

Lights, Camera, FILM Literacy!

Lesson Plan #9

Topics:

Journal Writing
Mary Pickford
Music in Film

Outcomes:

Students will follow organizational procedures.

Students will see and hear applicable vocabulary.

Students will recognize *Mary Pickford* as a film pioneer, business woman, and extraordinary talent in the early years of moviemaking.

Students will match musical tempo, instruments, and mood to film visuals.

Materials:

Writing journals

LCD projector

Computer

Post-it notes

Chart Paper

FOR THE TEACHER: Teacher notes for *PBS's Mary Pickford DVD*

Transcription portions of *PBS's Mary Pickford DVD*

HANDOUTS: "Which Movie Star?"

"Composing for Film"

BOOK: *Mary Pickford Rediscovered* by Kevin Brownlow

DVD's: *PBS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE SERIES: MARY PICKFORD*

LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY

New Vocabulary: musical scoring, intertitles, tempo, mood, synchronize

Sequence of Events:

I. Journal Activity (15)

Prompt:

What film techniques used in Charlie Chaplin's *THE KID* might you want to use in your future filmmaking?

II. Which Movie Star? (30)

1. Tell students that they will be learning how the early movie industry gave us the first movie stars, but before receiving that information, they are going to see how much they know about 20 statements on a paper called "Which Movie Star???" They will place the name of a movie star from the given list in each of the blanks to complete the sentence accurately and may use names more than once. Tell them they only get fifteen minutes to complete this individually or with a partner.

HANDOUT: Which Movie Star???

Even if all have not finished, stop after 15 minutes to review answers.

(Answer key: All answers are "**MARY PICKFORD.**") ☺

2. Call on individual students to read the sentences aloud with the correct answer inserted, so that they hear "Mary Pickford" all twenty times.

(Note: Although students could argue that # 10, 11, 15, 17 might possibly have more than her name and still be accurate, explain that it is Mary Pickford that will receive our focus in these lessons.)

III. Mary Pickford (70)

1. Ask students...

"How many of you heard of Mary Pickford before today?"

Show the Kevin Brownlow book:

MARY PICKFORD REDISCOVERED

2. Tell students, *"In order to learn more about Mary Pickford, I am going to show you portions of a PBS documentary. Look for the author of this book-- Kevin Brownlow -- as he is one of the people speaking in this production.*

"You will be learning about Mary Pickford's

- 1) early life*
- 2) her rise to stardom*
- 3) her work as a creative actor and filmmaker*
- 4) her work at the business end of the film industry."*

(These four headings should be at the top of four posted chart papers.)

Give each student 4 Post-it notes. Tell students that after viewing the PBS documentary, they will be posting a comment about each of the topics.

3. **Follow the teacher notes and video transcript** *(found before the handout section of this lesson).*

Teacher notes for PBS's Mary Pickford DVD

Transcription portions of PBS's Mary Pickford DVD

DVD: PBS American Experience series: Mary Pickford

NOTE!!!: The entire video should NOT be shown...
...just selected portions.

Important...

DO NOT show last half-hour. (Begins: "The next year Mary turned 30.")

The film *must* be turned off right after Kevin Brownlow says, "I still don't know how they did it."

4. After viewing and completing the directions on the accompanying teacher notes, direct students to write their comments for each topic heading and to post them on the chart papers. Review their comments together.

IV. Musical Scoring (30)

1. Tell students...

"In 1917, there was no television, no computers, no iPods, no DVD's, no radio. Silent film audiences were so in awe of the technology of moving images and the stories told by them, that they loved movies without hearing the actors' voices. In fact, many more people went to the movies in 1917 than go to the movies today. 687 silent pictures were released in 1917 compared to less than 300 movies in 2007. About 35 million people attended movies every week...many more than today, even though our population has grown tremendously."

2. Write the term **MUSICAL SCORING** and ask students what this means. (music created for a film) Tell students...

"When silent films were made, there was no specific music created to accompany them. Instead, musical directors at movie theaters could choose the music their musicians would play from a collection of music. There was music for chase scenes, music for romantic scenes as well as music for other types of scenes. If you had seen a film in a theater in New York and then saw it again in a theater in Washington, the musical experience could be totally different."

"In 2001 The Mary Pickford Institute commissioned a composer named Nigel Holton to write a musical score specifically for the film LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY. Before you hear the musical score, you will watch the beginning of this film with no sound, just as Mr. Holton did, and try to imagine what type music you would have created if you had been hired to compose for this film."

"We will now watch the first eight minutes of LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY. I will stop the film after each of nine segments at which time you will circle your choices on the worksheet."

HAND OUT: Composing for the film *Little Lord Fauntleroy*

Make sure students understand the meaning of the choices listed.

Mention the following:

*Color film had not yet been invented.
Credits were listed at the beginning of movies.
The camera stayed still on a tripod for each shot.*

DVD: *Little Lord Fauntleroy*

Press MUTE on your remote! No sound at all! No music!

Start the film from the beginning.

Stop the film at 1:02...after the beginning credits.

Allow time for students to circle their choices on the handout.
(Students might want to delay choices for this particular section until after watching more of the film.)

Start and Stop each section, allowing students to circle their choices:

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- 2) EVERYDAY LIFE IN OLD NEW YORK (1:02 - 2:00)
 - 3) CEDRIC ERROL RIDES HIS BIKE TO GET AWAY FROM A BULLY (2:00 – 3:17)
 - 4) CEDRIC’S MOTHER THINKING ABOUT HER SON (3:17 - 4:00)
 - 5) CEDRIC IMAGINES GETTING HIS CURLS CUT / HOME TELLING MOTHER (4:00 – 5:23)
 - 6) THE BULLY AND HIS MOTHER (5:23 – 5:36)
 - 7) CECIL AND HIS MOTHER: A DECISION TO KEEP HIS CURLS (5:36 – 6:44)
 - 8) CEDRIC LOOKS FOR THOSE WHO PICKED ON HIM (6:44 – 7:33)
 - 9) CASTLE IN ENGLAND (7:33 – 7:56)

3. Now replay the first eight minutes of ***LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY*** with **sound** to compare circled choices to what was actually composed. Ask students their reaction to the composed music. Discuss how music adds emotion to film.

V. Post-Production (40)

1. Groups begin the process of creating and adding original music to their silent conflict scenes.

VI. Reflection: (15)

1. Direct students to the hanging chart paper labeled:

What did you learn about Mary Pickford?

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.