

A Cat in Paris



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DIRECTED BY: Jean-Loup Felicioli and Alain Gagnol

CERTIFICATE: PG

COUNTRY: France

RUNNING TIME: 126 mins

YEAR: 2010

SUITABLE FOR: primary literacy, modern foreign languages (French), personal, social and health education, art and design

KEY WORDS: Paris, cat, burglar, young girl, police officer, gangsters, Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, rooftops

SYNOPSIS

By day, Dino the Parisian cat lives with a little girl called Zoe, whose mother is a police officer. By night, he works with Nico, a jewellery thief with a big heart. Zoe, who lost her father to some local thugs, has refused to speak since his death. Lost in her silence and unable to find comfort even from her own mother, her only friend is Dino the cat. When Dino brings Zoe a diamond bracelet with a fish emblem, it's not long before Zoe's mother and the police are onto Dino and trying to track down the thief.

Trying to protect Dino, Zoe follows him one night when he sets off on one of his rooftop jaunts with Nico. She unwittingly stumbles up on a team of gangsters who have a big robbery in mind. When they discover that she has witnessed them at the scene of the crime, they kidnap her. It's up to Dino and Nico to try and save her.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- *A Cat in Paris* was Oscar (R) Nominated in 2012, alongside *Rango*
- The famous jazz singer from the 1940s and 50s, Billie Holliday is featured on the soundtrack
- The style of animation is inspired by artists like Picasso and Matisse
- The film is created in traditional cel, hand drawn, 2D animation
- The cat of the title, Dino, brings his owner Zoe dead newts to cheer her up
- *A Cat in Paris* is the first full-length feature film for its directors



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BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT

Old-school film style

A Cat in Paris is a simple story told in a rich visual style that harks back to the 'golden cinema' period of Hollywood cinema in the mid twentieth century - and the 'film noir' genre in particular. Film noir refers to a type of film that focuses on crime drama, full of wise-cracking gangsters and hard-as-nails detectives. 'Noir' means 'black' in French, and the title came from the many gritty black and white feature films that dominated the cinema in the 1940s and 50s. Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall and Robert Mitchum are a few of the famous actors who made their name in Hollywood in the films 'noir' of their day.

Mise-en-scène

Literally translating to 'put in place' or 'put in the scene', mise-en-scène refers to the details that come together to make meaning on screen. This can be broken down into the costumes, body language, props, placement of characters, set design, choice of background and the general 'look and feel' of each individual shot. The French invented the grammar of cinema, so it's no surprise that *A Cat in Paris* is full of visual 'mise-en-scène' detail. Look out for shots that help describe the mood of the film - for example: Nico the cat-burglar's empty apartment - symbolising his loneliness. And the dramatic sense of confusion that reigns when Zoe is hiding herself from the gangsters. There are also the stunning sequences of Dino skipping across the rooftops of Paris - known as the 'City of Light'.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

Imagine the Dino the cat could talk. How do you think he would describe what he does - by day, and by night? Write a short 'blog' piece that outlines his dual existence.

TEACHERS' NOTES

Shot, pair, share

Explore and analyse the two images on the next page as a way of critically evaluating the film.

The frame

Describe what you can see in the shot. Where is the camera placed? Why is it placed in this position? Why not high up? Or low down? Or from far away? Or close-up? What is not shown in the shot?

Colour / light

How is the scene lit? Are there contrasts between light and shadow? Why is it lit this way? What are the key colours in the scene? Do any colours stand out more than any others? Why? What does this tell us about the mood of the scene and the character?

Mise en scène

This means, 'everything in the frame', or the way information is communicated through a single shot. Describe the props, furniture, body language and facial expressions. Look at the details of the shot. Describe how each detail gives us information about the character and the scene's place in the film's narrative.

METHODOLOGY

Shot

Discuss each shot as a class. Ask for pupils' initial reactions: what does each shot tell us about the film?

Pair

Ask the children to annotate one or both of the shots in pairs, focusing on framing, colour and light or mise en scène (or all three).

Share

Each pair should then share one or two key observations about the shot.

15-MINUTE WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Shot one

7-year-old Zoe is in her bedroom stroking Dino, who is offering her a 'gift'!

- What is familiar about this setting?
- What is unfamiliar?

Write about your own bedroom, outlining your favourite thing to do whilst chilling out in your own personal space. How is your bedroom similar or different to Zoe's?

Shot two

Cat burglar, Rico and cat, Dino survey the 'City of Lights' in the moonlight.

Write a poem about the City of Lights in the moonlight, using this image as your inspiration. Describe it in terms of the 5 senses. Think about what Rico and Dino feel, see, smell, hear, taste on the air as they take in the sights. Use similes and metaphors to add depth and meaning to your poem. For example, you could describe the city as 'like a maze of chimney tops' (simile) or as a 'nighttime playground' (metaphor).

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



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Shot Two



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