



STUDYING FILM FOR NQ ENGLISH

Justifications and Methods

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

- Taught more frequently to junior class.
- Assumption that only of benefit to – or appropriate for - “lower ability” classes.
- Nervousness around use at NQ level, especially for “top sets.”
- Only around 10% of candidates presented at NQ use film text for Critical Essay





WHY IS THIS THE CASE?

- Resistance from within the profession – focus on traditional and “classic” texts at NQ.
- Parental concerns – Is my child being disadvantaged?
- Seen as less culturally valuable.
- Nervousness from teachers about teaching film at a higher level.

BENEFITS TO TEACHING FILM AT NQ - TRANSFERABLE SKILLS.

- Analysis of image(ry), sound and language.
- Pupils may already be invested in the production / analysis of video via social media, etc.
- Interdisciplinary – skills from Art and design and Graphic Communication and Music.
- Analysis of dialogue uses skills taught routinely in English.





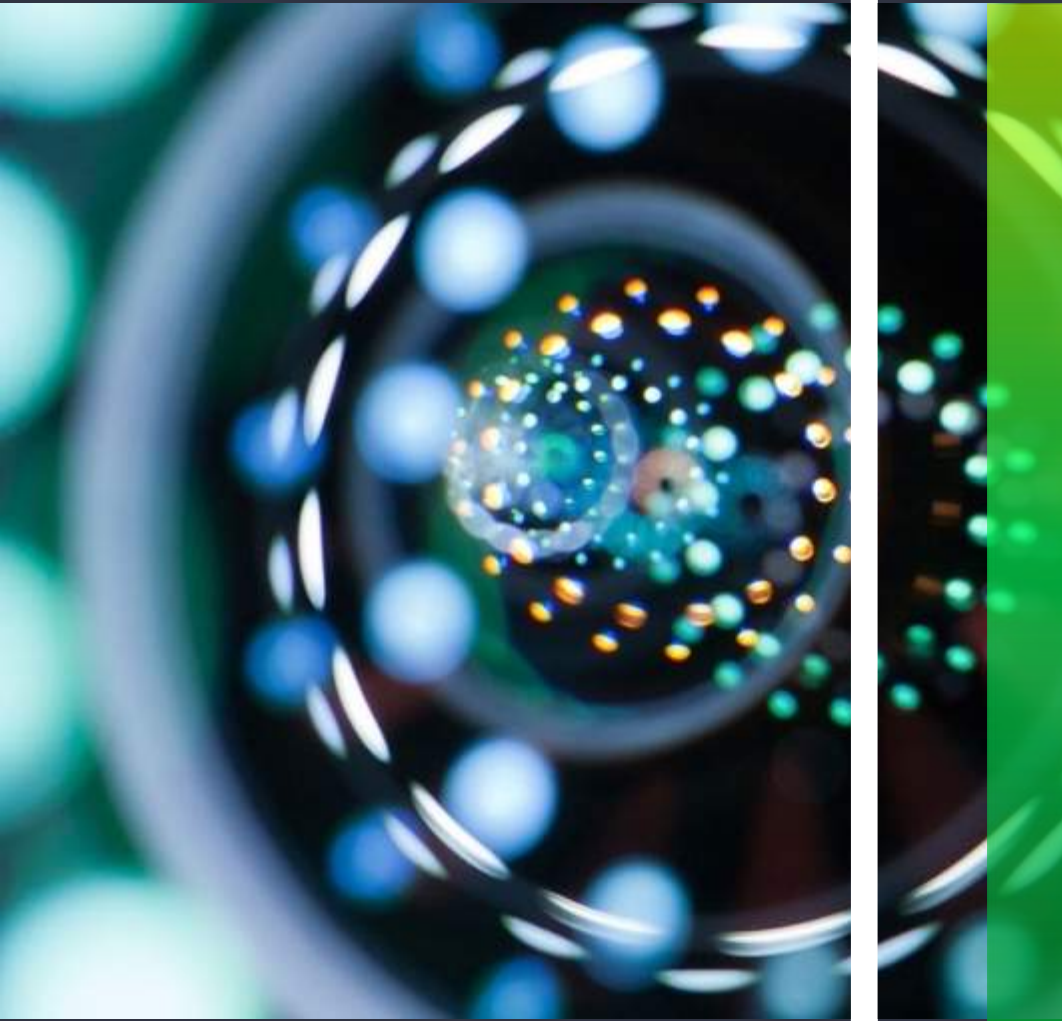
BENEFITS TO TEACHING FILM AT NQ - ACCESSIBILITY

- Familiarity and acceptance – few pupils don't see film as "my thing"
- Visual literacy can be higher than verbal.
- Often more comfortable discussing what they have seen and heard rather than read.
- Low financial outlay!
- "Text" often available to pupils at home via streaming sites etc.

BENEFITS TO TEACHING FILM AT NQ - INCLUSIVITY

- Huge opportunity for representation of different groups.
- Variety of genres / mediums can be matched to almost any class.
- Cultural voices from every corner of the globe can be addressed.
- Opportunities to tackle enormous range of issues and themes.





BENEFITS TO TEACHING FILM AT NQ –LIBERATING!

- No longer constrained by the contents of the book cupboard!
- New texts can be found with incredible ease and minimal time consumption.
- The number of available texts, genres and styles is huge and always increasing.
- Resources widely available and endlessly adaptable.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

- Spiderman: Into the Spider-verse - N5
- The Hurt Locker – Higher
- Knives Out - N5



SPIDER-MAN

INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE

The Character of Miles Morales

The character of Miles changes and develops throughout the film. Write a few sentences about how his character changes. What are the main events in his development into a true superhero?





For each shot here: name the type of shot used; describe the contents of the frame; comment on purpose (why has the image been selected; what does it tell us about the character of Peter/Spidey?) Consider the elements of the shot, such as positioning of camera and objects, camera angle, lighting, etc.



The two stairwells Miles' climbs are basically identical; how do the directors show his increased confidence the second time?

This is an example of "colour symbolism." The cold, darker lighting of the first stairwell represents fear and failure, whilst the warmer, lighter colour in the second at least hints at the possibility of success for Miles...





The end of the sequence is almost like Tom and Jerry slapstick comedy; how does this contrast with the start of the sequence and what point is being made?



Why do you think the camera pulls away from Miles during this overhead shot?

PEEL in media essays

Point – The argument you want to make. Should always help answer the question.

e.g. "The directors use a sequence of shots to tell the audience just how unprepared Miles is..."

Evidence – Description of the what you are analysing. Could be camera movement, etc;

e.g. "At the beginning of the sequence, the audience see an insert shot of a comic. Visible on the panels are captions..."

Explanation – Tell the reader what the director has done and why;

e.g. "...suggesting how important the task before Miles is. It also suggests that this is Miles' inescapable destiny."

Link – Simple words or phrases that move you on to the next point.

e.g. "next... in addition... in the following shot..."



Ramsey, Rothman and Perischetti use a sequence of shots to tell the audience just how unprepared Miles is. Shortly after discovering he has superpowers during the embarrassing incident at his school, Miles decides he must try to master his powers. His first efforts at being Spiderman are shown in a short sequence which ends with comic relief. It also tells the audience how hard this process will be for Miles. At the beginning of the sequence, the audience see an insert shot of a comic. Visible on the panels are captions which read "There is only one way" and "...No matter the risk" suggesting how important the task before Miles is. It also suggests that this is Miles' inescapable destiny. As Miles moves the comic, a Point-of-View shot reveals the building behind the comic closely resembles the one shown in the panel, and reveals Miles' intention to the audience; he is going to climb the building. This Miles sees this as an important step towards becoming a hero because he must overcome fear. An extreme Low Angle Point-Of-View shot is used here to emphasise the height of the buildings and the danger Miles faces . The non-diegetic sound is dramatic and tense and adds to the atmosphere. The driving beat also hints at the urgency of Miles' mission. The next sequence then further emphasises the dangers that Miles faces...



Themes...

Choose one of the following and write a paragraph on how a key scene illustrates your chosen theme:

- ◇ Coming of age
- ◇ Taking responsibility
- ◇ Overcoming adversity
- ◇ The role of mentors

Remember to reference techniques such as mise en scene, dialogue, use of camera, sound, etc.

Sound



What does
the scene open
with?



Sound



What does
the scene open
with?



Drumbeat at the beginning of the opening sequence – This pounding rhythm helps to create tension at the start of the film. It also mirrors the thumping heartbeats of the soldiers and citizens who find themselves in a highly dangerous situation. The music is mixed with diegetic sounds of local people screaming and shouting as well as the soldiers shouting orders. This highlights the chaos of the war zone.

A 'scraping' string sound is used sporadically in the opening sequence for grating effect. The inharmonious sound unsettles the viewer and heightens the tension.

Themes

What themes do you think are most prevalent?

Conflict

Psychological impact of war

Complexity of relationships

Obsession

Horrors of war

Make notes on each of the themes. Summarise the theme then give examples showing how each theme is explored throughout the film. You must give specific examples from the movie.

The Hurt Locker

We are going to rewatch the opening scene of the movie. While watching, think of the following questions:
What happens in this scene that draws you in to the rest of the film?
What visual aspects stand out?
How is sound used?
How do you think the opening is supposed to make you feel?

After watching, we will analyse the following:

Foreshadowing

Camera

Sound

Editing

Cinematic techniques used in the opening sequence are:

Sgt Will James Soundtrack

Task Instructions

For each of the memorable scenes in the film, you need to think about what emotions, thoughts or what actions are taking place.

Think of songs lyrics that reflect these. All the song doesn't have to reflect that particular scene but you need to at least be able to relate some of the lyrics AND explain why.

The final outcome will be like an album sleeve but with a sentence or two explaining why.

Class Example

Near the end when James is talking to Sanborn (maybe the final scene?)

Cast No Shadow
Oasis

"Here's a thought for every man who tried to understand what was in his hands...Bound with all the weight of all the words he tried to say. Chained to all the places that he never wished to stay...As they took his soul they stole his pride..."

This reflects Will at this point as he doesn't understand what it is that prevents him from having 'normal' aspirations such as having a family and leaving Iraq safe. James, when talking to Sanborn, cannot express in words what he is feeling as he knows that what he wants to say isn't supposed to be said. Will feels a sense of attachment to the conflict therefore he is chained to these countries where he is faced with danger. It shows that whilst he knows he shouldn't want to be in these places and situation yet he flourishes in them and he feels at ease. 'As they took his soul they stole his pride' could suggest that Will James doesn't regret his decision to leave his family and go back to war but in doing so, it is clear that the war has taken his soul and his pride as he has fled from the life he finds more difficult.

Let's rewatch the scene

Choose a film in which there is a particularly surprising, gripping or emotional sequence. With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how the film makers explore this sequence and how it adds to your appreciation of the film as a whole.

Paragraph 1

Prior Learning - what goes into each paragraph?

P E E L

P The Hurt Locker captures the attention of many audiences by **portraying** how dangerous war is - both physically and mentally; it does so with several scenes and sequences but perhaps the most gripping sequence is the opening of the movie. The **untraditional** opening begins with the epigraph 'The rush of battle is often a potent and lethal addiction for war is a drug'. This not only sets up the opening sequence but it introduces the genre of the film and foreshadows the main character's addiction to war and the dangerous situations this leads to. To highlight the danger that the epigraph foreshadows, Bigelow uses camera shots to **immerse** the audience.

E After the epigraph, the film begins with a point of view shot from the perspective of a military robot. The robot is **moving very quickly** across the ground and this creates a shaky and unsteady point of view shot. The audience cannot see anything except what the robot is showing us.

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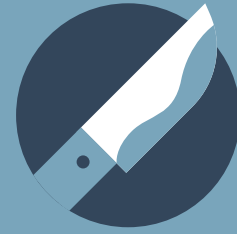
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A Study of
“Knives Out”,
directed by Rian
Johnson

Critical Essay



CRITICAL ESSAY CRITERIA



UNDERSTANDING

Of the text you have studied and its “central concerns” (themes)



ANALYSIS

Show understanding of director’s techniques and detailed explanations of them.

STRUCTURE

Your essay is structured coherently and follows a line of thought related to your chosen question.



EVALUATION

A developed commentary of what has been learned from techniques/general study of the text.

KNOWLEDGE

Of the text through use of quotations and description of scenes/characters.



TECHNICAL ACCURACY

Spelling, punctuation and grammar ensures the essay makes sense enough to pass.

Basic Film Information

1. Director: Rian Johnson
2. Genre: Comedy-Mystery
3. Date of Release: November 27th, 2019
4. Producer: Ram Bergman and Rian Johnson
5. Setting and Context: The Thrombey estate in Massachusetts and the surrounding area



THE VIEWER IS GIVEN CLUES
THROUGHOUT AS TO THE
IDENTITY OF THE MURDERER

INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY AN
ECCENTRIC, AMATEUR OR SEMI-
PROFESSIONAL DETECTIVE

COMPLEX, PLOT-
DRIVE DETECTIVE
STORY

A REMINDER:

Genre markers:
the murder mystery
– or “whodunnit”

ALMOST SEEN AS A
FORM OF COMEDY
– ORDER IS
RESTORED WHEN
MOST
THREATENED



We've just had a brief look at genre – what other media/literary terms will we be studying?

Literary/language terms	Media specific terms	<i>(Terms we won't be studying but could mention in essays)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Characterisation/Relationships• Themes (or issues)• Setting• Key scenes• Symbols• Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scene/sequence• Lighting• Mise-en-scene• Sound• Camera (shots and angles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foreshadowing• Climax• Atmosphere• Screen• Centre• Audience

- You will fill out this worksheet each time as we watch the scene, adding new information as we go.

Firstly,

“denotation” – literally what you see on the screen. Take note of everything you can.

Secondly, its

“connotations” – what these things *suggest*. Is a dark, foggy morning suggestive of something positive or negative?

“Knives Out” – Analysis of an Opening Sequence

	Denotation (What is there – literally, what do you see?)	Connotations (What it suggests – how does any of it link to the murder-mystery genre?)
The house	Weather: early morning, misty Camera: long shot - introductory Sound: staccato strings - intense	Mystery, suspense, typical of detective genre, dramatic

To help make your comments more detailed, let's learn about our first **media technique**:
Mise-en-scène.

Setting

- Setting, unsurprisingly, **sets the tone** for the film and gives the audience clues as to what to expect.
- In this movie, the Thrombey estate is the large, imposing home of the family and their household staff.
- The SETTING here is isolated, as well as decidedly dark and mysterious. This emphasises the vulnerability of the characters and the potential threat over them.



Costumes and Make Up

- *Costumes and make-up tell us a lot about individual characters.*



Costume 1:

- Strong colour
- Expensive jewellery
- Sharp haircut/glasses

Rich, powerful

Costume 2:

- Bland colours
- Very casual
- mismatched

Underprivileged,
modest



USEFUL LINKS

- <https://animationscreencaps.com/>
- <https://movie-screencaps.com/>
- <https://ezgif.com/maker>
- <https://giphy.com/create/gifmaker>
- STUDIO BINDER:
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUFoQUaVRt3MVFxgwPUMLCQ>