



WHAT IS A MOVIE?

That is one of the complications in making this film, there were different storylines. There's the Boo Radley storyline and the Tom Robinson storyline. They come together at the very end but not 'til the very end. And there is a lot of exposition to set up in this film.

— Alan Pakula, Producer, *To Kill a Mockingbird*



Scope & Sequence

Because *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an adaptation of a popular award-winning novel, most children who view the film in class do so as a compare-and-contrast activity. This read-the-book, watch-the-film approach has limited value. It does not challenge students to explore *how* the filmmaker tells the story, and, therefore, students do not learn to read visually. A fundamental principle of The Story of Movies curriculum is its interdisciplinary approach. Students can tap their knowledge not only of literary elements but also of social studies, music, art, and science in learning how to read the moving images. The activities in chapter 1 focus on the uniquely visual way film tells a story and, by doing so, guide students to higher levels of critical-viewing and critical-thinking experiences.

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Film Study Standards

- 1.0 **Film Language.** Students learn to read and interpret visual text by developing a film vocabulary, identifying editing techniques, and analyzing film elements within selected scenes.
- 4.0 **Viewers' Response and Aesthetic Valuing.** Students understand that a film is a work of art. Students describe, interpret, and analyze a film's visual design. They respond to and make informed judgments about film, deriving personal meaning from the work. They express their viewpoints through oral and/or written presentations.
- 5.0 **Cross-Curricular Connections.** Students first tap their knowledge of other disciplines to study a film. They then apply what they have learned about film to other disciplines, making connections between film and literature/language arts, film and history/social studies, film and other arts, and film and sciences.

Teacher Overview

Clearly the students in your class are no strangers to moving images. Film, television, news broadcasts, interactive computer games — these are among the visual media young people experience daily. And yet how much do students understand this technology that is so familiar? More important, how carefully do they “read” moving images? Activity A introduces students to key developments in moving-image technology that made telling a story visually possible on screen. The first screening activity enhances chronological thinking. Activity B explores how a film differs from other narratives, specifically novels and nonfiction texts. Activity C introduces the concept of *watching* versus *seeing* and challenges students to move beyond identifying details in visual images to analyzing how those images are constructed and what meaning they suggest. The final activity is a creative writing assignment based on the opening credits of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:












- identify key developments in moving-image technology;
- identify basic story elements found in all film narratives, specifically character, setting, and conflict;
- explain how cinematic storytelling differs from written narratives;
- identify four ways a filmmaker creates symbols and suggests meaning;
- examine objects of significance in their own childhood and write expressively about those objects;
- create a timeline of moving-image technology (*Enrichment*).

Key Terms

(Note: Most terms are defined within the activity text that follows. You may also refer to the glossary.)

Zoetrope, Kinetoscope, visual symbol, sound symbol, opening credits

Lesson 1 Materials

Activity	Print	DVD
Activity A An Introduction to Moving Images	 Screening Sheet 1-1: What Is a Movie?  Group Activity 1-1, <i>Enrichment</i> : Research a Moving-Image Timeline	 Film Clip 1-1: What Is a Movie?
Activity B Writing to Be Read v. Writing to Be Seen	 Reading Activity 1-2: The Front of the Bus  Screening Sheet 1-2: The Front of the Bus	 Film Clip 1-2: The Front of the Bus
Activity C Visual and Sound Symbolism	 Screening Sheet 1-3: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Opening Credits, Part 1 — Watching  Graphic Organizer 1-1: How Do Filmmakers Create Symbols?  Screening Sheet 1-3: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Opening Credits, Part 2 — Seeing	 Film Clip 1-3: <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Opening Credits
Activity D Cigar Box Memories	 Creative Writing Activity 1-3: Cigar Box Memories	None

Activity A An Introduction to Moving Images

1



Concept

A movie combines principles of art and scientific technology to communicate to an audience. This technology has evolved over the past century and continues to develop today.

Engage

Prompt discussion by asking the following questions and recording student responses on the chalkboard:

Are all movies fiction? What is a documentary? How do movies “move”?

Is the purpose of a movie only to entertain? What other purposes might a movie have?



Explain & Explore

- Emphasize the point that movies can do much more than tell fictional stories. Movies can also educate. They can express an opinion, an emotion, or a unique way of looking at the world. List the following three categories of film on the chalkboard or overhead projector, briefly identifying each:

Narrative film tells a story using characters, setting and plot. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an example of a narrative film.

Nonfiction, or documentary film, records real events. *Hoop Dreams*, about two Chicago inner-city youths (Arthur Agee and William Gates) who dream of becoming basketball superstars, is an example of a documentary film.

Avant-garde film experiments with art and moving-image technology to express a filmmaker’s unique way of viewing a subject. Avant-garde films are sometimes described as “cinematic poems” because the filmmaker does not tell his or her story using traditional narrative elements. An example of an avant-garde film is Andy Warhol’s *Empire*, made in 1964. It is an 8-hour movie. Rather than tell a traditional story with characters and conflict, the film is a single, continuous shot of the Empire State Building in New York City during the 8-hour period.

- Introduce the screening activity. Explain that the film they are about to see is a mini-documentary or nonfiction film. It does not tell a narrative in the way that *To Kill a Mockingbird* does. Instead, it presents factual information about the development of moving-image technology in the 20th century.
- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-1: What Is a Movie?** Because this is the first screening activity students will complete, take time to identify key parts on the Screening Sheet. When necessary, each Screening Sheet has a Word Builder box that provides brief explanations of key terms on the sheet and in the film. Each sheet also has a summary of what students can expect to see, as well as directions.
- View  **Film Clip 1-1: What Is a Movie?** After viewing, give students time to complete their sheets, then discuss student observations. Because the running time is less than four minutes, teachers may wish to play the film a second time if needed. Recommended answers are below.


Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-1: What Is a Movie?

- The first movies, or moving images, made in the 19th century were not silent films. What were they? *They were single photographs or drawings that, when set in motion, tricked the eye into perceiving continuous movement. Emphasize two devices illustrated in this film segment: the Zoetrope, which displayed images inside a cylinder that spun, and the Kinetoscope, that displayed images on a roll that flipped the images rapidly.*
- Why do you think moviegoers in 1903 were shocked when the bandit in *The Great Train Robbery* pointed his gun at the audience and fired? *Answers will vary but should focus on the main idea that the moving images gave the illusion of real life. Remind students that this was the first movie that told a story and so most audiences would not have seen an actor looking directly at them from the movie screen. The realism was shocking.*

Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-1: What Is a Movie? (cont.)

3. The narrator says “The silent film created a visual language for telling stories that could be understood by anyone, anywhere.” What does the narrator mean by “visual language?” *Because films were silent, images told the story and not words. Even people who spoke different languages could understand what was happening on the screen. You may wish to emphasize a key point the narrator makes: that this language of long shots, close-ups, movement and montage editing is the language of film, and it is still used today.*
4. List five inventions in moving-image technology identified in this film. *Both the Zoetrope and the Kinetoscope were early inventions that contributed to the development of film. Additional inventions identified in this film clip include: sound, color, wide screens, lightweight cameras and sound equipment, and computers.*

Enrichment

Distribute  **Group Activity 1-1, Enrichment: Research a Moving-Image Timeline.** Review “The Project” summary and each step in the process of researching the timeline. You may wish to allow students to view Film Clip 1-1 again as they research their timelines. Review students’ completed timelines in class. You may also wish to display their timelines on a bulletin board.

Close

Review the questions posed at the outset of this activity (see Engage). How have students’ responses changed? In some instances they will demonstrate a deeper understanding that a movie is not just a storytelling device. Emphasize that while Thomas Edison’s inventions contributed to early cinema, no one person invented the movies. The technology is the result of many creative minds — filmmakers and scientists alike — who continue to experiment and invent.

Activity B Writing to Be Read v. Writing to Be Seen

Concept


Like all narratives, movies have basic story elements, including character, setting, conflict, and plot. Filmmakers, however, tell their stories in a unique way — through images and sounds in addition to words.

Engage

Share this information with students:

Movies are different from other types of storytelling formats, such as short stories or novels. A film script is not meant to be read, but rather is a guide to what is to be seen and heard. This is a critical difference. In a book, a writer can describe what a character is thinking or feeling. But in a film, the writer must somehow suggest the thoughts or emotions through visual images and sounds. The same is true for setting. In a book, the writer describes the time and place where the action occurs. In a movie, the filmmaker must somehow recreate the time and the place, again using visual images and sounds.

Explain & Explore

- Distribute  **Reading Activity 1-2: The Front of the Bus.** This reading activity helps explain the difference between prose written to be read and a script written to be seen on a movie screen. Review the Word Builder terms. Read the passage. Then discuss the questions. The questions in part 2, in particular, will help students begin to think visually. Their answers will vary and become more creative. Encourage them to imagine and predict. Suggested answers follow.

Answer Key for Reading Activity 1-2: The Front of the Bus

Part 1: Identifying Details

1. Who is the main character in this story? *Rosa Parks. You may wish to emphasize that the story, as told here, has other characters including black and white passengers on the bus and the bus driver.*
2. What conflict does the main character experience? *Rosa must decide whether or not to give up her seat to the white passenger even though she is sitting in the front of the “colored” section on the bus.*
3. What emotion does the main character experience while waiting for the police to arrive? *She tells the reporter that she was not frightened. Rather, she was tired of being treated unfairly and of being pushed around. Some students may suggest she feels anger or indignation.*
4. What happens at the end of the story? *The police arrest Rosa who is found guilty of breaking an Alabama law. The story ends, however, with a successful boycott of the bus company by the African Americans who rode the buses. A little more than a year after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, the buses in Montgomery, Alabama, are integrated.*

Part 2: Imagining the Scene for the Screen


1. How do I show the setting? What would it look like? *Emphasize that showing a bus is not quite enough. They also need to suggest the year — 1955 — the time of year and time of day.*
2. How do I suggest that there is a white section and a black section on the bus? *A sign might indicate “colored section.” But also, the people on the bus beyond a specific seat would be black, while in another section they would be white.*
3. How do I show that the main character is not only physically tired but also tired of being pushed around? *Possibilities include tone of voice, facial expressions, dialogue, etc.*
4. How do I reproduce the main character’s memory of her grandfather? *Some students may suggest showing him on the screen, but emphasize that the grandfather can’t just appear. Somehow the image must suggest a memory, the past.*
5. How do I show the audience what the main character remembers about being treated unfairly in the past? *Some students may suggest having the character speak her thoughts aloud. Stress, however, that sometimes a filmmaker can only suggest that a character is upset, angry, or confused rather than show the specific thoughts.*
6. How do I suggest to the audience that the main character faces physical danger? *One way might be for the camera to focus on the bus driver’s fist or the policeman’s club or the glaring expressions of the bus driver, police, and even the other passengers.*


Part 3: Making Conclusions

1. How is a film similar to other storytelling formats, such as nonfiction narratives, short stories and novels? *A film, like written literature, relates a story. Like written narratives, movies also have characters, settings, conflicts, action, and themes.*
2. How is a film different from these other storytelling formats? *A film, unlike those other venues, tells its story in a uniquely visual way.*
3. What tools does a filmmaker use that a journalist or novelist does not use to show a character’s thoughts, memories, or fears? *Encourage students to recall images from the films they have seen. Answers may include music, images, and voice-over narration (when the character’s voice tells the audience what he or she is thinking).*
4. What tools and techniques does a filmmaker use to establish setting and conflict? *Answers may include the following: camera, lights and shadows, music, sound effects, color, and images.*

- Introduce the screening activity. Explain that students will view a scene from the film *The Rosa Parks Story*, starring Angela Bassett. Share this information with students about the film, which was made for television and so did not play in public movie theaters:

The director of The Rosa Parks Story is Julie Dash. In 1992, she was the first African American female director to have a full-length film released in theaters across the United States. That film was called Daughters of the Dust. She made The Rosa Parks Story for television in 2003. It won numerous awards, including the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Image Award.

- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-2: The Front of the Bus**. Review the key points on the sheet. Have students choose a screening partner. Remind students that they can record their observations during the screening activity as well as after viewing.

- View  **Film Clip 1-2: The Front of the Bus.** After viewing, give students time to complete their sheets, then discuss student observations. Answers will vary. Recommended answers include those listed on the chart below.

Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-2: The Front of the Bus

How does the filmmaker show...

Describe the visual images and/or sounds in the film that suggest the elements at left.

...the setting?

The first shot shows a bus, but the bus itself looks as if it is from a past time and not the design style of contemporary buses. Shots show the city streets and Christmas music plays in the background. The people are wearing coats and hats, indicating that it is winter, and we see a Santa Claus. It is dark out, so it must be evening.

...the main character's conflict?

The people getting on the bus are all white. The conflict is first dramatically expressed when the man sitting beside Rosa gets up but she only moves closer to the window. Later, when the bus driver threatens to arrest her, she tells him he "may do that" if he must. The camera then shows a sign that reads "colored" and the policeman allowing the bus driver to move it. Other clues are the angry look on the passengers' faces, Rosa's looks of confusion and worry, and music no longer sounding festive.

...the main character's memory of her grandfather?

She turns to the window, and the image dissolves so that the audience no longer sees the city street outside but a little girl with an older man. This indicates a flashback to an earlier time in Rosa's life. The lighting is different from that used inside the bus. It is a brighter light, with almost a washed-out look.

...that the main character may be in danger?

Dialogue and the reaction of others on the bus suggest this. First the bus driver asks for police backup. While everyone is waiting, the whispered annoyances of the other passengers can be heard. Perhaps most importantly, however, are the close-ups on the actors' faces. Rosa is rigid, suggesting she is not giving in, and yet she swallows hard a few times, suggesting her fear. The white passenger and the bus driver look angry. Other clues are the threatening music, dark shadows, the police cars and sirens, and their red lights flashing in faces.

Close

Encourage students to describe how the movie scene differed from the prose passage they read. However, avoid discussion of which version was better. Instead, focus on the way the film tells the story differently, using images and sound in addition to words.

Activity C Visual and Sound Symbolism

Concept



Filmmakers, like writers, use symbols to create narrative meaning. Cinematic symbols, however, rely on visual and sound symbols.

Engage

Ask for two student volunteers to come to the front of the room. Ask them to look at each other for a few moments, then tell them to turn their backs on one another. Ask them to change or alter three items about their personal appearance, either their hair or their clothing. Now, tell the two students to face one another again and identify what the three changes are. How

observant were they? Use this short warm-up activity to introduce the concept of *watching* vs. *seeing*. Can anyone in the room explain how seeing might differ from merely watching? Stress that careful observation makes the difference. Can anyone identify a situation when careful observation might be important? Detecting danger and witnessing an accident or a crime are two situations.

Explain & Explore

- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-3: *To Kill a Mockingbird* Opening Credits, Part 1 — Watching**. Explain that they will view this particular segment twice. Each viewing has a slightly different goal. Review the columns on the Screening Sheet. In this first viewing, they are being asked to list all the images they see and the sounds they hear.
- View  **Film Clip 1-3: *To Kill a Mockingbird* Opening Credits**. After viewing, give students time to complete their sheets, then discuss student observations. Answers will vary. Recommended answers include those listed on the chart below.

Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-3:

To Kill a Mockingbird Opening Credits, Part 1 — Watching

Images


cigar box; child's hands; children's toys or treasures, including marbles, crayons, carved soap dolls, pocket watch, harmonica, whistle, coins, safety pin, pencil, jacks, pen nib, eyeglasses, key; drawing of a bird on composition paper; ripping the drawing; and images of words, such as the title

Sounds

child humming or singing; ticking watch; giggles; sighs; "boom, boom, boom, boom"; coloring; ripping paper; piano and orchestra music

Think More About It

What happens in this sequence? *Some students may say nothing happens, and, in fact, there is little action. No one speaks or enters the frame. All the audience sees are the hands of a child. Others will respond that a child is playing, coloring and humming and at one point ripping a sheet of paper in half.*

- Review with students the meaning of the literary term *symbol*. A symbol is an object that stands for or represents something else. That "something else" could be a person, a place, a time, or even an abstract idea or emotion.
- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-1: How Do Filmmakers Create Symbols?** Review the key concepts on the graphic organizer, as suggested below.

The Filmmaker's Intended Meaning

Because films tell stories visually, filmmakers use symbols to suggest meaning about a character's personality or why he or she behaves in a certain way. Symbols can also suggest action that has occurred in the past or may soon occur in the future and can indicate meaning for a whole community or culture.

Repetition

One way to create a symbol is to show an object over and over again. The filmmaker is telling the audience to pay attention to this detail; it is important.

Association



An association is a relationship between two or more people or things. A second way to create a symbol and to suggest meaning is to link an object with a person, suggesting a relationship between them.

Sound Emphasis

Sound effects and music can also suggest meaning. Creaking steps, howling winds, the cry of an animal can all create reactions in the audience.

Visual Emphasis

A filmmaker can create symbolism by using color, light, and camera distances. Colors suggest meaning as do bright or dark lighting. Also, by moving the camera close to a person or object, the filmmaker is again telling the audience to "pay attention; this is important."

- Introduce the second viewing activity. Explain that often when we view moving images for the first time, we piece together the visual and sound clues to figure out meaning. This is the *watching* phase. But once the audience figures out what has happened, they can better concentrate on *how* it happens. This is the *seeing* phase. In this second viewing, students will watch the same film clip again. This time they should pay close attention not to what happens but rather to the ways the filmmaker creates symbolism and suggests meaning.
- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-3: *To Kill a Mockingbird* Opening Credits, Part 2 — Seeing.** Review the Word Builder terms and the questions on the chart, noting how they differ from those on the first chart they completed.
- View  **Film Clip 1-3: *To Kill a Mockingbird* Opening Credits** again. (Some students may need to view it once for the visual images and once for the sounds.) After viewing, give students time to think about and finish their Screening Sheets, then discuss student observations. Answers will vary. Recommended answers include those listed on the chart below.

**Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-3:
To Kill a Mockingbird Opening Credits, Part 2 — Seeing**

Ways a Filmmaker Can Create Symbolism

Repetition

- What images are repeated?
- How do some of these images suggest the past?

Association

- How does the filmmaker suggest a child has opened the box?

Sound Emphasis

- How do the sound effects make you feel? What might they symbolize?
- When does the music begin?
- Describe the music and how it changes by the end of the sequence.

Visual Emphasis

- What objects are seen very close up? What might those symbolize?

Observations

The entire sequence is a repetition of images of children’s toys, including crayons, pocket watch, marbles, drawings, etc. Many of the toys and treasures are old-fashioned and not the sort of toys children play with today.

The hands opening the box are those of a child, so that links her or him with the items inside. The items, the sing-song voice, the “boom, boom, boom, boom” and the coloring activity also suggest a child.

The humming and the ticking watch are sound effects. Some students may say the sounds suggest play or childhood. The music begins after the image and ticking of the pocket watch. The music changes when one marble strikes another. The music, which was just a piano melody — very simple, even childish — begins to swell with other instruments. At the end, it softens again and grows mysterious.

Most of the items in the sequence are shown very close up, so close, in fact, that you can read the year on the penny! Especially close are the pocket watch, the marbles, the drawing of the bird, the pencil, the rip in the bird drawing. Although the items may seem trivial, this close attention is a signal that the items have special meaning for the child. Students’ responses about what the items symbolize will vary.

Extend understanding by asking the following:

Guided Discussion

- What is the symbolic meaning of the child’s drawing of a bird? *It relates to the film’s title. And since it is a child’s rendition, it also relates to the point of view of the film — told through a child’s eyes.*
- What happens to this drawing at the end of the sequence and what might this symbolize? *It is torn in half, suggesting the events of the story will somehow divide people.*
- Symbols can also foreshadow action to come. Which objects seen in this opening sequence will appear later in the film? *The pocket watch and the two carved dolls*

Close

Share with students this information about the purpose of opening credits in a film:

Opening credits have two purposes. One is to suggest the story's content — its characters, setting, conflict, theme. The second purpose of opening credits is to give credit to the filmmakers who collaborated to create the story.

Ask: Which filmmakers, in particular, are identified in these opening credits? Note that the purpose here is not to quiz students on the names of the filmmakers but rather to draw their attention to the fact that credits list all the people involved in making a film.



TAKE 2

Commentary from the Filmmakers: Opening Credits
Read more about how the opening credits for this film were created by going to The Story of Movies Web site at www.storyofmovies.org.

Activity D Cigar Box Memories


Concept

Visual symbols give writers and filmmakers a common way to communicate ideas, feelings, and memories.

Engage

The contents of Scout's cigar box were personal items from her and Jem's childhood. Ask students to think of six to twelve personal items they remember from their childhood. These items may include toys, games, beads, coins, photographs, a sports banner, or a piece of sports equipment like a child's baseball bat. Encourage discussion by asking students to share what these items are and the memories they associate with the items.

Create

- Introduce the activity. Students will create a cigar box similar to the one featured in the opening credits of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The contents of the cigar box will be personal, based on each student's memories and emotions associated with childhood. Students will not make a film of their cigar box at this time. However, after learning more about film language in Chapter 3, some students may wish to return to this activity and experiment in making a video of their own, set to music.
- Distribute  **Creative Writing Activity 1-3: Cigar Box Memories**. You may consider assigning this as an in-class activity or as an at-home activity.
- Read the directions, including the voice-over lines from the script. Then review the prewriting activity as an in-class discussion. You may wish to allow students to view Film Clip 1-3: Opening Credits again at this stage.
- Emphasize this important point with students: They are not to create the opening credits for a movie. Instead, they are to use the cigar box as a visual symbol. The cigar box is a starting point only for their own self-expression.

Close

Suggest that students save their Cigar Box Memories in a writing portfolio for future work. As stated above, some students may wish to capture the contents of their cigar boxes in a short non-narrative film at a later time, once they have learned more about the filmmaking process in Chapter 2 and the use of light and camera angles and distances in Chapter 3.

Teacher Overview

There are two ways to study a story told cinematically. One is to focus on the *story*, or what happens and why. The other is to focus on the film's *narrative structure*. Narrative structure is the order in which a story unfolds on the screen. In a majority of feature films, scenes are grouped into three acts. Act 1 is exposition, or the setup of time, place, and character. This information is necessary for us to understand the action that will develop in act 2 as well as the resolution of the conflicts in Act 3. While not every film follows this three-act formula, the activities in this lesson explore this formula in some detail.

Activity A introduces students to a filmmaking technique frequently used to convey expository, or background, detail — voice-over narration. In activity B, they learn that an inciting incident is the single plot event that sets the story in motion. It is the first domino to fall, and all else that happens in the story will be a chain reaction. Activity C discusses the film's parallel story lines. Activity D's film clip, though less than nine minutes long, comprises almost all of Act 3.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:









- explain what voice-over narration is and its use in *To Kill a Mockingbird*;
- identify expository details in a scene;
- sequence plot events leading to the story's climax;
- describe the purpose of each of the three acts in a film's narrative structure.

Key Terms

(Note: Most terms are defined within the activity text that follows. You may also refer to the glossary.)

content, narrative structure, inciting incident, exposition, climax, rising action, resolution

Lesson 2 Materials

Activity	Print	DVD
Activity A Voice-over Narration	 Graphic Organizer 1-2: Two Ways to Read a Film  Reading Activity 1-4: "A Tired Old Town"	None
Activity B Act 1 – Expository Scenes	 Graphic Organizer 1-3: Narrative Structure  Screening Sheet 1-4: Reading Together at Night	 Film Clip 1-4: Reading Together at Night
Activity C Act 2 – Rising Action	 Reading Activity 1-5: Parallel Story Lines	None
Activity D Act 3 – Conflict Resolution	 Screening Sheet 1-5: "Like Shooting a Mockingbird"	 Film Clip 1-5: "Like Shooting a Mockingbird"

Activity A Voice-over Narration

1



Concept

Voice-over narration is a filmmaking technique that provides important information about a character, setting, or action in the story. The narrator speaks during the shot but does not appear on the screen.


Engage

Write this term on the chalkboard or overhead projector: *Voice talent*. Ask students to explain what they think the term means. Some students will easily understand that *talent* means a special skill someone has, and that a person with voice talent is likely to have a pleasing voice.

Prompt further discussion by telling students that they have probably heard voice talent many, many times. A person hired to read narration, or lines of dialogue, is voice talent, or a voice actor. All broadcast media — radio, television, and film — use voice talent. The type of voice needed depends on the project. For example, a voice to narrate a television advertisement announcing a sale of used cars would not be the same voice that would narrate a documentary film on the Underground Railroad or that would narrate a “book on tape.” The voice for the commercial aims to excite and motivate the listener. The voice for the documentary film or book on tape, on the other hand, wants to communicate a story.

People who narrate lines of dialogue often must audition for the job. Their appearance is not important, because they never appear on screen. But the quality of their voice is very important. Clear enunciation and perfect vocabulary, diction, and grammar skills are necessary.

Explain & Explore


- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-2: Two Ways to Read a Film**. Review key concepts on the graphic organizer, providing additional information as suggested below.

Content

The story’s content is *what* happens to whom and *why*. This involves identifying basic story elements present in all narratives — character, setting, conflict, plot, and theme.

Narrative Structure

The story’s narrative structure is *how* the story is told or how it is presented on the screen. This involves analyzing how the filmmaker shows the characters, settings, conflict, plot, or theme.

- Review with students the meaning of the term *voice-over narration* (VO). Voice-over narration is a person speaking during a shot in a film when not present on screen. VO is not a basic story element, such as character is. Rather it is a narrative-structure technique. It is one way to present important information to the audience without actually showing that action or person.
- Distribute  **Reading Activity 1-4: “A Tired Old Town.”** Review the Word Builder terms. Assign roles and read aloud the script excerpt. Use the questions and the recommended answers below to help students both identify stated information and make inferences about the characters and setting.

Guided Discussion

1. What necessary background information about setting does the VO provide in this scene? Recalling details: *Information about the setting — year (summer of 1932), place (Maycomb)*. Making inferences: *Maycomb is a small town; money is scarce for most everyone; summers are hot; women are referred to as ladies, suggesting gentility, politeness.*
2. What necessary information about Scout does the VO provide? Recalling details: *That she was six that summer*. Making inferences: *That she is older now and looking back; that she was a child at the time of the story she is about to tell (e.g., she says, “when I first knew it”).*
3. Who is speaking? How do you know? Making inferences: *It is never stated directly that the VO is Scout, but it is suggested through the transition from VO to dialogue.*
4. What do you learn about Scout’s character based on her first spoken lines in the film? Making inferences: *She is polite in calling the visitor “Mr.”; she is eager to be helpful, but she is also bold in assuming that the visitor will want to speak with her father.*

Close

The VO dialogue the students just read is only 148 words long, but it communicates a lot of information about the time and place where Scout lived. Encourage students to craft their own VO dialogue passage of not more than 150 words. Using the script as a model, they should describe their own home, school, or community during a specific period — either an earlier year in their childhood or the present time. Again using the script as a model, the opening sentence should name the place about which they are writing, and the closing line should identify their age.

Activity B Act I – Expository Scenes


Concept

Exposition provides background information that is necessary for the audience to understand the motivation of a character or characters in the story.

Engage

By middle school, most students have had experience in expository writing. Book reports and research papers are two examples. Tap students' prior knowledge by reviewing what expository writing is — explaining or providing factual information about a subject. Nonfiction books and magazine and newspaper articles are examples of expository writing. Explain, however, that in a fictional work, such as a novel or a film, expository information has a slightly different meaning. It is made up of the background details about the characters or setting that the reader or the viewing audience needs to know.

Explain & Explore

- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-3: Narrative Structure** to explain the three-act structure that most movies follow. Explain that although a filmmaker's style of storytelling may be unique, the basic structure of the story as illustrated on the graphic organizer generally does not change. In other words, most every film can be outlined according to this three-act structure. Review the key concepts of The Setup as suggested below.

Act 1

This is the beginning of a film. During this act, the audience meets characters and understands both the time and place of the story.



Meet the Characters

This phase is one of the building blocks of act 1. The filmmaker presents the main characters and provides necessary background information about them.

Inciting Incident

The inciting incident is an event that triggers a domino-like effect, setting in motion the action that will occur later in the story. It is a single plot action that will change the lives of the main characters.

- Define *exposition*. Exposition is background information about a person, a place, or a thing. This information is useful to understanding a character's personality and/or motivation. Although the information may seem minor at first — and it usually is — exposition helps audiences understand the story's conflict.
- Share this information with students:
In activity A, you learned that using voice-over narration was one way to provide the audience with expository details. But a film is a visual medium, and so the screenwriter must also use images and not just words to present exposition. The screenwriter — like all good writers — must show or dramatize, rather than tell.
- Introduce the screening activity. Explain that the scene students are about to view provides necessary background information to help the audience understand the relationships among the characters. Unlike voice-over narration, however, the information is not stated directly. It is suggested, or implied, through visual images. The viewer must infer, or make conclusions about, the characters based on these images.

- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-4: Reading Together at Night.** Review the directions. Students will identify and interpret visual and sound details.
- View  **Film Clip 1-4: Reading Together at Night.** After viewing, give students time to complete their sheets, then discuss student observations. Answers will vary. Recommended answers include those listed on the chart below.

Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-4: Reading Together at Night

Visual and Sound Details	What does this tell you about Scout or Atticus and their relationship?
The audience first sees the characters through the bedroom window. Scout is in bed. Atticus is sitting on the bed next to her.	<i>This is a private moment between Atticus and Scout. When Atticus says, "That's enough for tonight," the audience begins to understand that this is a nightly routine for father and daughter. By placing Atticus on the bed, he is giving her his full attention. They are physically close and also emotionally close. Atticus seems to be loving and patient.</i>
When Scout talks about Boo Radley, Atticus scolds her, telling her to "stay away from those poor people."	<i>"I told you," he says, suggesting that this is not the first time he has warned the children not to bother the Radley family. Atticus appears to be a good parent and considerate of his neighbors. But Scout's question shows that she is curious about Boo, if not a little frightened.</i>
Scout asks to see Atticus's pocket watch, then reads the inscription.	<i>The suggestion is that she had seen it before and favors it. She knows what is inside. Her reading the inscription provides some comfort to her.</i>
Scout asks Atticus what he will give her someday.	<i>She likes the watch and may be a little disappointed that Jem will get it, not her. She doesn't want Jem to outdo her. Atticus says he doesn't have much to give her, suggesting the family is not wealthy. The pearls belonged to her mother.</i>
Scout sleeps with a stuffed animal.	<i>This detail emphasizes how young Scout is.</i>
Scout calls to Jem, who is also in bed, "Was Mama pretty?"	<i>Scout is curious about her mother. But this exchange between her and Jem also reveals that she does not remember her mother and is perhaps a little lonely for her.</i>
The final shot shows Atticus sitting alone on the porch swing.	<i>Because the children are talking about their mother, the focus on Atticus at this point during their VO conversation suggests that he too is thinking about his wife, who has died. He appears thoughtful and perhaps concerned about his motherless children.</i>

- Tell students that what happens next in the film after this scene is the *inciting incident* that will change the lives of Atticus, Scout, and Jem, as well as other characters in the story. Ask if they recall what that incident is. *Most should be able to recall that the judge visits Atticus on the porch and asks him to defend Tom Robinson.*

Close

Explain the connection between the camera's position outside the window, looking in, and Scout asking Atticus if Boo Radley peeks in the window at them. By placing the camera outside the window, the audience gets to peek inside at Scout and Atticus. No doubt, the filmmaker wanted to create this impression specifically because of Scout's question.

Dramatize, Don't Explain

“Show; don't tell” is an important rule for all writers, including those who write screenplays. Go to The Story of Movies Web site at www.storyofmovies.org for a visual-thinking activity on using storyboards to create a scene.

Activity C Act 2 – Rising Action

Concept


Act 2 of a film shows the cause-and-effect events that lead to the climax, or turning point.

Engage

Ask for five students to come to the front of the room and stand side-by-side. Hand the first student a plastic cup. The cup is empty, but the students are to pretend that it holds a liquid of some sort. Ask the first student to take a drink and then pass the cup to the next student, who will also take a drink. Continue the process until the cup passes to the last student. Ask the class if what they just saw was interesting or in some way suggested a story. The likely response will be no, the same thing seemed to happen repeatedly without any progression or change.

Alter the demonstration. This time explain that the liquid inside the cup tastes tart or sour. As the cup passes down the line, the taste becomes bitter, then even more bitter. Ask the student volunteers to demonstrate this progression of bitterness through facial expression and/or sound effects. Ask the class to comment on how this second demonstration differed from the first. Not only did something different happen in each step but there was a progression of actions, one building upon another. Explain that rising action in a film is also a series of actions that build one upon the other.

Explain & Explore

- Display again  **Graphic Organizer 1-3: Narrative Structure.** Explain the key concepts of the second act in a film's narrative structure.

Act 2


The second act presents the rising action. *Rising* suggests events that follow one after the other, building in suspense.

Cause-Effect Event

This is an action that triggers a reaction or another event. A story can have many cause-effect events. Taken together, these building blocks form the film's *plot*.

Climax

Also called the turning point, this is the most dramatic moment in the story. The climax triggers a significant insight or a change in one or more of the main characters. The climax is also part of the story's plot.

- Distribute  **Reading Activity 1-5: Parallel Story Lines.** Review the Word Builder terms. Discuss with students where they would plot each event listed on the sheet and encourage them to provide reasons for doing so.

Answer Key for Reading Activity 1-5: Parallel Story Lines

Boo Radley's Story Line: Scout, Jem, and Dill go spying in the neighborhood at night. Jem discovers a medal in the hollow tree. Jem watches Mr. Radley cement the hole in the tree trunk.

Tom Robinson's Story Line: Atticus visits the home of a man he's defending. Bob Ewell spits in Atticus's face. A mob confronts Atticus outside the jail cell at night. Mayella Ewell and her father testify at the trial. The jury finds Tom Robinson guilty. Bob Ewell attacks Scout and Jem.

Think More About It

1. Why is the inciting incident not listed in the actions above? *The inciting incident occurs in act 1. It is what triggers, or sets into motion, act 2.*
2. What event is the climax, or turning point? Provide a reason for your answer. *The attack on Scout and Jem. It is the most dramatic event of the film. The trial is over. Tom Robinson is dead. But the danger to Scout and Jem is most real at this moment. The outcome of this attack will set in motion act 3, the resolution of conflicts.*

Close

Review terms learned earlier in this chapter — *exposition* and *visual symbol* — and ask the following questions:

Guided Discussion

1. During act 2, Atticus shoots a mad dog. This event does not trigger a reaction. Instead, it provides exposition. What information about Atticus does the audience learn during this scene? *He has a reputation for being not only a protector of the town, but the best shot in the county. He is so good, in fact, the sheriff gives him his rifle to kill the sick animal. The scene also reveals an important detail about Jem. He did not know his father could shoot. He is surprised and impressed by what his father does in this scene.*
2. Is the mad dog a visual symbol? If so, what might the dog represent? *Answers will vary. One interpretation is that the dog's madness is like the town's madness, especially when the group of men attempt to take Tom from his jail cell prior to his trial.*

Activity D Act 3 - Conflict Resolution

Concept

The final act in a film is the resolution. All conflicts are resolved, if only for the time being, and the main characters are somehow changed by the events that have occurred.

Engage

Boo Radley is an important character in the film. The kids talk about him throughout acts 1 and 2. Without Boo Radley, Jem and Scout could have been seriously injured, perhaps even killed. Ask students to comment on why the filmmakers decided *not* to show Boo Radley until the final scene of the film. What effect does this have on the audience? At what points earlier in the story could Boo have appeared? (*Some students may suggest showing Boo placing the medal and the dolls in the tree trunk, or Jem spying on Boo through the window on the night he creeps onto the porch.*) How would showing Boo Radley sooner have changed the ending?

Explain & Explore

- Display once more  **Graphic Organizer 1-3: Narrative Structure.** Explain the third, or final, act in a film's narrative structure. Review key points on the graphic organizer about act 3, as suggested below.

Act 3



The third act is the final one in a film's narrative structure. Act 3 has two important elements:

Falling Action

This is comprised of all the events that occur after the climax until the story's end.

Resolution

The resolution is the outcome of the events that occurred. Sometimes the solution to a conflict is positive. Sometimes it is negative. Often the solution to a conflict is not stated directly but rather implied through visual and sound symbols. By the end of the story, the main characters have changed somewhat. Either they have changed personally, or their view of others or the world has changed significantly.

- Distribute  **Screening Sheet 1-5: “Like Shooting a Mockingbird.”** Review the Word Builder terms and key points on the Screening Sheet. Explain that very often what has happened to a character is not stated directly. The filmmaker may also suggest what is likely to happen. The audience infers, or concludes, the resolution by paying attention not only to words but also to the visual and sound symbols. Remind students that they may jot their observations on the sheet both during and after viewing the segment.
- View  **Film Clip 1-5: “Like Shooting a Mockingbird.”** Have students choose a screening partner. After viewing, discuss student observations. Answers will vary. Recommended answers include those listed below.

**Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-5:
“Like Shooting a Mockingbird”**

Character	What has happened to this character? How do you know?	What can you infer, or conclude, will happen to this character in the future? How do you know?
Jem	<i>He has a broken arm. Image shows him in bed with a cast on his arm. He has been brought home by Boo. Image shows Boo hiding behind the door.</i>	<i>He will recover. The VO says he will wake up in the morning. He may befriend Boo. Image shows Boo looking in on him through the window.</i>
Scout	<i>Scout is not physically hurt. This is evident by the way she behaves. She shows no sign of injury. She finds out who Boo is. The close-up shot reveals her facial expressions of surprise and new understanding. Rather than being afraid, she smiles, sits with Boo on the swing, walks him home. Their new friendship is revealed by the symbol of holding hands and the tender music.</i>	<i>She’ll never forget those months of the trial or Boo and Jem. VO provides this information. She will find a new respect for Boo; dialogue reveals that she now calls him Arthur. She will continue to grow in closeness with her father; shown by images of them hugging on the porch and rocking in Jem’s room. Swelling music provides the feeling that everything will be okay.</i>
Atticus	<i>He is shaken, confused. He worries that his son may be guilty of accidentally killing Bob Ewell. In addition to dialogue, this is revealed through gestures — running his hand through his hair, pacing, the symbolic twisting of handkerchief. He can’t remember Jem’s age.</i>	<i>He will agree to “let the dead bury the dead.” Filmmaker shows him turning his back while the sheriff explains his version of what he will say happened. He will remain in this town. He will experience no more trouble as the result of the trial or Bob Ewell’s death. The sheriff’s dialogue and the VO suggest this.</i>
Boo Radley	<i>His appearance hiding behind the bedroom door suggests he was the one who rescued Jem and Scout. He is unhurt but painfully shy. Close-up shots of his face show this. He is very concerned for Jem. He lets Scout lead him by the hand to Jem’s bed.</i>	<i>He will not be tried for the murder of Bob Ewell. This is provided through the sheriff’s dialogue. The VO and the moving music suggest that Boo will not come to any harm as a result of the events of that night. He will probably become closer friends with Scout and will continue to protect her, shown by images of them walking down the street in the dark together and her standing on his porch.</i>

Answer Key for Screening Sheet 1-5: "Like Shooting a Mockingbird" (cont.)

Think More About It

1. In what way does this scene mirror the opening credits? *In the opening credits, the contents of the cigar box were simply items without meaning. By the end of act 3, the items have meaning. Some items, such as the pocket watch, remind us of the one that belongs to Atticus. Some items, such as the medal and the carved dolls, were gifts from Boo Radley to Jem. The film opens with us looking in the Finches' window and the camera moves inward. At the end, we again look inside the window to see the affection between Atticus and Scout, but this time the camera moves out and away. Some students may also point out that at the beginning of the film, Scout was afraid of Boo looking in their windows, but at the end we see him looking in on Jem with tender concern.*
2. According to Scout, who is the mockingbird? *In this scene, Scout tells her father that putting Boo Radley on trial would be "like shooting a mockingbird," suggesting that Boo meant only to protect Jem and not to kill Ewell. Boo Radley is the mockingbird. Some students may point out that the ripped drawing of the mockingbird represents the anger that threatens to destroy the children, specifically Ewell's revenge.*

1



Close

Write the following quote by director Martin Scorsese on the chalkboard or on an overhead projector and ask students to freewrite for two to three minutes on what they think the quotation means. Emphasize the second half of the quotation, in particular. Encourage students to address what movies tell us about the kind of human beings we are.

If you love cinema, you love people. Because cinema is about people — all cinema is about who we are as human beings.

Afterward, ask students what *To Kill a Mockingbird* reveals about "who we are as human beings". Are people more like Atticus or more like Bob Ewell? Are all children like Scout and Jem and Dill? Are all fathers like Atticus?

Teacher Overview

Students began this chapter exploring what a movie is. Activities and discussions focused on movies as technology, as powerful communication tools, and as a popular entertainment pastime. This lesson extends the definition one step further, to movies as works of art. The stories filmmakers tell are both interpretations and reflections of the culture in which they are created. In that sense, movies are part of our artistic heritage.

In activity A, students explore why two people often have different reactions to the same film. Then they follow a four-step process to write a film critique. Activity B introduces a critical problem concerning America's film heritage: Many films have already been destroyed and many more are in danger of being lost as a result of chemical deterioration. Of the more than 21,000 feature-length films produced in the United States before 1951, less than half exist today. Seventy-five percent of all silent films no longer exist. Students learn why film deteriorates and research film preservation strategies. To safeguard the country's film heritage, the United States Congress established the National Film Registry and passed the national Film Preservation Act. This law authorizes the Librarian of Congress to select up to 25 films each year for preservation. In activity C, students join the debate and nominate films of their choice to the National Film Registry. This activity provides an excellent real-world connection between your students and the film world.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:







- understand that each person interprets a work of art, including film, in a different way;
- identify the four steps involved in writing a film critique;
- identify two factors that cause film stock to decay;
- identify qualities that make a film eligible for the National Film Registry;
- understand the steps involved in the process of nominating a film for national preservation.

Key Terms

(Note: Most terms are defined within the activity text that follows. You may also refer to the glossary.)

critique, preservation, nitrate decay, acetate decay, emulsion, safety film, archive, restoration

Lesson 3 Materials

Activity	Print	DVD
Activity A Writing a Critique – Film as Art	 Graphic Organizer 1-4: Mirror Images  Graphic Organizer 1-5: Film-Criticism Ladder  Prewriting Activity 1-6: Organizing Your Thoughts	None
Activity B Understanding Film Preservation – Why Film Deteriorates	 Graphic Organizer 1-6: Film Layers  Graphic Organizer 1-7: How a Film Slowly Ages and Dies	None
Activity C How to Nominate a Film to the National Registry	 Group Activity 1-7: National Film Registry Nominations	(Although the curriculum does not provide specific films for screening in this activity, students may wish to screen films independently to review, evaluate, and consider them for nomination.)

Activity A Writing a Critique – Film as Art

1




Concept

The process of critiquing art involves four steps or areas of discussion — description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

Engage

Before students can discuss whether a film is or is not a work of art, they must first learn how to talk meaningfully about art and film. Begin the discussion by asking, *What is a work of art?* Some students may respond that art is a painting. Others may suggest that art is old or boring or something found in a museum. To encourage more meaningful discussion, ask these additional questions: *Is music art? Can a performance be art? Is art always beautiful? Why do people create art? Who decides what is or is not art?*

Explain & Explore

- Explain that in this activity, they will write a film critique of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Before they begin writing about the film, however, they must first understand the four steps involved in the art-critiquing process.
- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-4: Mirror Images** to introduce students to an important art-criticism principle: People interpret works of art differently. Review the key concepts on the graphic organizer as suggested below.

The Mirror


The mirror represents any work of art — a painting, symphony, novel, poem, film, and so on. The image in the mirror is a construction of various elements. In a painting, for example, the elements might include shapes or the use of color. In a poem, the elements may include meter and rhyme. In a film, the elements include not only what the story is about but also how the story is told — the use of lights, camera angles, and visual and sound symbols. Just as no two books are alike, no two paintings or symphonies or movies are alike. Each artist combines the elements in a different way, and so the image in the mirror changes with each new creation.

Viewer's Interpretation

When we look into the mirror, part of what we see is determined by who we are. Many factors shape who we are as individuals — our age, where we live, our family relationships and friendships, our hobbies and interests. Just as each person is different, so too does each person interpret art (or the image in the mirror) differently.

Viewer's Response

By definition, a mirror gives off a reflection. The reflection is your personal reaction to the work of art, the ideas or feelings you derive from it. Some art can make us happy. Some art can anger or frighten us. To explore why we respond to art the way we do is to explore ourselves — our strengths and weaknesses, our fears and desires.

- Emphasize this important point: *No two people may see exactly the same thing in the mirror. Likewise, people respond differently to the same work of art.* This is the reason we have opinions and why we do not always agree on what art is or whether a particular film is a work of art.
- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-5: Film-Criticism Ladder** to introduce students to the four-step process of critiquing a work of art. They will use this ladder first as a discussion guide and later as an outline for writing their art critiques. The graphic organizer will also be useful for them in activity C, when they develop criteria for nominating a film to the National Film Registry. Review the four concepts on the graphic organizer as suggested below.

Description

Most people begin a film criticism by asking themselves, *Did I like this film?* and then answer either *yes* or *no*. They are stumped as to what to write next. But when writing a film critique, you hold off expressing your point of view until later. First you describe the film. In writing a description, you tell what the film is *about*. This includes summarizing. Your description should tell what the film is about. Summarize the story's content, including elements of setting, characters, conflict, and plot.

Analysis


In writing an analysis, you explain the film's narrative structure, or *how* the filmmaker tells the story. This includes identifying visual and sound symbols, as well as other techniques the filmmaker uses to suggest meaning.

Interpretation

In writing an interpretation, you express your opinion about what the story *means*. This includes identifying the film's message or what the filmmaker would like the audience to believe. For *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you might ask yourself, *What does the filmmaker want me to believe about children?* or *What does the filmmaker want me to believe about civil rights?*

Evaluation

In writing an evaluation, you explain your *personal response* to the film. This is where you express your personal opinion of the film. But you must do more than just state "I liked it" or "I did not like it." Perhaps you share a quality with one of the characters, or perhaps a character inspired you. The conflict might have been similar to something you too had experienced. On the other hand, movies can trigger new ideas and help us see ourselves and others in a new light. Asking yourself, *What scene in the film touched me personally?* and *Which character am I most like or not like?* are just two ways to begin exploring your personal response.

- Explain the writing assignment. Students' film critiques will have five paragraphs — one for each step on the Film-Criticism Ladder and a fifth paragraph that is an overall conclusion. (*Note:* Some teachers may wish to adapt this writing assignment to best fit the needs and abilities of their students. For example, some teachers may ask students to write a single descriptive paragraph, focusing on the first level of the Film-Criticism Ladder.)
- Distribute  **Prewriting Activity 1-6: Organizing Your Thoughts.** Review each "card" on the worksheet. Once students have completed the prewriting activity, allow time for them to write their first drafts based on their note cards. Encourage them as they write to review their notes from this chapter, including the graphic organizers.
- Allow time for students to peer-edit and revise their drafts, then share their critiques with others in the class.

Close

After students have completed their film critiques, ask again one of the questions presented during the Engage section of this activity: *Who decides what is or is not art?* Many students may now understand that art is often a personal exchange between the artist and the audience.

Activity B Understanding Film Preservation – Why Film Deteriorates

Concept

Chemical composition and reactions as well as improper storage endanger the life of a film.

Engage

Use one or both of the examples below to introduce students to the concept of deterioration and simple chemical changes in substances that occur over time or when exposed to sun, heat, or moisture. Ask:

1. What happens to newspaper once it has been soaked in water? *The water softens the paper, changing its texture and its strength. The ink may blur or run.*
2. What effect does sunlight or prolonged heat have on painted wood? *The sun or heat can fade the paint's color and, over time, possibly cause the paint to blister and peel.*


Explain & Explore

- Share the following information with students, then challenge their listening skills by asking the two guided discussion questions that follow. (*Note:* You may wish to first write the vocabulary words *vaudeville* and *actuality* on the chalkboard or overhead projector.)

The first movies made, beginning in 1895, were shown in vaudeville theaters across the country. Vaudeville was a popular pastime. People in small towns and cities went to these theaters to see all kinds of entertaining performances, including song-and-dance acts, comedy routines, and even animal tricks. At that time, movies were considered a fad. Many (but not all) of these early films were “actuality” films. That means they didn’t tell a story. Instead they showed real people doing real things, such as sneezing or kissing or dancing. One film showed two champion female boxers in the ring slugging it out. The movies were short and fun and very popular, but no one thought they were anything more than just amusements. No one thought movies were worth saving for future generations to enjoy. As a result, most of the country’s earliest movies were lost or destroyed.

Guided Discussion

1. What kind of a movie was an “actuality” film? *Movies that did not tell a story but rather showed real people doing real things.*
2. What kind of information might these “lost films” from more than 100 years ago have provided for people of the 21st century? *Encourage discussion to focus on movies’ visual way of presenting information. We could have seen how people then dressed and worked and behaved. We could have made conclusions about what people then found interesting or fascinating or fun. That information could have helped us better understand the American culture of the 1890s.*


- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-6: Film Layers** to explain the basic structure of motion-picture film. Students may think of this as a sort of chemical sandwich. Discuss the key concepts on the graphic organizer as suggested below, starting with the bottom layer.

Bottom Layer

The base of film stock is thick and made of one of three types of plastic. Early motion-picture film used a plastic called *cellulose nitrate*. It had a negative characteristic. It could burst into flames very easily! *Acetate* is another type of plastic that has been used in creating film stock. Over time, acetate decays, especially if it is exposed to moisture and heat. *Polyester* is a third type of plastic and has a longer life than either *nitrate*- or *acetate*-based films.

Top Layer

The top layer is a thin coating of emulsion, or liquid, usually made with gelatin. Added to this are bits of silver. These particles become embedded as the emulsion dries. In color film, three colors — yellow, cyan (blue-green) and magenta (red-purple) are added to the emulsion.

- Distribute and display  **Graphic Organizer 1-7: How a Film Slowly Ages and Dies** to explain two key deteriorating processes of film. Explain that the “vinegar syndrome” affects color dyes too, causing them to fade. The vinegar syndrome also affects the soundtrack, causing that to deteriorate as well. While one solution is proper storage, scientists have recently developed a new base material made of polyester to give film a longer life.

Enrichment

- Learn more about film preservation by conducting an online research activity. Moving Image Collection (or MIC) is a group of organizations and individuals committed to preserving film around the world. Access the MIC Web site at this URL: <http://mic.imtc.gatech.edu>. Once you reach the MIC home page, click on the icon for the “remembrance wall.” The remembrance wall web page will allow you to access one of three categories. You will focus on just two: Films Presumed Lost and Films Found.
- Make a chart that has two columns. Label the first column “Films Presumed Lost.” Label the second column “Films Found.” Identify at least five films for each category, listing them on the chart in the appropriate column.
- After completing your chart, make a conclusion about the films you have reviewed. Consider these questions:
 1. What value might the “presumed lost” films have for viewers today?
 2. What information might someone today gain about the past by viewing one or more of the “films found”?

Close

Discuss with students where great paintings and books are stored. Responses will include museums, historical societies, and libraries. Explain that people often collect great works of art and keep them in their homes or in safely protected areas. An *archive* is any place that houses rare or important documents and works of art. Film archives include: George Eastman House in Rochester, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York City; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; and the UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles. Ask students to explain why an art museum would want to preserve old movies.

Activity C How to Nominate a Film to the National Registry


Concept

The United States Congress formed the National Film Registry to safeguard the country's film heritage.

Engage

Review the key concept of activity B by asking students to explain what an “endangered film” might be. Then tell them that in this next activity they are going to learn about a law passed by the United States Congress in an attempt to rescue “endangered films.”

Explain & Explore

- Explain what the National Film Registry is. It is an organization formed by the passing of a federal law, the 1988 National Film Preservation Act. Congress passed the law and formed the registry in order to safeguard and restore the country's film heritage. Each year the registry adds 25 films to its list. The Library of Congress works to ensure that each film on the list is preserved for all time, either through the library's massive motion-picture preservation program or through collaborative ventures with other archives, motion-picture studios, and independent filmmakers.
- Ask students why organizations like the National Film Preservation Board and the Film Foundation don't just save *all* the films that are endangered. Some students may rightly question who will pay for the cost of restoration for so many films. Emphasize too that many films exist as single prints that are owned privately and therefore the film does not belong to the general public.
- Write these three words on the chalkboard or overhead projector and discuss their meanings — *cultural*, *historical*, *aesthetic*.
 - **Cultural** encompasses the beliefs and values of a society, often expressed through its artwork, food, and clothing, but also through religion and education.
 - **Historical** refers to a society's past events.
 - **Aesthetic** is the quality of what a society finds beautiful or pleasing. Aesthetics refers to art and art appreciation.
- Emphasize that in activity A, students explored aesthetics in discussing what a work of art is and in writing their film critiques.
- Distribute  **Group Activity 1-7: National Film Registry Nominations**. Explain that students will work in groups to research and recommend 5 to 10 films to nominate for the National Film Registry. Review the Word Builder terms and the steps listed on the activity sheet, then allow the students sufficient time in class to begin their discussions. Much of this work will have to be completed outside of class, through Internet and library research. Classmates might even wish to hold movie-viewing parties. Students should use class time to discuss their research strategies and how to divide the tasks listed on the sheet.

Close

Discuss with students their group selections. Consider submitting their nominations to the Film Preservation Board at the Library of Congress. For more information, students can access submission information at the following addresses:

Registry site: www.loc.gov/film/filmnfr.html

Nominating information: www.loc.gov/film/vote.html

