



Lifelines

A review by Chris Drage, CISCO Regional Academy manager and an adviser and trainer with Central Brent Education Improvement Partnership

Lifelines aims to stimulate writing and develop speaking and listening skills. It presents nine innovative, short 'movies' that blend audio, video and still images to create engaging stories told from children's perspectives. Aimed at Key Stage 3, the resource comprises a CD-ROM and Teacher's Book and has been designed to be viewed via the interactive whiteboard or PC.

Teachers can play a whole filmic story through (each story lasts for approximately 5-7 minutes) and this is probably the recommended option if a class is watching the story for the first time. Alternatively the stories can be viewed screen-by-screen, stopping in between for discussion.

The story's chapter numbers are displayed along the bottom of the screen and are selected directly. By using these chapter numbers teachers can hop to any stage of the story. I particularly like the way each story can also be viewed in a range of ways, e.g. speech on/off, text on/off, music on/off. This is a useful option if teachers wish to explore the way each element impacts on the telling of the story.

Teacher's Book

The Teacher's Book is particularly good and has a quick start guide, which outlines the key features of *Lifelines* to help teachers quickly get the most out of the resource. It suggests ways that teachers can invite a wider range of responses using prompts for speaking, drama, reading and writing. Similarly, the very nature of the stories invites further research, and the use of the each story's assets (the still images and sounds) encourages students to create their own versions on screen.

There are also references to assessment focuses to enable you to use the resource as part of your gathering evidence for Assessing Pupils' Progress.

Lifelines' jewel-in-the-crown is its extensive bank of images and sounds that students can use when creating their own digital texts. These assets are taken from each of the nine stories and the script for each story is also provided in pdf format, so they can be printed out for reference or copied into MS Word for editing. The main menu screen provides links to a number of open source programs: Photo Story, Comic Life and Audacity so that they can be easily downloaded if they are not already installed. Once students have downloaded and saved files they are then able to use these or other open source programs to create their own filmic stories. *Lifelines* represents very good value for money – the digital assets alone are of great value!

Digital literacy is fast becoming an essential skill in our society and resources like *Lifelines* help prepare students to interpret, understand and use digital resources effectively. In the hands of an imaginative teacher, *Lifelines* should prove a hugely effective tool. Recommended!

For more information visit
www.risingstars-uk.com/lifelines
FREEPHONE 0800 091 1602