The Visual Literacy of Film: Tools to Establish Theme

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **4-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students will explore the importance of cinematography in film connecting it to the students' basic understanding of the plot, characters, and theme in the storyline. The cinematographer works closely with the director to manipulate content to achieve a specific purpose. Students will learn how cinematographers work with the director as a collaborative team to capture a film's overall mood and tone in the Mise-en-scene. This enables the director and cinematographer to read the thoughts and feelings of the characters visually and involves careful planning and analysis of how a frame will be shot and what colors will be emphasized. This unit focused not only on mise-en-scene (the framing of shots), color, and Film Noir but also on theme. Therefore, the overall goal of this unit is to teach students to analyze literature through film from the vantage point of the textual aspects of cinema. The unit tasks students to examine how the textual and technical expression of the film helps to further its theme.

Revised: July 2023

Standards

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life; and understand the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

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.

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.11-12.1	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.
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.2	Identify career pathways that highlight personal talents, skills, and abilities (e.g., 1.4.12prof.CR2b, 2.2.12.LF.8).
9.4.12.CI.3	Investigate new challenges and opportunities for personal growth, advancement, and transition (e.g., 2.1.12.PGD.1).
9.2.12.CAP.4	Evaluate different careers and develop various plans (e.g., costs of public, private, training schools) and timetables for achieving them, including educational/training requirements, costs, loans, and debt repayment.
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.
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.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).
9.2.12.CAP.6	Identify transferable skills in career choices and design alternative career plans based on those skills.
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.RI.9-10.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.) and make relevant connections, to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RI.11-12.1	Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RI.9-10.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze how it is developed and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RI.11-12.2	Determine two or more central ideas of a text, and analyze their development and how they interact to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

LA.RI.9-10.3	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
LA.RI.11-12.3	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
LA.RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
LA.RI.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
LA.RI.9-10.5	Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
LA.RI.9-10.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetorical devices to advance that point of view or purpose.
LA.RI.9-10.7	Analyze various perspectives as presented in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
LA.RI.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
LA.RI.9-10.8	Describe and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and reasoning.
LA.RI.11-12.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes and rhetorical features, including primary source documents relevant to U.S. and/or global history.
LA.RI.9-10.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance, (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail", Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc.), including how they relate in terms of themes and significant concepts.
LA.RI.11-12.10a	By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above with scaffolding as needed.
LA.RI.9-10.10a	By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above with scaffolding as needed.
LA.RI.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above.
LA.RI.9-10.10b	By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at grade level text-complexity or above.
LA.W.11-12.1.A	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
LA.W.11-12.1.B	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

LA.W.11-12.1.C	Use transitions (e.g., words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
LA.W.11-12.1.E	Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
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.11-12.5	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.11-12.8	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation. (MLA or APA Style Manuals).
LA.W.11-12.9.B	Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses]”).
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.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.

Essential Questions

- Does color have a cultural and universal meaning?
- How do basic film shots differ?
- How do colors impact a viewer?
- How do the set, costumes, and props connect to the use of color in a film?

- How is characterization depicted through the use of color and shots in a film?
- How is color used in a film? Are film colors conscious on unconscious?
- How is the plot of the film represented through the use of color and shots in a film?
- What additional elements are used as color vehicles in a film?
- What are angled shots and why are they used?
- What are some of the color theories used by different directors?
- What are the characteristics of a montage? Why is it used?
- What do the critics say about the cinematography and color used in a film?
- What film techniques are used to represent the theme, stated and implied, in a film?
- What is Mise-en-scene? How does it include the lighting, sets and props?
- What is the difference between a pan and a tilt?
- What is the difference between a shallow and deep focus shot?
- What is the history of color?
- Why are different shots used in a film?
- Why are lighting and color connected?
- Why is there such a controversy surrounding the colorization of black and white films?

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- How color and cinematography influence an audience on a consciious and unconscious level.
- How to identify the historical and cultural significance of color.
- How to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information, verbally and in writing, presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- That the mood and tone of a film
- The plot of a movie, exposition, rising action, climax, etc.. and connect it to the mise-en-scene and the use of color.
- What color and the framing of shots mean in a film.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered two 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
- Textual Analysis Reading Responses
- Dialectical Journal
- Rhetorical Precis
- SOAPSTone Analysis

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
- Analytical and Expository Essay

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
- SAT (grades 11-12)
- Final Exam

Potential Analytical Researched Essay Assignment:

Topic: Light and Dark and Shadow of a Doubt --Theme and Tone

How do Welles, Coppola, Lumet, and Mulligan's stylized use of light and shadow express the theme of psychological doubt? Expressionist filmmakers are concerned with spiritual and psychological truths and use the camera as a means of commenting on their subject matter; they don't strive for realism, but rather present stylized images whose form is as important as their content. Most fiction films fall somewhere in between the two extremes of realism and formalism. It is your task in this paper to demonstrate the ways in which any or all of the director's use of light and shadow in their respective films further the film's psychological themes.

- Analysis of color in clips and films
- Analyze the Mise-en-scene for the different types of shots and angles used in a film
- Answer the essential questions.
- Compare different styles of film using key terms.
- Complete a summative assessment on the use of color and shots in film.
- Complete Asynchronous Online Discussion Forum Entries
- Create and answer questions about color in films.
- Discuss the mise-en-scene and color in Socratic seminars, small groups, pairs or as a class.
- Evaluate visual principles of mise en scene
- Research and complete analytical academic essay assignment
- Research films that are renowned for their cinematography and evaluate their use of shots and angles for effectiveness.
- Research the use of color in films and history.

Learning Plan

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

- Analyze One Point Perspective: https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/7-iconic-hollywood-cinematography-techniques/
- Complete basic color analysis- what do colors symbolize in your life?
- Conduct multiple lessons on how to read a film: (The Spell of Fascinating Images vs. The Discriminating Power of Craft)
- Define key terms associated with color.
- Define Whip Pan: A shot that is the same as a pan but is so fast that picture blurs beyond recognition. The whip pan conveys urgency and rhythm. It's a fluid shot that is often the fastest way to get from Point A to Point B. http://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/film-studies-101-camera-shots-styles/ https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/7-iconic-hollywood-cinematography-techniques/
- Determine how to create an interpretation targeting the following: Clip: Inja, d. Steve Pasvolsky 2002 (Complete 'Questions to Consider' handout. "How to Read Sigmund Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams" "Discussion Questions for Freud and Film Clips"
- Discuss the use of color in film talk films and Socratic Seminars.
- End of Unit collaborative Socratic Seminar to connect the techniques to the films and clips discussed in class.
- Explain Point of View Shot: The viewer is looking through the eyes of the character.Halloween: http://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/film-studies-101-camera-shots-styles/
- Identify and discuss the effects of angle shots; The following models are viewed at http://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/film-studies-101-camera-shots-styles/
- Independently view films and analyze for color. Identify if the color choice is conscious or unconscious.
- Locate examples of angle shots: high, low, trunk, and dutch.
- Locate pictures from films to analyze as a class. Identify the Mise-en-scene in each.
- Read a film review and related criticism that discusses color. Write an analysis that defends or refutes the reviewer's assertions.
- Read pages 11-17 in Understanding Movies to define the types of shots used in a film.
- Read relevant film literature (some articles listed in materials section) and write an analytical essay synthesizing concepts.
- Read the article: The Use of Color in Theater and Film" and read pp. 22-28 in Understanding Movies

- Show clips of close-up, zoom-in, and zoom out shots. Introduce the ftrombone shot that is a combination of each.
- Understand the impact of a 360-degree pan; analyze Jack Terry (John Travolta) in Brian de Palma's Blow Out (1981). See model: http://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/film-studies-101-camera-shots-styles/
- Using a film known for its Mise-en-scene (from the list provided, such as The Graduate) introduce the basic concepts of shooting a film: long/wide, medium, and close-up.
- Using class models, demonstrate the difference between the different types of panning shots.
- View a full-feature film (from the list provided, such as Amelie) and/or film clips and analyze the use of color.
- View clips from a film sans the sound and just analyze for the use of color and shots. Determine the meaning of the visual.
- View the Close Up Montage: https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/7-iconic-hollywood-cinematography-techniques/

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.

- Brown, B. 2007. Motion Picture and Video Lighting. Focal Press.
- Course Text: Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader, Corrigan
- Course Text: Making Movies, Sidney Lumet
- Course Text: Understanding Movies, Louis Giannetti, Prentice Hall
- Finlay, V. 2003. Color: A Natural History of the Palette. Random House.
- Gage, J. 1999. Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction. University of California Press.
- http://www.dhhstheatre.org/uploads/2/0Capturing Images on film Handout: /3/1/20311683/cinematography.pdf
- Hyman, J. 2006. The Objective Eye: Color, Form, And Reality in the Theory of Art. University of Chicago Press.
- Magrin Chagnolleau, Ivan . "The Use of Color in Theater and Film." Academia.edu - ShareRresearch. Web. 27 Jan. 2017.
- Mollica, P. 2012. Color Theory. Walter Foster.
- Refer to the Film List on the Course Summary Page.