



Film Studies

A Level

Film Studies

Delivery Guide

Exploring messages and values in film

September 2015



A Level Film Studies Delivery Guide

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Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: Expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected which best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

This Delivery Guide has been written to aid teachers, however the activities listed from page 6 to page 23 have been written in a direct address to students. It is recommended that when using the suggested activities teachers follow their own good practice and where necessary contextualise or amend the activities (for example, in terms of film choice or themes) for the needs of their own cohorts.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email resourcesfeedback@ocr.org.uk.

KEY



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AS Level content only

Curriculum Content

Identifying, exploring and analysing messages and values is a necessary focus for study across all four units of the specification.

Unit F631 Text and Context: Section A – English language film – the study of messages and values is a required part of study for texts chosen for this topic. Examination questions can seek to assess students' understanding of this concept.

Unit F632 Foundation Portfolio – messages and values could form the entirety or part of the macro focus for the textual analysis essay (worth 40 marks out of a total of 100 for the portfolio).

Unit F633 Global Cinema and Critical Perspectives – knowledge and understanding of messages and values are of central importance to learning in Section A.

Unit F634 Advanced Portfolio – as with the Foundation Portfolio, messages and values is a legitimate area to centre critical investigations on.

Thinking Conceptually

Approaches to teaching the content

This delivery guide has been constructed to be used in two ways – as a linear resource and for a pick and mix approach to use activities as refreshers or for additional approaches to material being studied in class or being considered individually for coursework portfolio investigations. Underpinning the approach to linear design is Bloom's taxonomy – attempting to equip novice students new to the subjects with a series of activities designed to put in place the necessary foundations of knowledge and building up their understanding as the tasks in the delivery guide progress.

Common misconceptions or difficulties students may have

The biggest misconception which students seem to have with analysing messages and values in film is that too often messages and values are conflated together – and students lack the knowledge and understanding to differentiate between the two terms and thus they have difficulties communicating how messages and values are evident in the films they have studied. The aim of this delivery guide is to provide a range of opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of messages and values with applications to a range of films – mostly contemporary, but with some historical references too.

Conceptual links to other areas of the specification

The content covered in this guide is designed to lend itself to easy application of the study of messages and values across the different areas of the course - primarily by exploring films from a range of genres. Also, the materials are signposted via the weblinks incorporated in the sections below, which should provide fertile ground for independent enquiry, both on the films being explored in this delivery guide, but also for films being studied at school / college level and / or individual student level.

ACTIVITIES

This delivery guide aims to give a range of learning opportunities – encouraging students to work independently, and in small and large groups. The tasks across the guide require the students to develop their critical skills and to sharpen their communication skills, all applied to exploring the analysis of messages and values across a wide range of films (taken from across the course of film history). It is hoped by completing many, if not all of the tasks of the guide which follow, students will be well equipped to analyse messages and values in a wide range of films, thus being well set up for working on this area across the course as a whole.

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Key terms – definitions</p> <p>The first step to being able to master the analysis of messages and values is to understand what the terms mean. Words, even seemingly easy to understand words, can be very slippery to define. The first step in the process of understanding what the words 'messages' and 'values' mean must involve a brief consultation with the dictionary. Definitions to both terms from the Oxford English Dictionary can be found at the web links below:</p> <p>Messages (Oxford Dictionaries website) - http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/message A dictionary definition of the term 'messages'.</p> <p>On clicking this link, you will see there a variety of different definitions – this is what makes words so slippery to define. For practical purposes for this delivery guide, the second noun definition referring to moral points in films is the key one to remember and understand.</p> <p>Values (Oxford Dictionaries website) - http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/value A dictionary definition of the term 'values'.</p> <p>As with the definition for messages, there are a variety of options here – but the first noun definition will give film students what they need to begin developing their understanding of this term.</p> <p>Given the importance to understanding these words in all units of the specification it is a good idea to find some way to make a record of what these definitions are.</p> <p>Students could do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write these definitions down in their notes for their folder• Construct a word processor document to hold these definitions• Make notes of these definitions on their mobile phone or tablet – either in writing or dictating it into a phone. <p>For good study habits, it's a good idea for students to find at least two ways to capture these definitions – whether writing is by paper and pen or by dictating a note into their phone or tablet.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities

Key terms – but what do they actually mean?

While it is useful to have some definitions to begin interpreting what words such as 'messages' and 'values' mean, this is only the first step. On a practical level, when analysing messages and values in films, there are four questions that a student needs to ask of a film.

- 1) What is the film trying to say? (Messages)
- 2) How is the film trying to say this? (Messages linking to use of film language)
- 3) What is of importance to the filmmakers? (Values)
- 4) How are things of importance signified? (Values linking to use of film language)

Internalising and asking these questions is the first step to understanding that messages does not equate to values.

Consider the last film you saw – try to answer these questions about that film.

Next – tell a colleague what film you're thinking of and your answers to the questions. Listen to their responses – do you agree with them? Is it clear where their ideas are coming from?

These are critical skills which need to be well developed for film exams and for coursework portfolios – if you can develop such skills in oral communication, this will help you in expressing yourself clearly in written communication.

Resources

Thinking Contextually

Activities

Messages and values – taking it personally

When analysing films you will become familiar with analysing the 'appearance' (costume and look) of characters – this can and usually does say a great deal about what type of characters they are. In other words, a character's appearance will tell you a lot about what they value – about what is important (or not) to them; and about what messages they are trying to communicate to the outside world about themselves.

A good place to begin practising this type of analytical skill is by *taking it personally*. Consider your appearance from head to foot. The type of haircut / hairstyle you have will be an indicator of what is of value to you – about looking similar or looking deliberately different to many of the people you regularly come into contact with. Or it might be a case of having a hairstyle which you consider to be neat or practical – again this will be reflective of what is important to you.

Draw a portrait of yourself as you're currently dressed – going from head to foot, identify what you're wearing (include make up and jewellery) and work out why – why is this item important to you? What does it contribute to your overall appearance? What messages are you trying to send to your peers about what kind of person you are?

This is quite a personal exercise – the findings are for you to consider.

Some things to consider – if you are wearing a football team shirt or a band t-shirt, this will mark you out as a supporter / fan of that team or band. Presumably, this will be important to you tell the rest of the world this. This is an example of messages and values in action.

Resources

Thinking Contextually

Activities

James Brown – 'It's a man's world'

So far, you have learned what the words 'messages' and 'values' mean, acquired a short series of questions to internalise and ask yourself when watching films and considered your own acts of personal communication and the messages and values that lie inside these acts of communication. Before starting to explore in greater detail how films communicate messages and values, time for a musical interlude.

The point of this activity is to start querying what messages and values may be carried in texts with or without the conscious knowledge of the sender of the message.

First – read the lyrics to James Brown's song 'It's a man's man's man's world' at the following link:

Lyrics (Metrolyrics website)

<http://www.metrolyrics.com/its-a-mans-mans-world-lyrics-james-brown.html>

'It's a man's man's man's world' lyrics by James Brown and Betty Newsome.

- 1) What messages do the lyrics communicate about the roles and positions of males and females in society?
- 2) From your interpretation of the lyrics, how important are women in society?
- 3) Again, from your interpretation of the lyrics, how much do men need women to be successful?

Secondly – watch this video for the song at the following link:

Music Video (YouTube website)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juTeHsKPWhY&feature=youtu.be>

James Brown – 'It's A Man's Man's Man's World'

- 1) Look closely at how James Brown performs the song – does his performance challenge your answers to the questions above or reinforce these answers?
- 2) In this performance of the song, there are only males on stage. Does this fact reinforce or undermine the meaning of the song? (Your answer to this will depend on your own interpretation of the lyrics.)

While this is a relatively short exercise, the answers to the questions here give you something to consider for analysing messages and values in films – particularly if you can access the screenplay for the film you are analysing, because, as with the above, you will have the ability to compare between the written word and the performance of it – and this will enable you to query and make some assertions about the messages and values of filmmakers – and how this may differ between writer and director, for example.

Resources

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Frozen – research, presentation and evaluation tasks</p> <p>At the point of reading this, you may or may not have seen the film ‘Frozen’ – but you have surely heard about it and you are probably familiar with who the central characters are – particularly the two sisters, Anna and Elsa.</p> <p>If you are not familiar with the story of the film, then click here to read up on the Internet Movie Database’s (IMDB) synopsis for the film: Synopsis (IMDB website) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/synopsis?ref=tt_str_y_pl Synopsis of the film ‘Frozen’</p> <p>Frozen is the latest in a long line of Disney princess films – films which over the decades have been criticised for their representations of gender – with weak females needing to be saved by strong males. This has opened up Disney to criticisms of communicating sexist messages and of supporting a value system that espouses ‘it’s a man’s world’ – going back to the previous activity.</p> <p>The two links below offer a good opportunity for pair or small group work and for students to teach each other.</p> <p>One student or group reads the article from The Artifice website on gender representations in Disney princess films: Article (The Artifice website) http://the-artifice.com/disney-gender-stereotypes/ Article on gender representations in Disney princess films</p> <p>At the same time, the other student or group is reading the article from The Guardian on religious messages in Frozen: Article (The Guardian website) http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/25/disney-frozen-religious-allegory Article on religious messages in Frozen</p> <p>Next each student or group takes turns to present the details of the article they have read – a short time limit could be put on this to facilitate students having to distil and communicate key points in a short amount of time – as they will have to do in exams.</p> <p>From there, each student should then be in a position to evaluate the views expressed and make notes to answer the following exam style question:</p> <p>‘Frozen – a nice film to look at, but with nothing to say’. Discuss this view.</p> <p>This task will require students to consider the evidence at their disposal and engage in a debate about what the total answer might be – this will help to develop necessary essay planning and writing skills.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Ideology – taking theory to the next level</p> <p>A song by the 1960s band The Troggs told us that ‘Love is all around’ – a song made very popular in the 1990s through its association with the romantic comedy ‘Four Weddings and a Funeral’. As a metaphor, this is a good starting place for thinking about ideology.</p> <p>Arguably, ideology is all around us – in the same way that the air that we breathe is all around us. In normal conditions, we cannot see the air that we breathe, but we accept that it’s there. In certain conditions – we can make the air that we breathe visible. On a cold day, go outside and breathe out – you will then see the air that you have breathed. As we can with air, so we can make ideology visible in certain conditions.</p> <p>First, the word and its meaning – again, let’s turn to the Oxford dictionary as a reliable source: Ideology (Oxford Dictionary website) http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ideology A dictionary definition of the term ‘ideology’.</p> <p>The first definition here provides an excellent base to work from. If an ideology is a set or system of ideas, then another way of phrasing this is to say is that an ideology is a collection of messages and values.</p> <p>Given the importance of understanding this word it’s a good idea to find some way to make a record of what this definition is. You could: write this definition down in your notes for your folder; and/or you could construct a word processor document to hold this definition for you; and/or you could make notes of this definition on your phone or tablet (either in writing or dictating it into your phone or tablet). As stated previously, for good study habits, it’s a good idea to find at least two ways to ‘write’ down these definitions – whether writing is by paper and pen or by dictating a note into your phone or tablet.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Messages / values / ideology in contemporary popular films</p> <p>In order to consolidate the previous learning activities, go to the link from the Box Office Mojo website – a very detailed website full of all sorts of very useful statistics about the film industry internationally:</p> <p>Box Office Mojo website http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/uk/yearly/?yr=2014&p=.htm</p> <p>The top 100 most popular films in the UK, Ireland and Malta in 2014.</p> <p>The link details the top 100 most popular films in the UK, Ireland and Malta in 2014 (in case you're wondering why the 'UK, Ireland and Malta'? when the rights to film distribution are sold at international film markets (there is one of these at the Cannes film festival in the south of France every year in May), those rights are sold on a per territory basis – in international film markets, the 'UK, Ireland and Malta' form one of these territories).</p> <p>As a whole class competitive exercise, individuals or groups could see how many films on the list they can work out what the key messages are, what the key values are and what ideologies are being expressed within these films. There can be no overall right or wrong answers to this – the 'correctness' of the response comes from the quality of the reasoning applied to the answers given.</p> <p>To help with this task, students could consult imdb.com to learn about the storyline of particular films and use YouTube to view trailers or clips from these films to help develop answers.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Demystification 1: Messages and values – is that always about ‘big issues’ in hard-to-understand films?</p> <p>This can be a common view among students – let’s try to demystify this view by thinking about films you are likely to be with familiar with, e.g. some of the recent Disney Pixar films. Read the Discover magazine article linked here and then discuss with a partner what you think of the views expressed.</p> <p>Article (Discover Magazine blogsite) http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/sciencenotfiction/2011/05/14/the-hidden-message-in-pixars-films/#.VOn66ZisXeN Article on the hidden messages in Pixar’s films.</p>	
<p>Historical research – ‘The Birth Of A Nation’</p> <p>Many, if not all, of the films you will study across the A level will be narrative films – in the sense that films will each have a story to tell. One of the earliest landmark films in the development of narrative film is the artistic classic (because of its skilful use of the tools of this developing art form) but overtly racist film ‘The Birth Of A Nation’.</p> <p>Read through the articles detailed below. These articles will articulate the reasons for the criticisms of the racist messages and values in the film and that the film itself has always been criticised for these ideological messages and values. Thus, it should become clear that for as long as we have had narrative films, we have had films capable of carrying messages and values – and these messages and values have been a point of controversy.</p> <p>First, the Spark Notes article detailing the film’s reception at the time of its initial release: Article (Spark Notes website) http://www.sparknotes.com/film/birthofanation/section2.rhtml Article on the reception of the film ‘The Birth Of A Nation’ at the time of its release.</p> <p>Secondly, a Guardian article detailing about the continued potency of the film a century from initial release Article (The Guardian website) http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/jul/29/birth-of-a-nation-dw-griffith-masterpiece Article on the reception of the film ‘The Birth Of A Nation’ in contemporary society.</p> <p>Make notes on each of these articles to keep a brief record of what each article argues.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Content analysis - 'The Birth Of A Nation'</p> <p>Below is a link to the film – the entire film last for just over three hours. Try to watch at least 30 minutes to obtain a reasonable sample from the film – you can watch more if you wish.</p> <p>Whilst watching, make notes on the actions and appearances of the white characters and the black characters and how they are each represented on screen.</p> <p>What differences in actions and appearances have been presented on screen? Share your points with other students – where do you agree and disagree with each other? Are you interpreting scenes / events / characters in different ways to your colleagues? Why / why not is this the case?</p> <p>'The Birth Of A Nation'(YouTube website) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=302YMeiDSrl The film 'The Birth Of A Nation' presented in full on YouTube.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Research task – Racial discrimination in films</p> <p>With this very historical example to use as a point of comparison, carry out some independent research to discover what other controversies there have been in films that have engaged with the topic of racial discrimination through their characters and / or messages and values.</p> <p>As with any subject, care needs to be taken with independent research and teachers should be on hand to provide guidance about web safety and to ensure that you can use search engines as ‘safe’ resources for research, providing guidance on search settings and how to avoid inappropriate materials.</p> <p>Film to consider for this task could include: ‘Mississippi Burning’ (1988, c15), ‘Do the Right Thing’ (1989, c18), ‘Schindler’s List’ (1993, c15), ‘La Haine’ (1995, c15), ‘This Is England’ (2006, c18) and ‘Captain Phillips’ (2013, c12A). But this list is by no means an exhaustive list (there are many more historical and contemporary films that could be studied under this research topic.) Please be aware that some films studied under this research area may have an age rating of 18. If you are under 18 whilst completing your Film Studies course you must ensure that you consult with your course teacher(s) about any 18 certificated films and ask your teacher(s) to select suitable, age appropriate, extracts from the films for you to view.</p> <p>It is important when you are carrying out your research that you make sure that you filter out the useful results from the not so useful and copy and paste the web links for useful materials and websites into a Word document (or similar).</p> <p>This task can be developed can by joining your list of links to the lists of one or two other students.</p> <p>From here, look to pick out what common threads and controversies are communicated through messages and values in film when considering the topic of racial discrimination.</p> <p>Finally, develop a presentation to address the following question:</p> <p><i>Since the initial release of ‘The Birth Of A Nation’, to what degree has cinema changed, regarding both the availability and presentation of messages and values about racial discrimination?</i></p> <p>You could include video clips within your presentation to help anchor your ideas and make clearer what points you are trying to make.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Historical research – ‘The Wizard Of Oz’</p> <p>Dipping into another film from the earlier reaches of film history we find the old Christmas favourite, ‘The Wizard Of Oz’. Our previous film, ‘The Birth Of A Nation’, focussed on the messages, values and ideologies of larger, all-encompassing social and national issues. Messages and values on a different and more personal scale can emerge from a viewing of ‘The Wizard Of Oz’.</p> <p>Firstly, read the blog article from Psychology Today: Article (Psychology Today website) https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-narcissus-in-all-us/201006/why-the-wizard-oz-is-the-most-popular-film-all-time Article on why the ‘Wizard of Oz’ is the most popular film of all time</p> <p>Next, watch the clips available at the Movie Clips.com website (a very useful way to access clips from films legally and safely): ‘The Wizard of Oz’ film clips (Movie Clips website) http://movieclips.com/bYFD-the-wizard-of-oz-movie-videos/ Selected clips from the film ‘The Wizard of Oz’</p> <p>Discuss with one or two students – can you see what is being argued in the blog article coming through with what you are able to watch? For those of you who have seen the entire film, you should also draw off this experience.</p> <p>The article discusses gender and power and the fact that the film has a female hero (a still relatively unusual feature for films). What other contemporary films can you think of that feature the range of strong female characters that this film hosts?</p> <p>Depending on how easy you find it to name films in response to the above task, the following task will either be easy or hard: <i>‘Hollywood’s portrayal of gender is very outdated.’ Debate.</i> Form two groups, where one group has to argue points in support of the statement and one group has to argue points against the statement.</p> <p>Afterwards, note down your personal reflections on this point.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Historical research – Star Wars</p> <p>One of the biggest films of film history is undoubtedly 'Star Wars' (1977). This is a film that can be all films to all people – a western set in space, a religious parable, the ultimate movie merchandising platform. It's probably all of these things and then some. Take a read of the opinion piece blog article below that examines some of the political messages that can be detected in 'Star Wars': Article (The Huffingtonpost Blog Site)</p> <p>http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-hill/how-star-wars-conquered-t_b_6273582.html</p> <p>Article on the political messages that can be detected in the film 'Star Wars'</p> <p>Hopefully, what is now clear is that messages can be drawn from the film about political developments in America in the 1960s and 1970s. What the article doesn't tackle are the overlaps between aspects of 'Star Wars' and Nazi-era Germany. Arguably, there are a number of parallels between the evil Empire portrayed in the film and Hitler's Third Reich.</p> <p>Watch the film and see how many you can spot. Some things to consider – the appearance and behaviour of Darth Vader, the role of the Stormtroopers, the Death Star and the difficulties in accessing enemy strongholds (helping hand here – a little contextual research into Hitler's WWII mountain retreat 'The Wolf's Lair' may help to identify some overlaps).</p>	
<p>Historical to contemporary research – The James Bond franchise: Skyfall</p> <p>The James Bond franchise has always bent with the prevailing political winds – with Russian villains in Cold War days and media magnates in more recent times – up until the present with the most recent instalment in the series with 'Skyfall'.</p> <p>First, read the following opinion piece article from the left leaning US website, Fight Back.: Article (Fight Back website)</p> <p>http://www.fightbacknews.org/2012/11/14/her-majesty-s-imperialist-service-skyfall-and-politics-007-2012</p> <p>Article which delineates the overlaps between the real world and the villains and messages expressed in a variety of Bond films up to 'Skyfall'.</p> <p>Next focussing on the claims made in the article between Skyfall and the WikiLeaks affair, and the role of Julian Assange in this affair – What is the film's message about cyber –'terrorists' such as Assange given the murderous and psychopathic ways in which Silva behaves in the film?</p> <p>Watch the 'Mind the Gap' clip from movieclips.com to get started with this task. 'Skyfall' film clip (Movie Clips website)</p> <p>http://movieclips.com/N28PR-skyfall-movie-mind-the-gap/</p> <p>A clip from the film 'Skyfall' where James Bond (Daniel Craig) finally catches Raoul Silva (Javier Bardem), or at least he thinks so.</p> <p>You could explore the connections between Silva and Assange further if you can find other Skyfall clips from YouTube or you can access the whole film (which would be ideal).</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Historical to contemporary research – The James Bond franchise: Casino Royale</p> <p>Casino Royale, the film which re-invented the Bond franchise for the post-Jason Bourne (the Bourne trilogy) and Jack Bauer (TV drama, '24') world. It became famous for a variety of famous scenes – one of which was the card game sequence. At the risk of ruining the plot, at one point during this marathon card game, Bond runs out of British government money to spend – however he wants to keep fighting. Into the breach, steps Bond's friend, Felix Leiter, who is an American CIA agent. He lends Bond money to keep playing – but of course it's American government money he's lending Bond. Aspects of this scene can be seen in the following clip:</p> <p>'Casino Royale' film trailer (Movie Clips website) http://movieclips.com/FVwK-casino-royale-movie-trailer-1/</p> <p>James Bond (Daniel Craig) faces his first mission against Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen), a banker to the world's terrorist organizations, and becomes enamored with a woman (Eva Green) who strips him of his figurative armor along the way.</p> <p>During World War II, the UK became financially dependent on the USA – as is documented in this BBC news article: Article (BBC News website) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4757181.stm</p> <p>Contextual article on the UK's financial dependency to the USA following World War 2</p> <p>To continue with this task, it is best to watch at least this sequence from the film:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) What is the film's message about the nature of this 'special relationship' between the two countries? Use textual evidence to support your answer.2) Do the filmmakers positively or negatively value this 'special relationship'? Use textual evidence to support your answer. <p>You should attempt to develop two prose answers to these questions – answered fully, with textual evidence. Writing tasks such as this will give you excellent preparation for the rigours of both the AS and A2 exams.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Demystification 2: Message movies – are the messages always clear? Are the films always good?</p> <p>Following on from the previous demystification task and as a break between the historical and contemporary research tasks, read the article from the Games Radar website: Article (Games Radar website) http://www.gamesradar.com/worst-to-best-message-movies/ An opinion piece article discussing the fifty worst to best messages communicated via film</p> <p>Identify the films you are familiar with and discuss with in small groups what you think about the clarity of the messages expressed and your views on the quality of the films.</p>	
<p>Contemporary research – the fallout from 9/11: The Dark Knight</p> <p>‘The Dark Knight’, like any comic book, superhero adaptation movie is easy to pass off as fantasy and divorced from the world. Regarding superhero films in general, it can be argued that such a belief is misguided. Regarding the case specifically of ‘The Dark Knight’ there are strong grounds to read the film as a critique of the American government response to the threats (real or perceived) faced in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in America. The presentation linked to below highlights some of the connections between real world politics and events from the film – have a read through: Presentation (Slideshare website) http://www.slideshare.net/wayneobrien73/the-dark-knight-44984931 A series of points outlining possible connections between real world politics and events depicted in the film ‘The Dark Knight’</p> <p>Next watch the clips from movieclips.com: ‘The Dark Knight’ film clips (Movie Clips website) http://movieclips.com/KUQFn-the-dark-knight-movie-videos/ Selected extracts from the film ‘The Dark Knight’ to jog memories of the film or to see for the first time.</p> <p>After viewing the clips, take time to engage in the following debate: ‘The Dark Knight’ – meaningless entertainment or loaded with political messages? You decide.</p> <p>Form two groups, where one group has to argue points in support of the statement and one group has to argue points against the statement.</p> <p>Afterwards, note down your personal reflections on this point.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Contemporary research – the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis: The Dark Knight Rises</p> <p>Where 'The Dark Knight' saw Gotham City being assaulted by the terrorist style atrocities of the Joker, its successor film, sees a different threat in the shape of Bane. The Guardian article below makes connections between the film and the financial crisis which erupted in 2008 – and is arguably continuing, as the recent Greek general election results suggest with the coming to power of the new anti-austerity party Syriza. First read the following article:</p> <p>Article (The Guardian website) http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jul/22/batman-political-right-turn</p> <p>An article from the Guardian examining the political messages, values and ideologies that stem from the film 'The Dark Knight Rises'.</p> <p>Next, in the style of the presentation accompanying the tasks for 'The Birth Of A Nation', develop a presentation seeking to make visual connections between the argument advanced in the article and still images from the film. To find the images needed for the task, publicity stills which can be found at the photo gallery for the film at the following link:</p> <p>Images (IMDB website) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1345836/mediaindex?ref =tt_pv_mi_sm</p> <p>'The Dark Knight Rises' photo gallery.</p> <p>Web searches using Google images should also provide the materials needed to complete the task thoroughly.</p>	

Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Contemporary research – heaven or hell: Elysium</p> <p>The links to the articles below – from the American entertainment magazine and website Variety and from The Guardian newspaper both map out a range of political messages evident in the recent science fiction film ‘Elysium’.</p> <p>First, read the following articles: Article (Variety website) http://variety.com/2013/film/news/is-neill-blomkamp-elysium-socialist-propaganda-political-analysis-rearview-1200576930/ An article debating whether the film ‘Elysium’ is socialist agitprop or smart sci-fi filmmaking?</p> <p>Article (The Guardian website) http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/sep/02/elysium-morality-neill-blomkamp An article on why Elysium’s moral message is destined to miss its mark.</p> <p>Next you will need to watch the film, and while watching make notes to enable you to track what messages and values are being communicated – draw on the four questions that were mapped out in the task headed ‘Key terms – but what do they actually mean?’ from earlier on in this guide.</p> <p>Then, prepare a five minute oral presentation to focus on how clearly you think these political messages have been expressed.</p> <p>Final task: having seen the film, work out in what ways you can see Christian ideas of heaven and hell being expressed in the film? Again, draw on the four questions about messages and values from the earlier task. You should seek to generate one A4 side of notes in response to this task.</p>	
<p>Propaganda – is it all bad?</p> <p>The key terms used to date in this guide have been messages, values and ideology. As the guide winds its way towards its close – here is one more term: propaganda:</p> <p>Propaganda (Oxford Dictionaries website) http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/propaganda A dictionary definition of the term ‘propaganda’.</p> <p>The original meaning of the term is religious in origin – it was about the propagating of the Christian faith – in more simple language – it was about spreading the message.</p> <p><i>Debate: Is propaganda always a bad thing or it can also be used to serve good purposes?</i></p> <p>You should probably do some prior research – perhaps some small-scale contextual research about public health campaigns – such as those about smoking to give you some material to work with.</p>	

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<p>Contemporary research – here comes the war: Avatar <i>'Avatar is the best film made to date about the Iraq war'. Discuss this view.</i></p> <p>At this point of the guide, you should be in a position to take up the reigns. Your task here is to do sufficient relevant research – including watching extracts from the film, and reading articles such as the one linked below, to be able to develop a 750 word essay to articulate a response to the question above. At this point, at the end of the guide, you should be able to demonstrate your accumulated knowledge and understanding in response to this question through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an accurate use of film language• an appropriate application of textual evidence• demonstrating the ability to select and pick relevant examples from your broader research around the film to be able to produce a top end A-level essay. <p>It is expected that you will either watch extracts from the film – or the whole film and use the article below as a starting point for research (and not just as a one-stop shop!)</p> <p>Article (Telegraph blogsite) http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100019656/is-avatar-an-attack-on-the-iraq-war/ An article asking whether the film 'Avatar' is a direct attack on the Iraq war.</p>	



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