The Angels’ Share

DIRECTED BY: Ken Loach

CERTIFICATE: 15

RUNNING TIME: 97 mins

COUNTRY: UK

YEAR: 2012

KEYWORDS: British film, UK film policy, film education, Ken Loach, redemption, youth crime

SUITABLE FOR: 14–19 media/film studies, P4C and politics
SYNOPSIS
Robbie is a young Glaswegian man going nowhere in life. Though he has a pregnant girlfriend to support, he has no job, he’s living on a friend’s floor and he is committed to doing community service after he assaulted another man. It doesn’t help that his girlfriend’s father is a gangland boss and that many other criminals are threatening his life. But when Robbie is introduced to the world of the malt whiskey connoisseur by his community service officer, he not only finds a brief respite from his life but stumbles upon an opportunity to steal a barrel of rare whiskey that could be worth over a million pounds...an act that could change his life forever – one way or the other.

BEFORE VIEWING

UK FILM POLICY: HOW HAS IT AFFECTED YOU AS A MOVIE FAN?
The Angels’ Share is partly financed by the British Film Institute. Carrying on the work of the UK Film Council, the BFI allocates lottery funds to an array of British Film projects. ¹ This spells good news for the British Film Industry, as does the government’s recent policy review of film funding in the UK. However, in January 2012 the Prime Minister stated that “…the film industry should support “commercially successful pictures.”” ²

Read through this webpage from the BBC: www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16495095
- What problems can you see with the Prime Minister’s statement? Think about the process of a film’s development.
- How did filmmakers react to the PM’s statement?
- What examples of commercially successful British pictures can you think of from the last few years?

Not long after the Prime Minister’s comments, a report and review of British Film Policy ³ was published with aims that the BFI and filmmakers were generally happy with.

Read through this webpage from the BBC: www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16575204 (accessed 30/ix/12)
- How have the BFI and UK film directors responded to the government’s recommendations?
- The article notes that the report proposes ‘A new anti-piracy law and film education in schools…film clubs, festivals, pop-ups, rural community venues or digitally equipped modern cinemas…to give more opportunities to see movies, especially outside of London’. Have you noticed a difference around your school, community and local cinema when it comes to film-watching or cinema-going opportunities?
- How might future plans for film affect you? What exciting new film opportunities would you like to take advantage of?

¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-12924307 (accessed 30/ix/12)
² http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16495095 (accessed 30/ix/12)
³ The complete report can be viewed as a PDF here: http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/DCMS_film_policy_review_report-2012_update.pdf (accessed 30/ix/12)
AFTER VIEWING

A KEN LOACH FILM?
For a long while, Ken Loach had a reputation for being a ‘miserabilist’, for creating films that were downbeat and concerned struggling working-class characters. However, recently there has been a noticeable shift. With *Looking For Eric* (2009) and now *The Angels’ Share* he has begun to display a comic edge. To what extent is *The Angels’ Share* recognisable as a Ken Loach film? Can you identify the following Ken Loach conventions in the film?
- naturalistic performances
- regional dialects
- northern/Scottish setting
- social commentary
- working-class characters and milieu
- challenging subject matter
- on-location shooting
- screenplay by Paul Laverty

Look at the trailers for some of Loach’s other films, particularly *Sweet Sixteen* (2002), *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) and *Looking For Eric* (2009). What other identifiable Loach touches can you spot?

BALANCING COMEDY AND DRAMA
Reviewers have noted that Loach tries to balance very serious drama and very funny comedy in *The Angels’ Share*. The themes stretch from serious, confrontational social issues right to gross-out humour.

■ How does Loach handle the following swings in tone? Consider performances, mise en scène, editing and the placing of the sequences in the narrative:
  - Robbie’s beating at the hospital
  - Robbie’s pal drinking the jug of ‘whiskey’
  - Robbie being confronted by his victim and his family
  - Robbie’s ‘chat’ with Leonie’s Dad
  - the trip up to the highlands
  - the theft of the whiskey
  - the whiskey bottles breaking

■ Pay particular attention to the scene where Robbie meets his victim.
  - What editing methods are used to suggest the seriousness of the crime?
  - Which character or characters do you sympathise with in the scene?
  - Does the scene fit within the narrative framework of a ‘comedy caper’?

■ Look at the promotional material for the film, particularly the DVD covers, posters and trailer.
  - Which other films are referenced in the material?
  - Do the materials make the film seem more like a comedy or drama or are both genres covered?
  - Now you’ve seen the film, do you feel the promotional materials truly reflect the content of the film? How could you position the marketing campaign differently?
REPRESENTATIONS

A variety of social groups and institutions are represented in *The Angels’ Share*. The themes in the film also reflect many concerns of people living in Britain today such as youth crime, rehabilitation and violence.

What positive and negative aspects of the following character types are put forward in the film? Remember, the absence of representation is just as important as what is shown:
- young men
- young women
- the working class
- the middle class
- the police
- community service officers
- violent offenders
- victims of crime
- mothers
- fathers
- the Scottish
- NEDS (you may need to look up this term!)

With all that you have investigated, what does the film say about young offenders who wish to rehabilitate?

ACTIVITIES (PRACTICAL)

Using images from the film or your own photos, produce a poster for this film that gives the impression it is a drama rather than a comedy.

Try this genre switching for poster campaigns for other films of your choice. How easy or difficult is it to switch tone between different genres?
SUCCESS OF THE ANGELS’ SHARE

Look at the release dates and figures of the variety of British films below (which includes some other Ken Loach films). How did *The Angel’s Share*’s box-office figures compare? Is there a pattern when it comes to release dates? How does this film compare to other even more recent Loach films?

Find more information at the Film Distributors’ Association website: [http://www.launchingfilms.com/](http://www.launchingfilms.com/)

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<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Distributor</th>
<th>Release</th>
<th>Box Office</th>
<th>Opening</th>
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Written by Gareth C Evans