

## Oranges and Sunshine Study Notes



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**Directed by:** Jim Loach

**Certificate:** 15

**Running time:** 101 mins

**Release date:** 1 April 2011

### **Synopsis:**

Based on a shocking true story, *Oranges and Sunshine* stars Emily Watson as Margaret Humphreys, a social worker from Nottingham who uncovers a dark National secret: for decades, children in care were being illegally deported from the UK to Australia where the cost of looking after youngsters was much cheaper. Humphreys investigates further, leading her on a harrowing journey through corruption, abuse and several emotional reunions for the countless families she brings together.

**These Study Notes are suitable for students of Media and Film Studies at AS/A2 Level and equivalent. They also contain tasks suitable for exploring PSHE-related issues.**

## Before viewing

This is the directorial debut of Jim Loach, son of British filmmaker Ken Loach who is known for the 'social realism' of his films. As you will soon see, a number of similarities can be drawn between the styles and thematic concerns of father and son, but how much of an influence is Jim's father on him in terms of his approach to film?

- Investigate Ken Loach further: what are the key works in his filmography?
- Loach has never made a Hollywood film. What is the closest he has come to making a mainstream 'hit'?
- What themes and issues concern Ken Loach and what is his political stance?
- Loach is notoriously considered to be a filmmaker who makes 'miserable' and 'depressing' films. What films of his might contradict this opinion?

## After viewing

### Loach vs. Loach

Do you think that your knowledge of Ken Loach affected the way you viewed his son's film, *Oranges and Sunshine*? The comparisons and weight of expectation on Jim Loach's film were perhaps inevitable, but are they helpful to the film's reception?

- Both Ken and Jim directed television before coming to film. How does this show through their style and aesthetic?
- How much have reviews of *Oranges and Sunshine* stressed the link to Ken Loach?
- Does *Oranges and Sunshine* focus more on the human, social or political aspect of its fascinating story?

### Mise-en-scène

Look at the way the UK and Australia are shot. The UK is bleak, blue and grey while Australia is bright, sunny and warm. This reflects the life of 'oranges and sunshine' many of the children who were deported were promised.

- What is different about how Bindoon is shot and represented on film?
- How are the working-class people and communities of 1980s Britain represented?
- What do you notice about the camerawork, shot types and framing of Margaret Humphreys in the first few shots of the film? How does this change over the course of the film?

## Activity

Recreate a scene or sequence from *Oranges and Sunshine* but in the style of Ken Loach. How would the camerawork, editing and mise-en-scène be different?

## A True Story: PSHE-focused tasks

Investigate the history of the highly controversial British policy depicted in the film.

- What can you discover about the rationale behind this policy?
- What effect does Margaret Humphreys' work continue to have on social work, childcare and government policy?
- How did you react to these events as portrayed in the film?
- What do you think are the challenges involved in adapting true stories to popular formats such as feature films? Think about the emotional impact on the individual watching the film, including those involved with the events.

Some reviews have said that *Oranges and Sunshine* doesn't go deep enough into the effects of this harrowing true story; that perhaps the story was too big and far-reaching to be satisfyingly told in 100 minutes.

- To what extent do you agree with those reviews?
- Only two or three stories are explored in notable depth in the film. Would more stories have increased or lessened the impact of the film, do you think?
- The story of the lone outsider uncovering government corruption is a well-worn but exciting narrative arc. Are any clichés exploited during Margaret's investigation? How does this affect your reaction to the film?

*Written by Gareth C Evans*