

Animation Design, Degree Project

‘AMNESIA’

A short film on ‘The Myths of Childhood’

Animation Project II

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2008-2010

Project Guide:

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Approval Sheet

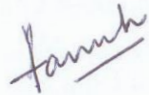
This Animation project entitled "AMNESIA" under the theme – Myths of Childhood, by Hannah Christopher (08634003) is approved in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Design Degree in Animation and Film Design.

	Signature	Date
Guide:		24/6/2010
Internal Examiner:		5/3/10
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Declaration sheet

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature



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My greatest thanks to my Lord and all time friend, without whom I am nothing.

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1.Introduction

Prologue:

*If imagination is beauty and
If beauty is in the eye of the beholder,
Anything in that subjective realm,
If not truth isn't it a myth?*

Myth is something that I feel is that which makes our life's race appear alive by giving us an escape from the creepy reality. Its only through myths, our search for light in everything, including dark places seem to have meaning. Our lives are myths within myths and this entangled web of myths weave a striking tapestry with memories to majestically ride upon and treasure the past. The caution is "live the myth, but beware it is a myth".

Why I chose this topic?

Though Santa Claus was nothing more than a myth to me, I still love his personality a lot that I willingly propagate this myth to all the kids. I never got money from a tooth fairy, but the smiles she brings on kids who refuse to smile for having lost a tooth or in those little one's terms 'having a hole in the mouth', is something to ponder.

The fact that these characters, that never even exist, bringing joy to kids and at times even elders, provoked me a lot to do my project on these characters. Because in kids, these myths, more than facts, seem to influence their fears, dreams and actions because these are the first super heroes they know, their first role models and friends.

2. Research

What is Myth?

After all the research, *if I am to define 'myth', I would simply call it 'A type of Story telling'*. It is the story we tell our self to give shape to our dreams and desire. They are shared or personal narratives explaining human lives in some conceptual framework.

Thus most myths we would have come across are evocative tales fashioned by our ancestors, designed to relay encoded information through the memory-tool of symbol, association and using entertainment as a method of attracting and sustaining interest.

The conceptual framework we try to define our lives, in case of myth is mostly the product of imagination, a world which is not real and is a genre that uses magic as a prime element.

It is dreamers dimension of the world and it underpins everything we believe in, extrapolates life's experience, colours our views, creates belief systems, and even reaches beyond death.

Who are these Mythical Creatures?

Mythical character can be a Fairy, a monster, a super hero sometimes even helpers. Some of them look human-like while some are animals. Few others have some exaggerated features, even up to the level of a human partly sharing an animal body or vice versa.

These mythical characters, all have an address and they belong to a beautiful world. Their specialty of that world is that it can exist only if you believe. Just like us human, each of them have a defined personality, an identity, a dress code, a job, friends and peers. Additionally they have unlimited time and infinite power, all depending on the limits of one's imagination.

In short *'Mythical characters' are friends across time.*



FEAR

What are 'Myths of Childhood' ?

Based on my understanding and research, I categorized myth as,

A CONCEPT OF CHILDHOOD INNOCENCE.

Myth seems to form the basis of thinking and enhance ideal and creative thinking. The hallmark of mature reasoning as defined by the adult world, is to distinguish fantasy from reality. In other words it means the death of that innocence is where the actual highway to imagination ends;



FANTASY

A CONCEPT OF CHILDHOOD IMAGINATION.

Myths allows expansion of the internal object world and motivation towards increasingly complex relationships. The first actual interaction of kids, without the interference of parents, is with these imaginary friends. These characters, the first personality a kid comes across, seem more real and convincing than the adults around them. This interaction helps develop pro-social behavior, socio-cognitive benefits says child experts ⁽¹⁾.

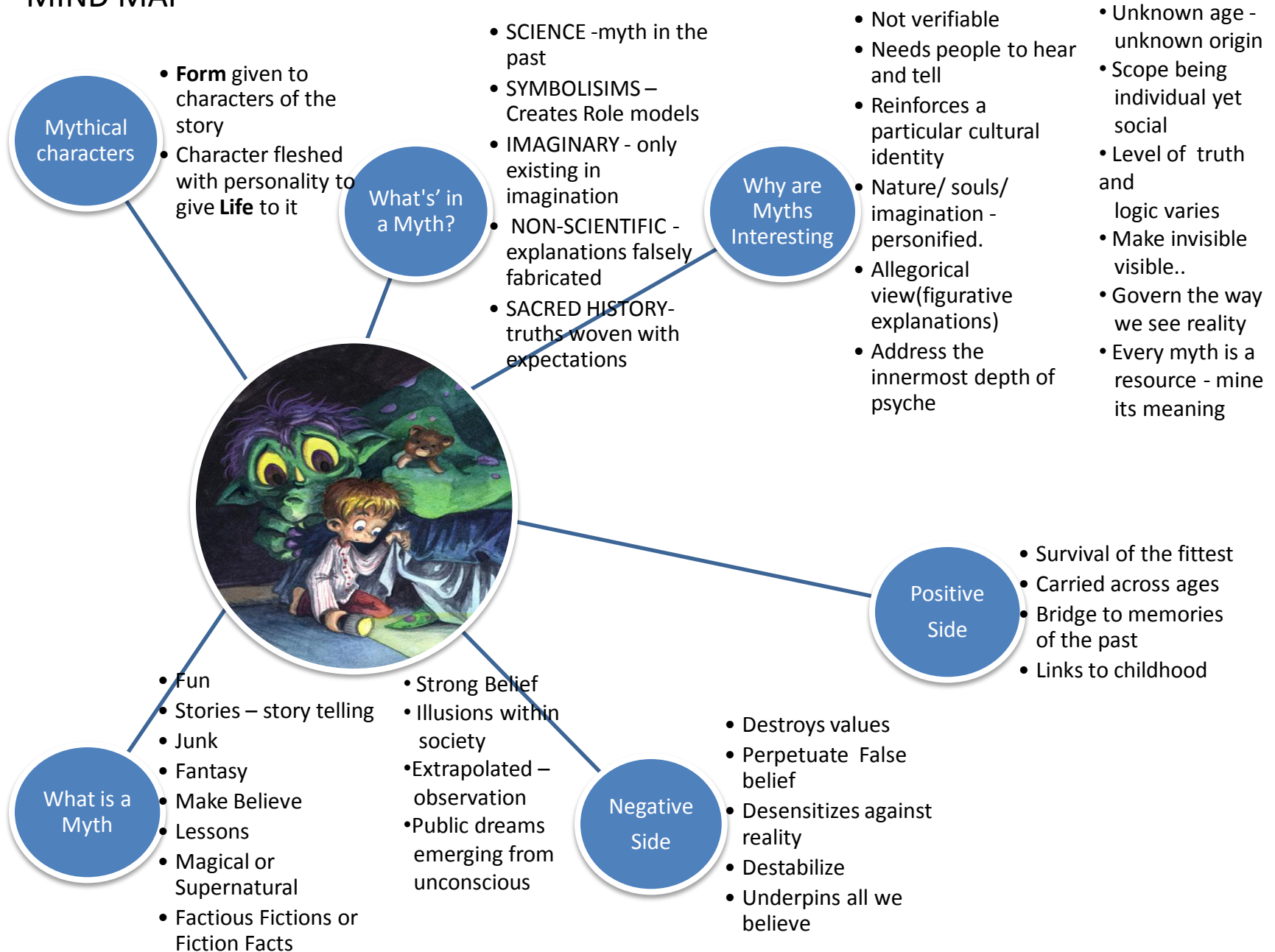


IMAGINATION

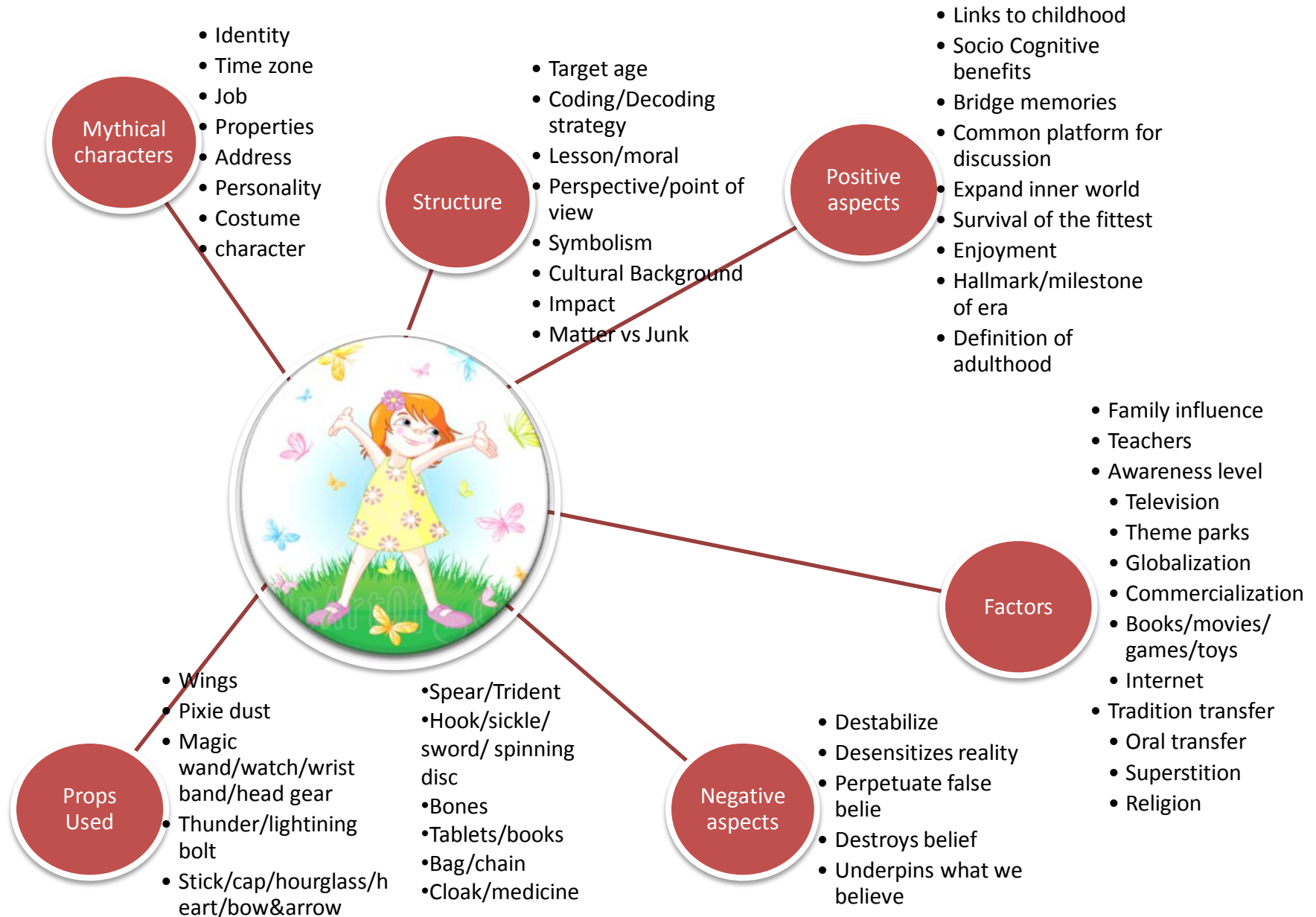
A CONCEPT OF CHILDHOOD REASONING.

Their First view of the world with its natural objects as designed, along with their childish interpretation of what they can be, based on the kids wants/reasoning/thinking is another interesting source of myth, I believe.

MIND MAP



MIND MAP



MOOD BOARD

Mythical Creatures

Fairies

Monsters



Super Hero's

Helpers

Research Conclusions and guidelines for the stories:

After the research I decided to base my story on some of these points that interested me:

IDENTITY ←.....

1. Every mythical character has a strong identity.

TIME TRAVEL ←.....

2. There is a beautiful concept of time involved in myths. Many myths have travelled across time and have believers across all time periods.

EXTRAPOLATED OBSERVATION ←...

3. Lots of extrapolated observations are involved in every myths.

FEAR ←.....

4. Fear factor is another big area of childhood myths. It is said to be a threat to the child's trust on parents and research points that 'monster fear' has long lasting psychological impacts on kids.

SYMBOLS & MORALS ←.....

5. Symbolism and moral teaching is seen in many myths.

LINKAGE ←.....

6. Myth act a common link between generations and acts the key source of relating to past memories.

CHANGE ←.....

7. Factors affecting myth include change in time/people/context/values/culture or social set up/boundaries or local / environment /audience /familiarity/ adaptation levels. 'Tale of the wheel of the year' is the truest example of how a myth is made.

3. Abstract - identity

The thought of a wrinkled face, covered partly with white sari with blue border, brings a gentle smile in every face. The thought of a bald and half naked man, wearing spectacles would bring pride to every Indian. That is the effect of an everlasting identity. Identity marks the person. But what forms an identity, what sustains it, is a question of deep psychological understanding.

It may be the costume as in Mother Teresa, the style as in Charlie Chaplin, the familiar phrases used as 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep' or the looks as in famous movie stars.

If the survival of the fittest sustained humanity's existence, I feel that the desire every man has, to create an impression, an identity is the reason which brings about every positive and negative action of a human. Memory helps to hold on to those actions, every thing we love, the things we are, the things we never want to lose."

It is also true that the value of identity of course is that so often with it comes purpose. The doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything. And if the doer is just a fiction, are we any different from those mythical characters ?

Life is a struggle; Half of it, to create an identity and the rest to maintain it. An identity once created, is next to impossible to destroy. And well this is one key point that every story teller plays around to get the story right. If you wake up at a different time, in a different place, you don't wake a different person. This holds good with you, me and the lead character of my story too, who may be existing in the real world of every dreamer. How did he establish their identity? Did he ever exist? Well the answer is simple. "The day you stop believing is the day he stops coming"

I have tried to implement in my story, some of the concepts that had been researched during my literature study. This story will speak of how myths and mythical characters have identity of their own, created over years by various people and through a range of events. It is about the memory loss of the lead character, who later assumes he is Big Foot. Unable to accomplish the tasks assigned for Big Foot, he ends in dejection. But his actual identity is so well known and established that in no time he figures out the truth of who he actually is. The story ends with him fulfilling his purpose of existence.

3. Animation process

- INSPIRATION** ◀..... It all started with one missing tooth and one missing smile, but the vanished smile came back as a loud laughter because of this one character, the tooth fairy who herself was missing from the scene, but only to doubtful eyes. It was all new from me, but it impressed me a lot that I decided to work on it for my project.
- RESEARCH** ◀..... Research for my project was very interesting as I learnt a lot; but more specifically if I have mention "I saw a fairy!". After a detailed study I concluded with some points that interested me the most about myths and stated making stories based on them.
- STORY SCRIPT** ◀..... Myths were nothing new, but my memory was not that good to track back to the point when I was a child to analyze how much of it I believed or what identity I associated with the characters I knew or I created. So to get a good story was difficult in the beginning. Many feedbacks suggested that the story was ok, but nobody really associated with any character, nor did the story make an impact. I just dropped the story I was working on and finally settled with the first story that I started with the day the project started. I fine tuned it after the research with elements and features that might fit better.
- EXPLORATION** ◀..... I initially enjoyed doodling Ursula, Captain planet, Shrek and few other characters using reference images. But later after finalizing on the characters in my story alongside Santa, I made simple sketches of them. As like earlier times, I loved creating backgrounds. My primary aim all through the project was to produce drawings of reasonable quality.

- ANIMATICS** ←..... Camera angles, cuts and transitions were greek and latin terms to me. I tried to watch films and tried identifying what these terminologies meant. I have tried to implement some of what I observed in my short film.
- SOUND EDITING** ←..... Sound editing was really so tough. To get what I want was difficult as I found it more difficult to express and search for my exact need. The more and more I listened to music tracks, I realized my musical knowledge so insignificant to help me in my search. Movies on Santa claus and music tracks of the cartoons that hosted Santa guided me in some direction on how and what to look for.
- ANIMATION** ←..... Being my very first effort in creating an actual animation film, I was hesitant in trying new stuff in everything. I wanted to use Photoshop and Flash as I thought that the software part will be comfortable for me, to try and focus on my drawings, visualization and story telling. Timing is something that I am still trying to decode and figure out in the never ending battle with it.
- COMPOSITING** ←..... Adobe Premiere pro and After effects were also fun to work with, though I would not call myself a good explorer to have used all those software to my advantage.

Initial Story Lines:

- SANTAS' AMNESIA** <..... Story where Santa claus due to his amnesia, forgets and assuming him to be a monster, behaves like one but is not accepted.
- GAME OF MYTH** <..... 4 kids (4 yrs, 7 yrs, 9 yrs, 13 yrs) play a card game of myth. Its how each of them interpret the mythical characters based on their knowledge and understanding
- A CASE AGAINST ME** <..... Story where the mythical world files a case against me for their recession, stating my film to be the sole reason. The story ends revealing that the whole case was just a kind of advertisement that was already planned.
- ADDRESS CHANGED** <..... Story where Santa lands in the equator region due to global warning(monster) having destroyed his home. This is a story of his new identity creation.
- MY NEW HOME** <..... This is the story about the complexity of the understanding and likeness of various myths as per age group is shown. It deals primarily on the relationship between a boy and his grandfather , where these myths acts as bridges between that two generations.
- FROM HISTORY** <..... A small boy hates to see the good characters of his history text book die. He brings them alive in his imagination and carries them over to the next pages wit the help of is imaginary mythical friends.

FINAL STORY PLOT:

VERSION 1 ←.....

Too many characters

Distracting elements

Existing Identity is not
being used to the fullest

AMNESHIA- There is a school in Neverland that teaches and trains the mythical characters. This story is about one such mythical character, a high school student of that school who falls off the bike and is taken to the hospital. When he feels better, he returns to the school. Just like all others he walk to the notice board and picks up his task for the day. As mentioned in it he tries to scare children. But the kids laugh at him. The story ends where this character walks to question the principal about the incident, and ends up finding that he is Santa Claus.

The story seemed to have loop holes like the school, some characters like the principal, creatures walking on the street. It lacked the dimension of showing how those elements related to my actual story. They were just extra elements and did not in any fit with the flow of the story I had.

VERSION 2 ←.....

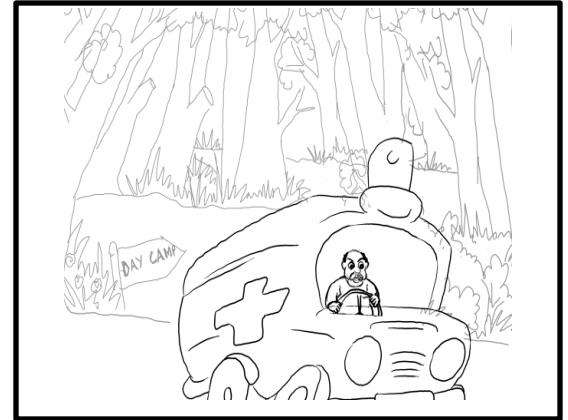
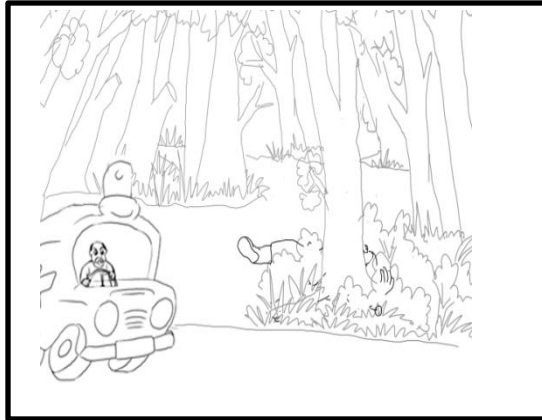
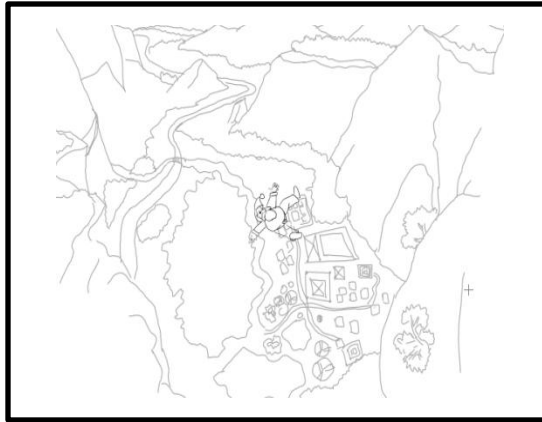
Location and details need
To support the story better

More simplification required

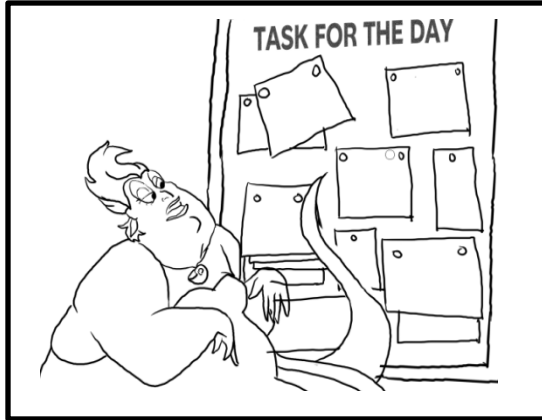
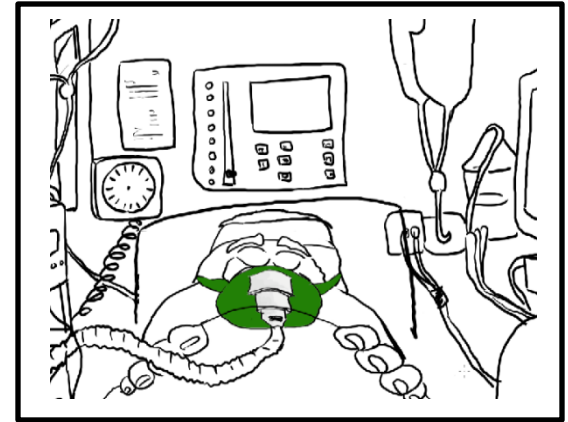
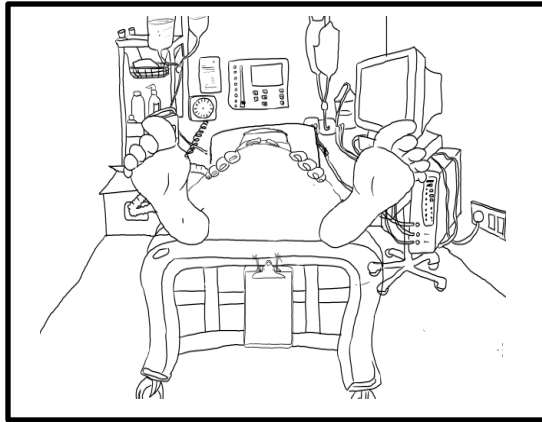
AMNESHIA- It's the story where the lead character has an accident and is taken to the hospital. When it feels better, it returns to its workplace. It picks up its task for the day and as mentioned in it, tries to scare children. To its distress, none of the kids get petrified, not even scared. They all in fact laugh at it. The story ends when it finds from a elf that he is Santa Claus. He laughs out loud and goes on his sleigh ride distributing presents.

The story is more defined, but the locations and added elements can convey much more meaning to the plot and the story, in terms of giving clue to his actual identity because the storyline focuses more on the new identity the character assumes he is.

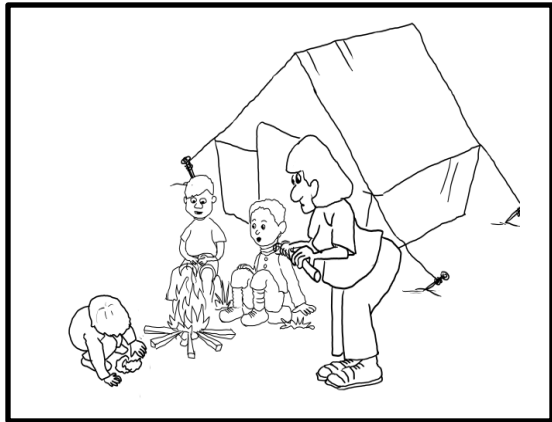
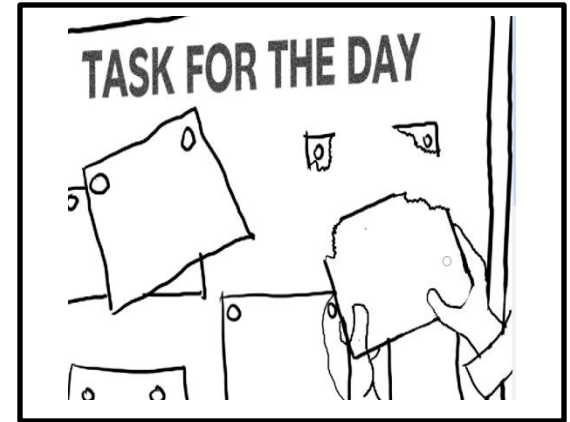
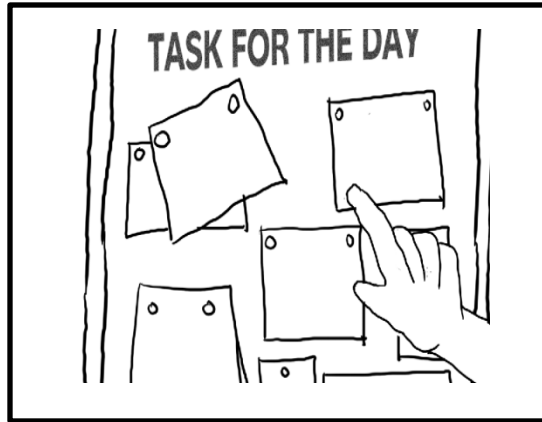
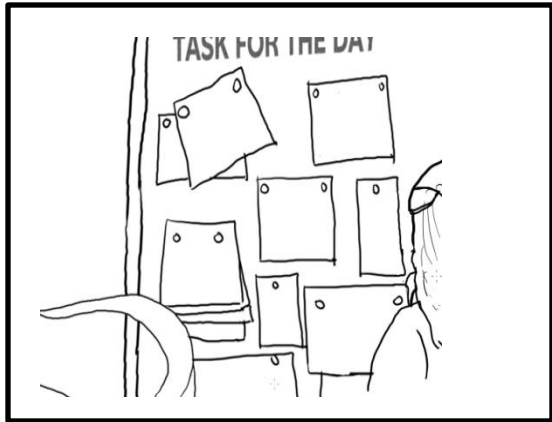
INITIAL STORY BOARD



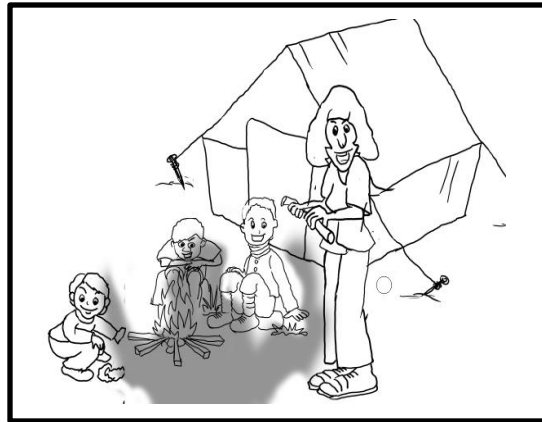
INITIAL STORY BOARD



INITIAL STORY BOARD



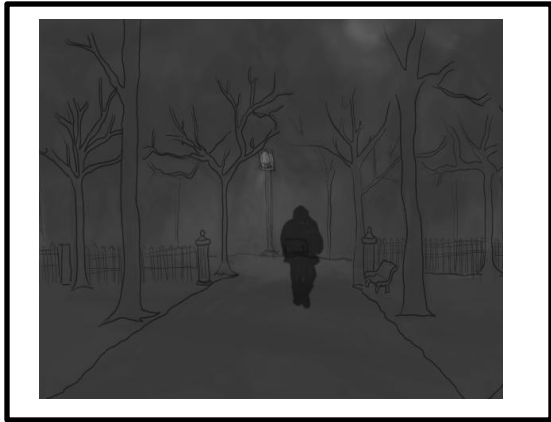
Sound: Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr (Scary)



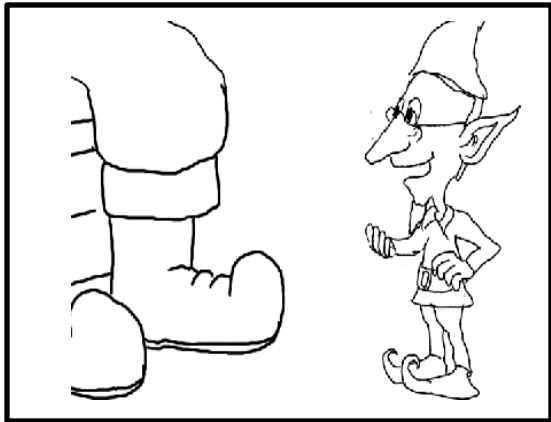
Sound: HUUUUHAAAA (growling)



INITIAL STORY BOARD



Skeleton: Hi man, why you sad?



Elf: But you are Santa



Santa: HO HO HO merry Christmas

EXPLORATION SKETCHES – Character sketches





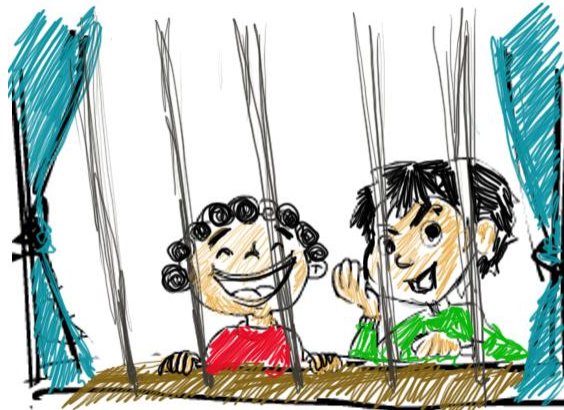
CHARACTER DESIGN AND ANIMATION

SANTA CLAUS

He is the hero of the story. Mostly his silhouette or his shadow is shown through the film to maintain the suspense of his identity yet revealing some clues of his build and personality. He appears to be walking around in his hospital dress. It's the last scene he actually is shown as Santa dressed in his regular red suit.

KIDS

There are 3 sets of kids appearing in the story. Some playing inside their tent and some sitting at the camp fire. But basically they all are just laughing at the lead character.





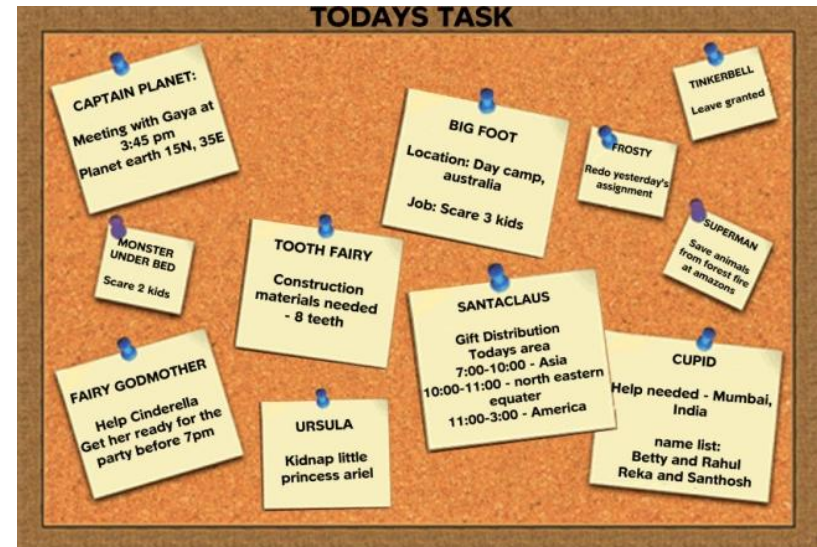
CHARACTER DESIGN AND ANIMATION

OTHER CHARACTERS:

URSULA – Its just the back of her that is seen from a distance. She walks out of the scene after talking the task sheet of hers. I have still kept her a octopus as in the Disney story, but have changed her hairstyle and looks.

TOOTH FAIRY – A small fairy that appears, picks up its task and vanishes. I created it to look like a construction worker coinciding to the fact that they get tooth to build a castle.

Some other characters like 'Captain Planet', 'Cupid', 'Fairy God mother', 'Closet Monster' are just the names that appear on the notice board. I have tried to balance the characters in all ways possible, like having hero's as well as monster and also balancing the gender, age.





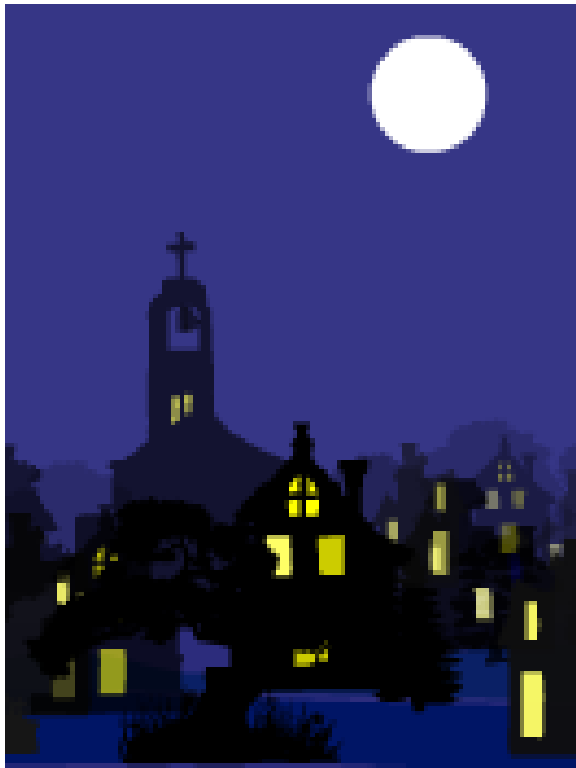
CHARACTER DESIGN AND ANIMATION

OTHER CHARACTERS:

RUDDY THE ELF - He is the one who reveals the identity of the lead character of the story. He is an elf with long ears and nose who hardly could reach Santa's knee in height.

JACK THE SKELETON - This is yet another creature associated with Santa, who actually I wanted in the story as he also has a profile of stealing identity but later realized the mistake. He is tall and well just a skeleton, as his name suggests. I did not change his looks as I wanted his appearance to kindle thoughts of the story that started him.





BACKGROUNDS

The story's essence remained same, but the location got altered twice so that even the background can give clues about the identity of the character. Initially it was a fall from high up in the sky which later changed to a fall through a tree with smoking chimneys for the background. Also the school idea was dropped to give the BG more simplicity and relevance to the story. It was changed to just a corridor with a notice board.

The most important scene of the story happens in a camp where the kids laugh at the lead character. And it ends with the same BG that started the story, with just the difference of more colors and life in it.

As most of the scenes happen in the dark, the characters are just silhouettes with some form of light (moon light/camp fire) highlighting it.



FINAL SCRIPT

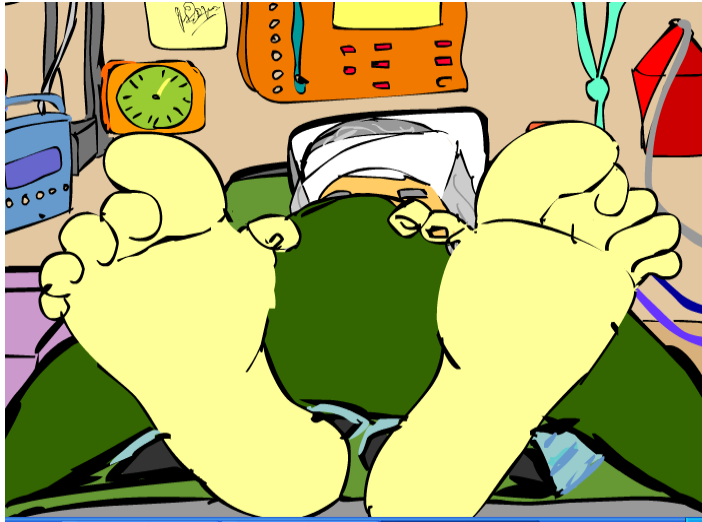
The animation shot opens with a moon light skyline of a city. The smoking chimneys and the slow moving clouds are the only animated elements. The city looks gloomy and stand still. Suddenly the lead character slips and falls down. An ambulance arrives and takes him to the hospital. The next scene is in the hospital where he is being given medication. He wakes up and opens his eyes. The shot cuts to a corridor, where at the end of it is a notice board. A huge feet lands with a thud and walks towards the board. There is Ursula reading the notice board and picking up her task for the day. Suddenly appear Tooth Fairy, to pick up her task for the day. As they both leave, our hero walks to the notice board.

He picks up the task that has his name in it “Big Foot”. In pride, he looks at his big feet and wriggles his fingers and toe. The task mentioned on his note reads ‘Scare the children at the night camp’. He walks towards those tents. He opens one tent and makes scary action and sounds. The kids laugh at him. He repeats the same in two other tents, but to his dismay, he is being laughed at by all the kids. Disappointed he walks back and sits by a streetlight. Jack the skeleton and Ruddy the elf walk by him. Seeing him sad, they talk to him to find out that he is sad because kids laughed him away. Ruddy the elf tells him, that he is Santa and kids love him. The second our hero hears that, he laughs Ho Ho Ho. And magically his hospital dress changes to his Santa suit. The film ends as he flies through those streets lighting up the homes and hearts.

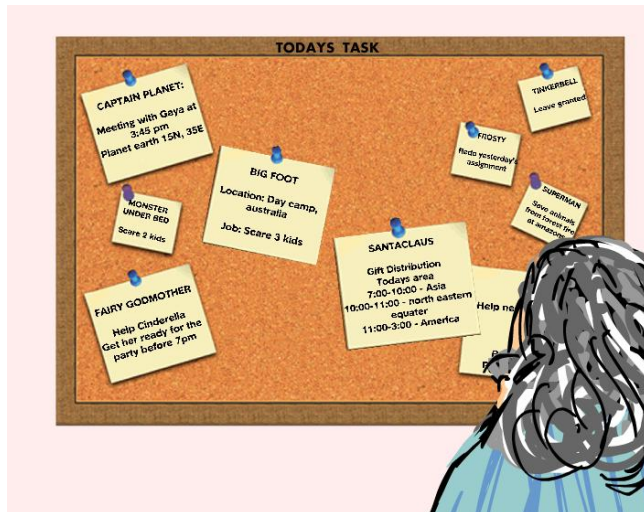
STORY BOARD



STORY BOARD



STORY BOARD



STORY BOARD



STORY BOARD



Santa: But the kids are not scared of me!



Elf: But you are Santa



Santa: HO HO HO merry Christmas

5. Conclusion

It was a great learning experience from the very start. The project as a whole, gave me an opportunity to change a lot of my bias thoughts and feelings.

I am glad that now I feel I know the answer to some of the questions which earlier was a mystery to me, like how to approach story telling and other aspects of animation. I am glad that I was able to explore and have a first hand learning experience of creating animation in this process of carrying out my project.

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MOVIES

Alfonso Cuarón, *Little princess (1995)*
(based upon the novel, A Little Princess by Frances Hodgson Burnett)
Chris Noonan, *Miss Potter(2003)*
P.J. Hogan , *Peter Pan (2003)*
Walt Disney’s *Peter Pan (1953) (Directed by Wilfred Jackson, Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske)*
Other movies starring ‘Mythical characters’ like The Santa Claus (1,2,3) , Candy Man, Indian in the Cupboard etc.