

# Sprockets

Toronto International FILM Festival for children  
**April 14-18, 2008**

A great deal of thanks and appreciation goes out to our teacher committees who volunteer their time to assist in the development of Sprockets lesson plans.

**TITLE:** Paula's Secret

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** Germany

**RELEASE YEAR:** 2007

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:** German

**DIRECTOR:** Gernot Krää

**RUNTIME:** 95 Minutes

**CURRICULUM LINKS:**

The following chart illustrates how the film *Paula's Secret* can be used to meet curriculum expectations. The lesson plan which follows, integrates Media Literacy, Writing and Visual Arts. Educators may want to provide students with the option of writing a response or creating a piece of art.

*Expectations listed below are Overall Expectations. Some specific expectations are listed.*

1. Media Literacy	2. Language Arts	3. Social Studies	4. Visual Arts
<p><b>Conventions and Techniques</b>  <b>2.2</b> Identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the</p>		<p>– ‘use information about time zones to identify time differences among regions of the world’  <i>(Specific outcome)</i></p>	<p>- describe how artists may use texture to represent or to evoke an emotional response</p>

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audience		<i>for Grade 6).</i>	
<p><b>Producing Media Texts</b>  <b>3.4</b> Produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques (<i>write a review of the movie that includes commentary on the effects related through the use of various conventions and techniques</i>)</p>	<p>← <i>Various writing expectations can be met as students will be writing a review.</i></p>	<p>– ‘use latitude and longitude coordinates to locate some major cities and countries of the world’  <i>(Specific outcome for Grade 6).</i></p>	<p>- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate a range of ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes and to specific audiences, using a variety of familiar art tools, materials, and techniques.</p>
			<p><b>Critical Thinking</b>  <i>(Specific outcome for Grade 6)</i>          Demonstrate awareness that an artist intentionally uses some of the elements and principles of design to convey meaning.</p> <p><b>Critical Thinking</b>  <i>(specific outcome for Grade 5)</i>          Describe the connection between an element of design and a specific artistic purpose, using appropriate vocabulary (<i>e.g., the artist has used soft colors and circular</i></p>

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			<i>shapes to emphasize the loving relationship between the mother and child)</i>
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**SYNOPSIS:**

Recommended for Grades 5 to 8

The theft of her most personal possession opens a young girl’s eyes to the inequalities around her in the intelligent and dynamic *Paula’s Secret*. Eleven-year-old Paula is happiest when fantasizing about meeting a fairy-tale prince who exists in the dreams she records in her diary. Alas, the only boy who likes her is Tobi who, to Paula, is the exact opposite of a prince. In fact, she ignores him whenever he follows her. However, as she is returning home on the last day of school, Paula’s backpack is stolen by young pickpockets. Tobi witnesses the theft and, as she is desperate to recover her diary, Paula agrees to his offer to help track down the thieves. But when she discovers the thieves are youth from another country who are being forced to steal, Paula must decide if she has the courage to help rescue them.

*Paula’s Secret* foregrounds contrasts in socio-economic class to explore discrimination based on income and wealth, and the exploitation of children for criminal purposes. Director Gernot Krää’s excellent script and strong direction balance tense, serious moments with lighter scenes. These elements combine to tell an important story about taking responsibility and standing up to injustice while so many others choose to look away.

**TEACHER ENDORESEMENT:**

" *Paula’s Secret* is an entertaining film that students will enjoy watching, while analyzing the stylistic choices director Gernot Kraa’s makes to emphasize the contrast between socio-economic class. This film provides

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the opportunity to meet the expectations of the Media Literacy Curriculum in an enjoyable way."

## DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

PAULA'S SECRET (2006)

THE THISTLE (1992)

## PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

Teachers may not find it necessary to prepare students for the story in the film. However, students should go into the film with knowledge of how movie conventions and techniques may be used in films. For example, "Movie conventions: in old-fashioned Westerns, white and black cowboy hats were used to identify "good" and "bad" characters; Movie techniques: freeze-frame images, slow motion, theme music in movies are used to communicate information non-verbally, emphasize or prolong important or appealing scenes, and maintain interest by keeping the viewer wondering, "What next?"

## WARM-UP ACTIVITY:

1. Introduce how movie conventions and techniques may be used in films by using the following warm-up exercise:

Watch the video clip found here:

<http://www.reginaspektor.com/index2.html> - click on the video called "Fidelity".

While watching the video, students should think about how colour is used to convey a message. For example, to convey sadness and isolation the director deliberately used black and white for set and wardrobe. As the singer sings of hope and of things getting better, colour is added to the scene.

In this music video, the contrast of colour to convey a message is obvious. Students should be aware that in film, directors make colour and lighting

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choices to convey different emotions, moods, and messages. They may not always be obvious to the viewer; hence students should be encouraged to pay close attention to the conventions and techniques used throughout *Paula's Secret*. While watching the film, students should consider why the director made the lighting and colour choices he did.

2. To meet Social Studies expectations, teachers can encourage students to locate Germany and Romania on a map before watching the movie. (The story takes place in Germany while some characters come from Romania).

## **DURING SCREENING QUESTION/ACTIVITY:**

While watching the film, students should pay attention to how conventions and techniques are used to convey a message.

### **Encourage students to consider the following:**

- Paula comes from a upper-class family whereas Tobi comes from a middle-class family. What conventions/techniques are used to emphasize the contrast between their two worlds?
- What conventions/techniques are used to illustrate that Paula is daydreaming? Are the techniques effective?
- How are the conventions/ techniques used to demonstrate the characters' personalities?
- How are conventions/techniques used to create mood?
- When are bright colors used? When are dark colours used?

Students' insights to the above questions will be discussed in the post-screening activity.

## **POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:**

Use the "*DURING SCREENING QUESTIONS*" to engage your students in a discussion of how the conventions/techniques were used in the film.

Students can choose to do one of the following follow-up activities:

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1) Like directors, artists intentionally use elements and principles of design to convey meaning. Create a piece of art that conveys a specific emotion or message. Students should be able to explain the choices they made. For example, "I used soft colours and circular shapes to emphasize the loving relationship between the mother and child" or "I used bold colours and sharp lines to emphasize anger".

Or

2) "Write a review of the movie that includes commentary on the effects related through the use of various conventions and techniques".

## **CONCLUSION/WRAP UP:**

Students will gain an appreciation for how directors (and visual artists) deliberately use conventions and techniques to convey or emphasize important messages. Students will be more aware of such conventions while watching other films in the future. They will have the skills to critically analyze why such techniques are used.