

MACQUARIE PEN ANTHOLOGY *of* AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

TEACHING GUIDE

Unit 7: Text into Film II

for Middle to Upper Secondary English

www.macquariepenanthology.com.au



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Text into Film II

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| FOCUS | <p>Some of the texts/extracts included in the <i>Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature</i> have been interpreted on film or made into a TV series.</p> <p>How does the text/extract compare with its representation in the film version? What techniques have been employed to adapt the text to film? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these transformations?</p> |
| LEVEL | Middle to Upper Secondary |
| LENGTH | Approximately 15 – 18 lessons |
| KEY TEXTS | <p>From the <i>Anthology</i>:</p> <p>Flanagan, Richard: <i>The Sound of One Hand Clapping</i> Franklin, Miles: <i>My Brilliant Career</i> Johnston, George: <i>My Brother Jack</i> Kenneally, Thomas: <i>Schindler’s Ark</i> Koch, Christopher: <i>The Year of Living Dangerously</i> Nowra, Louis: <i>Radiance</i> Rayson, Hannie: <i>Hotel Sorrento</i></p> <p>Supplementary Resources:</p> <p>Films: <i>Hotel Sorrento</i> (1995; Rated M) <i>My Brilliant Career</i> (1979; Rated PG) <i>My Brother Jack</i> (1998; Rated M) <i>Radiance</i> (1998; Rated PG) <i>Schindler’s List</i> (1993; Rated M) <i>The Sound of One Hand Clapping</i> (1999; Rated M) <i>The Year of Living Dangerously</i> (1982; Rated M)</p> <p><i>Anthology</i> film clips from www.macquariepenanthology.com.au ‘Miles Franklin’s Sybylla’ – Jill Roe ‘The character of Oskar Schindler’ – Thomas Kenneally</p> |

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| <p>ADDITIONAL TEXTS</p> | <p>Additional examples of texts from the <i>Anthology</i> that teachers could use for this unit include:</p> <p>Cusack, Dymphna and James, Florence: <i>Come in Spinner</i> Nowra, Louis: <i>Cosi</i></p> |
| <p>LEARNING & TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Introduction</p> | <p>Since the invention of motion pictures, a strong relationship has existed between written texts, particularly novels, and film.</p> <p>In this unit, students are given the opportunity to analyse the relationship between a linguistic art form and an art form that is fundamentally a visual one. Students will compare the written text to the film version, discuss the filmic techniques employed and evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the filmmakers' representation.</p> |
| <p>1. Comparing text and film</p> <p>(1 lesson)</p> | <p>Introduce the topic of Text into Film through a brainstorming activity, compiling a list of films which are based on written texts, such as <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>, the <i>Harry Potter</i> series, <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i>, <i>That Was Then, This Is Now</i>, <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, <i>Journey to the Centre of the Earth</i> and so on.</p> <p>Using the list you have compiled conduct a survey to determine which version students prefer, written or visual, and the reasons for their choices.</p> <p>After a class discussion about the survey results, each student should choose a book they have read that has been made into a film and write a paragraph about which version they prefer.</p> |
| <p>2. Close reading and viewing of extracts from Franklin's <i>My Brilliant Career</i></p> <p>(3-4 lessons)</p> | <p>Activity 2(a)</p> <p>Provide the class with a brief overview of some biographical information of Miles Franklin and talk about the influence of this context on her construction of Sybylla's character.</p> <p>Reference: <i>The Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm</p> <p>Activity 2(b)</p> <p>After reading the extract individually, students work with a partner to analyse Sybylla's character. See Student Handout 2(a) for details.</p> |

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| | <p>Activity 2(c) Students share their pen portraits with other groups. They must be prepared to support their use of a particular descriptor for Sybylla through reference to the given text.</p> <p>Activity 2(d) View the film clip ‘Miles Franklin’s Sybylla’ at www.macquariepenanthology.com.au and ask students how historian and biographer Jill Roe’s impressions of Sybylla relate to their own.</p> <p>Activity 2(e) View the film version of the relevant scenes. Consider the following questions in a class discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your impressions of Sybylla? • Does the representation of Sybylla in the film conform to your ideas and images of her as they are presented in the text? • View the scene/s again, identifying the techniques of film used to create the character of Sybylla. |
| <p>3. Comparison of texts (Koch, Flanagan) with their film versions (3-4 lessons)</p> | <p>Activity 3(a) Provide students with the extracts by Christopher Koch from <i>The Year of Living Dangerously</i> and Richard Flanagan from <i>The Sound of One Hand Clapping</i>.</p> <p>In these written texts, the authors have tried to capture a scene through the use of descriptive, evocative language which will create images in the reader’s mind, while in the filmed versions, the images are presented to the viewer through the camera’s lens.</p> <p>After reading the texts, ask students to identify the techniques used to create the setting or the atmosphere (eg: choice of word and image, rhythms, ordering of ideas). Ask them to explain the effects of these techniques.</p> <p>Activity 3(b) Talk about the importance of ‘mise-en-scene’ (ie all that appears before the camera including setting, lighting, costume, make-up and hairstyles, props, colours, blocking etc.) to the class. Ask students to sketch what they would include in the frame if they had the task of designing either Koch’s vibrant Indonesian market or Bojan’s dismal room.</p> |

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| | <p>Activity 3(c) View the equivalent scenes (of the extracts) in the film versions.</p> <p>Discuss the techniques used to bring the setting to life and to build atmosphere. Compare the film presentation with the two extracts in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.</p> |
| <p>4. Close study of an extract from Johnston’s <i>My Brother Jack</i> (1 lesson)</p> | <p>Activity 4(a) In the extract from George Johnston’s <i>My Brother Jack</i>, the narrator, David, is sitting on the roof of his house, reflecting on his life, past and present, thus giving the reader an insight into his character.</p> <p>See Student Handout 4(a) for discussion work in pairs.</p> <p>Activity 4(b) Explain that the director made the choice to not include this scene in the film. After viewing the film, ask students to consider why this decision could have been made. Would they have made the same decision? Why, or why not?</p> |
| <p>5. Comparison of Keneally’s <i>Schindler’s Ark</i> with the film version (2-3 lessons)</p> | <p>Activity 5(a) Although Keneally’s original title was <i>Schindler’s Ark</i>, he agreed to the title change for the film to <i>Schindler’s List</i>; subsequent reprints of the novel were published under the new title.</p> <p>Ask the students to consider the possible reasons for the change. What are the possible connotations of ‘Ark’? Students to think about whether there is a loss or a gain as a result of the title change as they pursue this study.</p> <p>Activity 5(b) Read the extract to the class. Provide them with a copy of the text and ask them to identify the language techniques Keneally uses to construct Schindler as a larger-than-life character.</p> <p>Activity 5(c) Watch the film clip ‘The character of Oskar Schindler’ at www.macquariepenanthology.com.au. Ask the students how Thomas Keneally’s thoughts on the character of Oskar Schindler reflect their own impressions of the way he is portrayed.</p> |

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| | <p>View the relevant scenes from the film and ask students to identify the visual techniques employed to create a representation of Schindler. In what ways is it similar to, or different from, his representation in the extract? Revisit the question about the title change.</p> |
| <p>6. Transforming drama to film (3 lessons)</p> | <p>Activity 6(a) Tell students you are going to look at extracts from two play scripts (Hannie Rayson’s <i>Hotel Sorrento</i> and Louis Nowra’s <i>Radiance</i>). You will be exploring the changes necessary to transform them to film. Remind students that plays, unlike novels, are written to be performed on a stage and in front of a live audience.</p> <p>Ask students to read the extracts in groups and discuss what changes they would make if they were to be filmed, and how they would convey their ideas on screen.</p> <p>Activity 6(b) View the relevant part of each film. Discuss the transformations. What is different from the extracts? How do the film versions compare with students’ earlier suggestions?</p> |
| <p>7. Building a character in text (1 lesson + homework)</p> | <p>Activity 7: Individual student task based on a close study of a character.</p> <p>See Student Handout 7 for guidelines of task and notes on characterisation.</p> |
| <p>8. Preparing to produce a film (1 lesson)</p> | <p>To conclude this unit, students select (from the list of additional texts) a text that they believe has the qualities to make a successful transition to film.</p> <p>In groups, they should prepare and present a pitch to persuade financiers to put up the financial backing for the film. The argument needs to demonstrate why the text that is being proposed would appeal to audiences and prove to be a money-spinner. The class votes on which pitch gets the money!</p> <p>Alternatively, you may wish to adapt previous activities to use with these texts.</p> |

Text into Film II

Student Handout 2(a)

Text: Extract from Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*.

- After reading the extract, work with a partner to analyse Sybylla's character by examining what she says and does, and her reactions to other characters.
- Create a pen portrait of Sybylla using adjectives and adverbs that best describe her.
- Share your pen portraits with other groups and be prepared to support your word choice through reference to the text.

Text into Film II

Student Handout 4(a)

In this extract from *My Brother Jack*, the narrator, David, is sitting on the roof of his house, reflecting on his life, past and present, thus giving the reader a number of insights into his character.

- Working with a partner, make a list of all the things that David is thinking about.
- Next to each item on the list, record what aspect of his personality or personality traits are suggested.
- Think about the visual techniques that could be employed to illustrate these character traits, for example, flashbacks, extreme close ups etc. You may find it helpful to use a grid:

| David's thoughts | Personality traits | Visual techniques |
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Text into Film II

Student Handout 7

Character: From text to film

Choose a character from any of the texts studied and write an analysis of the techniques used to portray the character in both the text and in the film.

Write at least a page about each of the forms of portrayal.

This is a guide to assist you:

Aspects of character

Characters are essential as they perform the plot and are usually the focus of interest. You need to distinguish between major and minor characters.

- What does the author tell us about the character(s)?
- What do the characters reveal about themselves by what they think, say, and do? Consider aspects such as appearance, personal characteristics, body language and movement, motivations. What techniques does the writer or filmmaker use to portray these aspects?
- How do the characters respond to stress and conflict?
- What do other characters think/say of particular characters and their relationships?
- Do the characters change or develop? In what ways?
- Are the character's actions plausible?
- What motivates action and behaviour?
- Is he or she a specific character type? Is there symbolic significance to the character?
- What effect does context have on the way the character behaves?