

# Lights, Camera, FILM Literacy!

Lesson Plan #6

## Topics:

**Journal Writing**  
**The Edison Company**  
**D.W. Griffith**  
**Framing, Composition, & Camera Distance**  
**Literary Conflict**  
**Silent Conflict Scene**

## Outcomes:

Students will follow organizational procedures.  
Students will see and hear applicable vocabulary.  
Students will discuss the contributions of The Edison Company to early narrative filmmaking.  
Students will analyze short films by D.W. Griffith.  
Students will note filmmakers' choices in framing, composition, and camera distance.  
Students will be involved in pre-production for a silent conflict film.

## Materials:

Writing journals  
LCD projector  
Chart paper  
Post-its  
Individual student pocket folders

HANDOUTS: Framing, Composition, and Distance: Early Narrative Films  
Create a Silent Conflict Scene

DVD: *EDISON: THE WIZARD OF LIGHT*

**New Vocabulary:** monopoly. literary conflict

## Sequence of Events:

### I. Journal Activity (15)

Prompt:

**How did your production experience change after discussing effective collaboration?**

### II. The Edison Company (60)

1. Direct students to place all three "How Movies Got Their Start" handouts in front of them. As they continue to watch the movie, students will continue to circle on their papers the names of people and machines that are included in the film.

2. Watch the remainder of the film.

DVD: *Edison: The Wizard of Light*

3. Discuss what machines and people students have circled as well as their reaction to viewing an interpretation of history.

*Does the film help them understand what life might have been like in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?*

*(Mention the tremendous amount of research done by the filmmakers to present a story based in an earlier time period.)*

### III. Early Narrative Filmmaking (45)

1. Tell students that early filmmakers enthusiastically joined in Edison's idea of telling stories and entertaining audiences through movies. Edison held many patents through which he tried to get a **MONOPOLY** on the early narrative film industry. This forced many filmmakers to find another filming location far from his New Jersey headquarters. One of the earliest directors to become known for his innovations was D.W. Griffith, who worked during 1908 - 1913 for Biograph Pictures, the first company to shoot a movie in Hollywood.

In just five years D.W. Griffith directed 489 films and wrote 188 of them! At this time in early filmmaking, filmmakers kept the camera still, in one position on the tripod. Griffith varied framing, composition, and camera distance.

2. Direct students to the handout, where they will note the framing, composition, and distance of the camera in Griffith's films.

HANDOUT: Framing, Composition, and Distance: Early Narrative Films

3. Watch the specific scenes of the films listed by moving the slider under the film window and only showing the portions indicated by the time codes listed below. ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) *Play without sound.*

1) 1908 *The Adventures of Dollie* (D.W. Griffith's first film) 8:10-10:10  
(Tell students that a little girl is hidden in the barrel.)

2) 1910 *The Girl and Her Trust* 1:15-1:50

3) 1911 *The Burglar's Dilemma* (YouTube spelling "The Burglers Dilema") 1:34-2:20

4) 1911 *The Sunbeam* 2:44-3:40

5) 1912 *A Blind Love* 5:21-5:36

4. Discuss students' observations. *Include in the discussion that this was not an ethnically-diverse industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and that, unfortunately, this reflected the exclusionary nature of the American culture at that time.*

#### IV. Conflict in Narrative Film (20)

1. Tell students that every effective narrative film includes conflict to keep it interesting. Watch each short scene again and ask students how conflict was shown.
2. Review the four levels of literary conflict:  
**character vs. character**  
**character vs. self**  
**character vs. society**  
**character vs. nature**
3. Ask students to identify which type of conflict is represented by the D.W. Griffith scenes just shown:  
*The Adventures of Dollie...* character vs nature  
*The Girl and Her Trust...* character vs character  
*The Burglar's Dilemma...* character vs self  
*The Sunbeam...* character vs character  
*A Blind Love...* character vs society

## V. Creating a silent conflict scene: (45)

1. Tell students that each group will be creating their own conflict scene.

*Physical combat (the easiest way to show conflict) is not allowed in this course, so students need to think like a filmmaker to show conflict in other ways.*

Groups will choose one conflict listed on the handout (shown in the films they just viewed), and change D.W. Griffith's scenario to an original scene. They will figure out a way to show this conflict visually...no sound at all.

HANDOUT: Create a Silent Conflict Scene

2. Groups begin planning their scenes. Next session, they will be deciding framing, composition, and camera distance after which they will be filming their conflict scenes.

## VI. Reflection: (15)

1. Direct students to the hanging chart paper labeled:

**What did you learn about Edison's role in early filmmaking?**

2. Hand out Post-its on which students write and post.
3. Review the comments on the Post-Its with the class, so students have a sense of what was learned that day. Make sure to clear up any misconceptions.