PIPER

CLASSROOM GUIDE

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Join director Alan Barillaro and producer Marc Sondheimer as they give us an insightful peek behind the curtains of Pixar Animation Studios' latest short, Piper. The film tells the story of a hungry sandpiper hatchling who ventures from her nest for the first time to dig for food by the shoreline. The only problem is, the food is buried beneath the sand where scary waves roll up onto the shore. In the presentation the filmmakers will discuss the production process as well as the unique inspiration for this delightful story.

This interactive multimedia program will provide many opportunities for connections with your STEAM curriculum as our guests discuss the many steps of their filmmaking process. A wide range of topics will be covered including: computer science, narrative storytelling, art history, musical composition, and even coastal wildlife biology. After the presentation portion of the program is completed, students will have an opportunity to ask questions to both Allan and Marc. The program includes a viewing of the short and will last around 90 minutes.

Grades 3-8
Suggested Subject Areas: Art History, Biology, Career Path Training, Computer Science, English, Math, Music, Peer/Youth

SFILM education

ABOUT THE FILM

Directed by Alan Barillaro and produced by Marc Sondheimer, "Piper," the new short from Pixar Animation Studios, tells the story of a hungry sandpiper hatchling who ventures from her nest for the first time to dig for food by the shoreline. The only problem is, the food is buried beneath the sand where scary waves roll up onto the shore. "Piper" debuted in theaters worldwide with "Finding Dory" in 2016.

Director's Statement

"Piper began as a test to try and craft develop animation tools that would provide greater flexibility to for artists. As the test evolved, I realized there was a story to be told. Inspired by the birds I would see while jogging near Pixar, I came up with this tale of a sandpiper, and infused it with the emotions I felt as a parent nervously watching my children growing up. Using the tools I'd been developing, the team and I dove in worked in a uniquely collaborative way in which everyone was empowered to contribute creatively. It was a thrill to work on Piper and we are so proud of the result."

PRESENTER BIOS

Alan Barillaro
Director
Pixar Animation Studios

ALAN BARILLARO (Director) joined Pixar Animation Studios in January 1997. Barillaro has worked on almost every Pixar film as an animator, including "A Bug's Life," "Toy Story 2," "Monsters, Inc.," and the Academy Award®-winning features "Finding Nemo," "The Incredibles," "WALL•E" and "Brave." On those last three features, Barillaro was given the role of supervising animator and was therefore responsible for overseeing the team of animators who worked to bring the characters in the films to life.

Following his work on "Brave," Barillaro went to work with Pixar's software development team to help craft an animation tool that would help provide additional creative flexibility to the studio's filmmaking process. As a proof of concept, Barillaro created a short animation test about a small bird – a sandpiper – on a beach. This animation test soon grew into a full-fledged short film, "Piper," directed by Barillaro and debuting theatrically with "Finding Dory" in 2016.

Growing up in Niagara Falls, Canada, Barillaro's interest in animation began at a young age. He worked his way up through the ranks at various commercial houses during high school and continued his studies at Sheridan College for Animation.

Barillaro resides in Oakland, Calif., with his family.

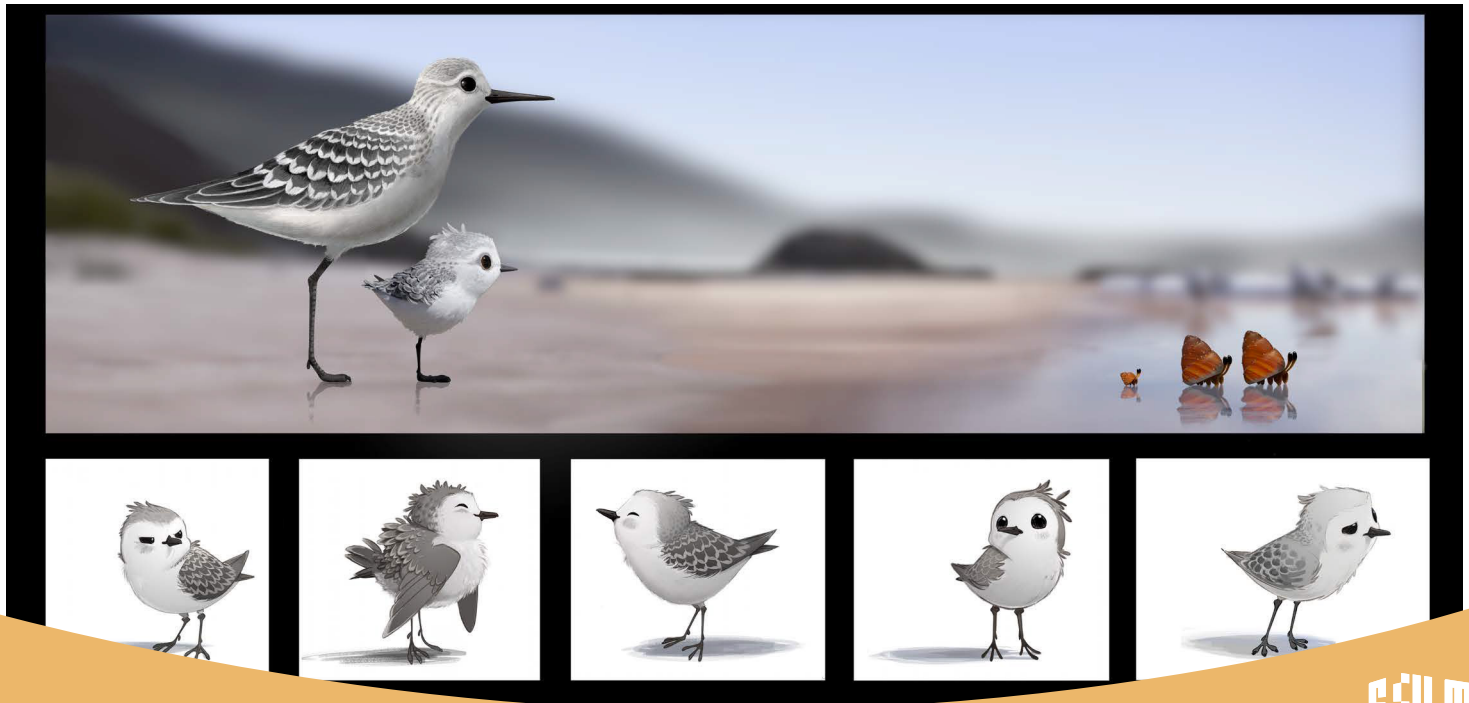
PRESENTER BIOS

Marc Sondheimer
Producer
Pixar Animation Studios

MARC SONDHEIMER (Producer) joined Pixar Animation Studios in October of 2001, where he started out as a production finance lead for "The Incredibles." Since then, Sondheimer has continued to operate in a variety of positions in production. He was the finance lead for the short films "Lifted" and "One Man Band," as well as for the Academy Award®-winning feature film "WALL•E," and on the studio's upcoming feature "Finding Dory." In addition, Sondheimer has been the sets department manager on "WALL•E," technical department manager for various CarsToons, and associate producer and production manager on the Academy Award®-nominated short "Day & Night." Most recently, he served a leadership role on "The Good Dinosaur" and was the producer of the promotional animation department on "The Good Dinosaur" and "Finding Dory."

Prior to Pixar, Sondheimer worked in a variety of different fields, including as a business strategy consultant and as the business development director for Quokka Sports, a digital sports media company. He was also a successful entrepreneur while operating his own import business.

Sondheimer received a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of California, Berkeley, and went on to earn a Master of Business Administration and Master of International Management degree from Thunderbird School of Global Management. Born and raised in Marin County, Calif., Sondheimer resides in San Francisco.



DISCUSSION AND EXERCISES

POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION

Characters and Story

1) Did you enjoy this presentation? What were your favorite moments? What did you like best about Piper?

2) Describe Piper. What is her personality like? What challenges does she face? How does she change during the course of the film? How can you know these things about Piper when she does not talk? What clues do the filmmakers use to describe Piper's personality and her transformation?

3) Who are the other characters in the film, besides Piper? How do these characters help and guide Piper on her journey? How would this story be different without the characters of Piper's Mom and the small hermit crab who becomes her friend?

4) Describe the beach where this story takes place. What is Piper's relationship to the landscape around her? Do you think this setting is important to the plot and narrative arc of the story? What role does Piper's environment play in this story?

Context

5) Piper is based on the Calidris alba or Sanderling, but she also has elements of the Snowy Plover. What did you learn about Sandpipers and other ocean birds in this presentation? What did you learn about the habitat of the Sandpiper and Snowy Plover? What did you learn about the anatomy of a bird, and how birds move? Why was it important that the filmmakers understand biology and environmental science?

6) How did director Alan Barillaro draw on art history when he was making the images for Piper? Describe the pictures that influenced him. What did he learn from these master artworks? What elements of composition and visual storytelling persist over time and across disciplines? Do you think it's important for modern artists to study art history? Why?

7) What did you learn about how the filmmaking team created the ocean waves and bubbles in Piper? What elements of traditional art and drawing did they employ? What role did technology play in creating the look and feel of the water? How did people from different backgrounds work together? Why was it important that people with different skills and expertise worked together?

8) What kind of research did director Alan Barillaro and the Piper team do to make the film realistic? Why was this kind of "homework" so important? Where did you see evidence of their research in the film?

Style, Message and Media Literacy

9) What do you think is the theme or message of Piper? What does Piper learn during her adventures on the beach? Can you relate to Piper's experience? What advice do you think she would give to another baby bird who is just leaving her nest?

10) What did you notice about the music in Piper? In a film with no dialog, how does composer Adrian Belew's score help you to understand how Piper is feeling? How do you think this film would be different if it had scary music or sad music?

11) Why does director Alan Barillaro think that sketchbooks are so important? What is the purpose of a sketchbook? Why is it important to have a space where you can make mistakes? What role do mistakes play in the artistic process? How about in the process of learning?

12) In a few sentences, summarize the characters and the story of Piper. How can the filmmakers create characters and tell a story without using any words? Can you come up with a definition for visual storytelling? How can you tell an effective story using pictures?

DISCUSSION AND EXERCISES

POST-PRESENTATION ACTIVITIES

1. Bay Area Biology: research bird life in the bay and observe Piper in the wild.

Piper is a member of the Sanderling species of Sandpipers, Calidris alba. In drawing and animating her, the filmmakers also drew inspiration from the Snowy Plover, Charadrius nivosus.

Using resources in your school library and on the Internet, write a short report about either Sanderlings or Snowy Plovers and their environments. Supplement your research with observation of these species in their natural environment. Take a trip to a local beach, and observe these birds in the wild. Add your own observations, drawings and photographs to your report.

2. Writing Activity: create your own story.

Piper is a compelling story in part because it is so simple. Challenge yourself to write your own story with a single plot arc and only three characters. Let your story describe a moment when your main character learns, grows or changes.

You might write a personal narrative, drawing from your own experience, or use your imagination to tell a story about characters who are animals. As in Piper, make sure you "show don't tell" and let actions and events reveal your character's transformation.

3. Draw a story: practice the fundamentals of visual storytelling.

Using the techniques of contemporary visual artists and old masters, challenge yourself to tell a story in a single picture, without using any words. If that sounds too easy, create a short comic strip in which three to five drawings tell a complete story from beginning to end.

Share your finished drawing or comic with the class.

4. Explore the relationship between art and science with Pixar in a Box.

The Khan Academy has partnered with Pixar to create Pixar in a Box, where you can learn the basic tools and processes that Pixar animators use in the studio.

Introduction to animation:
https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/pixar/animate

Introduction to particle systems:
https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/pixar/effects

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

The official Piper website and more information about Pixar short films

Pixar Short Films, Piper http://www.pixar.com/short_films/home

Bay Area Ecosystems

Save the Bay Watershed Curriculum
http://www.savesfbay.org/watershed-curriculum

The Watershed Project, Richmond, CA
http://www.thewatershedproject.org/home.php

SF Environment: Our Ecology
http://sfenvironment.org/buildings-environments/natural-san-francisco/our-ecology

Bay Area National Parks Science and Learning
http://www.sfnps.org/marine

Art History and Visual Storytelling

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Lesson Plans
http://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/lesson-plans

Stories in Art, from the J. Paul Getty Museum
http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/stories_in_art/sia_index.html

National Gallery of Art Teacher Resources
http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/education/teachers/lessons-activities.html

THE ANIMATED FILM

WHAT IS ANIMATION?

Animation is a process used to create motion pictures through the combination of still images (e.g., digital graphics, photographs of drawings, photographs of objects, etc.) which, when played in sequence, create the illusion of movement. All television cartoons, for example, are animations, and are made up of thousands of still images (drawn by hand or on a computer) that are played sequentially, along with a soundtrack, to tell a story.

TYPES OF ANIMATION

2D Animation Techniques

- Classic animation (e.g., Disney's The Lion King, most TV cartoons)
- Rotoscope (e.g., Star Wars lightsabers)
- Flip books

3D Animation Techniques

- 3D animation (e.g., Pixar's Toy Story, WALL•E, Up)
- Stereoscopic 3D (e.g., Avatar)
- Cut-out / Silhouette animation (e.g., South Park)

Stop Motion Techniques

- Claymation (e.g., Nick Park's Wallace and Gromit)
- Puppet animation (e.g., Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas, Coraline)

HISTORY OF ANIMATION

The world's most famous animator, Walt Disney, began making short animated cartoons based on children's stories in 1923. In 1928 he introduced Mickey Mouse in the first animated sound cartoon, Steamboat Willie, which became an immediate sensation. Throughout the next decade, Disney would add such elements as carefully synchronized music (The Skeleton Dance, 1929), technicolor (Flowers and Trees, 1932), and the illusion of depth with his multi-plane camera (The Old Mill, 1937), a device that allowed for animated cells to be photographed against a three-dimensional background. Although not the first animated feature, Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) was the first to use up-to-the-minute techniques and the first to receive widespread release. The film's success can be attributed in part to Disney's willingness to use animation to create a profound dramatic experience. He strove for photographic realism in films such as Pinocchio (1940), Dumbo (1941) and Bambi (1942).

The success of television cartoons led to the virtual disappearance of animated shorts produced for theatrical release. Animated feature-length films, however, flourished, especially after the release of Disney's The Little Mermaid (1989), regarded by many as the studio's best animated feature in decades. Other Disney blockbusters followed, including Beauty and the Beast (1991), Aladdin (1992), The Lion King (1994) and Lilo & Stitch (2002).

The development of computer animation was another great advancement in the form and resulted in feature films of astounding visual sumptuousness. In 1995, Toy Story was the first film to use only computer-generated imagery (CGI). In 2001 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences added a new Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. The first recipient of the award was Shrek (2001). Other major animated features were Toy Story (1995) and Toy Story 2 (1999), A Bug's Life (1998), Monsters, Inc. (2001) and Finding Nemo (2003).

from Britannica Online for Kids

ABOUT PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

Pixar Animation Studios, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, is an Academy Award®-winning film studio with world-renowned technical, creative andThe Northern California studio has created some of the most successful and beloved animated films of all time, including "Toy Story," "Monsters, Inc.," "Cars," "The Incredibles," "Ratatouille," "WALL•E," "Up," "Toy Story 3," "Brave," and "Inside Out." Its movies have won 31 Academy Awards® and have grossed more than $10 billion at the worldwide box office to date. "Finding Dory," Pixar's 17th feature, opened on June 17, 2016 and earned the highest-grossing domestic box office of all-time for any animated film; it is currently available to purchase via digital download and will be released on DVD and Blu-ray November 15.