

READING FILM

COMPOSITION & SHOT

Film is not "realistic" just because of the life like detail we see. The audience only experiences what the camera (director) want it to see and hear.

Is the director using a long shot, a medium shot, a close up, or an extreme close up?

Is the shot taken from a high angle, a low angle, or from eye level?

Is the camera placed in an "objective" location, or does it represent the point of view of one of the characters?

Does the camera move or does it stay in place?

What do you notice about the lighting, the props, and the placement of actors? Is some thing implied going on off screen?

NOTES & REASONING

As you take notes on composition, shot, mood, and theme, jot down what you think the filmmakers are trying to do/say with their choices. Be prepared to defend your analysis with specific evidence from the film.

MOOD & THEME

The overall mood of the film is created by acting, music, lighting, sound effects, costumes, colors, sets, symbols, etc. These small details play a crucial role in a film.

Does the film utilize effects like voiceovers, text, or direct addresses to the camera?

Does the director use long takes in a scene or does he/she divide the scene up with many short takes?

Does the editing make for a unified and continuous effect (i.e., you don't really notice it) or is it jarring or destabilizing?

Is there a recurring song, music, color, camera technique, or special effect that adds meaning to the film?

What imagery is used to develop the story and focus your attention?

What symbols are used? Why?

Multi-Genre Historical Source Analysis

Historical Thinking	Source A	Source B	Source C
Sourcing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who created this?• Do I know the creator's perspective?• When, where, and why was it created?			
Contextualization <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does knowing when and where it was created help me understand it?• What was different then? What was the same?• How might this affect its content?			
Corroboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the documents agree? If not, why?• What are other possible documents?• What documents are most reliable? Why?			
Close Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What claims are made?• What evidence is used to support the claims?• What important words, phrases, images, symbols does the author use to persuade the audience?			

Writing Text Specific Questions To Help Students Uncover the Complexities of a Film Source

CORE ACTION 2:

Employ questions and tasks that are text dependent and text specific.

Text Dependent Questions

Require students to answer using evidence from the text;
cannot be answered without reading the text

Text Specific Questions

Require students to delve into the particular complexities of the text at hand; are based solely on that text, not generalizable. (e.g. not “What are the main idea and details of the text?”)

1. Is the film worth close study and class time? Does it offer a unique or valuable perspective on the social studies topic or theme?
2. Determine the essential understanding(s) of the film text. What do you really care about students knowing and understanding when they finish reading this film text?
 - A. Write the essential understanding in a clear, concise, and very specific sentence at the top of the document. This is where your questions about the document should lead. The more specific your questions are the better. Your essential understanding is often the basis of your final writing prompt or task.
3. Qualitatively analyze the text. What about this specific text will be most complex for students? What is most interesting to notice but might be missed without a close and careful read? What cinematic structures provide focus?
4. What other historical primary and secondary sources can I use alongside this text to complicate it further and help students understand multiple perspectives? What questions can I write to specifically link the documents?
5. Determine key ideas that develop the essential understanding and create a series of open-ended questions to bring the reader to an understanding of these as they work through the reading.
 - A. Begin with questions that orient students to the text and have more literal answers before moving on to highly inferential questions or those requiring synthesis of multiple areas of the text and multiple documents.
6. Find difficult sections of the film and craft appropriate questions; these might include particularly dense information, tricky transitions or places that offer a variety of possible inferences. If there are areas wherein multiple ideas are presented, find a way to have students stop and decipher the ideas in the reading.
7. Refer back to social studies standards and scope and sequence as well as the CCSS for Literacy in History. Which standards might you be able to meet with this document? Consider things like tone/mood, multiple texts or points of view, etc.
8. Develop a culminating activity around the essential understanding(s). A good task should reflect mastery of one or more of the standards, involve writing, and be structured to be completed by small groups or by students independently.

Language to Use When Reading Film

Diegetic: sound is part of the world on film (on or off screen) like dialogue, sound effects from actual events, music in the scene

Non-Diegetic: sound is outside of the film world like a soundtrack, sound “effect” implying action, narrator commentary, voice over

Cut: The most common type of transition in which one scene ends and a new one immediately begins.

Fade: One scene gradually goes dark and the new one gradually emerges from the darkness.

Dissolve: A gradual transition, in which the end of one scene is superimposed over the beginning of a new one.

Wipe: An optical effect in which one shot appears to “wipe” the preceding one from the screen.

Long shot: A shot taken from a sufficient distance to show a landscape, a building, or a large crowd.

Medium shot: A shot between a long shot and a close-up that might show two people in full figure or several people from the waist up.

Close-up: A shot of one face or object that fills the screen completely.

Extreme close-up: A shot of a small object or part of a face that fills the screen.

High angle: The camera looks down at what is being photographed.

Eye level: A shot that approximates human vision; a camera presents an object so that the line between camera and object is parallel to the ground.

Low angle: The camera looks up at what is being photographed.