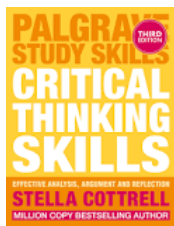


RESOURCES

- <http://www.filta.org.uk> – Especially the toolkit and the short films study guides
- <http://kidsloveshortfilms.com/>
- <http://kierandonaghy.com/seven-best-short-films-empathy>
- Lynette Tan Yuen Ling, Coleen Angove and Anuradha Ramanujan, Using Film to Teach Critical Thinking: Three Approaches in the Rhetoric and Expository Writing Classroom, <http://www.universitypublications.net/ijas/0903/pdf/V6NA204.pdf> (with some practical exercises and ideas)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Critical Thinking (July 2018) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-thinking/> (Comprehensive definition, theoretical strands and further resources)
- Open University: Thinking Critically (Study Skills booklet): <http://www.openuniversity.edu/sites/www.openuniversity.edu/files/brochures/Critical-thinking-Open-University.pdf>
- Jason Bainbridge, Textual Analysis and Media Research: http://lib.oup.com.au/he/media_journalism/bainbridge2e/bainbridge1e_tools03.pdf
- Basic Film Terminology with examples: http://users.wfu.edu/jarretes/Basic_Film_Terminology.pdf



- Cottrell, Stella. *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. , 2017. Print.

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INSET FOR MFL TEACHERS

SHORT FILM, CHARACTER JOURNEY AND CRITICAL THINKING

THOUGHTS FOR (SHORT) FILM ANALYSIS

© **Marta F Suarez**

Workshop designed and delivered by Marta F Suarez, as part of the INSET for MFL Teachers: Using Short Film for Critical Thinking in A-Level (29th September 2018). Manchester Metropolitan University.

This event was organised by FLAME (Film, Languages and Media in Education) at the Manchester Metropolitan University, as part of the New Approaches to Transmedia and Language Pedagogy Project, part of the AHRC Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) Cross-Language Dynamics. You can find out more about the OWRI Project by visiting our website or following us on Twitter.

FLAME (Film, Languages and Media in Education)

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- Transmedia in Education Project: <http://transmediaineducation.com>
- FLAME MMU Site: <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/languages/flame/>
- FLAME Wordpress Blog: <https://flameresearchcentre.wordpress.com/>
- Marta F Suarez: <http://martafsuarez.com>

HERO'S JOURNEY: FILM STRUCTURE

Most contemporary films with a single protagonist follow the structure of "The Hero's Journey", which involves a character arc of transformation. These are the usual steps for a full-length feature film, which might be simplified in short films under 20 minutes, or reduced to a couple of points in short films under 5 minutes. Short films usually find solutions to problems; long-feature films transform the characters and the world of the narrative. Characters in comedies, tragedies and horror genres might not change but suffer an external change.

★ ORDINARY WORLD

Everyday life, starting point, uneventful

★ CALL TO ADVENTURE

Initial disruption, call to action, small incident

★ REFUSAL OF THE CALL

Fear, self-doubt, moment of doubt

★ MEETING WITH THE MENTOR

Spiritual or personal guidance

★ CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD

Starting the quest! Let's go!

★ TEST, ALLIES, ENEMIES

Task is clear. Finding out who can be trusted

★ APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE

Approaching the first challenge

★ ORDEAL

Battle, dangerous encounter or internal crisis

★ REWARD

First transformation and reward

★ THE ROAD BACK

Things *seem* to settle into the ordinary world again

★ RESURRECTION

The last battle to fight, a new transformation

★ RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR

New ordinary world. Resolution. Full character arc

CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH (SHORT) FILM

Debate	Understanding the POV of the protagonist and the antagonist: goals, desires, objectives, reasons...
Scholarship	Finding relevant information on the themes, director, genre, actors, format, film analysis...
Argument	The dramatic conflicts can set up points for a logical sequence and a conclusion. Similar approach can be taken for character development.
Criticism	Looking at strengths and weaknesses in the argument, the character development, the film intention, flaws in the structure, etc. Also for discussion the director's approach, the premise, the apparent conclusions, etc.
Analysis	Deep analysis of the film can provide a full range of themes and issues not apparent at the level of the dialogue or the plot.
Evidence	Ensuring all the points are backed up by evidence from audiovisual clues, references, etc
Objectivity	Set one's knowledge and expectations, as well as the director's, the scholarship, etc.
Precision	Anything that does not develop the main argument of the discussion or that is not backed up by evidence must be removed

CHARACTER SHEET (FULL, DETAILED)

Name:	Age:	Gender:
Ethnicity:	Class:	
Religion:	Voice / Speech:	
Appearance:		

Origin, hometown:

Childhood and teenage years:

Memories:

Troubled event, trauma:

Education:

Profession and finances:

Relationships with colleagues:

Career objective:

Happy / Unhappy at the job:

Family and personal relationships:

Home:

Habits / routine:

Likes / Dislikes:

Obsessions:

Attitude:

Fears, weaknesses, failures:

Hopes and dreams:

Strengths:

Special places / retreats / comfort objects:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Most protagonists are designed taking into account three key areas: their **background**, their flaws and their desires or goals. All the information should be relevant, if a character is a fitness fanatic, for example, this characteristic must have meaning in the narrative or the transformation of the character.

The **character flaws** drive their transformation, as they are usually what hinders success or achieving the ultimate goal. Common character flaws are fears, lack of confidence, social awkwardness, lacking a quality or skill. These flaws define the (dramatic) “internal conflict”, that is, the obstacles that a character puts to herself/himself because of their beliefs, attitudes and personal characteristics. These flaws are often expressed in the character’s background or her/his “ordinary world”.

The **desires or goals** are usually relatable and something with which the audience can sympathise, such as achieving romantic stability, rising to a position of power, becoming famous, being successful at a particular task, etc. In order to succeed, the character must usually remove all obstacles by overcoming her/his character flaws (internal conflict), fighting the villain (interpersonal conflict) or confronting institutions and norms (situational conflict).



© BarbaraTP Devianart

INTERNAL CONFLICT: Overcoming lack of confidence in his own skills, believing in his destiny

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT: Confronting Voldemort and any other antagonists

SITUATIONAL CONFLICT: For each film, getting permission, getting help, bending rules, etc.

Note: “conflict” is used in the context of “dramatic conflict”, as “obstacle”.

OPENING AND CLOSING SCENES

In most contemporary films, the opening and closing scenes are usually related and either **contrast or mirror** each other. They often work as a kind of cover and back cover of the story and exemplify the transformation of the character, changes in the ordinary world or the critical elements of the narrative.

For this task, the opening scene does not have to be necessarily the first scene on screen, as often this is an establishing scene that merely informs the audience of where and when this narrative is taking place or creates a background for the story. In that case, the scene with which to work tends to be the scene in which the protagonist or her/his world is introduced.

The **opening scene** tends to set the initial “ordinary world” and the protagonist. It is essential to pay attention to objects and colours, which often evoke emotions or refer to the character’s background. The **closing scene** usually refers back to this initial scene and delivers key elements that signify the transformation of the character and sets the new ordinary world.

A comparison of both the opening and closing scene is valuable to define the structure, the character and the narrative. Sometimes it is more insightful to look at the introductory scene for the character, instead of the actual initial scene for the film. Sometimes these opening and closing scenes are mirroring other instalments in the wider narrative, such as in some of the *Star Wars* films. When this happens, it tends to either link the narratives together or to establish the main differences between the sequels.

© Lionsgate films (The Hunger Games, 2012) - Young adult adventure drama



© Pixar (Bao, 2018) - short silent film, family, drama



© Pixar (Alma, 2009) - short silent film, horror

