

Paul and the Dragon

Paul and the Dragon was produced by ‘il Luster Productions based in the Netherlands. Paul and the Dragon is a short animated film about a nine-year old boy who is diagnosed with cancer. His doctor explains to him that the cancer is like a dragon in his body that needs to be fought. But fighting is not always easy – especially when you are in the hospital and start losing your hair. Luckily Paul is not alone on his quest, but finds lots of different new friends along the way. With their help and finesse he works up his courage and as a true hero, Paul fights the dragon and wins.

Paul and the Dragon was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 7-11 fiction category.

International experts’ opinions



Figure 1: Paul suddenly feels unbearable pain during playing with friends.



Figure 2: His parents take Paul to the hospital.

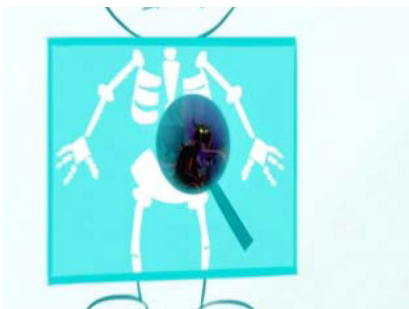


Figure 3: The doctor uses the metaphor of a dragon to symbolize cancer in Paul’s body.

Many international experts were really impressed by the program. “I thought *Paul and the Dragon* was a fascinating effort.” (female expert, USA). They praised the fact that the program was very appropriate for the kids. “I thought it was just such a brilliant idea to try to do it. I think they really captured the whole sort of arch of what a kid goes through: a certain loneliness and the scariness, in a way that I think would be really meaningful to kids. I think the fact that it was all visualised would be a really useful universal film for kids all over” (female expert, USA). There were other international experts who expressed similar feelings but brought in the importance of the context of viewing. They loved the use of animation in the program. “But, it is such a good idea to use animation to explain the feelings and kids love this” (female expert, Norway).

They also appreciated the character shown by the protagonist. “It is another self-help issue. I also loved that it was very clear that he had a major part in his own healing. I thought that the way they represented the medicine and how that helped, but it really was him that did it. I just thought it is a really hard thing to do, and I thought that they did this really well. I also thought it was tough, because it wasn’t quick development, but a process. The dragon didn’t die right away. There is nothing easy about it. He had his own emotional set-backs with it, and I thought all of that was really good. And done without any dialogue” (male expert, Canada).

However, some international experts found the program confusing. “I think that it didn’t really fully realize the effort, because I think sometimes the visualisation about cancer and chemotherapy was very confusing” (female expert, USA). Some experts echoed the



Figure 4: The medicine helps Paul fight the cancerous dragon.



Figure 5: Paul tries to defeat the cancer dragon, but fails at first.



Figure 6: Family members and friends come to visit Paul and encourage him.



Figure 7: With the medicine's help, Paul gets rid of the cancer dragon.

same sentiments. “When you need a certain amount of information beforehand – like the dark blue figure: what is it; what does it do? Because many of the things that it does you can understand in the end. But when it appears first, you don’t know what it is about. You have to have a certain, actually very precise, information of what is going on” (male expert, Germany).

They doubted if the target audience would be able to understand the program. “I think it is a brilliant idea, but it is very confusing. For me, as a grown up, it is confusing. Then I am thinking: Ok, this is 7 to 11? They have no idea what you are actually talking about. It took me quite a long time before I understood it was about cancer. So, for the target group, this is a hard film to understand. I don’t think it works” (female expert, Norway).

There were also discussions about the theme of the program and if it was appropriate to be telecasted on television. Some doubted that it could be telecasted. “I am just wondering: would we be able to put it on air? I think that is the best way of approaching it apart from what is done in the classroom” (female expert, Jamaica). There were further worries among the international experts. “I am thinking of the society. What would be the reaction of parents. You may attend to do it, but I am sure that before it goes on the air, someone up there will tell you “No”. If it goes on air there is going to be a telephone call. Take that thing off air” (female expert, Ghana). “I thought it was a fantastic idea. For me, it would be great to present in the education system, not just prompting the schedule without any explanation and wondering if this was going to be understandable” (female expert, Germany).

However, some experts dismissed the doubts about the telecast of the program. “Sorry, but why do you have a problem with putting it on the air? I can see it with sexuality, because that is something that we don’t want them to do so early. But here we are talking about something where they are dying” (female expert, Germany). A female expert from Jamaica provided the explanation, “In the States and in Jamaica, most people don’t want to talk about a disease. They are sympathetic when they find out that somebody is sick, but generally, and especially a lot of people are fearful of cancer. A lot of people tend to be fearful of it, therefore when in terms of airing it generally, it may be difficult: some people may call, they don’t want to see that on television. Sometimes, just a few people, I realise, can get something off air, because most people don’t go to those lengths. A lot of people, I have found, don’t want to deal with cancer. They don’t want to deal with diabetes. They don’t want to deal with Aids. They don’t want to see those things necessarily. Yet, I had no problem with it; I think it is great.”

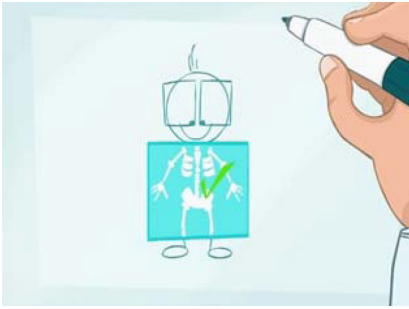


Figure 8: Paul is healthy again.

Some also questioned the duration of the program. “I found 23 minutes a bit long for an adult. I was wondering if a child would choose to stay engaged with it that long” (female expert, Germany). However some provided the justification. “I think if the kid was diagnosed with cancer and they were getting all this information about cancer and what chemotherapy is, that would set a context for it. That would explain what that evil thing is that is going to make him sick, but in the end he is going to conquer the beast, so to speak. I agree that it was probably longer than it needed to be, but I loved the fact that it was told without any words at all. I thought that was really interesting. I thought it was a great idea” (female expert, USA).

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