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THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2005  
 An edition of the ORLANDO SENTINEL  
 OrlandoSentinel.com

*'You wouldn't think one-twelfth of a second is that much, but it really shows up [for the camera].'*

— TRACY NELSON



AUTUMN CRUZ/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Tracy Nelson, 10, of Winter Park prepares to photograph a scene during an animation workshop at Lynn Tomlinson's home. She and 4 other 5th-grade graduates have made short films.

## The girls of the world

Five students just leaving 5th grade team up with an acclaimed animator to tell stories.

By JOY WALLACE DICKINSON  
 SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

If the folks behind the popular Babysitters Club books for girls hear about Orange County's Filmmaking Five, they might have material for a whole new series.

Alexis Brown, Rachel Cohn, Olivia Isenhart, Miranda Maio and Tracy Nelson — who all just finished fifth grade — have been busy telling their own stories through movie magic.

This spring the five have worked with animator Lynn Tomlinson of Orlando to make their own short movies through a project called "Girls of the World."

"By writing their own scripts and creating their own storyboards," the girls are learning both about animation and about "the challenges girls have faced historically and in different countries," Tomlinson said.

Tomlinson, 38, whose credits include

work for *Sesame Street* and MTV, received a Professional Development Grant from United Arts of Central Florida for the project.

During a recent Sunday work session, the girls transformed Tomlinson's home near Aloma Avenue into a bustling animation studio.

"Sad scene, take one," Olivia said as she held a microphone in front of Tracy, who played wistful notes on a flute.

What's the sadness about? Olivia said it's the part in her true animated story when an Indonesian girl's father puts a stop to her education because she's a princess.

Olivia's subject is Raden Adjeng Kartini, a pioneer in education for women in the 1800s.

Miranda, who lives in Orlando, chose the story of Mary Anning of England, credited with discovering the first fossilized Ichthyosaurus dinosaur in 1821. Miranda is home-schooled; the other four

girls in the group, most of whom live in Winter Park, have just graduated from Dommerich Elementary in Maitland.

Rachel is animating the story of Sadako Sasaki, who battled leukemia from radiation exposure after the bombing of Hiroshima at the end of World War II in 1945.

Tracy's subject is Kristina Vasa, crowned "king" of Sweden in 1632 (she's also known as Queen Christina).

Alexis tells the story of Jody-Anne Maxwell, a Jamaican girl who in 1998 was the first non-U.S. winner of the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee. Jody-Anne triumphed when she correctly spelled *chiaroscurist*, which means an artist who uses light and shade to produce the illusion of depth.

Alexis chose Jody-Anne as a subject because her own dad is from Jamaica, she said. For her soundtrack, she asked her



'I chose a Jamaican girl for my subject because my father is from Jamaica.'

— Alexis Brown



'Sadako's story inspired me because she never gave up.'

— Rachel Cohn



'It was sad when Kartini's father pulled her out of school because she was a princess.'

— Olivia Isenhart



'I went to the library. We had like 14 books to help us.'

— Miranda Maio

PLEASE SEE **GIRLS, H3**



# Girls' project relies heavily on research

**GIRLS** FROM HI

grandmother to vocally act the part of one of the characters.

Other subjects emerged from extensive research into the lives of girls across the world and throughout history, the young filmmakers said.

"I went to the library," Miranda said. "We had like 14 books to help us."

Tomlinson is well-equipped to teach the girls animation, including how to prepare scripts and storyboards and then transfer them to moving images.

An experimental animator whose independent films have been screened at international film and video festivals, Tomlinson has created spots for *Sesame Street* and the Children's Television Workshop, as well as an animated logo and "Free Your Mind" spot for MTV.

Her awards include the Mid-Atlantic Emmys, grants and fellowships from arts councils, including United Arts. During the summers, she teaches animation at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.



Animator Lynn Tomlinson smiles as she talks with students during a workshop at her home.

Tomlinson works in a number of animation techniques, including a clay-on-glass method in which she spreads colored modeling clay on a light table to create images that have been compared with moving finger painting or animated stained glass.

For the Girls of the World project, though, she and her team of five used figures and backgrounds made of colored



PHOTOS BY AUTUMN CRUZ/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Olivia Isenhart, 11 (from left); Tracy Nelson, 10; Alexis Brown, 11; and Miranda Maio, 11, get props ready to record sound effects during an animation workshop at the Orlando home of Lynn Tomlinson.

and cut paper. The girls' brush strokes and paint textures help give their images a unified look, Tomlinson said.

To animate a scene, the girls move their colorful cut-paper characters a fraction of an inch at a time, while recording the

moves with clicks of a digital camera, sometimes snapping hundreds of images.

When they have finished a sequence, they transfer the pictures to an animation program on Tomlinson's computer and then edit, adding sound effects

and narration.

They have already become discerning judges of what makes animation work well.

It's essential, for example, that the characters seem to blink their eyes, the girls said. Pieces of cut-to-fit colored pa-

per rest near a cut-paper scene ready to put over a character's eyes for some shots to create the blinking effect.

The moves of the characters the girls make between shots must not be too big, or the illusion of movement will be lost.

Each shot takes about one-twelfth of a second, Tracy said as she prepared for some digital camera work Sunday.

"You wouldn't think one-twelfth of a second is that much, but it really shows up."

As they planned sound effects and figured out what holes in continuity needed to be filled in their three-minute opuses, the girls said they hoped to have a rough cut ready to screen tomorrow for family members at the Crealde School of Art, where Tomlinson also is a studio artist in sculpture.

But the big premiere, at the Downtown Media Arts Center in Orlando, will be a little later, in August, after all the wrinkles have been smoothed out and the flute sounds and more have been blended into the background.

The team also hopes to show "Girls of the World" to other girls in groups such as the Girl Scouts.

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