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Why Movies?

Long before Edison projected a series of still images creating the illusion of motion, gathering to hear a story read or recited was commonplace around the world. Today families and friends frequently go to the movies or watch videos at home in order to enjoy each other's company while being entertained. Because movies are so popular, they are an appealing vehicle to use in teaching about stories, or what is formally called literary analysis.

Every story has a purpose. It uses techniques meant to impact its audience. Film is a medium with its own techniques. Since a movie is generally no more than 2½ hours in length, it follows the structure of a short story even when based on a novel. That is, the story is usually told from one point of view, follows a single major plotline, and has only a few well-defined central characters. This simplified structure should make it easier for students to dig deeper into the story elements.

Literature teaches. A well-written story appeals to our emotions. We find ourselves absorbing what it tells us is important in life and what behaviors are acceptable. This course is intended to help students understand the elements of good story-telling, identify and respond to messages even if they are not obvious at first, and to understand the techniques used by filmmakers or authors to involve us emotionally as we watch or read. In this way, students will develop the ability to critique stories, whether on film or in print.

Learning to critique literature develops the ability to reflect on underlying messages, analyzing them from a moral point of view. This habit can be a safeguard against absorbing almost subconsciously the unwholesome messages Hollywood and books sometimes promote.

Why These Movies?

Movies included in this course were chosen based on two primary criteria. First, the stories had to be well written in terms of literary elements. Most were based on novels or plays. Key characters are “fleshed out” (not left as stereotypes), plots are well developed and plausible, and the stories lend themselves to examination beyond the literal level. Second, the movies had to be filmed effectively, serving as examples for

various film techniques. For this reason, **it is important that the specific version of a movie listed here be the one viewed.** For example, after watching the remake of *A Man For All Seasons*, which is longer and includes all of the original play, we felt that the absence of certain film techniques made it less effective in drawing the viewer into the life and world of Sir Thomas More than the original, shorter, film. Therefore, the earlier version was chosen for this course.

Note: The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating is given for each film if available, although most of these movies were released before a rating code was deemed necessary. PG-13 is the most mature rating given any film studied in this book. However, if you are concerned about any movie's suitability, please preview it before watching it with a student.

Will I Cover Everything Necessary for an English Course?

According to the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English, composition should make up fifty percent of a high school English course with the remaining fifty percent made up primarily of the analysis of literature, allowing for some attention to vocabulary and grammar as needed by the student.

In this course, movies provide the short stories—the literature. The questions for discussion guide students into analysis of literary elements. That discussion should also include any vocabulary from the film or discussion questions that the teacher believes the students will find unfamiliar. It is assumed that by high school, students will be able to recall and summarize the story watched or read. Therefore, the emphasis in this course is on directing students to make inferences, draw conclusions, and identify and interpret figurative language and symbolism as they study character, plot, theme, and various literary and film techniques.

Each lesson contains three questions for compositions. The writing process should be used in order to fulfill the English requirement. That is, the student writes a first draft and the teacher offers constructive suggestions for further revisions until the final draft is considered by the teacher to be well done. Analytical skills will also be honed as students organize and support their points. Grammar related errors should be pointed out by the teacher and corrected by the student for the final draft.

If instructions are followed, this course will not only fulfill English requirements, but will also develop skills that the student will apply to stories and movies on his own.

If the student needs extra practice with composition, use appropriate discussion questions for further writing assignments.

What about an Honors Course?

For college bound students who want an Honors English listing on their transcript, a minimum of five activities chosen from “Activities for Extended Study” should be completed along with the regular course requirements.

How Do I Adjust This Course for a Student with Special Needs?

All questions, even those for compositions, should be answered orally. The student may dictate or write just his thesis statement and points of support for two of the three composition questions. The teacher should help the student work from rough draft to finished product on just one composition question per movie, allowing the student to dictate if writing is too difficult.

How Do I Use This Course in Grades 7 and 8?

Study only the first six movies unless the student is considered advanced. In that case, stop when it appears that the questions become too complex even with teacher guidance during discussion. Take as much time as necessary to complete each lesson. Use extended activity ideas, additional short stories, and/or short novels to be read and discussed to complete the literature portion of the curriculum. Add regular spelling and vocabulary practice and extra editing practice to hone grammar skills.

Where Do I Find the Movies for this Course?

Many of these movies regularly appear on television and can be recorded for home use. Some public libraries carry classic movies, and will frequently order titles by request. All titles are available at www.amazon.com for purchase at a low cost. Many are also available free if you belong to Netflix or Amazon Prime. **Be sure to check the date of the movie listed in this course in order to use the correct version.**

Student Sample Schedule

(For use with each movie)

- Day 1** Watch the movie in silence and without interruption.
- Days 2 - 3** Look over the questions and composition topics. Watch the movie again. This time you can stop the tape, rewind, and view scenes again in order to prepare for discussion questions and compositions.
- Days 4 - 5** Discuss questions 1 - 22 and, if time allows, begin discussing possible responses to the composition questions.
- Days 6 - 10** Work on each composition using the writing process. Watch portions of the movie again as needed in order to include specific evidence.

The Writing Process to be used in Composition Assignments

prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing

PREWRITING

Write one sentence that states your purpose to be used as your topic sentence (for short compositions) or thesis statement (for essays). Make an initial list or an outline of your supporting points. Go through it to determine whether or not each item supports your main idea. Then add or subtract points to make your final list.

Decide on the best order to present the information and arrange the details in that order. Any points listed in your topic sentence or thesis statement should be arranged in the same order in which they will be discussed. For example, let's say your essay began with the thesis statement, "The hero of this movie is intelligent, resourceful, and daring." The supporting paragraphs should first prove he is intelligent, then resourceful, and finally, daring.

If you are comparing or contrasting qualities (for example, those of two characters in a movie), you may choose to either alternate or cluster the information. To alternate, focus on one quality at a time, giving information about both subjects being compared or contrasted. (For example, explain why both men are intelligent, or why one is, but the



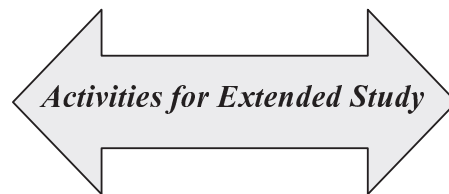
Questions for Discussion

1. This is a story about Emma as a matchmaker. Why doesn't she feel the need to search for a suitable match for herself?
2. Emma believes she is befriending Harriet out of kindness. How does the audience know that her motive is actually selfish?
3. The match between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor, Emma's former governess, is an example of a woman "marrying up." That is, Miss Taylor's social position and wealth improved through marriage. Emma congratulates herself as responsible for this match and introduces Reverend Elton to Harriet Smith with the same motive.
 - a) What is Harriet Smith's background in terms of her place in society, especially in regard to her suitability for marriage in Emma's circle?
 - b) How do you know that Emma wants Harriet to "marry up," that is, above her class?
4. Describe Mr. Martin by contrasting his position in society with his character. Refer to details in the film for support.
5. Mr. Elton, as a vicar, holds a more acceptable position in society than either Harriet or Mr. Martin. Contrast Mr. Elton's social position with his character, supporting your position with details from the film.
6. Harriet is easily influenced and not especially intelligent, but she is truly kind. Give examples that suggest these three qualities.
7. Contrast Jane Fairfax's social position with her character, explaining why her marriage to Frank may not be accepted by the aunt who has raised him.

22. a) The story is told from what point of view? b) How does this point of view enhance the overall telling of the story? c) How does the author use both the innocence and the prejudice of the children to expose the theme?

Questions for Compositions

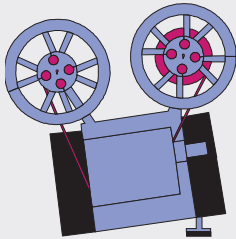
23. How does the title relate to both the main plot and the subplot of the story? Answers should develop the analogy between the mockingbird and both Tom Robinson and Boo Radley.
24. Atticus Finch serves as a positive role model as a parent. Identify his qualities and behaviors that parents should emulate. Support your points with details from the movie.
25. Most of the characters portrayed in this movie would consider themselves God-fearing Christians. Compare the attitudes of Atticus Finch with those of the mob who showed up at the courthouse based on these two scriptures from Proverbs: “Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and the needy” (31:9). “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (14:31).



Literature Read the novel. Compare and contrast it with this film.

History Conduct research to learn about the treatment of African Americans during this time period (up until the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

Raiders of the Lost Ark



Action / Adventure (PG)

1981

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Starring Harrison Ford, Karen Allen

Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan

Story by George Lucas and Philip Kaufman

Academy Awards: Best Art Direction, Best Effects,
Best Film Editing, Best Sound

Academy Award nominations: Best Picture, Best
Director, Best Cinematography, Best Music

Included in the American Film Institute's top 100 films



This film is a great example of the action-adventure genre. Its fast pace and edge-of-your-seat excitement keeps the audience rooting for the hero and hissing at the villains—in this case, the Nazis. This genre emphasizes plot—providing plenty of obstacles for the hero to overcome—making it acceptable for characters to be stereotypes. In this case, however, the central characters are given depth, adding to our enjoyment of this entertaining romp.



This is Spielberg and Lucas' big-budget homage to the cliffhanger serials of the 1930s and 40s. These low-budget, thrill-packed adventures featured such heroes as Zorro, Rocket Men, The Tiger Woman, Captain America, Junior G-Men, and many more colorful heroes. Each short installment ended with the hero in imminent danger (often hanging from a cliff, thus the name), encouraging the audience to return to the theater the following Saturday.

Sit back and enjoy this roller-coaster ride!

Studied in This Lesson

Character development
Plot development
Film Techniques
Irony

Character motivation
Exposition
Action hero
Comic relief

Mood
Tight Plot
Foreshadowing

Final Exam

PART I: Choose from the following list to identify what is being illustrated or described in the 20 examples given below. (3 points each)

action hero	allusion	analogy	anti-hero
character motivation	character development	dramatic license	exposition
film technique	anticlimax	foreshadowing	irony
mood	moral dilemma	onomatopoeia	plot
point of view	pun	setting	symbolism
theme	tight plot	tone	turning point

1. In the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Indiana Jones enters a cave with his only remaining companion. After encountering tarantulas and a booby trap, he is obviously afraid to continue with Jones. When Indiana says, “Stay here,” his companion responds, “If you insist.” His words imply a desire to continue, but his behavior tells us he is grateful to stay behind. _____
2. Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back. _____
3. The small, grimy, Los Angeles apartment is decorated with cheap, mismatched furnishings typical of the era. A radio on the kitchen table announces the re-election of President Eisenhower. _____
4. Even though *The Quiet Man* includes martial difficulties and Sean’s painful memories from his boxing career, the film as a whole has a light-hearted feel about it. _____
5. Although a teenager, Josh Birdwell was not trying to rebel against his parents’ authority when he joined the battle against their objections. Rather, he was trying to act according to his own beliefs, as they had taught him to do. _____
6. “When a man takes an oath, Meg, he’s holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his finger *then*—he needn’t hope to find himself again.” _____
7. Chorus tells the audience that they will help the playwright in “Jumping o’er times, turning the accomplishment of many years into an hourglass” in Shakespeare’s history of Henry V. _____

#2 - Friendly Persuasion

Questions for Discussion

1. *In this case, the movie's theme song and opening scenes help establish the tone of the entire movie. Identify the tone and the specific elements that lead to this conclusion.*

The tone is light-hearted in spite of the serious subject matter. The theme song tells about a man's love for a woman without any of the sadness, pain, or rejection that can be part of love songs. It's a sunny day, without any threat of bad weather. The farm looks prosperous and tranquil. This peaceful scene is interrupted by nothing of consequence—only a goose. We hear a child's voice telling us about his mother's love for this ornery bird. There is no indication that men's convictions will be put to the test or that it is a time of war. Light-hearted scenes continue throughout the movie, keeping the overall tone light even though there are serious moments.

2. *What film techniques are used to make the Birdwell farm seem idyllic?*

There are frequent exterior shots of the Birdwell farm that are picturesque, as if looking at pastoral paintings or "picture" postcards. When members of the family are included in a shot, daily life appears peaceful and pleasant. Swells of romantic music accompany these shots, contributing to the idyllic aura.

3. *In order to help establish the Quaker culture within the context of a typical protestant culture of the day, the film contrasts a Society of Friends (Quaker) meeting with a Methodist church service. Name at least three differences between the two congregations and their styles of worship.*

Clothing: Quaker women wear simple gray dresses; men wear black without any fancy buttons or buckles.

Methodists dress according to the fashion of the day, wearing colorful clothing to church.

Music: Quakers don't sing or play instruments during worship.

Methodist congregations sing accompanied by an organ.

Sermon: Quakers don't have a sermon. Instead, individuals speak as they feel led. Methodists have a sermon preached by a clergyman.

Minister: Quakers allow women to minister during services. Eliza Birdwell's family refers to her as a preacher. She calls herself one of the ministers when greeting the soldier during the church service.

In the Methodist service there is a male preacher.

Seating: Quaker women and men sit separately, facing each other.

In the Methodist service families sit together in pews facing a pulpit.

Speech: Quakers use "thee" and "thou."

Methodists use the modern equivalent for both: "you."

- 5) After the party, Tracy accuses Connor of being an intellectual snob, addressing him with the mockingly lofty title Professor.

Questions for Compositions

Teacher's Note: Students may hold a different point of view than that expressed in the answers provided. Their answers, however, must be well supported with examples from the movie.

23. *A comedy of manners often targets the contemporary upper class. Using witty, often cynical, dialogue, it mocks (satirizes) specific social standards (manners or conventions) such as a concern with appearances. Characters wear a mask of social acceptability, but reveal attitudes in opposition to their appearance. Thus, the story exposes human weaknesses. Identify and support any points in which this story fits that formula.*

Points that indicate this story is a comedy of manners are listed below.

- 1) The story targets America's upper class at the time it was written, making it a contemporary commentary. (That is, it was written in the same time period as the story's setting.)
- 2) It contains witty and cynical dialogue. From beginning to end, this film is pushed along by clever dialogue. Connor, a working-class reporter, arrives at the estate with no awe and plenty of cynicism. Dinah Lord doesn't like George, her sister's self-made fiancé, and responds to his attempts to mount a horse with witty put-downs. Tracy Lord shoots barbs at her ex-husband and father, and is wounded in return. She is the reigning goddess, and must learn to have compassion for human weakness.
- 3) The story mocks (satirizes) the upper class' concern with appearances while contrasting that concern with behaviors that suggest the people's true sentiments contradict that appearance. Tracy and Mrs. Lord are concerned with appearances in regard to Seth's relationship with a dancer and his expected absence at Tracy's wedding—What will people think? The reporters must not know the truth, and so, the comedy includes a cover up with all its complications.
- 4) Human weaknesses are exposed. Besides Tracy's need to change, Uncle Willie is a womanizer, her father has been grappling with a mid-life crisis, and even Sidney Kidd's hypocrisy is exposed.

24. *Typically, a comedy of manners exposes the weaknesses in the upper class. Character development usually takes place within a wealthy protagonist. While The Philadelphia Story does all this, it also exposes the prejudices of those outside the upper class in the person of Macaulay Connor. Write a brief composition identifying at least three opinions of Connor's that are changed, explaining how we know.*