

Prepare to Board: Creating Story and Characters for Animation Features and Shorts

In the realm of animation, the boarding process plays a pivotal role in translating the written script into a visual masterpiece. It is the stage where storyboard artists bring the story to life, crafting a sequence of panels that define the pacing, composition, and character dynamics. To effectively prepare for boarding, it's essential to have a solid foundation in story development and character creation. This article will guide you through a comprehensive process, empowering you to create compelling and engaging animated stories.



Prepare to Board! Creating Story and Characters for Animation Features and Shorts by Nancy Beiman

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Developing the Story

1. Understanding the Script

The starting point for any storyboard artist is a thorough understanding of the script. Read it multiple times, analyzing the plot, character arcs, and

overall themes. Identify the key moments, emotional beats, and narrative structure that will guide your visual interpretations.

2. Storyboarding Techniques

Become familiar with different storyboarding techniques, such as thumbnailing, rough boarding, and final boarding. Thumbnailing involves creating small sketches that capture the essential elements of a scene. Rough boarding expands on these sketches, adding more detail and defining the camera angles and movement. Final boarding is the polished version, where the storyboard panels are refined and prepared for production.

3. Visualizing the Action

Use your imagination to visualize the story unfold before your eyes. Experiment with different camera angles, perspectives, and compositions to find the most effective way to convey the action and emotions. Consider the pacing and timing of each shot, ensuring a smooth flow and dynamic visual experience.

Creating Compelling Characters

1. Character Development

Create detailed character profiles that outline their personalities, motivations, backgrounds, and relationships with other characters. Consider their physical appearance, mannerisms, and unique traits that will make them relatable and memorable.

2. Character Design

Design character models that visually represent their personalities and traits. Use shape, color, and texture to convey their emotions, attitudes, and physicality. Experiment with different poses and facial expressions to capture their range of emotions.

3. Character Interactions

Pay attention to the interactions between characters. How do they communicate, react to each other, and resolve conflicts? These interactions should drive the story forward and create engaging dynamics that captivate the audience.

Pre-Boarding Process

1. Scene Analysis

Break down the script into smaller scenes and analyze each one individually. Identify the main action, conflict, and resolution. Consider the setting, lighting, and atmosphere that will enhance the emotional impact of the scene.

2. Storyboard Thumbnails

Create storyboard thumbnails that capture the key moments within each scene. Use simple sketches and basic shapes to convey the camera angles, character positions, and essential details. Thumbnails help you visualize the flow of the story and identify any potential pacing issues.

3. Rough Boarding

Expand on your storyboard thumbnails by adding more detail and defining the camera movements and character actions. Rough boarding is an

iterative process where you can experiment with different approaches and fine-tune the visuals.

Preparing to board for animation features and shorts requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses story development, character creation, and a deep understanding of storyboarding techniques. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you can lay the foundation for compelling and engaging animated stories that resonate with audiences. As you continue to hone your skills and refine your process, you will become a valuable asset to any animation team, bringing your unique artistic vision to life on the big or small screen.



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