**TEACHERS' NOTES**

**ABOUT THE RESOURCE**

This flexible teaching tool, designed for use in English with students aged 11-14, comprises a DVD of fifteen carefully selected extracts from ten feature films accompanied by a disc of curriculum-focused learning resources. These materials offer purposeful and relevant activities for improving students’ engagement and attainment in reading and writing in a range of contexts, exercising skills of descriptive, evaluative, persuasive, analytical and imaginative response. This resource also offers a clear and accessible introduction to work on moving image in English. Film Education offers this educational resource to schools and colleges free of charge.

This resource is supported by a website, [www.filmeducation.org/thinkingfilm](http://www.filmeducation.org/thinkingfilm) where you will be able to find further information and updates.

**USING THINKING FILM**

The materials can be approached in a linear fashion as a complete unit of work, or used to focus on particular areas of interest at different points in the term. The introductory activities and supplementary resources offer a general grounding in moving image work that is relevant to all students at ages 11-14, and for work towards GCSE and equivalent in English, Media and Film Studies.

Starting with a conceptual exploration of storytelling and texts, the resource is divided into sections on **Setting and atmosphere**, **Character**, **Plot**, **Viewpoint** and **Genre**. The grouping of tasks here is conceptual and fluid: teachers may wish to dip in and out of activities or focus on a particular area of the resource where, for example, individual clips could be used to supplement more detailed study of a particular text or theme.

Each clip is referenced at least once in the activities and some are used in more than one section, where they are explored with a different focus each time. The wide range of activities in this pack encourages students to read the moving image closely, developing an understanding of film language within short sequences and across extracts. Students will look at how film sequences are structured, thinking carefully about conventions and audience expectations. Through close watching and repeat-viewing a range of detail can be uncovered and interpreted: an exploration of individual components and their effects in film, as with a written text, allows for analysis of the filmmaker's intentions and the degree of success with which these are achieved. Creative responses are suggested throughout; these make good extended writing or planning activities; they may also be set as homework, extension or group learning tasks.

**USING FILM IN ENGLISH**

Whilst film often finds a place in the 'media and non-fiction' section of the syllabus, this can be an awkward fit for a medium that is capable of a huge range of expression. If we consider film to be a storytelling medium, in principle, then any feature film can be explored in terms of story and genre. The clips in this resource are taken from films that are, in many cases, based on adaptations from written works (from a literary 'classic' such as *Great Expectations* to a graphic novel such as *Thor*). This deliberate choice is intended to reflect the primary focus within English on the written text and to provide a bridging tool between study of printed texts and an exploration of film texts in the English classroom.

Despite its debt to other forms and especially the novel, film tells its story with its own grammar, its own syntax. Camera movement, camera position, framing, lighting, sound, and editing are some of the main vocabulary by which a director or screenwriter may express a narrative. A film of a novel is far from being a mechanical copy of the source - it represents a shift from one set of conventions for representing the world to another. Why this should be so, what is the nature of this shift and for whom is it done, what is 'gained' and what 'lost' - these are some of the questions necessarily addressed when the 'film of the book' is introduced to a class.

**Film language**

Just as we teach children skills for close reading of and engagement with written texts, so we should also equip them with the tools required to make sense of film texts. Without being off-putting or overly complex, the Thinking Film approach is to offer students precise vocabulary for expression and conceptual understanding of elements in the construction of film and the ways in which the viewer may be encouraged to respond to individual elements.

Basic vocabulary about shot types and camera angles not only enables students to express their ideas clearly, it also helps them to read the moving image more closely. Within the **Supplementary resources** section on this disc you will find a basic **Shot types** worksheet and a **Film Language glossary**. We would recommend that each student be given a copy of these for his/her folder or exercise book as it makes a helpful and versatile reference.

**TAKING IT FURTHER**

* Film Education offers additional resources for a number of the films on this disc. The index of film titles in these Teachers’ Notes shows where these can be found online; all are accessible free of charge.
* For further information on the films themselves, there is a wealth of online sources: for example, sites such as the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) supply a wide range of detail on almost any feature film.
* Teachers may wish to use this resource to ground further study of the moving image; for example, when working towards an examination or coursework style piece, or as preparation for entry into a film or media qualification post-14.
* General questions for approaching any film sequence are given in the appendix at the end of this document. These offer a useful framework for close study of moving image extracts and could be used in a variety of contexts.

**THE DVD**

The film clips in this resource have been carefully selected from feature films of a range of genres, from a variety of time periods and production contexts. The clips are taken from ten different films, released between 1946 and 2011: there are fifteen clips in total. The intention is to enable the teacher to use the clips in the most suitable way for their classes. Film titles are listed alphabetically on the disc for ease of use.

**A note on classification**

The BBFC classification for each film is listed here for your reference. Please be aware that this rating is for the film as a whole, rather than for the individual clip. Information on classification, and more detailed information on the classification decisions made for more recent films, is available through the BBFC website: http://www.bbfc.co.uk/

We recommend teachers view individual clips carefully before using them with their students to ensure that they are familiar with the content and are happy with the suitability of the material for their classes. These clips have been chosen with care and sensitivity and although the use of film in a schools context is exempt from certification requirements, it is important that teachers work with department heads and their school leadership team and school governors to ensure that the learning intentions are well understood. It is important, particularly where the certificate of a film is above the age of a student, that parents are aware of the films their children will be exploring and the learning context within which this activity will take place.

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| **Title** | **Year** | **Classi-fication** | **Film Education resource** |
| *Beowulf:*  - Arrival by sea  - Beowulf and Hrothgar | 2007 | 12 | Website: www.filmeducation.org/**beowulf**/ |
| *Great Expectations* | 1946 | PG | - |
| *Jane Eyre* | 2011 | PG | - |
| *Jurassic Park* | 1993 | PG | PDF: www.filmeducation.org/pdf/film/**Jurassic**P.pdf |
| *Oliver Twist:*  - Opening sequence  - Oliver sets out | 2005 | PG | Website: www.filmeducation.org/**olivertwist**/ |
| *Rabbit-Proof Fence* | 2002 | PG | - |
| *Sherlock Holmes:*  - Introducing Lord Blackwood  - Blackwood and Holmes | 2009 | 12 | Website: www.filmeducation.org/**sherlockholmes**/ |
| *Thor:*  - Opening sequence  - Coronation ceremony | 2011 | 12 | Website: [www.filmeducation.org/thor/](http://www.filmeducation.org/thor/)  NB: this site features a range of interactivity, including creative ‘cut your own trailer’ task |
| *To Kill A Mockingbird* | 1962 | 12 | - |
| *Whale Rider:*  - Paikea and Koro  - Paikea jumps in | 2002 | PG | PDF: www.filmeducation.org/pdf/film/**WhaleRider**.pdf |

APPENDIX 1: CD-ROM contents

Materials on the CD-ROM may be networked within the school or college. Materials on the disc are ordered as follows:

* **Teachers’ Notes**
* **Introductory activities:**
* INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY SHEET 1
* INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY SHEET 2
* **Setting and atmosphere:**
* SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE ACTIVITY SHEET 1: Establishing the setting
* SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE ACTIVITY SHEET 2: *Great Expectations -* sound
* SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE ACTIVITY SHEET 3: *Great Expectations –* viewing activities
* SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE ACTIVITY SHEET 4: *Sherlock Holmes*: Introducing Lord Blackwood
* **Character:**
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 1: Who’s who?
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 2: Creating a hero – *Beowulf*
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 3: Character and representation - *Whale Rider*
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 4: *Whale Rider* - Paikea jumps in
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 5: What makes a ‘hero’?
* CHARACTER ACTIVITY SHEET 6: Heroes and villains - *Sherlock Holmes*
* **Plot:**
* PLOT ACTIVITY SHEET 1: The film’s ‘story’ – *Thor*
* PLOT ACTIVITY SHEET 2: *Thor* - plot, time and place
* PLOT ACTIVITY SHEET 3: Setting up the story: Beowulf and Hrothgar
* **Viewpoint:**
* VIEWPOINT ACTIVITY SHEET 1: point of view in stories and film - *Oliver Twist*
* VIEWPOINT ACTIVITY SHEET 2: *Oliver Twist* in still, and moving, image
* VIEWPOINT ACTIVITY SHEET 3: *Jane Eyre*
* VIEWPOINT ACTIVITY SHEET 4: *Rabbit-Proof Fence*
* **Genre:**
* GENRE ACTIVITY SHEET 1: What do we mean by genre?
* GENRE ACTIVITY SHEET 2: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
* GENRE ACTIVITY SHEET 3: *Jurassic Park*
* **Supplementary resources:**
* Storyboard sheet
* Film language glossary
* Shot types sheet

APPENDIX 2: General questions for approaching a film sequence

**Production context**

Using the film’s official website as your starting point, see what details you can find about this film online.

1. When was the film made?
2. Do you recognise any 'names' in the credits for directing, writing, producing or acting?
3. What information is available on the official site, and why do you think this has been selected for this site?
4. What does the marketing for the film indicate about the film’s genre and target audience? If you can find them, refer to the film’s trailer, poster, official synopsis and details from the official film website in your answer.

**What is the film about?**

1. Describe what you think is happening in the sequence. What do you think is significant about what you can see?
2. Describe any characters, their relationships and their actions in the sequence.
3. What kind of production does this seem to be (independent cinema? Hollywood blockbuster?), and what genre does this sequence seem to belong to? Explain your answer, describing any genre features you can identify in this extract.
4. What questions would you want to ask about the rest of the film? Based on what you have seen, what predictions might you make about narrative events that have already occurred and developments following this sequence?
5. Do you think the sequence highlights any particular issues?
6. From watching this sequence do you feel that the film has a 'message' for its audience – is it trying to put across particular ideas or viewpoints? Explain your answer.

**How is meaning created in this sequence?**

Refer to the key terms to guide you in answering these questions.

1. How do setting, location, props and costume choices contribute to your interpretation of the sequence? Consider what information these convey.
2. How does the sound shape your responses to the sequence? Comment on dialogue, tone, incidental sound and any music you notice, exploring their impact on your emotional response to the sequence.
3. How do lighting and colour affect tone and atmosphere? Explore lighting choices, including noticeable use of light and shadow, as well as considering choice of colour.
4. How does camera technique contribute to the creation of meaning in this sequence? Consider the effects of camera position and angle, choosing two example shots to describe in detail. What are we shown (and not shown) and what is the intended effect?
5. Consider the ways in which the editing affects our interpretation of what we see in this sequence. How important are pace and continuity in shaping your response to what you see?

**Why would you watch it?**

1. Does this sequence engage you, move you or connect with you in any way? Why?
2. Would you go and see this film? Why? What sort of audience do you think this film might have attracted at the cinema?
3. Whose point-of-view do we get in the sequence and why might this be important?
4. Why do you think the director chose to film the sequence in this way? How else could he have directed it?
5. Why do you think this sequence has been chosen for analysis of the different ways in which film can create meaning?