# Becoming Cineliterate – learning progression

## Towards a model of learning progression

Because little consistent and continuing moving image education currently takes place in schools, there is a lack of shared and explicit sense of the standard of work that might be expected at different stages. Anecdotal evidence suggests that similar kinds of moving image activity may be required of pupils at widely differing age levels, with similar results. Teachers' ideas about appropriate levels of challenge in either critical or creative moving image work tend to be derived from their experience elsewhere in the curriculum rather than from continuing experience of moving image activities with pupils of different ages. This is not surprising, given the general lack of in-service training and advisory support for any kind of media education.

There is therefore a clear need for a model to stimulate thinking about how pupils' learning might be expected to progress over several years if their moving image education were sustained consistently. Any such model needs to be firmly based in classroom practice and teachers' own research if it is to have any credibility. But a start has to be made somewhere, which is why we provide here a hypothetical model which some teachers, departments and schools may wish to use as a framework for discussion and reflection.

This model was first published in *Making Movies Matter*, the report of the Film Education Working Group (*bfi* 1999). It attempts to show what might be the outcomes of learning about the moving image media of film, video and television (FVT) through five stages of learning progression. These stages can be mapped on to the stages of mandatory and post-16 education, but the model can also be seen as non-age-specific, and all learners would to some extent pass through these stages. It is also a cumulative model: learners in Stage 5 would still be using the same keywords and doing the same kinds of activity that were identified at Stage 1, but in a context of more sophisticated usage and wider viewing experience.

No course content is shown here: this is not a syllabus or a curriculum. For the sake of conciseness and simplicity the model uses quite general terms and is very basic. It is divided into two broad sections at each level:
**Experiences and Activities**, which provides an indication of the range of inputs learners would need, and **Outcomes**, which describes what learners should be able to do by the end of the stage. At each stage a list of **Key Words** is provided, **not** as a vocabulary to be taught, but as a way of suggesting the areas and types of knowledge that each stage might involve.

The model is based upon three broad conceptual areas, for which a more detailed rationale can be found on page 57:

▶ **The language of moving images** – focusing on the ways in which moving image texts are internally *constructed*;
▶ **Producers and audiences** – exploring the ways in which moving image texts are *made and delivered* to audiences;
▶ **Messages and values** – concerned with the *interpretations* of the world offered by moving image texts and the effects these may have.

To become a really useful guide to teaching and learning, this model needs critical engagement from practising teachers. This can only happen where individuals and departments are able to invest in the necessary time for reflection and analysis, which of course will depend upon very particular circumstances. The *bfi* will seek to foster these over the next few years and to encourage others to do the same. Education departments in higher education and in other agencies may wish to use it as the basis for research, curriculum development and teacher training. Some schools – perhaps specialist schools in particular – may be able to undertake valuable developmental work on this model within the classroom, and to share it with others. The *bfi* is keen to hear about such work and to help disseminate it.

# Becoming Cineliterate · Stage 1

## EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- See a wide range of film, video and television (FVT) from different world cultures including different styles of animation, live action drama, adventure, musical, abstract, factual, documentary; short films and features; historical and contemporary, home videos.
- Access moving images in different ways, eg cinema, video, television, video games, CD-ROM.
- Talk about out-of-school FVT viewing, responses and preferences.
- Talk about content and structure of short video sequences while teacher uses pause button to encourage and enable close observation of compostion and framing.
- Use VCR, camcorder, and ICT software for sequencing and making animations.

### Key Words

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| shot | longshot | film |
| cut | pan | television |
| fade | track | videotape |
| mix | focus | programme |
| zoom | soundtrack | animation |
| close-up | special effects | video recorder |
| mid-shot | cinema | camcorder |

## OUTCOMES

Learners should be able to:

### Language

- Identify and talk about structuring features such as music, changes in location, interior/exterior settings, actors and presenters.
- Use Key Words to refer to elements of film language when describing events in a story.
- Use Key Words in talking about character types, as well as referring to clues such as dress, casting, performance etc.

### Producers and Audiences

- Use credits, video covers and posters to identify titles and actors' names, likely audience category, and theme or genre.
- Identify broad categories of intended audience, eg 'this is for little children', and give reasons.
- Identify common features between FVT, book and game versions of generic texts, eg myth, fairy tale, space adventure etc.

### Messages and Values

- Identify and talk about different levels of 'realism', eg naturalistic drama vs cartoon animation.
- Use Key Words to refer to elements of film language when explaining personal responses and preferences.
- Identify devices such as flashback, dream sequences, exaggeration – discuss why they are needed and how they are conveyed.

In addition they should be able to:

- Use VCR to find and repeat short sequences of FVT to support analysis and discussion.
- Work co-operatively with others to discuss or make moving image sequences.
- Use ICT software to sequence still or moving images to tell story or convey information.
- Transfer a narrative sequence from one medium to another, eg poem to film/photo story; film sequences to written text or cartoon strip.
- Add music or commentary to a moving image sequence.

# Becoming Cineliterate · Stage 2

## EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- ▶ See a wide range of FVT including more narratively complex stories, more from pre-1950 and silent periods, films from different cultures including subtitled films, and non-narrative and experimental films.
- ▶ Watch and discuss sequences that build impressions or emotional effects, eg montage.
- ▶ See different versions of the same story or event.
- ▶ Watch/listen and discuss the use of music, voices, sound effects and silence in short sequences.
- ▶ Watch and discuss how continuities and discontinuities in space and time are conveyed in FVT (eg in chase sequences).
- ▶ Watch and discuss sequences in which characters are presented non-verbally (eg through camera position, lighting, costume, music etc).

### Key Words

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| angle | broadcast | recorded |
| frame | channel | censorship |
| sequence | release | classification |
| dialogue | exhibitor | budget |
| sound effects | trailer | 'watershed' |
| projector | feature | star |
| scriptwriter | short | satellite |
| script | documentary | cable |
| composer | live action | |
| director | live | |

## OUTCOMES

Learners should be able to:

### Language

- ▶ Describe how sound contributes to the overall meaning of a moving image sequence, using Key Words where appropriate.
- ▶ Use Key Words to explain how a FVT sequence is constructed.

### Producers and Audiences

- ▶ Use Key Words to distinguish between different moving image delivery systems.
- ▶ Identify and distinguish some production roles, using Key Words.
- ▶ Suggest reasons why different people may have different responses to the same FVT text.
- ▶ Explain why some FVT may cost a lot of money to make.

### Messages and Values

- ▶ Use Key Words to identify ways in which FVT can show things that have not 'really' happened, eg violence, magic.
- ▶ Explore reasons for and against censorship, age classification and the broadcasting 'watershed'.

In addition they should be able to:

- ▶ Read subtitles.
- ▶ Plan and shoot short sequences on video using more than one point of view, eg a person entering a room; one person meeting another; a chase.
- ▶ Create animated sequences on film, video or ICT or in an optical toy such as a zoetrope.

# Becoming Cineliterate · Stage 3

## EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

Pupils should have opportunities to:

▶ See a wide range of FVT including examples of different national cinemas of different historical periods, examples of major directors and significant 'movements'.
▶ Watch and discuss sequences which have ambiguous elements or do not have a clear narrative resolution.
▶ Through analysis and practical activity, explore ways in which small editorial changes can effect meaning (eg slight change of timing of a cut).
▶ Look at and discuss publicity material for films and have opportunities to make posters, press packs, trailers etc.
▶ Use interviews and questionnaires to find out about audiences choices and preferences.

### Key Words

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| editor | copyright | unrealistic |
| cinematographer | scheduling | non-realistic |
| distributor | narrowcast | non-narrative |
| production | genre | abstract |
| company | realism | stereotype |
| target market | realistic | marketing |
| profit | authentic | promotion |
| ratings | propaganda | |
| box office | representation | |

## OUTCOMES

Learners should be able to:

### Language

▶ Use Key Words to identify and discuss differences between FVT genres.
▶ Explain how meaning is created through editing of image and sound.
▶ Explain some of the ways in which film styles have changed over time.

### Producers and Audiences

▶ Identify and distinguish between a wider range of production roles.
▶ Explain basic differences between processes of pre-production, production, post-production and exhibition.
▶ Use Key Words to explain some of the ways FVT are marketed and promoted to audiences.
▶ Identify and discuss factors that may contribute to success of a FVT text, eg star, genre, theme.

### Messages and Values

▶ Use Key Words to explain how social groups, events and ideas are represented in FVT.
▶ Explain and justify aesthetic judgements and personal responses.
▶ Argue for alternative ways of representing a group, event or idea.

In addition they should be able to:

▶ Use ICT to draft, create and manipulate moving image and sound sequences.
▶ Use online and print resources to access information about films.
▶ Use credits, packaging and publicity material to identify key information about a film's production.

# Becoming Cineliterate · Stage 4

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- See a range of FVT that both consolidates and extends existing viewing experience in terms of genre, directors, national cinemas, mainstream and non-mainstream, historical periods.
- Find out more about different modes of FVT production, eg industrial/mainstream vs low-budget independent.
- Have opportunities to relate FVT knowledge to other cultural fields, eg literature, history, fine art, music etc.
- Investigate a topic, using FVT text, online and print sources.

## Key Words

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| deep focus | dominant | theme |
| montage | independent | style |
| hand-held camera | low budget | 16mm |
| auteur | avant-garde | 35mm |
| art cinema | surrealist | digital |
| Hollywood | expressionist | non-linear |
| ideology | *cinéma vérité* | analogue |
| mainstream | *mise en scène* | |

Learners should be able to:

### Language

- Identify and describe some major FVT styles and narrative forms, using Key Words.
- Explain how elements of FVT styles may relate to technologies, eg portable cameras, editing software.

### Producers and Audiences

- Identify and discuss some of the factors in the production process that may effect the final shape and meaning of a FVT text.
- Describe some of the risks and costs involved in FVT production, distribution and exhibition.
- Explain some of the possibilities and limitations of audience research.

### Messages and Values

- Use Key Words to discuss and evaluate FVT texts with strong social or ideological messages.

In addition they should be able to:

- Use ICT to redraft and manipulate moving image and sound sequences in response to audience comment.
- Use FVT knowledge to evaluate information on FVT from online and print sources.
- Use stills and clips in live or recorded presentations of critical arguments or investigations.

# Becoming Cineliterate · Stage 5

## EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

Pupils should have opportunities to:

▶ Use ICT to explore expressive/communicative potential of specific FVT styles.
▶ Consolidate viewing experience and background knowledge of two or three aspects of FVT, eg a genre, a director's work, or a movement, a national cinema, a technological innovation.
▶ Read and discuss some critical approaches to FVT, eg auteur, genre, realism, audience effects, representation etc.
▶ Undertake independent research, using FVT texts, online and print sources, and live interviews where appropriate.

### Key Words

theory          hegemony          diegesis
critical         intertextuality    institution
culture         aesthetic

## OUTCOMES

Learners should be able to:

### Language

▶ Explain how FVT styles and narrative forms can relate to authors, production context, social and cultural context.
▶ Use film language to construct moving image narratives.
▶ Identify and describe the contributions of different skills in a FVT text.

### Producers and Audiences

▶ Describe and explain how authors, genres and stars are meaning-bearing systems and how they can be used to market FVT.
▶ Identify and describe some of the ways in which FVT institutions relate to social, cultural and political contexts.
▶ Describe the economic organisation of FVT institutions and the relationship between producers, distributors, exhibitors and audiences.

### Messages and Values

▶ Use Key Words to discuss and evaluate ideological messages in mainstream FVT texts.
▶ Describe and account for different levels of realism in FVT texts.
▶ Explain relationships between aesthetic style and social/political meaning.

In addition they should be able to:

▶ Assemble research findings into clear argument or exposition.
▶ Create moving image texts for specific audiences and purposes in specific styles and genres.
▶ Develop independent judgements about the value and relevance of critical theories.

### Further Learning

In specialist higher and continuing education, learners will develop increased ability to research independently, to synthesise ideas and information across a range of areas and to speculate and argue on the basis of such syntheses, to develop their understanding of FVT study as a discipline and to write, speak and make FVT within the disciplinary paradigm.

# Rationale

### Language

Each medium has its own system of conveying meaning, although schools have concentrated mainly on the medium of print. But over the last 100 years, the moving image medium of film has developed a particularly powerful language, which is now also used by television, video and computer software. The ways in which images are framed, sequenced, paced and combined with sounds – music and sound effects as well as words – have become a highly significant component of the information, stories and ideas we encounter every day. Everyone should have the chance to learn about how the moving image media create meaning. It is a basic skill of cineliteracy to be able to refer to devices such as framing, camera angle or editing easily and meaningfully in discussion and in critical writing. People of any age learn this most easily when they have opportunities to make and manipulate these devices in their own creative work.



Courtesy: bfi Stills

### Producers and Audiences

Now that there are so many different sources of communication it is an increasingly important element of basic citizenship for people to be able to identify where messages are coming from and what motivates them. It is not enough simply to be able to interpret or create moving image texts. The moving image media are huge industries and films are commodities, bought and sold by competing multinational companies. Audiences are targeted and courted in many different ways, although their real interests and responses can be very hard to identify. Everyone should be able to make informed choices about their consumption of moving image media, learning how to identify their sources and the interests they serve. By recognising that they themselves are members of audiences and larger social groups, learners can think about how their own interests relate to the ways they are defined by others. They should experience the excitement and power of producing their own moving image texts and these should be seen and discussed by real audiences.

**Fifty years before Disney, Jean Marais brought the Beast to life in *La Belle et la Bête* (Jean Cocteau 1946).**

### Messages and Values

Film and television can affect our emotions and our ideas. There are many theories about the effects of the moving image and opinion is fundamentally divided as to the real extent of its power to affect behaviour. However, we all know that we can be moved, entranced, angered, delighted or bored by film and it is important to explore these responses and be able to justify them. Particular texts or types of text may have ongoing effects on our ideas, values and beliefs: we need to consider whether this is the case, how it happens and whether it matters. It is also important to think about how we might assess the potential effects of the moving image – whether these are aesthetic, moral, political or economic – on other individuals and groups. Everyone should be able to explore the relative realism of different moving image texts and have learned to distinguish between literal meanings and underlying themes. Learners should have the chance both to see and to create moving image texts in a variety of modes from documentary and dramatic realism to fantasy and non-narrative forms.

**Perceptions of the British Empire are renegotiated in Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982).**



Courtesy: bfi Stills