On teaching film

Goals for today:

- ❖ *Presentations today: 2 groups*
- ❖ -What films do you enjoy?
- ❖ - How might we incorporate film into the literature classroom?
- ❖ - In what ways can we teach students to become active, critical viewers of film?
- ❖ -Are Giannetti's fifteen elements useful for teaching film?

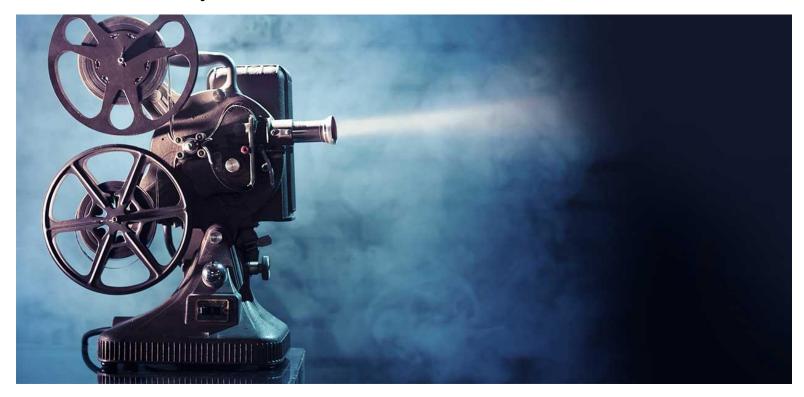# Gauging the class using film titles (check-in activity)

Please roam the room and find the film title that BEST describes how you're feeling this morning. Once you've found it, stand in front of the title.

Next two text presentations!

What film(s) do you want to teach?

Reflecting on Ahn (2014) reading

Any initial reactions? Insights? Did anything Dr. Ahn write resonate with you?

Moments from Ahn (2014) to consider:

Group (1996), this broader reading of texts is often more sophisticated, and to create meaning from reading today frequently requires the analysis of visual patterns and images. However, there appears to be a lack of attention to the development of visual literacy in the ELA classrooms. Part of this may be due to the assumption that students will just 'get it', that because young people live in such a visually dense society they will "obtain an implicit understanding of these other 'literacies' as they unavoidably encounter them outside of school" (Gilbert, 2013, p.89). However, this assumption is greatly problematic. Although students may in fact be engaged with a visual dominant society, they need the critical skills to interpret the images bombarding their lives.

Moments from Ahn (2014) to consider:

This notion that visual literacy is 'easy' was also inherent in my students. Early in my teaching career when introducing a film unit most students would proclaim: "YEEEES! We're just watching movies." This of course stems for the fact that as audience members, we become passive viewers, becoming engaged in the plot of the movie and engrossed in the visual, cinematic effects. But also, how many of us teachers (I include myself as being guilty here as well) have or have been tempted to 'just pop in a movie', have used films as a 'babysitter' or as a 'reward'? Or perhaps we have used it merely as a 'popular culture lure' to hook students in before reading a dense text? Or the classic choice: viewing the adapted film version of a literary text. These practices further reinforce the notion of 'just watching a movie' rather than becoming active viewers.

Moments from Ahn (2014) to consider:

One of the films I taught was Pixar's 2009 film Up!. We had completed a viewing of the film and proceeded to the analysis. (Another quick note here, I have always shown a film twice to my class, once so students could enjoy the film as a passive viewer. It is during the second viewing where students would become active viewers, analyzing the movie utilizing the terminology and concepts, such as mise-en-scene. And it is after the first viewing where I distribute any worksheets.)

Moments from Ahn (2014) to consider:

The vocabulary a person learns from watching films is not just film vocabulary; it's a visual vocabulary. As new forms of visual media emerge all around us, this language has become more vital than ever. While films will always retain their aspect of entertainment, we have reached a point in our society where visual language is no longer reserved for just entertainment but for communication. But as with any language, it must be learned. Yes, by just watching films there's a lot a person can learn about visual aesthetics and storytelling – but it's not enough. To really understand that aesthetic, a person must interact with film, deconstruct it, all the time asking, "Why, why, why?" Why did the director shoot the film using wide angle lenses? Why does the lighting in one scene have more contrast than in others? Why is a certain color palette used throughout the film? Much communication is rooted in the visual, and integrating the teaching of film into a school's curriculum allows students to develop a robust visual vocabulary, on which they will become increasingly reliant as they develop their own voice. (O'Flinn, 2011)

Mise-En-Scene Analysis: Giannetti's Fifteen Elements

Are Giannetti's fifteen elements useful for teaching film?

1. Shot and camera proxemics. What type of shot? How far way from the action is the camera?
2. Angle. Are we looking up or down on the subject, or is the camera neutral (eye-level)?
3. Lens/filter/stock. How do these distort or comment on the photographed material?
4. Lighting Style. High or low key? High contrast? Some combination of these?
5. Dominant. Where is our eye attracted first? Why?
6. Subsidiary contrasts. Where does our eye travel after taking in the dominant?
7. Composition. How is the two-dimensional space segmented and organized? What is the underlying design?
8. Texture. How clearly can we discern the details? Is the surface texture smooth, rough, glassy, fuzzy, etc.?
9. Form. Open or closed? Does the image suggest a window that arbitrarily isolates a fragment of the scene? Or a proscenium arch, in which the visual elements are carefully arranged and held in balance?
10. Framing. Tight or loose? Do the characters have no room to move around in, or can they move freely without impediments?
11. Density. How much visual information is packed into the image? Is the texture stark, moderate, or highly detailed?
12. Depth. On how many planes is the image composed? Does the background or foreground comment in any way on the midground?
13. Staging positions and proxemics. Which way do the characters look vis-à-vis the camera?
14. Character proxemics. How much space is there between the characters and objects?
15. Color values. What is the dominant color? Are there contrasting foils? Is there color symbolism? What mood do the colors invoke?

Reading:
"Everything you know about me:
The Asian character you're not
falling in love with in a Hollywood
produced romantic film/tv show"
(Ruan, 2017)

McSWEENEY'S

Would you consider bringing this into the classroom? How might you use a piece like this?

Resources that Dr. Ahn points us toward:

Check out her page here: https://claireahntheacademic.com/films-resources/

Take the last few minutes of class to explore her resources. She has generously offered to answer questions via email, so feel free to contact her if you want further information and/or support.

Film study ideas

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Lesson Plan

You Know the Movie is Coming—Now What?

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Grades	6 – 8
Lesson Plan Type	Standard Lesson
Estimated Time	Three 50-minute sessions
Lesson Author	**Lisa Storm Fink** Urbana, Illinois
Publisher	**NCTE** National Council of Teachers of English

Link: http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/know-movie-coming-what-854.html