

Film Reviews – The Curriculum Fit

Citizenship

The following resources hope that students see films they do not usually consume perhaps by attending a NSFW screening and then consolidate that experience with the writing of a review. The subject matter of many independently produced features and documentaries match many of the principles of Citizenship.

Film's peculiar ability to place us in others' shoes directly can encourage that **'respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities'** that Citizenship hopes to foster. Many of the films and documentaries: **'...address issues relating to social justice, human rights, community cohesion and global interdependence...[encouraging] pupils to challenge injustice, inequalities and discrimination.'** And having gripped them, then the writing of an effective heart-felt review might show **'pupils have critically explored diverse ideas, beliefs, cultures and identities and the values we share as citizens in the UK.'**

A film review's greatest pertinence to Citizenship lies in the contribution it will make to **'young people's critical skills'** and their ability to consider **'a wide range of political, social, ethical and moral problems'** and to speak out on **'issues of consequence'**.

English

A film review has possibly its most natural place in **English Lessons Key Stages 3-5**. A good review can represent a range of **writing** purposes including:

- Communicating with others
- Exploring experience
- Organising and explaining information

Students will have had to **'read' a non-fiction text** in preparation for their review in the shape of the film itself and this can be broadened by exposing them to a range of existing reviews – including those of previous Young Critics of the Year cached off the competition's homepage: www.youngfilmcritic.org

It is best that any review writing should be supported by **speaking and listening** with students describing and discussing their films in groups and whole-class settings. This would be an occasion to demonstrate key critical terms and help scaffold the shaping of their views into a coherent narrative.

Geography

The judicious choice of a film or documentary with a strong geographical/environmental dimension followed up by a review can help students meet a number of key subject aims:

1.6 Environmental interaction and sustainable development

- a. Understanding that the physical and human dimensions of the environment are interrelated and together influence environmental change.

- b. Exploring sustainable development and its impact on environmental interaction and climate change.

1.7 Cultural understanding and diversity

- a. Appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places, environments and cultures to inform their understanding of societies and economies.
- b. Appreciating how people's values and attitudes differ and may influence social, environmental, economic and political issues, and developing their own values and attitudes about such issues.

History

Attending an NSFW screening of a classic film, a modern period drama or a documentary with a strong historic dimension followed with a film review entry to the Young Film Critic of the Year Award could hit some important subject targets. Pupils could thus demonstrate their improved interest and understanding of **'the history of their community, Britain, Europe and the world... investigating Britain's relationships with the wider world, [while relating] past events to the present day'**.

A film treated in this way as a part of the historic record could provide an ideal opportunity (in their review) to **'evaluate evidence, identify and analyse different interpretations of the past, and learn to substantiate any arguments and judgments they make'**.

Media Studies

Film criticism also deserves a prominent place in **Media Studies at Key Stages 4/5**. Quite apart from fostering the kind of **critical engagement** with the media required of students, the necessity of honing students' **aesthetic appreciation of film** is a prerequisite of their own filmmaking. Film reviews – or the lack of them – are also a key constituent of film marketing and have been used by teachers to examine the **cross-media** impact of certain texts. The increasing importance of blogs, community forums and online review sites also opens up the possibility of a **new media** study.

Technology and the Media

The analysis and composition of film reviews speaks directly to one of the key cross-curricular facets of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4: 'Informed and responsible citizenship requires that young people become **critical consumers of media**, able to **reflect on the relationship between reality and the world portrayed by the media**. They should be aware of **the ability of the media to inform, entertain and influence public opinion**, and its important role in society. Young people need opportunities to become discerning and critically literate in relation to the media and the internet, learning to question the **authenticity, accuracy and reliability of the information they encounter.**'