Bringing the Book of Mormon to Life

By Jan Pinborough
Church Magazines
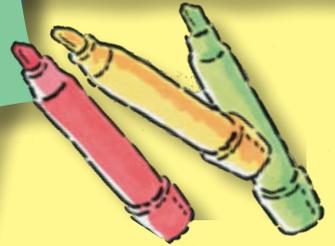
It's a gray, drizzly Saturday morning, but the children of the Danbury Connecticut Ward aren't in their pajamas watching cartoons or playing video games. They're busy making videos of their own. And their videos will help thousands of people learn about the Book of Mormon!

It all started when their bishop had a great idea. Bishop Summerhays is a media expert who teaches children from many countries how to use technology to create positive messages. Why not teach the children in his ward the same thing?

Now the children, joined by children from the Newtown Ward, are sitting at five long tables in the Primary room. Stacks of construction paper and poster board, pens, and scissors are on the tables. Each group will be making an animated video of a different Book of Mormon story:

Lehi's Dream
The Journey to the Promised Land
**Jesus Visits the Nephites**
Korihor
Moroni Buries the Gold Plates
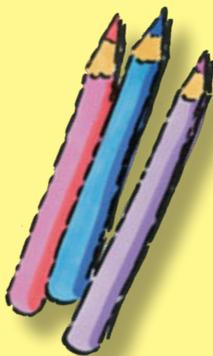
Rebecca V. colors puppet figures for her group's video.

You Can Do It Too!

Here's a cartoon to show you how you can do your own animation project.

Pick some friends and make a group (3–4)

Read your story from the Book of Mormon

Think about the best way to tell your story

Draw the story on paper

Step 3: Finally the animation begins. A digital camera on a tripod is focused on a piece of poster board—the background for a scene. The camera is attached to a computer.
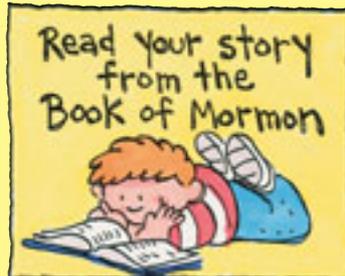
Step 1: First the children think about how they will tell their story. They draw scenes on special paper called "storyboards." Close-up scenes show people's emotions. Long-distance scenes show background and setting. In-between ones show action.

One group is shooting a battle scene between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Each child is in charge of two or three puppets. The children arrange their puppets on the poster board. Then someone hits the space bar on the computer. Flash! The first frame of the video is shot.

Now everyone moves their puppets a fraction of an inch. Flash! "This is fun!" says Brooke B.

It takes 900 shots to make one minute of animated video. After 30 shots, the children have made two seconds of film. They stop to watch their work on the computer screen. "That was awesome!" says Noah C. as

Step 2: Now everyone draws figures on construction paper. They draw arms and legs separately so the figures will be able to move. They also draw eyes open and shut and mouths in different shapes. Then they cut out the figures, which are called "puppets."

Make the paper puppets

Animate the story on video

Record the voices

Prepare for the Premiere!

ADMIT ONE

they watch their paper warriors come to life.

Later at another activity, the children will tell the stories, and their voices will be recorded. Then Bishop Summerhays will put the video pictures and the recorded voices together to make a movie.

Last year, these children made videos of Old Testament stories like Adam and Eve, Noah's ark, Jonah and the whale, and Daniel in the lions' den. They had a premiere in a local movie theater, where their families, friends, and neighbors got to see their videos on a big screen. Since then, about 10,000 people have watched their Old Testament videos online. Cierra D., age 11, brought a friend to last year's premiere. She thinks it's great to make stories "about what you believe."

Now the children can't wait for this year's premiere. They hope even more people will learn about the Book of Mormon by watching their new videos online.

And they are more enthusiastic about the scriptures because they brought them to life through their own creations. ◆

See More Online
You can watch a how-to video at friend.lds.org.

Dani L., age 7, enjoyed her job of pressing the space bar to take pictures.