

10 REASONS

WHY FILM BELONGS IN THE ELA CLASSROOM





▶ JOSEPH GOLDBERG TEACHING WITH FILM, LLC

Joseph Goldberg, PhD, of Teaching With Film, is a practicing National-Board certified secondary English teacher, Kappa Delta Pi Master Teacher of Honor, adjunct college professor and instructional designer. He holds master's degrees in Secondary English Education, in Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation, and is currently completing a third master's degree in Teaching and Curriculum. He holds Certificates of Advanced Study in Designing Digital Instruction and in Disability Studies.

Dr. Goldberg's doctoral research centered on film pedagogy in the English Language Arts classroom. He has presented in webinars and educational conferences across the globe, and his work has been published in the Film Education Journal, the NCTE's English Journal, the Journal of Media Education, and elsewhere.



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FILM IS CODIFIED IN THE ELA STANDARDS



The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Literacy Association (ILA) call for the use of film and characterize it as an “essential component of the English Language Arts curriculum.”¹ Moreover, the Common Core State Standards (2010)² and Next Generation Learning Standards (2017)³ codify the use of film dozens of times, both implicitly and explicitly. It is not merely permissible to include film in the curriculum, it is indeed the responsibility of English teachers to instruct with it.

2

FILM MOTIVATES STUDENT LEARNING



Student motivation in the learning process is one of the key factors in determining students’ academic success and social/emotional wellbeing. Extensive data⁴ reveals that motivated students are 2.5 times more likely to report earning excellent grades and 4.5 times more likely to report feeling hopeful about the future. Designing lessons around students’ interests⁵, and drawing from popular culture forms, such as film,⁶ can substantially increase⁷ student motivation by making curriculum content relevant, and thereby increasing student interest, confidence and satisfaction⁸ in the learning process.

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FILM LINKS CLASSROOM LEARNING TO STUDENTS' LIVES



Teaching with film connects the classroom to students' interests,⁹ ways of knowing,¹⁰ previous knowledge, and cherished values. Consequently, teaching with film resists the conventional and oppressive "banking" concept of education,¹¹ in which teachers, serving as authorities of knowledge, deposit the content they deem worthy, thereby reducing their students to passive recipients of pre-existing knowledge. Instead, effective teaching with film encourages students to question, explore and reflect on real-world problems, and repositions them as partners in the learning process and co-creators of new knowledge.¹²

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FILM IS HIGHLY INCLUSIVE

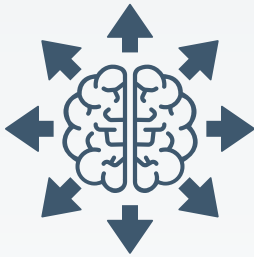


In addition to appealing to a wider array of students' multiple learning styles,¹³ film levels the field for students who have special needs,¹⁴ or come from underprivileged backgrounds.¹⁵ Film improves the listening and speaking skills of English Language Learners (ELL),¹⁶ as it has particularly rich authentic, verbal and paralinguistic language features.¹⁷ The universal language¹⁸ by which film communicates is a more familiar and accessible medium for all students to build confidence and achieve academic success.

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FILM IS COGNITIVE



Upwards of 85 percent¹⁹ of the brain is harnessed to process and categorize visual stimuli. The “cognitive and educational benefit”²⁰ of film stems from the viewer synthesizing the images presented on the screen. In fact, a secondary definition of the word “image” is “a mental experience,”²¹ as viewers “read” images through a “process of intellection.”²¹ Because sensory perception is the catalyst for the mental formation of concepts, the training of sensory abilities²² is the fulcrum for determining the depth and diversity of the concepts formed, making effective film education a powerful tool for facilitating complex and critical thinking. In this way, film can be a powerful tool for active learning²³ and “a machine for thinking.”²⁴

6

FILM TRANSMITS KNOWLEDGE



Movies are “a source of knowledge”²⁵ and take on “a pedagogical role in the lives of many people.”²⁶ In addition to conveying information and ideas,²⁷ movies give insight into the experiences of other people,²⁸ and are the primary “vehicle of cultural transmission of our time.”²⁹ Indeed, students tend to learn more about societal issues³⁰ through film than all the theoretical literature given to them in the classroom. Movies contain ideological values and ideas,³¹ some worth rejecting and some worth embracing, but all worth identifying, analyzing and reflecting upon.

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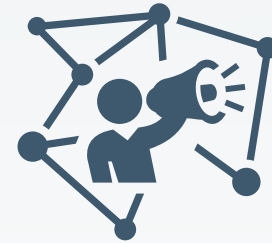
FILM SUPPORTS TRADITIONAL PRINT LITERACY



Despite detractors misperceiving film as a competitor or even enemy of books, film is actually a powerful ally of print texts. Since “all modes of communication are codependent,”³² and because of its narrative and linguistic commonalities with print literature, film can be leveraged to excite students about books, motivate reluctant readers,³³ build literacy skills,³⁴ enhance the study of literature, and hone writing and analytical abilities.³⁵ The concepts and skills that teachers strive for their students to learn in literature are more visible and accessible³⁶ to students in film. Once recognized on the screen, students more easily recognize them on the page.

8

FILM SUPPORTS 21ST CENTURY LITERACY



Visual communication has become the primary mode of communication in modern times and the very “fabric of contemporary life.”³⁷ Since literacy means being “conversant in the dominant expressive language and form of the age,”³⁸ having the skills to read and compose in digital, visual, and oral modes (multimodal literacy) is critical to being a literate person in the twenty-first century.³⁹ Effective teaching with film advances students’ visual literacy, which is essential for preparing them to “successfully meet the social, cultural, political, [and] economic demands” of “their future roles as citizens and workers in society.”⁴⁰

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FILM CAPTURES THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE



In the same tradition of the great epic poems, ancient tragic plays, Shakespearean theater and contemporary novels, film constitutes a “consensus narrative” that documents “cultural experiences.”⁴¹ In fact, the US Library of Congress preserves movies that are “culturally, historically or aesthetically significant” in the National Film Registry because movies “reflect who we are as a people and a nation.”⁴² Like literature, movies belong in the humanities classrooms because they tell “the human story.”⁴³

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FILM IS A UNIQUELY RICH TEXT

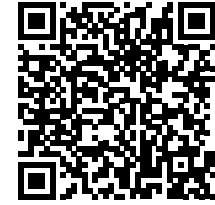


When students view a film, they in effect simultaneously⁴⁴ read a piece of literature, attend a play and a music concert, witness a fashion and a light show, and visit an art gallery, a photography exhibit and possibly a museum. Film combines the conventions of all of these pre-existing artforms and constitutes a unique language and artform in itself, which partly explains why it is so immersive. In this way, film offers one of the richest mediums for learning available, especially for teachers whose content centers on narrative, linguistic, historical, cultural, sociological, ideological, psychological or textual studies.⁴⁵

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Teaching With Film, LLC strives to provide English teachers with resources that allow film in the classroom to reach its full instructional potential. The information within this catalog articulates the educational rationale and value of teaching with film in the ELA classroom. It draws from classroom practice and numerous scholarly fields, including Multiple Literacies Theory (MLC), Universal Design Theory (UDT), critical pedagogy, constructivist learning theory, motivational learning theory, cognitive film theory and beyond. It is intended to assist teachers in their own classroom practice, as well as to assist teachers who find their use of film in the classroom questioned.

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