

This study guide is designed to enable students to produce a range of English and Media assignments at GCSE. Students are encouraged to see film adaptations as interpretations of the novel with the idea that investigation of both the visual and written text will enhance the understanding of both. This study guide centres on four novels:

Of Mice and Men
To Kill a Mockingbird
Jane Eyre
Oliver Twist

and a variety of their film adaptations. The texts have been chosen to reflect popular syllabus requirements, including pre-twentieth century needs, whilst still being accessible and appealing to students across the ability range:

York Notes are available for each of the texts selected and references to these have been included where appropriate

Texts used (book and film) have been indicated at the beginning of each section in this study guide.

Of Mice and Men

Texts used in this section are:

the novel *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck (Minerva, 1997)
the films *Of Mice and Men* (Lewis Milestone, 1939) and *Of Mice and Men* (Gary Sinise, 1992)

John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* is set during the depression that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929. It is concerned with the effects of poverty and large scale unemployment. In the desperate search for work which followed, men were forced to move away from the stability of family and community into temporary, short-term employment throughout the vast continent of North America. The novel tells the story of two such men who travel together in their search for work and the relationship between them.

In this section we will look at two different film versions of the story, alongside the written text. Whilst the two films essentially tell the same story as the novel, the films differ in important aspects both from each other and from the novel. In this study guide we are going to focus on the opening sequence of all three texts, comparing and contrasting the different versions.

Opening Sequences

The initial stages of any text are particularly important, whether this is the first few pages of a book or the opening sequence of a film. The author or filmmaker needs to attract the attention of the audience, interest them in what is going on and make them want to read or watch further. In a short space of time we are given information about where and when the story is set, learn the style in which the story will be told and are introduced to the major characters. The way in which we are given this information will depend upon the medium in which the story is being told. If it is a book we will learn via the author's use of words, punctuation and so forth; if it is a film the lighting, sound, colour, camera angle and movement, and the editing will be the tools. We call these tools the 'film's language'.

Read the following information which gives you a brief introduction to the way in which a filmmaker can use the tools at his disposal to tell a story.

Film Language

Title graphics

The way in which the title and credits of a film are written and the colours chosen for both them and the background tell us what type (genre) of film to expect. A horror film might appear in red Gothic font, whereas a romantic comedy might be in pastel font that looks as if it has been handwritten.

Lighting

Lighting quickly creates an atmosphere on screen. If it is dark and shadowy we might be made to feel uneasy, as in a thriller; if the lighting is bright we feel happy and confident. The filmmaker can use lighting to draw our attention to a person/object or equally, to hide them.

Sound

There are three elements to a film soundtrack:

dialogue - this can be used to give us clues as to character and what might happen next.

Music - this creates atmosphere, affecting us on a very emotional level.

sound effects (SFX) - again, very effective at creating atmosphere. These sometimes do not fit with the image that we are seeing, thus creating a disorientating effect.

Use of the camera

a) There are different ways in which what we see on screen has been framed by the camera:

long shot — shows background, establishes where you are.

mid shot — shows torso and some background.

close-ups — head and shoulders, usually used to show emotion. Draws our attention to face or object.

point-of-view shot - helps us to see the action from a character's viewpoint and thus empathise with them.

high angle shot - looks down on person/object, making them look vulnerable.

low angle shot - looks up at someone/thing, making them appear powerful.

b) The way in which the camera moves (dreamily, purposefully) can help create atmosphere and focus our attention.

Mise en scene

This term is used in film to describe what is in the frame and why. There are several areas to consider when talking about mise en scene:

- setting and props
- costume and make-up
- body language and facial expression
- lighting and colour

Each of these factors combines to give the shot a certain 'look' or 'feel'. What is put in or left out of a shot can make a big difference to the signals we receive about what sort of film it is and how we are supposed to feel at this point. For instance, a simple shot of a tree can be made to look threatening by adding a vulture and a storm and shooting it in darkness. The same tree can be given a very different look by having children playing beneath its sunlit branches.

Editing

The term editing refers to the changing shots within a piece of film. The speed with which this happens has important role in creating atmosphere. For instance, if there is a car chase on screen, the editing will be rapid, making us excited. A countryside picnic scene, on the other hand, will probably feature slow editing, we relax and take in the details on the screen.

Task

Look at the opening sequences from the two films *Of Mice and Men* and make notes on the following:

where and when is the action set?

What clues are we given as to what the story (narrative) will be about?

What clues are we given as to character?

What mood or atmosphere is established?

What type (genre) of film will this be?

What themes are introduced?

(You may need to return to this section after you have read more of the text.)

- We now have the basic information we need about the film openings. We now need to look closer at the texts and work out how we have gained this knowledge through the film language used. Watch the two sequences again and fill in the table on page 16 with as much detail as you can on page 16. You may like to complete this task in a group, each member looking for one particular aspect of the film language.

NB Notice that in the sound section you should concentrate on music and sound effects. Work on dialogue will follow later.

Film dialogue

In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck uses mainly dialogue to give us information about his characters, letting them speak to us for themselves. This avoids lengthy description and allows us to relate to them as if we were meeting them in real life. A filmmaker, like a writer, can use dialogue to help us understand a character quickly and easily - there is no option to describe unless a voice-over is used.

Dialogue from a written text will often be altered for the screen as the nature of film means we tend to concentrate on what we are looking at, not what we hear. Therefore, it will often be shortened and made clearer. If extra scenes are added the filmmaker may well invent dialogue for the action.

In the 1992 (Sinise) film version of *Of Mice and Men*, the filmmaker opens with George and Lennie on a train, a scene which does not appear in the novel. The dialogue which accompanies this scene is not John Steinbeck's but nevertheless is an effective introduction to the two characters.

- Read the following dialogue from the opening scene of the 1992 film and say what it tells us about the characters of George and Lennie and the relationship between them:

Lennie: "George..."

George: "What?"

Lennie: "Where are we going?"

George: "To get away from here."

Lennie: "I'm all wet."

George: "Take off the coat. Come on. Lie down and get some rest."

Lennie: "George..."

George: "Go to sleep Lennie."

Lennie: "I AM sleeping George."

Before we meet Curley's wife, an old man tells George that she's pretty but that 'She got the eye.'

Read from Steinbeck's novel (pages 32 and 33) the description of her:

She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her finger-nails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers.

- Write ten lines of dialogue to be spoken by Curley's wife and George. Use the extract above to get information on the sort of person Curley's wife seems to be and imagine the sort of things she might say to George. Think about which character would speak first and what the conversation might be about.

- Now compare the way you introduce the character of Curley's wife with the way she is introduced in the Milestone (1939 BN~) film:

Curley's wife: "You sure trust me, don't you Curley?"

Curley: "As far as I can spit. Who's in there with you?"

Curley's wife: "There ain't nobody in there. You punch drunk pug. I ain't even seen the boy. He must have just come in."

Curley: "Get out of here. Next time they'll carry you out. This'll happen to any guy I catch you with."

Curley's wife: "What did I ever do that gives you the right to treat me like I was..."

Curley: "Nothing but I ain't taking no chances. You got a home. You got a husband. You got no business messing around."

Curley's wife: "Sure I got a house. You think all I want to do is sit in that two-by-four waiting for you? I wanna see somebody, just see him and talk to him. I tell you, I just want to talk to somebody."

How similar are the two portrayals of Curley's wife?

It is now time to look in detail at the opening to the novel and how it compares to the two film versions.

- Read the opening of John Steinbeck's novel from the very beginning to page 7 'A few miles south of Soledad...' through to 'Lennie giggled happily. "I didn't forget that, you bet."' As with the film, make notes on your impressions of the following:

- Where and when is the action set?
- What clues are we given as to what the story (narrative) will be about?
- What clues are we given as to character?
- What mood or atmosphere is established?
- What type (genre) of book will this be?

TASK

- Now re-read the extract and search for exactly how the text gives you these clues. To help you complete this task, here are general areas to look for under each heading. You will need to be as specific as possible in the information you compile - page references are a good idea if you are to share your findings with the rest of the group. There may be some overlap between the sections.

SETTING - Places named, description of landscape, clothing, manners, vocabulary and expressions characters use.

NARRATIVE - Where are George and Lennie? What has happened to them and where are they going? why? How character traits may shape the story.

CHARACTER - Physical description of George and Lennie. What they say, how they say it, what they do and why? The relationship between them.

MOOD - Effect of the opening paragraph. Conversations between George and Lennie. How does each character make us feel?

Assignment

- Now you have looked at each text in detail, write a detailed comparison of the three openings to Of Mice and Men. Here are some areas to focus on:

Which text gives us the most information?

How does each of the openings catch and keep our attention?

Which opening do you prefer and why?

Extension activities

- Think about the clues that the opening sequence has given as to what might happen to George and Lennie. Use these clues to predict how the story will continue and what will happen in the end. Write your version down. When you have experienced the full text(s), compare your version with that of the writer and/or filmmaker How similar or different are they? What does this exercise tell us about the nature of the openings to books and films?

- Write your own version of Of Mice and Men set in the present.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Texts used in this section are:

the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee (Mandarin, 1997)

the film *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan 1962)

To Kill a Mockingbird is a story which centres on the trial of a black man accused of the rape of a white woman. The action takes place in the town of Maycomb, a southern state of the US in the 1930s. The main characters in the story are the Finch family: Atticus, a lawyer~ his daughter Jean Louise (known as Scout) and her older brother, Jem. While Atticus is educated and a professional man, many of the other inhabitants of Maycomb lead very hard lives. Ill-educated and poor, they still see themselves as superior to the black community in the town. Some white people regard the blacks with suspicion or hatred owing to their prejudice and ignorance. Atticus is more liberal than his friends and neighbours and believes in the principles of equality and fairness. He is the lawyer called upon to defend Tom Robinson against the rape charge.

In every trial, many people are called upon in the court to give their version of what happened at the scene of the crime and to give their opinion as to the character of the defendant. Of course, there will also be informal discussion within the community around the case, as people gossip in bars and on the street about what they have seen, heard and read. Each person will have their own opinion and relate events focusing on their own point of view. The trial of Tom Robinson is no exception.

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person as though the story is being told by Scout. The novel, then, is written from her point of view. When adapting the novel into film, this provides a challenge to the director who has to decide whether to tell the whole story from the same point of view and if so, how to do it. The activities in this section will encourage you to look at the film in terms of point of view. You can then compare your findings with the way in which the novel presents the information.

- Read the following extract from the novel (Part 1, pages 6 and 7) describing the neighbours from Scout's point of view.
When I was almost six and Jem was nearly ten, our summertime boundaries (within calling distance of Calpurnia) were Mrs Henry Lafayette Dubose's house two doors to the north of us, and the Radley Place three doors to the south. We were never tempted to break them. The Radley Place was inhabited by an unknown entity the mere description of whom was enough to make us behave for days on end; Mrs Dubose was plain hell.
- Imagine Mrs Dubose reminiscing about the same time when two young children played in the street outside her house. The children might be noisy or they might disturb her in other ways. How do you think she would describe the summer when six-year-old Scout and ten-year-old Jem played in front of her house? Remember that Mrs Dubose was an old lady and so might see things differently from Scout.
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of reading a story in the first person?
- What other books can you think of which are written in the first person?

There are different ways that point of view can be established in films.

- camera movement** Can be used to suggest that we are looking at something through another character's eyes.
- camera angles** Can be used by, for example, using low shots which tend to make large things look even larger which might suggest the point of view of a child.
- flashbacks** Can be used to show a memory of a character as he or she saw it.

Voice-over

In this method, the actor speaking is off-screen and the audience can only hear his or her voice, while we look at a set of images on-screen. The opening of the film *To Kill a Mockingbird* uses this technique.

- Compare the opening of the novel with that of the film (1962 below). Although the two openings are different, they both do the same job of informing us who is telling the story:

Novel

“When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow.”

Film

“Maycomb was a tired old town even in 1932 when I first knew it. Somehow it was hotter then.”

A woman is saying these words but we cannot see her. Instead we are looking at Maycomb, the town she is telling us about. This voice is, in fact, that of Scout, many years later.

Imagine there has been an incident in the canteen this lunchtime involving you and someone else. You are both called to the tutor's office to give your version of events. You then relay the story of what happened to your friend on the way home. How might the two versions differ? What factors will influence the content and style of the conversations?

The woman whose voice we hear at the beginning of the film is talking about events that happened a long time ago in her past. How might this influence the way in which she tells her story?

Extension activity

- You could now look at page 5 in the novel at the paragraph which begins ‘Maycomb was an old town...’ and ends ‘nothing to fear but fear itself.’ This is the part of the novel that the filmmaker based the voice-over which begins the film. Think about the differences in the two versions. What information is left out or added and why?

Narrating

Another technique for varying the point of view in film is where an actor describes something that we, the audience, cannot see. In the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, this happens in the following instances:

- 1 Jem, Scout and Dill wait outside the courtroom to find out what Atticus is doing. We do not see Atticus or the inside of the court. All our information comes via Dill, who, standing on Jem's shoulders, describes what he can see from his point of view, peering through a high window into the courtroom.
- 2 When Tom Robinson gives his testimony, he tells the court the story of how he came to know Mayella. A film could have used a flashback and a voice-over but instead, we just listen to the story and the camera focuses on the actor playing Tom Robinson.

Task

- View the two sequences from the film described above. Listen carefully to what Dill and Tom Robinson say and make notes on this.
- If you were directing another version of these two sequences and decided to show what Dill and Tom tell us what would you show happening on screen? List your shots like this:

Depicting the story of Dill's description of the courtroom:

Shot 1: A big close-up of a man with his eyes closed and a fly buzzing around him which makes him wake up and open his eyes as the camera draws back to take in the bench he is sitting behind.

Shot 2: A long shot of the same man with the courtroom in front of him.

Shot 3: A mid close-up of Atticus and Tom Robinson sitting at a desk talking seriously but inaudibly to each other at the front of the courtroom with people filling the seats behind them.

In the courthouse during the trial of Tom Robinson, some of the shots are used to indicate that we are seeing things from Jem's point of view. Some of the shots show the action occurring at a distance but in others we can see the action at very close range.

- What effect do the two different types of shot have on us as an audience?
- How is sound used in this scene to indicate different points of view?

Impartial Point of View

Some of the sequences in the film are told from an impartial point of view e.g. Atticus meeting Bob Ewell in the courthouse when he informs Bob that he will defend Tom Robinson. We do not see this sequence through Scout's eyes. It is simply presented to the audience who judge the sequence for themselves.

- View this sequence from the film. How does the filmmaker ensure that the viewpoint here is impartial?

In a first person novel, the narrator can only tell us about things that she sees or hears about. As a result, the novel of *To Kill a Mockingbird* does not tell us about the incident between Atticus and Bob Ewell because Scout was not there when it happened. Look again at the clip which shows Atticus and Bob Ewell meeting and imagine that Scout had witnessed it. Now try to write what Scout would have said about the meeting in the novel. How would she have described the way the two men looked? What might she have noticed about the way Bob Ewell spoke to her father? Would she have understood what the conversation was about?

Assignment

- Your task is to produce two written accounts from the point of view of a) Tom Robinson and b) Scout. The accounts will be diary entries made while the jury is out discussing the final verdict. Although both diary entries will be about the same events (the trial and the testimonies), they will be told from different points of view

Consider the factors that will influence how Tom and Scout see the courtroom sequence differently: The age of the characters since Scout is a child and Tom is an adult.

The fact that Scout might not understand the adult world whereas Tom will be very aware of his status as a black man in a racist community. The fact that the trial is to decide the fate of Tom whereas Scout is only involved insofar as her father is Tom's lawyer.

Writing Scout's diary

The film shows the court sequence mainly from an impartial point of view though sometimes we are made aware that Jem is watching events very carefully. As a result, the film does not give many clues about how Scout sees the trial. Watch the court sequence again and try to imagine how Scout is feeling. When the camera does look at Scout, examine her facial expressions and think about what information they give you. Is she confused or frightened perhaps?

- You will need to re-read chapters 17 and 21 of the novel to establish what Scout's point of view on the trial is. Note that in chapter 21, Scout actually falls asleep during part of the trial and so her version of the courtroom scenes may have pieces missing. Make notes on the following:
 - How much of the trial that she reports does she understand?
 - What, apart from the trial, is she thinking about in the court?
 - How does she feel when she senses that her father, Atticus, is nervous? How sympathetic is she to Tom and to Mayella Ewell?

Writing Tom's diary

The novel does not give us any direct information about Tom Robinson's feelings because the story is narrated by Scout. To write his diary entry, you will need to use clues that are provided by the film.

Watch the courtroom sequence again and make notes on what you imagine Tom is thinking and feeling during the trial. Consider the following:

- Tom's facial expressions.
- Tom's body language.
- What he actually says - and does not say.
- The vocabulary he uses and the way in which he speaks.
- The way in which he responds to others.

You may like to use the film stills which appear throughout this section of Tom in the courtroom to help you confirm your ideas.

You are the director of the film or the actor playing Tom Robinson. Work with a partner and decide who will be the director and who will be the actor. When you have decided this, rehearse the courtroom scene.

The director should give advice to the actor about how to play the part - how to move, what to say, how to look and how to talk. You could then swap roles and direct the same scene differently. Ask the rest of your group for their comments on the two different versions.

YORK NOTES REFERENCES:

TOM (Pages 57-60, 62-64, 67, 74, 81)

SCOUT (Pages 53-54, 62, 69-70)

POINT OF VIEW (Pages 61-63,76)

Jane Eyre

Texts used in this section are:

- the novel **Jane Eyre**, Charlotte Brontë (first published 1847, Penguin 1996)
- films **Jane Eyre** (Robert Stevenson, 1943) and **Jane Eyre** (Franco Zeffirelli, 1996).

A penniless orphan forced to make her own way in the world, Jane Eyre becomes governess to the daughter of Edward Rochester and takes up her post at Thornfield, his home. She falls in love with her employer and he with her and a date is set for their wedding. As Rochester and Jane are about to take their vows, Richard Mason arrives and claims the union to be unlawful — Mr Rochester already has a wife, Mason's sister Bertha. Rochester takes the witnesses to his wedding back to Thornfield to meet the woman Mason is calling his lawful wife, the mad Bertha Rochester, currently locked in an attic room and tended by the servant Grace Poole.

- Read the following extract from Charlotte Brontë's novel:

Chapter 26 (pages 327 and 328)

He lifted the hangings from the wall, uncovering the second door: this, too, he opened. In a room without a window, there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

- Make a list of all the ways in which Bertha's madness is emphasised.

Bertha's Madness

Look again at the episodes from the novel where Bertha Mason's presence is felt. It is not until chapter 26

that we actually meet Bertha following the aborted wedding between Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester but there are episodes in the novel when we hear her. At the time, the novel tells us that we are listening to Grace Poole, a servant but, in fact, Grace Poole is the woman who looks after Mrs Rochester and has to take the blame for the strange noises and events.

There are two extracts below that you should re-read from Jane Eyre. Remember while you are reading them that it is Bertha Mason (Mrs Rochester), who is responsible for the events, not Grace Poole.

- Re-read chapter 11 pages 122 and 123 from 'While I paced softly on...' to '...Grace curtsyed silently and went in.'
- Re-read chapter 15 pages 167 - 170 from 'I hardly know whether I had slept...' to "Good-night, then, sir" said I, departing.'

What do the above extracts tell you about the personality and behaviour of Bertha? Think about how the extracts prepare the reader for meeting Bertha in chapter 26. Now you are going to compare the way the two film directors (Stevenson and Zeffirelli) portrayed the episode from chapter 26 when we first meet Bertha. Watch the Stevenson adaptation from where the wedding is stopped up to the attack on Mr Rochester by Bertha. Watch the Zeffirelli adaptation from the point where the wedding is stopped up to where Bertha hurls herself off the balcony. Choose five shots from each of the film versions and analyse them under the headings below:

Camera shot - (This means what the camera shows and the distances between the image and the camera e.g. close-up/long shot.) From what distances do we observe the actors? Which camera shots are used and which angles? Why has the shot been constructed in this way?

Lighting - (This refers to the use of darkness, light and shadow.) Consider the effect of the varying tones of light and dark in the two scenes. Are different atmospheres conveyed using light?

Sound effects - (This term can be used to include music and/or background noises.) What you hear and how do the noises contribute to creating an atmosphere?

Dialogue - (This term refers to the lines that the actors say.) Which actors speak and what do they say?

What tone of voice do the actors use? Which of the actors do not speak?

Do any of the actors make verbal noises which are not words?

Duration - (This refers to the length of time the camera remains in one position for.) How long are the shots? Is there a mixture of short and long shots? What are the different effects of each on the viewer?

- Write a paragraph describing how each filmmaker has chosen to portray Bertha Rochester. Which is the most sympathetic version? Do you think the period in which each film was made may have affected the portrayal?

Wide Sargasso Sea is a novel by Jean Rhys published in 1966 (Penguin). Fascinated by the story of Jane Eyre, Rhys wrote what she imagined was the untold story of the mysterious Bertha Mason and how she came to be locked up by her husband, Mr Rochester.

This novel tells the story of Bertha Mason growing up in 1830s Jamaica. This novel explains how Bertha

Mason came to be matched and married to Mr Rochester, and about how she came to be living in England.

Written from the point of view of several different characters, the novel ends with Bertha telling her story in the first person.

- Read this extract from *Wide Sargasso Sea* written from Bertha's point of view:

Part 3 (page 142)

In this room I wake early and lie shivering for it is very cold. At last Grace Poole, the woman who looks after me, lights a fire with paper and sticks and lumps of coal. She kneels to blow it with bellows. The paper shrivels, the sticks crackle and spit, the coal smoulders and glowers. In the end flames shoot up and they are beautiful. I get out of bed and go close to watch them and wonder why I have been brought here. For what reason? There must be a reason. What is it that I must do? When I first came I thought it would be for a day, two days, a week perhaps. I thought that when I saw him and spoke to him I would be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. 'I give you all I have freely,' I would say, 'and I will not trouble you again if you will let me go.' But he never came.

Assignment

- *Your task is to prepare a film version of this extract.*

You need to decide how closely you want to stick to the text of the novel and why, if this is the case. Consider which parts of the original can be shown in pictures and which will have to be represented in other ways (e.g. voice-overs, flashbacks, words on the screen etc.).

Remember that Bertha Mason is, we are told, mad. Although the extract from *Wide Sargasso Sea* gives Bertha a voice that sounds in control and reasoned, we must assume that she is disturbed at this point in the story. Think about ways in which you can indicate her lack of mental clarity on film, through both sound and images, for example extremely close-up shots can distort an image; sound could be unrelated to what is happening on screen. Be as creative as you can.

- *Produce a storyboard illustrating how the action will take place. Pay particular attention to the distance and angle of the camera shot and experiment with different versions of the same shot. When you have finished, try cutting up your story board and moving some of the shots around. Does this create a better effect?*
- *Prepare an oral or written account of your production process, your ideas, how they changed, what you were trying to achieve in each shot, the problems, how you overcame them, what you and others think of the finished product. If you have access to a video camera you may be able to film your sequence.*

YORK NOTES REFERENCES:

JANE EYRE (Page 73)

(NB There is Jane Eyre Advanced York Notes Advanced available)

Oliver Twist

Texts used in this section are:

the novel **Oliver Twist**, Charles Dickens (Penguin, 1994)

the films of **Oliver Twist** (David Lean 1948) and **Oliver!** (Carol Reed, 1968)

|

This section is divided into two parts. *Part A— Oliver Twist. Part B— Oliver Twist and Jane Fyre.*

Part A

Charles Dickens wrote many novels about life in Victorian Britain. *Oliver Twist* is the story of a boy whose mother dies in childbirth condemning him to life in the workhouse. The workhouse operated like a prison with the occupants living in horrifying conditions, forced to work even though they might be malnourished, ill, very old or, as in *Oliver Twist*'s case, very young. Dickens' own father had been sent to a debtor's prison since poverty was seen as being almost a criminal offence. Perhaps as a result, Dickens was disgusted by the plight of poor people in Victorian Britain and, in his writing, tried to make his readers sympathise with people who were poor. In addition, he tried to show how insensitive and unfair the system which dealt with poor people was.

When films are used to support the reading of a novel it is quite common to be asked to take an extract from the novel and to consider adapting it into film. In this section you will be asked to do the opposite; that is, to watch a sequence of film and turn it into prose.

Assignment

- View the opening sequence of David Lean's film adaptation of *Oliver Twist* (1948 81W). The film opens with Oliver's pregnant mother walking towards the workhouse in a storm just before she gives birth to him. Dickens' novel (which was originally serialised in a magazine written between 1837-1839)

begins differently, with the baby Oliver already alive in the workhouse.

- Your task is to write an alternative opening to the novel, based on the David Lean version of the text. You will need to write about the setting (where and when the events take place), the characters (who the story is about) and to introduce the narrative (what happens).

SETTING - a storm on a heath at night time, the Victorian era.

CHARACTERS - a young, heavily pregnant woman.

NARRATIVE - a poor woman, in need of shelter goes to a workhouse to have a baby.

Below is a summary of the twenty-eight shots that are used to tell the story in the film version. For your assignment, you must include information about each of the shots. However rather than describing each shot, use the images, sound and atmosphere that each one provides to tell a story.

- 1 Silence. Storm clouds and lightning.
- 2 Still branch and leaf falling.
- 3 Puddle showing the reflection of the storm clouds. Water moving in the wind.
- 4 Branch waving. Leaves falling.
- 5 Heath and clouds. Rushes waving in the wind. Woman on the horizon.
- 6 Mid close-up of woman in pain, holding stomach.
- 7 Rain falling on the ground.
- 8 Woman pulls shawl across chest.
- 9 Back view of the woman walking in a laboured way.
- 10 Woman walking, looking up at the sky.
- 11 Cloud moving over moon.
- 12 Long shot of woman struggling down the hill.
- 13 Silhouette of woman caused by lightning, standing still.
- 14 Music. Close-up of thorn.
- 15 Mid close-up of facial expressions showing pain, determination and catching sight of something.
- 16 Long shot of light in the distance from a building.
- 17 Mid close-up. Low angle shot of woman pulling shawl closer and looking at sky.
- 18 Storm clouds and rain.
- 19 Woman struggling in rain.
- 20 Battered tree.
- 21 Woman struggling.
- 22 Puddles.
- 23 Woman leaning on tree, in pain, soaked by rain.
- 24 Building slightly nearer.
- 25 Woman starts walking again.
- 26 High angle shot from behind iron gates.
- 27 Back view of woman approaching gates. She pulls the rope which sounds the bell. A person carrying a lantern appears from behind the gates.
- 28 Camera pans up the gates to a sign which says Parish workhouse.
- 29 Clouds still. Silence. Baby cries.

- Which shots do you find particularly effective, and why? For each shot, think of five words which sum up the action and atmosphere. You may like to focus on these in your writing.

Consider how you would describe the landscape (the trees and the heath), the weather (the sound of the thunder and the effect of the lightning), the way the woman looks (her clothes, her body, her facial expressions), the way she moves (her struggle to walk against the wind), what the workhouse looks like (the iron gates), the sounds (of the storm and the workhouse bell).

You should be able to write at least two sides of A4 describing the above. Concentrate on using vocabulary which makes the reader feel s/he is actually there, on encouraging us to feel sorry for Oliver's mother etc.

You may like to write your piece in the style of Dickens. If this is your aim, study an extract from his work and make a list of all the features which he employs e.g. long sentences, antiquated vocabulary. You can then try to include as many of these as you can in your own work.

Jane Eyre & Oliver Twist

Wider Reading

The novels *Jane Eyre* and *Oliver Twist* have certain similarities. The central characters of each novel (after whom the novels are named) are both young, orphaned children living in Victorian Britain. During this time, orphans were perceived to be the responsibility of other family relations e.g. Jane Eyre's Aunt Reed or of the parish which was the social unit or community they were born into. The parish was a structure which was partially governed by the church and generally provided a workhouse and a charity school within its community. Both institutions were designed as places where poor people could be sent to live and work for a meagre allowance in the form of food and shelter provided in return. Poor people were not regarded as being in need of help, rather they were seen as deserving to be punished. Jane and Oliver are similarly guilty of being poor and, as such, a burden on the community.

In this section we are going to focus on a comparison of life in two institutions, as portrayed in two novels and four films.

For this assignment you can draw on all the relevant information that your reading of the two novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Oliver Twist*, has given you. However in order to make sure you include enough detail you need to select some aspects of the two institutions that can be contrasted. As an example, the food given to Oliver in the workhouse and Jane at Lowood School has been selected to illustrate how the two places compare.

In chapter 2 of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens describes the eating habits of the children in the workhouse:

Chapter 2 (pages 14 and 15)

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper at one end: out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at meal-times. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer, and no more — except on occasions of great public rejoicing, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed; employing themselves, meanwhile, in sucking their fingers most assiduously, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon.

In chapter 5 of *Jane Eyre*, Brontë relates the following:

Chapter 5 (pages 55 and 56)

Ravenous, and now very faint, I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste, but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess — burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it. The spoons were moved slowly: I saw each girl taste her food and try to swallow it; but in most cases the effort was soon relinquished. Breakfast was over, and none had breakfasted. Thanks having been returned for what we had not got, and a second hymn chanted, the refectory was evacuated for the schoolroom. I was one of the last to go out, and in passing the tables, I saw one teacher take a basin of the porridge and taste it; she looked at the others; all their countenances expressed displeasure, and one of them, the stout one, whispered-

'Abominable stuff! How shameful!'

- * Watch the opening of the two *Oliver Twist* film versions and the two *Jane Eyre* film versions and note down as much information about food as you can. The class should divide into smaller groups and repeat the exercise with each group looking for information on one of the following themes. First read the novel passages and then look at the film adaptations. Make notes on your findings and discuss as a class.

Remember this is a literature assignment. Do not be tempted to base your work on the film versions only. You need to refer to the novels wherever possible. With this in mind, you may find the following references useful:

Relationships with adults — in *Oliver Twist*, re-read the sequence in chapter 2, pages 15 and 16 from 'The master was a fat, healthy man... "...that boy will come to be hung.'" Compare this with the sequence from chapter 4, pages 41 and 42 of *Jane Eyre* from "No sight so sad as that of a naughty child..." "...attempt to impose on Mr Brocklehurst."

Friendships — re-read the sequence in *Oliver Twist* at the end of chapter 7, pages 61 and 62 from 'He reached the house he never once forgot it.' Compare this with chapter 8, pages 80-82 in *Jane Eyre* by re-reading the sequence from "'Come, eat something..." ...at once recognised as Miss Temple.'

Punishments — in *Oliver Twist*, re-read chapter 3, pages 17 and 18 from 'For a week after the commission... the very Devil himself.' Compare this sequence with one in *Jane Eyre* in chapter 7, page 77-79 from "'Fetch that stool... during the remainder of the day.'"

Routines — re-read the sequence in *Oliver Twist* in chapter 2, pages 13 and 14 from "'Well! You have come here to be educated..." ...and the board were in ecstasies.' Compare this with *Jane Eyre*, chapter 6, page 65 from 'The play-hour in the evening... sense of liberty.'

Purpose and philosophy — of the institution re-read *Oliver Twist*, chapter 2, page 12 from "'Bow to the board surly one in the white waistcoat.' Compare this with *Jane Eyre*, chapter 5, pages 60 and 61 from "'Can you tell me what the writing on that stone and is said to do a great deal of good.'"

Assignment

- Write up your essay under the title:

A Comparison of Life at Lowood School (*Jane Eyre*) with that of the Workhouse in *Oliver Twist*.

YORK NOTES REFERENCES:

OLIVER TWIST (Mr Bumble) (Pages 72 and 75)

CONTEXT AND SETTING (Pages 7-9)

JANE EYRE (Pages 8, 76 - 77)

(NB There is also a Jane Eyre York Notes Advanced available)



Film Language

How does the film language give us information?

	Title Graphics	Lighting	Sound - music and SFX	Use of the camera	Mise en scène	Editing
Setting						
Narrative						
Character						
Mood/Atmosphere						
Genre						

Note to teacher: Photocopy this page and resize to A3