APPENDICES

Doctor Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. Dir. Stanley Kubrick, USA, 1964. Comedy/Satire. Classification PG. 95 min. DVD, Columbia.

Historical Themes/Topics

War and peace in the 20th century: Cold War, nuclear arms race, atomic energy, social values and climate of 1960s

Historical Context

According to many historians, rapid advances in science and technology during the 20th century have contributed to making it one of the most destructive eras in world history. Arguably, in a bare-bones approach, history can be characterized as a continuing series of violent attacks between groups of humans. Typically, war is studied in terms of geographic and political realignments. However, something happened to warfare in the 20th century that has changed our collective understanding of war and peace in western society.

The ability to understand and harness atomic energy is characteristic of the advancements in science and technology in the 20th century. It reflects the attempt among modern scientists to understand the smallest particles that are the building blocks of matter, whether in particle physics, microbiology, genetic research, or the development of the microchip.

The development of the atomic bomb allowed humans to develop weapons of mass destruction. For the first time in history, human beings have the power to wipe out entire civilizations in seconds. At the same time, the increasing destructiveness of warfare is communicated with immediacy using modern

communications technologies. The fact that mass communications include

> real images of real people suffering has played a role in developing a modern sensibility of the "other." Faced with images of the destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, North Americans saw children and families as well as whole neighbourhoods destroyed in the blink of an eye. Suddenly, the enemy had a human face.
>
> It could be argued that with exposure to "real" images of the destructiveness of war combined with increased levels of public education, international travel, and mass communications, there is a growing consciousness of universal human rights and, more recently, of the notion that humans are part of the planet and they must care for their environment.
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> With increased scientific knowledge and technological capacity comes a new measure of responsibility. It may be said that science and technology are the very heart of modern responsibility. In what sense can the harnessing of nuclear energy be seen as a sort of "coming of age" story of the 20th century, and what are the ethical consequences of this?
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> **Teaching note:** The study films selected for this course highlight ethical questions related to war, peace, and the human condition. By the end of the course, students should be able to draw some conclusions and make some interpretation of the impact of war over the past century. Their reflection should consider many aspects of war: geography, economics, and political and social movements. Students may be guided to consider questions such as the following: Is the 20th century fundamentally different than previous centuries? Is it more violent than previous eras?

Cinematic Significance

- Stanley Kubrick (1928–1999) is an important filmmaker in the history of film.
- The film provides a masterful example of a black-and-white film.
- It has a rich cinematic language that can provide accessible lessons in visual literacy (e.g., camera shots and angles, techniques, and style).
- The film is a black comedy, which is an excellent example of satire.
- The film style allows students to compare elements of film genre (i.e., documentary, war films). The "war room" as depicted in the film became an iconic image, used as a figure of speech and copied in other films. President Reagan (a movie star turned President of the U.S.), on his first tour of the White House, reportedly asked to see the "war room." When he was told there wasn't one, he replied that there must be a war room, as he had seen it in Kubrick's film.
- Dr. Strangelove, released in 1964, was the first commercially successful political satire about nuclear war. Students need to consider the context of time and place in their analysis of the film's satire (e.g., the nuclear arms race, the Cold War, the Bay of Pigs crisis). They may conduct research on "MAD"—mutually assured destruction—which was considered at the time a legitimate military theory based on the concept of nuclear deterrence.

Students may be invited to observe how Kubrick illustrates the absurdity of this reasoning. Given the political reality of the time, the subject of the end of the world was not at all funny, but very frightening. Discuss the role of satire in entertainment and in dealing with stressful historical circumstances. Refer to the following website for further background on the film: www.filmsite.org/drst.html

Before Viewing

- Before viewing this film, students should be familiar with the meaning of satire and should recognize that the goal of satire is never simply to entertain, but also to convey a moral position or point of view (refer to Charlie Chaplin's satire of Hitler in *The Great Dictator*).

  Teaching note: Satire makes fun of human vice or folly, holding it up to judgment. Although satire is a form of comedy, its intent is not simply to be humorous, but to use wit to attack something of which the author disapproves.

  Students may be invited to choose and share examples of satire in literature or film. As a group, they can analyze various techniques used by writers and filmmakers to ridicule the character, idea, or group depicted (e.g., exaggeration, parody, caricature, etc.).

- *Dr. Strangelove* is a satirical film. Unlike a film such as *Merry Christmas*, where historical information about a little-known event of the First World War is best reserved for discovery after viewing the film, the satire of *Dr. Strangelove* cannot be fully appreciated without first having acquired knowledge about the historical topics it addresses. Since satire uses comedy to parody real facts and events, it is important that there be some research beforehand on the historical context. Without this prior historical knowledge, the impact of the film's satire is weakened.

Suggested historical topics for pre-research

1. The atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb

   How and when was the atomic bomb invented? What was the Manhattan Project? What were the contributions of Einstein and Oppenheimer to the development of the atomic bomb? What is the difference between the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb?

   - Explain the theory of nuclear deterrence and assess whether it makes sense.
   - Sketch a brief timeline of key American nuclear testing events and turning points (i.e., time, place, event, consequences).
   - During the Second World War, for what reasons did the Allies decide to use the atomic bomb in Japan?

- What were the long-term and short-term consequences of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Consider the political and human impact.
- What is the significance of the beginning of the atomic era in human civilization?
- Conduct research on military nuclear accidents (submarines or aircraft carrying nuclear bombs).

Historical note: It has been estimated by Greenpeace and other organizations that since 1950, there have been 51 nuclear warheads lost at sea due to nuclear accidents. Since the end of the Cold War, nuclear nations continue to possess arsenals of operational weapons and the danger of nuclear accident persists. Analysts of military history have described the period of the Cold War as a time of vertical nuclear proliferation (in effect, a race of stockpiling between two nuclear superpowers), as opposed to the more recent horizontal proliferation (the acquisition of nuclear arms by an increasing number of countries). Students may carry out additional research on nuclear arms after the Cold War (e.g., topics such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and its signatory and non-signatory states, current nuclear-armed states, environmental issues surrounding the disposal or destruction of nuclear weapons, etc.).

2. The Cold War
   - What are the origins of the Cold War? How did the allies of the Second World War (U.S., Great Britain, and Russia) become long-term political enemies? Students may create a chart of causes and consequences.
   - Students may construct a chronology or timeline of the escalation points in the Cold War. Historical note: Include developments such as the construction of the Berlin Wall, the establishment of the Iron Curtain, the installation of Russian missiles in Cuba, the Bay of Pigs crisis in Cuba, the Vietnam War, etc.
   - How did the United States and the USSR become nuclear powers? Students may each select a key development to research and present (e.g., Einstein-Roosevelt letter, Manhattan Project 1942–1945, etc.). The letter from Einstein to FDR can be found at <www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-ein39/>.
   - German academics and scientists were retrieved by the U.S. and the USSR to work on rocket programs. What role did they play in the arms race between the two superpowers?

   Note: Students may research the biography of the German scientist Werner von Braun and his involvement in the American space program after 1945. They will note the similarity between Dr. Strangelove and Werner von Braun (i.e., German accent, scientific/military research background, even the injured arm). For more information, refer to <http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/vonbraun/>.

During Viewing

- This may be a good occasion to assign specific viewing tasks to different students re: cinematic technique, acting, historical elements, satire, and humour. Consult viewing guides for suggestions.
- Invite students to observe the documentary style of filming in the Air Force command base and note how it appears to be very realistic (cinema vérité style) and the cuts to close-up shots of the cramped interior of the B-52 bomber and back to long, static shots of the Pentagon's huge underground war room.
- Invite students to identify and record the realistic elements of this film based on their pre-research. Initiate a discussion about the realistic and absurd elements in the film and their respective roles.

Teaching note: Student groups may be assigned viewing tasks "Realistic Elements" and "Absurd Elements" and compare their observations after viewing.

After Viewing

Initial response

- Discussion questions/screening journal questions: How does this film make you feel? What are the first impressions that remain with you after viewing?
- In this film, are there "good" and "bad" characters? What distinguishes them? How does the film use humour in its portrayal of characters? Record the names of the main characters and the impressions they create.
- In this film, is there a central message? What is this message and how is it expressed? Are there other secondary messages?
- Take note of scenes that had a strong satirical or humorous effect. What do these scenes depict?

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Analyze the role of the scenes that stood out the most for you in the film. What do you notice in the images, sounds, and character portrayal? What kinds of camera shots are used?
- Describe and comment on how music is used in this film (e.g., the opening theme, the tune linked to the B-52 bomber, the ending song).
- Describe all the elements of the film that are absurd, far-fetched, or exaggerated. How do these elements support the satiric message of the film?

Information note: Observe the names of the characters (i.e., Strangelove, Jack D. Ripper, Mandrake, Turgidson, Kissoff), the caricatured acting and expression, the accents and comical dialogue of the characters, the irony in the comedic treatment of military procedures, the army slogan "peace is our profession," etc.

- The themes of sex and death are predominant throughout the film. Gather observations of the images, words, and situations that highlight these two themes, and discuss how they are related.

Teaching note: The theories developed by German neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) had a profound effect on thinking in the 20th century. Freud believed that human psychology was ruled by two opposing desires: the life drive (survival instinct, sexual instinct, creative force) and the death drive (the instinct to return to a state of calm, or death wish). Students may be guided to observe many elements in the film that express these paradoxical instincts (e.g., the opening scene of the airplanes refueling as a metaphor for the sexual act, the sexual obsession of General Ripper and his "precious bodily fluids," the juvenile sexuality of General Turgidson, Strangelove's polygamist scheme to repopulate Earth, the obsessive interest in arms and destruction, the seeking of annihilation set against the desire to survive, the final scene of riding the atomic bomb, note the film's subtitle "how I learned to love the bomb,", etc.).

- How can satire be compared to simple comedy or parody or burlesque? Find examples of each in film and compare their characteristics.

Teaching note: Parody uses comic techniques to convey a moral message. Often it is used to express a moral outrage so strong that it cannot be expressed directly.

- Describe the scenes in the film that are treated in straight documentary style or that contain some elements of documentary style. What is the role of these quasi-documentary scenes in the film?

Teaching note: Stanley Kubrick is well known for his meticulous research (see other Kubrick films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *Barry Lyndon*).

Some examples of documentary-style scenes: the refueling of the aircraft in the opening scene; the scenes of bomb explosions; the scenes on the attack of the military base by other American forces, scenes in the interior of the B-52 bomber. These scenes serve to support credibility, but also are used to highlight the absurdity of the situation.

The recreation of the interior of a B-52 cockpit was so detailed that the FBI conducted an inquiry into Kubrick's information sources. Observe the scrupulous arguments depicted in the dialogue scenes (e.g., among the president, Russian Prime Minister Turgidson, the ambassador, and Doctor Strangelove; between General Ripper and Mandrake; between Mandrake and Colonel Bat Guano).

Notice also the cinematic techniques used in various scenes: in the B-52 bomber, the film editing is rapid, with a succession of close-up shots; in other dialogue scenes such as in the war room, the shots are long and do not move around as the actors carry out the movement.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- Create a diagram of the cause-and-effect chain that leads from the initial trigger of the crisis to the final atomic disaster. Assess the extent to which this sequence of events may be seen to be plausible.
- Compare how communist and capitalist ideologies are represented in the film and by which characters.
- Compare the representation of men and women in the film. How does the portrayal of the genders contribute to the satirical tone of the film? What does the portrayal of gender roles in the film tell us about the distribution of power in the 1960s?
- Do you think that the subject of atomic warfare would have been better dealt with in a serious film? Or do you believe that the satirical treatment of the topic, or the use of black humour, is a more effective way to awaken the public to the danger of atomic warfare?

Information note: This discussion may be organized as a debate between two opposing sides, supported by arguments that refer to both the impact of cinematic techniques and historical information acquired in pre-research.

- What does the film express about the filmmaker's historical interpretation of the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and the threat of nuclear annihilation?
- In what sense does this film reflect the values of the 1960s? (Students could compare the film with other films from this period, or carry out a brief research into social values and change in the 1960s.)

Other films on the atomic bomb

- *Atomic Café*. Dir. Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty, Pierce Rafferty, 1982, Finland. Documentary. (Using U.S. propaganda films from the Cold War period.)
- *Hiroshima mon amour*. Dir. Alain Resnais, 1959, France.
  (Feature film, not an easy film for students, adult topics.)
- *If You Love this Planet*. Dir. Terre Nash with Helen Caldicott, 1982, National Film Board. Canada. Documentary (Oscar winner).
- *Trinity and Beyond*. Dir. Peter Kuran, 1994, U.S.
  (Documentary on the history of the atomic bomb, includes archival footage of American nuclear test sites.)
- *The Fog of War*. Dir. Errol Morris, U.S.
- *Fail-Safe*. Dir. Sidney Lumet, U.S., drama/science fiction, 1964. Based on the novel by Eugene Burdick.

Notes

Persepolis. Dir. Marjolaine Satrapi, France/U.S.: France 3 Cinema, 2007. Animation, black and white with colour sequences. Classification PG, not recommended for young children. 95 min. DVD, Sony Home Entertainment.

Historical Themes/Topics

Rule of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, 1941–1979 and Westernization policy; the Islamic Revolution in Iran, 1979; Iran–Iraq War, 1980–1988.

Historical Context

This film is essentially about the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The themes are revolution, ideology, and oppression. In particular, the film deals with the impact of the Islamic revolution on women and children. Students should do some pre-research on the period of protest and civil unrest against the Shah's authoritarian rule, the rise of Islamic nationalism, and the events leading to the Islamic revolution. They need to know the following terms used in the film: *Marxism, Leninism, nationalism, socialism, anarchism, proletariat, revolution, repression, ideology, Westernization, Islam, fundamentalism, feminism*, etc. They need to acquire background knowledge about Iran-U.S. relations under the Shah, the causes of the Islamic Revolution, the Iraq/Iran War (1980–1988), and the role of women during this period.

Note that this film has caused controversy at various points in several Arab countries. Refer to the following news reports:

http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/iranian-official-singles-out-persepolis/

www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/jan/27/persepolis-trial-tunisia-postponed

Before Viewing

Cinematic significance

Persepolis is an animated film for adults. Although there have been feature animation films for adults before *Persepolis*, none were as personal and political as this film. The film is adapted from Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel in four volumes, in which the author tells her life story in an authentic but imaginary style. In collaboration with French director Vincent Paronnaud, Satrapi decided to use a new medium to tell the story of *Persepolis* using the language of cinematographic technique. The film uses the medium of cinema very successfully, using traditional animation technique—that is, creating thousands of still images without digital intervention—and preserving the original characteristics of Satrapi's books. The film moves the story along continuously, though a variety of superb and very realistic characters and many strongly emotional or humorous moments. The effect is the telling of an event in modern history from the personal perspectives of the people who lived through it. It demonstrates the power of cinema in facilitating historical perspective-taking.

Suggested topics for pre-research

- On a contemporary map, locate Iran and its neighbouring countries. Compare with a historical map of the same region to locate Persia and its borders. Brainstorm ideas about the strategic elements of Iran's location.
- Find out about the natural resources of Iran. What might be the strategic impact of this on recent history in Iran?
- Find out about religious and ethnic groups in Iran and the relationship between Iran and other Muslim states.
- Find out about the film's title, *Persepolis*. Why do you think Satrapi chose the name of the ancient capital of Persia as its title?
- Find out about Mohammed Reza Pahlevi (Shah of Iran from September 1941 to February 1979) and his cultural and political impact. What powers upheld his regime? What was life like for Iranians under the Shah's regime?
- Research the beginnings of the Iranian revolution, its leader, and his previous history (Shi'i imam Ayatollah Khomeini and his 14 years in exile in France). Investigate the meaning of the concept of *theocracy* as it relates to Khomeini's rule.
- Research the impact of the revolution and the Islamic Republic on Iranians, especially women and children.
- Research the causes and consequences of the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1988). Find out about relations between Iran and the West—in particular, Europe and USA during this period (e.g., Iranian hostage crisis from 1979–1981).

Suggested Sources

Film Education (UK) has suggested teacher notes and background information on the film at <www.filmeducation.org/persepolis/teachers-notes.html>.

The History Channel also includes useful information on the Iran-Iraq War at <www.history.com/topics/iran-iraq-war>.

During Viewing

Screening note: This film lasts 95 minutes and should be viewed in two separate sections. A recommended viewing schedule is Chapters 1–13 as the first part (up to Marjane's departure to Vienna from Iran), and Chapter 13 to the end in the second viewing session.

During the viewing, students may take note of the elements of the film that are familiar and the elements that are foreign to them.

Students may make an inventory of the realistic and imaginary elements in the film.

After Viewing

Initial response

Students may enter responses to one or more of the following questions in their screening journals:

- What feelings and impressions remain with you right after screening?
- Are there any "good" and "bad" characters in this film? Who are they and what distinguishes them?
- What do you think of the personality of Marji? Do you find her to be realistic? Can you relate to her?
- What do you think is the main message of this film? Is it a political message or a message about human nature?
- Describe the scenes you found most compelling, and explain why they are important in the film.
- Do you think that the true subject of this film is Marji's personal life or the story of her country? How are the personal story and the political story related and combined in the film?

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using animation to tell this story. Do you think it would have been more effective with real actors? (This activity can take the form of a debate with two sides.)

- This film is presented both in colour and in black and white. How do these two styles interact in the film and what do they represent?
- The original graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi does not present the story with any flashback in time, but follows a linear timeline throughout the four volumes. What effect does the use of flashback have in the film?

Teaching note: Invite students to compare the graphic novel to the animated film. The use of colour (scenes in the present) and black and white (scenes in the past) introduce an element of nostalgia or melancholy, and invite the viewer to step back from the main character's biography.

- Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud insisted that well-known actors perform the voice-overs (without accents) in each of the languages in which the film was screened. Why do you think they did this?

Teaching note: Animated films from a child's perspective encourage the viewer to connect to the characters. Satrapi stated in interviews about making the movie that she wanted the story to remain universal, so that Westerners would not dismiss it as a "merely Arab" tale, in a pejorative sense. The use of voices of known actors without foreign accents helps the viewer identify more with the character and gives the story a more universal character.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- Compare the impact on the Iranian people of the Shah of Iran regime with the impact of the Islamist regime.
- Draw a concept map that shows how the various ideologies represented in the film relate to one another. Which ideologies were opposed to the Shah's regime? Which ideologies were opposed to one another?
- Because the director is Iranian, the film depicts the daily life of people in Iran from an insider's perspective. How does this approach help you understand the perspective of the people of Iran during the time of the Shah and during and after the Islamic Revolution? (historical perspective)
- How does this film help to break down stereotypes about modern Iran and Iranian people?
- If we were to consider this film as an interpretation of a history, what does the film tell us about the filmmaker's point of view regarding the Iranian revolution?

Beyond the Film

Children's films and censorship

The freedom of expression of filmmakers and artists in the Islamist state of Iran was strictly subjected to censorship. Film directors quickly discovered that films for children were less subject to scrutiny by the authorities. As a result, a number of filmmakers set about creating films for children, and

their work impressed the critics and moviegoers alike by their cinematic quality. Although the storyline of these films was often simple, they had great psychological depth. As in *Persepolis*, we see a very honest reflection of everyday life in these children's films, a dimension sometimes missing in the official adult films of the same period.

In the same way, in Eastern Europe during the period of communist rule, the arts—including cinema—were subject to censorship. For an example of a short animation film that deals with the theme of oppression in Soviet ruled countries, see *The Hand*.

As a part of a study of the theme of state oppression versus individual freedom, students may also view *The Lives of Others* about life in communist East Berlin (1984).

Further research (film as art)

- Students may read the graphic novels on which the film is based and compare the effects of the message in both media.
- Students may carry out research into miniature Persian stamps, paintings, and illuminated manuscripts, and observe the effect of this cultural tradition on visual elements on the film's aesthetic look.
- The black-and-white aesthetic of the film is also highly influenced by German expressionism of the early 20th century. Students may want to compare the visual effects with excerpts of films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) or films by F.W. Murnau, such as the classic vampire silent film *Nosferatu* (1922), *Faust* (1926), or *The Testament of Doctor Mabuse* (1933). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-WnY_ZmT9E

Students may ask themselves whether the film's title, *Persepolis*, may have been influenced by *Metropolis*.

- Students may watch other Iranian films, such as the following:

  Abbas Kiarostami, *Where is the Friend's Home?*
  www.imdb.com/title/tt0093342/

  Bahram Beizai, Bashu, *The Little Stranger*
  www.imdb.com/title/tt0096894/

  Jafar Panahi, *The White Balloon*
  www.imdb.com/title/tt0112445/

  Or more recent Iranian films by popular and influential Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

Notes

Manufactured Landscapes. Dir. Jennifer Baichwal, photography by Edward Burtynsky. Canada: National Film Board, 2007. Photographic documentary. Classification PG, 70 min. DVD. Genie Awards 2007: Best Documentary.

Historical Themes/Topics

Environmental impact, industrialization, history of documentary film

Cinematic Significance

Since the beginning of the 21st century, full-length documentary film—once thought to be outdated—has seen a renaissance in theatres. In the 1980s and 90s, the documentary form had become almost exclusively restricted to television, because it provided cable distributors with a wide variety of content that was relatively inexpensive to produce. The programs also had the advantage of supplying Canadian content on a wide variety of topics to cable distributors in accordance with CRTC regulations. On the negative side, this meant that documentaries were formatted in half-hour or one-hour programs with frequent interruptions for advertising. Additionally, television broadcasters restricted the creative control of documentary producers, even in the case of "auteur" genre documentaries produced by the National Film Board.

An unexpected change has taken place in recent years, with a number of feature-length documentary films attracting public attention in cinemas, initially through film festivals such as Hot Docs in Canada (available at <www.hotdocs.ca/>) and later in commercial cinemas with a wider audience. New avenues were opened by films such as Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1989), or his polemical *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), the Canadian film *The Corporation* (2004), or the American film *Supersize Me* (2004), and particularly the controversial Oscar-winning film *An Inconvenient Truth* (D. Guggenheim, Al Gore, 2006). In

many cases, these documentaries were more interesting for their content than for their cinematic art. Most were low-budget, using few resources for sets and amateur equipment for cameras, lighting, and sound. (*An Inconvenient Truth*, for example, appears to be more a slideshow than a documentary film.) But the important element in this film is to discuss global warming, the arms build-up in the U.S., and the role of multinational corporations: these subjects permit the documentary to do what it does best, which is to offer an alternative view, to express a counter-opinion, and to engage in and provoke social debate.

In Canada, the National Film Board responded by producing more of this style of documentary, either independently or in co-production with other companies, having found a new audience for a genre that seemed to be in danger of disappearing.

Manufactured Landscapes, directed by Jennifer Baichwal, has some similarity in appearance to *An Inconvenient Truth*. In both films, there is a man giving a lecture, supported by photographs. But that is where the similarity ends. In the Al Gore film, the photography supports the points the lecturer is making; in *Manufactured Landscapes*, the narration supports the photography. Edward Burtynsky is, above all, a photographer and his complex message is best expressed through images rather than through words. Although its implicit message is clear, the filmmaker steers away from making an overt ideological statement and its tone is radically different from the polemical character of *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Before Viewing

Pre-research

- Students may engage in research about the history of documentary film and the various styles of documentary. (Refer to the section on film genres for background and suggested resources.)

  Teaching note: Students will note that in Canada, as in many countries, documentary film is the source of a national cinematography. In many countries, documentary originated as a means of recording actions of war and was used as a form of propaganda to convince the public to support the war effort. Students may wish to carry out research into the role of John Grierson, the first director of Canada's National Film Board, and his approach to documentary. Students may also view the NFB film *Nanook of the North*, which is sometimes said to be the first documentary. This film is greatly admired by John Grierson as a model of documentary film.

  Students may also view excerpts of early documentary NFB war films to observe how documentaries can do more than simply reflect reality; they can influence the public's perception of reality. Students may select and discuss examples of documentary films that clearly express a political or social judgment or an alternate version of the facts that seeks to open the eyes of the public to a lesser-known reality.

- Invite students to select and view a news report that deals with one of the subjects in *Manufactured Landscapes*, and to discuss differences of style and content between a news report and a documentary.

  Teaching note: A news report pertains more to journalism than to documentary film. News reports are produced rapidly, generally for television or online viewing, and are less concerned with reflection on the reality they present. Often, news reports express no opinion at all, but focus solely on the facts. Television channels generally prefer news reports to documentary, as they are less controversial, more suited to short and rapid transmission of information, and generally have a more predictable style.

- Invite students to research examples of human projects over the course of history that have radically transformed the landscape of Earth. Conduct a discussion on the question of whether the "manufactured landscapes" of modern history are significantly different from those of the past.

  Teaching note: Students may collect images of historical constructions such as the Egyptian pyramids, Greek and Roman architecture, Mayan and Aztec temples and cities, the Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu, Angkor Wat, etc., and compare these to examples of modern transformations of the natural environment, such as the Three Gorges Dam, the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal, the Hoover Dam, the International Space Station, or other human constructions that alter the environment significantly.

- Generate a discussion with students about questions of aesthetics and ethical ambiguity. This may be supported by inviting students to find examples of powerful photographic images that evoke a sense of beauty while dealing with subjects that are sometimes catastrophic or tragic. Students may consider perspectives of the ethical responsibility of the mass media with respect to "witnessing history" impartially, seeking an emotional response or compelling a certain ideology. Invite students to view a website or book of photos by Burtysnky, imagining his images as the very large installations they are.

  Possible source of images in this discussion:

  - Edward Burtynsky
    www.edwardburtynsky.com/
  - French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand
    www.yannarthusbertrand.org/en
  - Photographs of the Deepwater Horizon oils spill in the Gulf of Mexico
    www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/oct/10/deepwater-horizon-edward-burtynsky-photographs

- Invite students to conduct research on industrial development in Asia and how China became the greatest manufacturing country in the world economy.

Teaching note: Students may conduct further research into the historical changes in China that led to its massive industrialization and its growing role in the world economy in the latter part of the 20th century. As the Chinese economy became more capitalistic, and with the return of highly industrialized and entrepreneurial Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997, factories began to proliferate in China. Growth in the manufacturing sector was further supported by the lower pay scales of Chinese workers compared to Western industrialized countries, and an increased demand for manufactured goods (e.g., televisions, electronics, computers, cars) in the growing Chinese middle class. In this climate of rapid industrial growth, primary resource and energy exploitation became very significant, and environmental standards took a back seat to rapid and large-scale development.

Resources

- BBC News Asia. China Profile: A Chronology of Key Events
  www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13017882
- BBC News Asia. Hong Kong Profile: A Chronology of Key Events
  www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16526765

During Viewing

- Invite students to take note of the images and scenes in the film that are most powerful, and to focus on their first impressions of the message that Edward Burtynsky is trying to convey in his photographs. Encourage students to note details in the still photos as well as the video.
- Ask students to note the use of high-angle shots, lateral camera movements, and camera zooms in and out. Students may take viewing notes under two columns, *Still Photography* and *Video*, in order to observe and compare the elements of both media and how they may complement one another.

  Media literacy teaching note: This film can capture the viewer by the ambiguous beauty of its photography and its contemplative rhythm, among other artistic elements that led to its recognition with numerous awards. Nevertheless, it is weak in terms of its storyline or narrative structure, which is a familiar element not only in fictional film but also in documentary. This film does not have a progression from beginning to end, as students are accustomed to seeing in Hollywood-style cinematic productions. Because of this lack of narrative development, it is important to prepare students to observe carefully and to focus on the photographic images, and possibly to break down the viewing into shorter segments.

After Viewing

Initial response

- Conduct a debriefing discussion to allow students to express the feelings evoked by the film's images and the impressions that remain with them after viewing, including still images, video, and soundtrack.
- Invite students to observe how the director Jennifer Baichwal combines her filming with the still photographs of Burtynsky. How does the film complement the perspective of Burtynsky? What does the film do that the still photographs cannot do?

  Teaching note: Encourage students to think about the process of making this film, using the very large scale, very detailed still photos of Burtynsky (generally his photos are displayed in a very large format). On the one hand, Baichwal wants to respect Burtynsky's vision, but without making her documentary film into a simple compilation of still photos. (Many people think this film is Burtynsky's because of the prominence of his images, just as many people think that Al Gore is the director of *An Inconvenient Truth*.) This is a film about photography, and Baichwal uses film to show what the art of photography can do when complemented by the art of film. What do film and still photography have in common and how are they different from one another? Students may be invited to pick excerpts of the film that illustrate the contrasts of movement versus stillness, sound versus silence, directed viewing versus free viewing, the passage of time versus frozen in time, etc.
- As a filmmaker, Baichwal takes an approach that replicates Burtynsky's photography, moving our view from the very large to the very detailed stories contained in the large image. She moves seamlessly from the initial impact of the macro-view to plunge us into the multiple details of the micro-view of the scene. To do so, she uses camera movement dramatically, from high-angle shots to lateral travelling, to zooming in to examine a scene, to zooming out to the large picture. The first scene of the film—several minutes of a sustained lateral travelling shot of the Chinese factory—has a "Burtynsky" effect, guiding the spectator's gaze from right to left over the entire scene and inviting a response to its impact. The musical score has a relentlessly industrial but somewhat hypnotic tone, moving us onward through the images without narration or instruction.
- Encourage students to observe the editing process used in the film—in particular, the very fluid transitions from the moving image to the still photograph.

  Media literacy teaching note: The cinematographer uses camera movement (zoom or travelling) to bring us into the world of the still photo, inviting us to meditate on its details, and then moves us back out again into the moving image and the human elements of the scene. The film may be seen as a sort of continuing dialogue between scale and detail (macro and micro), destruction and beauty, stillness and movement.

- Generate a discussion about the film's narration, inviting students to consider how the lack of didactic explanation serves to highlight the impact of the images. Invite students to consider whether the filmmaker appears to be condemning or praising any of the elements she is depicting.

  Media literacy teaching note: Burtynsky's message is expressed through his photos, and these photos express a contradictory reality: an impression of beauty alongside the realization of environmental devastation. The fundamental ambiguity of this message is part of the reality of global citizenship in modern times. Near the end of the film, we hear Burtynsky state his point of view: he does not judge the human activity, even though he knows that his images support an environmentalist perspective. He invites us to consider a different way of thinking about human progress and development with respect to the environment. He urges us to avoid a black-and-white approach to questions of industrialization versus environmental impact. His vision is more an artistic (rather than judgmental) view of human attitudes toward progress, development, the production of consumer goods, and the price we pay for these activities with respect to the planet. This message haunts his images and invites us to think of the human condition and its ambiguous nature. Baichwal's film adds to this message the human dimension: people sorting through electronic waste in China, workers on the roads surrounding the huge Three Gorges Dam project, people stripping commercial fishing boats, factory workers seeking to accelerate production, etc. The Burtynsky photos provide a reference point that gives us a symbolic idea of the scale of the landscape in which these human activities are taking place. There is no condemnation of these actions; there is simply a portrayal of their humanness in the context of their damaging effects.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- Generate a discussion about whether Edward Burtynsky's photographs constitute a valid secondary source of historical information. Invite students to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the artistic interpretation of a historical theme or subject.

  Teaching note: Photography, as well as documentary film, can create misunderstanding when dealing with a historical subject. Both focus the attention on a selected portion of reality, and both can give the impression of great objectivity. Nevertheless, photography and cinema can only present a single fixed perspective of a subject, depending upon the choice of angle, the distance from the subject, and the framing of the shot. These factors can greatly influence the viewer's point of view. In the case of a documentary, even the editing process is a subjective choice of the filmmaker, and can have an effect on how the message is received by the viewer. Both are visual documents that are well suited to presenting a perspective of reality but not necessarily to the objective presentation of reality. Having said this, Burtynsky`s images are compelling because they are systematically shot from a perspective of reality that people rarely

have the chance to see (e.g., the factory scenes in China, the Three Gorges Dam, the dismantling of ships in Bangladesh).

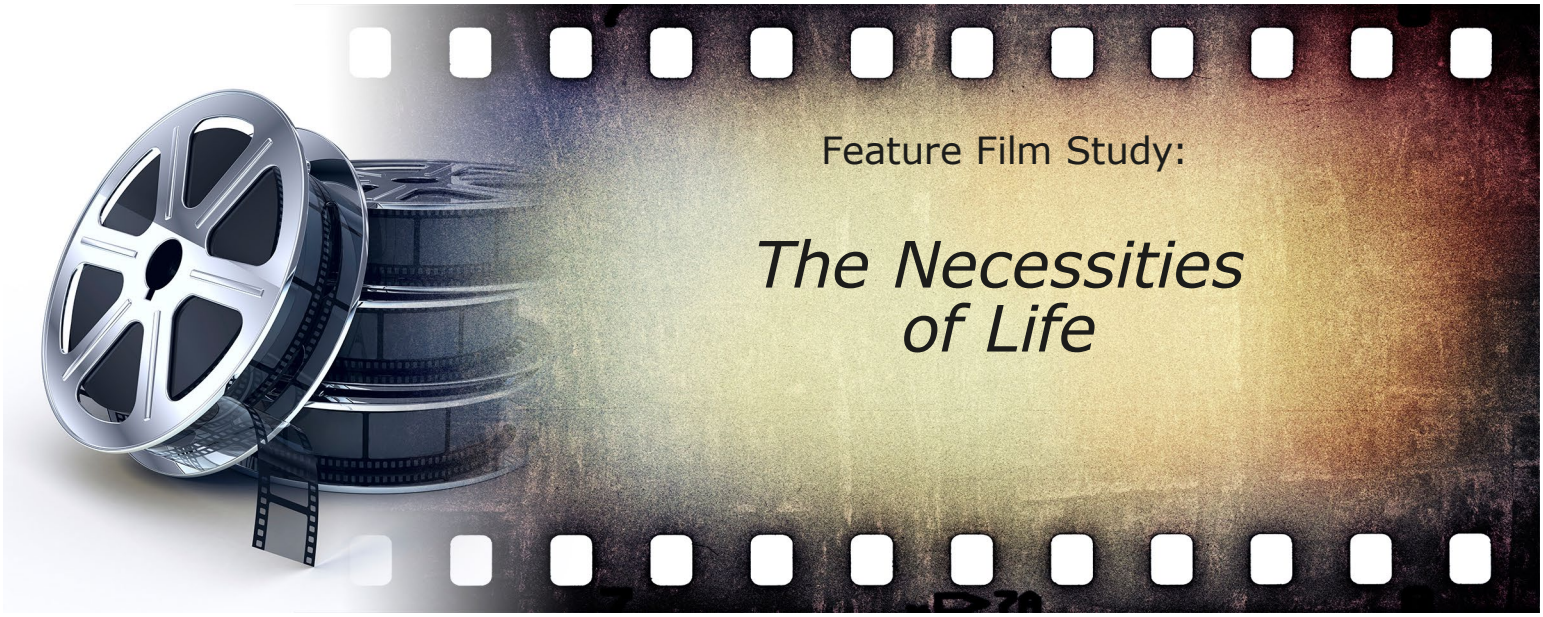
- Organize a debate between two teams of students with opposing points of view:
  - Team A defends the advantages of technical development and argues that a certain amount of damage to the environment is inevitable. It is the price we have to pay for the production of material goods, and all human beings want material goods.
  - Team B maintains that human beings have a responsibility to protect the natural environment at all costs, and that we should ban any development that has a destructive impact on nature.
- After the debate, open the discussion to find a zone of compromise wherein development and the protection of nature are both acknowledged and can possibly even complement one another.
- Invite students to collaborate to analyze Burtynsky's work as a social artifact (primary source), supported by research into the historical and social context of the creation of this film.

Beyond the Film

Students may be asked to view and respond to the following films in order to compare style, photography, or message:

- *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006)
  http://documentaries-plus.blogspot.ca/2013/12/an-inconvenient-truth.html
- *Home* (Yann Arthus-Bertrand, 2009)
  Teacher Guide available online:
  www.homethemovie.org/en/education/home-education
- *Watermark* (Edward Burtysnky, 2013)
  www.edwardburtynsky.com/site_contents/Films/Watermark_Film.html

Notes



The Necessities of Life (Ce qu'il faut pour vivre). Dir. Benoît Pilon. Canada: Seville Pictures, 2008. Biography. Classification General, 102 minutes. French and Inuktitut (English voice-over). DVD, APTN (2008).

Historical Themes/Topics

Inuit culture and European contact, displacement of Inuit peoples, tuberculosis epidemics in the North

Historical Context

The Inuit are one of three constitutionally recognized Indigenous peoples of Canada. Traditional Inuit culture, adapted to survival in the North, is unique to the region and differs from other Indigenous cultures. Early in Canadian history, some Inuit people had sporadic initial encounters with European culture (e.g., with the Norse in the Labrador and Newfoundland region, in 1576 with Martin Frobisher in the search for the Northwest Passage, and later in the 19th century with Europeans in northern whaling stations). However, because the lands of the North were of little interest to European settlers, the impact of modern European ways of life was not felt until fairly late—in effect, only in the early 20th century. Until that time, the Inuit were one of the few remaining nomadic peoples of the northern hemisphere, with a distinct oral tradition and set of life practices. The early European explorers named them *Eskimo* (meaning "eaters of fish"), a Western appellation that is today rejected by many Inuit groups. The name *Inuit*, which means *the people* (plural), is how they referred to themselves in their own language (*inuk* is the singular form). Today, their population is only about 50,000 in Canada, which is partly a result of the radical impact of Western culture on their way of life, health, and posterity.

The Inuit made political choices that differed considerably from those of other Indigenous peoples. In the time of first contact, the Inuit did not sign treaties with the European arrivals; however, in 1976, they began negotiations with the federal government for the creation of a self-governing territory in the eastern and central Arctic called Nunavut ("our land"), with specific agreements about the management of natural resources, the hiring of local workers, and the sharing of profits. The territory of Nunavut was established in 1999. Similarly, an Inuit regional government (Nunavik) was negotiated in northern Quebec, with approximately 9000 inhabitants.

These more recent successes have not erased the ill treatment of Inuit populations in the past: entire communities were displaced from their traditional regions without any consideration for their basic needs and access to the resources required for their survival. Inuit persons were assigned numbers instead of names (this practice is referred to in the scene in the boat at the beginning of the film), and at times communities suffered crises from illness and starvation. In spite of this, some individuals had very positive relationships with the Inuit communities, including, among others, the explorers Elzéar Bernier and Alfred Tremblay, who were Arctic mariners assisted and supported by the Inuit in their travels in the early 20th century.

About the Film

The film *The Necessities of Life* (Ce qu'il faut pour vivre) takes place in the 1950s when a tuberculosis epidemic was taking place in the North. Contact with Europeans had brought along with it tuberculosis (sometimes called consumption), a disease that spread particularly rapidly in Inuit populations where there was little immunity to the illness. In the 1950s, more than one-third of Inuit people had tuberculosis (TB). The principal treatment for TB was in-patient care in a sanatorium, which involved displacing patients for an extended period of time to a city in the South. It is this experience that is depicted in the film.

The film depicts Inuit culture from the point of view of Quebec in the 1950s. It deals non-judgmentally with the impact of intercultural contact, without resorting to sentimentality and without creating simplistic dualistic characterizations of good versus evil. Illness is the sole real enemy of all the characters. The dialogue and the direction show the course of history unfolding, with the traditional nomadic life of the Inuit hunter in the process of disappearing. Technological and scientific advances are spreading, and change appears to be inevitable. The impact includes positive as well as negative repercussions (e.g., the TB treatment of Tivii is successful, and the telephone allows him to speak to his wife).

The film moves slowly and has a contemplative and almost solemn mood. It combines the Inuit world view of Tivii, as the filmmaker conceives it, with that of a world that is completely different. The result is a cultural shock so strong that Tivii loses his desire to live: he feels lost and overwhelmed by a strange world. The society into which he is transplanted is completely foreign to him,

including the language, customs, and even the relations between men and women. In the second part of the film, he meets the boy Kaki and, in effect, returns to life. He finds a reason to survive by offering to teach Kaki to become a hunter.

Suggested research topics before viewing the film

- The creation of Nunavut
- Inuit culture and life; cultural change as a result of connections to the South
- Displacement of Inuit populations for sovereignty motivations
- Arctic exploration by Europeans
- North Pole expeditions supported by Inuit guides
- Historical and strategic importance of the North to European countries (resources, DEW line, defense and transportation, Arctic sovereignty questions, etc.)
- History of tuberculosis (consumption) in Canada and its impact on the Inuit population

Resources

- Tuberculosis History in Canada
  www.lung.ca/tb/tbhistory/
- Museum of Health Care, TB in Canada
  http://museumofhealthcare.ca/explore/exhibits/breath/tb-in-canada.html
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Canada's Relationship with the Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development
  www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100016900/1100100016908
- Listening to Our Past, The Creation of Nunavut
  www.tradition-orale.ca/default.html

Viewing the Film

Recommended viewing segments

This film has very strong visual qualities, but its rhythm is slow and contemplative. The following scenes are recommended for viewing with students:

- 00:00 to 09:54—Beginning in the Arctic, in the boat and arrival in Quebec.
- 36:13 to 49:16—Return and illness of Tivii, arrival of Kaki
- 1: 09:21 to 1:19:20—The story with the strings
- 1:28:53 to the end (1:38:00)—End, death of Kaki and return to the Arctic

Cinematic technique

The 1950s, as depicted in this film, borrows from the clear lines of the French cartoonist Hergé. This was the period of the great success of Hergé's *Tintin* cartoons (the young nurse offers a Tintin album to Kaki in the film). The cartoonist's aesthetic is one of very pure, clear drawing lines, with flat colours and no shadows. It is a world in two dimensions, flat and clear and clean. In a sense, the film imitates the spirit of such a style without copying it.

The 1950s are represented as a time when, contrary to the more rebellious 1960s, people did not question the ways of the world and the progress of the society in which they lived. They took on their world view and lifestyle without much self-consciousness and in a somewhat naïve way. Things appeared to be relatively simple and were taken for granted. Benoît Pilon recreates this world with his framing and lighting and his carefully applied and orderly style, letting the viewer move slowly to see everything in the plane of view. The camera movements are precise and symmetrical. The technique expresses a very orderly world that is organized and logical, which is characteristic of the urban world view of Canadians of this period. While this world evidently had order and logic from the point of view of the Quebecois characters, for Tivii, it was the source of enormous and deep confusion. Illness is the other element that refuses to respect the controlled orderly world: tuberculosis introduces chaos and death, the incomprehensible reality of the death of a child.

Quebec cinema

It is important to note that Benoît Pilon is from Quebec and is not himself an Indigenous filmmaker. This is his first film and it is not at all typical of cinema in Quebec, in the sense that the protagonist is Inuit rather than Quebecois. Quebec cinema developed in the latter 20th century with the Quebec market in mind—that is, films that reflect the reality, life, identity, and language of Quebec. This strategy has led to enormous success inside Quebec, but on the other hand it has been generally met with indifference in anglophone Canada, as well as elsewhere in the world. With some few exceptions (e.g., Denys Arcand, Denis Villeneuve), Quebec filmmakers have generally not been able to successfully enter other markets. At the same time, Benoît Pilon's work has been very well received by critics and by the general public.

Students may wish to compare this film to some other noteworthy examples of Quebec cinema that deal directly or indirectly with historical topics, such as *Mon oncle Antoine* or *Les orders*.

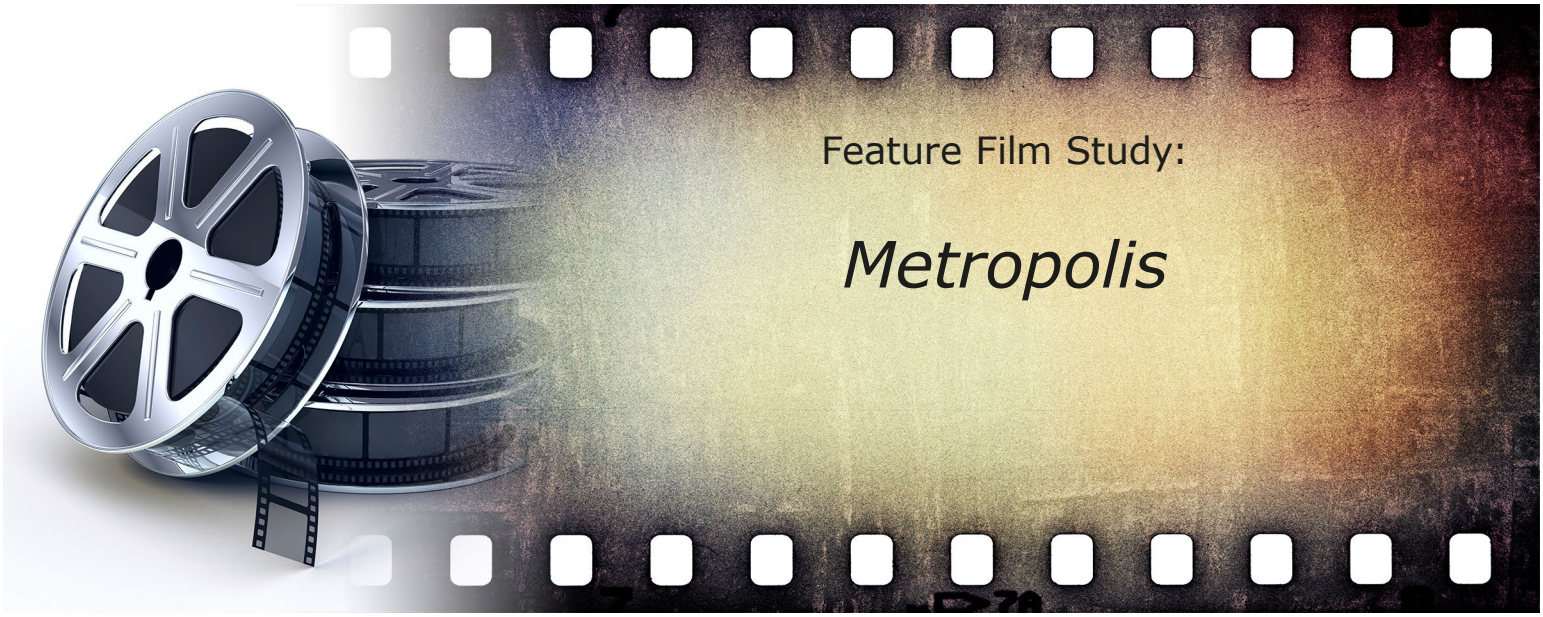
Other Films about the Inuit

Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner. Dir. Zacharias Kunuk. Canada, APTN, 2001.
This film represents Inuit tradition from within, depicting a legend told by an Inuit filmmaker.

Coppermine. Dir. Ray Harper. Ottawa, ON: National Film Board of Canada, 1992.

This is a visual documentary of an Inuit community in the grip of an epidemic of tuberculosis in 1929.

Notes



Metropolis. Dir. Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927. Black and white, silent. Classification G. 153 min. DVD, KinoVideo.

Historical Themes/Topics

Envisioning the future, the working class, impact of industrialization, and revolution

Cinematic Significance

Fritz Lang was a very prolific filmmaker in his time. Some of his films had a significant impact on the history of cinema as an art form and on the social climate of 1920s Europe, as well as on the memory and sensibility of millions of film viewers over the decades. This impact is not only due to the quality of the films themselves, but also because of Lang's underlying visionary impulse and his exploration of the unconscious mind. In this sense, his films are part of the surrealist movement, which was born in 1924 in Paris with André Breton's *Manifeste du Surréalisme*. Influenced by the emergence of the field of psychology and a growing interest in social liberation and freedom, surrealism became a broad artistic revolution that sought to merge reality and dream, the conscious and the unconscious mind.

Metropolis, like *The 1,000 Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960, Lang's last film), represents German expressionism at the turn of the 20th century, which emphasized personal expression and rejected strict rules of style in the arts, film, and architecture. But the connection to surrealism is clear in many elements of the film, which combine to create a "kitschy" scenario, somewhat vulgar and melodramatic: the Freudian unconscious as the robot-temptress who fascinates men with her sexual appeal; the political revolution as the workers revolt;

the rejection of authority; the surreal visual elements inspired by Cubism, Bauhaus architecture, and artists such as Kandinsky.

Synopsis of the Film

Metropolis is a city of the future in which a privileged caste dominates a mass of slaves who are subjected to endless production in underground tunnels. A revolt is brewing among the workers, but the young Maria appeases their anger. To oppose Maria's influence, the chief of the city uses a female robot built by the academic Rotwang in the image of Maria. He wants to push the workers to revolt in order to oppress them further. However, his son is in love with the real Maria and opposes the female robot, who sparks a real catastrophe in the city. Everything is solved through reconciliation between the workers and the City Chief (in Marxist terms, labour and the means of production). Later, Fritz Lang is said to have declared that the final harmonious reconciliation between the master and the masses was a false conclusion, which he did not really support.

Historical Context

Strictly speaking, *Metropolis* is more a science fiction film than an historical film. However, to analyze the film historically is, in a sense, to plunge oneself into the consciousness of Germany of the 1920s. The interwar period was a time of alarming inflation in Germany, as it became increasingly isolated economically from the rest of Europe. The Weimar Republic had been established in 1919 to replace the crumbling imperial regime. The Republic, which was democratically elected, was being pulled in opposite directions by a variety of extremist factions from both the left and the right ends of the political spectrum. Following the order that was earlier imposed by Bismarck on the German Empire, the signing of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I, and the cloud of the Russian Revolution, many Germans saw this as a period of economic, political, and moral chaos. The screenplay, written by Théa Von Harbou (the wife of Fritz Lang), shows a preoccupation with the problems of this period and deals with the issues using the science fiction genre.

The theme of the workers' revolt is at the centre of the film. It was a period of many populist ideologies in Europe, each group seeking to seduce the imagination of the workers and the many unemployed. On the left were the anarchists, labour unionists, communists, and socialists; on the right were the emerging but still somewhat hidden movements of the fascists in Italy and Nazis in Germany.

Metropolis shows the crowd of workers as an anonymous mass of people, oppressed and easily manipulated by one group or another. The real Maria entices the crowd toward Christian compassion and negotiation, while the false Maria urges them toward destructive violence. The workers are represented as children, subject to strong and uncontrollable emotions and

unable to consider the consequences of their actions (e.g., in their rage, they forget their children in the tunnels where they were left to drown).

Only certain individuals appear to be mature, complete human beings in the film: the Grand Master Joh Fredersen; his son; Maria; the wise man, Rotwang; and, to some extent, Grot and Josephat, the former right arm to Federsen.

The crowd scenes are expertly filmed and are said to have greatly impressed Goebbels and Adolf Hitler. In 1933, Goebbels declared his admiration for Fritz Lang and offered him a position as commissioner of cinema in Germany. Lang—who did not approve of Nazism—left Germany for good at that point (his mother was Jewish, a fact that Goebbels possibly did not know, but which made Lang vulnerable to future persecution). He exiled himself to France and later Hollywood, where he continued to pursue his career in film. Nevertheless, the imagery of *Metropolis* impressed Hitler so strongly that he strove to reproduce its reality in the large Nazi rallies (as mocked by Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*). Note that in *The Great Dictator* there is a scene where the crowd is crawling up the stairs that is almost identical to a scene in *Metropolis*.

A Note on Silent Film

Metropolis and Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* are recommended films for viewing to represent the period of silent film, the first period in the history of cinema. In this early cinema, film communicated only through images accompanied by live music. At its start, the language of cinema was, thus, communication through images—a primarily visual means of communication—in which lighting, composition, facial expression, and gesture, complemented by a few explanatory subtitles, told the entire story. Early cinema counted a great deal on pantomime, makeup, exaggerated movements, and body positions in order to convey a message (such as the witch-like, vicious posture of the female robot). In the eyes of today's spectators, these conventions can seem outdated and strange, and may even create confusion (e.g., the very emotional scene between a heavily made-up Freder and Josephat may be perceived as a homosexual scene, which may or may not have been the filmmaker's intention).

In addition, German expressionism tended to use exaggeration to communicate a message in order to create a very strong emotional reaction. (Expressionist painters were inspired by the strong, contrasting lines and colours of Van Gogh and preferred a palette of deep and sometimes clashing colours. They tended to use strong diagonal lines slicing across the vertical and horizontal planes to create a more shocking effect, to go beyond realism.)

Before Viewing

Historical pre-research

- Conduct research on German Expressionism in art (1920–1933) during the inter-war period: www.moma.org/explore/collection/ge/

Consider examples of the later influence of this style on American horror films.

- Conduct research on the end of the German Empire and the period of the Weimar Republic. Pay particular attention to the rise of extremist movements during this period (communism, fascism, Nazism) and the social and economic issues of the time in Europe.
- Conduct research on the impact of industrialization and assembly line production on the working classes and labour conditions in Europe at this time.
- Find out about *populism* and research examples of populist movements in history. What is the ideological opposite of populism?
- Compare communism, trade unionism, anarchism, fascism and Nazism. From which social classes did these movements draw their followers?

  Teaching note: Consider that these movements, although ideologically opposed, often sought to seduce the working class, as they were populist movements as opposed to movements that privileged a restricted upper class (such as the nobility or the aristocracy, plutocracy).

- Conduct research on Fritz Lang and his role in the history of cinema.

During Viewing

Recommended scenes for viewing (based on restored KinoVideo DVD):

Because of the length of this film, it is recommended that students view only some excerpts. To put the viewing in context, a synopsis of the film is provided.

- Scenes 1 to 9 (approx. 20 min.)
- Scenes 12 to 18 (approx. 15 minutes)
- Scenes 21 to 23 (approx. 10 minutes)
- Scene 26 (approx. 3 minutes)
- Scene 29 (approx. 3 minutes)
- Scenes 30 to end (approx. 16 minutes)

- Observe the visual representations of the effects of industrialization. Describe how the effects are portrayed.
- Observe the soundtrack and note its effects.
- Look for representations of various ideologies or "isms" in the film: communism, anarchism, fascism, socialism, labour unionism.
- Note some scenes that strike you as extremely unrealistic, or more realistic. Do any of the scenes remind you of more modern science fiction films?
- Make connections to historical events of this period: the Russian Revolution 1917, the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, the rise of the Nazis in Germany, etc.

After Viewing

Initial response

- How did this film make you feel? What impression remains with you after viewing?
- How would you classify the genre of this film, and why? What is its tone or mood?

  Teaching note: we can see this film as a philosophical fable or lesson that uses the science fiction genre as a way of expressing its message. The filmmaker appears to use a fictitious society to condemn the practices of real industrialized societies. Note that Fritz Lang is an exceptional filmmaker but his universe is totally lacking in humour, unlike Chaplin (*The Great Dictator*) and Kubrick (*Doctor Strangelove*) who convey a moral judgment using humour and satire.

- Are there "good" and "evil" characters in this film? What distinguishes them?

  Teaching note: There is no ambiguity in the moral message of this film: the crazy inventor and his robot are clearly evil; Fredersen is evil at first but is redeemed through his love for his son; Josephat also redeems himself. Maria and Freder are clearly "good," yet their good intentions are weak and somewhat unimpressive. In typical Fritz Lang style, it is the "evil" characters who are the most interesting.

- What is the message of this film?

  Teaching note: The official message of the film is clearly articulated at the end: if modern society is to live in peace and harmony, its leaders need to treat the working classes with compassion (Christianity): the Head and the Hands are reconciled by the mediation of the Heart.

  Nevertheless, this simplistic message is contrasted by strongly imaginative scenes that seem to contradict it: we recall the arrogance and coldness of the Grand Master as a sort of fascinating calmness. We see the dehumanization of the crowd not only in their mindless work but also in their infantile and often violent behaviour. We recall the savage sexual image of the female robot more vividly than the "saintliness" of the real Maria.

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Choose some scenes that stay with you and explain why they had an impact on you. Describe the strongest visual elements of the film.

  Teaching note: Some artists have the gift of finding the perfect image to mark people's imagination—for example, the strong visual images in Chaplin or Hitchcock films. In *Metropolis*, the visuals have impressed many artists (including Madonna and Lady Gaga in their music videos). The robot image in the film is said to have inspired C-3P0 in *Star Wars*

and the city name *Metropolis* is used in the story of *Superman*. Consider the visual impact of the scene of the workers changing shifts on the elevator, the scene with Molloch, and the scene with Freder and the giant clock needles.

- The film is a sort of allegory that makes frequent references to Christianity. In a group, make an inventory of these cultural references.

  Teaching note: References include the Tower of Babel, the early Christians hiding in the catacombs in Rome, the symbol of the cross, the reference to a Messiah or compassionate mediator, the authoritative Father-God, the Gothic cathedral, the seven deadly sins, etc.

- Compare *Metropolis* to Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator*.
- Research examples of the influence of *Metropolis*'s visual effects on various contemporary music videos (e.g., Queen, Madonna, Whitney Houston, Lady Gaga). What do you think are some of the reasons for this continuing influence?

  Gallery of visual elements in *Metropolis*:
  www.acephotos.org/t636901/metropolis-photo-gallery-1.html

- Research the soundtrack history of *Metropolis* (original score by Gottfried Huppertz, the 1974 electronic score, the 1984 rock soundtrack, the 2000 techno score, and new orchestral versions since the beginning of the *Metropolis* restoration project in 2008). Refer to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/*Metropolis*_(film)#Other_soundtracks>.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- If we were to consider the film as a source of historical information about the time and place in which it was produced, what does it tell us about the historical context? What does it reveal about the perspective of German citizens of that period?
- Fritz Lang has been accused of creating in *Metropolis* a film that implicitly justified the basis of the Nazi ideology. What might be the reasons for this interpretation, and do you think it is justified?
- Make an inventory of all the elements of the film that refer to its real historical context (i.e., Europe of the 1920s).
- Describe the class structure of the world of *Metropolis*.

Beyond the Film

- Compare elements of the film to a more recent science-fiction film.

  Teaching note: Adjusting for inflation, the budget to create *Metropolis* would cost about $300 million in 2013. The film production of the time did not have access to digital special effects, and involved some 37,000 extras.

The Lives of Others. Dir. Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck, Germany, 2006. Colour, German (English subtitles), Classification 14A, 137 min., DVD, Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Historical Themes/Topics

Authoritarian regimes—oppression and resistance; Cold War; life in East Germany under Communist rule

About the Film

The Lives of Others begins in 1984, the symbolic year made famous in the futuristic book by George Orwell. The novel *1984* is likely the best preparatory reading to help students understand how totalitarian ideology can come to dominate the citizens of a state while purporting to act in their best interest—that is, how ideology can be used to justify the abuse of power and the suppression of individual and collective freedom. Orwell's book examines in particular how the media—and language itself—can be used to monitor and control every aspect of the private lives of individuals in the name of the state. The society of *1984* was inspired by Nazism and totalitarian communist states.

The communist states established in post-war Eastern Europe, in Mao's China, and in North Korea, all represent oppressive single-party states in which freedom is limited, similar to the Big Brother scenario in George Orwell's dystopic novel. Students may conduct pre-research into the political reality of single-party authoritarian states in 20th-century history, in order to understand the nature of totalitarian ideology and its effects on the everyday lives of people.

Before Viewing

Historical pre-research

Students may carry out initial research into one of the following developments in the history of East Germany and the Cold War:

- Why and how did Germany come to be divided into two states: West Germany, a capitalist economy (Federal Republic of Germany); and East Germany, a communist economy (Democratic Republic of Germany)?
- When and why was the Berlin Wall built, and what did it come to represent?
- What types of restrictions were placed on citizens of East Germany and why were these restrictions enforced?
- Who was Erich Honecker and what was his role in East Germany?
- What was the meaning of "glasnost," and what were its causes and its consequences?
- How and when did the unification of Germany come about in 1990?

Historical Context: Timeline of the German Democratic Republic and Key Points in the Cold War

Date	Event
7 May 1945	VE Day Germany signs surrender to Allied Forces; Germany is divided into multinational occupation sectors.
1948	The Berlin Blockade (24 June 1948–12 May 1949) is the first international crisis of the Cold War.
1949	The government of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) is formed on 20 September 1949. On 7 October 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is established as a socialist state in the Soviet occupation zone of East Germany and East Berlin.
1950	The formation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact solidify the division of Europe into east and west blocs.
1950–53	The Korean War, with the involvement of communist China, escalates East-West tensions.
1956	Soviet troops invade Hungary.

Historical Context: Timeline of the German Democratic Republic and Key Points in the Cold War	
Date	Event
1956	Britain, Israel, and France invade Egypt during the Suez crisis.
1959	Cuban Revolution and installation of Fidel Castro's communist government.
1961	Building of the Berlin Wall, barrier surrounding East Berlin, and symbol of the Cold War is completed on 13 August 1961.
1962	The Cuban missile crisis brings the world to the brink of nuclear war.
1970s	Tensions begin to relax in the 1970s, especially following German chancellor Willy Brandt's policy of reconciliation (ostpolitik).
1980s	Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policies (glasnost, perestroika) in the Soviet Union greatly reduce Cold War friction.
1989	The Berlin Wall is opened by East Germans on 9 November 1989.
1990	Collapse of the communist system and tearing down of Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany, end of Cold War.
1991	The Soviet Union ceases to exist.

Pre-research: totalitarian ideology and the role of secret police

- What was the "Stasi"? What was its primary role, and what means did it use to ensure that it carried out that role? Why did this organization come into being? What were the underlying values and beliefs of its operations?

  Teaching note: Students may conduct research into use of secret police or political police in the regimes of the Eastern Bloc after World War II (e.g., the KGB in the Soviet Union, the Stasi in East Germany, the Securitate in Romania, the SB in Poland, StB or State Security in Czechoslovakia, the AVH or State Protection Authority in Hungary, etc.). Compare the role of these security forces to that of the 'Thought Police' in *1984*. Note that the

use of secret police by modern states is highly connected to reinforcing the power of single-party states in many areas of the world, including dictatorial regimes in South America. These forces operate in secret to protect and strengthen the power of a regime and are not subject to the rule of law.

Discussion question: In a democratic society such as Canada, what types of barriers (institutions, laws, principles) exist to protect citizens' private lives and personal rights and freedoms from the intrusion by state police?

- Are there countries today with political police or secret police agencies that can severely limit the freedom of citizens?
- In the period following the Second World War, the ideological conflict between capitalism and communism intensified and became more radical. Create a comparative chart of the key characteristics of each of these ideologies or belief systems and their supporting arguments.
- In the West, the *intelligentsia* (educated intellectuals who make a living in the realm of ideas, culture, or the arts) came to support in large part a socialist ideology that was highly critical of capitalism. During the Cold War, western intellectuals and artists were often targeted for having Communists sympathies, while in the Eastern bloc, they were seen as resistant to the authority of the state, and many were imprisoned, exiled, or subjected to severe government censorship. Students may conduct research into examples of this sort of state control exacerbated by the Cold War (e.g., McCarthyism and the Hollywood blacklist, the Gulag in the Soviet Union).

  Background note: The Gulag or penal internment camps of the USSR, which came into being as corrective labour camps to punish anti-Soviet activity and reinforce state power, were greatly intensified by Stalin in the period after the Second World War. By the end of the 1950s, Stalinist policy had been rejected and the Gulag labour camps dissolved. The discovery of the Gulag system and revelations of Soviet repression of political prisoners led to widespread criticism—and fear—of communist ideology. In the West, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a member of the Soviet Army and later a political prisoner under Stalin, author of *The Gulag Archipelago*, became a symbol of the excesses of Stalinist policy. Although the USSR had officially rejected Stalinist totalitarian policies in the late 1950s, many Western intellectuals came to abandon their support for socialist ideology as a result of the discovery of Stalin's oppressive policies. Students may wish to view the film *The Way Back* by Peter Weir (2010) for a view of the Gulag system and its consequences.

During Viewing

- Observe and note visual elements that describe the two main characters, the policeman Wiesler and the writer Dreyman. Note the contrasts in their appearance, style, lifestyle, friends, and activities.

  Teaching note: Some examples of contrasting elements:

- The writer's apartment is full of objects, books, papers, not in order; Wiesler's apartment is empty, orderly, sterile.
- Wiesler's world is made of right angles (hallways, square rooms, rectangular buildings, angular furniture); the writer's world is full of organic and living shapes and spaces, including plants and trees.
- Wiesler is always carefully clothed in a very orderly, almost military fashion; Dreyman wears loose casual clothing, no tie, with his shirt often untucked.
- Dreyman has a warm intimate relationship, with a woman he loves and who loves him; Wiesler lives alone and uses the services of a prostitute.
- Wiesler has no friends; Dreyman has friends.

After Viewing

Initial response

- What feelings did this film evoke in you? What impression or mood remains with you after viewing?
- With a partner, create a comparison chart of the world of Wiesler, the policeman, and Dreyman, the writer, based on the notes you gathered during the viewing of the film. Consider categories such as art, style, relationships, friendships, women, clothing, activities, etc. Students may also create a visual collage representing the contrasting worlds of the two characters.

  Teaching note: The director creates a clear visual contrast between these two characters, yet eventually the world of the writer (without his awareness) absorbs the policeman and brings him to change. As he observes the humanity and warmth of Dreyman's life, Wiesler begins to regain bit by bit the humanity he needed to deny in order to be an effective Stasi agent.
- Select scenes that made a deep impression on you. Explain why these scenes affected you and describe their importance in the film.
- In this film, is there a message? Is it strictly a denunciation of the political regime of Erich Honecker, head of the Communist regime in East Germany until 1989? Or does the film also have a message about the human condition?

Media literacy: response and reflection

- The film projects an atmosphere of oppression. Create a list of the narrative elements and cinematic elements that serve to create this atmosphere.

  Teaching note: Narrative elements: The voyeurism of the Stasi agents, their hidden watching and knowledge of the most intimate details of others' private lives; the threats that are constantly weighing on the

characters, the fear that any one could possibly be a spy, the feeling that there is nothing that can be assured of as being private.

- Cinematic elements: The use of many high angle shots, as in a bird's eye view, sometimes quite beautiful, but always looking down from above as if spying. The camera never shows the sky, or a wide space with a vanishing point, until the last few minutes of the film. Sky shots give an impression of openness and safety, while high angle shots in tight spaces create a sense of closing in.
- Select a scene from the film and imagine how an American action filmmaker might have represented it. What does this tell you about the choices made by the filmmaker and their effects on the message conveyed?

  Teaching note: It is easy to imagine, for example, when ex-minister Hempf meets Dreyman after the reunification of Germany, how the scene could have ended with a fist in the face of Hempf. Instead of this, Dreyman simply says "To think that people like you at one time led an entire country." Consider the effect of this statement.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- If we consider this film as an interpretation of historical information, what does it tell us about the perspective of the filmmakers about the events and the period it represents?
- Do you think that the subject of this film could have been treated in the same way if it were produced immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall rather than in 2006? Why?

  Teaching note: It is difficult to imagine that a Stasi operative could be seen as a positive figure or hero in German cinema until several years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Some critics were very hesitant about accepting the positive portrayal of a Stasi agent. The same reticence applied to the release of *Goodbye Lenin* (Germany, 2003), which was a more humorous treatment of the theme of oppression in the period around the dismantling of the Berlin Wall.

- This film is based on questions of ethical principles and corruption. Consider the various steps of the discovery by Wiesler that his superiors (Grubitz and Hempf) are morally corrupt. What was Wiesler's deep motivation that, to him, justified the "immoral" acts of his work?

  Teaching note: Wiesler sincerely thought that his work was to use all means available to contribute to fighting the enemies of his country, his government, and his people. He truly believed that "the end justifies the means," with the object being the protection of the state order and, presumably, the collective well-being. As a meticulous technician of interrogation and inquiry, he never questioned the legitimacy and the soundness of his actions until his work brought him to observe the life of Dreyman, a man who also loved his country.

- Setting aside the ethical dimension, do you think that the files and records kept by the Stasi would have historical value? They preserve, in effect, detailed primary source information about the day-to-day activities of thousands of citizens over several years. Discuss.
- What evidence from primary sources is mentioned in the film, which the director may have known about or consulted before making the film?

  Teaching note: In an interview of the director, it is mentioned that this is the only film to be have been partially filmed (the last scenes) in the building of the Stasi archives, which were opened to the public in 1991.

Beyond the Film

Students may be invited to view other films depicting the abuse of power and the invasion of privacy and civil liberties by the state, such as the Chinese film *To Live* by Zhang Yimou, or *The Conversation* by Francis-Ford Coppola (USA, 1974) or *All the Presidents' Men* by Allan Pakula and Robert Redford (USA, 1976), about the Watergate campaign to sabotage political rivals of President Nixon in 1973 through the use of wiretaps. Consider the impact of this type of activity, in this case, not in a totalitarian regime but rather in a state that considers itself to be a champion of personal liberty. The Watergate scandal created an American climate of protest and paranoia that is evident in U.S. films of that period.

Another possibility for analysis of this film would be a comparison with Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, which depicts a dehumanized society in which a maze of bureaucracy, documents, spying, and government controls threaten individual rights and liberties. Although fictional, the universe of *The Trial* bears many similarities to the real universe of *The Lives of Others*.

- Compare this film with the tragic-comic film *Goodbye Lenin* (Wolfgang Becker, Germany, 2003), which also takes place in East Germany at this time, but treats life during the period of Erich Honecker in a lighter fashion.
- Carry out research into the beliefs, ideology, and influence of political figures (e.g., Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Erich Honecker) in the context of the Democratic Republic of Germany up to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

  Teaching note: In the final scene of *Goodbye Lenin*, we see a helicopter taking away a statue of Lenin in East Germany. The dismantling of memorials to Lenin, the father of Soviet communism, was typical of the period around the end of the Soviet Union and its influence on communist satellite countries. Note that although Stalin was initially influenced by the beliefs of Lenin, later Lenin and other communists severely opposed his totalitarian practices in the Soviet regime.

Erich Honecker was a German politician and adherent of Leninist beliefs, who was jailed in Germany during the Nazi regime because of his communist views. After the war, he fled the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) from 1971 until 1989. After German reunification, Honecker first fled to the

Soviet Union but was extradited to Germany by the new Russian government. Back in Germany, he was imprisoned and tried for high treason and crimes committed during the Cold War, including orders to border guards to shoot any person trying to cross the East German border into West Germany. During the trial, Honecker became ill and was released from prison. He died in exile in Chile about a year and a half later.

- View the film *Burnt by the Sun* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Russia, 1994), which deals with life in early Stalinist Russia. Compare the atmosphere and treatment of political oppression and paranoia.
- View the film *Brazil* (Terry Gillian, Great Britain, 1985) or the film version of *1984* (Michael Radford, Great Britain, 1985) about life in a bureaucratic totalitarian order. Note that often these films deal with the ethical will and integrity of individuals in the face of oppression.

The Great Dictator. Dir. Charlie Chaplin, U.S., 1940. Comedy/satire, Black and white/silent with English intertitles. Classification G. 126 min. DVD, Foxvideo.

Historical Themes/Topics

Rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany, dictatorship, anti-Semitism, Second World War

Cinematic Significance

At the time of the creation of *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin was already famous worldwide as "The Little Tramp," a comic figure who wore the same style of moustache as Hitler. In this film, the Little Tramp is transformed into the Jewish barber, and placed in contrast to a parodied figure of Hitler.

The Charlie Chaplin film *The Great Dictator* is a film with a definite political message. As such, the film does not simply seek to depict the period, but to bear witness to the unfolding of certain historic events of that period. It would be useful to view the documentary film *The Tramp and the Dictator* (Kevin Brownlow, 2002) for background information on the making of the film, its historical significance, and interpretations of its message. Some viewers have been critical of the overt political message of the film, while others criticized the use of humour to depict the horrors of Nazism. The perspective of some critics, such as science fiction writer Ray Bradbury, is that humour is very important to human survival and that the use of satire in the film served more effectively as moral support for those who opposed Hitler and the Nazi ideology than did the serious propaganda films of the time. In fact, during the Blitzkrieg or intensive "lightning war" of German bombing in 1940, *The Great Dictator* was being viewed in the cinemas of London.

The final scene of the film, in which Chaplin abandons his film character and delivers a counter-propaganda speech and plea for peace, was highly criticized for diminishing the artistic integrity of the satire. However, in spite of this and other criticisms, the film was to become one of the greatest successes of Chaplin's career.

About Charlie Chaplin

At the time of the production of this film, Chaplin was working in the U.S. and was already famous as a filmmaker and comic actor. The question of American involvement in the war had a very important economic dimension at the time of the release of this film (1940). At the time, even in the realm of cinema, Italy and Germany remained lucrative markets for American film. Hollywood studios attempted to pressure Chaplin to abandon this film project, which he had undertaken in 1938. Chaplin had to finance the project with his own money, and it took 559 days of production, which was considered a very long time to make a film at that time. It should be noted, however, that U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt personally encouraged Chaplin to produce the film.

The script for *The Great Dictator* was written around 1938, and it was filmed in 1939, placing it right at the time of the rise of fascism and Nazism in Germany and Italy, but just before Hitler's invasion of Poland and the beginning of Nazi extermination policies. While the film was in production, the British government announced that it would prohibit its showing in the United Kingdom in keeping with its appeasement policy concerning Nazi Germany. However, by the time the film was released in October 1940, the UK was at war with Germany, and the film was welcomed in part for its obvious propaganda value. Needless to say, the film was banned in Germany and in all the countries occupied by Germany during the war.

In his 1964 autobiography, Chaplin stated that he would not have been able to make such jokes about the Nazi regime had the extent of the Nazi horrors been known, particularly the death camps and the Holocaust. After the scope of Nazi atrocities became apparent to the world, it took another 20 years before any other films dared to satirize the era.

Charlie Chaplin continued to grow in fame in the U.S. and abroad, but later ran into political problems with the House Unamerican Activities Committee (HUAC). In 1952, Chaplin left the U.S. for what was intended to be a brief trip home to the United Kingdom for the London premiere of Limelight. J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, learned of the trip and negotiated to revoke Chaplin's re-entry permit so he could not return to the U.S. because of his alleged left-wing political views. Chaplin decided not to re-enter the United States, and then made his home in Switzerland. He wrote in his autobiography: ".....Since the end of the last world war, I have been the object of lies and propaganda by powerful reactionary groups who, by their influence and by the aid of America's yellow press, have created an unhealthy atmosphere in which liberal-minded individuals can be singled out and persecuted. Under these conditions I find it virtually impossible to continue my motion-picture

work, and I have therefore given up my residence in the United States." (Chaplin, 1964, *My Autobiography*, p. 154)

Before Viewing

Suggested historical topics for pre-research

- It is important that students begin by gathering some information about the historical context in which this film was produced.
  - What was happening in the world in 1940? Who were the key historical figures? What ideologies were prevalent?
  - What was happening in the world of cinema at that time?
  - Why produce a comedy film during this period? How was this done?
- Students should conduct preliminary research into the ideologies that played a role in German aggression in the course of the Second World War. For historical benchmarks, refer to the key points in the rise of Nazi power and international aggression listed in the historical background at the end of this film study.
  - What is fascism? What is totalitarianism?
  - What is Nazism or national socialism? How did it originate and take hold of the people of Germany during this period?
  - What was the official Nazi party policy with respect to the treatment of Jews in Germany at this period? On what beliefs was this racialism based?

    Teaching note: The persecution of Jews is at the very heart of this film. The parallel stories of the little Jewish barber and the mustachioed dictator give this film its structure. According to the documentary film *The Tramp and the Dictator*, it is uncertain whether or not Chaplin was Jewish, but Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda literature targeted him as a "pseudo-Jew" and included him in a list of prominent Jewish bankers, activists, academics, journalists, and artists said to be forming an international network aimed at world domination. Many of the people on this list were exterminated by the Nazi regime. The Nazis used news images of Chaplin in some well-known anti-Semitic propaganda films. While Chaplin was working on the film, representatives of the Jewish community in the U.S. approached him to ask him to abandon the film for fear of making life for Jews in Europe more difficult. Chaplin responded that he did not believe that the situation for Jews in Europe could get any worse than it already was.
- Who is Charlie Chaplin? How well known was he in 1940?

  Teaching note: In 1940, Charlie Chaplin was the most famous actor in the world. His character of the Little Tramp (in France, known as Charlot) was well known and adored in countries across the world. Silent films

had permitted Chaplin to win over an international following without any language barriers. Note that *The Great Dictator* was the first movie in which Chaplin spoke, or his first "talkie."

- What was the position of the U.S. with respect to Nazi Germany? When did the U.S. decide to enter the Second World War?

  Teaching note: The U.S. remained "neutral" for a long time following the rise of Nazism and the outbreak of war in Europe. The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 by Japanese forces, allies of Germany, finally led to the American decision to enter the war.

- Were there Nazi sympathizers in the U.S.?

  Teaching note: The Nazi party in the U.S. was active after the Great Depression. In the documentary *The Tramp and the Dictator*, we see images of gatherings in support of Hitler that included as many as 20,000 people.

- What were the effects of the Great Depression on industrialized nations such as Germany, Italy, France, England, and the U.S.?

  Teaching note: Encourage students to analyze the connections between the collapse of economies, unemployment, poverty, social and political disorder, and the rise of radical political ideologies in developed countries, on the left toward communism, as well as on the right toward fascism. The ensuing devaluing of democratic principles led to single-party nationalistic states led by totalitarian leaders who were seen as strong providential figures (e.g., Hitler, Mussolini, Franco).

During Viewing

Teachers may decide to present a synopsis of the film and show only some parts of the film. It may be useful to assign to small groups of students the task of observing 2–3 particular historical, dramatic, or cinematic elements during the initial viewing (refer to the sample screening guides). Allow time for the second viewing of parts of the movie as required.

It may also be helpful to have students view archival clips of Hitler's speeches before or after the initial viewing of the Chaplin film in order to observe Chaplin's caricature of Hitler's oratorical style, language, and mannerisms.

Principal sequences in the film:

- The globe scene at the beginning depicting Hitler's megalomania and his dream of world domination by a pure Aryan race (about 7 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqyQfjDScjU
- The scene of the Nuremberg-style conference with the microphone writhing before Hynkel's ravings, or the scene of the barber and Hannah walking through the ghetto with Hynkel's anti-Semitic invective in the background (about 2 minutes)
- The scene at the train station where Hynkel and Napaloni meet or the office scene where the two dictators are together (about 3 minutes)

- The final speech by the barber (about 6 minutes)

After Viewing

Initial response

- How does this film make you feel? What impressions remain with you immediately after viewing?
- In this film, are there "good" and "bad" characters? What distinguishes them? What is your opinion of the opening text that represents a view of the historical period?

  For example: This is the story of the period between two world wars—a period when insanity cut loose, liberty took a nose dive, and humanity was kicked around somewhat.

- What are your impressions of the little Jewish barber played by Chaplin? Do you empathize with him?
- In this film, is there a central message? What is the message? Is it clearly expressed? What is your response to the final speech of the little barber at the end of the film?
- How do you feel about the use of humour to deal with a serious historical subject? Exchange ideas about this with your peers.

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Carry out a second viewing of the scene where Hynkel's troops destroy the barbershop, providing some guiding questions for students. This may be also compared to a similar scene in *Life is Beautiful*.)
- When Hynkel's troops force open the door and destroy the barbershop, what does the camera focus on? Why is this cinematographic technique used? What is its effect?

  Teaching note: Chaplin is careful to avoid melodrama here. The camera remains focused on the bird cage (as a symbol of Jews in the ghetto), then it moves to the barber and his fiancée Hannah on the roof. We only hear the shouts of the soldiers and the explosion of the bomb, without seeing it. We then see the burning house and the reaction of the two characters. The choice of the filmmaker in this case strengthens the scene: by showing less, he says more.

- Select some scenes that left an impact on you. Compare with another viewer's selected scenes and exchange ideas about why these particular scenes affected you. Discuss the role of each of these scenes in the film.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- Engage in a discussion about the pro-democracy anti-war message delivered in the last five minutes of the film.

Teaching note: This long "Look up, Hannah" speech, an out-of-character personal plea from Chaplin, became quite famous, and even controversial. It was considered by some critics to be overly sentimental and not in keeping with the film's character. Others consider it to be a true message of peace from a man whom the whole world would listen to, at an appropriate time in history. Chaplin was asked to repeat the speech on national radio, and the text of the speech is widely available today online. Consider the message of the speech in relation to later political difficulties Chaplin had with the U.S. government.

- Make a list of the elements in the film that evoke or represent historical realities of the Germany of the First World War and just before the outbreak of the Second World War (persons, events, developments, uniforms, symbols, etc.). Make an inventory likewise of the fictional elements. Analyze the effects produced by the juxtaposition and interplay of the fictional/comic and clearly historical elements.
- What is the role played by Commandant Schultz in the story and what does he represent?

  Teaching note: Commandant Schultz, the Tomanian (German) hero and veteran of the First World War, represents the sort of opposition Hitler encountered within a certain military aristocracy during the period between the wars. Refer to the film *Valkyrie* (2008), which depicts a July 1944 plot by German army officers to assassinate Hitler and use the national emergency plan to take control of the country. See also the writings of German officer Ernst Junger (e.g., *On the Marble Cliffs*). Although he represents a militaristic and nationalistic point of view, he nonetheless did not support Hitler and Nazism.

  The same role applies to the character of Schultz, who is also not Jewish. This allows Chaplin to portray both good and bad characters without creating a simplistic moral dualism by making all good characters Jewish and all bad characters German.

- Conduct a debate in opposing teams regarding the following statements:
  - The use of humour in this film is an excellent tool for denouncing the dangers and the horrors perpetrated by Nazism.
  - The use of humour to depict the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime is inappropriate, disrespectful, and ineffective.
- Chaplin apparently stated after the release of the film that had he known the real extent of the atrocities carried out by Hitler and the Nazis, he would likely never have made *The Great Dictator*. Why do you think he stated this, and what does such a statement indicate about the ethical dimension of historical understanding—in particular, with respect to events such as the Holocaust and the rise of Nazism?
- Research the historical and political context of Chaplin's life and the production of this film. Do you believe that Chaplin was taking a serious artistic and political risk in releasing a satire of Hitler in 1940?

- View the documentary *The Tramp and the Dictator:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhp5PGsDp-A

Beyond the Film

- Conduct further research on the life and times of Charlie Chaplin and his impact on the history of cinema.

  Teaching note: Refer to Kevin Brownlow's documentary, *The Unknown Chaplin* (1983). Read the fiction book by Daniel Pennac *The Dictator and the Hammock* and analyze how it may be seen to be based on the story of Hitler and Chaplin.

- **Film comparison:** After viewing *Life is Beautiful*, describe elements that the actor Roberto Benigni has in common with Charlie Chaplin and the film *The Great Dictator.*

- Create a visual catalogue of images in the film that are a caricature of Nazism and fascism of the period.

  Teaching note: The film often parodies the Third Reich's official taste in art and architecture and the imposition of its standards on German artists of the time. Note, for example, elements such as the following: the extremely long distance between the front door and Hynkel's desk; the painter and sculptor trying to create the official image of the dictator, while he never stays posed for more than a few seconds at a time; the statue of Venus de Milo with a fascist salute, and Rodin's *The Thinker* sits likewise with his arm raised. Some of the signs in the shop windows of the ghettoized Jewish population in the film are written in Esperanto, a language that Hitler condemned as a Jewish plot to destroy German culture. Garbitsch, who constantly counsels and advises Hynkel, seems to be the one guiding him. This is an allusion to the rumours that Goebbels was the actual ruler and Hitler only a puppet leader.

Historical background: key points in the rise of Nazi power and international aggression

Date	Event
1919–1933	Rise of the Nazi party following the end of World War I and through the period of the Great Depression.
1925	Benito Mussolini assumes the title Duce of Italy and promotes a single-party dictatorial state.
January 1933	Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.

Historical background: key points in the rise of Nazi power and international aggression	
Date	Event
March 1933	Establishment of Dachau, one of the first Nazi concentration camps to which political opponents of Nazism were sent.
August 1934	Hitler declares himself Reich Chancellor or *Reichsführer* and President of Germany.
1935	Hitler establishes anti-Semitic policies, Nazi propaganda, and youth indoctrination. The propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* by filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl is commissioned.
1936	Berlin hosts the Olympics and showcases Nazi power to the world. Hitler commissions the creation of the film *Olympia* for the purpose of Nazi propaganda.
March 1938	Hitler annexes Austria.
November 1938	Kristallnacht or "Night of Broken Glass", intensification of anti-Semitic measures in Germany and Austria.
September 1939	Germany invades Poland. Great Britain and France declare war on Germany. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada follow. This is commonly seen as the beginning of the Second World War.
September 1940	Germany, Japan, and Italy sign the Tripartite Pact and officially found the the Axis powers.
April 1940	Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
May 1940	Germany invades Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.
June 1940	France cedes to Germany; France will remain under German Occupation until 1944.

Historical background: key points in the rise of Nazi power and international aggression	
Date	Event
1941	Construction of Nazi death camps and beginning of the systematic extermination of Jews.
June 1941	Germany and its Axis allies declare war on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
December 1941	Japan declares war on the United States of America, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa.

Teaching note: The chain of causes and consequences is far more complex and involves many more countries than those mentioned here. Students may be encouraged to use a world map to visualize the domino effect and web of events that rapidly implicated most of the international community in the conflict.

Students may refer to historical sources including websites such as the following:

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The Holocaust and World War II, Timeline
  http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007653
- World War 2, Timeline
  http://www.world-war-2.info/timeline/
- The Holocaust Explained
  http://www.theholocaustexplained.org/

Notes

Life is Beautiful. Dir. Roberto Benigni, 1997. Rome, Italy: Cecchi Gori Group Tiger Cinematografica. Comedy/Drama. Classification 14A, Controversial social content. 118 min. DVD, Miramax Home Entertainment (1999).

Historical Themes/Topics

Holocaust, rise of fascism in Italy

About the Film

Benigni was surprised at the worldwide success of his film *Life is Beautiful,* which was all the more astonishing given the premises on which it was founded— premises that push the limits of what is tolerable.

In an interview, Benigni declared the following: "When this idea took hold of me, like an illumination, a revelation, I immediately recoiled. It was a reaction of fear, as though in self-defence. But I held to the idea, it kept me from sleeping, it was a sentiment so strong that the fear dissipated." Benigni is a breaker of taboos. With this story, Benigni, in the character of Guido, plays with danger by telescoping in the same story the ultimate horror of the Nazis' final solution and the complete innocence and naiveté of a child playing a game. It is an explosive combination.

Others have tried to combine childlike humour with the theme of the Holocaust, but never with as much success. For example, the French artist, Roland Topor, himself a Polish Jew whose family went into hiding during the Nazi regime, wrote a short story about a Jewish child during the Second World War who believed that the yellow cross given to identify him as a Jew was the sign that he has become "the sheriff" of his neighbourhood. This work was highly criticized. (Likewise, Yann Martel's novel *Beatrice and Virgil*, a Holocaust

allegory using animals as central figures, has been criticized as being offensive and trivializing the Holocaust.)

The impact of the film is no doubt related to its historical context. One might easily assert that this film would not have been accepted or produced even 10 years earlier, when the pain and suffering of the concentration camps was still unbearable and still fresh in the collective memory. It may also be argued that in 50 years, when all the concentration camp survivors are long dead, the immediacy of the horror will have weakened. In this sense, one might see *Life is Beautiful* in itself as a historical turning point in the general perception of the Holocaust and the beginning of a change in the collective memory of the event. (Note: The film was in fact criticized for its treatment of the Holocaust; however, ultimately it seems its inspirational and hopeful character is what has triumphed in the general perception.)

Before Viewing

Suggested topics for preparatory research

- Who was Mussolini and what was the Fascist movement in Italy? Carry out research about the rise of Fascism in Italy and try to imagine the lifestyle changes that occurred during this period for all Italians, and especially for Italians of Jewish descent. (perspective taking)
- What were the relations between Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, before 1939, and after 1939?
  Teaching note: Encourage students to compare the emergence of very similar ideologies in Italy (fascism) and in Germany (Nazism). Both ideologies took hold during a national period of social and political chaos. As depicted in Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, there was also a sort of a personal rivalry between Hitler and Mussolini, as they were both personalities with exceedingly large egos. Their leadership styles were also very similar: enflamed rhetoric in their public speeches; a taste for mass demonstrations, often not very tasteful but with a distinct style; the cult of the "superior race"; obsession with largeness and grandeur; and the use of pomp and ceremony.

  In 1936, Hitler and Mussolini formed a strategic military alliance, the Rome-Berlin Axis. In 1939, Japan joined the Axis powers; Italy, Germany, and Japan formalized their alliance with the signature of the Tripartite Pact in 1940. These three nations, at varying points joined by some other European countries (e.g., Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Finland), formed the main military adversaries of the Allies during the Second World War.
- In the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, how were non-conformist or minority groups (e.g., Jews, communists, homosexuals) viewed?

  Historical note: Fascism, in the same way as Nazism and communism, began as a populist ideology, or a grassroots movement that appealed to

the people. (In contrast, the single-party authoritarian state of General Franco, which took hold in Spain from 1939 to 1947, relied on the traditional social structure of the Spanish power elite.) These populist movements offered to the masses of workers and the poor (mostly unemployed) the promises of a glorious future where they would take their rightful place in society. Arising out of the period of economic and social crisis following the end of the First World War and into the 1930s, these movements offered a vision of a restructured society and renewed prosperity to the working class. In the case of both fascism and Nazism, government became single-party states dominated by a single authoritarian figure. In many communist states, a similar authoritarian model was imposed.

In the case of Nazism in Germany, a policy rapidly emerged of ascribing blame to groups that were identifiably different, such as Jews, homosexuals, Communists, the disabled, and the Romani people (often called "gypsies"). The exaggeration or invention of differences between "the People" and "the Other" became the tools of a mass propaganda machine. In Italy as in Germany, anti-Jewish policies were popularized and enforced by reviving anti-Semitic sentiments that were already present in some quarters, as well by the identification of a scapegoat for the economic and social troubles of the time. (In Italy, the Jewish community was well integrated into Italian life when the fascists first came to power in 1922; anti-Jewish racial laws began to be imposed in 1938.) In Germany, the ideology was tied to the notion of a superior Aryan race, and the supposition that other races are inferior. In Italy, fascist ideology was tied to an extreme Italian nationalism and militarism. Benigni recounts that he found in his research about growing anti-Semitism in Italy during this period that it was often students who, exalted by the idea of belonging to a superior race and seduced by Fascist ideology, perpetrated and supported anti-Jewish acts.

- Were there ever concentration camps in Italy? Students may carry out research to find images of the architecture and structure of the camps to compare with the camp as depicted in the film.

  Historical note: There were four concentration camps in Italy: three of these were transit camps, where Jews were assembled before being sent to extermination camps. The *Risiera de San Saba*, a former rice mill outside the city of Trieste, was equipped with a crematory and was operated by Nazis. Although Roberto Benigni has said that he did not base his depiction on any particular camp, it is clear that the factory style installations of this camp were used as a model for the film's setting.

During Viewing

- The film clearly lends itself to being viewed in two parts (before the concentration camp and in the concentration camp). Allow for discussion and debriefing after each part.

- It has been stated that this film is not a realistic depiction of the history of the time. With this is mind, observe and note any elements of realistic history in the film. Also note any questions you might have about the realism of any historical element portrayed in the film.
- Note scenes that strike you as you view the film, recording some of the key details of what you see and hear.
- Keep track of scenes that recall other scenes in the film or that contrast the first part of the film (before the concentration camp) to the second part (in the concentration camp).
- Observe any scenes that are particularly revealing about the character of Guido. What techniques does the filmmaker use in these scenes?
- Keeping the film title in mind, pick out elements that seem to support its message.
- Did you notice any completely unexpected scenes or events in the film?

After Viewing

Initial response

- How does this film make you feel? What is the main impression that remains with you after viewing?

  Teaching note: Encourage students to share their responses, as they will find that different people respond differently to this film. To some viewers, the (relatively) happy ending offers comfort and reassurance, since the boy Giosuè and his mother survive and are reunited. However, for others, the difficult nature of the second part of the film is for some viewers almost unbearable.

- Is this film realistic?

  Teaching note: If students carefully view this film more than once, they may be struck by how it is bathed in an atmosphere of unreality, much like a fairy tale or fable. This unreality is reflected in the stylistic elements of the setting and décor, which call to mind the settings of Chaplin films such as *The Great Dictator* or *Modern Times*, or even some elements of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. This impression is reinforced by scenes such as those in the concentration camp where the prisoners are marching along as zombies, much like the workers in *Metropolis*. They may also note elements of unreality and dream in the décor that resembles the style of films by Fellini.

- Benigni has openly stated that there is nothing intended to be realistic in this film. He maintains that there is nothing more powerful than evoking terror. As Edgar Allen Poe observes, when we come to the edge of a cliff and do not look, the horror is immeasurable. If we show the horror, it becomes what we show. Benigni observes that, based on what he saw, heard, and felt in the accounts of concentration camp prisoners, nothing could approach

the reality they experienced (see primary sources). Since nothing could truly capture their experience, he realized it would be pointless to try to depict it "realistically." How could he be realistic about a horror that was unspeakable?

- In this film, are there "good" and "bad" characters? What distinguishes them?

  Teaching note: Clearly, Guido, his family, and friends are the good characters and the fascists are the evil characters. In the first part of the film, the fascists are shown as pretentious and somewhat ridiculous characters, much like the burlesque characters of Chaplin's old comedies, which were a source of inspiration to Benigni. But in the second half of the film, everything falls into tragedy. We see that the Italian fascists are ridiculous versions of a much more dangerous entity: the Nazis. Here, comedy gives way to tragedy. The German soldiers are cold and cruel. However, Dr. Lessing, Guido's former customer at the Grand Hotel, is somewhat different. He likes Guido and treats him with consideration. Nevertheless, in the camp, he is obsessed with his games and does not even see the horrors in which he is participating and to which the Jews, including Guido, are being subjected. He seems to represent a sensitive, educated man, but one who has turned a blind eye to any sense of morality.

- What do you think of the character of Guido? Do you relate to him? Would you have been capable of doing what he did for his son?

  Teaching note: The character of Guido is an exceptional being and somewhat unreal. On the one hand, he is human; on the other hand, he seems almost not human or even superhuman. Guido is a Jew, fully integrated into Italian society, who profoundly loves his life. He has a strong sense of family and friendship; he loves his neighbours and does not seek to harm anyone. He falls madly in love with Dora and proceeds to win her over with personality, charm, imagination, and humour. He then has a wonderful relationship with her as his wife and with his young son Giosuè. He is affectionate and caring and would do anything to protect his son's innocence and his life. And we find ourselves moved by this concern.

  At the same time, Guido is a superhuman character in that it is virtually impossible to imagine that any human being is capable of doing what he does to protect his son. This would require a will of steel and the capacity to face the worst kind of adversity without crumbling. These are the kinds of characteristics we see in the heroes of fairy tales or fables. Even in the first part of the film, we see that Guido has a special role in society: he goes beyond the normal in his devotion to fantasy and imagination. Wherever he goes, he introduces an element of fancy. He is capable of imposing his own vision and his own rules of the game on reality: this is evident, for example, in the scene with the key and the hat. At times, his audacity is incredible, such as in the scene in the school. Up to this

point, Guido is in the world of Chaplin's Little Tramp character. It is in the concentration camp that he passes into the tragic side of reality.

Benigni has always maintained that *Life is Beautiful* is not a realistic film. Guido is the same character throughout and never changes, true to himself in all circumstances, much like the characters in fairy tales. He retains the same characteristics no matter what happens, and he is a bit of a wily trickster, always talking, always pretending, never realistic, never serious, even in the face of tragedy.

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Benigni has said that this film is a tragi-comedy. Find some examples that illustrate that this is the case.

  Teaching note: There are numerous examples: one of the most evident is the scene in which a German officer calls for a translator. Guido volunteers, and with remarkable aplomb he announces the rules of the game he has invented for his son rather than translate the camp rules (which he could not translate because he does not understand German). This scene would be typically comic if it were part of a film such as Gérard Oury's *The Great Stroll* (La grande vadrouille), which makes fun of the Germans during the war. However, in this case, the scene takes on a tragic dimension as we share in the realization of Guido and the other prisoners that this is not a game.

  More than perhaps any other film, this film plays upon the contrast between what some characters know (Guido, the other prisoners) and what another of the main characters does not know (Guido's son). This complicity of knowledge between the viewers and the adult characters in the film is unique in the history of cinema in its intensity and its implications. It engages the viewer in a very profound way, because the viewer, even more than Guido himself, knows exactly what the horror of this camp is.

- In this film, is there a message? What is it? Is there more than one message?

  Teaching note: Benigni has said that one of the messages of the film is that "Laughter saves us, seeing the other side of things, the unreal and amusing side of things, or succeeding in imagining it—this helps us to not be destroyed, not be crushed, helps us resist the worst and still sleep at night, even when it will be a very long night. In this sense, we can make people laugh and not do harm to anyone."

  Another message is that the love of parents for their children is immeasurable, powerful, and a kind of salvation. This kind of love can not only save an individual, but it can also bring salvation with respect to the realities of history, to the human condition.

  Finally, students may observe the message contained in the title of the film itself: that ultimately, life is beautiful, and even the most terrible tragedies cannot take away that fundamental beauty of life.

- Students may read the transcript of an interview with Roberto Benigni, and respond to his statements as they analyze the film and its intent:
  - Refer to *Euroscreenwriters*, Interview with Roberto Benigni: http://zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/roberto_benigni_512.htm

  In this film, pick out some scenes that have contrasting atmospheres or moods, and explain these differences.

  Teaching note: There are many examples of contrast in the film (e.g., the scene where Giosuè is hiding in his parents' house—a happy scene—and the scene in the camps where he is hiding in the letterbox, until the arrival of the Americans liberating the camp).

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- If we were to consider this film as a source of historical information, what can it tell us about the events it depicts? What does it tell us about the beliefs and values of the director with respect to these events? In what sense—-if any—can the film be considered to be a valid interpretation of history?
- View a documentary about the period of Nazism and the Holocaust and pick out any historical inaccuracies or misrepresentations they may reveal in this film.
- Are there any elements in this film that make a direct reference to events in the rise of fascist and Nazi ideologies and anti-Semitic policies in Germany and in Italy? (Refer to *Historical background: key points in the rise of Nazi power and international aggression* for a timeline of some key events of the period.)
- Compare this film to *Schindler's List*. How are their messages similar? How are they different? Which film made you reflect more on the historical realities of this grievous period in history?
- Suggested debate topics in teams:
  It is impossible—or wrong—to use humour when we are dealing with a subject such as the Holocaust.
  OR
  In a situation of extreme suffering or cruelty, only humour can save us from despair.

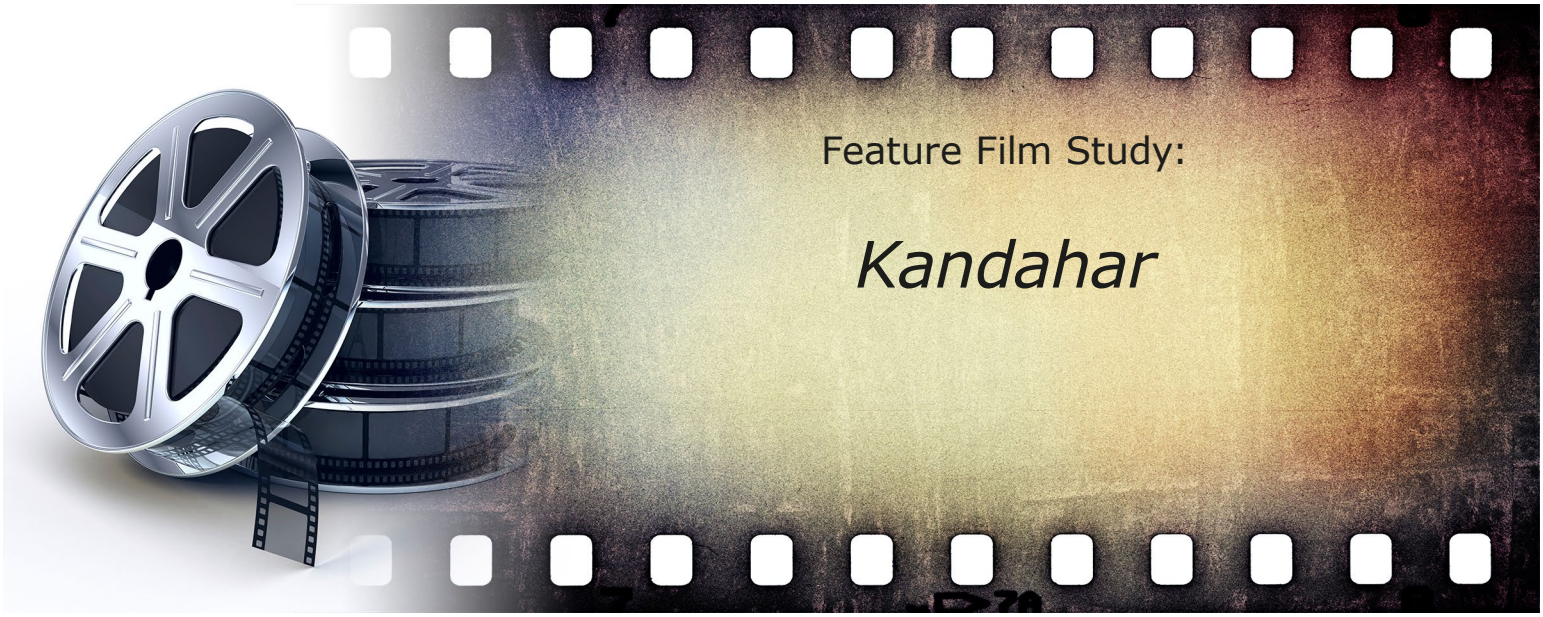
Beyond the Film

- Support films for comparison purposes before or after viewing:
  - *The Great Dictator*, Charlie Chaplin
  - *A Special Day*, Ettore Scola
  - *Monsieur Batignole*, Gérard Jugnot
  - *Night and Fog* (Nuit et brouillard), Alain Resnais
  - *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielberg

- Selected interviews of Holocaust survivors and witnesses, in the nine-hour documentary *Shoah*, dir. Claude Lanzmann (1985, France)
- *Europa Europa,* Agnieszka Holland

Readings:

- *Night*, Elie Wiesel.
  An account of a Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner.
- Excerpts from *If This Is a Man* by Primo Levi (autobiography)
  Primo Levi is one of the great Italian authors of the 20th century, and an Auschwitz survivor.



Kandahar. Dir. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 2001. Iran. Paris, France: Bac Films. Historical fiction/Semi-documentary. Classification PG. 85 min. DVD, New Yorker Video.

About the Film

Kandahar (Dari-Persian: قندهار Qandahar) was directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf in 2001. It is an Iranian film set in Afghanistan when it was under the control of the Taliban. The film is non-fiction but contains fictionalized elements. It tells the story of an Afghan-Canadian woman who returns to Afghanistan to find her sister who was forced to stay while the rest of her family escaped.

While *Kandahar* was filmed mostly in Iran, it was also filmed in Afghanistan itself. Most people in the cast are not professional actors and played themselves. *Kandahar* won the Federico Fellini Prize in 2001.

Before Viewing

Historical pre-research

The following are suggested questions to guide student research before screening the film.

- Observe the location of Afghanistan on a world map and list its bordering countries.

  Teaching note: Iran, Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are the bordering countries. It is generally accepted that the suffix "stan" is an ancient Persian or Farsi word meaning *country, land,* or *place*; Afghanistan would then mean "place of the Afghans."

Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were all part of the former Soviet Union, and became independent countries in 1991 when the USSR dissolved.

- What are the key characteristics of the physical and human geography of Afghanistan?

  Teaching note: Students may do a quick web search to locate data and photography of the terrain using reputable sites (National Geographic, CIA World Factbook, United Nations). The territory includes rugged mountain ranges and desert in the south region near Pakistan: a difficult terrain to control with few travel routes through the mountains. The population is diverse and includes many ethnic groups and languages. The majority of the population is Muslim. Many ethnic groups find refuge in isolated mountainous areas and are protective of their culture; these remote areas are often controlled by local warlords. This situation has led to continued conflict among ethnic groups and factions.

- Historically, what has been the strategic significance of this country's location?

  Teaching note: Although landlocked, Afghanistan is important geopolitically as it is centrally located in the Asian continent. Over many centuries, it was a part of of the Silk Road overland passage between the East and the West. in the 19th century, Afghanistan was a buffer state between the Russian empire and the British empire.

- Develop a timeline sketch of key events in Afghanistan in the late 20th century up to the present.

  Teaching note: In the late 20th century, Afghanistan became a site of confrontation between Muslim fundamentalism and communism (from the USSR to the north). In 1973, the Russians established a communist government in Afghanistan. In 1979-80, Soviet troops invaded the country in order to protect Soviet power and to suppress Western influence. Armed resistance to the communists was organized (the Mujahideen) and supported by Muslims in many nations. The CIA, to consolidate American interests in the region during this period of the Cold War, actively sustained this resistance to Soviet rule.

Some key points in the modern history of Afghanistan

1979	The Soviet Army invades and props up the communist government.
1989	The Islamic Revolution overcomes the Soviets and the Russian army retreats from the country. The communist regime in Asia is weakening. Afghanistan remains a site of continued civil war between communists and Islamists.
1992	Collapse of the Soviet regime. The country is divided among many religious and ethnic factions, and many Mujahideen commanders establish themselves as local warlords.

1994	The Taliban, an extreme religious and military group that emerged from the conflict, launches an offensive to conquer the country, supported by Pakistan.
1996	The Taliban takes the capital Kabul and seizes power. Osama bin Laden leads an extremist anti-Jewish and anti-U.S. group that carries out attacks on American interests in a variety of countries (Tanzania, Kenya, Yemen) and the attack of 11 September 2001 in New York.
2001-02	The U.S. and allies including Canada begin a military intervention to defeat the Taliban regime. This results in the installation of a transitional government, whose power in the region continues to be questioned and challenged.
2003	NATO takes control of the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to support governance, policing, security, support of the Afghan National Army, anti-insurgency military action, reconstruction, and eradication of opium trade.
2004	Afghanistan has its first democratic elections. There are continued pockets of resistance by Taliban insurgents, but warlords establish a regional division of control over the country.
2009	The second elections are held with ISAF support; there is poor voter turnout, as well as threats and incidents of violence and reports of electoral abuse.
2011	Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan ends in July 2011.
May 2012	NATO summit endorses a plan to withdraw foreign combat troops by the end of 2014.

Refer to BBC, Afghanistan Profile at www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253

- What are the natural resources of Afghanistan? How does the population make a living?

  Teaching note: In the past, the principal occupation was agriculture. In recent times, Afghanistan has become the world's largest producer of opium. Opium trade accounts for 35% of the country's economic production (GDP). Agriculture, textile, and rug production are also part of the economy. The country also possesses mineral and natural gas resources that are largely unexploited.

- What has been the impact of the Taliban regime on the condition of women in the country?

  Teaching note: Consider elements of continuity and change.

  - Refer to CBC News in-depth, Women in Afghanistan: www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/afghanwomen.html
  - Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan: www.cw4wafghan.ca/who-we-are

- Research the use of anti-personnel mines, their use, and their ongoing impact in the region.

Consider the ethical dimension and the ongoing issues related to land mines. Research the history of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (known as the Ottawa Convention) established on 3 December 1997.

Refer to International Committee of the Red Cross, Anti-personnel land mines: www.icrc.org/Eng/mines
International Campaign to Ban Landmines: www.icbl.org/

- Research Canadian humanitarian, development, and military involvement in Afghanistan. Take and defend a position on continued Canadian involvement.

  Teaching note: Canada has taken on an increasing military role in the country since 2001. Consider questions related to the ethical dimension of history, such as the role of citizens in supporting or opposing military action.

  - Refer to the following Canada in Afghanistan website: www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/index.aspx?lang=eng;
  - See also CBC report on Canada in Afghanistan: www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/02/10/f-afghanistan.html

During Viewing

Decide ahead on a possible dividing point in case the film needs to be viewed in two sittings.

Propose one or two elements for each student to observe during screening. For example:

- Record your impressions of the character of the American doctor
- Note the techniques used by the filmmaker to show the negative effects of the Taliban regime
- Observe the use of documentary-style filming in some scenes
- Take note of scenes that are particularly striking or beautiful
- Record your first impressions at the end of the film

After Viewing

Initial response

- How does this film make you feel? Do you believe that the story is mostly true or fictional? What are the first impressions that remain with you after viewing?
- In this film, are there "good" and "bad" characters? What distinguishes them?

Teaching note: One could think that the bad characters in the story are the Taliban, even though they never appear as characters in the film. On the other hand, what we do see is the impact of the regime on the population: a school where young boys learn the Koran while they learn how to use weapons; poverty; malnutrition; the oppression of women; a climate of violence; the permanent danger of land mines that threaten the limbs and lives of adults and children. The evil that is depicted here is the evil of a humanitarian catastrophe.

In her odyssey or quest, Nafas meets characters who are neither good nor evil, but who sometimes lean more toward one side than the other. Most of them are dominated by the single thought of survival. This motivation to survive pushes them to commit acts that are sometimes reprehensible. Even the American doctor, now helping to do good, once served as a fighter with the Mujahideen. All the characters in the story are depicted as people who could help—or hinder—Nafas in her quest.

- In this film, is there a central message? What is its message? Is the message clear or is it ambiguous?

  Teaching note: As mentioned above, the strongest message of the film is its condemnation of the effects of the Taliban regime on the Afghan people, and particularly on women. This message does not express a clear ideological position, but is rather a description of the devastating effects of the Taliban ideology on human beings.

Media literacy: response and reflection

- Analyze the visual details used by the filmmaker to represent life under the Taliban. Consider the lighting, cinematography, and composition techniques used by the filmmaker to enhance the effect of these images.

  Teaching note: This film is the story of a voyage in which documentary content is mixed with poetic imagery throughout. Certain strong poetic images emerge: women in burkas, one-legged men running to catch artificial legs delivered by parachute, children reciting the Koran in school, views of the desert, images of the face of Nafas, a child stealing a skeleton in the desert. But there are also scenes that show to a Western audience (Europeans and Americans in particular) the difficult realities of day-to-day Afghan life under the domination of the Taliban. The director often places a documentary-style scene just ahead of a scene of the arrival of Nafas (e.g., the Koranic school before the expulsion of the boy Khak, the scene with the American doctor, the Red Cross camp…).

  The style adopted by Mohsen Makhmalbaf is original, personal, and reflects an Iranian style of cinematography, as seen in the work of other Iranian filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami.

- Find examples of the use or symbols or metaphors in the film. Reflect on how this film's style differs from the style of mainstream Hollywood productions.

  Teaching note: Students may wish to refer to the film review and summary by Roger Ebert at <www.rogerebert.com/reviews/Kandahar-2002>.

  The final impression of the film is abrupt and shocking, completely opposite to the typical Hollywood ending. Nafas, who wants to rejoin her sister before the eclipse, finds herself blocked at the gates of the city, unable to proceed any further. She experiences herself the "prison" that each woman must live in under the Taliban, the prison of the burka, its lace serving to limit the vision of the women who must wear it day after day, hour after hour. It is the eclipse that obscures all vision and kills all hope.

Historical thinking: response and reflection

- To what extent can we consider this film to be a secondary source of historical information? What does the selection and presentation of historical information tell us about the point of view of the filmmaker regarding these events?
- The actress who plays Nafas is an Afghan refugee in Canada, Nelofer Pazira. This story is inspired in part by her experience and her attempts to retrace a childhood friend in Kabul. Unfortunately Nelofer Pazira had to turn back in Afghanistan before arriving in Kabul, because of the danger. Does this information change how you see the film? How? Does this background add to or diminish the impact of the film as a source of historical information?
- The situation of the Afghan people in the years preceding the attack of 11 September 2001 is mostly unknown. This film, produced in 2001 before the New York attack, contributed to the world's awareness of the situation under Taliban rule. Create an inventory or descriptive list of the characteristics of Afghan society under the Taliban as revealed in the film. Conduct research to find statistics and further data to compare with what is revealed in the film about social and economic conditions.

  Teaching note: The film, with its gallery of portraits (e.g., the boy named Khak, the American doctor, the man with the amputated hand, etc.), conveys a great deal of information as it tells the story:

  - the indoctrination of young men into Taliban ideology at the Koranic school
  - the almost total absence of rights for women (education, dress, requirements of marriage, etc.)
  - the absence of children's rights
  - frequent civilian victims of antipersonnel mines and bombs, including some concealed in children's toys

- daily violence and crime (theft, rape, military and religious terrorism, etc.)

- Many Western people have difficulty in relating to the ethnic and ideological conflicts of this region, because of strong underlying cultural differences. Students may conduct an inquiry into the complex religious foundations of the question in order to clarify their understanding.

  Teaching note: Religious conflict between Sunni and Shiite Muslims is a long-standing issue of the Middle East and is further complicated by the displacement of people, political issues, and ethnic and regional differences. The conflict between Pashtoun and Tadjik (referred to by the false American doctor in the film) is another example of the religious and ethnic conflicts of this region.

  - Refer to the CBC News in depth, *Sectarian tensions: Shia vs. Sunni across the Middle East:*
    www.cbc.ca/news/background/islam/sectarian-tensions.html

Note that Sunni Muslims constitute the majority of Muslims worldwide, with Shiite Muslims being predominant in Iraq and Iran and certain regions of other countries. Iranians (including the filmmaker in this case) are mostly Shiite Muslims, as is most of the Afghan population near the Iranian border. The Taliban are predominantly made up of young boys from the Pashtun ethnic group who left Afghanistan during the period of Soviet rule and travelled as refugees to Pakistan, where they were trained by extremist groups of Sunni Muslims. Note that the civil war in Iraq is also based largely on tensions between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.

Beyond the Film

- To find out more about the actress and activist who inspired this film, students may view the W5 documentary produced by CTV called *Lifting the Veil*, which is included with the film on the DVD. Students can gather observations about how the documentary style differs from the style of the film.

  Students may also view Nelofar Pazira's dramatic film *Act of Dishonour:*
  www.imdb.com/title/tt1670620/?ref_=nm_ov_bio_lk1

- Students may read about humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as described in the memoir *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin (2006).

  - Students may view a documentary about Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMyiTRMDp_c
  - The NFB film *Portraits of Soldiers in Afghanistan*
    https://www.nfb.ca/playlist/22nd-regiment/

- The CBC news special *Remembering Afghanistan*
  www.cbc.ca/thenational/indepthanalysis/rememberingafghanistan/#tpSwf

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