USING FILM IN THE CLASSROOM

The English Language Arts Senior High School Program of Studies, 2003, includes feature film in the minimum requirements for text study. Study of feature film is required in ELA 10-1, 10-2 and 30-2, and is listed as a choice in ELA 20-1, 20-2 and 30-1. Feature films can include both documentaries and movies and can be dealt with in different ways, from viewing the entire film in class or a theatre to viewing clips of films.

Choosing Films

Alberta Learning does not presently have a list of films authorized for Alberta classrooms. However, there is a list of recommended films at the end of this section (pages 95–102). Teachers and schools may choose films based on local approval.

In choosing films for classroom study, teachers, schools and/or school jurisdictions need to consider how well the film will help students meet the outcomes, but they must also consider the quality of the film, appeal and appropriateness for students, community standards, copyright concerns, cost and availability.

Because students must become critical viewers of nonprint media, the films chosen for classroom study often deal with sensitive issues. Therefore, care must be taken both in the choice of films and in the kinds of learning activities that are planned around the films.

☞ **Appendix A, pages 405–408, contains a film assessment tool that outlines key considerations in selecting films for classroom use.**

☞ **Pages 103–110 provide further guidance in choosing resources and dealing with sensitive issues.**

A Word about Ratings

Ratings can be confusing because there are different ratings given to films depending on the context in which they are shown. Alberta's Film Classification Board views and classifies films that are shown publicly in Alberta and attaches age-appropriate ratings and advisories to each publicly-screened film, video and DVD. Since showing a movie in a classroom is deemed a public performance, Alberta classification ratings must be observed. Teachers are strongly advised to preview any movie before showing it to students. A chart that gives public screening ratings for Alberta and compares them to the American ratings, which are often printed on packages and

☞ posters, can be found in Appendix A, on page 409.

Teaching Film

> "It is only through an understanding of the structure of a medium that one can gain real access to its message."
> – Frank Zingrone, *The Media Symplex: At the Edge of Meaning in the Age of Chaos*, p. 3.

Movies produce an emotional response in audiences. We can be amused, frightened, excited; we can experience sorrow, pity, tension, patriotism, revulsion. In fact, any human emotion can be induced by a well-made film. Many movies are designed to pull the audience into the story—to identify strongly with, or at least to care about, the central character—to provide audiences with a vicarious experience in an "other world," and above all, to make audiences forget they are watching a movie. Audiences are influenced to react to situations and conditions; to believe in the veracity of events; to accept the ideas and ideals promoted in the film; and to adopt values, interpretations and perspectives. An audience can even be persuaded to buy products that are placed in scenes, especially when these products are seen as contributing to the enjoyment, relief and/or success of characters who use them. Cinema presents a powerful influence that contributes to cultural change, coaching us to accept or reject aspects of our society, inspiring the way we dress, popularizing our expressions, shaping language and meaning, and persuading our self-image.

Hollywood Style and its conventions subordinate narrative technique to keep the audience focused on character and story. A basic rule of Hollywood Style is to keep the audience unaware of individual artistic elements. The audience must forget it is watching a movie. Any technique that draws attention to itself distracts the audience from the characters and the unfolding narrative. These tools of film narrative are evident, however, when one looks for them in the analytical process: first, by learning to recognize the various elements; next, by applying this knowledge to the analysis of a scene; finally, by examining the entire film to incorporate structure and form.

Understanding not just the film's text, but how the narrative is presented and why, and how decisions have been made in the creation of the film's scenes, will help individuals to appreciate this unique, collaborative art form. At the same time, individuals will come to terms with a very powerful and persuasive medium and recognize why and how motion pictures exert such immense influence on us.

There are a number of considerations in film analysis, including:

- Does the film's theme make a significant social statement? (Alternatively, is the film propagandist in its presentation of events?)

- How has the film made a direct communication with the audience to produce an emotional response?

- Do we find similar techniques and themes in literature?

- Do we find similar techniques and themes in the director's other films that suggest a particular style, approach or philosophy? In other words, could we consider this director an *auteur*?

Note: Throughout the rest of the Teaching Film section, there are several references (parenthetical or sidebar) to the specific outcomes from the program of studies.

General Introductory Activities (*2.2.1 10-1b; 20-1b; 20-2b and 2.1.3 10-1b; 10-2b; 20-1b; 20-2b; 30-1a, b; 30-2a, b*)

The following questions are considerations that can form the basis of a film study. These questions can be used either as part of a generic class discussion or for personal response writing prior to investigating a specific film.

- In general, what attracts us to a film? (Students might consider such things as the film's stars, subject, genre, effects and word of mouth recommendations.) How are films geared to particular audiences?

- Identify a film you saw recently and enjoyed. What reason(s) had you for wanting to see the film? Did the film meet your expectations? (Provide reasons for your answer.)

Considerations for Film Analysis

Movies have much in common with stories and novels in literature. Edgar Allan Poe defined the short story as narrative writing whose elements combine to produce a single effect. In the Hollywood, or "Classic," style of filmmaking, all elements of the film must combine to create a total effect. No one aspect of the film should stand out to distract the audience.

2.1.1 all courses a
- Consider the content initially: What is the film's purpose? What ideas are being developed? Who is the intended audience for the film? What is the film's genre?

2.1.2 10-1c, 10-2c
- Summarize the story in one or two sentences. Next, reduce the film's plot to no more than six words. For example, the plot for *E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial* can be expressed as "get home." The plot for *Jaws* can be expressed as "destroy the monster." The plot for *Saving Private Ryan* could be expressed as, "find Private Ryan." (Summarizing a film's plot in two to six words is known as "high concept," and is a favoured means for "pitching" a film proposal to a producer. *Alien* was pitched as "*Jaws* in space.")

2.1.1 all courses a
- What was the story's purpose? Was it strictly an emotional experience for the audience? Was there a sociological theme advanced or a point being made? Is the audience intended to subscribe to a value or cause?

2.3.2 all courses c, d
- What factor(s) contributed to the reality of the story or of a particular event within the story? Can you cite any event that seemed real during the unfolding of the narrative, but in retrospect would be impossible, implausible or impractical?

2.3.1 all courses c
- Are there any elements of the film that are striking or memorable, such as a false plot device, an effective or symbolic shot, a music theme or cue, or a character's signature expression or action, that reflect popular clichés or that in turn could become popular clichés copied by people?

2.3.1 all courses b
- How might one conclude that the film offers the audience wish fulfillment and/or a success story? What does the movie allow members of the audience to experience vicariously that could not, or probably would not, be experienced in their own lives?

2.3.2 10-1d, e, f; *10-2d, e; 20-1d, e, f;* *20-2d, e; 30-1d, e, f;* *30-2d, e*	• When reflecting on the film, what implausible event, character or detail can you note? Why do you think this detail escaped your attention as you watched the film the first time?
	Narrative: Since most films are structured as three-act "plays," divided into exposition, development of conflict, and resolution of conflict, consider the following:
2.2.1 all courses c	• Is this a linear narrative or a fragmented one? Does it contain a definite beginning, middle and end, or does it unfold through a series of flashbacks, contrasting or varied points of view, and/or seemingly unrelated events? Identify the point of the initial incident—the event that disturbs the status quo or the initial state of affairs and triggers the conflict. Consider the point at which events take a turn toward resolving the conflict.
2.1.2 all courses d	• Consider the protagonist's purpose or goal; consider efforts undertaken to restore balance and order. Note significant plot points that advance the action, contribute to suspense, and affect the protagonist's behaviour and motivation.
2.1.2 all courses c	• What details in the film support the controlling idea? What information is implied, leaving the audience to interpret it? What information is concealed? What information is omitted, leaving the audience to "fill in the blanks"?
2.3.1 all courses c	• How are we encouraged to identify with the protagonist and to see the protagonist as an idealized version of ourselves? How does the protagonist represent audience interests, values and sensibilities? What point-of-view shots are used to strengthen audience identification with the protagonist? How is the protagonist's emotional point of view impressed upon the audience?
2.2.2 10-1e, 20-1e, *30-1e*	• Are there key symbols, images or motifs that define character and theme?
2.3.3 all courses b	• Are effects used to support character and narrative, or do they exist for their emotional impact?
2.1.2 10-1b; 10-2b; *20-1b, c; 20-2b; 30-1b,* *c; 30-2b*	• What contrasting messages are presented in the film? In other words, how is the antagonist or villain made to appear attractive or fascinating? What compensating message is revealed by the end of the film?
2.3.3 all courses b	• Are there any controversial elements in the film such as language, sex or violence? Are these elements gratuitous, or have they a purpose in advancing story and/or character?
	Character: It is usually through the central character that the audience will experience the story's events. Since Hollywood encourages strong audience identification with the protagonist, consider the following:
2.1.2 all courses d	• How is the central character introduced to the audience? Is there an element of mystery to the character's personality that the audience discovers as the plot unfolds? What details are provided in the images that help define the protagonist's personality? (Consider props, dialogue, character motivations and actions, and significant music cues.)
2.3.1 all courses c	• In what ways are the choices made by the film's protagonist or central character similar or different from yours? In what way does the character provide a vicarious experience for you?

2.1.2 all courses f *2.3.2 all courses d*	• Are there familiar character "types" and archetypes in the film, such as a lone hero, maverick hero, antihero, foreign villain, rich villain or cruel villain, or conventional female types of mother, fallen woman as helpmate, or temptress. Is a female character co-opting a traditional male role? Are characters stereotyped? What contributes to the reality of the character? Are there any aspects of characterization that would seem strange, implausible or exaggerated in the "real" world?
2.3.1 all courses b *2.3.2 all courses b*	**Themes**: What themes does this film present? How can you relate to any or all of these themes on a personal level? How effectively does the film present the themes? Are the themes and techniques used to present the themes ones that you recognize from your study of other texts? How are they the same or different?
2.2.2 all courses a	**Editing**: Audience reaction to characters and events are shaped by the length of shots, the rapidity of cuts, and the use of crosscutting (juxtaposition). How is tension created through editing? How does the director use editing to convey a chaotic state of affairs? How do longer takes contribute to a lyrical unfolding of events? How does editing contribute to an objective point of view of events versus a character's subjective point of view? Does the editing contribute to varied points of view simultaneously? What transitional devices are used to move from one scene to the next?
2.1.2 all courses g	**Lighting**: Are scenes brightly lit? Is there much shadow and darkness? What is the purpose of such lighting? Does lighting focus on a character or object? Why? Is the source of the light realistic, symbolic, designed to draw audience attention to detail, or used to augment a character or the personality of the star? Are shadows used to conceal, to dramatize or to symbolize aspects of character, action or theme?
2.1.2 all courses g	**Colour**: Consider how colour is applied to the overall "look" of the film, to character costuming and to props. Colour usually will have symbolic and atmospheric purpose. Consider the purpose of colour choices. Note colour contrasts from one scene to another. If the film is shot in black and white, consider the director's purpose for this choice: is it to evoke a period, recreate a style, produce a specific atmosphere and mood? Was it a convention to use black and white at the time the film was made? How does the use of colour contribute to the meaning of the film?
2.1.2 all courses g	**Camera Placement**: What do we see? How do we see it? Why do we see action, events, characters and objects this way? Consider distance and angle in relation to action, perspective (i.e., size of objects on screen), dimension, focus, manipulation of time and manipulation of space. Determine the following:
	• How does a shot serve the narrative? Why is this shot used within the context of the action? Does the shot comment on action, character or theme? Is the shot functional or symbolic? For example, does a long shot establish a setting, distance the audience from a character emotionally or comment on a character's feelings of alienation? Does a close shot invite the audience to become intimate with a character, provide the audience with detail and information, or deliberately restrict the audience's perspective to create feelings of tension? Do low and high angle shots represent characters' points of view, are they symbolic of character power or weakness, or are they objective comments about events at hand or about a character's personality? What sounds accompany the shot (dialogue, sound effects, music) and complement the effectiveness of the shot?

2.1.2 all courses g	• Are subjects centre-framed on the screen? Note the background: is it unobtrusive, out of focus or uncomplicated, thereby reinforcing our attention on the character? Is the background cluttered or chaotic; if so, what effect does this background have on character and theme? How do details in the frame contribute to character delineation, plot advancement or commentary on theme?
2.2.2 10-1b, d; 10-2b, c; 20-1b, d; 20-2b, c; 30-1b, d; 30-2b, c	**Music**: How does music define the atmosphere, mood and tone of a scene? Does music comment on a character? Does music define or identify characters or contribute to irony, caricature or humour? How does music unify disparate shots? Does music assist the transition of time? Is the music a marketing tool?
2.2.1 all courses c	**Space**: How does use of space within the frame comment on character or situation? Does use of space relate to a character's state of mind? How does the framing of character within space help the audience to identify with the character?
2.2.1 all courses c	**Time**: How is time shown to elapse? How does spatial change relate to time passing? How and why is time compressed? How is time actualized, and what purpose does this serve?
2.1.3 10-1c; 10-2c; 20-1c, d; 20-2c; 30-1c, d; 30-2c	**Genre Considerations**: What are familiar elements, settings, environments, images, props, situations, events, character types, themes, moods and atmospheres of a particular genre? What social or political commentary does the genre film contain? (This is especially applicable to Westerns and to combat, espionage and gangster films. Comedy could include sociopolitical satire or parody.)
2.2.1 all courses c	**Codes and Conventions**: These are filmmaking shortcuts that the audience understands to save time and move the narrative forward without undue explanation. For example, time passing can be delineated using such codes and conventions as a screen title (as in "One year later"), calendar pages changing rapidly, the hands of a clock revolving, shots of a clock to show changes in the hour, a dissolve from one image to the next, changes in environment, changes in costume and changes in conveyances. Determine what codes and conventions have been used to relate the narrative.
2.1.1 all courses a	**Stars**: Is the star's role typical of other roles the star has played? Does the star's character conform to audience expectations based on previous characters the star has portrayed, or is the star playing against type? Is a character made sympathetic because the star portrays this character? Does the attractiveness of the star have a bearing on audience reaction to the character?
2.3.3 all courses b	**Director**: Are this film's themes representative of themes in other films made by this director? What features of style make this director's films recognizable and identifiable as belonging to the director's body of work? That is, can you determine any stylistic similarities, such as character types, character roles, setting and environment, lighting, story structure, and recurring motifs seen in the director's other films? Can you identify any significant contribution this director has made to advancing film technique and art?

Copyright

Home video and DVD are not cleared for public screenings. Teachers and schools must observe copyright laws that state that public performances of full-length films or film clips require a fee to be paid to the copyright holder, even if no admission is charged to the audience. Schools or school jurisdictions can pay a nominal fee to purchase a Public Performance Location Licence, which covers the use of all approved videos used during a school year. The feature films must be legally manufactured (not copies). **Please contact the Visual Education Centre at 1–800–668–0749 and/or Audio-Ciné Films Inc. at 1–800–289–8887 for information and rates.**

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Related Materials

Annotated lists of films and ideas on teaching film are available from sources such as the following:

- *Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults*, by Alan B. Teasley and Ann Wilder. Available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre.

- *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom*, by John Golden. Available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre.

- *Internet Movie Database*. Available at http://www.us.imdb.com/top_250_films. This Web site contains a list of 250 films, each with a plot outline, genre, cast and credits, user comments and recommendations for similar films. Trailers for the films are also available for viewing.

- *Canadian Review of Materials*. Available at http://www.umanitoba.ca/ cm/videos.html. This Web site provides a list of video reviews of Canadian materials.

- *Understanding Movies*, by Louis Giannetti and Jim Leach.

Other Web sites, such as the *Media Awareness Network* at http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng, *The Jesuit Communication Project* at http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/JCP/, *FilmValues.com: A Parents' Guide to Children's Films* at http://www.filmvalues.com, and *Much Ado About Teaching and Learning* at http://www.members.shaw.ca/dsaliani, provide a wealth of ideas for using film and other media.

Film Study Units

The following sample units demonstrate different approaches to teaching film.

"Lighting, Colour, Music: A Study of Film Elements" examines film elements through the use of clips from various films. The film clips are shown in class, then students choose films to view on their own and compare them to the clips.

"The Truman Show" is intended for ELA 10-1 and ELA 10-2. The approach taken in this unit is to show the entire film in class and follow it up with activities that take students back into the film to examine various aspects.

"Finding Forrester" is intended for ELA 20-1 and ELA 20-2. The approach taken in this unit is to require students to view the film outside class, using only film clips in class. Pre-viewing and follow-up activities are provided for classroom use.

"Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" is intended for ELA 30-1 and could be adapted for ELA 30-2. Students will view the film in class in sections or view clips only with extensive background provided throughout.

A glossary of terminology used is provided following the units.

Note: **The films mentioned are not authorized by Alberta Learning. They were chosen by a committee of teachers who suggested their use for the courses indicated. Local approval must be obtained for using these or any other unauthorized resources. Copyright permission must also be obtained for public screening of these or any other films**.

Lighting, Colour, Music: A Study of Film Elements

In this unit, students study chosen film elements and their effects on the medium. They describe the effect and purpose of lighting, colour and music in selected film clips; research a director; and then compare the use of the selected elements in two films by the same director.

Examples of Film Clips for This Unit

Light
- *Schindler's List*—glamour (from above) lighting on Oscar Schindler (as he creates the list)

Colour
- *Schindler's List*—girl in the red dress used as the turning point of Schindler and his "loss of innocence" (when Schindler and his mistress see the emptying of the ghetto)
- *Batman*—colour used to express genre (comic book) and set mood (throughout)

Music
- *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—music as plot (when the aliens respond to human message with music)
- *2001 A Space Odyssey*—mood (the space ballet)

Choose clips from several films that showcase the elements of lighting, colour and music. Films by directors such as Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton, Stanley Kubrick and Alfred Hitchcock make good use of these elements.

Another approach is to study clips from one director. Films directed by Tim Burton, such as *Batman*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach* and *Beetlejuice*, are good possibilities.

☞ After discussing the various effects and possible purposes of these elements, students fill in a film analysis sheet such as the one in Appendix B, page 449. Students can be encouraged to use the following questions to guide their analysis:

Lighting: Are the scenes brightly lit? Is there much shadow and darkness? What is the purpose of such lighting? Does the lighting focus on a character or object? Why? Is the lighting realistic, symbolic, designed to draw the audience's attention to detail, or used to augment a character or the personality of the star? Are shadows used to conceal, to dramatize or to symbolize aspects of character, action and theme?

Colour: How is colour applied to the overall "look" of the film, to character, to costuming and to props? Is there a symbolic and/or atmospheric purpose? What colour contrasts are present from one scene to another, and what is the purpose? If the film is shot in black and white, what is the purpose—to evoke a period, to recreate a style or to produce a specific atmosphere or mood? Was it a convention to use black and white when the film was made?

Music: How does the music define the atmosphere, mood and tone of a scene? Does music comment on a character? Does music define or identify characters? How does music unify disparate shots? Does music assist the transition of time? Is the music a marketing tool?

Students choose a director of one of the film clips shown in class and research areas such as family background, education, influences and filmography that could influence the way he or she uses these elements of film.

Students use a variety of media, such as print, video and the Internet, to gather the information and present what they have found in the form of an oral or written report, electronic graphics presentation, or collage. Students should be encouraged to assess the usefulness and credibility of the sources they used and reflect on the strategies they used to gather the information.

Using the information gathered in their director reports, students choose a film by this director for further study. Students should be encouraged to involve their parents or guardians in their choice. In their study of the film, students could examine all three elements of lighting, colour and music, or just study one or two of these elements. Students then compare the use of the film element(s) in their chosen film with the use of the film element(s) in the clip by

this director that was shown in class. The comparison is presented in the form of an essay that answers the following questions:

- What are the intended effects and purposes of the elements?

- Are they used in the same way and for the same purposes in both films?

- If they are used differently in the films, what are some of the reasons for doing so?

☞ **See Appendix A, pages 410–411, for a sample of student work.**

This unit addresses the following outcome subheadings:

2.1.1   Discern and analyze context
2.1.2   Understand and interpret content
2.2.1   Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content
2.2.2   Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects
3.1.1   Focus on purpose and presentation form
3.1.2   Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources
3.2.1   Select, record and organize information
3.2.2   Evaluate sources, and assess information
3.2.3   Form generalizations and conclusions
3.2.4   Review inquiry or research process and findings
4.1.2   Consider and address form, structure and medium
4.1.3   Develop content
4.1.4   Use production, publication and presentation strategies and technologies consistent with context
4.2.1   Enhance thought and understanding and support and detail
4.2.2   Enhance organization
4.2.3   Consider and address matters of choice
4.2.4   Edit text for matters of correctness

The Truman Show

☞ This film is rated PG. See Appendix A, page 409, for a description of film ratings.

I. Possible Entry Points

The Truman Show can be dealt with as a commentary on modern society. Issues such as the media's influence on individuals, the individual's acceptance of the world with which he or she is presented, or what is real can be considered.

II. Pre-viewing Activities

1. Advertising Present in the Classroom. By examining clothing labels or branding, looking at what is present on the walls of the classroom, and identifying the major companies and the quantity they encounter, students can assess the power of advertising based on product placement.

2. Homework Assignment: Twenty-four Hour Advertising Survey. Students count how many advertisements they are exposed to in this period of time.

3. Discuss Favourite Television Shows. Do a classroom survey and focus on one or two favourites. Questions for group discussion include:

   a. What makes the show popular?
   b. What do you like about this show?
   c. Who is the intended audience?
   d. What values are promoted in this show?
   e. What kinds of clothing do the male and female characters wear?
   f. Is there pressure in this for conformity?
   g. How true to life are the situations?
   h. Have you ever felt manipulated by this television show?

4. Homework Assignment: Analyze "Reality Television." Students watch a reality television episode, considering questions such as the following:

   a. Where is the camera?
   b. What does the viewer see?
   c. How does the perspective change when there are close, long and angled shots through the camera? For example, is the camera cutting between two groups or two individuals to suggest conflict?
   d. How might the viewer respond to the use of crosscutting and juxtaposition?

5. Group Discussions. Students share group findings about the reality television and the advertising survey and look for consensus. The purpose of both the advertising activities and watching reality television for camera angles is to prepare students to watch for these things in *The Truman Show*.

III. The First Viewing

This show can be viewed in two 70-minute blocks. Stopping to analyze too frequently should be discouraged in order for the students to get a fluent sense of the film. Analysis can be done by viewing and discussing significant clips, following the initial viewing.

1. Discuss symbols of freedom, such as birds, the sky and open doors, and symbols of confinement, such as fences and closed doors. Have students make note of anything they notice as they view the film. (*Truman's confinement is suggested by a number of symbols of conformity and repression, such as the 1950's images of picket fences and martial images of boots and snarling dogs which suggest entrapment. He is also trapped by guilt through his wife and mother, and by the cubicles at work. Techniques such as geometric patterns suggest a constructed, fixed and rigid world; and a shot of Truman in a convex mirror suggests a fish confined in a bowl.*)

2. Stop the film occasionally for students to write down what they have noted in connection to freedom and confinement, as well as anything they noticed related to the following features of the film:

   a. Setting, character, plot and theme/recurring images, such as the eye, mirror and cross/x motifs
   b. Camera shots
   c. Music
   d. Lighting

e. Sound effects
f. Speech qualities

IV. Reviewing the Film

1. Determine the initial reactions of the students and their interpretations of the film through exploratory talk.

2. The film can be reviewed in four stages:
1) Opening credits 2) Truman unaware 3) Truman becoming aware 4) Truman breaking free. The following are suggestions for discussion of each segment of the film. Some of the possible responses are in italics.

Opening Credits

a. Write down what Christoff says in the opening credits.
b. The camera eye is always trained on Truman at the beginning. Interpret this first viewing we have of Truman.
c. Identify the visual tools used by the director to portray Truman and his situation. *For example, there are four succeeding levels of frames around Truman's face that depict the degree of his captivity. Christoff's character resembles a priest in his clothing and in his name, and this sets a powerful religious context.*

Truman Unaware

The viewer begins to be aware that Truman does not know he is being spied on and is the main character of a voyeuristic television program that is viewed around the world.

a. What are the clues given to Truman and the audience that his reality is contrived? *Frames within frames are used to suggest entrapment. The many reflected images and use of mirrors might suggest illusion. The obvious manipulation of Truman for product placement in advertising hints that this is not reality but a television show. The images shown by the hidden cameras suggest surveillance. The eyes of the characters give away when they are acting and when they are experiencing real emotions.*
b. How is conflict introduced?

Truman Becoming Aware

Once Truman takes the magnifying glass when the characters are viewing old photographs, it is possible to recognize a shift in Truman's perspective of his world. He begins to look for himself and use his own eyes.

a. What does Truman do to manipulate his pseudo world in order to discover his real situation?
b. What does the name Truman Burbank represent? (*True Man in Burbank Studios: First person to be legally adopted by a corporation.*)
c. What do the images of bridges with no ends suggest? *He is trapped in his world or his own reality. He has many dead-end roads, and he is often searching beyond the end of the bridge.*
d. In what ways is Truman trapped? *He is trapped in a conventional life and is manipulated in his world. He is unable to see past his own reality.*
e. Are we trapped or confined in any way?
f. When is the moment that Truman decides to break free from his contrived reality? How does he begin to break out of his world?
g. What are we learning about Truman's viewing audience? Who is watching him and why are they watching him so faithfully? *The audience may be trapped or enslaved by the show.*
h. To what extent is our world manipulated as Truman's is?
i. Why does Truman initially not try to escape? *He is not aware that there is any other kind of life. The world he lives in is in some ways idyllic—safe, perfect.*
j. What do Christoff's words, "If he was determined to find the truth, there is no way we could prevent it," suggest about our situation?

Truman Breaking Free

a. There have been many contrived and real obstacles that have prevented Truman from escaping. What are these obstacles?
b. The rising action brings us to Truman confronting his "Creator." Describe this power struggle and the connections/allusions you can make.

c. What images and symbols of freedom, confinement and new beginnings can you find? *Truman is trapped by the weather. Truman, ironically, is also confined by the sky and by roads and bridges that go nowhere. He is confined by his fears, and he needs to confront his greatest fear—of water—in order to find freedom. The Santa Maria, represents exploration and finding a new world of freedom. Truman's coming out of the water suggests a rebirth into freedom. The artificial sky is like the shell of an egg that Truman must break out of in order to be reborn, and the door that he leaves by suggests a new opportunity and freedom as well as stepping out into the unknown.*

d. Truman hits the wall of his known world. Why is this a powerful ending to the story? Describe the symbolic elements of this ending and Truman's decision to bow like an actor at the end of his performance and exit to the dark back stage of the real world.

e. Why does Truman's audience cheer?

V. Extension Activities

1. Have students write a script or story about the differences that Truman will encounter between his old world and his new world and what might be the same.

2. Divide the classroom into various groups, giving each group a motif, such as eyes, mirrors or crosses/x's, to track and to discuss their possible meanings. Part of the discussion should include how the film comments on modern society. Students should then bring their ideas to a full class discussion. *The use of x's, such as when Truman has his fingers crossed in his wedding picture, may suggest that it is not true or real. The eye motif may represent Truman trying to see the truth, reality or alternate reality; and the mirrors could represent the illusion of the world he accepts as true.*

3. Have students represent Truman's world in another shape or form and explain their representation.

4. Have students create out scenes from the film. *For example, Sylvia might choose to interview Christoff. Would Truman appear on a talk show, or would he shun that world altogether?*

5. Present a soliloquy by Truman upon entering and discovering the new world.

6. Have students write about, or demonstrate in a project representation, how we are all Truman in some way or another.

This unit addresses the following outcome subheadings:

1.1.1   Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
1.2.1   Consider new perspectives
1.2.2   Express preferences, and expand interests
2.1.2   Understand and interpret content
2.2.2   Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects
2.3.1   Connect self, text, culture and milieu
2.3.2   Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts
3.2.1   Select, record and organize information
3.2.3   Form generalizations and conclusions
4.1.2   Consider and address form, structure and medium
4.1.3   Develop content
4.1.4   Use production, publication and presentation strategies and technologies consistent with context
4.2.2   Enhance organization
4.2.3   Consider and address matters of choice
4.2.4   Edit text for matters of correctness
5.2.1   Cooperate with others, and contribute to group processes

Finding Forrester

Finding Forrester explores the idea of transcending obstacles to achieve success. This film is rated PG. ☞ See Appendix A, page 409, for a description of film ratings.

To save class time for close analysis, students may be asked to view the film at home before beginning the in-class study.

Note: The bolded terms in this unit are defined in the glossary, which follows the sample film study units.

I. Pre-viewing Activities

Controversial Material

Some language is off-colour, but its use helps in the characterization of Jamal's friends and of the mysterious "Window." Implied sexual activity in an adjoining apartment to Jamal's bedroom helps to define the atmosphere and poverty of Jamal's neighbourhood. (The sounds tell us the building is poorly built, having thin walls.)

Examining Cultures, Language and Class

Several approaches could be taken to introduce students to how stereotypes emerge from people's use of language, choice of music, dress and/or behaviour.

- Research rap music.
- Create stereotypes of people who listen to different types of music. Students and the teacher can bring in examples of music.
- Role-play how language reinforces stereotypes. This could lead to a related study of *Pygmalion*, which connects to the themes found in *Finding Forrester*.

Themes

Finding Forrester explores the idea of transcending obstacles to achieve success, and the following themes are used to develop this thought.

Individuality
Self-expression/identity
Stereotyping
Peer pressure

The effect of environment on the individual
Choices, and reasons for choices
Mentorship
Entrapment

Teachers might encourage activities that invite students to reflect and comment on personal experiences that address each of these themes:

1. The means they and their peers use to express themselves as individuals, as declarations of "This is who I am; this is what I represent." What positive and negative ramifications do self-expression and individuality invite?

2. The extent that peer pressure influences their self-expression and their perceptions of identity, and any restrictions they feel or experience in their declarations of individuality.

3. How "the system"—school, home and social environment (both physical and cultural)—shapes attitudes, restricts or encourages self-expression, imposes conformity or invites individuality, and creates or influences the creation of an alternative identity. This theme connects effectively with *Lord of the Flies*.

4. How people create "masks" that present an alter ego, an alternative personality that shields against criticism, opposition and conformity, and/or "masks" that define what individuals would like to be, rather than how they perceive themselves to be. Students could create their own masks (e.g., papier-mâché, drawing) and discuss what image they present to the world.

5. How they make choices. What reasons or motives do they apply when making decisions about actions and activities that have significance and relevance to their well-being, their futures, their attainment of goals, and their personal definitions of "success"?

6. How we restrict ourselves, create obstacles for ourselves, and even trap ourselves into situations or conditions that ultimately make us unhappy.

7. The heroes or role models they adopt for their own self-expression. (Consider television and movie

stars, characters from television shows and movies, popular music stars, athletes, and others.) What makes these role models popular, inviting, worth emulating?

8. The ways in which their behaviour could limit, restrict and/or confine them.

9. The ways in which their behaviour could lead to stereotyping.

II. Beginning the Film

Ask students to work in groups and share their impressions of the film. The place mat activity would be effective here (see page 192).

Target Audience

The film is targeted at anyone 15 years of age and older. The film is neither condescending toward people of colour, nor does it vilify Caucasians.

Point of View

- From whose point of view does the narrative unfold?
  Jamal is the protagonist. We experience events from his point of view.
- Why does the audience come to identify with Jamal?
  Jamal's ethnicity plays a secondary role to his less-than-affluent background, the peer pressure he senses, and his feelings of rejection by others—situations common to most people. As well, the story is told from Jamal's point of view. The audience experiences conflict through Jamal.

III. General Introduction to the Film

View the film from its beginning to the end of the **scene** in which Jamal explains in brief the history of the BMW Company. As they watch, ask students to note the following and determine how this is conveyed:

- the mood and tone of the environment
- the relevance of school to the students in the film.

Divide the class into nine groups, and assign each group one of the following scenes to analyze and then report back to the class.

1. The purpose of the opening **clapper shot** retained in the final edit.
   This shot is self-reflexive, reminding the audience it is watching a construction, as opposed to "reality."

2. The purpose of the youth rap artist.
   He helps set the tone of the environment and establishes Jamal's neighbourhood. The fact that the rap performer is performing directly to the camera underscores the self-reflexive element of this opening shot. The shot itself seems impromptu and in the spirit of cinéma vérité.

3. The purpose of the **montage** scene behind the opening **titles**.
   *The opening montage serves to establish the character of the neighbourhood, its setting and atmosphere, as well as introducing the themes of self-expression and identity. The editor's choice of **shots** used to create the montage suggests that neighbourhood residents seek personal identity through self-expression, conveyed mainly by outward appearance, in contrast to the self-expression of Forrester and Jamal who use their talents for communicating ideas as their means of conveying individuality.*

4. The significance of the pigeons taking flight.
   While keeping pigeons appears to be an aspect of the neighbourhood, as seen in the subsequent shot, the pigeons also provide both a metaphor and a symbol for freedom and escape. In addition, they introduce a bird motif that also relates to the theme of entrapment as opposed to freedom.

5. The means by which Jamal is introduced, and why this is significant.
   *The camera **tilt**s up a stack of books, then **pan**s across the room to Jamal who is prone, asleep on his bed. A **close shot** reveals his eye opening. Jamal is characterized by his eclectic collection of books, representing his knowledge and intelligence, and providing the antithesis to the stereotype of the black athlete preoccupied with basketball. That Jamal is dormant and his eye opens suggest a character who will be "awakened" in the course of the narrative. The eye also introduces the motif of "seeing clearly"*

or "clarity of vision," synonymous with awareness, cognizance and intelligence.

6. The introduction of the mysterious stranger, known as "The Window," and why this is effective.

   The mysterious stranger provides a plot point that eventually brings Jamal to invade Forrester's apartment. The stranger peers at the boys through binoculars, an extension of the "seeing" motif. The "mystery" of who the stranger is, and why the stranger peers at the boys provides some suspense and moves the story forward.

7. Representations that stereotype Jamal and his friends.

   Considerations include their language, their clothing, their basketball games and their preoccupation with sports over literature as revealed in the classroom discussion of Poe's, "The Raven." This also provides a basis for the pressure Jamal feels about not revealing his intelligence, and the fact that he keeps his journals a secret. Jamal hides his uniqueness within the stereotype because from his peers' perspective being smart is uncool.

8. The choice Jamal makes to invade Forrester's apartment.

   Peer pressure creates the circumstance for Jamal to commit a break-in. Jamal's purpose is to retrieve something from Forrester's apartment as proof to his friends that he did enter. After Jamal goes through the window and unlocks the door, the camera presents us with Jamal's perspective, and we see first the baseballs and photographs of baseball players, then the television set on, next the knife, and finally a wall of books. Jamal briefly examines the knife, but it is the books he chooses to scrutinize. The scene contributes to the delineation of his character as one fascinated by literature, and one who is instinctively inquisitive and inherently intelligent. Such information is another reminder that he does not conform to a "black stereotype" and at the same time provides a thematic caution to the viewer about making prejudicial assumptions.

The teacher may step away from the narrative at this point to observe also that Jamal's actions could be argued as false and unnatural, and that logic is subverted. If Jamal is committing a break-in, and if he at least suspects that "The Window" is somewhere asleep in the apartment—the television is on, and "The Window" has never been seen leaving the apartment—then why would Jamal take precious minutes to examine a book? Would it not be more natural, having placed the knife in his pack, to leave immediately? Such awareness would escape audience consciousness until analysis reveals it. The purpose of the scene is both to further characterize Jamal and to provide an excuse for Jamal to leave his backpack, containing his journals, so that Forrester can respond to the writing, provoke Jamal's curiosity, and lead to Jamal's return and ultimate relationship with Forrester.

9. The purpose of the "BMW" scene.

   This scene reveals that Jamal is intelligent and well-read, more so than the average audience member. It shows that people of colour are stereotyped as thieves by Caucasians, and that Jamal resents the stereotype. It reveals that Mr. Massie, the Caucasian messenger who drives the BMW, stereotypes himself as "better" than the black youth. Massie adopts a "mask" of importance, both through the car he drives and by wearing sunglasses.

IV. Considering Narrative Technique

Structure

Finding Forrester is a linear narrative in three acts, presenting a figurative journey that returns to its point of departure.

ACT I (Exposition) From the **tilt shot** of Jamal's books, to Forrester watching Jamal's departure from his window, seen in a **high angle shot**.

ACT II (Development of Conflict) From the **establishing shot** of the Red Rose Diner, to Terrell delivering Jamal's letter, culminating in his brief conversation with Forrester.

ACT III (Climax and Resolution) Division of the film into its six Narrative Sections. Each section ends with a significant change for the protagonist. Ask students to write a journal entry from the point of view of one of the characters in the section. Specify that the character should comment on the protagonist's change.

I. *The character of the 'hood. Jamal is one of the guys.*
    – *break-in*

II. *Jamal "seeks" Forrester's opinion about his writing.*
    – *offer of scholarship to Jamal is a turning point in their relationship*

III. *Jamal at Mailor-Callow.*
    – *conflict with Crawford and Hartwell presents Jamal with an obstacle to his goal*

IV. *Jamal is accused of plagiarism.*
    – *isolated at school, from Forrester, and from friends*

V. *Jamal is vindicated by Forrester.*
    – *resumption of friendship and mutual respect*

VI. *Epilogue.*
    – *Forrester's death*
    – *Jamal "returns" to the 'hood a success*

Scene Analysis

Hollywood Style means that nothing is wasted in the creation of the film. Everything we see and hear as the narrative unfolds has purpose and relevance. The examination of a few key scenes helps to reveal narrative techniques that can be applied to other scenes. The video time references provided are measured from the beginning of the Columbia logo and may vary slightly with equipment used.

Scene One (The scene begins 0:02:54 with the shot of the books and ends 0:05:10 just prior to the shot of Ms. Joyce in her classroom.)

- How is Jamal introduced, and how does his introduction begin the audience's identification with him?

Shot 1. *The camera **tilt**s up a stack of books that are worn and obviously read, then **pans** left in an extreme **close-up** along the prone figure of Jamal. The books are our first indication Jamal is a voracious reader of scholarly works. We hear his mother calling him by name (identifying him), urging Jamal to get up. The camera stops and holds on his face as his eye opens, then (typically) closes.*

Shot 2. *Cut to a **close-up** of Jamal's face as his eye opens a second time when he realizes he is about to miss his deadline.*

*These two **close shots** place the audience in intimate physical proximity to Jamal. Emotionally, most teens (present and past) can identify with Jamal's reluctance and Mom's insistence.*

- The variety of camera shots constitutes the language used to describe the events. As the scene continues, determine:
    – how the camera is used and why it is used this way
    – how what is seen and heard helps to define Jamal's character
    – how Forrester is introduced and why he is introduced this way
    – the contributions the camera and editing make to this introduction of Forrester.

Shot 3. ***Interior wide angle long shot** as Jamal reaches the main floor landing and goes out the door. This shot is a transition within the scene that also compresses time, employing a Hollywood convention viewers have come to understand and accept. In less than one second of real time, Jamal has moved from his bed to the ground floor landing of his apartment staircase, fully dressed. The audience automatically and instinctively understands that some time has elapsed as Jamal dressed quickly and departed.*

Shot 4. *Cut to a **long shot** of Jamal's friends seen through the lenses of binoculars. The binoculars are seen in extreme close-up and in **soft focus**. The first element of mystery is introduced: who is watching, and why? Jamal, eventually, will solve this mystery.*

Shot 5. *Cut to a close shot of the boys playing basketball. The previous shot puts the audience in intimate proximity to Forrester sharing his perspective. Now the close shot reveals subjectively what he sees.*

Shot 6. *Cut to a **reverse shot** in close-up of Forrester looking through the binoculars. This time the shot is objective, permitting only a glimpse of the man while providing an explanation of the previous shot through the binoculars. Again, the audience is brought in close physical proximity to a character with whom they are to identify.*

Shot 7. *Cut to a reverse shot of the boys from Forrester's point of view. Again, the subjective shot, revealing what he sees, contributes to eventual sympathy for him.*

- Continue to analyze the types of shots and their significance from Jamal's arrival to the end of the scene.
  *Pan shots follow Jamal's play, further defining his character as an able basketball player. Reverse shots provide the audience with a "sense of being" with Forrester as he watches. Reverse shots also provide the audience with character perspective. **Zoom** shots act as printed italics on a page, adding significance (emphasis). The **telephoto** (long) shot of Massie's arrival indicates the boys' perspective; his arrival adds to the mystery of Forrester in conjunction with the boys' (expository) conversation about "The Window" since, within the narrative, we are yet to discover Forrester's identity. Close shots function as Forrester's perspective through binoculars; when indicating the boys' perspective, they add weight and significance to the window and the mysterious figure behind it. **Medium** shots here are either subjective, placing the audience physically and emotionally with the boys to share their experience, or objective, permitting the audience to merely observe the action. Low and high angle shots in this scene provide character perspective. The last three shots of the window are not from any character perspective, but instead serve as a transition to the next scene by providing emphasis to the boys' comments about the mysterious dweller they have dubbed "The Window." The audience is teased by the barely perceptible*

presence of the figure moving behind the curtain when the camera refuses to go inside. Curiosity is piqued and tension is introduced via the mystery.

Analyzing Camera Shots in Context

The meaning and purpose of a camera shot varies in accordance with its context, belying the assumption that the angle or distance of a shot has a predetermined meaning. This concept can be explored by examining carefully the scene of Jamal and Forrester arriving at Madison Square Garden (1:21:31 to 1:24:20; DVD Scene 20).

- What do the medium-close and close shots convey in this scene? Specify when the camera is used subjectively and objectively.
  *Initially, the camera provides us with an objective view of Jamal and Forrester, merely establishing them within the environment, first in a close, then a low, wide angle long shot. The sense of crowded space is suggested by keeping the mass of people in focus as they spill into and out of the screen's frame. When the camera is close on Forrester, the people are out of focus, a swirling mass, suggesting Forrester's confusion and panic and creating for the audience the sense of the claustrophobia and entrapment that Forrester is experiencing. (This claustrophobia is augmented by the video format, which crops the **widescreen** composition.) In these shots, the camera is providing a subjective viewpoint; it is slightly unsteady, creating the impression of the imbalance Forrester is feeling. The camera also makes short, close panning shots to suggest Forrester's point of view as his head moves frantically in search either of Jamal or for a way out of this human trap. Close shots of Forrester's head and face bring the audience to him as a means of identifying with his plight, and seem to place the viewer beside him in the crowd. Throughout the scene, the sound is loud and cacophonous, providing an extra feeling of tension. Subjectivity is aided by the use of available natural lighting instead of assisted lighting in the filming of this scene.*

  When Forrester takes refuge in a small alcove under a staircase, he is still in close-up, but the view of him reverts once again to an objective perspective, conveyed as people's legs pass between him and the viewer. The camera is objective as well when joining Jamal in close-up

as he searches for, and then finds, his friend.
As Forrester and Jamal leave, the camera remains
watching objectively as they move out of sight.

Character Delineation

Often, a scene's ***mise-en-scène*** contributes not just to setting and atmosphere, but also to defining a major character, especially in the exposition of the narrative. That means that *everything* seen and heard contributes to characterization. Character delineation usually begins with the introduction of the protagonist (and often the introduction of the antagonist unless this character is a stereotype). The characters in *Finding Forrester* are true-to-life. Their realism adds to the believability of the film. Director Gus Van Sant defines the characters of Jamal and Forrester throughout Act I of the film.

- While the opening scene provides some information about the personalities of Jamal and Forrester, their characterization unfolds throughout Act I. Review Act I (the film's exposition) and note what additional characterizations are indicated, as well as *how* this information is imparted. For example, in the first scene, why is it significant that Forrester mutters a prediction that Jake "can't give him that," as he watches Jamal score a basket, and then Jake says, "I can't give him that"?
  An aspect of Forrester's character is introduced: he is knowledgeable about sports.
- How much screen time elapses until the audience sees Forrester completely for the first time? What information is imparted about him at this point? Why is his personality revealed in stages, over time?
- How does his use of coarse language contribute to defining his character, and why is its use not gratuitous?
- How is Forrester made sympathetic to the audience?
- Parallels in characterization contribute to the dramatic unity of the film. What parallels are revealed between the characters of Jamal and Forrester?
  The two characters are seen for the first time in a similar way: the close-up of Jamal's eye in the opening shot parallels the close-up of Forrester's surrogate eyes, the binocular lenses, when the boys first discuss The Window.

Jamal and Forrester are well-read, love writing, and are sports enthusiasts.

Jamal and Forrester each wish to keep a truth about his identity a secret.

Initially, Forrester is angry and impatient with Jamal. Near the end of Act II, Jamal is angry that Forrester withheld information about the publication of "A Season of Faith's Perfection." Forrester, in turn, is angry that Jamal violated the rule that nothing written in the apartment was to be removed. Each feels betrayed by the other: Jamal because Forrester will not speak for him, and Forrester because Jamal wants him to come out of seclusion.

Jamal and Forrester have suffered prejudicial criticisms from Crawford.

Jamal's piece is called "Losing Family," (in contrast to "Finding Forrester"). Both Jamal and Forrester have lost family: Jamal, his father; and Forrester, his brother, mother and father. Forrester, as a surrogate father, rescues Jamal, both as a writing mentor and from the charge of plagiarism; Jamal provides meaning in Forrester's life by giving him a reason to care about someone, in turn freeing him from his seclusion.

- What parallels exist between Crawford and Forrester?
- What is significant about the dialogue before each appearance of Crawford? How does this shape the audience's perception of this character?
  Crawford's appearances are prefaced with a character making a negative comment. Some examples:
  i. *Claire says, "The teachers [at Mailor-Callow] are too busy listening to themselves talk." Cut to Crawford who, passing books to the students, pronounces a judgement on Forrester: "... an author who could have offered much more."*
  ii. *Claire identifies Crawford for Jamal: "He's been here as long as most of the buildings." Her remark associates Crawford with her negative statement about the school. Then Crawford reinforces this negative tone with his judgement about Forrester's novel: "Unfortunately, his first try was also his last. This was the only one he chose to publish.*

> *For all we know, it's the only one he chose to write."*
>
> iii. *Claire's cynical comment about the Mailor-Callow lockers—"At least they look good"—is followed by a move into Crawford's classroom where the failed author announces the school's writing competition.*
>
> iv. *From Hartwell's put-down of Jamal—"Don't think we're the same. We're not."—the camera cuts to a shot of Crawford in his office calling to Jamal and speaking in a condescending manner.*
>
> v. *Forrester tells Jamal, "Crawford thought he knew me," and "A lot of writers know the rules about writing, but they don't know how to write." The next scene is in Crawford's office where Jamal is forced by Crawford to write his next piece.*

Lighting

In addition to considering the use and purpose of various camera set-ups and how these shots are presented (edited together), it is important to consider how various scenes are lit and what purpose is served by having them lit in such a manner. Brightly lit scenes, suggesting natural lighting, convey less drama and seem nonthreatening; scenes with low light create shadows and add tension, mystery and dramatic effect.

For example, the **high key** lighting used in Scene One contrasts with the **low key** lighting of the scene showing Jamal at his school locker (0:08:12) after he receives the dare from his friends in the school cafeteria. The low lighting of the scene as he writes in secret at his locker comments on this secrecy, as well as his secret that he is intelligent and exceptionally well-read, another aspect of his character he keeps from his friends.

- Review the scene beginning 0:21:20 (DVD Scene 06) when Jamal first goes to speak to Forrester. Mute the volume to concentrate on the images. Describe the lighting: is it realistic in terms of the setting?
  Jamal is seen climbing the staircase in an overhead shot. The hallway outside Forrester's door is dim, its source of light is the windows at the staircase landing below each floor. Lighting appears realistic, but reality is subverted for effect when a bright light emanates from the peephole. Supposedly, Forrester is looking out through this

small opening, in which case his head would block some of the light; in addition, we learn from a later scene that the light inside his apartment is dim. Why, then, is there bright light from the peephole? The light draws attention, so that as Jamal speaks and Forrester answers, this light represents Forrester. Sean Connery (Forrester) is not seen in the shot. He may not have been present when this scene was filmed, since the two characters are not seen at the same time. The only shots of Connery—through the peephole in close-up—could have been made on a separate day without Rob Brown (Jamal) being present. A movie is a construction. Scenes are seldom shot in chronological order. Individual shots are cut and assembled in post-production; therefore, the light from the peephole serves as a coded stand-in for Forrester. There is potential for discussion of symbolism here. "Light" symbolizes "enlightenment"; windows permit the passage of light; the boys refer to Forrester metaphorically as "The Window"; the peephole is a door window.

- Compare the lighting of this scene to the scene in which Jamal delivers his essay to Forrester, beginning 0:22:49 (DVD Scene 06). How is lighting used for dramatic effect?
  Once again, the light from the door's peephole is significant, becoming now a miniature spotlight on Jamal's essay, highlighting its importance. It is in the reverse shot here that Forrester's head is blocking the opening to prevent light shining through, and revealing the dimly lit interior of the apartment.

Composition

Just as the lighting of a scene or character might add significance, the composition, or framing, of a shot may convey added meaning as a symbol or commentary. A good example is the framing of two shots when Jamal first brings his 5000-word essay to Forrester, just after Forrester says, "Well try remembering it exactly as I said it." (approximately 0:23:42; DVD Scene 06). The single frame advance feature on the VCR or DVD player is best to view these two shots. Just after speaking the above line, Forrester turns his head to the left. Cut to Jamal on the other side of the door, in profile, facing right. The door becomes a quasi mirror suggesting each character is a mirror image of the other, foreshadowing the eventual revelation of similarities between them.

Their eye lines match in the two shots. When Jamal throws his composition against the door, he symbolically breaks down the barrier between the two. At first, they cannot converse acoustically, but they "speak" to each other via the written word.

- Crawford forces Jamal to write his next assignment in Crawford's office. Consider the significance of the framing of Crawford in the brief 3-shot scene beginning 1:33:15 (DVD Scene 22).
The video version and the DVD widescreen version present different visuals here. The widescreen image shows that Crawford's office has two side-by-side doors, each with a narrow window. Crawford is in the left window. Jamal is barely visible in the foreground. In the video "pan-and-scan" version, one window only is visible, placing Crawford on the right side of the screen, inside the window's frame, which is inside the screen's frame. The left edge of the window is diagonal, suggesting an imbalance. More than half the screen is blacked out. Both versions convey entrapment. Crawford, like Forrester, is trapped willingly within his own environment. The frame-within-a-frame composition of Crawford indicates he is doubly confined: trapped by his own pride, remaining at Mailor-Callow where he is regarded as important; and trapped by his prejudices, which prevent his professional growth. The only time Crawford is seen physically outside Mailor-Callow is at Dr. Spence's party, where the entire faculty is in attendance, thereby making the Spence home a surrogate for the school. Crawford will never leave the school environment professionally. He is restricted in his role—smug, but living in a limited and limiting world. The widescreen end-of-scene shot, seen again from outside the room and through the door windows, shows Jamal in the left window and Crawford in the right. They face each other across space as opposites, black and white, youth and age, a mind open to learning and a mind closed by pride. The video version shows only Crawford, still trapped.
- What is suggested by the framing of the shot showing Jamal behind the chain fence watching Fly and the others playing basketball (1:45:55; DVD Scene 24)?

Costuming

- How do Jamal's clothes reflect his character? What subtle changes do you see in both?
- Describe the clothes Forrester wears in his apartment. How does costuming contribute to his character delineation?
- Why does Forrester wear dark glasses at night to go to the basketball game? Why does Mr. Massie wear dark glasses when he leaves his BMW parked to deliver supplies to Forrester? *Consider the idea of "mask" and "protection" in both cases.*

Information Through Implication

Hollywood Style invites audience participation in the lives of characters. Often, viewers experience vicariously the emotional content of a scene, e.g., excitement, tension, fear, sadness. But this style of filmmaking also makes them participants in the storytelling by letting them fill in information that is not overtly presented. For example, they can surmise that Forrester has not left his apartment for many months, even years, when he is seen about to depart with Jamal for the basketball game at Madison Square Garden. This assumption can be made because Forrester has learned it is night; yet, he decides to wear dark glasses that will provide a degree of comfort by hiding his face. Also, he hesitates at the door, reluctant to step out into the hallway. (Crossing a threshold and passing through a doorway symbolizes a change in one's life, usually a transition that produces growth.)

- You do not hear Jamal's entire essay when Forrester reads it to the assembly at the writing symposium. Before the assembly audience applauds and Crawford makes his fawning comments, what do you infer about this essay, and what clues provide this implication?
- What clues throughout the film suggest Jamal and Forrester are "family"?

Time Lapse

Filmmakers, of necessity, must condense time within a film. Showing time has elapsed has become a cinematic convention using different codes. The filmmaker might employ a dissolve within a scene; a fade-out/fade-in serves as a scene transition from one to the next, which indicates time passed; shots of sunset and sunrise will indicate a new day.

- In the scene of Jamal playing basketball alone (0:08:42; DVD Scene 03), how does the shot of Forrester's windows (0:09:10) indicate a time of day?
- Determine how you know time has elapsed in the following scenes:
  - Forrester writes, then Jamal writes "A Season of Faith's Perfection" (0:52:00; DVD Scene 15)
  - foul-shot competition (0:56:40; DVD Scene 16)
  - Jamal has met influential people at the Spence party (1:04:35; DVD Scene 17)
  - Jamal and Forrester in Forrester's apartment (1:16:07; DVD Scene 18)

Implausibility

Hollywood Style occasionally subverts logic in the narrative process, but the presentation is so clever that the illogical, or even the impossible, is not noticed until the events are considered later.

- Show how each of the following situations contains implausible events.
  - Jamal breaks into The Window's apartment. *Jamal is committing a crime of break-and-enter, plus it is the home of a man rumoured to be very violent; yet, Jamal takes time to examine the man's collection of books.*
  - Jamal learns the identity of The Window. *The Window just happens to be the renowned author of a novel Jamal is studying; further, Jamal obtains this author's mentorship.*
  - As they watch *Jeopardy*, Jamal quotes silently while Forrester speaks the lines of a poem by Lowell. *The poem is obscure. (If Jamal knows the poem, why does he not mention that it refers to an oriole, not a tanager?)*
  - Crawford *exposes* Jamal's plagiarism. *Crawford finds an obscure, out-of-date piece of writing by a younger William Forrester in an old copy of* The New Yorker *magazine.*
  - Crawford cites quotations in an effort to embarrass Jamal. *Would a sixteen-year-old be as well-read and able to recall lines from such little known and diverse works as those he quotes? It is equally amazing that Crawford has committed so much literature to memory.*

Star

The star's appearance in a film evokes certain expectations of the star by the audience, since the star has become as familiar as any friend.

- Sean Connery's appearance in *Finding Forrester* reminds the audience of roles he has played in previous films. What films come to mind? *Connery's characterization of William Forrester echoes some previous roles. Shots of a young Sean Connery recall his appearances in earlier movies such as his portrayal of James Bond in* Dr. No, From Russia with Love, Goldfinger, Thunderball *and* You Only Live Twice. *Other early roles in which Connery portrayed defiantly independent men include those in* The Molly Maguires *and* The Anderson Tapes. *As a crusty leader, patriarchal figure and mentor, Connery's characters include those in the movies* The Untouchables, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade *and* The Hunt for Red October.
- Does Crawford remind you of another character played by F. Murray Abraham? *F. Murray Abraham's role as Robert Crawford, a man jealous of the ability and success of a young, "inferior" upstart, recalls his role as Salieri in* Amadeus. *Salieri was the resident composer in the court of Emperor Joseph II of Austria. In the film, he was fiercely jealous of the young, brash, offensive Mozart.*

Director

Critics have made the inevitable comparisons between *Finding Forrester* and *Good Will Hunting*, both directed by Gus Van Sant. Probably anticipating these comparisons, Van Sant employed Matt Damon, the star of the former film, for a cameo appearance in *Finding Forrester*.

- Comment on the effect of Matt Damon's appearance. *This could have both positive and negative effects depending on the degree to which Damon's celebrity, taking away from the meaningfulness of the scene, distracts the audience.*

V. Culminating Activity

Choosing whatever form of expression is most appropriate, illustrate what you have learned from the study of this film.

VI. Extending Activities

- Track "windows" as a motif. Comment on the symbolism, and show how other windows contrast the windows associated with Forrester.
- Outline the narrative as the Hero's Journey: Key plot points include identity of the status quo; the disruption of the status quo; challenge; various crises and tests the hero faces and overcomes; the assistance the hero receives from a god–teacher and/or guide; the turning point in the hero's situation that produces irreversible change, usually by facing and defeating some monster; and the hero's return to stability, usually in some higher status.
- Recast the film, defending the actor selection.
- Rewrite or storyboard a scene and include new actions. Defend how it would alter and improve the film.
- Assuming the film has not been made, write a proposal to acquire funding to produce it.

This unit addresses the following outcome subheadings:

1.1.1	Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
1.2.1	Consider new perspectives
2.1.1	Discern and analyze context
2.1.2	Understand and interpret content
2.1.3	Engage prior knowledge
2.2.1	Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content
2.2.2	Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects
2.3.1	Connect self, text, culture and milieu
2.3.2	Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts
3.1.1	Focus on purpose and presentation form
4.1.2	Consider and address form, structure and medium
4.1.3	Develop content
4.2.3	Consider and address matters of choice
4.2.4	Edit text for matters of correctness
5.1.1	Use language and image to show respect and consideration
5.1.2	Appreciate diversity of expression, opinion and perspective

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

Dr. Strangelove was completed in 1963 and released in January 1964. Unlike classic Hollywood movies, *Dr. Strangelove* is not a story of heroes but a satire. The classic Hollywood archetypal hero was an independent man of action who risked himself to pursue a conviction, ideal and/or vision in opposition to a corrupted power. His sacrifice benefited the community or society. The protagonist of *Dr. Strangelove* is corrupted power personified. General Jack D. Ripper, an unbalanced and irrational individual, pursues convictions and a vision both warped and insane. The combined force of government and military might are powerless to stop him, as Ripper's unrestrained power leads to the annihilation of the world.

Background

The Cold War represented the division between democracy (the United States of America) and communism (the Soviet Union). It began in 1946 and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. These two powers adopted a deterrent theory called "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD) founded on the continued development of nuclear weapons. Eventually, the United States and the Soviet Union had amassed more nuclear weapons than necessary to effect the destruction of the world. This theory of deterrence is represented in the film as "the Doomsday Machine."

By 1963, the Berlin Wall had been built, the Bay of Pigs invasion had failed, and America's involvement in the Vietnam conflict was escalating. Especially chilling was the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, which increased fears that the Cold War would escalate into World War III. Because the United States had a 4:1 ratio of nuclear weapons compared with the Soviet Union's arsenal, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev decided to place intermediate-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in Cuba, targeted at the United States. President Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union remove its missiles from Cuba, and he ordered a naval blockade to deter the Soviet delivery of missiles by sea. After an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba,

military advisers pressed Kennedy to launch air strikes and a full-scale invasion. American ships were ordered to fire across the bow of any Soviet ship refusing to turn back. The possibility of war with the Soviet Union was never stronger. Ironically, in spite of the destructive power of each of these two countries, neither country had the means to *defend* against a nuclear attack. In support of MAD, the United States and the Soviet Union had signed a treaty in which they promised *not* to develop such defences. This meant that cities (and civilians) were left without protection. In the film, General Turgidson comments on the possibility of 10 to 20 million civilian casualties, euphemistically referring to this devastation as getting "our hair mussed."

Director Stanley Kubrick had believed for years that a nuclear war would be triggered more likely by accident than by political design. Real threat came from the possibility that some insane or fanatical individual or group would initiate a global confrontation (an eerie parallel to events involving Osama bin Laden and North Korea; the relentlessness of Major Kong's B-52 bomber, and its success in meeting its objective, is a chilling, although unintended, foreshadowing of the 9/11 air strikes at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon). Kubrick found support for his belief in the novel *Red Alert*, by Peter George. In adapting the novel to film, he decided a satiric approach—he called it "a nightmare comedy"—on the subject of nuclear attack would be more effective than a drama. One can evaluate satiric and dramatic treatments by comparing Kubrick's film with Stanley Kramer's *On the Beach* (1959), Sidney Lumet's *Fail-Safe* (1964), and James B. Harris' *The Bedford Incident* (1965).

Style

The style of *Dr. Strangelove* is expressionist. Expressionism originated as an artistic mode of painting, a reaction against the implied realism of Impressionism. Its origins have been attributed to Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, whose paintings are characterized by moods of angst, fear, despair and death. With its exaggerations of reality and the natural

world, expressionism violates the techniques of classicism. The total effect of expressionist art is to suggest the waking nightmare where sanity and insanity blend. Munch's famous work, *The Scream*, exemplifies such nightmare. (See http://www.ivcc.edu/rambo/eng1001/munch.htm.)

Dr. Strangelove contains many examples characteristic of expressionist cinema, a style developed by German filmmakers in the early 1900s. Like the expressionist painters, theirs was a violent and emotional style, an expression of their inner demons in reaction to Germany's defeat in World War I. Rejecting images of beauty, they opted instead to depict chaos and despair, putting turbulent and disturbing images on the screen as a reflection of social conditions and using images that conveyed life as dreary, grim, harsh and desolate. Expressionist works are usually set in cities that become nightmarish environments. The waking nightmare is further suggested by time constraint in a dangerous situation, the remedial process rendered static or uncontrollable, equating it with the nightmare feeling of immobility. Close analysis of an expressionist work reveals qualities that call attention to its artificiality, reminding the audience that what they see is not real or natural.

Expressionism articulates emotion by exaggerating and distorting line and colour in its mise-en-scène as well as through a violence implied in the composition of the frame. Emphasis is placed on diagonal lines to convey a world out of balance, and on broken lines and jagged, sharp or pointed shapes to convey threat and violence. Camera shots include oblique angles and grotesque perspectives. Sharp angles may also be achieved through lighting that produces high contrasts of bright light and dark shadows to produce a dark and sinister atmosphere.

While classic cinema is centered on the celebrity performer, expressionism is image-centred, emphasizing visuals that convey gloomy, sinister and threatening moods. The actor is only one part of the mise-en-scène and may be placed off-centre or even out of the frame altogether. As well, framing of a subject may be symbolic. Characters, for example, may be placed in visual traps. Where the ending of a classic film offers the audience a promise of hope, the expressionist film provides an apocalyptic ending.

Kubrick composes numerous shots with bursts of overhead light hanging over people. For example, see the establishing shot of Burpelson Air Force Base at night (0:3:10, DVD Scene 2), an aerial view showing a myriad of light patterns, followed by a shot of a B-52 on the ground, with three huge lights above it (0:3:24, DVD Scene 2), and the first interior shot of the B-52 (0:6:33, DVD Scene 3) with lights above Kong's head. Kubrick frequently lights the plane's interior in this manner. Such lighting is prominent in other shots having an otherwise dark mise-en-scène.

Expressionist symbols include the mirror and the maze. Mirrors symbolize self-division, fragmentation and schizophrenia in an individual's personality by suggesting a doppelgänger: a double or an alter ego. Mirrors also symbolize revelation and truth; they increase the clutter, confusion and ambiguity of the mise-en-scène; and they suggest the film is a reflection of reality. In addition to the multiple reflections seen in Buck Turgidson's bedroom (the seemingly capable commander), and the mirrored reflection of Ripper in his office washroom (insanity clothed in authority), the film offers figurative mirrors. The labyrinthine maze conveys a tangled journey to achieve victory over adversity. This labyrinth may be portrayed variously as a staircase, corridor, tunnel, grid, spiral or vortex. The numerous panels in the computer room, a series of partitions, suggest a human-sized maze. Mandrake navigates another maze (the corridor), first to reach the monster's lair (Ripper's office), then to escape it to save the world.

Pre-viewing

Study of this film provides decided contrast to more recent feature films in its style, content and presentation. It might be helpful to begin with a discussion of the kinds of films students enjoy and why, as well as the variety of purposes for which films are created. It will also be necessary to decide how much of the film to view and to what depth students need the background information. Students may need encouragement to see past the American content to recognize the effectiveness of the film techniques. This could be an excellent film to use in conjunction with social studies or humanities classes.

💣Before students see the film, establish the contrast between the seriousness of the subject and the satiric method of presenting the subject. Begin by focusing on the first telephone conversation the President makes to the Soviet Premier (0:39:58, DVD Scene 13).

1. First, describe the situation. The President is calling the Soviet Premier to avert the instigation of World War III.
2. Show students the scene of President Muffley talking for the first time to Dimitri Kissoff, the Soviet Premier. **But show it with no sound**.
3. Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of the imagery: What visuals suggest the seriousness of the scene?
4. Now replay the scene, this time with sound, and discuss students' reactions to the comedy. What makes such a sobering scene funny?

💣Define satire.

"*Satire … assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured.… Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard … Two things, then, are essential to satire; one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack.*"[15]

Satire requires observation and judgement, rather than mere identification.

Activities

1. In groups, have students brainstorm satiric films or television shows and choose one to answer the following questions:
   - What is being satirized?
   - What point is being made? Do you agree or disagree?
   - How is the satire achieved? Is it successful? Why or why not?
   Present your findings to the class.
2. Research topics such as the Cold War, Stanley Kubrick films, Peter Sellers films.

3. Begin discussion of social commentary by brainstorming:
   - current issues of concern
   - other films that make a social comment (e.g., *Wag the Dog*, *The Insider*, *Bowling for Columbine*)
   - other ways that people can make their views known (e.g., public protests, writing letters, drama, art, literature).

   Have students write a letter to an editor, MLA, MP or city/town councillor expressing their views on a current issue about which they are concerned.

Note: Due to copyright restrictions, this information is not available for posting on the Internet. The material is in the print document, available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre.

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15. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 1957, pp. 223–224.

Divide students into groups of six. Ask each group to choose a social problem for which they would like to explore a solution. Give each member of the group a "different coloured hat," each of which reflects a different approach to problem solving (as described above). During the discussion, each student is to approach the task only from the approach specific to his or her colour. Another variation on this method is to ask the entire group to think about the problem from the same coloured approach at the same time, e.g., everyone adopts a black hat view. To introduce the Six Thinking Hats and to help students become familiar with it, try a practice run with each group discussing the planning of a school activity, such as a dance, assembly or pep rally.

Viewing

✸Like Disney's seven dwarfs, each of Kubrick's main characters is distinctive. What characteristics do you notice about Mandrake, Ripper, Kong, Turgidson, Muffley, Bat Guano, and Dr. Strangelove?

✸A doppelgänger is a parallel or counterpart to someone or something. It is a figurative mirror image. For example, as Turgidson mangles gum wrappers, we see Mandrake carefully folding one. What actions parallel the following by occurring at the same time?

1. Kong assures his men that promotions and citations are a certainty after their mission.
   Turgidson assures Miss Scott he will return soon to address her needs.
2. Kong reads mandated procedures to his crew.
   Mandrake is forced to follow Ripper's orders in Ripper's locked office.
3. De Sadesky describes the Doomsday Machine as an irreversible course of action once it is set into motion.
   Ripper tells Mandrake of the communist plot to destroy America through fluoridation.
4. After the CRM 114 is damaged, Kong decides to drop the bomb.
   At the same time, Dr. Strangelove tells Muffley that computers are better than humans at making decisions.

✸The United States of America is a country that was settled by people fleeing religious persecution, and a country that continues to espouse strong religious principles. What references to religion are contained in this film?

- *Burpelson's slogan, "Peace Is Our Profession," suggests the tenets of Christian religion, namely "Peace On Earth, Goodwill Toward Men," and "Love Thy Neighbour." As commanders of the Air Force that uses this slogan, Ripper and Turgidson profess a commitment to these religious ideals, but, hypocritically, they create war and destruction.*
- *Turgidson tells Miss Scott not to forget to say her prayers.*
- *Ripper says, "I know I'll have to answer for my actions," implying a Day of Reckoning with the Almighty.*
- *Turgidson prays a prayer of thanks and deliverance in the War Room. This military advocate of an all-out strike who dismisses 20 million civilian casualties as an acceptable cost of a decisive victory, speaks now as if he were a civilian. We see Turgidson without his uniform coat as he prays.*
- *A combined Russian phrase book and Bible are part of the B-52 crew's survival kit.*
- *Dr. Strangelove's first appearance out of darkness shows his hands in a mock prayer pose.*
- *Dr. Strangelove's mine shaft plan, which includes greenhouses and breeding facilities for animals, suggests a perverted concept of Noah's Ark.*
- *The closing shots of the film suggest Armageddon.*

Post-viewing

✸How is time depicted?
Real time is implied, the events of one night moving steadily from inception to conclusion, approximating the film's running time. There is an archetypal significance in death being initiated at night, the end of day. Time is also gauged in terms of space (distance)—the progress of the bombers is measured by comments pertaining to the B-52's travelling time and by the lights on the Big Board. The plot follows a countdown where neither time nor events can be halted.

♦ How does each of the three main settings become a mirror of the others?
The three main settings are Burpelson Air Force Base, the B-52 bomber and the War Room at the Pentagon. Each is isolated from the rest and unable to communicate with the others. Crosscutting among them unifies them by showing simultaneous events. With source lighting from above, the extremities of these settings are covered in shadow and darkness, reinforcing the image of isolation and the nightmare situation. Each predicts the isolation of the proposed mine shaft civilization. They appear claustrophobic, where movement is restricted. Within each setting, we see various machines created to ensure safety but which contribute directly or indirectly to the impending destruction.

♦ Show how the situation in each of the three settings degenerates from stability to chaos, becoming more absurd as the film progresses.
1. *Ripper's office first appears orderly. By the end of the attack, it is a shambles. Ripper knows he has lost the base and kills himself, fearing he will reveal the stop-code under torture.*
2. *Routine activity on the B-52 creates boredom, but after the plane is damaged, the routine becomes the means to survival. The explosion damages the CRM 114 communication device, preventing the stop order from being received even when the code is determined. The explosion also renders the bomb bay doors inoperable, forcing Kong's personal intervention which results in his death.*
3. *The circular table and light fixture of the War Room suggest perfect order and symmetry in a world that is fast going out of control. The order of the War Room is disrupted by the conflict between Turgidson and de Sadesky. Soon, the participants at this conference table are no longer seated and discussing matters rationally. Eventually, Dr. Strangelove emerges from the darkness with the appearance of rational thought but with solutions that will not alter the current doomed state of the world—solutions that merely address self-preservation through existence in a pit.*

♦ Stanley Kubrick is a cinematic *auteur*, which means that themes and situations tend to repeat in his various films. Each of the following is present in his other films. Show how they apply to *Dr. Strangelove*.

- The story progresses from "normal" to "chaotic."
- People tend to set up their own constricted worlds, based on their needs and fears.
- Communication among these worlds tends to be made indecipherable.
- Inappropriate comments are used by one character to another.
- Each character becomes a victim of his or her self-created fantasy.
- People are deceived or deluded.
- Males are depicted as lonely.

♦ Themes explored by Stanley Kubrick in *Dr. Strangelove* have been central to his other films: the abuse of power; incompetent leadership; best laid plans gone wrong; an over-reliance on machines; man can develop technology, but he cannot control it; machines designed to help either become threats or control our destiny; isolation is destructive; the absurdity of war; the absurdities of life; the inevitability of human error. How are each of these themes exemplified in *Dr. Strangelove*?

♦ Kubrick also explores the *consequence* of poor communication: the inability to communicate effectively leads to disaster. What examples are there in the film of poor communication?
Ripper has effectively closed off his base so that it will be impossible to contact him to reverse the order. Mandrake is locked in Ripper's office and prevented from communicating information about the hoax. Kong says, "Goldie, How many times have I told you guys ..." suggesting he has had to repeat admonitions to his crew. Lack of communication with the B-52, other than via the CRM 114, thwarts efforts to stop the attack. The B-52's inability to communicate its new target destination to base operations means the Russians will be unable to stop its attack. Mandrake has difficulty convincing Bat Guano that something is seriously wrong. Mandrake lacks enough pocket change for the pay phone to provide the President with the recall code.

♨Related to poor communication is the theme of secrecy. What examples in the film develop this theme?
Ripper asking Mandrake, "Do you recognize my voice?" suggests secrecy about identity. Secrecy about the true state of affairs is abetted by Ripper's confiscation of all radios, hiding the truth that there is no reason for Attack Plan R. The secrecy of Ripper's recall code means annihilation. Mandrake must decipher the recall code from Ripper's desk doodlings in the form of a crossword puzzle. Politics requires secrecy of the War Room. Turgidson does not want de Sadesky to see his documents or the Big Board. The Doomsday Machine is so secret it becomes ineffective as a deterrent. The secrecy of the telephone number in Omsk slows down the communication between the President and the Russian Premier. The B-52 flying below Russian radar is a form of secrecy involving its location, thereby protecting its mission.

♨How does Kubrick indicate that people do not learn from past errors?
Kubrick shows de Sadesky secretly photographing the Big Board, even as the world is set to erupt in nuclear devastation.

♨Northrop Frye tells us that humour depends on conventional agreement that the incongruous is funny. Provide examples of incongruities in the film that contribute to its humour.
Most of the humour in Dr. Strangelove arises from the depiction of everyday human behaviour in a nightmarish situation: Turgidson is in the bathroom when the call comes alerting him of the order for Plan R; the Russian Premier on the hotline forgets the telephone number of his general staff headquarters and suggests the American President try Omsk information; Colonel Bat Guano fails to recognize an allied officer's uniform; Guano is reluctant to damage a soda machine—"private property"—to obtain the coins necessary to telephone the President about a

crisis.[17] Humour is created also when language is at odds with the situation. Turgidson's promise to return to his mistress includes language that refers to rockets and bombs, such as "countdown" and "blast off." Language becomes simplified in extreme situations: Muffley speaks to Kissoff as to a child; Ripper yells to Mandrake, a British officer, "The Redcoats are coming!" as the Army attacks Burpelson Air Force Base; Kong expresses an impossible scenario—going "toe-to-toe with the Rooskies" in a "nookular combat"; and Turgidson argues for a swift all-out assault on Russia: "We stand a good chance of catching them with their pants down."

♨The United States Air Force insisted a disclaimer be inserted to assure audiences that an accidental triggering of war could not happen. How does Kubrick achieve satiric humour by placing it at the beginning of his film instead of at the end?
Placed at the film's beginning, one can read this statement as ironic, given the portrayal of events that follow. While Kubrick dutifully reports this could never happen, he shows a clear and logical progression of the catastrophe evolving. President Muffley says to Turgidson, "You assured me there was no possibility of such a thing ever occurring," reminding us of the opening disclaimer. Had the disclaimer been placed at the end of the film, audiences would have been left with a sense of reassurance, as this message would have been the last thought of the film, negating what they had just seen.

♨Absurd situations suggest existential qualities. "Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience.... The satirist has to select his absurdities, and the act of selection is a moral act."[18] Cite examples of absurd situations in the film.

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17. This echoes a real-life situation: As the *Titanic* was sinking, stewards warned Third Class passengers they would have to answer to the White Star Line for the damage they caused to a locked gate blocking their exit to the Life Boat Deck.

18. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 1957, p. 224.

Some examples:
- *American Air Force personnel fire upon American soldiers in the belief that Russians have purchased goods and uniforms from U.S. Army Surplus stores to disguise themselves.*
- *Mandrake does not have enough pocket change to save the world.*
- *Bat Guano protects the interests of big industry against world security.*

💣 How does the film show that in spite of the rational characters, madness takes over?
Ripper's will is more powerful than the rational Mandrake. Mandrake's deductive analysis and urgency to convey the secret code is overridden by Bat Guano's seemingly rational suspicions of sedition and of a duty to protect private property. Turgidson's enthusiasm for war overshadows the rational thinking of the President. Major Kong, "programmed" to respond, refuses to acknowledge other possibilities as suggested by Lieutenant Zogg. The irrational proposition by Dr. Strangelove of survival in mine shafts, made palatable by the necessity of assigning ten women to each man, holds sway even over the rational President Muffley.

Character

This is a movie of characters and situations, driven by an antiwar theme. Humour is derived from the dialogue and its delivery, and by the actors' poses that become absurd tableaux of behaviour. The characters are caricatures of stereotypes. Ripper and Turgidson represent American jingoism. Turgidson's "patriotic" distrust of Communists, ironically, does not extend to Nazis, as Turgidson has accepted the Nazi scientist Dr. Strangelove, the archetypal "mad scientist." Ripper's obsessive and psychotic behaviour is mirrored in Kong's determination to drop the bomb at any cost. Major Kong in a Stetson hat is a cowboy parody whose seriousness adds to the absurdity of the situation: his vision of fighting "toe-to-toe with the Rooskies" recalls the Wild West street shootout in the spirit of the frontier; his isolated plane on its singular mission means this Southerner has seceded from the Union; and his last action is to ride the bomb like a rodeo cowboy. Other "cowboy" references in the film include Ripper's pearl-handled pistol and Turgidson saying he'll "mosey on over to the War Room." While

President Muffley is concerned with political correctness in the face of word annihilation, it is Captain Mandrake who epitomizes decorum, even as catastrophe looms. Mandrake is a caricature of the proper Englishman. Possessing the cool efficiency of his computers, he is the antithesis to Ripper's insane individuality. Conformity is Mandrake's benchmark behaviour.

While not direct representations, some characters seem to have been inspired by real people. Jack D. Ripper and Buck Turgidson collectively allude to General Curtis LeMay. LeMay advocated striking at the Soviet Union if a Soviet attack seemed likely, even though such a pre-emptive strike violated government policy. "It's not national policy," said LeMay, "but it's my policy." At the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, LeMay urged President Kennedy to launch a pre-emptive strike against Cuban missile sites and to invade the country. While campaigning for Vice-President as George Wallace's running mate, he advocated "bomb[ing] North Vietnam back into the stone age." He is also quoted as saying, "[I]f you are going to use military force, then you ought to use overwhelming military force. Use too much and deliberately use too much ... You'll save lives, not only your own, but the enemy's too."

President Merkin Muffley looks like Adlai Stevenson, the American statesman, Presidential candidate and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations with Cabinet rank.

The former Nazi, Dr. Strangelove, becomes Director of Weapons Research and Development for America. The character appears to be a composite of three European expatriates to the American government: Henry Kissinger, Edward Teller and Wernher von Braun. Kissinger had been a nuclear strategist who advocated a variety of nuclear weapons that the United States should use as deterrence to Soviet threats of attack. Kissinger also warned the American government of a "missile gap" in reference to the growing Soviet missile production. Kubrick parodies this in references to the "Doomsday gap" and the "mine shaft gap." Edward Teller had been involved in the development of the atomic bomb as part of the Manhattan project, then in the development and testing of the first hydrogen bomb, and ultimately became a leading advocate of the nuclear bomb and of the expansion of America's nuclear arsenal. He opposed

the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. Wernher von Braun had been a Nazi scientist during World War II and was part of the development team of the V-2 rocket missiles that attacked London. After the war, he surrendered to the Americans and became a developmental scientist for the U.S. Army.

De Sadesky and Dimitri Kissoff are composites of Nikita Khrushchev: loutish, brutish and reputed over-imbibers. (De Sadesky resembles a Khrushchev with hair.) De Sadesky gives a face to Dimitri as Dimitri's alter ego in America. They are parallel characters, both concerned more with defeating their enemy, or "winning the game," than with saving the world from destruction. This is typified by de Sadesky using the watch camera even as the bomb is falling, and by Muffley having to cajole and beg Kissoff and finally demand his cooperation. When Muffley contacts Dimitri Kissoff, the Soviet Premier is enjoying a private party and is somewhat drunk. This idea comes from President Kennedy's speculation that Khrushchev was drunk when, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he called the White House and spoke incoherently at length.

The BLAND Corporation suggests the RAND Institute, a think-tank that rejected the concept of automatic response systems in case of a missile attack on America.

💣 Show how each of the following mirror one or more characteristics:
1. Ripper and Turgidson
2. Kong and Guano
3. Mandrake and Muffley
4. Mandrake and Lieutenant Lothar Zogg
5. Turgidson and Strangelove
6. Muffley and Kissoff

1. *Both Ripper and Turgidson are fanatical in their views of a Russian threat.*
2. *Kong and Guano are myrmidons, following orders without question or applying reason. Guano unknowingly serves Ripper's interests in detaining Mandrake. If one can argue that Ripper and Turgidson are narrow-minded in their global outlook, one can also argue that Colonel Guano is narrow-minded in his patriotism, another fixed and determined individual lacking any sense of humour, and powerfully suspicious. Maybe the*

soda machine spits in his face to add a slapstick touch, attacking his lack of humour. Kong likewise serves Ripper in his unwitting but dogged determination to carry out his mission.
3. *Mandrake and Muffley are coherent and rational under increasing tension.*
4. *Mandrake and Lieutenant Zogg both assume the call for Plan R is a loyalty test.*
5. *Turgidson and Strangelove are both attracted to notions of "slaughter" and to polygamous relationships for the "good" of civilization.*
6. *Muffley's childish expressions to Dimitri match Dimitri's childish concerns with Muffley not liking him. They argue about who is the sorrier of the two.*

💣 Some characters' natures suggest a duality or alter ego. Identify the contradictions inherent in the following:
1. Ripper
2. Strangelove
3. Turgidson
4. Kong

1. *Ripper is so concerned with protecting America from communist corruption that his actions lead to the annihilation of America and the rest of the world. He is a super-patriot, a fanatic, a quasi Hitler seeking to wipe out communists. At one point during the attack, Ripper urges cooperation from Mandrake by referring to a collective union between Her Majesty's Government and the Continental Congress. The Congress as a government was in direct opposition to the British Crown. Ripper also refers to the attacking American troops as "redcoats." If the "redcoats" are the enemy, how can Ripper seek help from Mandrake, a British officer and, therefore, a "redcoat"? In this sense, an alliance with Mandrake suggests Ripper has joined the enemy in opposition to his countrymen and fellow soldiers. Ripper, the patriot, becomes Ripper, the traitor. In fact, he has betrayed his President, his Commander-in-Chief.*
2. *Strangelove is a Nazi serving a democratic leader. In addition to this emotional division, his duality extends to a physical disconnection. His right hand and arm are physically stronger than his left, and independent in action from the rest of his body, apparently possessing a life of their own.*

This suggests two personalities within one individual. Otherwise physically weak—he cannot stand or walk—he nonetheless wields power through influence and knowledge.

3. *Our initial impression of Turgidson in the War Room is the antithesis of the clownish individual we first met, placing him figuratively on the other side of the mirror. He is dressed smartly in his uniform and appears very competent and official in his role as advisor to the President. But the façade soon breaks down. The more he responds to President Muffley and offers his unsolicited opinions, the more unbalanced he appears, summarizing the outcome of Ripper's strike action as a "slip-up." Turgidson is a religious warmonger who dismisses civilian death as a statistical inevitability of war. In contrast to Muffley's attempts to stop Russian retaliation, Turgidson calls for an all-out attack to thwart any Russian reprisal, echoing Ripper's command to Burpelson personnel to "shoot first and ask questions later." Turgidson becomes an ally to Ripper's madness, endorsing it and recommending it become official.*

4. *Believing he is saving America, Kong also becomes an innocent ally of Ripper's mad plan in his determination to reach his target, or any target, to drop his bombs. In his determination to open the bomb bay doors to release a bomb, he unwittingly fulfils his own challenge to go toe-to-toe with the enemy. Kong's nick-of-time success in freeing the bomb is a reversal of Hollywood movie climaxes. Normally, a hero manages to detonate, defuse, overcome or thwart within seconds of a deadline, and we applaud such heroism. Kong's success represents disaster, not salvation. In repairing the faulty mechanism, he represents the mad scientist bent on destruction, even if it means his own demise. Our "hero" becomes the insane villain shrieking madly at his success, even though his own doom is sealed.*

💣 Kubrick has changed the characters' names from those in Peter George's novel. How do the names Jack D. Ripper, Mandrake, King Kong, Buck Turgidson, Merkin Muffley, de Sadesky, Bat Guano, Dr. Strangelove and Kissoff take on ironic significance?

- *Jack D. Ripper is a play on the name of the historic murderer of women. Was Jack the Ripper motivated by hatred? Distrust? Fear? Kubrick's character represents psychotic hatred and distrust of communists, and possibly a fear of women.*

- *Mandrake's name refers to a plant whose root was once believed to be a pain reliever, a sleep inducer, an anesthetic and a purgative. Old Anglo-Saxon beliefs held that the plant was endowed with mysterious powers against demoniacal possession. As an amulet, it was once placed on mantelpieces to avert misfortune and to bring prosperity and happiness to a house.*

- *King Kong, the giant ape, was simple and uncomplicated, but possessed brute strength. He exacted mindless destruction in response to threat. Major "King" Kong represents power and strength in a simple, almost childlike mind. Like his namesake, he is entirely devoted to his master.*

- *Buck Turgidson encompasses two suggestions. A "buck" suggests a young, virile male. "Turgid" means swollen, excessively embellished in style and language, pompous, and bombastic.*

- *Merkin Muffley's soft sounding name matches his outward benign personality. "Murkiness" as a noun is something vague or obscure. To "muff" is to goof or commit an error.*

- *De Sadesky's name, a reference to the Marquis de Sade, suggests someone who derives pleasure from inflicting pain or suffering, a typical depiction of one's enemy.*

- *Aside from the coarse, literal meaning, Bat Guano is an unflattering appellation for someone who "exists in the dark"; that is, someone not cognizant of situations, but merely programmed to respond.*

- *Dr. Strangelove is the archetypal mad scientist whose fixation ("love") is violent slaughter.*

- *Kissoff's name refers to a slang expression. Telling someone to "kiss-off" is a rude expression of dismissal.*

💣 Everything we see within the film's frame is called the mise-en-scène. This includes the characters and their placement within the frame, the set design, props, lighting, camera perspective, and so on. Contrast the mise-en-scène of Mandrake in his work environment with Ripper in his office.

The first shot of Ripper's office (0:3:47, DVD Scene 2) is a wide-angle long shot. Note the orderly placement of objects. Ripper's office is filled with statements about his militant, dark, secret and narrow-minded personality—the model bomber; the antique guns; the machine gun in the golf bag (war is a game); the map; the patronizing motto whose insignia is an armoured fist clenching lightning bolts, appointed with an olive branch, itself a contradiction in message; and a photo of a bomber dropping bombs—all in a dimly lit room with many shadows. The night settings in Dr. Strangelove *help justify the necessary shadows and darkness for its expressionist style. Illumination is from overhead lights that reflect as a light burst on the ceiling. The low ceiling adds to the sense of isolation and confinement of the madman out of touch with reality, overtaken by surrealist fears. While Ripper is centred in the frame (denoting order from classic style), there are a number of diagonal lines in the frame, (denoting the expressionist style).*

Mandrake's environment is cool, objective, brightly lit, uncluttered and impersonal. When Mandrake prepares to join Ripper, he shuts off lights, changing his environment to one akin to Ripper's. Mandrake moves, literally and figuratively, out of the light and into Ripper's nightmare world. Ripper, as well, moves from light to shadow at the conclusion of his call to Mandrake, metaphoric imagery of his descent into madness. Strangelove will first appear emerging from a shadow, as if to suggest Strangelove extends the insanity of Ripper.

💣How is the mise-en-scène of Ripper's office echoed in the War Room.
The lighting of the men in the War Room, with the rest of the environment in shadow, multiplies Ripper's figure; he is illuminated by an overhead light. This composition makes an ironic link: rational men corrupted by the insanity of Ripper, abetted by Turgidson.

💣How does Kubrick suggest that war for these politicians is a game?
The overhead establishing shot shows men seated at a circular table, not unlike a giant poker table. The circular light fixture over them suggests a giant roulette wheel. The animated lights of the Big Board suggest the electronic display of an arcade game.

Composition

💣Composition involves decisions about character size and placement within the frame. Contrast shots of Mandrake and Ripper in the opening scene. How does framing suggest character?
Mandrake is part of the frame, suggesting a discreet character. Ripper often fills the frame, a man both imposing and bombastic in appearance, tone, and manner.

💣Contrast the effect of seeing Ripper in medium shots and in close shots. What purpose is served by showing Ripper in medium shots? How do close shots affect our impression of him?
Medium shots of Ripper in his office suggest order and stability, a General remaining cool and in control of himself at a moment of crisis. Close-ups, seen in low angle, place him in a dark background; the dark mind confined is suggested.

💣Why is Major Kong introduced in a tight medium shot (0:6:33, DVD Scene 3), and what effect is produced by the zoom out? Why is a zoom in shot used on the new CRM 114 coded message (0:7:21, DVD Scene 3)?
Kong appears intent on his flying mission, but the zoom out produces a visual joke and ironic comment about the performance of his duty of national security. Later, he sets his controls on automatic pilot and attempts to catch a nap. The pilot's behaviour seems to establish permission to the crew, for they echo him in their activities: one eats, one manipulates cards, another reads. All seem bored, rather than fixated on the solemnity of their duty in protecting America from sneak attack. The zoom in on the newly arrived code indicates its importance.

🕭 Comment on the framing and composition of shots inside the B-52 that evoke the expressionist style. *Overhead lighting creates shadows within the space. The mise-en-scène is cluttered, and a number of diagonal lines are evident. Tight framing of the crew suggests not only cramped space but people trapped and isolated within their environment. Use of a hand-held camera suggests both the plane's motion and a sense of instability.*

🕭 Symbolic composition extends to the approach of the Army convoy to Burpelson Air Force Base (0:38:19, DVD Scene 12). How do we view this arrival? What makes these shots significant? *Kubrick added these documentary touches for effect. The documentary style incorporated into the film creates the suggestion of realism, just as the authoritative narrator at the beginning adds to this realism. The arrival of the Army is seen in a subjective point-of-view shot through binoculars. The trucks are framed by foliage and viewed in long shot. This framing, a frame-within-a-frame suggesting confinement, echoes the closed or contained perception and ideology of General Ripper and his closed-office environment. The attack on Burpelson Air Force Base is presented in a documentary style as well, resembling World War II newsreel footage. The camera is hand-held, and our perspective is subjective, as we become part of the attack by adopting the soldiers' point of view. The reverse aspect of the attack is seen from Ripper's office, where we watch his actions as detached observers.*

🕭 A long shot of the group seated at the round table in the War Room (0:24:16, DVD Scene 8) suggests a documentary view of the proceedings. This objective camera placement makes us onlookers. But the camera also places us subjectively, as if we are seated at the table with these men. How does this subjective placement alter our reactions to these leaders? *When the camera moves us to the table, we have a better opportunity to see the main players— Turgidson, de Sadesky, and eventually Dr. Strangelove—as caricatures instead of capable leaders. We trade the seriousness of the documentary aspect for the satiric.*

Symbol

🕭 What symbolic function does the opening "over-the-clouds" shot of the film serve when compared to the closing shots? *The shots become "bookends" to the film. The closing shots show nuclear explosions suggesting the Doomsday Machine triggered, but the opening shots also suggest a wasteland, reinforced by the narrator's reference to the Doomsday Machine, "the ultimate weapon," and his comments of "the perpetually fog-shrouded wasteland below the Arctic peaks of the Zhokhov Islands."*

🕭 Ripper's cigar is prominent in the close shots of his face. How is it a symbol of his character? *Ripper's cigar suggests machismo, determination and the rigid resolve of his purpose. His personality is the antithesis of Mandrake, who is soft-spoken, polite, calm and rational.*

🕭 As Ripper explains his motives to Mandrake prior to the assault on the base, Mandrake carefully folds the foil of a gum wrapper. What might this symbolize? *Mandrake wishes to restore order to the suddenly chaotic world.*

🕭 While the telephone booth represents communication, what symbolic purpose does it serve? *The telephone booth is communication thwarted. It becomes the dead end within the expressionist maze of the corridor.*

🕭 The establishing shot of the War Room is an overhead long shot through a circular light fixture of the men seated at a giant circular table. In later shots of the table, we see the men lit from above by this lighted ring. Shots of Dr. Strangelove also show the lighted ring above his head. What might this ring symbolize? *The ring can suggest a return of evil, the presence of insanity, and the return to chaos. A familiar literary concept is the return or revisiting of evil. From Tolkien's* Lord of the Rings, *we know that rings represent power, corruption and destruction: "One ring to rule them all." The ring of light in the War Room might suggest the madness that hovers over the group. The ring shape also relates to the plumed ring of the bomb explosions.*

Motif

💣 A prominent motif in the film is food and its variations. Each appearance or reference has a specific connotation. Cite and explain examples for each of the following situations:
1. nourishment/sustenance
2. hospitality
3. stability
4. comfort
5. entertainment
6. boredom
7. metaphor

1. *A dinner cart or table with supper's remnants is mirrored in Turgidson's bedroom. Ripper's rant against fluoridated water includes foods also proposed for contamination, an ironic foreshadowing to the current practice of genetic modification of plants and animals. The Mine Shaft Plan includes greenhouses (plant food) and breeding facilities for animals (meat).*
2. *Ripper invites Mandrake to fix drinks— "rainwater and grain alcohol. Fix yourself whatever you prefer." A buffet is set in the War Room for the attendees, which includes as its guest the Russian Ambassador, the enemy.*
3. *Mandrake plays with a chewing gum wrapper. A packed lunch seen on the printer's ledge when Mandrake retrieves the radio is a link to home, hearth and safety.*
4. *Turgidson stuffs himself with gum as President Muffley grills him. Ripper's cigar can be seen as a pacifier. Association with a last meal of the condemned can apply to the buffet in the War Room, where food is offered in the face of death, an echo of "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."*
5. *The soda machine.*
6. *Lieutenant Goldberg eats a sandwich as he receives the attack code. The image comments on Kubrick's criticism of America's casual approach to war.*
7. *Ripper says to Mandrake, "Feed me. Feed me, boy," referring to the machine gun's belt of bullets.*

💣 Confinement becomes a motif in Kubrick's films, where a crisis is emphasized by composition that suggests or shows confinement. How is this motif of confinement applicable to:
1. Mandrake
2. Ripper
3. Kong
4. Muffley
5. Turgidson
6. Strangelove?

1. *We see Mandrake confined by Ripper in Ripper's office, emphasized by the dark lighting and by the threat Ripper conveys. Mandrake's futile attempts to extract the recall code from Ripper confine his ability to stop the attacking B-52 bombers. Bat Guano's rifle confines Mandrake by preventing him from telephoning the Pentagon. Lack of sufficient coins for a long distance telephone call confines him, preventing communication with the President. Our last view of Mandrake is of him physically confined within a telephone booth. Mandrake is Reason, and reason is hedged, thwarted, boxed. In this way, the motif relates to the expressionist maze.*
2. *The course of action set into motion by Ripper is confined to a set outcome. Images of Ripper in close-up confine him in darkness within the frame, suggesting his narrow-minded thinking and isolation from rational thought. Ripper is "confined" within his office, and ends in a smaller room (the bathroom). Such confinement equates with lack of communication, being sequestered or cloistered, and being shut off from the outside.*
3. *Kong is confined within the environment of the B-52. Unable to communicate with base, his years of military service and training confine his actions to procedure, fixing his course and his purpose as irrevocably as the gravity that confines his direction as he falls through open space, confined to the bomb he rides.*
4. *Confinement is seen in the War Room as well, not just as a physical restriction, but also in a circumstance Muffley is powerless to alter or reverse. The intransigence of General Turgidson further confines (restricts) Muffley's efforts to circumvent annihilation.*

5. *Turgidson starts confined (in a bathroom), then enters the larger confined space of the bedroom. His world is an illusion of space: in the bedroom, it comes from the mirrors; in the War Room, his worldview is reduced to a framed screen animated with lights. Turgidson's thinking is confined to trumping the Russians and to the attendant costs involved, as evidenced by his personal documents,* World Targets in Megadeaths *and* War Alert Actions Book. *Lights on the Big Board representing the advance of an attack suggest the world's future is confined to the actions of a few. The motif of confinement, then, extends to self-interests and selfish concerns: characters caught up in their own personal fears, foibles, phobias and fascinations. "Freedom" becomes a metaphor for "illusion."*

6. *Confined within the shadows of the War Room, Strangelove is also physically confined to his wheelchair. His Nazi background confines his way of thinking: note the delight he takes at the mention of the slaughter of animals, and in his mathematical calculation that the superior minds of politicians and the military elite should be permitted to survive in the confinement of bunker-like mine shafts.*

A motif of regression suggests a return to infancy or childhood, and includes childish and irrational behaviour, and a lack or loss of decorum. Show how this motif applies to:
1. Ripper
2. Turgidson
3. Kong
4. Muffley
5. Strangelove.

Show how it applies metaphorically to 6) the opening screen credits, and 7) the opening and closing shots of the film.

1. *Ripper's mind regresses as he becomes more fixated on his plan and on his hatred of communists. He has triggered a nuclear bomb attack, threatens Mandrake with the automatic pistol on his desk, and fires on soldiers with a machine gun, but ironically, the mounted guns on his wall are antique flintlock pistols. In a similar vein, his drink of choice is not bonded whiskey, but grain alcohol, not purified water,*

but rainwater. During the attack, he crawls like a baby on all fours, while Mandrake whimpers on his knees like a frightened child.

2. *Turgidson's entire character is essentially a "boy" at play. When we first see him, he wears clothing associated with youth: short pants and an unbuttoned short-sleeved shirt. Slapping his stomach is an indirect reference to his fitness and, therefore, to his youth. The action suggests a means of impressing his girlfriend. In the War Room, we see him stuffing several sticks of gum into his mouth, the soother for the child experiencing stress as he pouts over Muffley's reprimand. Later, he tussles with de Sadesky, two boys fighting over some slight.*

3. *Kong, too, becomes a "boy" at play. He dons a cowboy hat to go into combat, gloriously imagining battling "toe-to-toe with the Rooskies," even though his weapon is a nuclear bomb. His expressions are less sophisticated than those of other characters, giving him a rube-like quality.*

4. *As President, Muffley becomes a father figure who cannot control his errant "children"—Ripper, Turgidson and Kong. Muffley uses child-like expressions in his conversations with Kissoff: Ripper "went a little funny," and "did a silly thing."*

5. *Strangelove's first faltering steps out of the wheelchair (a surrogate baby stroller) are like a baby's uncertain first steps. He proposes living in mine shafts (caves) as a means of beginning civilization.*

6. *The screen credits are hand-printed, free hand, in childlike letters.*

7. *The circle imagery of the lights in the War Room suggests a circular transition from chaos to chaos, moving from a primal state, through progress, then to a return of the primitive. The film's opening image of the Zhokhov Islands suggests the world at its inception, possibly the time of Creation. The end of the film depicts nuclear devastation, a return to the primal state of the world.*

Irony

💣Indicate the irony in each of the following:

- The Burpelson Air Force Base slogan is "Peace Is Our Profession"
  Burpelson as professional peacekeeper maintains attack bombers on 24-hour alert. The motto suggests, "We profess Peace." The word "profess" means both to affirm and to pretend.
- Kong responds to the attack order calling it "the stupidest thing I've ever heard."
  Kong follows orders nonetheless. Patriotic duty becomes the process to world annihilation.
- Ripper kills himself, believing he will be unable to resist disclosing the prefix code under torture.
  Revealing information would constitute betrayal of America, but his actions already have doomed his country. He does the "honourable" duty of "falling on his sword." Self-sacrifice is parodied.
- Mandrake successfully decodes the attack code prefix and transmits the information to the War Room.
  The CRM 114 has been rendered inoperable and cannot receive the counter order.
- Automatic strategies have been designed to prevent human error.
  These strategies are obstacles that prevent the correction of human error.
- The damaged B-52 cannot open its bomb bay doors.
  While all of the planned, sophisticated fail-safe mechanisms fail, the damaged circuit in the B-52 provides an unplanned fail-safe deterrent to world annihilation.
- Kong struggles to repair the circuit.
  Man's resourcefulness leads to his destruction.
- Turgidson wishes for a Doomsday device similar to the Russian weapon.
  Only one Doomsday Machine is necessary for total world annihilation.
- Strangelove joyously exclaims, "I can walk!"
  The final image of Strangelove leaving the wheelchair and walking suggests his recovery from an affliction, man's freedom from the reliance on machines and self-sufficiency. But it is too late, for at that precise moment, the bombs explode.
- Ripper's plan is successful.
  Ripper does not realize he has achieved a Pyrrhic victory. His is the only planned course of action that succeeds but to an extent that surpasses even Ripper's insane desires.
- Machines represent progress in the film.
  Machines become the means to destruction.
- Machines consistently fail.
  We put almost absolute trust in machines.
- NORAD's base in Colorado is inside Cheyenne Mountain.
  Established in 1966, it is an ironic variation on Dr. Strangelove's suggestion of living in mine shafts.

Music

💣Kubrick chooses music carefully for his films. The movie's beginning and ending use two popular songs: the prologue plays "Try a Little Tenderness" as a bomber is being refuelled during its requisite patrol two hours from its target; the epilogue has the popular World War II song, "We'll Meet Again." How do these songs add to the satiric commentary?
The opening credit sequence of a bomber refuelling shows the relentlessness of this air defense. The planes do not take the time to land and refuel. "Try a Little Tenderness" used here expresses a similar sentiment as John Lennon's song, "Give Peace a Chance." "We'll Meet Again" expresses hope for the future. World War III will not be a typical war, given the potential for the complete devastation of the world in a nuclear battle. The song's sentiment becomes an ironic statement, providing a final note of caution to the consequence of such a war.

Other Considerations

💣Why is the film effective as a satire?
Through satire, Kubrick challenges the audience by not providing a neat ("proper") ending. Because nuclear devastation is total and nonselective, Kubrick suggests that the well-being of our world is a problem we all must acknowledge and that world peace must not be left

totally in the hands of politicians and the military. Problems created by human nature include narrow thinking; traditional, instead of creative, thinking; individuals' quests for power; and the need of a minority group to impose its will on a majority. The film's satire is expedited by the actors' performances. By exaggerating posture and expression, they become living caricatures that externalize their personalities as recognizable comic types.

💣A character in Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* cautions, "Don't worry about your beard when you're about to lose your head." How does this statement apply to Kubrick's film?
We see many instances of characters concerned with petty matters in the face of doom. For example, Turgidson and de Sadesky are concerned with espionage, even as they count down to the destruction of the world: "He'll see the Big Board," complains Turgidson, and later de Sadesky secretly photographs the Board on two occasions.

Extension Activities

- Watch another film—of Kubrick or Sellers, or a film that makes a comment about war—and compare it to *Dr. Strangelove*.
- Discuss how the message of *Dr. Strangelove* applies or does not apply to today's world.
- Organize a debate on the value or morality of civil disobedience.
- Storyboard your own film that makes a social comment.

This unit addresses the following outcome subheadings:

1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
1.2.1 Consider new perspectives
2.1.1 Discern and analyze context
2.1.2 Understand and interpret content
2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge
2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content
2.2.2 Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects
2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu
2.3.2 Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts
3.1.1 Focus on purpose and presentation form
4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium
4.1.3 Develop content
4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice
4.2.4 Edit text for matters of correctness
5.1.1 Use language and image to show respect and consideration
5.1.2 Appreciate diversity of expression, opinion and perspective

Glossary of Terminology Used

clapper (also clapboard, slate)—a small board with a hinged top that identifies the film's working title, director, director of photography, scene, shot, take number, date and time. It is filmed at the beginning of each take. The clapper-loader claps the hinged top to the board to provide the editors with an audiovisual point for synchronizing image with sound.

close shot (also close-up, CU)—only a portion of a subject appears in the frame, providing the audience with visual detail, intimacy with the subject and/or restricted perspective. Extreme close-up and medium close-up are relative variations.

establishing shot—usually a long shot at the beginning of a scene to identify location of the action.

high angle—camera is placed higher than the subject and photographs the subject by "looking down," similar to an adult's perspective of a child.

high key light—bright illumination evenly distributed in the shot. Shadows are minimized.

interior shot—a script indication of an action that takes place inside a building or other structure.

long shot—the camera is placed at a distance from the subject to record both the subject and a portion of the environment around the subject, suggesting a similar perspective one has while viewing live theatre.

low key light—lighting that produces much shadow and darkness on the screen.

medium shot—the closest approximation of natural human vision, showing a person from knees or waist to the head.

mise-en-scène—a French theatrical term meaning "put into the scene" that describes, in cinema, the contents of the frame, including set design, characters, action, camera placement and auditory information.

montage—related shots spliced together to create relatively quick changes of action that suggest time passing or that describe unified events.

objective/subjective camera—describes camera placement in terms of audience perspective, making the audience mere observers having an "objective" view of the action, or making the audience experience the emotional perspective of a character, thereby possessing a "subjective" view of the action.

overhead shot—the camera is placed directly overhead and looks down on the subject as from a ceiling or from the sky.

pan (panorama shot)—the camera pivots horizontally from left to right, or from right to left.

reverse shot—perspective between two shots changes between 120° and 180° showing an opposite or reverse view. When two characters converse, we seem to stand looking over the shoulder of one, then the other, watching as each speaks.

scene—a group of related shots that develop an idea or follow a character, ending with some minor climax or change.

shot—everything recorded on film from camera on to camera off; that is, everything recorded between the director calling "Action" and "Cut." A shot usually is shortened by the editor and may be juxtaposed with other shots. The shot is the smallest unit of the narrative.

soft focus—images are blurred and out-of-focus to varying degrees.

take—the filmed record of a shot. A shot may require more than one take before the director is satisfied with the result. The director may order only certain takes be printed.

telephoto lens/shot—a lens that records a subject from a great distance; a shot made from a distance that brings the subject close to view. A telephoto lens/shot tends to compress space and distance.

tilt—the camera pivots vertically from bottom to top, or from top to bottom.

titles—printed words appearing on the screen, sometimes superimposed over establishing shots or other images.

wide angle—a lens or shot that includes a wider vista or perspective than one sees naturally. The closer the camera is to the subject, the more distorted the image will appear.

widescreen (also scope, CinemaScope)—describes the frame's aspect ratio of horizontal to vertical size of the image. Aspect ratios vary depending on when the film was made. The current widescreen ratio is approximately 2.35:1.

zoom lens/shot (also zoom in, zoom back, zoom out)—a lens that changes a shot variably from wide angle to telephoto without necessitating a camera move. Zooming in on a subject adds significance or importance.

Feature Films Recommended for Classroom Use

The following is a list of films that have been reviewed by a number of Alberta senior high school teachers, based on common criteria. **Note that this list is not authorized by Alberta Learning.**

Annotations, ratings, cautions and suggested teaching strategies have been provided for each film; and a chart indicating the senior high school ELA course or courses deemed best suited for using each film is included. The list is not meant to limit the use of other films. (Other titles used effectively but not reviewed by this group are *The African Queen, Lawrence of Arabia, High Sierra, My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and some Canadian films such as *The Grey Fox, Bye Bye Blues*, and *My American Cousin.*)

As with all resources, Alberta Learning strongly recommends that teachers preview films, giving careful consideration to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community. This recommended list is not intended to limit the use of these films but to indicate where the reviewers felt the films fit the program of studies, and the nature and maturity of the audience. Three films have been listed for use with all ELA courses while others are suggested for certain courses. **Consideration should be given to films examined at the 30-level as texts students could use for their written responses on diploma examinations. Some titles may be effective for classroom use but are either not suitable or not easily addressed by students for diploma examination purposes.**

Ratings for each film are Alberta film classification ratings (see page 409 for descriptions of these ratings). No films rated G or 18A have been included: the only concern about G films is their appropriateness to the senior high school curriculum and audience; and teachers must make their own carefully considered decisions, in consultation with school administrators and parents, about the use of restricted or R-rated films. **Copyright permission must also be obtained for public screening of these or any other films**.

Recommended Course Levels for Films

Film Title	10-1	10-2	20-1	20-2	30-1	30-2
Billy Elliot					*	*
Birds, The	*	*	*	*	*	*
Brokedown Palace					*	*
Cast Away	*	*	*			
Chocolat					*	*
Citizen Kane			*		*	*
Dr. Strangelove					*	*
Finding Forrester			*	*		
Forrest Gump	*	*	*	*	*	*
Frankenstein (1931)			*		*	
Fried Green Tomatoes			*	*	*	*
Gallipoli					*	
Green Mile, The			*	*	*	*
Hearts in Atlantis			*		*	*
Life Is Beautiful			*	*	*	*
Magnificent Seven, The			*	*		*
Matrix, The	*		*	*	*	*
Miss Congeniality	*	*	*	*		
O Brother, Where Art Thou?	*	*	*		*	
October Sky	*	*		*		
Pay It Forward	*	*	*	*	*	*

Film Title	10-1	10-2	20-1	20-2	30-1	30-2
Pleasantville	*		*		*	*
Psycho	*		*	*	*	*
Rain Man			*		*	*
River Runs Through It, A			*	*	*	*
Shine			*		*	*
Truman Show, The	*	*				

Billy Elliot
14A, Dramatic Comedy, 111 minutes

Synopsis: Billy Elliot, an 11-year-old boy growing up in the coal-mining town of Durham, England, chooses ballet dancing over boxing (the acceptable sport of boys his age). His dysfunctional family tries to prevent him from pursuing his lessons, but Billy refuses to give up his career choice and continues against his father's wishes. Billy's family is affected by the coal miner's strike, in which both his father and brother are striking union members. As the strike drags on, Billy's father realizes the only chance his son has for happiness is to follow his dream and join the London ballet school. Billy is successful and goes on to study at the ballet school. Billy has achieved his goals against the odds of his family, social class and sexual stereotyping.

Caution: The sometimes controversial nature of the film, while lending itself well to student reflections and self-awareness, contains references to physical abuse and homosexuality, and uses coarse language that may be offensive to some communities. Viewer discretion is advised.

Themes: gender bias, stereotyping, family relationships, friendship, personal passion, aspirations, coming of age, self-realization

Teaching Strategies: opportunity for writing and research on labour disputes, class structures, period culture, an art form and a creative process; focus on use of light, pacing and types of shots used in scenes with differing emotional content; students could do a creative response (story, video, song, poem); character study of father dealing with personal and work-related pressures, or mother's influence on Billy's life and role in his realizing his dream

Birds, The
PG, Thriller, 119 minutes

Synopsis: Spoiled socialite Melanie Daniels pursues lawyer Mitch Brenner to his Bodega Bay home after meeting in a pet store in San Francisco. Melanie sails across the bay secretly to deliver the gift of lovebirds to Mitch's young sister, only to be attacked by a gull on her way back. Soon random attacks on humans are taking place all over Bodega, as birds of all varieties mass in their thousands overhead. This suspenseful story of how the feathered species can gather together and overpower humanity only reinforces man's vulnerability to those things he takes for granted.

Caution: Some still consider this film terrifying so viewers should be warned. Gender biases of the 1960s are present.

Themes: excellent connection with mythology or Gothic literature, gender bias of the 1960s

Teaching Strategies: ties to the short story by Daphne Du Maurier through examination of adapting the original text to film; use storyboarding and scriptwriting; especially effective for examining film techniques related to creation and artistry of text and author purpose

Brokedown Palace
PG, Drama, 110 minutes

Synopsis: Two eighteen-year-old American girls plan a clandestine trip to Thailand to celebrate their graduation from high school. They become unsuspecting targets of a drug smuggler and their friendship is tested as they are imprisoned. The girls struggle to remain loyal to each other while seeking truth and justice. The ending is a testament to their friendship.

Caution: There is some use of strong language, and the veracity of the portrayal of the Thai judicial system is unclear.

Themes: loyalty, friendship, truth, perseverance, justice, cultural differences, dangers of pushing the limits

Teaching Strategies: use of narration; examination of female protagonists in film; symbols associated with the girls; editing for lighting, colour, music and camera angles

Cast Away
PG, Adventure, 143 minutes

Synopsis: A shipping company manager finds himself surviving alone on a tropical island following a plane crash at sea.

Caution: The length of the film may be difficult for some viewers.

Themes: isolation, self-realization, nature of love and endurance, perseverance

Teaching Strategies: connection with *Lord of the Flies;* examination of effects of little dialogue; symbolism (wings, elements of time, rope, volleyball); response journals

Chocolat
PG, Drama, 121 minutes

Synopsis: A single mother arrives in a small French town at the beginning of Lent. She opens a chocolate shop that changes the lives of the villagers. The town is run by an overbearing mayor who tries to control everything—even Vianne, the owner of the chocolate shop. When the handsome Roux arrives, it is Vianne who is challenged to change.

Caution: There is a brief scene of nudity and a somewhat negative portrayal of Catholicism.

Themes: stereotypes, isolation, societal expectations, change versus tradition, single parenting, relationships, dealing with change

Teaching Strategies: examination of characters, archetypes, symbolism (wind, fire); discussion of narrative voice-over technique and other film techniques; research of background and different approaches to Christian beliefs and shamanic tradition; research chocolate and its industry

Citizen Kane
PG, Drama, 119 minutes

Synopsis: Loosely based on the life of William Randolph Hearst, this tells the story of Charles Foster Kane, an aging millionaire newspaperman, who begins his career as the champion of the underprivileged but is corrupted by his lust for wealth, power and immortality.

Caution: Students may need to be informed of the historical context of the film so that they do not react negatively to the fact that it is in black and white.

Themes: power, greed, quest for immortality, importance of media.

Teaching Strategies: excellent for studying film techniques (video contains an analysis of how the film was made, including innovations that made the film groundbreaking); filmmaking projects; research projects on historical setting; connection with *Macbeth* and *Ozymandias*; importance of context; researching and writing for newspapers

Dr. Strangelove
PG, Social Commentary, 93 minutes
See unit included in this section.

Finding Forrester
PG, Drama, 136 minutes
See unit included in this section.

Forrest Gump
14A, Drama, 142 minutes

Synopsis: Forrest Gump is a mentally challenged young man who recounts his past through three turbulent decades of the United States, from the 1950s to the late 1970s. He unknowingly stumbles through many famous historical events with humorous and poignant moments.

Caution: There is some profanity and sexual content (treated from the innocent perspective of the narrator) and racist terms relevant to the context of the film.

Themes: changes in relationships over time, ostracism, prejudice, innocence, importance of community, importance of historical context

Teaching Strategies: research issues and events of the time period; study of the music of the period; examination of the layers of the film; visual and sound film techniques

Frankenstein (1931 version)
PG, Horror, 123 minutes

Synopsis: Dr. Frankenstein dares to tamper with life and death by creating a human monster from lifeless body parts which he robs from graves. The doctor's dreams are shattered by his creation's violent rages when it wakens to a world in which it is unwelcome.

Caution: Teachers will need to create the appropriate context in which to study this film.

Themes: medical ethics, morality, medical experimentation, appearance versus reality, mob mentality

Teaching Strategies: comparison of films of the past with films of the present; comparison with other Frankenstein texts (novel and other film versions); connections with science (e.g., cloning, stem cell research, organ transplants)

Fried Green Tomatoes
14A, Drama, 130 minutes

Synopsis: The story follows four women—two from the past and two from the present. The intertwining plots involve an elderly woman, Ninny, who befriends a distraught middle-aged Evelyn. Ninny helps Evelyn find her self-esteem through her stories of Idgie and Ruth, two women of the 1930s. Idgie's courage and Ninny's wisdom inspire Evelyn to take control of her own life.

Caution: Violence and some profanity (including racial slurs) may cause concern.

Themes: power of friends, relationships, racism, love, self-esteem, death and loss, domestic violence, choices

Teaching Strategies: connection with study of fables; storytelling projects; sharing of wisdom through the ages; film techniques used to cross time periods; devise definite ending for the film; research racism and the Ku Klux Klan, and women's rights

Gallipoli
PG, Historical War Fiction, 111 minutes

Synopsis: Two young Australian sprinters face the brutality of war in the ill-fated battle of Gallipoli in 1915. The film explores the young men's motives for going to war, their camaraderie and the tragic death of Archy as a result of bureaucratic arrogance.

Caution: This film should only be used with senior students due to its complexity and brutality.

Themes: propaganda, cost and futility of war, coming of age, loss of innocence, friendship, idealistic youth

Teaching Strategies: connection with *The Wars* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*; humanities link to research of WWI and Australia's participation; examination of motives and decisions of characters; responses from the perspectives of the characters; newspaper articles describing the battle; examination of cinematography, especially settings—the final frame of Archy's death has been compared to Robert Capa's infamous photograph from the Spanish Civil War at the soldier's moment of death (provides a link to art as well as history)

Green Mile, The
14A, Drama, 188 minutes

Synopsis: In 1935, a Louisiana prison's death row receives a mysterious inmate, John Coffey. The man is huge and foreboding, but gentle and compassionate, and is convicted of murdering two young sisters. He performs miracles, helping the guards and other inmates. Through strange and sometimes humorous experiences, the head guard comes to a greater appreciation of life and death, and learns to live with the inmate's special gift.

Caution: There is some profanity, a realistic, graphic portrayal of a death row execution and one shooting. This is a film for mature students only. Length may also prove to be a problem.

Themes: faith, hope, doing the right thing, stereotypes, racial profiling, justice, compassion, redemption

Teaching Strategies: rich in devices such as foil and irony; research the language and mannerisms of the time and place; effectiveness of introductory scenes and sequence; discussion of capital punishment and belief in miracles; excellent film to use clips for film techniques; a **Scanning the Movies** series on this film is available from ACCESS: The Education Station

Hearts in Atlantis
PG, Drama, 101 minutes

Synopsis: A successful adult reflects back on a summer when he was eleven and developed a relationship with Ted, the man who lived upstairs. Bobby's view of the world is challenged because Ted has psychic powers. The FBI wants Ted for these powers and he hopes to avoid them but risks his position by befriending the boy. Ted becomes a father figure to Bobby, teaching him courage and forgiveness.

Caution: There is some profanity and a partially observable, violent rape scene. There is also some violence between boys.

Themes: coming of age, loss of innocence, bullying, relationships, responsibility and friendship, role models, transition from childhood to adolescence, positive treatment of reading skills and classic literature

Teaching Strategies: use of foreshadowing and flashback as well as suspense, irony, allusion and symbolism; connection with excerpts from Stephen King's anthology; use of twists in plotline; representation of the time period through sound track, costumes, locations and use of newspaper headlines; the DVD version includes commentary from the director, with a very detailed discussion of film techniques as well as motifs and themes; a **Scanning the Movies** series on this film is available from ACCESS: The Education Station

Life Is Beautiful
(subtitled version is recommended)
PG, Foreign Drama, 122 minutes

Synopsis: Guido, a charming but bumbling waiter, who's gifted with a colourful imagination and an irresistible sense of humour, wins the heart of Dora, a woman whom he loves. Together, they create a beautiful life with their young son. That life is threatened by WWII, and Guido must rely on his strengths to save his beloved wife and son from an unthinkable fate. Guido, the main character, is a Jewish man who manages to keep his son alive and with him in an Italian concentration camp run by Germans. The film focuses on the effect of the Holocaust on one family and on the capacity of humans to survive, to sacrifice, to find humour and hope, and to show that life is the most precious thing in the world.

Caution: The film is called a fable and must be treated as such: otherwise the portrayal of the Holocaust may appear oversimplified and insensitive to those who really lived the experience.

Themes: intolerance, propaganda, family, hope in the face of adversity, sacrifice

Teaching Strategies: production challenges and aspects of foreign films; research of the Holocaust; connection with *Night* and the works of Hernando Téllez; use of humour to teach life lessons

Magnificent Seven, The
PG, Western, 128 minutes

Synopsis: A band of seven cowboys with different personal issues embarks on a journey to save a small Mexican village from the raids of a Mexican bandit who keeps the village from moving above the level of subsistence. Each of the seven men has a personal problem from which he is running; stories and fears come to play throughout the movie. The Mexican village struggles to survive against the raids, and when the group of seven arrive, they help the people of the village learn to defend themselves. The village is almost defeated by the bandit, Calvera, when the Magnificent Seven return and help to defeat the bandits at the expense of four of the group.

Caution: There is some violence in the gunfights, but this is reflective of the historical context.

Themes: maturity, individualism, human dignity, bullying, persecution, overcoming obstacles, self-reliance

Teaching Strategies: good example of the western as a film genre; research into western history; good opportunities for predictive viewing; examining stereotypes; research into oppressed peoples; connection with *Seven Samurai*; study of team strategies; study of archetypal qualities

Matrix, The
14A, Science Fiction Thriller, 136 minutes

Synopsis: Neo, a computer hacker, discovers that the world around him is a computer simulation called the Matrix. Neo teams up with a group of freedom fighters in an effort to stop domination by computers.

Caution: There are violent scenes, both physical and with weapons. There is some profanity. The portrayal of the main character as "The One" may have unacceptable religious overtones for some. Two characters dressed in long black trench coats shooting indiscriminately may call up disturbing memories of school shootings.

Themes: fate, self-discovery, sacrifice, influence of technology, isolation, greed, conformity

Teaching Strategies: study of groundbreaking special effects and cinematography; focus on technical design and unusual sound track; use of symbolic names (Neo, Morpheus) and the significance of the title; juxtaposed imagery; parallels with *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*; study of archetypes; mythological and biblical allusions; connection with *The Chrysalid;* a **Scanning the Movies** series on this film is available from ACCESS: The Education Station

Miss Congeniality
PG, Romantic Comedy, 110 minutes

Synopsis: A rambunctious and bumbling female FBI agent goes undercover as a contestant at a Miss USA pageant to prevent a terrorist bombing. She is transformed into a winner in unexpected ways.

Caution: There is some profanity. This film needs to be used in conjunction with an examination of gender stereotypes.

Themes: gender stereotypes, archetypes, identity

Teaching Strategies: use of irony (especially created by music choices); study of satire; issues of product placement in films; connection with traditional transformation stories and myths (e.g., *Pygmalion)*; connection with a thematic unit on the metamorphosis archetype in literature; connections between literature and popular culture; good example of film genre (rogue cop, buddy, fish-out-of-water pictures); a **Scanning the Movies** series on this film is available from ACCESS: The Education Station

O Brother, Where Art Thou?
PG, Comedy, 103 minutes

Synopsis: Loosely based on Homer's "The Odyssey," this tale takes place in Mississippi in the 1930s. Three convicts escape and head off across country in search of a stash of $1.2 million. Along the way, they find themselves in precarious and humorous situations.

Caution: In a scene in which two of the convicts are baptized and have their sins washed away, the third convict scoffs at the idea of redemption. This could cause concern to some.

Themes: stereotypes, racism, archetypes, journeys

Teaching Strategies: research on setting and Ku Klux Klan; connection with Homer's "The Odyssey"; excellent cinematography (use of sepia tones); jigsaw activity to study depression era photography and bluegrass culture/music; parody

October Sky
PG, Biographical Drama, 108 minutes

Synopsis: This film is based on a true story, *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam, of a teen from a small coal town in 1957 who is inspired by the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik to create his own rocket. Homer is determined to defy the odds against him: many failed launches, the disapproval of his father, his limited education, and pressures to succumb to his destiny to work in the coal mine. With the inspiration of his teacher, Homer fulfills his vision and creates a viable rocket, earns a scholarship to college, and finally wins his father's approval. The real Homer Hickam now has a career with NASA.

Caution: The film includes mild profanity.

Themes: dreams and goals, relationships with parents, overcoming obstacles, tolerance, choices

Teaching Strategies: personal response on a significant decision or conflict; connection with book *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam; *Between the Lines 11* has a movie review; sound track is useful on its own; connections with physics and mathematics; student reflection on Homer's successes and failures

Pay It Forward
PG, Drama, 123 minutes

Synopsis: A class assignment to change the world leads Trevor to develop a theory that requires someone to repay a favour, not by paying it back but by paying it forward to three more people. By helping others and asking them to do the same, Trevor believes the world can become a better place. His home life is less than ideal but with the help of his teacher, Trevor is able to see the good in life.

Caution: There is some profanity and domestic violence, as well as one non-graphic sex scene.

Themes: bullying, domestic abuse, individual's power to affect others, taking responsibility for choices, compassion, interconnectedness of humanity

Teaching Strategies: students create own ideas on how to change the world; class or school projects "paying it forward"; very suitable for metacognitive activities

Pleasantville
PG, Drama, 124 minutes

Synopsis: David and Jennifer, teens of the 1990s, get zapped into the perfect suburbia of the black and white 1950s television sitcom "Pleasantville," which is about a "perfect, happy" family and community—a stark contrast to their divorced family situation. They are able to help those of the fictional town break through their personal limitations and, in the process, break through some of their own.

Caution: There are references to teen sex and one allusion to masturbation.

Themes: prejudice, discrimination, promotion of respect and diversity, family conflict, coming of age, identity, self-fulfillment, choice and discovery

Teaching Strategies: use of colour to connect theme; individual freedom; excellent source for teaching artistic unity and the intricacies of directing and editing; connection with *Death of a Salesman*; discussion of the nature of progress; excellent film for use of clips

Psycho
14A, Horror, 109 minutes

Synopsis: Norman Bates, a troubled man running an out-of-the-way motel with an old dark house adjoining it, leads a mysterious life with his aged mother. When a young woman rents a room in the motel seeking refuge, the compelling and terrifying mystery of time unravels.

Caution: The film is suspenseful, but there is no gratuitous violence.

Themes: theft and punishment, mental illness, duality, gender stereotypes

Teaching Strategies: comparative study of two versions of film; research project on censorship; study of film techniques (easy deconstruction); use of film in context of directorial decisions (DVD version has excellent information); connection with *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *A Rose for Emily*

Rain Man
14A, Drama, 133 minutes

Synopsis: Charlie is introduced to Raymond, the autistic brother he never knew, after their father's death. Charlie abducts Raymond to get his "fair share" of the estate. What begins as selfishness soon evolves into an odyssey of camaraderie and self-revelation that expands Raymond's narrow world and softens Charlie's hardened heart.

Caution: This film is recommended for mature students due to the sensitivity of the topic. There is some profanity.

Themes: tolerance, discrimination, inclusion, forgiveness

Teaching Strategies: research autism; archetypal journey; study of symbolism and characterization; effective sound track; examination of learning styles and multiple intelligences

River Runs Through It, A
PG, Drama, 124 minutes

Synopsis: Set in Montana in the early 1900s, a Presbyterian minister teaches his two sons, one a strait-laced intellectual and the other a bold, high-living daredevil, about life and religion through fly-fishing.

Caution: There is some profanity, promiscuity and brief nudity.

Themes: family relationships, racism, role of women, coming of age, consequences of choices

Teaching Strategies: study of character motivation; family heritage; beautiful cinematography; river/water motif; metacognitive appeal of identification with characters

Shine
PG, Drama, 105 minutes

Synopsis: This is the true story of a gifted, fragile Australian piano prodigy who as a boy is tutored and abused by his tyrannical father, a Holocaust survivor. David defies his father's wishes to pursue his dreams. In adulthood, he meets Gillian, an astrologer whose unconditional love and acceptance allow him not only to survive and perform but also to "shine."

Caution: The film includes sensuality and brief nudity. Serious issues need to be handled carefully.

Themes: family relationships, goals, perseverance, tolerance, overcoming obstacles, sensitivity and respect, creativity, zest for life

Teaching Strategies: examination of foreshadowing and flashback; connection with *A Beautiful Mind* and *My Left Foot;* research and discussion of mental illness; personal reflection on goals and plans; examination of the power of classical music in film; connection with the real-life Helfgott; relates to unit on identity

Truman Show, The
PG, Drama, 104 minutes
See unit included in this section.