



Teaching and learning about film in Stage 6 English

**Subject:
HSC English (Advanced)**

**Class group:
Year 12**

**Module C:
Representation and text**

**Elective 3:
History and memory**

**Context:
Using the medium of film to develop students'
understanding of the relationship between
memory and documented events**

**Prescribed text:
*Life is Beautiful***



“The world is my representation”

Arthur Schopenhauer



Module C: Representation and text

This module requires students to explore various representations of events, personalities or situations. They evaluate how medium of production, textual form, perspective and choice of language influence meaning. The study develops students' understanding of the relationships between representation and meaning, both the product and the process.

Each elective in this module requires the study of one prescribed text offering a representation of an event, personality or situation. Students are also required to supplement this study with texts of their own choosing which provide a variety of representations of that event, personality or situation. These texts are to be drawn from a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media.

Students explore the ways in which different media present information and ideas to understand how various textual forms and their media of production offer different versions and perspectives for a range of audiences and purposes.

Students develop a range of imaginative, interpretive and analytical compositions that relate to different forms and media of representation. These compositions may be realised in a variety of forms and media.

(Board of Studies NSW, 1999, Stage 6 English Syllabus, p.52)

Elective 3: History and memory

In their responding and composing, students explore the relationships between individual memory and documented events and consider the role of personal experience and empathy in the growth of cultural knowledge.

Prescribed text

Film: *Life is Beautiful*

(Benigni, Roberto, *Life is Beautiful*, Roadshow, 1999)

(Board of Studies NSW, 1999, *English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study Electives Texts HSC 2001 and 2002*, p. 22-23.)



Outcomes addressed

A student:

- H1 explains and evaluates the effects of different contexts of responders and composers on texts.
- H2 explains relationships among texts.
- H3 develops language relevant to the study of English.
- H4 explains and analyses the ways in which language forms and features, and structures of texts, shape meaning and influence responses.
- H5 explains and evaluates the effects of textual forms, technologies and their media of production on meaning.
- H7 adapts and synthesises a range of textual features to explore and communicate information, ideas and values for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.
- H8 articulates and represents own ideas in critical, interpretive and imaginative texts from a range of perspectives.
- H9 evaluates the effectiveness of a range of processes and technologies for various purposes, including the investigation and organisation of information and ideas.
- H10 analyses and synthesises information and ideas into sustained and logical argument for a range of purposes, audiences and contexts.
- H12A explains and evaluates different ways of responding to and composing texts.

This module requires students to:

- explore the film's representation of the Holocaust
- evaluate how medium of production, textual form, perspective and technical aspects of film influence meaning
- understand the relationships between representation and meaning
- supplement the study with a variety of texts of their own choosing, drawn from a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media
- explore different versions and perspectives of the Holocaust
- develop a range of imaginative, interpretative and analytical compositions that may be realised in a variety of forms and media, explore the relationships between individual memory and documented events, and consider the role of personal experience and empathy in the growth of cultural knowledge.



Teaching and learning activities

Introduction: Weeks 1 and 2

As memory is to the individual, so history is to the community or society. Without memory, individuals find great difficulty in relating to others, in finding their bearings, in making intelligent decisions – they have lost their sense of identity.

(Marwick, 1989, NSW English Syllabus)

- Overview of the rubrics and the relevant key words and concepts.
- Introduction to the technical aspects of film using the CD-ROM, *Take one*.
- Applying the information from the CD-ROM to the establishing shot in the film and examining positioning of the audience, with a focus on sound, lighting, shot type, editing, mise en scene and paradox. Students placed in groups and assigned one of these aspects.
- Discussion of how medium of production, textual form, perspective and technical aspects of film influence meaning.
- Clips from films and documentaries that provide different versions and perspectives of the Holocaust.
- Discussion of the relationship of history and memory.
- Composition by students of an imaginative text drawn from their memories.

Focus on prescribed text: Weeks 3 to 5

You can't show unimaginable horror...

(Roberto Benigni)

- Context of Benigni and film as well as historical information on the Holocaust.
- Close reading of the film, focussing on the film's version and personal perspective of the Holocaust.
- Students are to be placed in groups to focus on specific technical aspects of film:
 - lighting
 - camera shots and angles
 - sound
 - mise en scene
 - editing.
- Students record responses to the film in a journal and complete set response sheets.

Focus on other texts: Week 6

- Teacher provides examples of related texts and focuses on how the composer shapes our reception of the Holocaust. (See list)
- Students complete at least two responses on texts of their own choosing. Students must ensure that the texts are drawn from a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media.



Activities

1. Teacher informally assess student notes on prescribed text and response sheets for related texts.
2. Viewing and representing
Task: Students create a visual representation based on the film and texts of their own choosing. Students present their representation accompanied by a personal critical commentary.
3. Extended responses
Students compose imaginative, interpretative and analytical compositions in a variety of forms and media.
 - a. How have the makers of *Life is Beautiful* used history and memory to create their story? Compare the techniques used with those of one other piece of related material you have chosen.
 - b. Write an imaginative piece in which you use historical facts and memories.
4. Group activities
Groups analyse the technical aspects of film used by Benigni in *Life is Beautiful*.

Resources

- CD-ROM: *Take one*
- Sample extended responses from the English Teachers' Association newsletter, *Metaphor*
- Critical essays and notes on film. Included will be responses that are critical of Benigni's representation of the Holocaust, e.g. Gerald Peary: see www.geraldpeary.com
- Clips from *Schindler's List*, *Jacob the Liar*, *To be or not to Be* and various documentaries to introduce the context, concepts and different perspectives and versions of the Holocaust.
- Documentaries:
 - *A Book of Dreams: Anne Frank's Diary*, ABC, 1997
 - *Hitler's Holocaust*. (Episodes 4 & 6), SBS, 2002
 - *The Lodz Ghetto: 1941 to 1945*
- Various web sites on the film and the Holocaust:
 - www.findarticles.com
 - www.time.com
 - www.detnews.com
 - www.shootthemessenger.com.au
 - www.joebarlow.com
 - www.cooper.edu
 - www.remember.org (an excellent site for related texts on the Holocaust)
 - www.holocaust-heroes.com
 - www.depotati.it/cover
- NSW Board of Studies Extension History Syllabus: This text contains an excellent exploration of what is history.
- Sydney Jewish Museum: <http://www.sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/>



Suggested related texts

- *The Diary of Anne Frank*
- Axelrod, Toby, 1999, *In the camps: Teens who survived the Nazi concentration camps* (non-fiction)
- Ayer, Eleanor, 1999, *In the ghettos: Teens who survived the ghettos of the Holocaust* (non-fiction)
- Biderman, Abraham, 1998, *The World of my Past* (non-fiction)
- Blay, Anna, 1998, *Sister Sister* (non-fiction)
- Bresheeth, Haim, 1994, *The Holocaust for Beginners* (non-fiction)
- Cross, Robin, 1994, *Children and War* (non-fiction)
- Kenneally, Thomas, 1983, *Schindler's Ark* (fiction)
- Kestenber, J. S., *The Last Witness: The Child Survivor of the Holocaust*
- Seliger, Mark, 1996, *When they came to take my father: Voices of the Holocaust* (non-fiction)
- Verolme, Hetty, 2000, *The Children's House of Belsen* (non-fiction)
- Voigt, Cynthia, 1993, *David and Jonathon* (fiction)
- Willoughby, Susan, 2001, *The Holocaust* (non-fiction)
- www.remember.org contains paintings (e.g. artist Jan Komsky), poems, personal accounts (e.g. Rita Levi-Montalcini), text list and links to other relevant sites.