# Writing for the Big Screen - Original Screenwriting

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **3-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

## Brief Summary of Unit

Students will read Oscar-nominated original screenplays and analyze them for character composition, narrative structure, world-building, and thematic vision. Students will be tasked with watching several films nominated for best original screenplay Oscars in order to compare the films to the screenplays and identify successful elements. Through reading in both small groups as well as a common whole-class title, students will be exposed to several award-winning screenplays and Socratic seminars with an emphasis on characterization, three-act structure, and world-building. The unit will culminate with students writing an original two-shot dialogue with an incorporated flashback with an emphasis on the vernacular use of language, local dialect, and narrative structure.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship.

During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers. Students may continue to make informed choices and pursue electives that further their study and contribute toward the formation of career interest.

Revision: June 2023

## Standards

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/ levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

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| LA.RL.11-12.1 | Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. |
| 9.4.12.CI.1 | Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas (e.g., 1.1.12prof.CR3a). |
| LA.RL.11-12.2 | Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| LA.RL.11-12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). |
| 9.4.12.CI.3 | Investigate new challenges and opportunities for personal growth, advancement, and transition (e.g., 2.1.12.PGD.1). |
| LA.RL.11-12.4 | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (e.g., Shakespeare as well as other authors.) |
| LA.RL.11-12.5 | Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. |
| 9.4.12.CT.1 | Identify problem-solving strategies used in the development of an innovative product or practice (e.g., 1.1.12acc.C1b, 2.2.12.PF.3). |
| LA.RL.11-12.6 | Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). |
| 9.4.12.CT.2 | Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving (e.g., 1.3E.12profCR3.a). |
| LA.RL.11-12.7 | Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (e.g., Shakespeare and other authors.) |
| LA.RL.11-12.9 | Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. |
| LA.RL.11-12.10b | By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above. |
| LA.W.11-12.3 | Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. |
| LA.W.11-12.3.A | Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events. |
| LA.W.11-12.3.B | Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. |
| LA.W.11-12.3.C | Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution). |
| LA.W.11-12.3.D | Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters. |
| LA.W.11-12.3.E | Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or |

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| | resolved over the course of the narrative. |
| LA.W.11-12.4 | Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.) |
| LA.W.11-12.5 | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. |
| LA.W.11-12.6 | Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, share, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information. |
| LA.W.11-12.10 | Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes. |
| LA.SL.11-12.1 | Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. |
| LA.SL.11-12.1.A | Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas. |
| LA.SL.11-12.1.B | Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed. |
| LA.SL.11-12.1.C | Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. |
| LA.SL.11-12.1.D | Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task. |
| LA.SL.11-12.3 | Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used. |
| LA.SL.11-12.6 | Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. |
| LA.L.11-12.1 | Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. |
| LA.L.11-12.1.A | Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested. |
| LA.L.11-12.2 | Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. |
| LA.L.11-12.2.A | Observe hyphenation conventions. |
| LA.L.11-12.2.B | Spell correctly. |
| LA.L.11-12.3 | Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. |
| LA.L.11-12.3.A | Vary syntax for effect, apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts. |
| LA.L.11-12.4 | Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. |
| LA.L.11-12.4.A | Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. |

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| LA.L.11-12.4.B | Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable). |
| LA.L.11-12.4.C | Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage. |
| LA.L.11-12.4.D | Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary). |
| LA.L.11-12.5 | Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. |
| LA.L.11-12.5.A | Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text. |
| LA.L.11-12.5.B | Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations. |
| LA.L.11-12.6 | Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. |

## Essential Questions

- How are works influenced by those that preceded them?
- How do we analyze a script?
- How do you adapt a source to a new medium?
- How does screenwriting differ from traditional prose?
- How does the time period or cultural context in which a film is made impact its narrative?
- What are the fundamentals of screenwriting?
- What defines a good script?
- What is subtext and intertextuality?
- What is the difference between a screenplay and storyboard?
- What is the difference between an original screenplay and an adapted screenplay?

## Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- Analyze stories across mediums.
- Evaluating interpretation and influence on a work.
- How to adapt a script.
- How to analyze a script.
- How to analyze theme, plot, and characterization.
- How to create a storyboard.
- How to write an original script.
- Identifying similarities and differences between film art and various literary genres.

## Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative:

- Teacher Observations
- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars/Fish Bowls
- Analysis of multimodal text sets
- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation
- Peer and self-evaluations of learning
- Entrance and Exit Tickets
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal

Summative, including Alternative Assessments:

- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed
- Researched Presentations
- Performance Assessments
- Project-based Learning
- Problem-based Learning
- Personalized Learning
- Visual Literacy Prompts
- Digital Portfolios
- Online Discussion Forums

Benchmark:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a

claim and use evidence as support
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics

Other Assessment Ideas:

- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism using various databases, CLCs, and Bloom's Literary Database
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation, develop notetaking skills and annotations
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation, rehearsal and modeling effective listening and speaking techniques
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal regarding Reflections, Character Development, and/or Life Choices
- Researched Presentations, Biographical, Historical, Psychological and/or Philosophical analysis of a Memoir
- Performance Assessments, including a dramatic reading of a scene, excerpt, or poem that relates to one of the subthemes
- Participate in organized literature circles where students lead discussions about character, conflict and theme and work collaboratively to determine answers to questions posed by teacher and other students
- Evaluate societal concerns reflected through plot and theme
- Cite and interpret quoted material from the text and from literary criticism
- Create a narrative memoir using narrative techniques and factual information in proper MLA format
- Participate in peer and teacher/student critiques to revise and edit their essays
- Create artistic, interactive and/or multimedia projects that suggest an understanding of the text beyond its literal meaning

## Learning Plan

Instructional time for reading film will be divided into thirds; one-third of the time will be dedicated to whole class text instruction; one-third will include film circles; one-third, independent screenings. The intent is for student-readers to have clear modeling through whole-class instruction. These strategies are practiced through literature circles in a group setting of peers and through independent practice monitored through teacher conferencing with students. An emphasis will be based on the transfer of skills instruction, teaching the reader, not merely the content of the text. The text complexity and rigor of reading will be appropriate for grade 11; materials selection for whole-class and literature circles will be from the book list approved by the Board of Education. Classrooms will house rich and diverse independent reading libraries of contemporary and canonical works.

The reading of text targets not only comprehension but also analysis. Students will read both long-and short-form, excerpted, and feature-length, fiction, and nonfiction texts. The study will include the analysis of visual texts including film clips, art, infographic, maps, charts, graphs, cartoons, and graphic novels. Techniques and terminology specific to a genre of reading are examined. Research tasks are embedded throughout the year and a minimum of one task is completed during each unit. Vocabulary instruction will be chosen from the reading material.

Students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. Various forms of writing including digital writing are emphasized as well. Grammar instruction is embedded in writing instruction through mini-lessons, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through mentor texts, both published and student-crafted. Teachers focus on process in addition to the product with an emphasis on synthesizing texts with nuanced understanding; teacher-created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes, timed and untimed pieces are all important.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address individual student's distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds.

Students may complete analytical analysis, persuasive writing, synthesis essays, database research, and journal writing. Students will participate in individual, partner, and group activities including Literature Circles, Socratic Discussions, Jigsaw Methods, and other Cooperative Learning activities.

Students will be taught how to speak and listen in addition to being assessed on these skills. Lessons will include identifying effective speaking and listening strategies, analyzing various techniques for enhancing voice and movement, modeling various effective speakers and listeners strategies, and creating opportunities to develop vocal effectiveness and presentation skills.

Students will compare directorial liberties in movies and plays.

This unit of study will focus on screenwriting. The central quotation from Alfred Hitchcock is "To make a great film you need three things – the script, the script, and the script."

Sample Unit Plan:

- Core Text: Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind - Script and Film
    - Mini-lessons teaching students screenwriting techniques and analysis.
    - Students should conduct close readings comparing scenes from the script with scenes from the film.
- Film Circles: Film Shorts
    - Focus on screenwriting, dialogue, and production.
    - Have students read a Steven King Dollar Baby selection and adapt part for a single-page script.
- Workshop: Screenwriting
    - Students will review various screenwriting outlines.
    - Students will write an original or adapted two-shot dialogue with an incorporated flashback focusing on vernacular use of language, local dialect, and narrative structure.
- Production: Dialogue with Flashback

- Students will produce their script.

## Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List and the Core Film List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

## Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

Possible accommodations include:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing/reading
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques
- Offer oral assessments
- Supply study guide questions and access to class notes
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts
- Individualize reading choices based on ability and level
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Small group and one on one assessment
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed
- Use art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment

- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan