

AND Schools Forum: unlocking learning through narrative

Resource 2: using film as a creative entry point – additional classroom activities

Possible films that could be used as conversation starters

This resource is intended to help you to think about ways in to using film clips. The films suggested are not suitable for all ages and nor are they definitive - they offer a variety of approaches, to help you to think about your own favourites. The majority of these are drama exercises which can be initiated after watching clips and discussing and prior to commencing a writing task.

CHARACTER: Aladdin (Disney) – The Carpet
Zelig (Woody Allen) – Zelig
Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann)– The Mother and Father
Cinema Paradiso (Tornatore)– The Teacher
La Dolce Vita (Fellini) – The Film star

PLACE: Le Notti di Cabiria (Fellini) Opening desert
Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann): Dancing on the rooftop with the hills hoist
Room with a View (Merchant Ivory): The Piazza
Spirited Away (Miyazaki): The Tunnel and the abandoned station

DIALOGUE: Cinema Paradiso (Tornatore) – Alfredo, Toto in the exam
Citizen Kane (Welles) – Charlie and Susan fighting
Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann) – Fran stuttering
Le Notti di Cabiria- (Fellini) – Meeting Alberto

STORY/TRAILERS: Romeo and Juliet (Luhrmann)
Moulin Rouge (Luhrmann)
The Cat Returns (Miyazaki)

CHARACTER – WHO?

1. Look at the character images.

This could include types, archetypes, personalities. You may also want to think about the body, or physical choices of the actor. What can we learn about the character by studying their body (e.g. status or emotions)?

2. Drama exercises:

‘Leading with Body Parts’: this exercise is based on commedia dell’arte techniques. The actors can physically create characters by walking, but leading with different body parts e.g. knees, pelvis, chest, nose. You could then discuss what sort of characters this exercise creates.

3. Writing and Reflection

To do this, you can suggest that the actors draw a picture of a character that they have discovered or thought about in the drama session.

Then, ask them to develop a biography of the character to give to an actor. This could include the following information:

- How old are they?
- Do they prefer cats or dogs?
- Have they travelled?
- Do they cook or eat out?
- Do they exercise or play sport?

You could ask them to include more metaphorical questions about the character such as:

- If they were a colour, what would it be?
- If they were an animal, what would it be?
- If they were a piece/type of music, what would it be?
- If they were a car, what make would they be?
- If they were a season, which would it be?

You could also ask them about their sensory preferences. This might include:

- Sight – love to see, hate to see
- Sound – love to hear, hate to hear
- Touch – love to touch, hate to touch
- Taste – love to taste, hate to taste
- Smell – love to smell, hate to smell

PLACE – WHERE?

1. Looking at images

You could ask the students to think about how space or location affects the way that the characters move, feel and speak. An extension of this would be to think about how the space or location allows the action to progress, or how it impacts upon the action and mood.

2. Drama exercises

A particularly useful exercise is asking the actors to walk into different spaces and environments. These might include a museum, busy street, church, or airport. While half of the group do this, the other half could be making the sound effects of the environment. This will allow the students to explore different settings, as well as consider how their characters might react to the places.

3. Writing and Reflection

‘Model With an Image’: the class can work in groups for this exercise. Give the students magazine images of places. You can then ask them to describe in detail the place that they have chosen. This might include descriptions of colour, weather, climate, whether it is natural or man-made, or

textures. The students can then think about what sort of person they might expect to find in that place. After this, they can imagine a scene that would take place there. It could be a love scene, a fight scene, a secret meeting, or even a murder.

DIALOGUE AND EVENTS – WHAT?

1. Speech

You can discuss with the actors how different characters are differentiated by patterns of speech. It may be useful to watch some clips of ‘emotional’ characters. You could also brainstorm how speech is affected by different emotions and situations.

2. Drama exercises

‘One Line Characters’: give the students a character. It is then their job to come up with a line and one movement which established that character. The rest of the group then has to guess who they are. Characters might include: parent, teacher, spy, princess, TV compere, fashion model, football coach, shop owner (of a store for either women or men), painter, waitress, or priest. You could then add in a situation, such as: a TV compere who has lost his job; a painter who has just sold his first piece; a fashion model who has just broken a nail.

3. Writing and Reflection

For this, the actors can work in pairs using the following dialogue:

a. What are you doing here?

b. I came to see you

a. Me?

b. Yes, you ... I just wanted to tell –

(cutting him/her off) I can’t believe it!

a. _____

b. _____

a. _____

b. _____

a. Where were you last night?

b. I couldn’t make it.

a. You couldn’t make it!

b. I said I am sorry – what more do you want me to say ...

a. _____

b. _____

a. _____

b. _____

You can explain to the students that the dialogue is open: it could be said by anyone anywhere. It is up to the students to decide who they are, where they are, and the circumstances that they are under. They can then work of the dialogue. After they have decided on the setting, they can write a

detailed description of the place. YOU could encourage them to make notes of: any objects that might be in the scene; what each character is wearing; what they look like; what sort of music they would put behind the scene. An extension task could be to write directors notes to the dialogue, such as how each line is said. For example: “a. Where were you last night? (*BARKED*)”.

STORY

1. Looking at trailers

You can discuss with the students combining all the factors that you have covered. How do character, place and dialogue all fit together? You could then discuss different genres, such as action, romance, historical epic, fantasy, musical, etc.

2. Drama exercises:

‘Movement Composition’: give the students a theme and some music. From this they can then create a class ‘trailer’. This should include:

- Film Title
- Voice over introducing the film
- Scene showing general setting (with 15 students)
- Scene of dialogue between characters (with 2/3 students)

3. Writing and reflection

The students can then write up and storyboard the trailer that they have developed.

‘Writing a Film Pitch’: introduce the scenario as a Hollywood pitch meeting. The teacher or another student could be in role as a producer and the students have 2 minutes to pitch their idea. This pitch must include: genre, title, story outline, style of music/sound, and actors.