

Teaching Film

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Humanities Texas Teacher Workshop

Teaching Critical Thinking Through Film

“Engaging in critical analysis is a lot like an episode of *Law and Order*. First, you must be a detective, examining the evidence of how the object of your study was created, how it communicates, or how it functions within the culture. Then you are a lawyer, using the evidence you have gathered to argue for a particular interpretation of the nature, function, or value of the artifact or phenomenon you have studied. **There probably will not be any gunfire or fist fights, but conducting a critical analysis and presenting your case can still be challenging and thrilling. . . . The strength of your work will lie not in getting the ‘right answer,’ but in how well you argue for your interpretation of the data.** So conduct your investigation and marshal your evidence to make your best case. Chung CHUNG.”

—*Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, eds. Matthew J. Smith and Randy Duncan

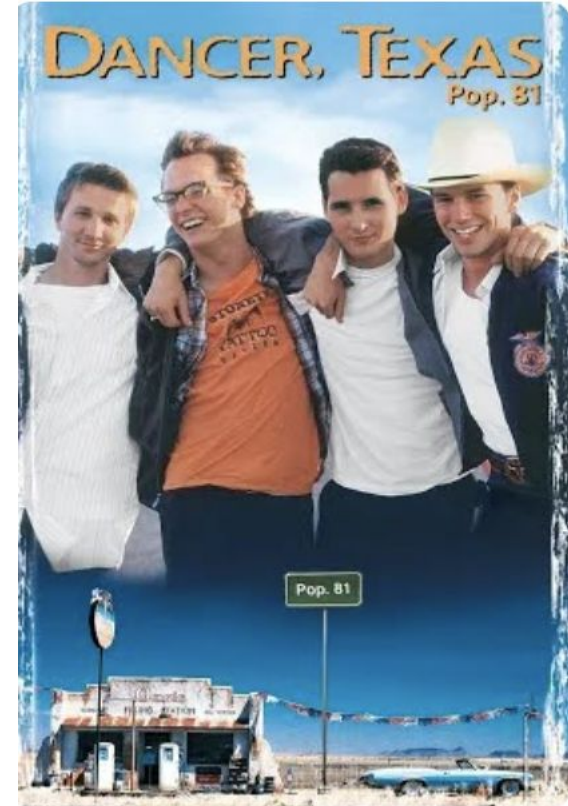
The Wizard Of Oz (D: V. Fleming, 1939)

- Elements of film language



Dancer, TX Pop. 81 (D: Tim McCanlies, 1989)

- [“Betting Scene”](#) (YouTube, app. 2:00)
 - Character and Theme
 - Rural representations
 - Establishing narrative deadlines
 - The changing landscape of Texas and its influence on state politics, economy, culture [TEKS 113.19.B.7E]



Frankenweenie (D: Tim Burton, 1984)

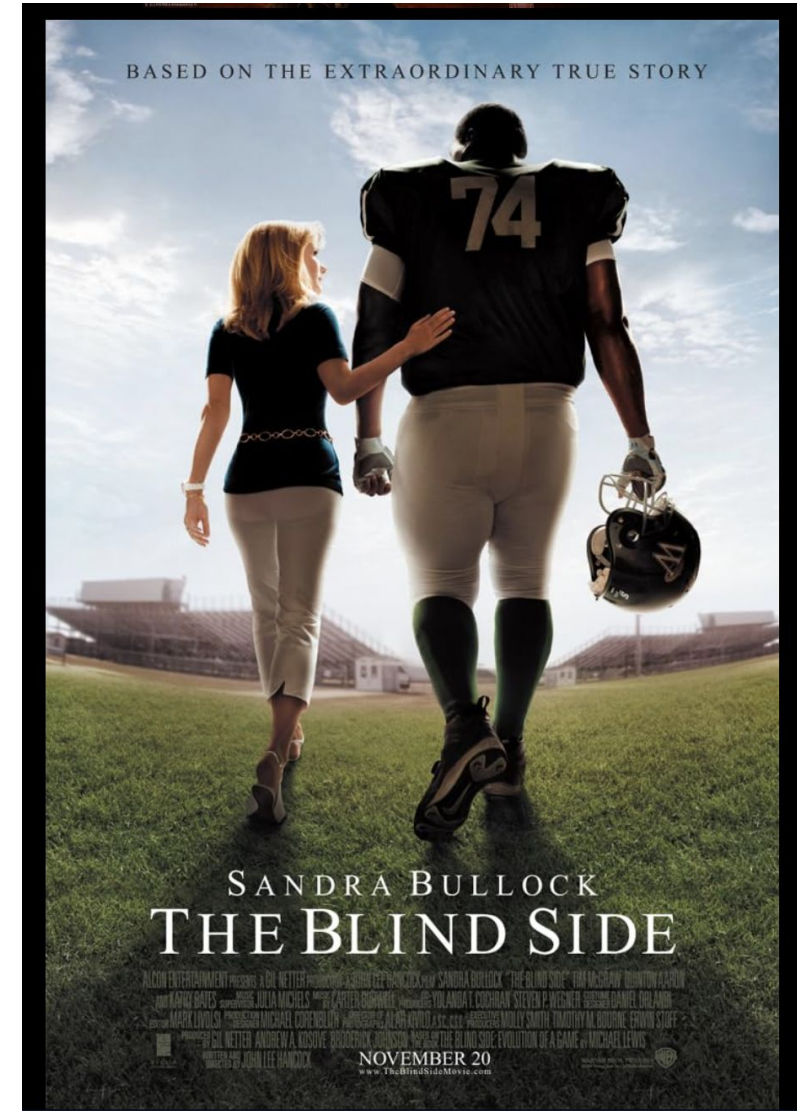
- [“Pre-credit Sequence”](#) (YouTube, app. 2:30)
 - Using camerawork to heighten drama, identification
 - Establishing or master shots
 - Shot reverse shot/reaction shots
 - Tracking shots
 - Different spatial perspectives
 - Long to medium to close-up shots
 - Genre nods
 - Horror cues
 - Tone
- [ENG III TEKS 110.C.7f]



The Blind Side (D: John Lee Hancock, 2009)

- [“Protect Your Family”](#) (YouTube, app. 3:00)
 - Editing basics
 - Shot reverse shot/reaction shots
 - Editing for drama
 - Length of shots
 - Editing for action
 - Number of shots

[ENG III TEKS 110.C.5B and ENG III TEKS 110.C.5F]



The Help (D: Tate Taylor, 2011)

- [“Minnie Gets Fired”](#) (YouTube, app. 3:00)
 - Mise-en-scene
 - Setting
 - Production design
 - Lighting
 - Adaptation (book to screen)
 - Star power
 - Racial politics
- [ENG III TEKS 110.C.6D and ENG III TEKS 110.C.8A]



Hotel Transylvania (D: G. Tartakovsky, 2012)

- [“Welcome to the hotel”](#) (YouTube, app. 4:00)
 - Dialogue
 - Stars and characterization
 - Sound F/X
 - Transgressive humor and kids
[ENG III TEKS 110.C.5F]



Activity: Analyzing Primary Materials

- [“LBJ Addresses Joint Session of Congress”](#) (app. 4:30)
 - Key figures in politics ca. 1963 and in the Civil Rights movement [TEKS 113.19.a.1 and 2; 113.19.b.7.D]
 - Activity
 - How do camera (angles and movement), editing, and even characterization tell the story?

Activity: Analyzing Primary Materials

- How does this diary entry add to our understanding of the LBJ address?
 - Lady Bird Johnson's White House diary for December 7, 1963

The whole country is still numb from the tragedy and it is hard to sort out the days and encompass all that has happened, but I keep reminding myself of Lyndon, for whom it is hardest of all to carry on. I find myself repeating that "new resolve" which he urged on all of us last week in his speech to Congress. Our challenge, he said, is "not to hesitate, not to pause, not to turn about and linger over this evil moment but to continue on our course so that we may fulfill the destiny that history has set for us."

That, we in this house must do most of all, but as I told Nellie Connally the other day when I talked to her over the phone, I feel like I am suddenly onstage for a part I never rehearsed.

Activity: Analyzing Film Elements

- [“Miss Americana”](#) (app. 4:30)
 - Group activity [ENG III TEKS 110.38.c.D]
 - How do camera angles, camera movement, editing, characterization, mise-en-scene, and sound (music and voiceover) tell the story?
 - Watch clip twice; assign groups after first viewing
 - What are these elements telling us about stardom, performance, and women in the music industry?



Links to Clips

- *The Wizard of Oz* (D: Victor Fleming, 1939)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWFHeDcVNiw> (“Dorothy in Oz”)

- *Dancer, TX* (D: Tim McCanlies, 1989)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edb93YDG58c> (“Betting Scene”)

- *Frankenweenie* (D: Tim Burton, 1984)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rcPe9sojpc> (“Pre-Credits”) *Film starts at 5:56

Links to Clips

- *The Blind Side* (D: John Lee Hancock, 2009)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o69s_0GEEemY ("Protect Your Family")

- *The Help* (D: Tate Taylor, 2011)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKXty_E2Y58 ("Minnie Gets Fired")

- *Hotel Transylvania* (D: G. Tartakovsky, 2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7niKPYr0upQ> ("Welcome to the Hotel")

Links to Clips

- “Address Before Joint Session of Congress, 11/27/63,” LBJ Library, full speech

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LF0TpxlMA0>

- *Miss Americana* (D: Lana Wilson, 2020) Netflix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfsAX1u-gL0> (0:00–3:10)