

LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 1 to 6
About the Author: This lesson has been adapted from the activity guide for the video Live TV, produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

Thinking About Television and Movies

Overview

We want to encourage kids to form opinions about what they watch - to react to what they see on the screen. In this lesson, children begin to think about basic concepts - such as how audiences interpret meaning, and the constructed world of television and film. They accomplish this by exploring the differences between worlds created on film and real life, film-making techniques, sound and music, and storyboarding.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- beginning awareness about how they respond to television and film
- understanding of the various ways in which film and television are constructed
- appreciation for film techniques
- beginning film production techniques

Preparation and Materials

- In accordance with copyright laws in your area, tape or obtain a short film or television program

Procedure

Viewing, Thinking, Forming Opinions

Discuss a television show that students are familiar with, starting with questions such as:

- Do you like this program?
- What do you like best about it?
- Are there any parts you don't like?
- In this show, what are some things that could really have happened?
- Does anything happen that could never happen in real life?
- Is there music on the show? Does it have a catchy opening song?
- Does it use any special effects?
- Who is your favourite character?



Activities

- Draw a picture of a character from this show doing something he or she usually does; or
- Write a review of this show, telling viewers why they should - or shouldn't - watch it.

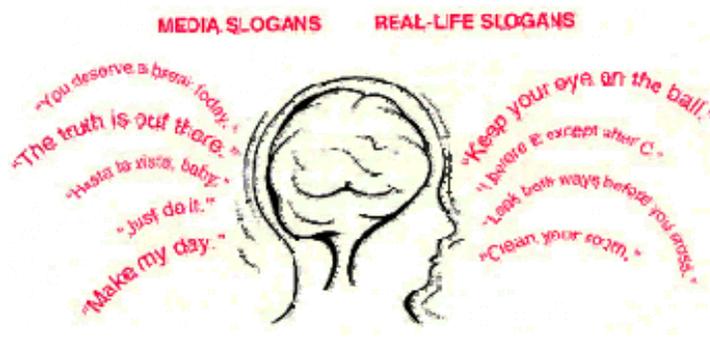
Slogans and Sayings

Characters on TV show and in movies, often use all sorts of slogans, catchphrases and buzz words.

- Have students think up some quotes or sayings for their classmates to guess which TV shows or movies they're from.
- Chart the number of children who have seen each show or movie. Does everyone recognize the same sayings? Why not?
- Think about how real people talk. Keep a list of the slogans and quotations from TV shows and movies frequently used by the people you know. How many do you hear in an hour? In a day? Which slogans and sayings do you hear most often?

Activity

- What slogans and sayings from TV, movies and advertising are floating around in your brain? Draw a picture of your brain full of media slogans.
- Draw a second picture of your brain full of the slogans and sayings put there by real people, like your parents, teachers, coaches and friends.



Exploring Some Filmmaking Techniques

Television and movies communicate part of their message without words. The "language" of film includes music, lighting, costumes, props, camera angles, editing, and other techniques, which we understand on an almost subliminal level. We can help children to recognize and to name these elements, and to discover how the makers of TV shows and movies use these techniques to create atmosphere and construct meaning.

Review the following terms for talking about film:

Shot: A complete section of footage without any cuts, which can last from only a fraction of a second to several minutes.



Cut: The point at which two different shots are joined (edited) together.

Wipe: When one shot seems to push or pull another shot off the screen. There are lots of different kinds of wipes.

Reaction Shot: A shot that cuts away from the scene to show a character's reaction to it.

Activities

Technique Hunt

As a class, view a segment of an age-appropriate video or television show. Watch and listen closely for some specific choices the filmmakers made.

TV shows and movies can often feel like seamless stories.

- Count the number of shots in two minutes of the show or video.
- Identify a "wipe." How many different wipes between scenes can you spot? Why do you think they are used?
- Listen to any background music. How does the music make you feel?
- Identify the sounds and visuals that help create the feelings from the audience. (Pay attention to the lighting and cutting too.)
- Watch the way the camera is used. Look for close-ups, medium shots and establishing shots. Can you find a low-angle shot?

Get an Angle on Angles

Have students try this with a partner:

- Stand a few feet apart and look at each other through a frame you've made with your hands.
- Now "zoom in" for a "close-up" by walking closer to each other until all that's in your view is your partner's face.
- Try stepping a little closer for an "extreme close-up."
- How do you feel about being so close to your partner?
- "Zoom" back out to a "medium" shot so that you can see your partner from their chest to the top of their head.
- From this distance, try talking about how the different shots feel, and as you are talking, start zooming out again, this time, to a "long" shot.
- How does this affect the conversation?
- Try something different.
- Find a reasonable distance for talking to your partner and get a chair.
- Have your partner stand on the chair and look down at you, while you crouch on the ground and look up.
- How does your partner look from your low angle? Trade places.
- How does your partner look from the high angles?
- Draw a character of your own design.



- Try drawing your character from a low angle.
- Now draw it from a high angle.
- Which angle would you choose to illustrate a character who is large and powerful? Which angle is best for creating a character who is small and unimportant?
- Medium shots give you some idea about what's happening between two people.
- Close-ups let you know lots about feelings.

Sound Alert!

Music and sound can be powerful storytelling tools. Here are a couple of activities to sharpen your media ears. (Teachers may want to re-play a film segment for this exercise.)

- Listen carefully to the video as you watch. Pay particular attention to the music. Do you like it? During what parts of the film is music used? Listen for music that makes a scene more exciting. Listen for music that makes you feel an emotion. Listen for music that tells you that something is about to happen.
- Watch a segment of the video or TV show with your eyes shut. Can you guess what's happening without the picture? How well can you follow the story? How much is conveyed about the setting by the music and sound?
- Try again with the picture, but no sound. Can you follow the story? Which is easier?

Telling Your Own Stories

Tell students it's their opportunity to experiment with some of the techniques that have been discussed.

In small groups, have students develop a storyboard (with six or more pictures) telling a simple story.

Have them develop scripts to accompany their storyboards.

If you can get hold of a video camera, have students try creating special effects and simple animations of their own. One fun and easy special effect is to make someone "disappear" on film.

- As you film, have someone walk into the frame.
- When they reach somewhere close to the middle of the frame, stop shooting but continue to hold the camera in exactly the same spot.
- When the person has finished walking out of the frame, shoot a few more seconds of the scene without the person in it.
- Watch the shot. Did it look like the person disappeared in the middle of the frame?
- Have kids figure out how to make someone "appear."
- Try changing someone's hat in the middle of a scene, having people "pop in" and "pop out", move closer to the camera without appearing to walk, or, have your shoes walk into the scene ahead of you.
- What other "effects" can you create by stopping and starting the tape without moving the camera?

Have students film their stories and present them to the class.



Evaluation

- Class participation
- Completed group productions and storyboards

