A SOURCE BOOK FOR THE TEACHER OF FILM ART

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A SOURCE BOOK FOR THE TEACHER OF FILM ART

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It would be difficult to deny that the film has established itself as an art form and is today perhaps the most characteristic art form of our age. More than any other medium—fiction, drama, poetry, music—it has extended man's power for studying reality, for communicating with his fellow men, for moving and influencing them. Though some of its effectiveness lies in certain characteristics shared with the other arts, its real force lies principally in a quality which is uniquely its own, one which "no one has yet satisfactorily named. It is something like immediacy or instantaneousness, an astonishing and total impact on the senses" (6, p. vii). This singular quality makes it unequalled in its power to attract and give pleasure to its mass audience.

Because the film can influence thoughts and feelings, because it is concerned with values, reality, standards of conduct and moral judgments, and because it is the dominant mass cultural medium, it has come to be recognized as a force which cannot casually be dismissed. Just as discriminating audiences have been created for other art forms by an exposure to and analysis of the best within a medium, it is imperative that there also be developed an audience equipped with some
fundamental principles of criticism that can recognize and appreciate the best of film art.

Traditionally educators have shared in efforts toward cultivating audience taste in the arts. In the field of cinema, however, the avoidance of any responsibility has been both obvious and curious. Though some teachers have expressed an interest, as evidenced in the frequent articles in educational publications, the fact that there have been no changes in curriculum, that not a single classroom-tested program has appeared to serve as a model for interested teachers is a stronger evidence of the general reluctance on the part of educators to innovate any approach toward an understanding of film art.

Some explanations for this reticence have been offered. Margaret F. Thorp in her America at the Movies writes of the early fear of teachers and parents that a child who had seen a classic on the screen would feel it unnecessary to read the book. She demonstrates how time has proven that films can make people not only read books but actually buy them. "The film premiere of The Good Earth shot the sales of the book up to 3,000 a week. More copies of Wuthering Heights have been sold since the novel was screened than in all the previous ninety-two years of its existence." She also points out the great role of films as promoters of collateral reading. The appearance of Lives of a Bengal Lancer, she states, swept public library shelves of every book on India. The Barretts of Wimpole Street had the effect of emptying shelves for months not only
of every life of the Brownings but of every copy of their poems (7, p. 246).

Henry B. Maloney, writing in the English Journal, also offers several explanations as to why film is treated as a "stepsister of print" in today's schools. The teachers, he says, fear that "if the classroom door is left open to popular culture, it will sweep in like a massive, enticingly scented ooze and absorb the young scholars." A second deterrent, he proffers, arises from the "paradoxical situation of the English teacher subconsciously trying to remain faithful to the stereotyped image of himself . . . a figure of a bespectacled, graying, middle-aged woman, who has just renewed her three-year subscription to the Reader's Digest." Such a teacher can see no room for anything as dynamic as the public arts in this "genteel fantasy." The third and most instrumental agent in keeping films out of the English classroom, he suggests, is formal grammar exercises. Though tests indicate no correlation between proficiency in these exercises and ability in other areas of language arts, they have the "blessing of tradition" and require little preparation to teach. Teachers use them to avoid a lesson which demands review and polishing (5, p. 575). Certainly such instruction is not in keeping with today's goals in language arts, which place major emphasis on providing "a language experience that is directed toward acquaintance with and practice in the rich and varied resources of the language (2, p. 288).
Max Herzberg, also writing in the *English Journal*, accuses English teachers of being influenced by "vested interests, lethargy, but mainly ignorance and misunderstanding." He declares that they do not see clearly that pictures do speak louder than words and that the art of motion pictures is truly "an incredible, vital art and not the art of literature" (3, p. 83).

A further indictment of the teachers is made by Howard M. Jones in his article "The Fetish of the Classics." He states that "with the enormous expansion of branches of knowledge set before the modern child, literary classics occupy relatively a much less important place than they did when the curriculum of our schools was originally invested." In our age of stereos, computers, and space explorations, "a knowledge of the masterpieces is, even for very intelligent persons, no longer so central a matter as it was when Byron wrote his poems or when a gentlemanly polish was expected of the graduate of the Boston Latin School." It has been assumed, he asserts, that taste could be developed in literature "through daily classes taught in isolation from out-of-school-experience while the motion picture has been altering and developing taste on a gigantic scale without reference to our feeble efforts in the classroom." Altogether, he fears that the traditional and typical English classroom has been oblivious to what has really been going on and what is really needed (4, p. 224).

Our schools have been built around the book, and it is undeniable that there has been a widely accepted notion that
anything in print is worthwhile and anything on a screen is light entertainment and of little academic value. Carl Sandburg speaks out against the fallacy of such thinking when he states that "anything that brings us to tears by way of drama does something to the deepest roots of our personality. All movies good or bad are educational and Hollywood is the foremost educational institution on earth" (l, p. 2).

Whatever the reasons may be for excluding films from the curriculum, they are poor ones. It is necessary that all educators come to this realization. Their job in this century is a difficult one and one in which success is impossible without the use of the tools which the age has provided. The motion picture must be accepted for what it is—the greatest tool of education since the invention of the printing press. It must come to be used as has the printed word.

Taking into consideration that today's teen-agers are accustomed to visual communication, that they spend more time before the television and movie screen than they do in the classroom, and that they come to school with impressions and attitudes gained from such experiences, educators must expand the educational process to include the organizing of, and bringing into perspective what is already present in a student's mind. They must also teach the language and literature of this media and train the child in methods of evaluating and interpreting the continuous flow of visual stimuli that he will be exposed to.
How does one teach the language and literature of the film? Where does one begin? What should be included in such a study? The answers to these questions do not exist and will not until much earnest effort and time have been spent toward their discovery. Certainly this thesis does not contain the final answers. It does contain some tentative answers, however, answers that can be put into practice in the classroom, examined, modified, rejected, or accepted. The ideas and suggestions are only invitations to explore; from such exploration will come the real advancements in this important field.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

PREPARATION AND FIRST APPROACH

Essential to an appreciation of film art is an understanding of the history and development of the medium, the various elements involved in its creation, and a familiarity with its various genres. Since the primary purpose of this guide is to provide an outline for the teaching of film criticism, of necessity these various aspects of the art must be considered.

Because of these numerous considerations and also because of the inexperience of most teachers in the area of film appreciation, it is essential, too, that this guide be both specific and detailed. Hopefully, with it so written, teachers will experience a greater measure of success in their first efforts and be encouraged to continue in the development and refinement of their own techniques.

Essential Preparations

To insure the success of this unit, there are certain details which will require anticipation:

1. Securing funds—Most of the films suggested for use in this unit must be rented and requests for funds to cover this expense often must be made far in advance in order to be included in the budget. In cases where funds can not be made
available, students can be requested (never required) to pay a small sum each.

2. Scheduling projector, screen, and showing room—Because of the number of films that will be shown and since some films, because of length, will require more than one day to be shown, a projector and screen need to be carefully scheduled for the teaching of this unit. If two or three teachers are working together, the school auditorium is usually the only place large enough to accommodate the number of students. To avoid conflicts with drama rehearsals, band practices, and other activities, early and careful arrangements need to be worked out with principal or supervisor. (Needless to say, the teacher should also schedule herself enough time to become thoroughly familiar with the projector. A projector that will not work will defeat the most carefully conceived program.)

3. Ordering films—All films should be ordered far in advance so that the specific films can be secured and so that substitutions will not be necessary. (For information about the companies from which the various films can be ordered see Appendix A.)

4. Preparing visual aids and handouts—Making the suggested visual aids and handouts in advance is important since some of them are essential to the development of the unit.

5. Ordering the text—The suggested text is the well-written, easy to read history of the movies written by Arthur Knight and titled The Liveliest Art. It is a very complete
and comprehensive survey not only of the inventors and artists who contributed to its rise to one of the world's most influential media but of every aspect of film-making both in the United States and abroad. It is available in paperback form.

Initial Discussion

It would be well to begin a unit in film art with a discussion of the following questions:

1. What areas of human endeavor do we classify as "the arts"?

This is a good question with which to begin since many of the students will be able to contribute to the answer and will be encouraged to try the subsequent questions which are somewhat more difficult. The answers enumerated should include painting, drawing, architecture, sculpture, music, drama, poetry, and dancing. It would be well to point out that there is a distinction between these which are designated as the fine arts and others (which students may have named) such as ceramics, weaving, embroidering, and china-making which are termed useful arts.

2. What is art? What do the above have in common?

Some basic points which should arise out of this discussion are these:

a) Its creations are designed to please the viewer or listener and to excite his aesthetic emotions.

b) Each work of art is meant by its creator to be not only beautiful but also effective in saying
c) Its creations are products of man's intellect and imagination.

d) All art functions to enrich life and to help mankind to understand it.

e) All of the best work in any medium obeys certain common laws which can be explained and which can be used in an analysis of other work.

3. Can film be classified as art?

If this question is discussed in terms of the points made in the discussion of the previous question, the students will have no difficulty arriving at the correct conclusion. The teacher should point out, however, that relatively few pictures can seriously be considered as works of art. In motion pictures, just as in the other art mediums, only when a film can be defined as a gifted, serious endeavor to express reality in an imaginative and sensitive way can it be classified as art.

The discussion of this final question will lead logically into a statement of the goals and purposes of the unit. The students should be made aware that at the conclusion of the unit they will be expected to know common laws to which a film must conform in order to be called art. They need to develop ability to recognize and interpret outstanding specimens of the art.

First Analysis--A Literary Approach

The following set of criteria should provide an easy first approach to film analysis. The students' familiarity with the
aspects of the novel will give them some concrete basis for
critical judgment. A goal, of course, is for the students to
be able to discuss the film in filmic terms. It is planned
that as the unit progresses, more precise and specialized crit-
ical tools for making decisions about film will be developed.
A copy of the following list of points should be given to each
member of the class and briefly discussed before the showing
of the first film.

The Criteria

1. Does the film produce a visceral reaction? Why? Is
this a result of sensationalism (the use of artistic expression
that is intended to shock), or is it a response to the artistry
of the film as a whole?

2. Theme—What is the central idea expressed in the film?
Is it of universal significance—worthwhile, meaningful, rele-
vant to everyone?

3. Plot—Does the plot seem to develop naturally as a
result of character and of event upon character? To what ex-
tent is coincidence used to entangle or disentangle it?

4. Characters—Are the main characters "flat" (types,
caricatures, characters built around one central quality) or
"round" (individualistic and, hence, less predictable, resem-
bling real human beings with all the human complexities).

5. Setting—Are the settings valid and honest, or do
they appear artificial, unrealistic?

6. What do the other critics say about it?
The Serious Western: The Ox-Bow Incident

Before the showing of the first film, The Ox-Bow Incident, the following items should be called to the students' attention:

1. The Ox-Bow Incident is the first of a line called the serious Western which differs from the typical Western in many ways, ways which hopefully students will discover. Other films in this classification with which they perhaps are familiar are Red River, Yellow Sky, The Gunfighter, High Noon, and Shane.

2. During the film they should keep in mind that they are viewing it primarily for evaluative purposes, that film criticism requires a different type of involvement than that to which they are accustomed. Whereas previously they have dissolved their identities and participated vicariously in the action of the screen, they should now attempt to become consciously aware of the various elements involved in a film which contribute or detract from the film's overall effect.

3. They should begin to think of a film much as they would a poem. Just as "poetry cannot be discussed meaningfully unless one can assume that everything in the poem—every last comma and variant spelling—is in it by the poet's specific act of choice" (2, p. 143), so also a film must be considered a creation resulting from a director's many choices. Assuming that nothing "happens-in," they should begin to ask such questions as Why that music? Why that camera angle? Why a close-up?

4. To increase their appreciation and understanding of the film, they should read in The Liveliest Art pages 25-26, which
describe the making of the first Western, Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, and pages 119-121, which explain the wide popularity of the Western, describe its change from the "realistic portrait of frontier life" during the early twenties to the later formula-type, more romantic version of the West, and trace the development of the "big Western" from the production of *The Covered Wagon* (1903) to George Stevens' *Shane* (1953).

5. They should keep the points of the evaluative criteria in mind as they view the film and jot down notes in preparation for the class discussion.

The film should be followed by a discussion of the several points under consideration. There should be no difficulty arriving at the conclusion that on all points the film measures up admirably. The teacher will be able to enrich the discussion if he is familiar with the following reference: George Bluestone, "The Ox-Bow Incident," *Novels into Film* (Los Angeles 1968), pp. 170-196. This excellent chapter discusses the film's plot, characterizations, and three-part structure. The class would profit from having sections of this chapter read to them. It would better acquaint them with the analytical process and help them in the development of their own critical skills.

When the last point of the evaluation—"What do the other critics say?"—is considered, the teacher should read reviews of the film taken from periodicals, selecting certain comments
for the class's reaction. The following article would serve well for this purpose: Manny Farber, "Let Us Now Praise Movies," The New Republic, CVIII (May 17, 1943), 669.

At this point the students need to be made aware of the various sources of critical comment. They should be directed to the Readers' Guide. There under "Moving Pictures--Plays" a bibliography on a film can be easily obtained if the year of its release is known. Arthur Knight's "Index to Film Titles" at the back of the text provides the dates of many past films; the recent ones will present little problem. The students will also need assistance in interpreting the references and locating the magazines. The New Yorker, Time, Newsweek, Esquire, Saturday Review, Nation, Commonweal, The New Republic, they will find, contain excellent reviews. The students should also become acquainted with the film quarterlies now published --Sight and Sound (British), Film Culture, The Film Quarterly, and Film in Review--in which many perceptive reviews can be found.

To encourage the habit of reading competent critics, a large bulletin board should be blocked off into areas with each area designated for a local theater. Under each theater heading reviews from the various publications can be posted for the film which that particular theater is currently running (1, p. 34). During the unit each student can be required to give a digest containing personal and critical opinion about a current movie he has seen and to provide the material for the class bulletin
board. A weekly time should be designated for these presentations.

The Formula-Type Western

For the purpose of contrasting the serious Western with the common formula-type Western, the students should next be given the assignment of watching a television Western of the "Cheyenne," "Gunsmoke," or "Have Gun--Will Travel" variety, of evaluating it on the basis of the same criteria, and of writing a three-hundred-word analysis of the program with attention given to each of the various points. Preferably, the same program should not be watched by all of the students, since reports of different programs would supply stronger evidence for the conclusions to be drawn about the typical Western later in class discussion. The programs should be chosen from the afternoon or early evening listings so that the written assignment can be completed for the following day.

From the discussion of the television Western which should follow this assignment, two conclusions should be drawn: first, that there are many repetitive qualities found in the typical Western and, second, that there is a limited range of story material allowable in the Western formula. The following points, if covered during the discussion, would provide a sound basis for these conclusions:

1. Almost nothing changes in a typical Western series --the locale, the town, the tavern, the clothes, the period, the sidekick, the horse.
2. The plot consists of the villain making himself known, being confronted by the hero, and finally being decisively beaten by him in a man-to-man fight.

3. The hero is always unmarried, strong, rugged; physically, mentally, and emotionally unchanging; in action, thought, and morality always predictable.

4. The hero must have some romance and a girl must play a part in every story. She may be a gambling-den queen or a chorus girl who assists and comforts the hero (3, p. 693), or a girl from the East, refined and virtuous, who does not understand the West "where men are men" (4, p. 137).

The teacher will find enrichment material for the above discussion in the following articles:

Howard S. Rowland, "Using the TV Western," The English Journal, LII (December 1963), 693-696. This article contains a detailed discussion of the formula-type Western and of the four factors--violence, identification, familiarity, and escape--which give this type of Western its appeal.

Robert Warshow, The Immediate Experience (New York, 1962), pp. 135-154. This chapter also examines the popularity of the Western and proffers that in today's society it is because of the image of personal nobility retained by the typical Western hero that the Western still holds our attention. He points out, however, that the Western comes into the field of serious art only when the hero's code is found imperfect. These and other points made by Warshow are worthy of the students' examination.
Neil Postman, *Television and the Teaching of English* (New York, 1961), pp. 51-55. One of the principal points of this article is that the Western has been a fully developed mythology for over a hundred years, its earliest outlines identifiable in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. 
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER III

TEACHING THE HISTORY AND TECHNIQUE OF FILM ART

Many can judge the literary qualities of a story from which a film has been made, but this is not an adequate measure of the film itself. An accurate evaluation is dependent on an understanding of many factors, an important one of which is the history and the development of the art which it embodies. Through a knowledge of film history and the parts played in it by pioneers like Griffith, Ince, Sennett, Eisenstein, and Flaherty can come an understanding of the stature, message, and amazing vitality of the film today. Maurice Bardeche, writing on film appreciation, asserts that "only after a prolonged and complete re-examination of the films of the past will an authoritative analysis of the film come to be recorded" (1, p. xii). Surely any unit designed to foster informed opinion and to help students to appraise the product of the medium must give proper consideration to such study.

Such a consideration, while hopefully accomplishing these goals, will also produce other worthwhile results. In the seventh art's short history, hundreds of motion pictures have been made each year, millions of people have seen them, and the films have subsequently disappeared from the scene. Yet, although they were made for the purpose of entertainment, they
have had enormous influence in forming taste and affecting attitude, and at the same time have been "unconsciously reflecting the changing ideas and customs, moral and physical characteristics of the twentieth century" (1, p. xi). A study, then, of the history of the medium should not only increase one's understanding and appreciation of film but also provide the added benefit of expanding one's knowledge of the cultures and societies that created and enjoyed them.

Inseparable from the study of film history and equally important is a study of film technique. To understand anything and to form a sound opinion of it, it is necessary to analyze it, weigh its various parts, and see their relation clearly (2, p. 3). In the case of motion pictures, the production is so complex, the elements involved so many and varied, the judgment, skill, and experience required so great, that no adequately critical appreciation of a motion picture is possible unless there is an understanding of the problems involved.

Since many students will think that the making of a picture is extremely easy and requires no special training or aptitude, one of the purposes of this section of the unit will be to make them aware of the complexity of the film-making process by acquainting them with the many creative arts which go into a film, and to train them to view a film in terms of these various component parts.

These many and involved purposes need not discourage the teacher inexperienced in teaching film art. There is truth in
the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words and also much merit in the now oft-repeated statement that the best way to teach film is with film. The excellent films now available in the areas of both film history and technique, supplemented by discussion and reading assignments, and coupled with well-chosen activities, should adequately accomplish the desired purposes.

Film History and Development

Using Films on History

Two excellent films with which to begin this section come from *The History of the Motion Pictures Series*—Film First Part One and Film First Part Two. Both of these are twenty-seven minute films in black and white, produced in 1960. The first surveys the ideas, techniques, and stories of the films' earliest days to the screen's first "talkie"; the second depicts the achievements of great film pioneers—Edwin S. Porter, George Melies, Thomas H. Ince, and D. W. Griffith. Two other films which, because of their varied approaches, would contribute additional information while reinforcing that presented in the first two films are *Origins of the Motion Picture*, a twenty-one minute black and white produced in 1955 which traces the machinery and arts of the motion picture since the earliest suggestions of Leonardo Da Vinci, and *The Movies Learn to Talk*, a twenty-six minute black and white produced in 1960 which follows the development of sound movies from the turn of the century to the
polished sound film of today. This film also provides glimpses of thirty-four personalities and excerpts from twelve silent and sound movies. These films are listed in the film index (See Appendix A) with the names of their distributors.

Using the Text

Prior to the showing of these films, a list of daily reading assignments should be made in The Liveliest Art with the material to be covered divided into four or five installments. It might be necessary to start these assignments several days early, depending on the number of films to be shown, in order for the material to be covered in time for the discussion which should follow the films. Because the text is so detailed, the students should be provided with a guide to accompany the reading assignment which will serve to point out the areas which merit special attention and help to organize the material around certain points to be considered in the later discussion. The following reading assignment sheet and student guides are suggested.

Reading Assignments—The Liveliest Art

1st Day pp. 11-19
An Art Is Born
The Machine for Seeing Better

pp. 23-26
Dawn of the Narrative Film: Melies and Porter

2nd Day pp. 31-50
The Father of Film Technique: D. W. Griffith

The Creative Producer: Thomas H. Ince
Sennett, the Keystone of American Comedy
Chaplin and the Rise of the Star System
Student Reading Guide--Sheet One

Instructions: As the assignments are read, note the answers to the following questions and list them in the spaces provided.

A. Why are the following individuals considered important in the field of film art?

B. In what decade did they make their most significant contributions?

C. What additional information about them was of particular interest?

1. Peter Mark Roget
2. Eadweard Muybridge
3. William Kennedy Dickson
4. George Eastman
5. George Melies
6. Edwin S. Porter
7. D. W. Griffith
8. Thomas H. Ince
9. Mack Sennett  
10. Charlie Chaplin  
11. Cecil B. DeMille  
12. Ernst Lubitsch  
13. Erich von Stroheim  
14. Robert Flaherty  
15. Joseph von Sternberg  
16. Rene Clair  
17. Rouben Mamoulian  
18. The Marx Brothers  
19. W. C. Fields  
20. Alfred Hitchcock

Student Reading Guide—Sheet Two

Instructions: As the assignments are read, list the outstanding personalities, major films, and important technical advances according to the decade to which they principally belong.

1900-1910  
1910-1920  
1920-1930  
1930-1940

Both of these guides should be prepared in such a way as to provide sufficient space for the students to record not only the requested information but also any later notes taken during the class discussion.

The class discussion which follows the showing of the films should not lack for contributors. The students, armed with the notes from their readings, will be anxious to verify their findings and to add their "information of particular interest" to the discussion. Contributions from so many should make the discussion both interesting and comprehensive. If the students will add to their notes any additional points brought out during this discussion, their reading guides will be excellent review sheets for a quiz over this section of the unit.
Using Film Classics

After viewing the previous films on the history of the motion picture and covering the various assigned sections in the text, the students will have sufficient familiarity with the periods and names of films to appreciate viewing some of the classics of the past eras. The following four films are recommended for this purpose; each represents a decade in the history of films, beginning with 1900 and continuing until 1940, when the techniques of film making had developed to a state of refinement not very much different from that of today. Notes for the teacher are provided for briefly reviewing the information given in the text about each film and to furnish additional information that will increase the students' enjoyment of them. This material would serve best if presented before the films.

The Great Train Robbery (1903).—This film was directed and photographed by Edwin S. Porter.

1. The Great Train Robbery was the original ancestor of the ever-popular Western; it was also the first attempt to tell a story by moving pictures. Melies in earlier pictures had told his stories with a sequence of static scenes, as in a stage play; Edwin S. Porter told his with shots, some of them no more than two or three seconds in length.

2. Marie Murray, who played the cabaret dancer in the film, was probably the movies' first "leading lady." Max Aronson, the "leading man," actually played three roles: the
locomotive fireman, a train passenger, and the bandit who shot the very same passenger. Aronson became known as Bronco Billy Anderson and became the star of 375 other Westerns. In 1958 during the Motion Picture Academy's award ceremonies, he was called to the stage, a stout, stoop-shouldered 76-year-old man, to receive a special, honorary Oscar as "the first movie cowboy." Typical of most cowboy stars, he had never been near a horse until he mounted one for the movie camera. It is said that he missed the first day's shooting on The Great Train Robbery because he had fallen off his horse on the way from the stable.

3. The Great Train Robbery was the first picture laid out in scenes with each scene conceived in relation to the others. The only exception to this was the last scene, where the outlaw takes aim and fires point-blank at the audience. This was tacked on for no other purpose than to startle the movie-goer.

4. For the first time the scenes of the film did not follow in chronological progression. Two scenes were portrayed as taking place simultaneously. This was done by cutting and bringing the film pieces together and relating them to each other. In this way the shots "cut" abruptly from one actor to another, from the robbery scene to the cabaret in town, from the fleeing robbers to the pursuing posse. This was the beginning of the art of film editing, so basic to the art of motion pictures.
Since this film is a "classic," owing to the cutting principles which were originated in it, and because the students need to be initiated into viewing a film in terms of the various elements that are involved in its making, it would be a profitable activity to have the students divide this film up into its several scenes and "cuts." By this process and by thinking of the film in terms of its predecessors in which each scene had to follow in chronological order, the students will be able to view this film with an understanding of its importance in motion picture development. In order not to spoil the students' enjoyment of the film, it would be well to pursue this activity during a second showing. Since the film is only twelve minutes in length, this should not present a time problem. The results of their investigations should be something like the following:

Scene 1--Begins with the robbers shown entering the railroad telegraph office and continues with simple pictorial continuity until after binding and gagging the operator, they board the train as it begins to move.

Scene 2--A cut to a new line of action proceeding simultaneously in the interior of the mail car, where the clerk, busy at his safe, discovers the burglars trying to make an entrance and is subsequently killed.

Scene 3--A cut to another simultaneous action in the locomotive cab, where more of the robbers are battling with the fireman and engineer.
Scene 4--A cut to another simultaneous action--back to the first bandits, "frisking" the passengers lined up on the tracks. Scenes 5, 6, and 7 follow a simple pictorial continuity showing three phases of the bandits' escape.
Scene 5--The locomotive run.
Scene 6--The race over the hills to the waiting horses.
Scene 7--The dash into the wilderness on horseback.
Scene 8--A cut which introduces a flashback (the first of its kind) to the telegraph operator whose daughter releases and revives him.
Scene 9--A cut to the dance hall where the action is interrupted by the operator, who enters and alerts the men.
Scene 10--A cut across to the robbers, escaping, being followed by a posse, which they manage to outdistance and, in apparent safety, examining their loot, being surprised by the posse and killed in the gun battle which results.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919--Director: Robert Wiene).

Before seeing this film, the students would profit from reading pages 59 and 60 of the text. The following are other points about the picture that are worthy of mention:
1. The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari was the most widely discussed film of its time. It was a sensation by nature of its complete dissimilarity to any previously made film.
2. One uniqueness of the film is that the audience sees the whole story through the eyes of a madman. The mind of the audience is brought into play psychologically; it must take
part and believe in the wild imaginings of a madman and share
the distorted ideas of the professor of the lunatic asylum in
which the lunatic and thus the audience are confined.

3. Its importance in the development of motion pictures is due
to its use of pictorial composition, settings, and lighting to
emphasize the dramatic content.

4. The settings are composed of flat canvas and hanging dra-
peries and painted to emphasize the distortion of the madman's
mind through whose eyes they are seen and to provide interesting
decorative values of tone which vary from rich blacks to purest
whites.

   a) The linear design of the painted floors leads the eyes
      of the spectator to the significant figures or objects.

   b) The walls of the prison cell are arranged and painted
      in tall perpendicular planes to emphasize dejection.

   c) Curves and dark tones are contrasted with straight
      lines and light tones to accent the feeling of chaos.

   d) The furniture consists of simple objects; the stool
      of the Town Clerk is six feet high and is used to symbolize
      bureaucracy and the difficulty that Caligari had in obtaining
      attention.

   e) The stylized black tights and masklike makeup of the
      madman also contribute to the ominous and tragic atmosphere.
      This costuming emphasizes the frailty and helplessness of the
      girl whom the madman carries off. The warped and angular
      branches of the trees in the landscape also strengthen the
dramatic content of this scene.

5. An excellent example of the effective use of lighting is the scene in which the murder of the Town Clerk is discovered. A darkened room is shown with a single source of light directed onto the beautifully grouped draperies of the white sheets. No corpse is visible, but there is no doubt as to the content of the scene.

6. The film was conceived by painters who were absorbed with ideas of abstract art and who were not so much interested in movies as in the forms of "expressionism," the doctrine of the advanced schools of the drama, the novel, painting, and sculpture in Germany in 1919.

7. The twisted and distorted designs were created partly out of necessity. Germany, newly defeated in World War I, was poverty-stricken, and the studio had no money or material for realistic sets. Complicated lighting setups could not be afforded and electricity was rationed, so painted shadows and highlights on the sets were used.

8. The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari attracted the attention of artists and intellectuals who had been indifferent to the screen. Heretofore the movies had been regarded as a "poor man's" entertainment.

9. Technically, as regards camera work, lighting, and other technical operations, it may be said that this film is dated, but in meaning, content, treatment, and above all entertainment, it is still as convincing as it was when seen years ago.
10. The film revealed no new suggestion of camera-angle, all scenes apparently being taken from a normal eye level. Long shots and medium shots (See Appendix B) predominate and the iris-in and iris-out method for beginning and ending a sequence is common. One view was revealed to the audience by a diamond-shaped iris which was especially suitable to the twisted and angular houses in this scene.

Another assignment that will increase the students' familiarity with the various elements that are involved in a film's making is to have them concentrate on a single technique employed. This film would be an excellent one for training the students in an awareness of the iris-in and iris-out technique and of its use in emphasizing important matter. They should be able to find at least three uses of the technique. Finding the one instance in which the diamond shaped iris is used would provide a challenge for most of the students.

The Golden Age of Comedy.--This film brings together all that is characteristic of the comedy of the 1920's. A brief review of these characteristics (discussed in the text on pages 39-44) before showing the film will heighten the students' appreciation of it. The following are a few of the most important ones which should be covered:

1. Fantasy--In these films cops chase their victim at a mile-a-minute pace; fat men leap hundreds of feet through the air; the hero dashes through walls; flivvers mow down telephone poles, crash through houses, and eject hundreds of policemen.
It is a matter of the impossible made possible with the audience willing to believe.

2. Camera trickery—Most of the important gags are visual ones and depend upon a use of camera trickery—stop-motion, slow-motion, fast-motion, and double exposures.

3. Speed—Above all else, speed is the essence of the comedy theory of this era. Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and the Mack Sennett Keystone Cops—all speeded up the film to produce their chases, the funniest certainly in the history of mankind.

4. Characters—The characters were all distinguished by some preposterous makeup and abnormal individual characteristics—the extremely fat, the extra-lean, the heavily bearded, the homely.

5. Content—Many of these comedies were parodies or burlesques, with little plot. Mainly they kidded other movies or ridiculed noble virtues and lofty sentiments, using coincidence, treachery, disguise, chivalry, super-heroism, sentiment, gags. The joke usually grew out of the incident.

6. In general it was an energetic physical comedy of farce and slapstick in which every movement of face and body was explored for every comic possibility.

Activity—To re-emphasize these characteristics in the minds of the students, it would be well to assign a theme comparing the comedy of the 20's with modern comedy. Proper development should require from 300 to 500 words.
The River (1937--Director: Pare Lorentz).--Since this film is a documentary, representative of a class whose features and purposes are distinctively different from those of the narrative film, its characteristics as such need to be briefly discussed prior to its viewing. Some of these characteristics are covered in the text, pages 248-257. In the discussion the following few points should be emphasized:

1. A documentary is concerned with facts rather than fiction.
2. Its method recognizes the power of the cinema as an instrument for social influence and attempts to use it for purposes more important than entertainment.
3. Its aim is not only accuracy but also creation in dramatic form to bring alive the real world--familiar things and people--so that their place in the scheme of things may be honestly assessed.
4. "The world of documentary is a world of commerce and industry and agriculture, of public services and communications, of hygiene and housing. It is a world of men and women, at work and leisure; of their responsibilities and commitments to the society . . ." (3, p. 26).
5. As a propagandist and social instrument, it differs from the instructional film whose purpose is to teach direct facts.

The following points about the film itself should also be commented on before the film is viewed:

1. The River gives a swift cinematic history of the Mississippi from pre-Columbian times, and reports Government reclamation work.
2. Its most startling feature is the beautiful photography, sometimes of romantic quality—sequences of visuals such as that of the rain-sodden tree stumps, sometimes of a powerful locomotive quality—sequences of objects which either by their circular motion or their circular form suggest the rolling quality of the river.

3. The feature which received the most critical acclaim was its synchronization of the picture, the narration, and the music. The movie comes at the spectator on three sides simultaneously. He sees pictures and hears both music and an incantation of words. Any one of these by itself would be incomplete; even two of them would leave something to be desired. Pare Lorentz's aim was to give a vivid sense of the way in which the river gathered in power and importance. Giving the viewer this sense of quickening tempo and of greater momentum was accomplished by the crescendos of the musical accompaniment, by the quickening pace and excitement in the narrator's poetic commentary, and by the metrical arrangement of the shot lengths.

4. The music score, by Virgil Thomson, is based on bright scraps of locality music and is sensitively adapted to the shifting moods, sometimes spirited and at other times nostalgic.

5. The commentary style is poetic, written in free verse and Whitmanesque. Its most distinguishing characteristic is its rhythmic repetition of phrases and sentences and place-names, which provides an effective lyrical accompaniment to the images.
6. Lorentz tells his story with visual language. There is no dialogue, no actors. A total experience is developed, building to an emotional climax without either.

7. Adverse criticism points out that the lack of human beings limits the effectiveness of the film; that the music is too difficult; that the introduction of the ruined mansions inspires an irrelevant emotion, since the Civil War has no bearing on soil erosion; that Pare Lorentz acts embarrassed by the propaganda in that he tacks on the propaganda message in an epilogue.

8. The River did more to secure the popular recognition of the documentary film in America than any other picture. It is most frequently cited as "liked best" by the schools surveyed by the textbook publishers.

9. This famous documentary seems to ripen with age. It is generally felt that its effectiveness has suffered little in the years since its production in 1937.

Film Technique

The unit should now move to a study of the film techniques involved in the making of motion pictures today. Since a study of the development of present day techniques is part of the study of film history, and since some of the past activities have been directed toward familiarity with some of the aspects of film-making, this transition should seem both easy and logical to the students.
Using Films

Most recent and best suited to this purpose are four films of The Film Appreciation Series. These films, produced in color in 1966, each twenty-eight minutes in length, do an excellent job of covering all important aspects of film making. The first of the series, Elements of the Film, introduces basic film terminology and technique; the second, Visual Language of the Film, demonstrates the elements of visual language—picture composition, camera angles and lighting—and discusses their psychological effects; the third, Nature of the Film Medium, discusses camera movements and speeds, symbols and film editing; and the last, Film as Art, demonstrates the harmonious and discordant in editing, the use of background music, and the use of color or black and white.

If finances will permit, this series can be supplemented by The Movies and You Series—five short, ten-minute films which divide the process into the work of the various craftsmen: The Screen Writer, The Screen Director, The Cinematographer, The Art Director, and The Sound Man.

Using Activities.

Following the showing of the films, the students should be engaged in activities which will reinforce the material presented in the films and which will continue the process of training the students to think visually. The following activities are suggested:
1. The students should be divided into teams of from three to five students and each team assigned to find an idea suitable for filming and to prepare a treatment of it. The ideas can be an original story, a scene from a play, a poem, or a presentation of a problem or situation in real life. The treatment, it should be explained, is a short, simply written account of the idea or subject proposed, carefully planned with each event and incident leading logically and easily to the next (2, p. 72). Class time will need to be provided for the various groups to decide on their ideas and prepare their treatments.

2. When the treatments are completed, they should be read aloud, preferably by the teacher (so that personalities will not be a factor), and then evaluated by the class for interest, audience appeal, and filmic possibilities. On the basis of this evaluation, one treatment should be chosen for the class's further consideration.

3. The various groups should then be given copies of the treatment selected with instructions to rework it, making any additions and revisions that they feel will improve it. Their objective, it should be stated, is to tell a story that "begins arrestingly, unfolds logically, constantly increases the dramatic interest, reaches a skillfully constructed middle, and thereafter ascends towards a climax that transcends everything preceding it" (2, p. 72). This is no small task, as the teacher will be well aware.
4. When the revisions have been completed, the treatments should be discussed again by the class and a committee selected to combine the best features of each into a single final form.

5. When this is completed, the students will be ready to attempt the writing of a scenario. It should be explained that this is an elaboration of the original idea, a catalogue of the film scenes, written in their exact chronological order, each one numbered and clearly marked to establish its location (2, p. 72). Copies of sample two-column scripts, visual and sound, should be given to each group along with a list of terms frequently employed in scenario writing (See Appendix B). The following books should be made available for reference:

Andrew Buchanan, Film-Making from Script to Screen (London, 1951).

Edgar Dale, How to Appreciate Motion Pictures (New York, 1934).


Ernest Lindgren, The Art of the Film (New York, 1948).

Don Livingston, Film and the Director (New York, 1953).

Raymond Spottiswoode, Film and Its Techniques (Los Angeles, 1953).

Several days should be allowed for writing the scenarios. When finished, they should be graded and made available for the students to peruse and compare.

Another but shorter activity which can also be used to improve the students' ability to think visually is to provide the students from time to time with a short poem or quotation
and have them explain how its thought might be conveyed on film. The following would lend themselves well to this type of activity:

My eyes are tired of brick, of steel and stone,
My ears are weary with the noise of crowds.
A longing fills me just to be alone
Where there are only trees, and grass, and clouds.

Elizabeth Raplee

He that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the midday sun;
Himself in his own dungeon.

John Milton

You to the left and I to the right,
For the ways of men must sever--
And it well may be for a day and a night,
And it well may be forever.

Richard Hovey

A late lark twitters from the quiet skies
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, gray city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

William Henley

Solitude is very sad,
Too much company twice as bad.

William Allingham

I was lying on the grass,
Thinking of nothing in particular,
When a maple leaf settled beside me
And laughed in the friendliest fashion.
You have no idea
What a pleasant hour we spent together.

Melville Cane

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in His heaven--
All's right with the world!

Robert Browning
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER IV

TEACHING FILM CRITICISM

After the previous films have been shown and activities completed, the students will be able to see in a film much that they would have previously overlooked and will be sufficiently prepared to attempt an analysis of film as a visual medium with some degree of artistic awareness.

The procedure now will be to let the students see a series of high-quality films, ones which have received near unanimous praise and withstood a limited test of time (2, p. 29), and to provide them with the experience of evaluating them by analyzing their various elements.

Since the students will be engaged in the process of criticism, they should be made aware that certain standards and principles will be necessary for evaluating the various elements of the film, standards for the photography, the story, the action, the direction, the lighting, the dialogue, and the sound. It should also be pointed out, however, that because film is a "live" art, because each picture has its own set of purposes, because talent can cross boundaries, these standards must be qualified and tentative (2, p. 27). In the following excerpt from his book The Art of the Film, Ernest Lindgren states well this important principle:

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The science of criticism is based on the assumption that all the best work in any medium obeys certain common laws which we can elucidate and which we can subsequently apply to other work in attempting to analyse the impression it makes on us. It cannot be said too often, however, that these laws are not finite laws made to be applied rigidly and mechanically. The critics endeavour to formulate them, but it is the artists who make them, and the artists who, by the same token, may break them to establish new laws. It is in this way that art progresses. The critic must apply the rules and endeavour to judge by their light, but a work is not always and irrevocably to be condemned because it disobeys them. It is in this constant weighing of the rules against the facts of one's experience, no less important than the weighing of the facts against the rules, that criticism itself becomes an art (4, p. viii).

The following criteria come from sources which are too numerous to be footnoted and which are therefore listed in the Bibliography. Special acknowledgment, however, is due to the 1934 publication of Edgar Dale's *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures*, from which the nucleus of this set of standards was taken.

The Criteria

The following lists constitute the criteria to be used in evaluating the various aspects of the film.

**Photography**

1. Does the technique of photography sometimes obstruct the purpose of the picture? Is it given such prominence that it attracts attention to itself and away from the story?

2. Were there examples of beautiful photography? If so, was it appropriate to the picture?
3. Were the transitions between scenes done smoothly and creatively?

4. What scenes were photographed from unusual camera angles? Were they necessary? Were they successful?


6. Was the close-up avoided except when necessary to see at close range in order to understand the thoughts or action?

7. What examples did you notice of skillful and unskillful uses of lighting?

**Story**

1. Was the title appropriate? If not, what would have been a more satisfactory one?

2. Was the plot of the story plausible and reasonable? (Are all of the problems depicted as minor and solvable?)

3. Was there a consistent rise in interest from the beginning of the picture to the climax?

4. Was the picture constructed so that it was easy to follow and understand? Should certain scenes have been rearranged or omitted?

5. Can the reasons be seen for the actions and decisions of the characters?

6. Was it possible to forecast the various incidents of the story before they occurred?

7. Did the humor fit naturally into the situation, or
was it merely as relief?

8. Was the ending of the picture logical? Might there have been a better ending?

**Characterization and Acting**

1. Did the characters in the picture seem like real people, natural in speech and manner? Were they typical of the period and locale? Were they stereotypes?

2. Did the picture present only the characters' outward, physical actions, or did it treat also their emotional conflicts and internal struggles?

3. Were the players well cast? Did they fit their roles?

4. Were the actors able to submerge their own personalities into the characters they were playing, or did they play themselves?

5. Were the actors skilled in timing? (Did they get an idea too quickly, pause at the wrong places?)

6. Was there consistency in characterization, or were there sudden changes in character which caught the audience unprepared?

7. How skillfully were strong emotions such as grief, anger, fear pictured? Were they overdone?

**Theme and Settings**

1. Did the picture treat a problem that is important in real life?

2. Was the problem presented accurately?
3. If the story was concerned with persons who have differing standards of conduct, did it furnish a sympathetic insight into their lives and truthfully show the consequences of having those standards?

4. Were the settings appropriate? Were they an accurate representation of the period in which the story takes place?

5. Did the settings give the picture the appearance of reality and contribute to the narrative design?

6. Did the settings at any time distract the attention of the audience away from important action?

7. Was the costuming authentic and proper? Did it contribute to the atmosphere of the play?

**Dialogue, Music, and Sound Effects**

1. Was the dialogue interesting and effective? Did it appeal to you as real?

2. Did it successfully reveal the characters?

3. Did it intensify the action and advance the plot?

Were some speeches unessential to the understanding of the story?

4. Was there too much dialogue and too little use of pictorial effects to communicate the story? In what specific places, if any, could action have been substituted for dialogue with better effect?

5. Was the volume of the dialogue in accord with actual life situations? (Were intimate conversations shouted?)

6. What unusual sound effects were used? Did they have dramatic value or were they unnecessary?
7. Did the music help to develop the mood or atmosphere of the picture? Did it detract or intensify the artistic effects? Did it force its attention at any time on the audience?

Analysis by Student Groups

In order that the first attempt at analysis may not seem an overwhelming task to the students, the class should be again divided into committees, with each committee assigned to consider only one aspect of the film. The members of each committee should then be provided with the list of points pertinent to their particular evaluation, instructed to study them carefully and write their comments on each as soon after viewing the film as possible.

After the film has been shown, the various committees should then meet and correlate their points and opinions and prepare their final reports for class presentation. These presentations may take the form of an oral report given by one member of each committee or a panel on which all members of the committee participate.

In the reports of the several committees, some important details, of course, will not have been covered. These should be presented by the teacher to complete the film analysis.

Citizen Kane (1941)

This movie was directed by Orson Welles, with music by Bernard Herrmann. The following is a list of examples of some of Welles' many stylistic methods which were synthesized and
harmonized into the story and which made Citizen Kane of primary importance in cinema history. Any of these which have not been covered in the reports of the various student committees should be presented by the teacher for the class's consideration.

Photography.--The use of a deep-focus process allows the camera to record objects at close range and those several hundred feet away with equal clarity in the same frame, thus achieving very much the field of vision encompassed by the human eye. Examples: (1) When Mrs. Kane is signing the form whereby Thatcher is to be the guardian of the young Kane, the father is placed at the left of the frame, the mother at the right in close-up, with Thatcher leaning over her; and in the background, beyond the window, the boy plays in the snow. This shot keeps one aware of the person whose future is being decided. (2) When Kane finds that Leland has begun an unfavorable review of Susan's operatic debut, he types out the remainder of the notice himself. Kane is shown at his typewriter in close-up at the left of the frame, and one sees Leland stagger down the length of The Inquirer, in sharp focus, towards his boss. Here a series of direct cuts is avoided, visually extending the lull before the quarrel. (3) When Susan drugs herself after her disastrous performance at the opera house, the implications and urgency of the situation are conveyed on three levels in one remarkable shot: the glass and the phial of poison are in close-up, the head of Susan in mid-shot, and
the door in the background, beneath which appears a strip of light. (This is given dramatic intensity by the soundtrack, with the labored breathing of Susan, and the pounding of Kane on the locked door.) (4) When Susan is practicing her singing with the voice instructor, the piano is placed in the foreground, with the teacher gesticulating on the left and Susan singing on the right. Unseen by them, Kane enters the large room by a door in the far background in clear focus and is kept in sharp focus as he advances towards them. This dramatic irony arouses suspense because the audience knows that Kane is about to intervene in his usual domineering manner.

The use of the dissolve—At the start of the film the camera crawls up from the "No Trespassing" sign, and the wire fences dissolve into heavy gates, then into a series of views, in closer and closer proximity to the palace, with, successively, a cage of monkeys, gondolas, a ghostly, oriental pavilion, an abandoned golf course marker, and an open-air swimming pool in the foreground. These quick shots, merging into each other, convey the power of Kane during his life at Xanadu.

The use of the wipe—The wipe is used very effectively to bridge the six episodes in which Welles shows the deterioration of the marriage between Kane and Emily at the breakfast table. Kane becomes gradually more and more morose, and Emily ends by reading The Chronicle, the arch-rival of Kane's own newspaper.

The use of the angle-shot—(1) Kane is most often viewed from a camera set up at floor level. The tilt, and the resulting
exaggeration of the human figure, displays Kane's dominance over the people in his life. (2) Early in the story when the reporter finds Susan in a roadhouse, the camera looks down on her through a skylight, where she sits among empty tables, her head on folded arms and an empty glass in front of her. The camera, looking down on her, makes her seem even more forlorn. Use of lightning mixes--This is a process by which the scenes are linked by the soundtrack but not by the images. (1) During Thatcher's recollections, the shot changes from his wishing the young Kane "a merry Christmas--" to the same man, somewhat older, continuing the sentence "--and a prosperous New Year" just before his protege's twenty-fifth birthday. (2) Kane's clapping at Susan Alexander's piano recital in her own parlor is dovetailed with the applause from a small crowd as Leland campaigns for Kane to be governor in the 1916 elections; then almost immediately afterwards, Leland's sentence "--who entered upon this campaign" is replaced by that of Kane himself in the assembly hall, "--with one purpose only." This dramatic continuity illustrates Kane's frightening rise to power. The use of the close-up--Two outstanding and effective uses of the close-up to emphasize important details are (1) the gigantic close-up of Kane's lips speaking the word "Rosebud" and (2) that of the paperweight globe containing the artificial snow dropping from his hand and bouncing to the floor. The first introduces the riddle which lay at the heart of the story; the second offers the important key to its solution.
Setting.—Each scene in *Citizen Kane* is provided with a ceiling. Welles felt that it was disastrous to let a cameraman light a set without a ceiling. The effects, he thought, looked artificial.

**Dialogue and Sound.**—(1) When the labor leader denounces Kane to a large crowd in the city square, he speaks in the short phrases and long pauses of a man using a loudspeaker in a great space, and an echo or feedback registers slightly as he talks. (2) The handling of dialogue is unusual. Persons interrupt each other and several talk at once for a few seconds, preventing the viewer from hearing what is being said. Welles risked confusing his viewers to suggest reality.

**Visual Communication.**—In many places actions were substituted for dialogue with better effects. (1) When Susan Alexander begins the opera career, one sees her at stage center waiting for the curtain to go up, and projected against the set behind her, the shadow of the curtain rising. As one's eyes follow the shadow up, the camera continues up through the flies, higher and higher until it reaches a scaffold, where two stagehands stand looking down. One turns to the other and holds his nose. (2) The viewer does not find out the music critic's opinion of Susan's opera debut through a trite conversation with the man next to him in the audience. He simply sees the performance on stage intercut with shots of the critic meticulously tearing up his program and bending it into a toy construction. (3) As Kane types out the remainder of Leland's
review of Susan's operatic debut, it is the letters made by the typewriter keys which reveal that Kane is also panning his wife's performance.

Music.—As The Liveliest Art points out, the music composed by Bernard Herrmann is "completely functional, providing accents, tying scenes together" (3, p. 175). This is nowhere more apparent than in the opening scene, where the music builds up the heavy, oppressive atmosphere, seems to snarl as the Kane emblem appears at the top of the massive gate, rises to a climax as the lighted window is approached, and then ends in a sharp, frightening crash when the light goes out. After a moment of silence, the music again rises to a climactic crash as the snow-toy crashes on the ground; a sharp chord then precedes the word "Rosebud," giving it greater significance, followed by a hymn-like line with the entry of the nurse, which introduces a feeling of reverence (5, pp. 120-121).

As a final activity for Citizen Kane, some criticism of experienced film critics should be read for student reaction. This will serve to point out a few additional details worthy of comment and hopefully to improve the students' perceptivity for their future attempts at criticism. Through this activity, also, they will become aware that the critics themselves do not always agree, that they cannot always apply what they know in theory and come out with the same answers. This should encourage the students to disagree with the critics when there are valid reasons and to trust their own judgment more often.
The following comments are provided:

Citizen Kane shows the kaleidoscopic life of a man of empty importance who bought people but did not know them. Others see him, but he never sees himself. He is drugged with egomania. —National Council of Teachers of English, The Motion Picture and the Teaching of English.

Citizen Kane attacks the sterility of bourgeois life; it emphasizes the loneliness and alienation of the individual as the decisive phenomenon in this sterile existence. —Paul Lawson, Film, the Creative Process.

... the sled with the name Rosebud burns among the effects left behind by Kane, signaling the detour in Kane's life that has taken him from his mother's boarding house, where he might have flourished emotionally. It is as if Kane as a boy knew intuitively what was best for him, and as if his parents and guardians were working against his nature, or psyche, to convert him to what he could not be. —Roy Huss, The Film Experience.

The music in the film is too histrionic—almost humorous at times in its supercharging of a crescendo already fierce in the movement of shots one to another. —National Council of Teachers of English.

In several sequences Welles uses caricatures that seem inconsistent with his effort to create an unusual sense of reality. The deposed editor of the newspaper which Kane buys huffs and puffs like a frog as Kane takes over his office—acting like an exaggerated character from Dickens. —National Council of Teachers of English.

Only two or three of the hundreds of shots in Citizen Kane seem artificial. The mock-up of Xanadu viewed from a distance at the beginning of the film does not look believable; it seems borrowed from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The long shot of the shabby New York Inquirer building is obviously a picture of a poorly painted drop. —National Council of Teachers of English.

Most of Welles' methods are crude and eclectic adaptations of devices invented by the film pioneers, and are chiefly devices which more experienced directors avoid because they call attention to the process of film-making ... all these florid
innovations merely disguise a technique which is basically that of the stage. The camera flourishes serve only as brilliant decorations for a story told through dialogue or verbal narration. --Paul Rotha, The Film Till Now.

Citizen Kane remains Welles' finest film, a treasury of cinematic metaphors and devices . . . . Irrespective of the fluctuations of critical opinion, it emerged as the film cited most by critics asked to list the ten best films ever made. --Peter Cowie, Cinema of Orson Welles.

On the Waterfront (1954)

The same process used for reviewing Citizen Kane should be used to review On the Waterfront, which was directed by Elia Kazan, with music by Leonard Bernstein. If the various lists of points to be considered are exchanged by the committees, the students will have the opportunity to develop their perceptivity in other areas. The following are some of the most important items which should be brought out in analyzing the theme:

**Theme.** --The film gives expert treatment to realistic situations.

1. **On the Waterfront** in its portrayal of a young man (Terry Malloy) -- his soul searching, his sacrifices, his suffering -- is considering a theme which is always a relevant one, the basic dignity of man.

2. The violence and venality around the New York docks which it depicts had been an issue but recently in the headlines, and On the Waterfront was an attempt to treat with
realism and respect this important cinematically untouched area of national life.

3. Because it is made about an actual labor dispute, developing its story line and character from real events and real people, to some extent, it can be classified as a documentary.

4. It engages the audience's attention and sympathy because it says things that are true, things drawn from a long roster of evidence that the waterfront had in fact been in the grip of thieves and murderers.

**Story.--**Although this film is an excellent tool for teaching many important aspects of the art, it is admittedly imperfect. Some critics have denounced it as melodrama replete with a moral resolution. The hero, a confirmed thug, is led by a dawning awareness of wrong into personal conflict with his villainous colleagues. This results in the inevitable fight, where the bad man gets tossed into the water, and everyone goes happily back to work. There are other critics, however, who feel that the characters of the story are plausibly motivated and that the final scenes have the quality of the making of a saint. They see in the hero's triumph a final victory of all men.

**Symbolism.--**In the famous "park scene" there are in embryo all the major motivations for the changes that will take place in the main characters. As the principals enter the
park, Terry is accosted by a bum, a character type used to symbolize Terry's darker self. Since Terry is a bum at this point, he tries to push the intruder away while Edie is present. Edie's white glove, which she accidentally drops, is a symbol of her goodness, purity, and principles; while Terry's picking it up and fondling it is a sign of his forthcoming change of character. Smoke is used as a background when Terry tries to think, an obvious and appropriate symbol (2, p. 31).

Photography and Settings.--The film is an excellent example of the effective use of real scenes as part of the story and of the setting becoming almost as important as the actors.

1. Most of the pictures are beautifully photographed in Hoboken, New Jersey, with the Hudson River, the New York skyline, the Hoboken piers, saloons, tenements, and one Catholic church in particular as background.

2. The scene where Terry tells Edie about his childhood is an outstanding example of the power of the visual image to portray meaning. The image of his face so floods the consciousness of the spectator that it has priority over the sound of his voice. The scars around his eyes tell more about his past than his halting explanation.

Characterization and Acting.--This movie contains excellent examples of proper role casting.

1. The role of Terry Malone is written with understanding and played with equal understanding. The infinitely slow
penetration of an idea in Terry's head and the incredible pressures required for him to overcome his natural inertia—all is played perfectly. There is the touch of the usual toughness of the Marlon Brando style, but the role is an outstanding portrait of change and regeneration.

2. Eva Marie Saint's selection for the role of the convent-raised girl who sways Brando through her loveliness and principles is another excellent example of proper casting.

**Sound and Music.**—Sound plays a key part in the film; also, the musical score by Leonard Bernstein serves as an asset, highlighting the action and mood of the story. The music is always pertinent and unobtrusive, serving to step up the dramatic point the film is making.

1. The important role of sound in the picture is well illustrated in the church scene where the audience is kept unconsciously aware of the traffic noise of the city, of the sounds of wind and waves coming into the large church over these noises, and of the pedaling of a child's bicycle which punctuates the dialogue of two characters who have wandered in. Not only are all the words preserved of the dialogue in this scene but the words have the echoic quality appropriate to the cavernous setting of a large church (1, p. 66).

2. The whistles from the boats on the river, the early morning noises along the docks, the soft noises of pigeons—all are natural and effective, designed to support the action.
Some of the scenes in the film have no background sound at all and seem particularly effective (6, p. 66).

3. The music is especially effective in the love scene on the roof where it does the real storytelling. It is shy at first and then, with growing intensity, comes to a great climax which swamps the scene and then fades out in a slow diminuendo during which Brando emits his famous utterances, considered the most eloquent in the entire script (1, p. 68).

Before the analysis of this film is considered complete, reviews by professional critics should be examined and discussed. It would be well to assign certain students to locate reviews of the film and report to the class their findings, those which both agree and disagree with the class’s evaluation. This should be followed by a discussion in which the class reacts to some of the specific comments from the reviews.

Individual Analysis

Hopefully the discussions and activities which have accompanied each of the previous films will have moved the students closer to the ultimate goal of the unit—the individual evaluation of an entire film. The final two films of the unit should be assigned to the students for such an analysis. By summarizing briefly the story of the film (which they will have found to be usual in the motion picture reviews which they have read during the unit) and by commenting on the phases of the film which are outstandingly strong or weak (using the
previous standards with which they are now familiar), they should have little difficulty writing a satisfactory review.

Listed below are the outstanding features which the teacher should have in mind in grading the written reviews and in conducting the subsequent class discussions of each of the final films.

The Bicycle Thief (1949)

*Theme.*—The Bicycle Thief, directed by Vittorio De Sica, is one of the simplest of stories—the needs and anguishes of the hungry. However, it is not just a report on postwar Rome; its tragedy is so simple that one feels it must happen everywhere all the time.

1. It becomes indirectly a plea for a chance at human dignity and a condemnation of lack of concern for one's fellow men. It also asserts the conviction that the human spirit deserves to prevail.

2. Because of its profound humanism, its social comment on employment and unemployment, and its portrayal of simple human relationships, it ranks among the great films of all time.

*Plot.*—The film has the form of a classic "chase" through the streets and byways of Rome. De Sica starts with a slender theme—a father and son caught in an apparently minor predicament. In actuality, however, this places them in such jeopardy that it reveals the flaws in the whole social organism, flaws
from which conditions arise that degrade the human spirit beyond endurance.

1. The film is very simple in construction. De Sica felt that everyday life in its most familiar aspects is not necessarily boring on the screen. He believed that imposing a complex plot on life is false.

2. In the plot there is no clash of great forces; rather, there is a gentle portrayal of conflict which carries the story to a restrained, dramatically inconclusive climax (more usual in the well-written short story than in film). The question, what next? is inherent in the conclusion.

3. In the final scene when the boy and his father are utterly defeated, they join hands—a gesture which makes the tragedy final. It can be argued that this scene is sentimental; yet one feels that these people have learned a lesson, one which the audience learns with them—the inevitability of conflict.

4. The story has an extraordinary power to move the audience. The last scene in which the boy slips his hand into the hand of his broken-hearted father is probably one of the greatest movie tugs at the heartstrings. Also exceptional is the poignant scene when the father, in an excess of frustration, denounces the boy as a nuisance and slaps him.

Photography and Setting.—The rough photography, harsh lighting, and squalid settings used in the filming create the
illusion of being unposed and uncontrived, as if the camera had happened upon it.

1. The photography is endlessly varied and expertly catches the feel of the city, the crowds of people on the streets, the secondhand marts, the parks, the mission, the restaurant, the poor quarter of town.

2. De Sica uses the camera rapidly and nervously, rushing the story into its critical moments; from time to time, however, he allows himself to be distracted by the beauty of light, form, and weather.

3. There is fine visual irony in the views of the workman and the boy making their way through the crowds of fashionable and sporting cyclists, searching for a worn-out bicycle that their livelihood depends on.

4. Only with expert use can the camera produce dramatic art of a high order with amateur actors. De Sica succeeds amazingly in his portrayal of helpless fury on the face of his non-actor hero.

Characterization and Acting.—The Bicycle Thief is an admirable example of use of non-professionals as actors. There is only one professional in the cast—Vittorio Antonucci, playing the small role of the thief. The hero is a metal worker, the wife a journalist, and the boy a seven year old whom De Sica happened upon while shooting a street scene.

1. Lamberto Magiorani as the heartbreakingly pathetic father and Enzo Staiola as the son, Bruno—the silent and
clinging echo of his father's despair—perform a beautiful duet in human relations. They not only reveal their separate roles but also produce the still more important personality of the two of them together.

2. These untrained actors put many professional actors to shame and strengthen the argument that movies are a director's art. The man's panic when the bicycle is stolen, the little boy's pride as he shines the bike when it is first recovered from the pawn shop, the man's suspicions as he looks at all bicycles at the market, his anxiety as the day wears on—all are exquisitely realistic portrayals of emotions.

Humor.--The humor in The Bicycle Thief is not the obvious comic-relief variety, but the kind that bears an unmistakable relevance to the film's theme. In spite of the tenseness of the movement of the film, there are touches of humor throughout that are quiet and real. There is humor in the boy's confusion at the mission when, on peering into a confessional, he is rapped sharply on the head by the cleric. It is also found in the naive and trusting pathos of the group of people who, because of their ignorance and misery, have implicit faith in the pronouncements of the medium. Perhaps the quietest and most pleasurable humor is found in the scene where the son is unwilling, because of his anger, to walk on the same side of the street as his father.

Music.--In The Bicycle Thief the composer, Alessandro Cicognini, is concerned with the expression of feeling that
is not directly apparent on the screen. The musical score, in
the style of La Boheme or Swan Lake, beautifully underlines
the emotions and simply and successfully moves the audience.

The music during the last nine minutes of the film is
an exceptional example of its importance and effectiveness.
The music is continuous during this time, beginning with its
central theme as the two pass along the streets after the un-
successful attempt to have the man suspected of stealing the
bicycle arrested. The music changes as the football stadium
is approached; then there is a rise of tremulous sound when
the masses of bicycles fill the screen. The music changes
again as the father sees an unattended bicycle by a doorway,
making it obvious that he desires to steal it. This is fol-
lowed by a stream of undulating sounds as Antonio wrestles
with his conscience; the sounds rise to a climax, ending on
a sharp chord as he snatches the bicycle. Immediately a
"chase" theme begins, ending with a sharp beat as the father
is caught. The main theme appears again when Bruno sees what
has happened to his father; this music is played three times as
the father and son go sadly on their way (5, pp. 146-147).

Red Balloon (1957)

Theme.—Red Balloon is a fantasy theme in modern dress.
Though pleasure enough can be found in just watching it, it
can be explored for theme and will lend itself to a variety
of interpretations.
1. To some this film is a wry commentary on the foibles of humanity and on the behavior of bus conductors, shopkeepers, schoolmasters, urchins, and bullies of all ages.

2. The boy can be viewed as the symbol of those fortunate (more often, unfortunate) possessors of great talent, ideas, and other gifts. These gifts, as does the red balloon to the little boy of the story, distinguish one man from another and are the cause of envy. The red balloon is the gift above the ordinary for which the boy must be challenged.

Story.—Red Balloon is an enchanting re-creation of the carefree world of childhood—a world in which it is common sense for a boy to be late for school rather than abandon his red balloon and where, when the envious youngsters pop the balloon, there is no heartbreak. Pure magic brings all the other balloons of the city down to transport the boy over the house-tops. The surprise ending perhaps leaves one wondering what the moral of the tale is.

Characterization and Acting.—The characters of the story are a five-and-a-half-year-old boy, a four-and-a-half-year-old girl (Pascal and Sabine, children of the director, Albert Lamorisse), and a fat, large and charming balloon. Though not human, the balloon is the hero of the story. He befriends the boy, follows him, teases him, flirts with the little girl's blue balloon, admires himself in an old gilt mirror, and finally, shot down by a rowdy boy, acts out an affecting death scene,
slowly wrinkling up, losing color and deflating. His death is made as painful and affecting as the wanton killing of a human being.

**Sound and Music.**—There is no dialogue in the film beyond a few scattered words. In place of dialogue, the film relies on music and street sounds.

**Photography and Setting.**—The story is told in the most elegantly simple movie terms. Its special enchantment lies in its superb trick photography and its outstanding color shots of the streets, shops and crumbling tenement flats of Paris. The color photography paints a Paris that is misty blue-gray, pale and unobtrusive, a perfect contrast with the splendid red sphere.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Film is the most powerful and distinctive communicative tool of our century and unquestionably the "natural" and preferred medium of today's youth. Because of its power to involve its spectators so completely--their eyes, ears, mind and heart, it is necessary that its audience be well equipped to understand, interpret, and evaluate it and that training in the development of such ability be regarded as essential in the growth of the modern student.

Since film uses language, exploits the dimensions of time and space, and approaches the range and fluidity of the novel, it inevitably falls within the scope of the language arts curriculum and should therefore be the concern of every English teacher. In general, however, the development of film "literacy" has not been given its merited place in the modern course of study, and there are few teachers who sense the importance of film art in the educative process and who see the need for training in this medium. This guide has been prepared in an attempt to remedy this unfortunate situation.

Although the ultimate goal of this unit is to teach students to see film more perceptively and thus to increase their discriminatory powers, its immediate goal is the training of
teachers. By offering a guide that will lead teachers systematically through a study of film history and film technique, that will provide them with tentative criteria for examining film, and that will demonstrate the application of these criteria by an actual examination of a number of films, it is hoped, first of all, that teachers will come to a personal understanding and appreciation of film art. Once this understanding and appreciation is gained, no motivation will then be necessary to spur them on in the development and refinement of their own techniques. The techniques which arise from these efforts may form the basis of newer and better approaches to the study and teaching of film art.
APPENDIX A--INDEX OF FILMS

The Ox-Bow Incident

History of the Motion Pictures Series
- Film First, Part One
- Film First, Part Two

Origins of the Motion Picture

The Movies Learn to Talk

The Great Train Robbery

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari

The Golden Age of Comedy

The River

The Film Appreciation Series
- Elements of the Film
- Visual Language of the Film
- Nature of the Film Medium

The Movies and You Series
- The Screen Writer
- The Screen Director
- The Cinematographer
- The Art Director
- The Sound Man

Films, Inc.
1150 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, Illinois 60091

Sterling Educational Films
241 East 34th St.
New York, N. Y. 10016

Du Art Film Labs, Inc.
245 West 55th St.
New York, N. Y. 10019

McGraw-Hill Textfilms
330 West 55th St.
New York, N. Y. 10036

Museum of Modern Art
Film Library
11 West 53rd St.
New York, N. Y. 10019

Museum of Modern Art
Film Library
11 West 53rd St.
New York, N. Y. 10019

ICS Films
203 N. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Ill. 60601

University of Illinois
Division of Univ. Extension
Visual Aids Service
Urbana, Ill. 61801

Hour of St. Francis OPM Productions
1229 S. Santee St.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90015

Teaching Film Custodians
25 West 13rd St.
New York, N. Y. 10036
Citizen Kane
Citizen Kane
Citizen Kane

On the Waterfront
On the Waterfront
On the Waterfront

The Bicycle Thief
The Bicycle Thief
The Bicycle Thief

Red Balloon
Red Balloon
Red Balloon

Citizen Kane Films, Inc.
1150 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette Ill. 60091

Audio Film Center/Ideal Pictures
34 MacQuesten Parkway So.
Mount Vernon, N. Y. 10550

Brandon Films
201 West 57th St.
New York, N. Y. 10019

Brandon Films
201 West 57th St.
New York, N. Y. 10019
APPENDIX B—A GLOSSARY OF MOTION-PICTURE VOCABULARY

Angle Shot—A scene photographed from above or below the normal camera position to give the audience a clearer view of some important action (a football huddle photographed by pointing the camera into the faces of the players). It is also used to heighten the illusion of size and importance.

Close-Up—A scene or action taken with the character or object close to the camera. It is used to call attention to something in the picture that may otherwise be unnoticed. It may be of an object—a letter or a weapon—or of an actor's face. Only when it is essential to the understanding of the story should it be used.

Cutting—(Also called film editing) The selecting and arranging in the proper sequence of the various scenes in a picture; the splicing of two shots together, creating a transition from the first to the one that succeeds it. This process is at the root of many of the creative powers of the film.

Dissolve—The gradual transformation of one photographed scene into another; a shift of scene which does not break the action.

Fade-In—The gradual appearance of the screen-picture from darkness to full light; the purpose is to indicate the beginning of a new scene.

Fade-Out—The gradual disappearance of the screen-picture into blackness to indicate the end of a scene or to distinguish between different parts of the story.
Frame—A single picture on a motion-picture film.

Iris—An adjustable lens diaphragm which can close a scene by darkening the screen from the outer edge inward in a decreasing circle (iris-out), or increase the circle and thereby open the scene (iris-in).

Long Shot—A scene photographed, utilizing the entire angle of the view of the camera lens; used when great perspective is desired or when atmosphere is sought; used to make a character seem small and insignificant.

Masks—Metal plates with openings of various shapes—keyhole, porthole, field glasses—which when fitted into the camera result in pictures of that shape.

Medium Shot—A scene photographed from a moderate distance that might include several persons from head to toe and part of a room. It is the most frequently used shot as it places the spectator in the most natural position for watching the event unfold. It creates a screen impression that resembles normal impressions.

Panning—The process by which the camera rotates to follow the action without changing its base position. Panning right and panning left produce varying audience reactions; because the eye is trained through reading to move from left to right, we accept the entrance of material from the right as normal; from the left it comes awkwardly and, on the screen, the eye must jump to meet it.

Scene—The action taken before a particular setting by a camera.
Sequence—A series of shots dealing with a single unit or episode of a film story without any interruptions of continuity.

Track Shot—A shot taken when a camera is mounted on a truck or dolly and the whole apparatus is made to move towards or away from the object being filmed.

Visual Transition—The gradual changing of a scene by fading out one object and fading in another which has a similar appearance or similar motion.

Zoom Shot—Changing from a long shot to a medium shot, or from a medium shot to a close-up, without changing the camera position; this requires a lens of variable magnification.
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