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to the teacher

Young people watch more film than any other age group.

Popularity in film, as with everything else, is not always synonymous with quality. In order to become discriminating, discerning viewers, young audiences need to be given a toolbox of techniques which will make them more perceptive of what they are viewing. It is our hope that this guide will help you help our young audiences to observe critically, to analyze, and to evaluate what they see; to look hard.

We realize teachers are extremely busy and have several balls in the air at any one time. It is hoped that you will find this guide to be user-friendly.

The background information can be read aloud if you like, then discussed. Related activities are presented with each concept. Pick and choose as you wish, but do read the film sequence on page 6 as it is referred to in several areas.

You are encouraged to have your students keep a film-viewing journal at the outset of your film study. Photocopy the Student Film Journal page and ask the students to keep it in a duotang along with note paper.

We would greatly appreciate your feedback. Thank you!

See you at Sprockets!

This Study Guide was originally created for Flicks (Saskatchewan International Children's Film Festival) with funding assistance from The Saskatoon Foundation. Used with permission.

When you go to a movie, do you just look at the screen, or do you see the film?

TO LOOK and TO SEE are often used interchangeably, as synonyms. If you think about these two words carefully, though, they are actually quite different. One way of differentiating them is to think of “looking” as using one’s sight, turning one’s eyes in some direction, the act of looking. “To see” can also be used in the sense of understanding, as in, “Oh, now I see!” or, “I don’t see your point.” In this context, “to see” implies thinking about and grasping a concept, understanding, developing an awareness. That is exactly what we want you to do with a film. We want you to LOOK very hard, so that you can say, “I SEE!”

activity

Give students a minute or two to draw a picture of a candle and flame.

You will need:

- candles (one per student or group of students – votive candles work best)
- candle holders (or drip some wax onto a plate, place the candle in the melted wax and hold until the wax sets)

Now, distribute and light the candles. Have students examine the candle and flame closely for five minutes. If they need prompting, ask them to note the shape of the flame. How many colours are there in the flame? Note the shape of the colours within the flame. Observe the flame’s movement. Note the texture and shape of the wick. What is happening to the wax? Now have the students carefully snuff out the flame, and to note the sound, what happens to the wick, the smoke. Have the students sketch another drawing of the flame of a candle.

Have you been sensitized to parts or aspects of a candle flame that you weren’t really aware of before? By carefully examining and studying a familiar object, we may see aspects of it we have overlooked or been completely unaware of before. That is what we are going to do with film: dissect it, examine it, study it, take it apart and put it back together, and emerge with a greater awareness and understanding of this wonderful medium.

celluloid magic

A piece of film cut to a length of 24 frames has been included in the study guide.

We refer to film as a “movie” when in fact what we are really looking at is a series of still shots. These stills, or frames, are run through a projector which magnifies and illuminates the celluloid image. This process happens at a rate of 24 frames per second!

math activity

At a projection rate of 24 frames per second, calculate how many frames would be required...

for a five-minute film

for a half-hour programme

for a two-hour movie

why study film?

- Young people watch more film than any other age group, whether on television, video rentals, or at the theatre
- Film is the 20th century's most unique, dominant and popular art form
- It is the medium most capable of reaching and influencing large audiences

Film can be very seductive – one can easily take a very passive approach to watching it, believing that whatever is presented on the screen is real. Film is a dominant, powerful and influential artform and young people comprise its largest audience, so it is vital that youth be made aware of film's immense potential and power. It is essential that we know how to analyze, criticize and evaluate what we watch.

Hopefully, studying film will:

- help us appreciate the creativity and complexity of this art form
- make us aware of its influential power
- teach us how to examine, analyze and evaluate, making us wiser consumers – a skill that can be transferred to all aspects of our lives
- help us enjoy film more

brainstorm

Why do we go to the movies at the theatre, rent movies, or search them out on television?

- something to do • to relax • to escape • to be entertained • they're fun • it's easy to do • to learn • etc.

The primary purpose of films may be to entertain us, but they do much more than that. They instruct, expand our horizons, heighten our awareness and teach us about ourselves.

They also INFLUENCE us. This makes film powerful.

We need to learn how to look, what to look for, what the elements of a film are.

In what follows, we will take a close look at all the aspects of a film – much like the wick, wax, flame and smoke of a candle – and, hopefully, emerge with heightened awareness and understanding. We will look and truly see. The complexity of film and the amount of time, energy, creativity and money that go into making this piece of celluloid is both amazing and astounding.

With heightened awareness come greater analytical skills. We are better able to evaluate, to judge, to make decisions. Better informed, we become more critical, less passive and develop higher expectations. We will be aware of how media influences our views, of how films mirror our interests and desires. We will reflect on what we're watching and learn to think for ourselves.

So... Why study film? Because KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

“Film is the 20th century’s most unique and dominant art form and the one most capable of reaching and influencing large audiences around the world. It is vital that young audiences have the opportunity to view the richest expressions of what is perhaps our most democratic and powerful art form. At a time in which mainstream films too often reflect growing intolerance, numbed emotion and incomprehensible violence, events such as [children’s film festivals] help remind all of us that the world is liveably beautiful. Stories and images reflecting the experiences of children, teenagers and young adults from other countries and cultures prove that films can challenge, enrich, inform and entertain. [Children’s film festivals], like all other cultural events that help shape the sensibilities of young audiences, are incalculable in their importance. They help renew and redeem an art form by ensuring that the audiences of the future are aware of its immense potential.”

– James Quandt, Senior Programmer, Cinematheque Ontario

activity

Record every film you watch during a one-month period. In your list, include feature films you watch on television (do not include television programmes), rent from a video store or see in a theatre.

For each film, note the following:

- the title of the film
- the name of the production company that made the film
- the name of the director
- the year in which the film was produced
- the country of origin (this is the country where the production company is from, not necessarily the country where the film is made or shot)
- the classification of the film (adult accompaniment, family, etc.)
- the running time – how long is the film?
- the names of the main actors
- the film’s genre (is it a comedy? a western? a thriller?)
- where you saw the film (on tv, at the cinema or a video rental?)

Then, answer these questions:

If you saw the film in a theatre, which one?

How did you find out about this film?

Did the film have any special effects or interesting filming techniques?

What do you think about the actors performances?

Would you recommend this movie to others? Why or why not?

How does the title suit the film?

Finally, write a brief description of the plot (two or three lines maximum)

plot • storyline • narrative

“We settle to read any work of fiction with the same squirm of anticipation primitive people experienced as they gathered closer to the fire and the storyteller began the tale.”

– Jenny De Vries

Few things are more delightful than settling into a comfortable chair with a good book when you need quiet time, a good meal when you're hungry, a clean bed when you're exhausted, or a cool glass of water when you're thirsty. When you want to relax, laugh, escape, think, learn, be challenged or be entertained, there are few things that compare with a good film.

When the lights are dimmed and the film begins to play, the “squirm of anticipation” we feel as we enter this most modern of art forms links us to ancient storytellers around the fire. This “squirm of anticipation” is the beginning of our involvement in the story which, if the film is good, will lift and carry us to far away places, will transport us.

It all begins with an idea, a theme. This idea is developed into a plot, a storyline, the narrative, then into a script by a scriptwriter. Whether they are classics or current bestsellers, stories told in caves around a fire, in novels or in film all have the same basic components or structure:

Beginning:

The characters are introduced, the setting is described and the situation is explained. Then, some element of disorder is introduced which upsets or changes the normality of the world the characters inhabit. A common technique used in film to establish setting is to show an instantly recognizable landmark (e.g. the Taj Mahal) or a close-up shot of a licence plate.

Middle:

The upsetting element and the effect it has on the characters' lives is developed. Good plots will develop the characters' personalities, so that we begin to know and understand them.

End:

The events of the story are brought to a climax, the conflict is resolved, and a state of normalcy returns, perhaps different from the one we were shown at the beginning, but things are set right and the characters can continue on their way.

Read the following description of a film sequence aloud to the students, photocopy it for them to read, or both:

To upbeat, lively music, we see a boy riding his bike on a bicycle path along a river. This scene is filmed from above, as if from an airplane (aerial view). Now, in a closer side view, he turns off the bicycle path onto a street. We notice that there is a tennis racket attached to his bike. Next, the screen is filled with the boy's freckled, smiling face as he waves and calls out, "Hi, Mrs. Nugony!"

The next scene shows the neighbour's face as she returns his smile and calls Hello, Jason! Now we see the boy ride up a driveway, past a tricycle, a skipping rope, an abandoned lemonade stand and a frisbee. He parks his bike, goes to the door, finds it locked, shrugs, turns and lifts a clay flowerpot full of bright red geraniums and picks up a key. He unlocks the back door, replaces the key and walks into the house.

The volume of the music, which has been playing continuously since the opening scene, has been dropping steadily but unnoticeably.

We see the boy's bicycle helmet land on a pair of pink ballet slippers on the floor by the door. A dog, its tail wagging wildly, runs up to the boy. He kneels down, pets the dog and says, "Hey girl, how are you doing? Where is everybody?"

We are shown what the boy is looking at from his kneeling position: the camera slowly travels around the pleasant, sunny family room. There is nothing extraordinary about this scene, our eye doesn't focus on any one object or aspect of the room, until the camera stops and slowly zooms in on a telephone receiver dangling on its cord near the floor.

The music stops.

brainstorm

What have we learned about the boy? What clues have we been given?

he lives in a city • he knows some of his neighbours • he lives with his family, which likely includes at least two younger siblings, one of whom is a girl (pink ballet slippers) • his family is neither extremely wealthy, nor extremely poor (he owns a bike, a tennis racket, a dog) • he seems to be a normal, typical boy

This film sequence illustrates the beginning segment of a story. We meet the character, learn some things about him and sense that something has occurred that may be disruptive.

This short film sequence is not exceptional or unique. Many movies use similar scenes in similar ways. This simple sequence introduces many of the most basic principles of cinematography and filmmaking.

We will use this scene to learn about film technology, film codes and film language.

the language of film technology

Every area of study or activity has its set of building blocks, its own set of phrases, expressions and vocabulary unique to itself. Film is no exception.

brainstorm

What are some terms associated with:

Music?

beat • melody • rhythm • sound • instrument names • rap • rock • country • classical • etc.

Painting?

colour • shape • acrylic • oil • watercolour • brushes • paint • canvas • easel • brush strokes • etc.

Skateboarding?

wheels • board • deck • ollie • kickflip • etc.

Writing?

words • punctuation • phrase • sentence • paragraph • chapter • description • etc.

Film has its own set of expressions. Can you name a few?

take one • lights, camera, action! • scene • shot • sequence • special effects • animation • close-up • etc.

Now we're going to take a close look at the building blocks of film and learn some of its technological language.

different types of shots (framing)

When we write a story, we use paragraphs, sentences and phrases. Film language present information in a similar way, using long shots, medium shots and close-ups.

The *long shot* is a picture taken from a distance. It helps to establish the locale in which the action will take place. It provides context, but little detail. In our example, the long shot is an aerial view of the boy riding on a bicycle path, which reveals a river running alongside the path and a city across the river.

The *medium shot* is used to give background details and to establish characters' appearances. This type of shot is used most often. When centred on a person, a mid shot shows them from just above the head to the waist. The scenes of the boy turning off the bicycle path onto the street, waving to his neighbour, riding up the driveway, unlocking the door, and the view of the interior of the house are all medium shots. They are full of clues that tell you a great deal about the boy.

The *close-up* has a very tight, restricted frame. It is used to direct attention to a significant detail, or to show a character's emotional reaction to events. In a close-up, a face appears from just above the top of the head to just below the chin. Our film sequence uses the close-up shot to show us the boy's face, the neighbour's face, the bicycle helmet and ballet slippers, the dog, and to focus our attention on a very important piece of information: the dangling telephone receiver

the language of film technology

We know the amount and type of story information we understand while watching a film depends on how close the camera is to what it is showing. We also receive this information in different ways depending on the angle of the camera in relation to the subject, and whether it is moving or not.

different types of shots (angles)

Generally, there are three camera angles: high, low and flat.

In the *high-angle shot*, the camera is situated high above the scene, looking down on the subject. It can be used to create a sense of power over the subject. In our example, the long shot of the boy riding his bicycle is also high-angle shot. The high-angle shot can also be a medium shot or a close-up.

For the *low-angle shot*, the camera is placed well below the subject, pointing upward. This produces a scene much like a child looking up to an adult. Our example uses this technique when the boy is kneeling on the floor and looks up, scanning the room and realizing no one is home.

The *flat-angle shot* is the most common type of shot used. It films the subject at eye level. Examples of this shot from our sequence include the boy riding up his driveway and entering his home.

activity

These different types of shots are not restricted to motion picture film – still photography uses them as well. Cut pictures from magazines which illustrate the different types of filming techniques and label them.

different types of shots (movement)

There are two basic moving shots: pans and tracking shots.

Moving shots are often used to attract our attention to something outside the frame. In the *pan shot*, the camera turns from left to right or right to left, or up and down (this is known as a vertical pan). In the *tracking shot*, the whole camera moves – it can go left or right, forward or backward. It is called “tracking” because for this kind of shot, the camera is placed on a platform, which has wheels that move along tracks that are laid on the ground.

The zoom

Even though it often feels like a moving shot, the camera actually stays still for the *zoom*. This technique is often used to focus our attention on a particular object. The camera does this by “moving in” and gradually eliminating details until the only thing left on screen is the subject the film wants to draw our attention to. Think of moving from a long shot to a close-up all in one shot – that’s a zoom!

Our film sequence pans to show what the boy sees when he looks around the family room. A zoom is used to focus our attention on the telephone receiver. The shots that follow the boy from the bicycle track to the house are all tracking shots.

the language of film technology

other terms and film elements

Mise-en-scène

This French term refers to absolutely everything seen in the frame of the film. Nothing should ever appear in the film by accident – it is a highly controlled and constructed situation. Everything included in a scene is chosen to establish a certain type of setting. In our example, everything from the city to the actors to the exterior and interior of the house were carefully considered before being included. Companies pay lots of money to have their products appear on the screen – this is a form of advertising called “product placement.” Now you know that when a brand-name product appears in a film, it was included on purpose.

Lighting

Lighting for any type of photography is extremely important. Using different kinds of lights, filters and reflectors, what appears to be natural lighting can be produced. Even the lighting in outdoor scenes is manipulated to achieve a natural effect. When lighting is well done, we don't really notice it. Lighting can also be arranged to achieve less natural-looking special effects. We are more likely to notice this lighting, partly because we see that it seems unnatural, partly because it will often evoke an emotional response.

activity

Have students collect samples of different kinds of lighting situations.

Pictures can be cut from magazines, newspaper movie sections and free movie magazines from theatres. Film advertising relies heavily on lighting to give potential movie-goers clues as to what to expect from the film.

Sound

A film's soundtrack, including music, is an extremely powerful tool that helps to communicate ideas and manipulate the viewer's emotional response. It sets the mood and deepens the quality of a scene, often without the viewer being aware of it. Sound effects – voices, the wind, animal sounds and incidental noises, like a door closing, traffic or footsteps, and even silence – contribute to the film's realism.

activity

Promote consciousness of the effects of music, incidental noise and sound effects.

Watch the beginning of a video without the soundtrack, then listen to the soundtrack without pictures, then view the segment with both image and sound. Students can also try this at home.

Special Effects

Some of the simpler and more common special effects include slow pans, zooms, fades, extreme close-ups, high- and low-angle shots, slow motion, silence and special lighting techniques.

activity

What effect does the slow zoom in on the dangling telephone receiver and the sudden silence when the music stops have on the viewer?

attention is riveted • suspense is heightened

Different types of shots can be used in a wide variety of combinations. These combinations of shots are used to convey information about location, character appearance or reactions, or to draw our attention to significant details.



elina

Long Shot (LS)

Used to establish the locale in which the action will take place.



scars

Medium Shot (MS)

Establishes background detail or characters' appearance.



spellbound

Close-up (CU)

Directs attention to specific details or character reactions.



frank, dinner is ready!

High-angle Shot

The camera is situated above the scene looking down on the subject.



masterpieces

Low-angle Shot

Camera is situated below the subject.



disa moves to japan

Extreme Close-up (ECU)

An extreme close-up focuses our attention on one detail.

overview activity

Just as we carefully studied the flame of a candle, we can use the same approach to looking for the examples of film technology we have discussed

Watch a short film or a segment of a longer film together in class. Have students watch for samples of the different types of film shots, camera angles and lighting and sound effects. Stop and rewind as often as necessary. Watch the same sequence without sound.

Just as writers use phrases, sentences and paragraphs as building blocks to write stories, filmmakers use shots, scenes and sequences to make films

Films are made in bits and pieces, then put together in a process called *EDITING*. Editing links a series of shots together in a way that helps the story unfold so it makes sense. Film gives us the illusion that we are watching something that really happened, when in fact we are seeing something that has been carefully, meticulously constructed bit by bit.

A shot may be as short as a single frame, or as long as the film in the camera.

In our example, the image of the boy on the bicycle path is a single shot.

A scene is a series of shots.

The bicycle path in our example is one complete scene. The street is another; the driveway another.

A sequence is a series of related scenes

The three bicycle scenes form one sequence. Another sequence begins when the boy enters the house.

time manipulation

Filmmakers can use several techniques to turn real time into “reel time.”

When a story is told on film, the narrative is usually reduced to its essentials. Films shorten time because reality takes too long to put on the screen. It is not necessary to show every movement the boy makes to understand or believe what is happening. For example, when we see the tennis racket on his bike, we understand and believe he is en route to or from playing tennis. Similarly, we needn't see him ride his bike the entire distance from the tennis court to his home. This would make the scene long and tedious – especially if he lived 15 minutes away! Editing can condense that 15 minutes of real time into perhaps 35 seconds.

Another technique for showing that time has passed or is passing is to show calendar pages flipping, or train or car wheels turning. This is an example of a *film code*. Another method is to show an outdoor scene in summertime followed by a shot of the same location covered with snow. We understand and accept that several months have passed in a few seconds. The magic of film!

The completion of a task or activity is another method often used by filmmakers to condense time. In one scene, we might see a person with long hair sitting in a barber's chair. Next, we see the barber swivelling the chair so the client can have a look at his or her new hairstyle. Or, a scene might show a car with a smiling family on board backing out of their garage at sunrise. The next scene might show the same car travelling along the highway in broad daylight, followed by a night scene with the car pulling to a stop, everyone but the driver fast asleep. There is no mistaking what the filmmaker is telling us.

Sometimes, editing is used to manipulate time by changing the order in which events occur. A common technique is the use of *flashbacks* or *flash forwards*. When this technique is used, what we see on the screen alternates between scenes from the film's present time and scenes from the past or the future.

It is also possible to show that two (or more) events are occurring simultaneously by alternating between scenes that are occurring in the present.

other tricks of editing

Editing can be used to rivet the viewer's attention, create tension, heighten suspense or increase the emotional impact of a scene. One effective method is to insert a slow motion sequence in an athletic event. Watching a pole vaulter rise up and over the high bar in slow motion can be highly effective. Removing the sound in combination with a slow-motion sequence can also heighten dramatic impact. It can emphasize the agony in a battle scene or the tension and suspense of an athletic event, or create a nightmare scene.

Film is a very costly endeavour, so lots of money-saving gimmicks have evolved. Take, for instance, an air-plane explosion. The producer (who handles all money matters) and the director might decide their budget doesn't allow for the re-creation of such an explosion. They may decide to eliminate the scene altogether, or they might purchase some film that has already been made of the explosion their script calls for. This is called stock footage and it is sold by the foot. The editor takes this footage and inserts it where appropriate.

activity

Watch a television commercial, paying careful attention to the editing.

Watching the commercial without sound makes it easier to become conscious of where cuts were made by the editor. Try tapping your finger every time there is an editing cut. Record your favourite programme and study its editing cuts. Rewind and study closely any special effects or particularly interesting editing. Watch for examples of time manipulation. This can also be done as a group activity in class.

Students might be asked to agree on a favourite programme they could all watch at home. They could be assigned the task of studying the scene changes and editing techniques. Discuss their findings in class the next day.

storyboarding

Storyboarding is the process of putting ideas for a scene on paper.

Stick figures are drawn on one side of the paper, with arrows to show the direction of the characters' movement. The drawing shows very roughly what we will see on the screen when the film is finished. On the other side of the paper, detailed notes about dialogue, camera movement, lighting, sound effects, music, the duration of the shot, etc. are recorded.

activities

Photocopy the storyboarding page (page 13). Have the students fill in the details of the boy and bicycle sequence.

This sequence, though brief, contains many shots and scenes. Students might be asked to storyboard two or three scenes of their own choosing. Or the class might work as a group, with each student or group being assigned one scene and the work put together to form a complete storyboard of the entire sequence.

Make a videotape of a television commercial. Watch it several times, then make a storyboard showing the various scenes.

storyboard exercise

picture	directions

Different people will view the same film differently.

While watching a film, we respond to the elements in it that are of personal interest to us, while ignoring things that hold no interest for us. We also completely miss some details because we are unaware of them. We do this all the time in real life as well. We are constantly filtering and selecting what we focus on, whether we are aware that we are doing it or not.

Think back to the boy heading home on the bike path. Some of us might notice the type or brand name of the bicycle. Some might take special note of the way the boy sits on the bike and how fast he is pedalling. Someone else will notice his clothing, helmet, the brand name of his runners or his tennis racket. One person might notice the ballet slippers by the door, while they may not even register with the next person. The dog will be of special interest to animal lovers. A musician might focus on the soundtrack while others might not even be aware of it. A city planner might take special note of the bike path details, while an architect might respond to the housing styles on the street. Finally, a teenager would likely to respond to the film sequence on a more personal level than her grandmother would.

Now that you understand that everyone perceives the same scene differently, depending on their age, background and interest, it will be easy to see why different people develop a particular interest in different kinds or genre of film.

“Genre” means type, kind or category.

brainstorm

Ask students to name different types of music.

rock • rap • classical • country • gospel

What categories of books are there?

fiction • non-fiction • mystery • horror • romance

What kind of television programmes are there?

sitcoms • talk shows • game shows • newshour • documentaries • soap operas

Now ask students to name film genres.

comedy/chase • romance • adventure • science fiction • animated • western • horror • drama • historical
foreign • crime • musical • action-adventure • documentary • fantasy • mystery • thriller • gangster • film noir
experimental • art cinema

Films from each genre share certain identifiable characteristics. For example, you would expect to see special effects in a science-fiction film, period costumes and furnishings in a historical film, and lots of action in an adventure film. Similarly, a crime film is likely to take place in a city, a western out in the country, and science fiction films often – though not always – take place in outer space.

Of course, many films feature characteristics from more than one genre. For example, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* contain elements from the fantasy, action and adventure genres. *Scream* might be classified as a horror-comedy.

genre

activities

Survey students, teachers, parents, and friends to find out what their all-time favourite movie is and what new film(s) they would like to see.

Classify the results according to genre. Is there a correlation between age and genre?

Interview the manager of a video rental store to determine which films are rented most often and by which age group.

Is there a correlation between age and genre?

Study the entertainment section of the Friday edition of the paper name? to see which movies are playing.

Study the pictures and read any reviews you can find to help you determine which genre they belong to.

Make a trip to the video rental store and examine the store's layout.

Notice how the hundreds of titles are grouped under different genre headings. Wander around the store, study the titles and examine the pictures in each section. Do the pictures on the containers share common characteristics that make them readily identifiable as a particular genre?

Rent a video from a film genre you are unfamiliar with.

Ask each student to list all the movies they have seen in the past two months and identify which genre each one belongs to.

Compile the information. What are the three most popular genre categories for that age group?

Choose two films of the same genre that were made at least 20 years apart.

Identify the similarities and differences between the two films. Can you link them to historical context perhaps?

audience

Filmmaking is a tremendously costly undertaking – often, millions of dollars go into producing a film – so the movie's financial backers want assurance that there is a market for the planned film. One method the industry uses to determine whether there is a market for a particular film is by tracking box-office sales of current films from the same genre. If one movie genre does very well at the box office, more films of a similar nature are likely to be produced. Often, this also leads to the production of sequels to popular films – the *Free Willy*, *Austin Powers* and *The Nutty Professor* series are examples of this. Of course, even with careful planning there is no assurance that a film will be successful, but the producers make every effort to minimize financial risks. The results at the box office decide whether a film is a success or a failure and determine whether or not more films like it will be made.

activities

Have each student list all the movies they have seen in the last two months and designate which genre it belongs to.

Compile the information. What are the three most popular genre categories for that age group? Would film-makers be interested in this type of information?

Look at the top grossing films of that week. Assign a genre category to each.

If you are not sure what the film is about, or what genre it belongs to, check the movie reviews for more information. Does any one genre dominate the list? What age group might each film appeal to?

brainstorm

Why do you think young people watch more film than any other age group?

more leisure time • more spending money • often only work part time • fewer responsibilities than adults • etc.

activities

Survey teachers, parents, friends, siblings, neighbours, grandparents to find out how many movies they have watched in the last month.

Have the students categorize the people surveyed as elderly, mature adults, young adults, youth, children, or ask the person being surveyed for their age. Compile the results and if possible create a bar graph.

After they have kept their Student Film Viewing Journal for one month, ask students to total number of hours spent on film in one month.

Calculate the average number of hours per week. Work out a class average.

Young people are studied very carefully by the film industry so they can produce products which will be popular, will sell, will make money.

We now understand why the same types of films are likely to be made over and over again. Does this automatically mean they are good films? What happens to a film that is excellent but has limited appeal?

If a film is popular, it can make millions of dollars – and millions more with the merchandising spin-offs that accompany some mega-hits. You have noticed the toys and clothing associated with such films as *The Lion King*, the *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars* series and *The Little Mermaid*. It has been suggested that films sometimes seem like one long advertisement for the spin-off merchandise! It is not surprising that so many films of this genre have been made.

target audience

brainstorm

Now that we are familiar with genre and realize the tremendous variety of films being made – a casual glance in a video store reveals hundreds and hundreds of titles to choose from – how do we choose the one we will see?

word of mouth • newspaper film reviews • movie magazines • movie previews

Film posters, movie magazine advertisements, video-case covers and movie previews (“trailers”) that run in movie theatres before the main feature, are designed very carefully to give you as much information as possible about the movie in an attractive, appealing manner.

These images and scenes, as well as the wording or “sound bites” that accompany them, are chosen to appeal to a specific “target audience.” Only a certain number of movies are suitable for, or appealing to all ages.

activities

Ask students to collect and bring to school several samples of movie advertising.

Study the pictures carefully for clues as to which genre each film belongs to and group them accordingly. Are there characteristic details for each genre’s advertising?

animation • bright colours • shadows • dark colours • facial expressions • lettering • etc.

Examine the photographs in the Sprockets programme guide.

Try to determine the target audience of each film without looking at the age recommendation.

Have students design a poster for their favourite film, keeping the advertising characteristics for the film’s genre in mind.

Ask students to choose a film they have seen which is a combination of two genre categories – e.g. a comedy-adventure.

Design two posters for the film, one emphasizing the comedy aspect, the other the adventure.

Before releasing them, film companies take the precautionary measure of pre-viewing films with selected audiences. If they don’t get a positive response from this test audience, they will re-shoot or re-edit entire sections of the film if that is what it takes to make the film more appealing to the target audience.

film classification or ratings

Once the target audience for a film has been established, the producer and director pay careful attention to film classification or ratings.

Given the extremely expensive and risky nature of film production, it would be foolish to produce a film like *Lilo and Stitch* in such a way that Film Classification Boards would give it the rating “Parental Accompaniment.” If the film *Harry Potter* contained some element that meant it received a Restricted rating, what might happen to box-office sales?

classifications

The film classifications in Ontario are:

General (G) – Material is suitable for all ages.

Parental Guidance (Suggested) (PG) – Material may be of more mature content than “General.” Parental guidance is suggested, but children are permitted unsupervised access.

Parental Accompaniment (Required) (PA) – Persons under 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

Restricted (R) – Only persons of 18 years of age or older may view.

For further information on film classification in Ontario, see the enclosed Ontario Film Review Board booklet.

overview activity

Many if not most students will have seen both *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (rated PG) and *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (rated PG-13). These two films contain many similar elements, yet they have been produced, marketed (advertised) and classified quite differently – because their target audiences are different. Ask students to compare the two films point by point, either in a class discussion or as a written assignment. Encourage them to visit video rental stores and look in publications to see different posters and other promotional images.

character representation and development

One of the keys to how much we enjoy a film lies in how much we care about the characters, and how much we care about the characters depends on how well we come to know and understand them.

brainstorm

What types of things give us clues about the nature of a character's personality? We use the same clues to find out about any new person we meet in real life.

age • clothing • hairstyle • gestures • language • facial expressions • etc.

Give examples of personality traits or characteristics.

serious • funny • good • evil • happy-go-lucky • troublemaker • sneaky • untruthful • kind • generous • intelligent
shy • nervous • strong • weak • timid • brave • mean • etc.

What devices or techniques do filmmakers or authors use to help develop characters, to help us get to know them?

the activities they participate in • the various things they do and say • the ways they relate to other characters
their reactions to events • how they spend their free time • the setting they usually appear in
the skills they possess • etc.

When viewing a film, we should remember that what we see on the screen is not reality, but an artificial world constructed very carefully bit by bit and then assembled to make a whole which looks real.

Nothing appears on the screen by accident and whatever does appear there has been chosen to be consistent with the message the film is trying to communicate. This is one way in which film is so powerful. Whatever is presented on the screen looks real and therefore could be interpreted as “the truth.” This is wonderful – providing that the idea put forth is indeed accurate.

But the idea may be inaccurate, or a sweeping generalization. Characters that are stereotypes may form an impression about that kind of character in people's minds, or, if they already hold a certain point of view about that kind of character, reinforce that impression.

brainstorm

Ask students to give examples of stereotypes or generalizations.

female behaviour • male behaviour • racial and religious generalizations • etc.

Ask students to look for examples of stereotyping in books on television and in films. They could also watch for stereotyping that arises daily in conversation they hear around them. Ask them to record any examples they encounter over a two-week period, then share them in class.

A good film will stimulate our intellect, emotions and senses.

A good plot develops the film's characters and makes them seem real through dialogue, their reactions to events, etc.

If too much emphasis is placed on action in a film, this can result in a weak story. Sometimes action, violence and special effects are used to disguise a weak plot.

Film presents information to us very rapidly.

We begin to receive and decode the clues and messages of the film language in the very first moments of the film. The title, the background, the lettering used for the credits, the music, etc.: all these play an important role in establishing mood.

As we are swept along by the film's visual imagery, sound, characters and action, it is important to remember we are being bombarded with ideas which can influence our values and beliefs.

We are left with impressions and feelings that are stored away in our minds, even if we are not aware of that happening. We should stay alert for the messages a film is sending and reflect on and evaluate them when the film is over.

Perhaps the most important technique in learning to be more perceptive is to discuss the films we see with others. By expressing ourselves in words, we increase our ability to analyse film.

the final analysis – the film review

A film review is a film critic's reaction to a film.

The critic writes a brief summary of the film, explaining its core idea or theme, or perhaps provides an outline of the story, hopefully without giving too much away. The film's genre is often mentioned. Sometimes, the film might be compared to other films of the same genre. The reviewer will mention the lead actors' names and comment on their performances. Supporting actors, as well as those in minor roles might be mentioned, especially if that particular actor is well known for a specific genre or quality of film. Any special feature or special effects of the film are commented on, as are any mistakes such as poor casting, etc. The review often ends with an overall assessment of the film, stated in a few words like, "two thumbs up!" "a must-see," "can't miss," "a bomb," "a bust" or "a turkey." The film is often given a star rating with four, or sometimes five stars given to an extraordinarily good film and no star at all given to an exceptionally poor film. If a film receives four or five stars, this will no doubt be mentioned in the film's advertising, along with a quote from the critic who gave the rave review.

activity

Find reviews that appear in different newspapers and analyse the content of their reviews.

Do you agree with their opinion of the film?

the final analysis – the film review

activities

Find two or more critiques of the same film written by different critics.

Compare the content and their assessment of the film. On what specific points do they agree or disagree?

Watch a film made in Hollywood and write a review for it.

Watch a Canadian-made film and write a review for it.

Have you seen a foreign film? Perhaps at Sprockets? Write a review of that film.

so, what makes a good film?

Now that we...

know a film starts as an idea, a theme
know a story with a beginning, a middle and an end is written around that core idea
know that the story is written with a bias in the form of values and beliefs
are familiar with the elements of a film
have developed an understanding of how films are constructed
know how to look at the film, identify the pieces that make it up and analyse them

...we have developed a great power.

We know how to:

examine • dissect • analyse • evaluate

We know how to look and what to look for. We began this journey by explaining the difference between looking and seeing. When it comes to the movies, we are now able not only to look, but to see.

We can ask:

what is the message? • how is the message delivered? • what techniques develop the film's message?
• have stereotypes, violence, action sequences and/or special effects been used as a substitute for good, solid dialogue and the development of the characters and plot? • how are our feelings being manipulated?
• what values are we being asked to accept or reject? • how do our personal values line up with the film's message?
• have our values and thinking changed because of what we have seen? • is this a change for the better?

So, what makes a good film?

Good film is about emotional experiences embellished with magical film techniques that make us willing and able to suspend our disbelief, that let our hearts and minds soar, that lift and transport us and set us down again, transformed and hopeful.

stage	elements	elements of a film	job	task
pre-production	idea	a film begins with a nugget of an idea financial backers are found	producer	what is the theme, the core idea?
	plot	idea is developed into a story with a beginning, middle and end		what key scenes are in the beginning, middle and end?
	script	story is condensed into dialogue and directions	scriptwriter	storyboard
production	actors	people and animals		character sketches evaluate performances
	set	props • make-up • costumes	production designer	watch for details in background, clothing, props and make-up
	camera	cinematography • lighting • sound effects	director of photography	watch for special effects, lighting, sound, types of shot
	editing	shots and sequences are selected, ordered and joined together	editor	watch for scene changes
	marketing	advertising, interviews, spin-off mer- chandising	producer	study posters, inter- views, advertising
post-production	audience & critics	response	general public film critics	write a review

who does what?

producer

Basically, the Producer raises money, plans the budget and sells the film.

The producer begins with an idea he or she thinks would make a great movie. Then the producer takes that idea and tries to convince others to give the financial backing necessary for such an expensive undertaking. Once the money is in place, a scriptwriter is found to write the story as a screenplay. When the script is written, the next step is to hire a director and, as the film gets closer to being made, the rest of the team needed to make the project a reality.

The producer is involved in every stage of a film project. He or she is involved in all decisions with financial implications, and is always concerned with costs. In the pre-production stage (before the cameras start rolling) the producer and director collaborate to arrive at a shared vision of the film they are making. Together, the producer and director hire a production designer, a director of photography and other key people. The producer plays a crucial role in the selection of people who run the set, but does not run the set during production. While the film is being shot, the producer bows to the director's authority on the set, but is involved in all decisions dealing with cost. In post-production (after the film is shot and is being pieced together) the producer works with a distributor to get the film shown in theatres, coordinates all publicity, advertising, promotions, marketing and the media.

director

The Director decides how the film will look and is responsible for what is seen on film, for everything "inside the frame."

Much like the conductor of an orchestra, the director is in charge of and runs the set. He or she takes the script and translates what is written on the page into action. The actors bring the script to life under the director's direction. The director makes all the decisions about the set, plans where the actors will stand and how they will move. He or she decides when another take is necessary and when a scene is good. He or she is also involved in the editing process.

production designer

The Production Designer oversees and controls all the details that affect the visual aspects of the film.

He or she looks for locations that have the right feel and atmosphere for scenes, whether it is a stadium, desert, forest, apartment, art gallery or a village that is required. He or she also makes all the decisions regarding how any sets built especially for the film look. To make the film seem authentic, the production designer needs to research the time period of the film and any customs that may need to be shown. Several positions are the production designer's responsibility:

- The *Property Master* is in charge of all action props – everything on the set that moves, is held, or is handled.
- The *Set Director* deals with everything else on the set – unmoveable props and decorations.
- The *Storyboard Artist* sketches each scene, making detailed notes about lighting, shot type and sound.
- The *Draftsmen* design the set.
- The *Costume Designer* designs and assembles the actors' clothing and accessories.

director of photography

The Director of Photography – usually called the d.o.p. – is responsible for anything connected with the operation of the camera.

He or she directs the Camera Operator regarding what type of lenses and filters to use and exactly how to photograph the scenes. He or she also directs the lighting crew. These positions also fall under the d.o.p.:

- The *Gaffer* is the chief electrician, who is responsible for a safe and efficient lighting setup.
- The *Best Boy* is an assistant electrician who assists the Gaffer.
- The *Key Grip* makes sure the camera is in the right place and is in charge of the stage hands on the set.

editor

The Editor chooses the best shots to tell the story, then assembles them into the finished product.

He or she works closely with the director and follows the director's vision, but has a good deal of influence over the final outcome.

activity

Study the credits at the end of a film to see how many different people and jobs are involved in film production.

Rewind as many times as necessary to get the complete list. The nature of some jobs will be obvious from the title. Research those jobs which are not.

choices – a look at theatres

Have you ever noticed that there is often not much of a difference between the stores in one shopping mall and those in the next mall?

Many stores are part of a chain, so the same store selling the same merchandise might be found in many locations in a city, indeed in many cities, all across the country. Similarly, many newspapers are owned by the same corporation, which can control the material and type of message that is printed. It is a good idea to read a variety of magazines and newspapers to get many points of view. Ditto with film.

brainstorm

Name stores which are part of a chain

The Bay • Sears • Shoppers Drug Mart • Chapters • Zellers • WalMart • K-Mart • Footlocker • etc.

Name as many movie production companies as you can.

Paramount • Universal Studios • Warner Bros. • Dreamworks • etc.

choices – a look at theatres

activities

Ask students to keep a film journal for a month.

Have them enter the title and production studio for every film they see, whether on television, video rental or at a theatre. If they see it in a theatre, have them record the theatre name as well. They could also note actors' names, genre, special filming techniques they enjoyed, etc. Make sure they record the studio's name for each film even if they have recorded that particular studio before. At the end of the month, have each student tabulate how many Universal Studios pictures he or she saw, etc. Then tabulate the class totals.

Study the entertainment section of the newspaper or have a look at the Yellow Pages under "Theatres."

Compile a list of movie theatres in the city. Contact the theatre manager for information on who owns the theatre and how it is decided which films they will feature.

Find out about the film industry in Ontario.

Check the Yellow Pages under Motion Picture Producers and Studios. The Archives of Ontario (Sound and Moving Image Portfolio), City of Toronto (Toronto Film and Television Office) and the Ontario Media Development Corporation could also be used as a resource for more information on filmmaking.

Contact the National Film Board of Canada for information on the kinds of films they produce.

general activities and discussion topics

Discuss James Quandt's statement on page 4 of this guide.

Are all films entertaining? Do all films entertain in the same way? While some films are intended to inform and instruct, they are still entertaining. Can you give an example of such a film? Other films are created to provide entertainment but still make profound statements about life and what it means to be human. Think of examples. Many films are "escapist." What kind of films allow people to escape from reality? Cite examples.

Sometimes, if a movie is very well done, you forget or are willing to forget to distinguish between reality and fantasy while you're watching. This is called "suspension of disbelief." Has this ever happened to you? Share the titles of these films.

What is the difference between film and literature? What can film do that literature cannot? What can literature do that a film cannot? Visual images stimulate our perceptions directly, while written and spoken words stimulate our perceptions indirectly and leave more to the imagination.

When you read a description of a person in a book you "see" the person being described through your imagination. You will imagine a different image than the person sitting beside you will have in his or her "mind's eye." The visual nature of film leaves much less to the imagination. Is a picture worth a thousand words?.

general activities and discussion topics

- Are the most popular films the best films?
- What is a good film?
- What criteria can you use to decide?
- Acting styles differ substantially depending on period, genre, tone, national origins and directional emphasis. Choose your favourite actor and examine his or her career. Is this person always cast in the same type of role, or does he or she have the acting skills to carry off a variety of roles? Try to picture the actor in a comedy, a historical film, a fantasy film, a drama.
- We are experiencing an increasing tendency towards globalization. Plan to take special note of cultural differences that show up in a film you see at Sprockets. What things do our cultures have in common? What are the differences? Are these important or superficial differences? Are people pretty much the same everywhere?
- “The camera can see the world through the other people’s eyes.” Discuss.
- Think carefully about the titles of films you have seen and will see. How does the title relate to the story? Is the connection an obvious or a subtle one?
- Collect ads for movies from newspapers and magazines. Note the techniques used to get you into the theatre, such as catchy drawings, titles, names of stars, quotes from reviews, etc. In your experience, are these generally reliable in predetermining the quality of the film?
- When you attend Sprockets, or any time you view a film, plan to take special note of such details as: Is the pace of the film too slow, or too fast to allow you to follow the plot? Is music used effectively? Does the music distract from or enhance the film? Do any camera angles seem odd or unnatural? Do they make the film interesting? Does the lighting add to the atmosphere? Is zooming, slow motion, or speeded-up filming used effectively? Are there any special effects that add to the impact of the film? Are there any camera shots that strike you as particularly difficult to achieve? How does the director make crashes, explosions, etc., seem believable? Does the film overuse special effects? Do they disguise a weak story line?
- Sometimes films deal with a period in history, a major event, or the life of a person. A film can pique your interest in a topic, or challenge the opinions you hold. Even though *Fern Gully* is a cartoon, it makes people think about the fate of the world’s rain forests. *Apollo 13* might prompt an interest in space travel. Brainstorm with your classmates to come up with a list of movies that educate and challenge as well as entertain, and consider them next time you rent a movie.
- After you have seen a film, take a few moments to think about the title and how, or if, it ties in with the film. Is it a good choice? If not, think of a better title.
- View and then compare and contrast two film versions of the same story (e.g. *The Secret Garden*).

AERIAL SHOT – A shot taken from above using with a crane, plane or helicopter. Not necessarily a moving shot.

APERTURE – The hole through which light passes from the lens to the film.

ART FILM – In the mid-fifties, a distinction was made up between the art film – often of foreign origin – with distinct aesthetic pretensions, and the commercial film of the Hollywood tradition. Art films were shown in “art houses,” usually smaller theatres catering to a discriminating clientele; commercial movies were shown in larger theatres.

AVANT-GARDE – An advance beyond what has gone before. The cutting edge of artistic experimentation.

BACKLIGHTING – The main source of light is behind the subject it and directed toward the camera, creating a silhouette.

BACKGROUND LIGHT – A light that is placed behind the subject and directed away from the camera to create a sense of depth and distance between subject and background.

BLOCKBUSTER – Jargon term for a film that either is highly successful commercially or has cost so much to make that it must be extraordinarily popular in order to turn a profit.

CAMERA ANGLE – The angle at which the camera is pointed at the subject: low, high, flat.

CINEMATOGRAPHY – Motion picture photography. The cinematographer is responsible for deciding how the camera and lighting are to be used.

CLAPPER BOARD – A chalkboard, often with a digital timer, that is photographed at the beginning of a shot. The pertinent data for the shot (take number, film title, scene number etc.) are written on the board. A clapstick on top of the board is snapped shut and the resultant sound and image are used later to synchronize picture and sound.

CLOSE-UP – (1) Precisely, a shot of the subject’s face only. (2) Generally, any close shot.

COMPOSITION – The arrangements of elements within a shot.

CONTINUITY EDITING – The editing together of shots so the action flows smoothly. The content, position and direction of movement must be consistent between shots. Continuity editing ensures that attention is not drawn to the construction of the film itself.

CRANE SHOT – The camera is mounted on a crane, so it can move up, down, backwards, forwards and sideways.

CUT – A transition from one shot to another. Also describes the end of a take, i.e. when the director yells “Cut!”

DEEP FOCUS – Everything from foreground to background is in focus. Cf. shallow focus.

DETAIL SHOT – A shot usually more magnified than a close-up. A shot of a hand, eye, mouth, or subject of familiar detail.

DEPTH OF FIELD – The range within which the objects in an image are in focus.

DOCUMENTARY – A term with a wide latitude of meaning, basically used to refer to any film or programme not wholly fictional in nature.

EDITING – Selecting the required takes from the filmed shots, arranging them in the required order and joining them together.

EDITOR – Also called the cutter. The person who determines the narrative structure of a film, in charge of the work of splicing the shots of a film together into final form.

ESTABLISHING SHOT – Generally, a long shot that shows the audience the general location of the scene that follows, often providing essential information, and orienting the viewer. Provides visual context.

EXTREME LONG SHOT – A panoramic view of an location photographed from a considerable distance, often as far as a quarter of a mile away.

FADE – A common device for indicating the end and beginning of a scene. The last shot of a scene may well fade to black and the beginning of the next scene fade from black into the first shot.

FEATURE FILM – Customarily, a film must run for 75 minutes for it to be classified as a feature film.

FILL LIGHT – A soft light placed on the side of the subject opposite the key light. It reduces shadows by balancing out the overall level of lighting.

FILM NOIR – Originally a French term, now in common usage, to indicate a film with a gritty, urban setting that deals mainly with dark or violent passions in a downbeat way.

FILM SCRIPT – The written description of a film. It contains all the information required to realize a film, from characters, dialogue and actions, to locations, props and camera angles.

FINAL CUT – The film as it will be released in theatres. The guarantee of final cut assures a filmmaker that the producer will not revise the film after the filmmaker has finished it.

FLASHBACK – A scene or sequence (sometimes an entire film) that is inserted into a scene in “present” time and that takes place in the past. The flashback is the “past tense” of film.

FLASH-FORWARD – On the model of flashback, scenes or shots of future time; the “future tense” of film.

FOCUS – The degree of sharpness of an image.

FRAMING – Relates to the edges of a shot and what is included and what is excluded.

GAFFER – The chief electrician on the set; in charge of the lights. His assistant is the “best boy.”

GENRE – A type of film. There are various archetypal patterns, e.g. the Western, the musical, science-fiction film.

GRIP – The person in charge of props on the set.

MAINSTREAM FILM – The vast majority of films available for general public consumption; Hollywood or pop-culture film. Also called a High Concept Film.

MASTER SHOT – A long take of a scene, generally a relatively long shot that facilitates the assembly of component closer shots and details. The editor can always fall back on the master shot: consequently, it is also called a cover shot.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE – Everything seen in a shot. Literally, the “putting-in-the-scene.” Can include the direction of actors, locations, props, costumes, make-up and lighting.

PAN – Movement of the camera from left to right, right to left or up and down (a vertical pan) around the axis that runs through the camera.

POPULAR CULTURE – Those aspects and artifacts of culture that have mass appeal and consumption.

SCENE – A complete unit of film narration. A series of shots (or a single shot) that take place in a single location and that deal with a single action. A relatively vague term.

SEQUENCE – A basic unit of film construction consisting of one or more scenes that form a natural unit. An ambiguous term.

SHOT – A single piece of film, however long or short, without cuts, exposed continuously. A film may be composed of more than a thousand shots or it may be, or seem to be a single shot.

SOUND EFFECTS – Sounds that are not dialogue or music.

STILL – A single photograph; more precisely, a frame enlarged or similar publicity photograph from a film.

STOCK SHOT – (1) A library shot, literally borrowed from a collection, such as World War II shots or jet planes in flight, or establishing shots of New York City (2) An unimaginative or common shot that looks as if it might as well have been a library shot.

STORYBOARD – A series of drawing and captions (sometimes in resembling a comic strip) that shows the planned shot divisions and camera movements of the film.

SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF – A phrase coined by Samuel Coleridge. We may have no personal experience in reality of what we are viewing on screen (and in some films like horror or science fiction we never could), yet we accept what we see to be real.

glossary

TAKE – A version of a shot. A filmmaker shoots one or more takes of each shot or set-up. Generally, only one of each group of takes appears in the final film.

TARGET AUDIENCE – The group of people for whom a media text was constructed; the expected consumers of the media product.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR – The television crew member in charge of control-room decisions – such as which camera to use when – during the taping or broadcast of a show.

VOICE-OVER – The narrator's voice when the narrator is not seen.

glossary sources

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Abrams, Nathan, Ian Bell, Jan Udris. *Studying Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

suggested reading list

The Film Reference Library

The Film Reference Library, a division of the Toronto International Film Festival Group, is an invaluable resource devoted to the study of film as art and industry and to the preservation of Canadian cinematic history. The Film Reference Library houses the world's largest collection of English-language Canadian film-related material, as well as acting as the archives for Sprockets and the entire Festival Group. The Library is open year-round to the public, scholars, educators, media, industry, students, film buffs, and organizations for a nominal fee on a membership or per-visit basis.

The Library's website at www.filmreferencelibrary.ca provides access to catalogues, research tools and the Canadian Film Encyclopedia, an online reference project currently consisting of five hundred entries, including film titles with plot summaries and credits, as well as biographical and subject entries covering some of Canada's foremost films and filmmakers. This is a work in progress and additions will be made on an ongoing basis.

For hours and location please visit the website. If you are interested in bringing your class in for a tour of the Library, please call (416) 967-1517 or e-mail libraryservices@torfilmfest.ca

These books are available at the Toronto Film Reference Library:

Boggs, Joseph M. *The Art of Watching Films*, third edition. London: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1991.

Encourages the use of the VCR in the classroom as a tool for serious film study. Its aim is to help students become more aware of the complexity of film art its nuances, textures and rhythms.

Bone, Jan and Ron Johnson. *Understanding the Film*. Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company, 1991.

Blends explanations of filmmaking with insights into classic films and recent releases and includes the business as well as the artistic side of making films.

Bordwell, David and Kristen Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*, fifth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Introduces the reader to the aesthetics of film. A survey of the fundamental aspects of cinema as an art form.

Cella, Catherine. *Great Videos for Kids*. New York: Citadel Press, 1992.

Over 450 critically reviewed kid-approved titles listed by subject.

Culhane, Shamus. *Animation from Script to Screen*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Everything you ever wanted to know about animation.

Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*, fifth edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990.

Can be used in understanding how television and movies communicate and the complex network of language systems they employ.

suggested reading list

Hayward, Philip & Tana Wollen, eds. *Future Visions : New Technologies of the Screen*. London: BFI Publishing, 1993.

Commissioned essays by experts in the field explain what the new technologies are, how they work, and what their implications are for conventional film and television.

McCarthy, Robert E. *Secrets of Hollywood Special Effects*. Boston: Focal Press, 1992.

Covers the basics as well as hard-to-find information about different kinds of effects, including chemicals, pyrotechnics, weapons, levitation, and weather.

Miller, Frank. *Censored Hollywood*. Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1994.

Focuses primarily on the history of Hollywood's self-regulation, from the efforts by Will Hays to keep books and plays off the screens to the more recent battles over the MPAA's ratings system.

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

The classic. Explains complicated technical or ideological points without taking any previous knowledge for granted.

Nelmes, Jill, ed. *An Introduction to Film Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996.

A comprehensive textbook for students of cinema. Provides a guide to the main concepts used to analyse the film industry and film texts, and introduces some of the world's key national cinemas.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, ed. *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Essays on the history of cinema; includes an extensive bibliography.

O'Connor, Jane and Katy Hall. *Magic in the Movies: The Story of Special Effects*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1980.

Intended more for young people; dated, but useful.

Ohanian, Thomas A. and Michel E. Phillips. *Digital Filmmaking*. Boston: Focal Press, 1996.

Details the procedural, creative and technical aspects of pre-production, production, and post-production within a digital filmmaking environment.

Sklar, Robert. *Film: An International History of the Medium*. New York: Abrams, 1993.

The title says it all.

Thomas, Tony. *Music for the Movies*, second edition. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1997.

Another classic. A popular history of Hollywood film music from the thirties to the nineties as viewed through portraits of many of its foremost practitioners.

bibliography

Books:

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Abrams, Nathan, Ian Bell, Jan Udris. *Studying Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Bone, Jane and Ron Johnson. *Understanding the Film*. Chicago, National Textbook Company, 1992.

Fell, John L. *Film*. New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1975.

Bordwell, David and Kristen Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1979.

Study Guides:

The British Film Institute Department of Education – “Film Education”

Saskatoon Board of Education – “Media Literacy Guide”

North Ireland Film Council – “The Kodak Cineguide”

Other:

Ontario Film Review Board, “Classification Guidelines”