubber and penetrated with latex, a liquid that made the shapes firm and rubbery. Since latex is sticky, Co Hoedeman could roll each puppet in his table top sandbox to coat them. He inserted a wire into each foam rubber body giving it support and mobility. The combination of these elements made the unforgettable "sand" people that frolic in THE SAND CASTLE.

Sand is absorbent and holds a shape when it is wet with water. But it dries out quickly. To shape a sand castle that would stay intact, Co Hoedeman mixed the sand with oil instead of water. Since he didn't want to use large quantities of sand to make the dunes, he carved them out of styrofoam and covered them with a layer of sand.

The sand storm was a result of an experiment that began with Co blowing on the sand with his mouth. He discovered that if he blew the grains of sand into the air, they remained suspended for a brief moment. By degrees, he used a blower on the sand and sent clouds of swirling particles upward. He photographed it. Projected at 24 frames per second, it looks as if a sandstorm is actually brewing. Co Hoedeman's deft creation of a legendary world, transformed an apparent danger into a spellbinding reality. Threatened by the wind and the blowing sand, the frightened creatures scurry into their sand castle and their flight is incredibly suspenseful.



After viewing the film:

1. Imagine that you are walking along the beach and you spot the sand castle shown in the film as well as its inhabitants. Write the story of your visit with these characters. What did you ask them? What did you do? What did they tell you? How did you feel?
2. The characters in the film do not have names. First, based on the sounds in the music that characterize them, give them a name (example: rrrgh! or augh!) Then, give them a proper name based on their looks or personalities. (This is a good way to teach capitalization of proper names and the basics of character analysis).
3. The film ends in complete silence. Take the ending and continue it. What happens next? Use your imagination.
4. The characters in the film do not speak English. Pretending that they do, write the dialogue that would exist in one of the following scenes:
 - a) When the idea of building THE SAND CASTLE is first introduced by the central character.

b) When THE SAND CASTLE is being built and finally finished.

c) When the winds start to blow.

Note: Teach the use of quotation marks and punctuation of dialogues with this suggested plan.

5. Give the students information about the filming process (see "Before viewing" #3). Discuss
6. a) Using the following suggestions by Anita Malnig of the Children's Television Workshop, invite students to create their own friendly creatures:

FOAM RUBBER CREATURES

MATERIALS: Thin squares of foam rubber (foam used for pillows works well. This can be purchased inexpensively in variety yard good or department stores.) Scissors (blunt-edged for younger children), Plain bond paper, Straight pins, Buttons, Poster paint, Glue, Magic markers,

Have the students draw an outline of a funny creature on plain white paper. This is their pattern. Cut it out and pin it on a piece of foam rubber. Cut out the figure from the foam rubber. Remove the pins and pattern. Let the children decorate the creature as they like. To paint it, use a small extra piece of foam rubber like a sponge. Dip the sponge into the jar of poster paint and dab the sponge onto the creature. You will have to wait overnight for the paint to dry. If the creature is left unpainted, use the Magic marker to draw the mouth, or clothing, or hair. Glue on buttons for eyes and nose.

CLAY CREATURES

MATERIALS: Clay, Toothpicks (For sculpting with younger children, knead the clay yourself a bit to soften it.) Use Plastiline (or Plasticine, different brand names). This clay does not harden and can be used repeatedly. Ask for it for modelling clay in art supply stores.

Ask the children to break off a little bit of clay, have them roll, squish, and flatten it in their hands. Have them think about the creatures in the film. Ask them to make similar figures or whatever creatures of their own they would like to make. Use toothpicks to "draw" eyes, a nose, a mouth or any design the children want on their creature.

b) Suggest that the children recreate some of the events in the film, or that they make up their own stories in which each of the characters they have made plays a part. To extend this, have the students write scripts involving their creatures in the story.

7. Play the soundtrack of the film without the picture. Have the students describe what they think is happening. Have the students pretend they are describing the music to someone who is deaf but who can read lips. (This is a good lesson for teaching descriptive writing). For example: "This part is like the way people look when they walk into church. They are tiptoeing ever so quietly.", or "The sun is beating down on your head . . . pounding . . . pounding . . . until you can hardly stand it anymore."
8. Randomly, break up into groups of five; each person must do an assessment of skills he/she possesses. Given the group's abilities, have them decide on a project that they could successfully complete. (If you have the time and materials, have them execute the project).
9. Have your students pick an organization that relies on a group of people to make it work. Have them interview each of the parts and do a study of the organization. The school site might be a perfect starting place. As an extension, study the parts of the government that must work together cohesively.
10. There is no stated moral or message in this film. Have each student write a one-sentence moral. Collect them all and discuss the ideas presented.
11. (For older students)
Read Jack London's *"To Build a Fire"*, Ernest Hemmingway's *Old Man and the Sea* or works by Emerson, Thoreau or Faulkner. Discuss the common theme of man's relationship with nature (Several other stories illustrate this theme).
(For younger students)
Discuss the theme more simply (how man relates to nature) by reading such works as E.B. White's *"Charlotte's Webb,"* Kenneth Graham's *"The Wind in the Willows"* or Isaac B. Singer's *"Zlateh the Goat."*
12. As a research project, have students research famous catastrophes (Hindenburg, Titanic, San Francisco Earthquake) and report their findings in a mock newspaper of the day after the event occurred.
Have them recreate the front page of the morning edition including news stories, features, pictures, interviews etc. Extended activity: read Thornton Wilder's *"Bridge of San Luis Rey"* and discuss the concept of fate.

Film programs using related NFBC titles

13. a) Co Hoedeman's imaginative combination of foam rubber, wire, sand and latex made the captivating sand creatures that build THE SAND



CASTLE. His playful puppets bring the art of two and three dimensional animation to children. Follow a screening of THE SAND CASTLE with other films that animate materials familiar to children: peanuts, blocks, clay, dolls, cutouts . . . Here are a few samples:

MATRIOSKA—Wooden dolls, one inside the other, perform a gay Russian folk dance. (c, 5 min.)

TCHOU-TCHOU—A boy, a girl and a dragon, made of blocks, play a suspenseful game of hide and seek. (c, 14 min.)

OWL AND THE RAVEN: AN ESKIMO LEGEND — Two life like puppets made by Eskimo artists act out an engaging arctic legend explaining how the raven got its color. (c, 6 min.)

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE—In this 13th century french fairy-tale, cutout figures become animated characters involved in a mediaeval love story complete with prince, princess, castles and pirates. (c, 16 min.)

PADDLE TO THE SEA—In this children's film odyssey based on the Holling C. Holling book, a little Indian boy launches his hand carved canoe on a series of adventures on Canadian waterways. (c, 28 min.)

b) THE SAND CASTLE creates an imaginary landscape but it imitates a real and familiar world—the

wind, the sand, and the offscreen presence of the sea are actual beach elements that intrigue children. A FILM PROGRAM EXPLORING THE NATURE OF SAND AND SEA COULD FOLLOW A SCREENING OF THE SAND CASTLE. Here are a few titles that relate to THE SAND CASTLE beach theme:

WIND—A gust of wind enchants a small boy and sets his mind to creating fanciful images from flying clouds. (c, 9 min.)

SKY — Using time lapse photography, this film condenses the astounding spectacle of one day in the life of the sky. (c, 10 min.)

UNIVERSE—Winner of over 20 awards, this film classic combines animation, special effects and actual photography to explore the familiar planets and infinite galaxies. (b & w, 26 min.)

WE CALL THEM KILLERS — Using two friendly killer whales in an aquarium, a famous cetologist explores the habits of one of the seas more elusive mammals. (c, 16 min.)

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