



Irish Film Institute

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# IFI Film Focus

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New Directions in  
Film & Media Literacy

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# Executive Summary

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*Film. Media. Young people.*  
The connection seems obvious. Yet it still comes as something of a surprise that in Ireland, where we have an established film industry, a huge youth population and growing creative industries, there is no clearly defined national policy which would ensure that young people can access, experience and critically engage with film and media. Alongside this, the connection between how young people view, what they like to view and how they might portray themselves in this mediated age poses challenges for all involved in media and in education.

As organisations working in the field of production, exhibition and education, our collaboration on Film Focus was a unique opportunity to explore some of these concerns. At the Irish Film Institute, it was an opportunity for us to carry out research in film education, an area which we have been leading for over fifteen years. It would enable us to explore new possibilities but also to build on the strengths of our existing education programme through consolidating networks and forging new relationships with policy makers. At the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann, we were interested in finding out exactly how young people were, if at all, being educated in the art and craft of filmmaking, or even getting the opportunity to see new Irish films. The publication of the Film Focus project report marks the end of this two-year endeavour.

At IFI, we constantly seek new ways of engaging audiences and developing our existing programmes. The projects and ways of working which Film Focus has revealed have confirmed a huge excitement among teachers and young people for learning through film and moving image. Through commentaries and surveys, it is apparent that film provides an access point to all manner of learning and literacies, across education, social, cultural and aesthetic arenas, where Irish film has a vital role to play.

The Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann is committed to supporting filmmakers and artists to tell stories and create images that reflect an Ireland we can recognise. We are conscious that the visually and media literate young people of today offer us the best possibility of sustaining and developing such an industry. The changing Ireland which they have directly experienced needs creative voices and a visual aesthetic which will communicate that story to the world. Our belief is that these voices can be developed through education and training both in and out of school.

It is our hope that the publication of the Film Focus report will stimulate discussions and progress a case for film and media literacy across the spectrum of young peoples' learning. Film. Media. Young people. Film Focus has made the connection. Now we need to ensure that it stays obvious.

—  
Ross Keane  
Director  
Irish Film Institute

—  
Teresa McGrane  
Deputy CEO  
Irish Film Board




















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# Introduction & Background

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*Film Focus* was a two-year action research project in film and moving image education commissioned by the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann (IFB) and undertaken by the Education Department of the Irish Film Institute (IFI), with the support of the Arts Council. With a history of collaboration with the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann and over fifteen years experience of leading film education in Ireland, IFI was well placed to carry out the research. Film Focus was developed within the context of the existing IFI Education programme, and the activities of other film educators, facilitators and interested personnel with whom we made contact through existing and new networks.

As researchers, our concern was to observe the many ways educators and facilitators worked with film, moving image and young people, both in and out of school. Framing the project within media literacy and film education, we were also interested in seeing what relevance Film Focus projects might have for curricula and related developments. When we began our research, consultation into Junior Cycle by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was already underway, resulting in the publication of a draft Framework for Junior Cycle in 2010. This Framework, due for implementation in 2014, aims at providing an education experience ‘first and foremost connected to the lives and learning of 12–15 year olds’. Based on our education programme at IFI, we were confident that Film Focus would yield such experiences.

A review of Senior Cycle by the NCCA was also in train, with moves to devise more flexible programmes of learning based on key skills, learning outcomes and new ways of assessing. The key skills - critical and creative thinking, communicating, information processing, being personally effective and working with others – offered useful criteria against which to set Film Focus projects at Transition Year (TY) and Senior Cycle. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011) was also significant, including as it did a reference to literacy in digital media. At Primary level, the Primary Curriculum Review (Phases 1 and 2) and later the Language Curriculum Research reports provided significant reference points.

So, operating within the context of current curricula and associated developments, the IFI Education programme and film education activities around the country, and following a short period of consultation and research into models of international practice in film education and media literacy, we structured Film Focus as follows:



// **A national survey of the film education landscape**

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// **Two phases of action research with groups of committed practitioners**

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// **A survey of IFI Education screening programme**

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// **Detailed case studies & observations of established organisations in the field**

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// **Pilot Gaming Camp & Teen Club**

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// **Write-up**

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Film Focus reflects the support of the Board of IFI, the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann, The Arts Council, the work of the research team, our facilitator, Belinda Moller, the practitioners who developed and delivered projects, the Advisory Group who offered expert guidance and advice, all those who gave their particular film education programme for case study or observation, and the teachers, practitioners and young people who contributed their ideas, opinions and creativity across a range of activities. It was informed by existing research from Ireland and overseas. This report is a summary of the complete Film Focus endeavour. It comprises data analysis of surveys, evaluations of pilot projects, conclusions and recommendations. We hope you will find it stimulating, insightful and useful in your film education activities.

—  
Alicia McGivern

—  
Thomas McGraw Lewis

# Methods

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## Phases of Research

Film Focus used quantitative and qualitative research methods in its study of the place of film and moving image across the Irish educational landscape, both in and out of school.

The project was structured around three phases:

### Phase One: National Survey Sept – Jan 2009/10

A quantitative survey of film and moving image education in Republic of Ireland.

### Phase Two: Feb 2010 – May 2010 Dublin

- / Teacher and Student Surveys at IFI Education screenings
- / Pilot Projects (Dublin)
- / Research Meetings
- / Advisory Group Meetings

### Phase Three: Sep – May 2011

- / Teacher and Student surveys at IFI Education screenings
- / Pilot Projects (Dublin and Outside Dublin)
- / Research Meetings
- / Case Studies & Observations
- / Gaming Camp
- / IFI Teen Club
- / Advisory Group Meeting

## Research Methods – Phase One

Drawing on our existing experience with educators, facilitators, arts workers, youth festival programmers and filmmakers, we sought to engage as many practitioners as possible through the initial exploratory phase of Film Focus. We designed a broad survey that we hoped would have relevance for the many ways people in Ireland work with film and young people.

The survey was made available online, it was included with our Autumn Education Programme mailout, and was sent to education and arts centres around the country.

## Phases Two and Three

- / Pilot Projects: From the quantitative survey results, we invited a number of film educators – identified as teachers, arts festival coordinators, youth workers and facilitators, to take part in the next phase which would involve action research. We identified a number of Modes of Engagement (with film) and participants then developed pilot projects around a particular Mode eg. Film as Subject Support. Some were interested in formulating a ‘new’ project, others wanted to build upon previous efforts with assistance from the Film Focus team. Phase Two was based in the greater Dublin area and the third phase opened up Film Focus’ engagements nationwide. Some of the projects were only week-long engagements; others had a number of film-related projects and methodologies operating for weeks, months or across the year.

- / Teacher and Student surveys: Quantitative surveys were distributed to teachers and students who attended IFI Education screenings
- / Research Meetings: These were scheduled at particular points throughout, these provided an opportunity for participants to share experiences and methods, exchange ideas, raise concerns and make their voices heard. A final meeting in April, 2011, revolved around the early findings of Film Focus, as well as broader questions of film and media literacy, and the place of film education in current and future curricula
- / Advisory Group Meetings: This group was established to steer the project and appraise and inform participant stakeholders from the fields of education, film and the broader media industry. Three meetings were held over the projects’ duration, chaired by Teresa McGrane of the Irish Film Board

- / Gaming Camp: The digital literacy skills used in gaming and their overlap with film prompted us to develop a week-long practical project grounded in the existing research on gaming, learning and visual literacy
- / IFI Teen monthly film club: A focus group of teen club members was convened and facilitated by a youth worker. Young people were invited to offer their opinion on film and media literacy, and broader questions concerning the place of film in their own lives

### Case Studies and Observation

Film Focus was committed to reflecting the wealth of film education activities already in place in order to get an indepth profile of the field. To achieve this we further surveyed a series of different projects that included those with direct links to IFI Education, filmmaking activities, and projects and individuals who expressed an interest in the work of Film Focus. Through direct observation and interview, case studies were profiled according to:

- / the content of their film education programme
- / the issues for successful delivery thereof
- / how they located their projects within broader contexts
- / their own views on the 'bigger questions' of literacy, curriculum development etc.

On completion of the action research and observations, we collated all responses and information, viewed all the projects from both a Key Skills and Media Literacy perspective, and identified a series of actions which our findings could support.

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# Overview

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## *Film, Media & Literacy.*

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### *Film –*

a means of cultural, creative and aesthetic expression conveyed in visual and audio form.

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### *Media –*

a range of platforms, including visual, print, broadcast, online, through which information is communicated.

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### *Literacy –*

the skill which enables us to communicate, create and make meaning from texts.

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### *Film/Media Literacy –*

the skill which enables us to access, create, make meaning from and critique forms of cultural expression conveyed in print, audio and visual media, including film, television, video, gaming and online.

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In devising Film Focus as an action research project, we needed an operating framework that would offer a relevant context, as well as provide support for any direction the project might take. This framework would reference the above three elements, based on our experiences as film educators working within the Irish education system, but also research into the broader field of media literacy both nationally and internationally.

For IFI, film was an obvious first point of reference: The project was an impetus of the Irish Film Board/ Bord Scannán na hÉireann, who were interested in the development of future filmmakers and a joined-up approach to film education that would include Irish film. Research into film as an aspect of arts education was in the interests of IFI's principal funder, the Arts Council. The IFI Education programme chiefly concerns film. But although film offered a clear direction, we were cognizant of the fact that for young people today, film is just one delivery system of the mediated world in which they operate. Whether gaming, social networking, film viewing or file-sharing, the convergence of media forms has created a multi-platform world which they require the skills – the literacy - to access and navigate. We wanted a framework that would not only recognise the interests of the primary stakeholders but also reflect the significance of film and moving image for young people today. We were also interested in questioning the nature of literacy itself, in a world where conventional reading and writing skills are no longer enough.

### **Mediating a Changing Landscape**

Since we began our research in Autumn 2009, much has changed in our educational, political, cultural and economic landscapes, all of which has been reported to us by the media itself. Dominant images included those of pop duo Jedward, the visits of Queen Elizabeth II and President Obama, the arrival of the Troika, and from further afield, images from the Arab Spring revolutions and anti-capitalist protests. What was interesting for our research was not so much the content of the images but rather how people were viewing them, as high-speed broadband, mobile technologies and social networking provided ever more instant access.

While the impact of the financial crisis encroached on every sector of our society, welcome and surprising news came from the Audiovisual Strategic Review Steering Group (AvSRG)<sup>1</sup> which reported that Irish creative industries had shown a sense of ‘remarkable resistance’ across the country. This success story evidenced Ireland’s increasing skillbase in areas that include animation, gaming and other creative arts involving digital media technologies. It highlighted an obvious need for education in creative technologies that might equip young people for future careers. Yet many young people were already highly competent media users, though not necessarily utilising the skills in school. In devising our framework, we knew that for our film education research to be relevant for learning today and in future, it had to relate to the wider media literacy field.

In this regard we looked to The Charter for Media Literacy (2005, updated 2007) drawn up by the UK Film Council and partners on the Media Literacy Task Force which identified three Cs –creativity, cultural access and critical understanding to which media literacy, including film, would ascribe. To this, we added communication in recognition of how media is utilised today, resulting in a framework that encompassed four key aspects.

### Education Context: Where would we fit in?

If defining a framework was one challenge, finding a space for film/media research in our fairly rigid, subject-delineated curricula was another. Within school curricula in the Republic of Ireland, neither Media nor Film Studies has ever had distinct subject delineation (although Moving Image Arts is an established and highly popular subject in Northern Ireland at GCSE, AS and A2). Media Studies appears in Junior Certificate English and Civil, Social, and Political Education (CSPE), and has a presence in Primary Visual Arts and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), along with Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) across the sector. At Senior Cycle, film exists as Comparative Study in Leaving Certificate English, and as Gearscannaín in Irish. Film can be discussed in Modern Languages oral exams and has a presence in the Art Leaving Certificate programme. However, as a subject in its own right, which offers possibilities for investigating creative, aesthetic and narrative content, as well as having huge potential for enjoyment, film as a subject worth teaching remains up to the discretion of individual teachers, some of whom we

hoped would take up the opportunity of our project.

Curriculum development initiatives at Junior and Senior Cycle were also presenting opportunities. The move towards key skills based learning – that included Literacy, Communicating, Creative and Critical Thinking – was highly relevant for a media literacy project which encompassed these skills. The framework for ICT in curriculum and assessment recognised the significance of digital technologies for life today.

In the primary sector, developmental work in the area of language acknowledged the need for a broad definition of literacy today to include digital media<sup>2</sup> and the potential of technology to promote language in different media forms. Also of note were revisions to Assessment (afl)<sup>3</sup> which stressed the child’s active role in their own learning, which we found was a typical outcome of film education projects.

### Media & Literacy

The publication the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2011 gave educative and statutory recognition to media literacy. It followed a major shift in thinking about literacy which had occurred with the publication of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in 2010. These revealed Ireland’s slippage to 21st place in reading comprehension in 2009 compared to sixth and seventh in 2006 and 2003 respectively. The results, combined with Department of Education and Skills development work in the area, led to the Strategy which defined literacy as ‘the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media’.

Although broad, this definition was not without limitations, such as the emphasis on reception, the absence of creativity and the separation of ‘printed’ text from other forms. Nevertheless it offered an opportunity to locate Film Focus projects in the context of a national plan. In recognising a role for parents and community in supporting literacy and numeracy learning too, the Strategy also provided a useful perspective on the film literacy ambitions of our monthly family film programme at IFI and our annual IFI Family Festival.



Thus, within the education sector, along with the use of Film for Subject Support, opportunities for Film Focus were opening up within the context of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, within the Framework for Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle developments, and within Primary level initiatives. Over and above curricula, there was also a broad awareness among teachers and educators that young peoples' often prolific media skills were not being fully exploited within the school arena.

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### Statutory Context

Further statutory underpinning for our research came from the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) who have a media literacy remit, under the Broadcasting Act 2009, and contributed to our advisory group.

BAI's definition of media literacy, 'the skills, knowledge and understanding that allow consumers to use media effectively and safely' differed considerably from that of the Strategy cited above. Trying to define media literacy was nothing new. In their report on the development of Media Literacy as a public policy issue in Ireland, O'Neill/Barnes observed that 'while we know it (Media Literacy) is a good thing, we are not entirely agreed on what it is', but that it 'expands the concept of traditional literacy'. This study followed The Radharc Report (2007) into Critical Media Literacy, which offered a detailed survey of the Media Literacy landscape in Ireland and how it had evolved.

The European Commission defines Media Literacy as 'the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents, and to create communications in a variety of contexts'.<sup>4</sup> Other international models cited in Barnes/Flanagan, included those of Scandinavia, Australia, Canada and US, which provided us with instructive reference points.

### The Film Component & Arts Education

Working within the media literacy frame we had to keep in mind that our first point of connection with film educators was the creative engagement with film as an artform through our education programme at IFI.

The IFI Education programme reaches over 15,000 young people throughout the school year both at IFI and a number of venues around the country. With origins in the National Film Institute founded in 1943, established under the patronage of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, the Education Department at that time had a remit to be the 'teacher and moral guardian' of the cinema-going public. Fortunately, much has changed since then. Our public film education activities include a monthly teen club and family programme, as well as an annual IFI Family Film Festival all of which aim to promote film culture and raise awareness of Irish film. In school we provide young people with access to a wide range of film including Irish, for TY and

other programmes, as well as offering to support curricula and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Many of the TY programmes we encounter through IFI concern 'film as subject'. This gesture towards a creative arts education recalls the White Paper on Education, 1995, when governmental policy stated that creative and performing arts are 'intrinsically valuable educational disciplines'. The subsequent Points of Alignment report puts forward a complete rationale for fully resourced and developed arts-in-education programmes, and informs the strategies for arts education being developed by the Encountering the Arts lobbying group, of which IFI is a member.

Creative arts education also encompasses filmmaking projects, encountered through pilot projects and also the case studies of Fresh Film Festival, Film Project for Primary Schools (FÍS), Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM) and others.

### Creative Europe

In a broader European context, a case for film education is currently being made under the Creative Europe Agenda<sup>5</sup>. Speaking to the European Culture Forum, German filmmaker Wim Wenders asserted that 'We need to equip our children with the skills to decode images so they'll still have the taste for their own ones, so we can continue in Europe to produce and project our own imagery, our own image and identity, in the future'. This interest in fostering a taste for 'our own image' is reflected in the enthusiasm for new Irish film in our education programme at IFI but also the commitment to include an Irish film in the Leaving Certificate Comparative Study. If recognising indigenous creative industries is a matter for arts education, Wenders' gesture towards vocational training is echoed in the Creative Capital Report produced under the aegis of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This aligns with the EU Green Paper Unlocking the Potential of Creative and Cultural Industries (2010). Both clearly outline the need for education and training for young people, stipulating that it has to be 'the education system {-} in which the skills that develop creativity are fostered'.

Whether or not arts education should be viewed as a means of securing a future creative industry, the inclusion of 'Creative and Critical Thinking', at Senior Cycle, and the specification of Creativity and Innovation within the Junior Cycle Framework for Learning, is in keeping with this commitment and further connected these developments with the creative projects in which we engaged.

### Participative and Collaborative Learning Styles

The final element to be considered in our framework was the participatory dimension of film and media literacy projects. This aspect finds weight in claims by The European Association of

Viewer's Interests (EVAI)<sup>6</sup>: that media literacy capabilities are 'vital for social relations around the nexus of civil society, education, policy and industry'. Two sides to this are evidenced by the use of social networking to activate citizenry during the Arab Spring and the condemnation of social media usage during the 2011 riots that occurred in the UK.

While there is a growing case against some of the grander citizenship claims of media literacy, and the fact that technological developments benefit huge corporations ultimately, at the same time few would doubt that 'to become an active participant in public life necessarily involves making use of modern media',<sup>7</sup> just as traditional literacies facilitated participation in a written-text based society. The idea of belonging to a world in which ideas are shared and shaped by the citizenry, recalls Jurgen Habermas' 'public sphere'. Not suggesting that having the skills to access for example online gaming communities leads to participation in a broader society, but that the collaborative, skills-based ways in which games are played or films are made can have relevance for classroom learning and the cooperative learning styles advocated by both proposed revisions to Junior and Leaving Certificates.

#### Film Focus Framework

To conclude, therefore, in defining a framework for Film Focus, we referenced current curricula and related developments at Primary, Junior and Senior Cycles, and we also looked to the Literacy Strategy and wider media literacy arena.

We located Film Focus within the regular activities of the IFI Education programme and acknowledged the creative industries debate as well as the participatory effects of media literacy.

Film Focus offered us the following opportunities:

// to investigate film education activities currently in place around the country

// to carry out research that would complement our existing education programme through new and existing networks

// to evaluate action research projects in the context of curricular developments

// to explore other areas such as youth and community

and

// to view our work within a broader European and international context

Our research was framed within a definition of literacy that encompassed what media education expert and author Cary Bazalgette refers to as 'the whole portfolio of integrated skills, knowledge and understanding that enables us to participate in our culture and society'.<sup>8</sup> This we believed offered us highly relevant points of engagement from which to proceed.

## // FILM –

ITS AIM IS TO INCREASE  
PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF  
THE MANY FORMS OF MEDIA  
MESSAGES ENCOUNTERED  
IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES...  
MESSAGES ARE THE...FILMS...'

<sup>1</sup> AvSRG 2011, 32

<sup>2</sup> [www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Early\\_Childhood\\_and\\_Primary\\_Education/Primary\\_School\\_Curriculum/Language\\_Curriculum\\_Research\\_Reports/litreport.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Primary_School_Curriculum/Language_Curriculum_Research_Reports/litreport.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ncca.biz/guidelines/intro.html>

<sup>4</sup> [ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy)

<sup>5</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/culture/creative-europe/>

<sup>6</sup> EVAI p8

<sup>7</sup> Buckingham, 2011

<sup>8</sup> POV 1.1 p12

# Phase One – National Survey Analysis

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The first research phase of Film Focus took the form of a quantitative survey, through which we aimed to map the film education landscape in Ireland. While we were already very familiar with the field through our education programme in IFI, we hoped to learn of other practitioners from youth, community and arts sectors. The survey was made available through our Education programme mailout to over 3000 schools. It was also housed on the IFI website and emailed to personnel in arts, youth and community sectors for forwarding to their databases. Our researcher followed up with a scheme of phone calls, emails and text messages.

By our cut-off date, the survey yielded a total of 216 respondents with a roughly even split between respondents from the Dublin area and outside. Hardcopy responses yielded 25% of the results and these were combined with the online version. In terms of both geography and types of projects encountered, the sample is wide and varied and, we concluded, would give us a representative glimpse of film education in Ireland.

## Some Analysis

Of the total number of respondents, the weighting of 59.6% (See Fig.1) was largely in favour of secondary school teachers. This group also makes up the greater number of users of the IFI Education programmes who engage with film for TY or other subject support.

Results of the survey (See Fig. 2 & 3) showed that the greater percentage 27.9% of film education programmes being delivered involved film in TY, backed up by the preferred age range (15-16). 23.8% used Film as Subject Support. An interesting 18.2% of programmes involved Media Studies but it was unclear if this referred to Junior Cycle English which includes a Media Studies component. Both of these findings informed the definition of Modes of Engagement for the subsequent action research phase of Film Focus.

## Aims of Film education Programmes (See Fig. 4)

When selecting from the range of possible aims for a film education programme, 'having fun' scored the highest at 16.6% to 'raise(ing) the profile of film in your venue' as the lowest 5% with 'Other' yielding 3%. This preference for 'fun' prompts

questions, the most obvious being whether an absence of curricular basis result in separating film education from the more serious aspects of curricula? Was it linked to the higher proportion of transition year groups reporting 27.9% where students are freed from curricular demands? Or did respondents' experience of film education confirm that most students enjoyed it? It is interesting that a Curriculum Principle of the Proposed Framework for Junior Cycle is 'Engagement, relevance, enjoyment'; a film education programme which has enjoyment as a priority would have something to offer such a syllabus.

Scoring just below the 'fun' element is media literacy – unsurprisingly an interest for the film educators who were replying.

Likewise, many cite TY as the place where film can be done 'as film', which may reflect on the network of IFI Education programme users.

Unsurprisingly, film to support curricula was the next highest score 14.2%, echoing much of the IFI's school audience but also the way in which film is actually used in the classroom.

This is backed up by the 13.7% whose preference is for using foreign language films, followed by documentary.

Despite the very significant presence of FÍS in primary schools, the majority of people from whom we received data were not working in the primary sector. Primary yielded 7.8% of replies.

## Screenings (See Fig. 5)

50% of respondents came from Dublin and 50% from outside Dublin; 21.6% of respondents are actually coming into the IFI to access film screenings while 40.3% use DVDs in school. In-school screenings take place predominantly in the classroom, with a mere 11.7% having access to a designated screening room. An interesting 19% cited their local cinema as the venue for screenings, however it is not clear if this refers to the IFI Education touring programme, which brings certain films for schools to local cinemas. Given class durations and other demands, it is welcome to note that 15.3% show entire films while 77.1% show a mix of clips and entire films.

### What films are shown? (See Fig. 6)

In terms of genres screened, foreign language films are most popular 13.7%, shortly followed by documentary 13.4%. While the foreign language preference is backed up by other results e.g. The use of film for subject support, the selection of documentary is puzzling unless seen as subject support for eg History, Geography. Interestingly, Irish films get support as wide as short films and classics.

### Resources

The overwhelming majority 88% utilise further resources to get the most out of film. Resources are determined to be 'very useful'. While a quarter of respondents are using IFI resources, more still are making them themselves, though not all teachers are keen to go to such lengths.

### Filmmaking (See Fig. 7)

Of 120 responding, 53.2% included filmmaking in their film education programme. Despite this not inconsiderable number, only 44.5% had training in the use of equipment with 23.3% feeling less than confident in its use. 51.7% used their own equipment. Of those who deliver practical filmmaking, 55.5% have had no training in the use of equipment.

Only 1/3 of respondents who run practical filmmaking courses create a variety of films. All others favour Animation 15%, Live Action 31% or Documentary 22%.

### Best Aspects of film education programmes

In the final section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to list and rank the three 'best aspects' of their own film education programme and three areas in which their programme could be strengthened. First preference '**best aspects**' ranged from the very curriculum focused such as '**exposure to foreign language and culture**', '**making English syllabus more enjoyable**', '**assisting literacy**' to wider learning such as '**media literacy**', '**interpersonal skills development**' and '**learn(ing) about culture**'.

Among the first preference aspects to be strengthened, the most frequently recurring was the need for training in technology and having access to more resources including DVDs, studyguides and filmmaking equipment.

The final section of our survey invited respondents to comment generally on their experience of film education. Several insightful replies were helpful for the development of the action research phase of the project. They also offered a more qualitative insight into the film education landscape that the survey aimed to measure. Among the many comments, they included an interest in:

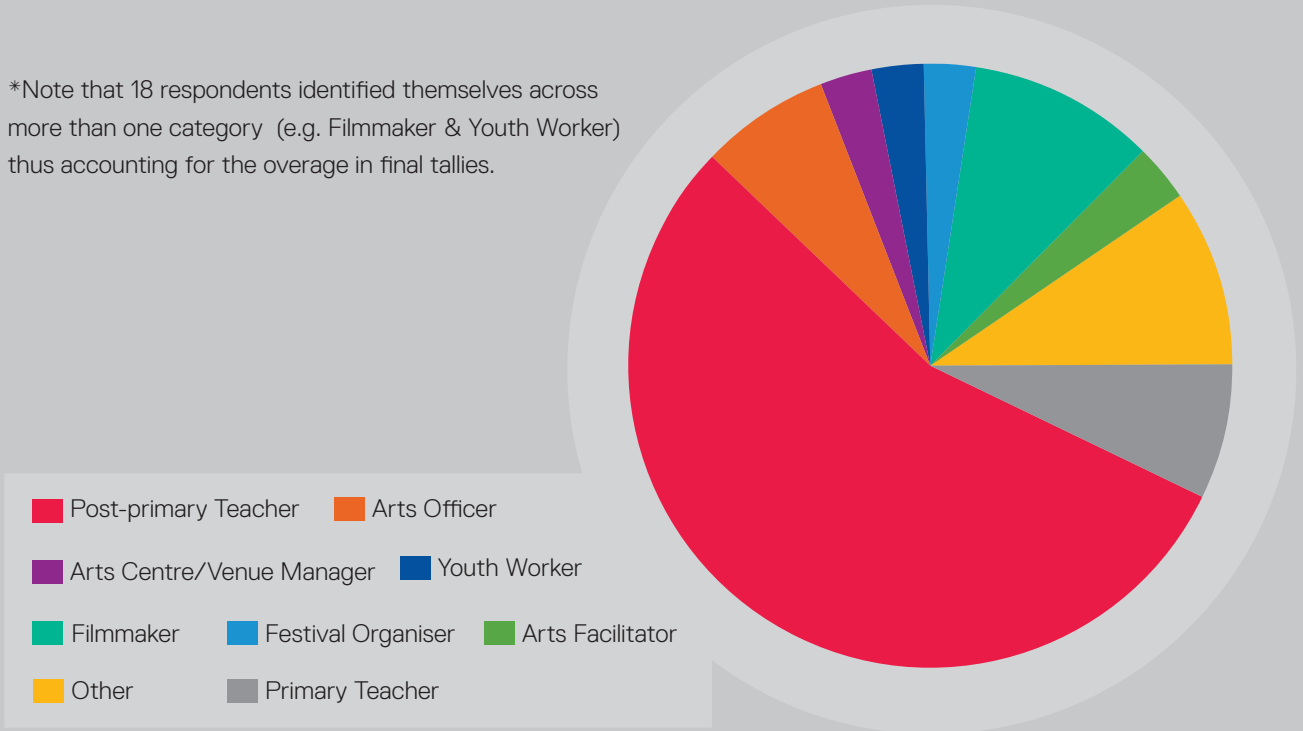
- / sharing resources and ideas, getting advice and training, time constraints particularly for filmmaking projects and convincing students that Film Studies involved a bit more than simply watching films
- / having access to artists and filmmakers
- / the need to teach film language
- / using film in primary school
- / the potential of filmmaking for a fun and engaging module for teens

Thus the Film Focus Phase One Survey yielded results that were illuminating in terms of the nature of film education programmes around the country but also, and perhaps more importantly, the impact of these on facilitators and participants. These results provided a foundation for the next stage of our research process.

**Fig. 1 – Breakdown of participants**

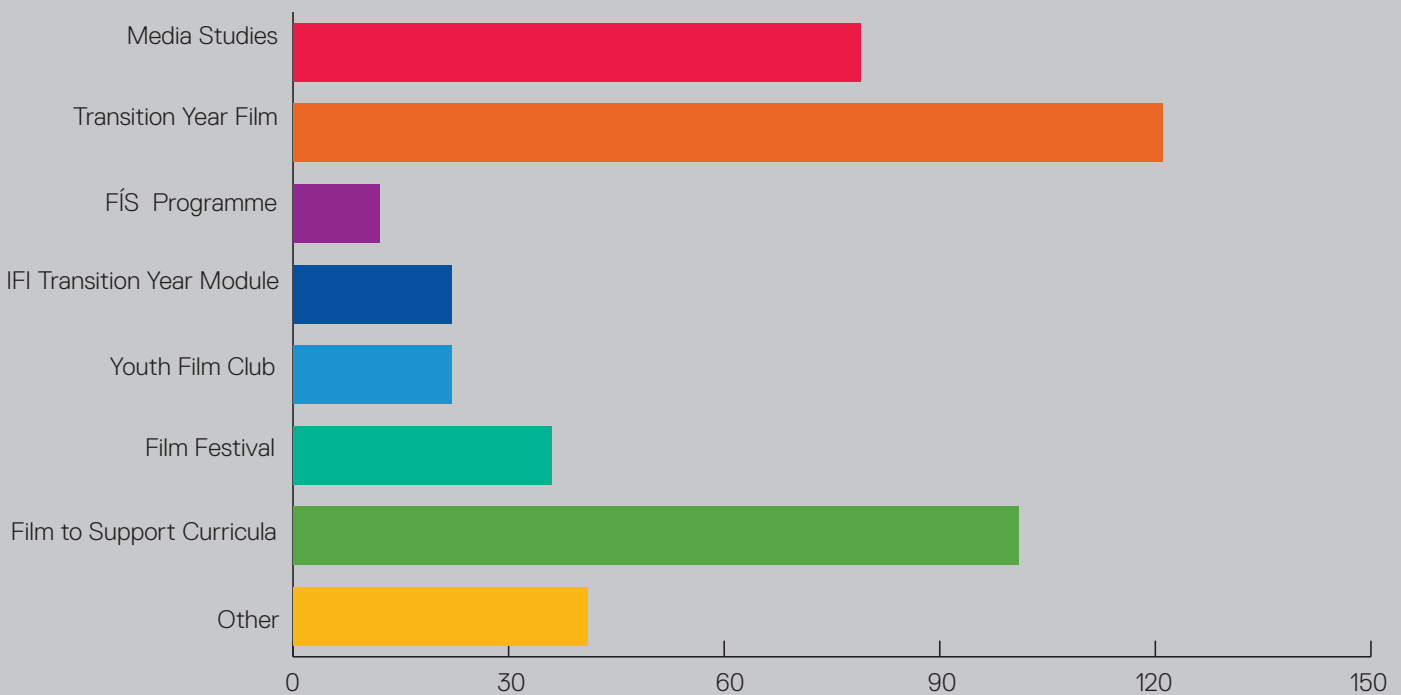
[218 Reporting]

\*Note that 18 respondents identified themselves across more than one category (e.g. Filmmaker & Youth Worker) thus accounting for the overage in final tallies.



**Fig. 2 – Does your film education programme involve any of the following?**

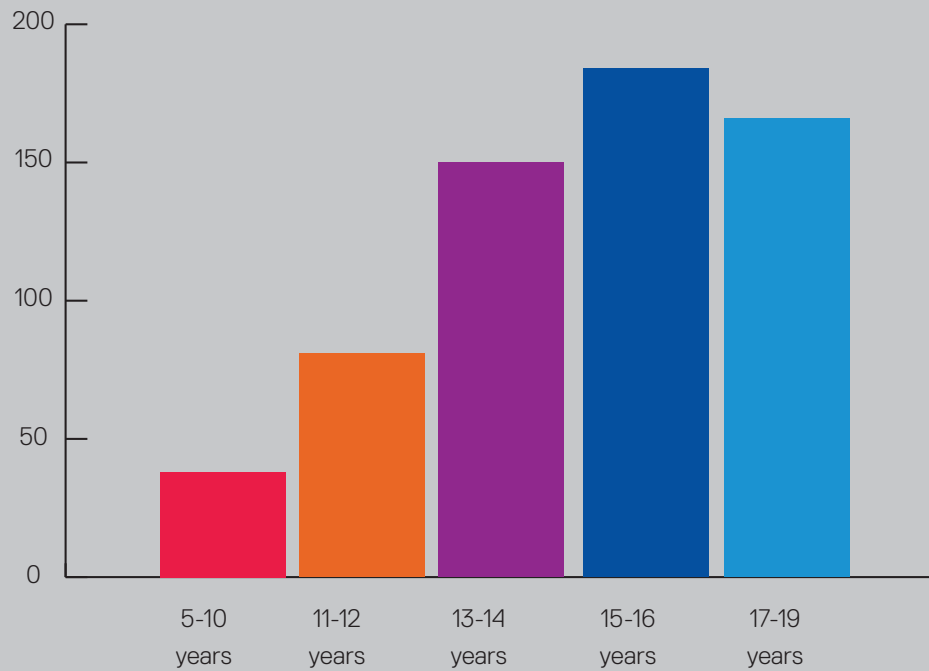
[218 Reporting; 100% Reporting]



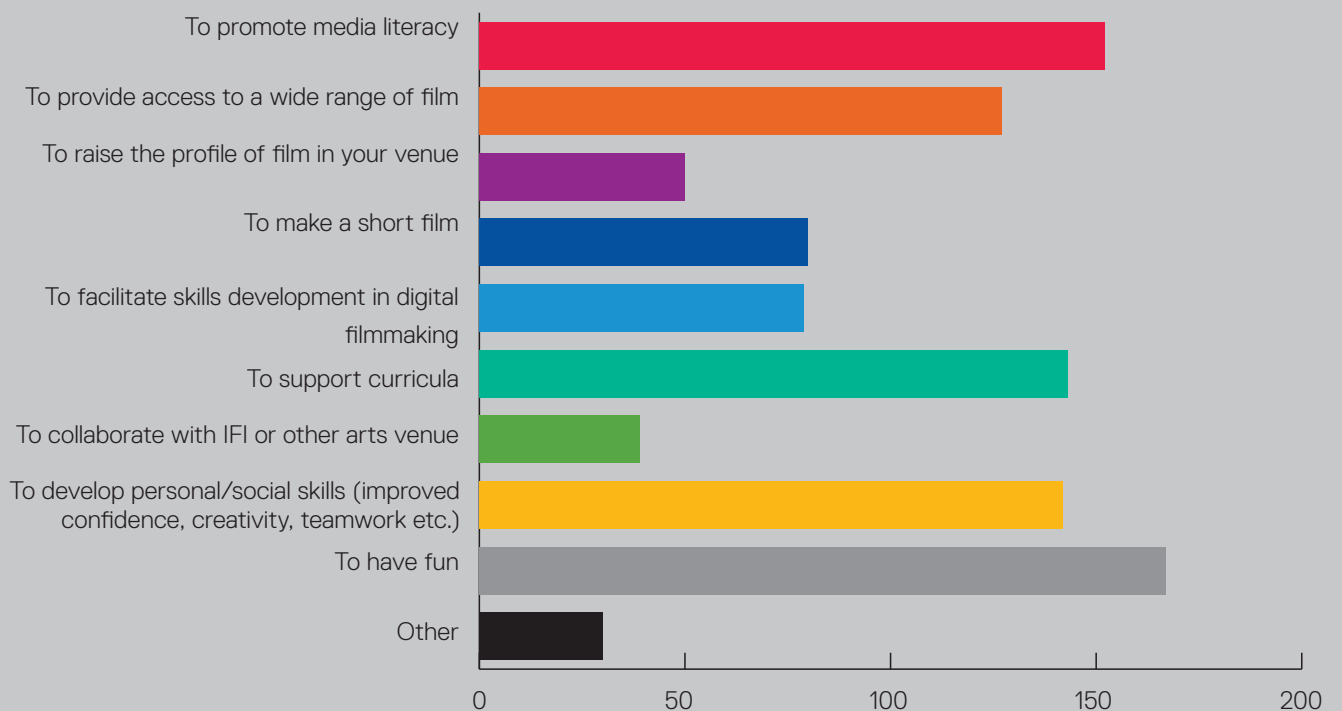


**Fig. 3 – What age groups do you work with?**

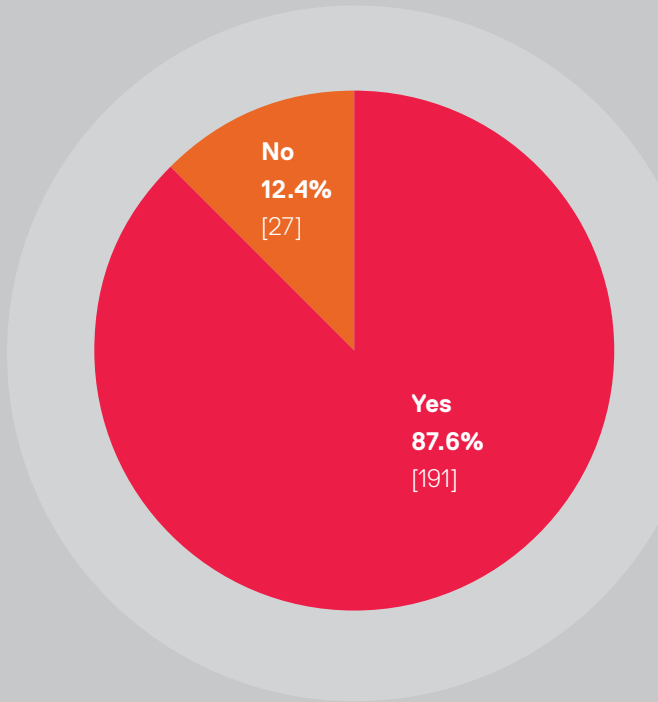
[218 Respondents; 100% Reporting]

**Fig. 4 – What are the aims of your film education programme?**

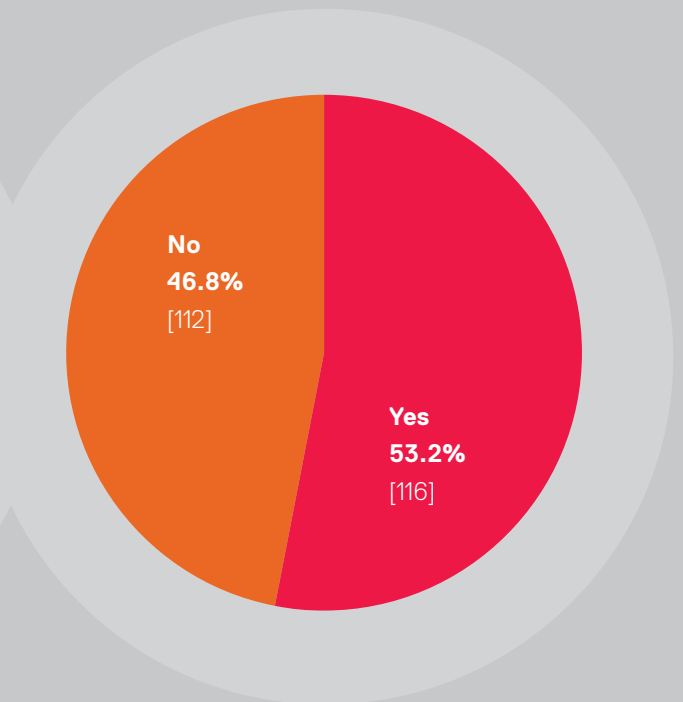
[216 Reporting]



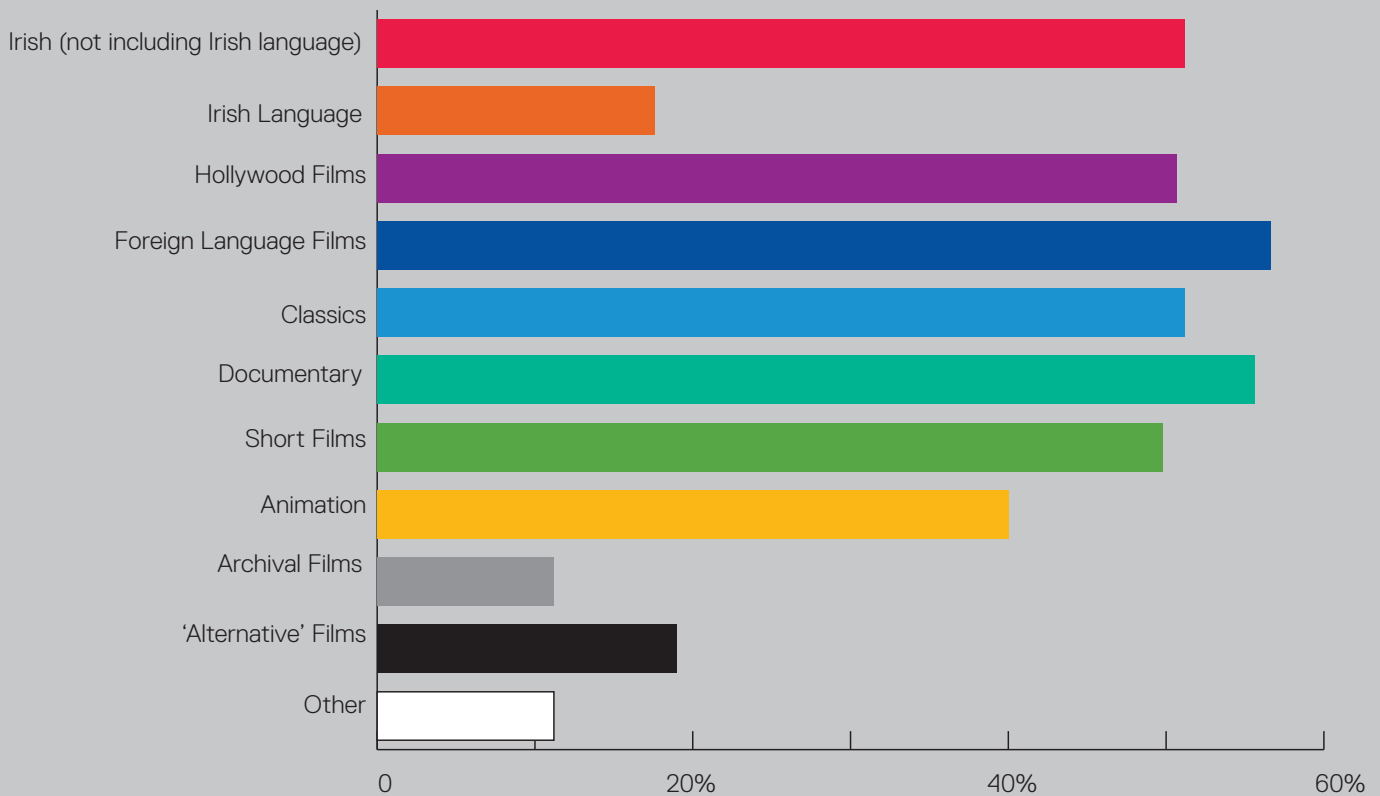
**Fig. 5 – Does your film education programme include film screenings?** [218 reporting]



**Fig. 7 – Does your film education programme include filmmaking/production?** [218 reporting]



**Fig. 6 – What kinds of films are participants introduced to in your programme?** [205 Reporting]





# Phase Two – Teacher and Student Screening Surveys – Analysis

16

## Rationale

Following the quantitative survey and alongside the action research, we continued to gather relevant data through surveys of the student and teacher audiences at film screenings of the IFI Education programme. In doing so, we hoped to establish connections between both activities. The manner in which we programmed films for schools – i.e. selecting titles which would support curricula, wider learning or facilitating the teaching of film in Transition Year – were also the Modes of Engagement we had defined to inform the pilot projects.

Taking the fact of young peoples' attendance at a screening as evidence of engagement with film to some extent, we believed that the attendees' own evaluation of this would give us some insight into the nature of their engagement. Although students' attendance was dependent on their teachers', this did not detract from their commenting on how film complemented their schooling. On a micro level, the screening surveys enabled us to get some insight into the audience experience of the IFI Education Programme. On a macro level, these surveys could yield a sense of respondees' understanding of the broader issues of film education. Those surveyed were informed that the information they provided would feed into a wider project.

## Screenings and Education

In many ways, film screenings for schools reveal some of the challenges of film education for teacher and learner:

For the teacher, it's a matter of stepping outside of traditional pedagogical methods to teach a medium in which the learners are already very familiar and may even know more.

For the student, they are being asked to bring their experience and enjoyment of watching films outside of school into the school context. Unlike an outing to the theatre, a more unfamiliar cultural environment, the cinema is an identifiable location where recognisable behavioural and social norms apply, even within a cultural venue such as IFI.

When attending a schools' screening, people sign up for a shared viewing experience and all that that implies. Both teacher and student are, most likely, new to the film and ideally, students will have been given the language to facilitate a critical response either after the screening or back at school. Both parties are

encouraged through the shared cultural encounter to step out of classroom designated roles, even if roles revert when back in school. From the IFI Education programmes we surveyed teacher and student audiences of a selection of films in the following categories:

- / Film as Subject Support
- / Modern Languages (French, German)
- / Gearrscannáin
- / Film as subject (TY) including Irish film

## Some Analysis

### Teacher Surveys

The 39 teachers who completed the surveys at a range of screenings responded to a number of questions that related both to their own teaching and to broader questions of film education.

Although 31% declared CPD to be of most benefit in enabling them to use more film in their teaching, 68% reported feeling confident in film education; 5% reported feeling a lack of confidence.

57% reported using film 'Once a term or less'. So, although they were attending a film screening, this could suggest that either they did no follow-up work, or they perceived the screening, rather than their teaching, as 'using film'. 31% used film 2-3 times per month; 3% used film as often as was relevant;

Regarding the reasons for coming out of school to see a film at IFI, 25.6% cited Learning Support as the most important. Both ticket price and a chance to visit IFI were given fairly equal weighting 17.8%/17.0%.

When asked about their attitudes towards the usefulness of film education (See Fig.1), teachers gave the greatest weighting to 'providing access to culture' while the greatest benefit of film education was 'raising cultural awareness' 27.3% (See Fig.2). As the teachers surveyed represented a cross-sector of subjects, including English where film has a specific presence, it is interesting that merely 3% of the total reporting used film 'always: as often as is relevant' in their teaching. This contrasted with the 37% who used it once a term or less. Interestingly,

despite cutbacks and difficulties in getting substitution for school trips, an overwhelming majority declared it ‘very easy’ to get out of school for the particular event. Admittedly this tells us nothing about all those who did not attend.

Thus, this brief survey of teachers who were already engaging with film through screenings did not really tell us anything surprising. But findings were in keeping with the views we were hearing at Film Focus meetings and from the Phase 1 mapping survey:

- / Film was very useful when supporting curricula
- / It was an incentive to learn
- / Teachers felt ill-equipped to use it
- / It was a means of providing access to culture
- / It was accessible to all learners

Referring back to our operating framework, we also placed the screenings within the broader context of Key Skills (See Fig.2) as an aspect of curriculum development. Thus, film education could develop:

- / Critical and Creative Thinking (Critical Skills 16.2%)
- / Working with Others (Interpersonal Skills 12.0%)
- / Information processing (Visual literacy 24%)

### Student Surveys

The overwhelming majority of students 96% (See Fig.3) surveyed rated the importance of viewing films about other cultures highly, a direct complement to the teachers’ view. While 32% regarded a cinema outing as merely a nice morning away from school, and 2% had no idea why they were in the cinema, a resounding 64% declared that they would actually like to see more film in school (See Fig.4), but not necessarily as a stand-alone subject. To those who believe young people won’t watch subtitles, a resounding 69% declared that they ‘often’ do. 46% of this viewing took place ‘at home’. 65.1% could also see the potential of watching films in another language for incentivising Modern Language learning. Unsurprisingly to the mediated generation, watching a film is regarded as being as useful as reading a book.

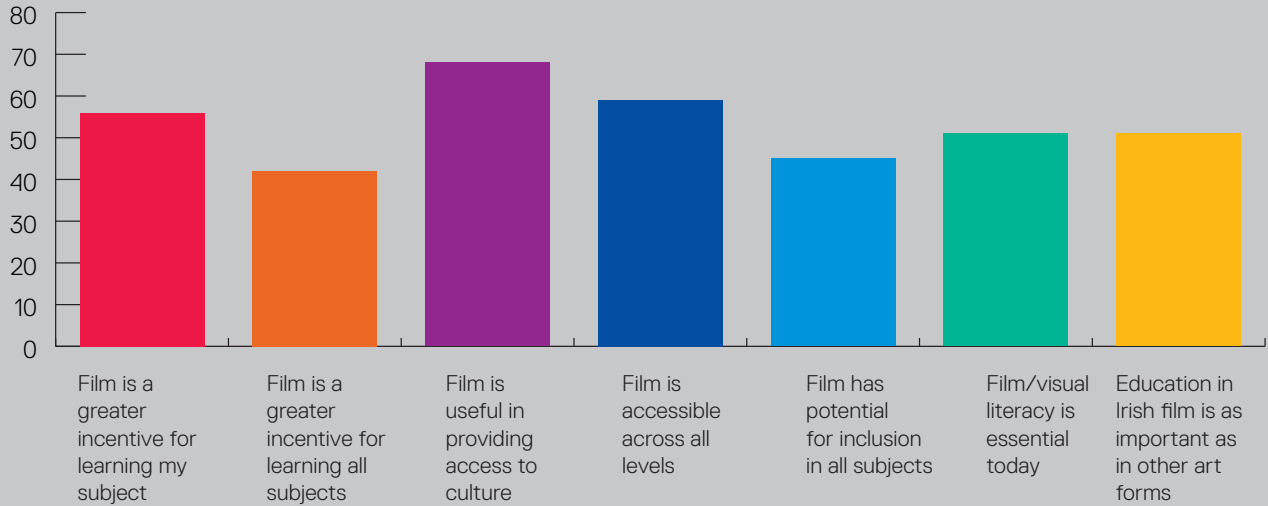
As with the teachers, therefore, the results of the student surveys did not really reveal anything that we had not suspected. Young people were open to a whole range of films from different cultures; their preference was for communications via media texts rather than printed texts; they enjoyed a day out – 45% felt that it was ‘important’ to watch a film in the cinema. On the negative side, a consistent 4% (See Fig.5) disagreed strongly with the fact of film being a relevant artform for young people, were used to talking about film or did not want to have more film in schools (See Fig.6 & 7). What was useful for our purpose and for those involved in curricular reform was the perception of how film as a form of communication and cultural expression was of significance in their lives and one to which they were open. The extent to which this could be attributed to ‘more film= less work’ must come into question.

If we compare the responses in these surveys with the experiences and views expressed in our Teen Club case study (See. p. 94), we can assert that the overwhelming positivity surrounding film is not because it’s just time away from school, but rather because there is an inherent interest and a connectivity between the mediated image and the way young people live their lives today.



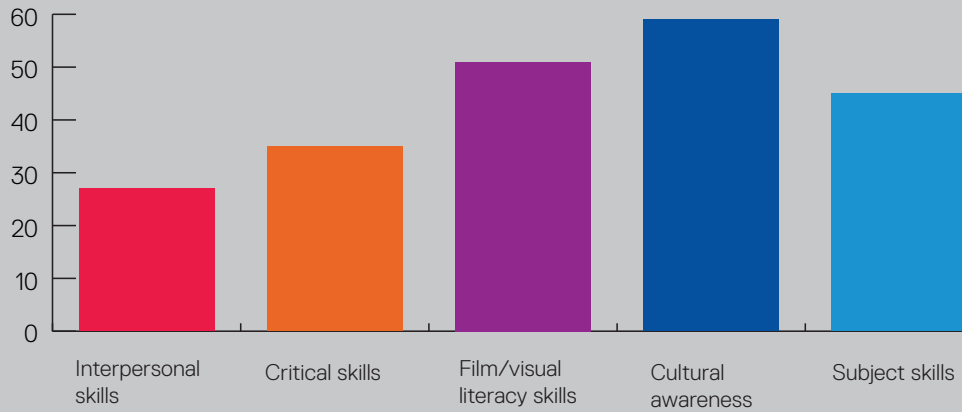
**Fig. 1 – How strongly do you feel about the following in terms of film education?**

[39 teachers reporting; weighted]



**Fig. 2 – To what extent does film develop skills?**

Average perceived benefit, where x/1:



**Fig. 3 – How important do you think it is to see films about other parts of the world or other cultures?**

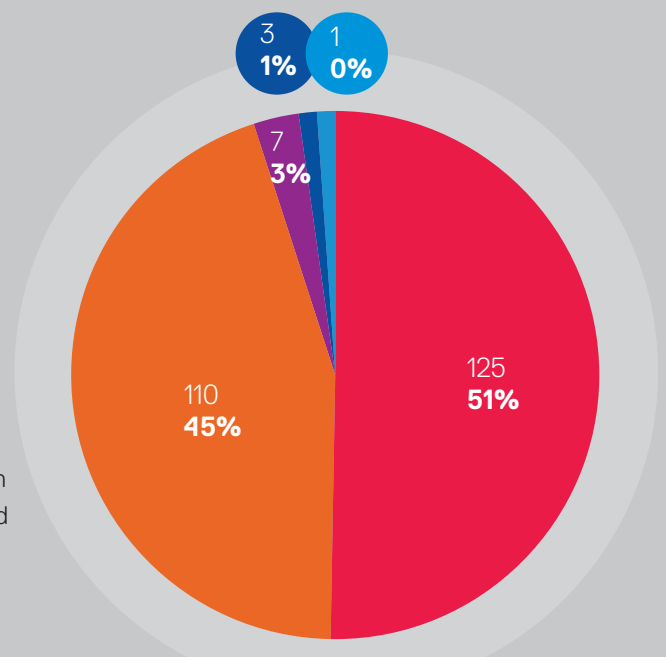
[246 students reporting\*]

**Weighted averages:**

- 2** = strongly agree;
- 1** = agree;
- 0** = neutral;
- 1** = disagree;
- 2** = strongly disagree;

How important do you think it is to see films about other [...] cultures: **1.44**

\*Students who watched films that centred on political events in other countries received this question. Answers were recorded from students who screened *Burma VJ*, *John Rabe* and *Persepolis*.

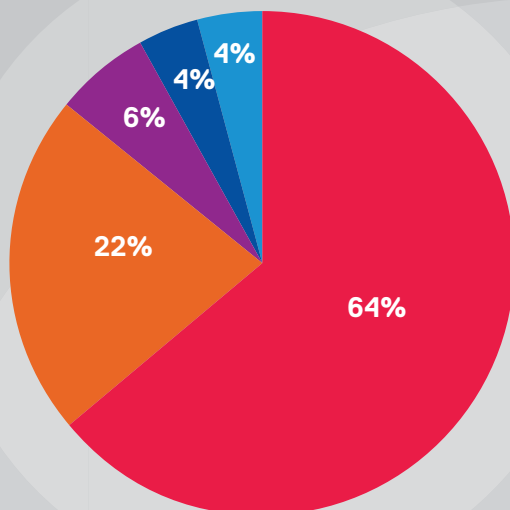


Very important Important Neither Unimportant Very unimportant

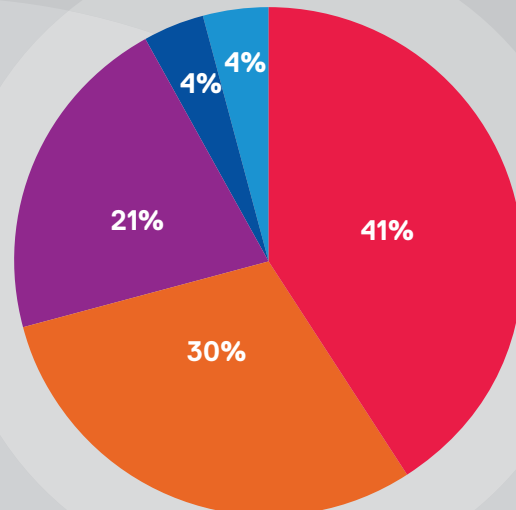
### How useful is film education in the curriculum?

■ Strongly agree   
 ■ Agree   
 ■ Neutral   
 ■ Disagree   
 ■ Strongly disagree

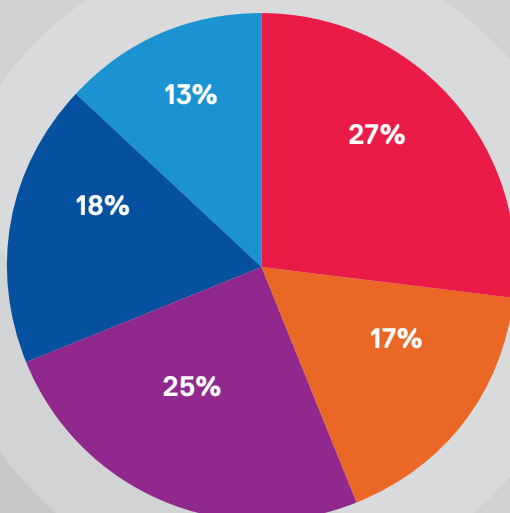
**Fig. 4 – I would like to have more film in schools.** [x/1]



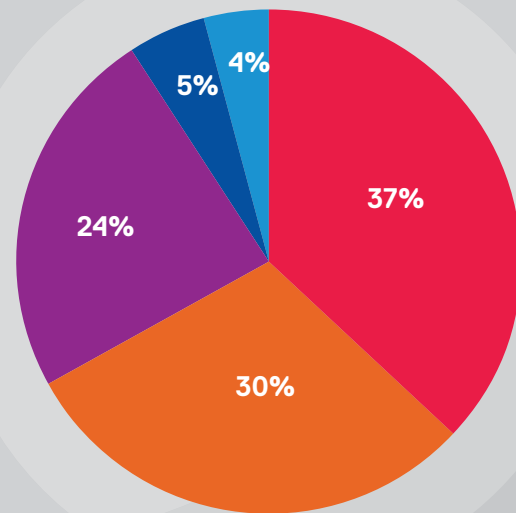
**Fig. 5 – Film is a very relevant art form for young people.** [x/1]



**Fig. 7 – I would like to have film as a stand alone subject** [x/1]



**Fig. 6 – Film is accessible as we are used to talking about it.** [x/1]



# Phase Two & Three – Pilot Projects

20

## Introduction

Drawing on our existing networks, and including survey respondents, we invited a number of film educators from across the fields of education, arts, youth and community to develop, deliver and evaluate pilot projects according to defined Modes of Engagement.

While some of the researchers developed only week-long engagements, others had a number of film-related projects and methodologies operating in similitude for weeks, months or across the school year.

The first group of projects centred on the Dublin area while the second group included Dublin and beyond. Of note, the majority of the film educators who came forward were second-level teachers. This was an acknowledged deficit throughout the research phase. Although film is frequently used as a 'treat' in primary schools, and filmmaking with the FÍS project has been carried out in hundreds of schools across the country, our call-out yielded a relatively small number of primary teachers.

The subject specialisms of the secondary teachers involved reflected the manner in which film exists in syllabi (English, Irish and Modern Languages, TY and other humanities such as Art and History) and correspondingly in IFI Education networks. While Film Focus has proactively had interactions with subject representative groups in mathematics, sciences and the vocational training sector – many of whom are calling out for more resources that utilise film and moving image media – educators from these subject areas by and large did not register through our survey.

## Types of Projects

The following Modes of Engagement devised from our Phase One survey results would provide the motivations for the various projects:

**Film for learning support** – these projects were based on the argument that the positive response engendered by film, a media form which most have experienced and enjoyed, can facilitate active enquiry which in turn will promote oral, visual and written literacies, particularly among those who may be

inhibited by more traditional learning methodologies. Some filmmaking projects and the necessity for collaborative thinking and action which they require also fell under this category.

**Film for subject support** – these projects and observations argue that utilising film can be of great support to a host of school subjects. Projects explored areas where film has already gained acceptance within curricula such as in Leaving Certificate English, or they examined its direct oral and aural (as well as visual) benefits for modern language teaching and the use of short film within the Irish syllabus.

**The subject of film** – largely aimed at Transition Year (TY) students, where schedules are more free to explore film and moving image media outside of curricula, projects included those who have engaged with IFI Education's TY programmes as well as those who developed short courses around a cinematic theme e.g. genre. Encompassed within these projects was the notion of film as an artform which stimulates aesthetic awareness and pleasure. As film educators, the teachers running these modules also taught a regular subject, so their comments and critique of the place of film in Irish education is drawn from both a film-centred perspective and their experiences of including film and the concerns of visual literacy into the processes of teaching subjects to exam.

**Film as cultural experience** – these projects argue that the cinematic experience of seeing films projected large in the cinema is itself a culturally validating experience. Whether watching classic film, engaging with an Irish production or watching an example of alternative cinema that places emphasis on another culture, the social aspect of watching as intended, in an environment free from distraction or timetabling, is an approach to cultural material that cannot be replicated by more traditional classroom approaches to text.

**Filmmaking** – These projects revolved around practical filmmaking efforts and in most cases, learning about the techniques of filmmaking was coupled with an engagement with film as a visual language. As stressed by facilitators, in many instances the actual product made is secondary to the problem

solving, collaborative skills and social engagement necessary to bring a film from an initial kernel of an idea to a completed production for screening. Issue-based filmmaking projects also provide an impetus to explore topics and social issues larger than the films themselves.

On completion of their projects, each facilitator submitted a project report in which they outlined strengths and challenges of their endeavour. Given the curricular context in which Film Focus was operating – the Junior Cycle Framework, The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, proposed key skills for Senior Cycle – we then viewed each project through its relevant curricular lens and offer this as supplement to each. The projects reported here are the work of dedicated professionals who were willing to absorb considerable extra

activity into their already full schedule in order to explore filmic possibilities for their subject, through a structured activity. Though the projects are all different, they shared their facilitators' passion for film and a belief that their students would be motivated by engaging with it.

### General Findings from Pilot Projects

- // **While FÍS has enabled filmmaking projects across the primary sector, film as subject is predominantly aimed at second level students. Even then, many teachers find it difficult to programme for Junior Cycle students and by the time film is introduced in the Senior Cycle 'it is too late'.**

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- // **There is support for a wider introduction of film at primary level; this requires a validation of film literacy as an educative tool other than simply as an aspect of ICT, or as something to be taught to corroborate written or other types of learning.**

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- // **Students recognise film, be it viewing, analysing or creating, as a distinctly social engagement. That it can be a site for dialogue-based enquiry with uptake across all levels of learners cannot be emphasised enough.**

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- // **There is consensus that the manner in which film is included in Leaving Certificate English is limited. It configures film as a medium to be directly related to the written word rather than examples of an artform itself.**

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- // **Film can energise a classroom, or its subject matter; The pleasure associated with film viewing, the knowledge which young people already have of visual media, should not be under-estimated in terms of their capacity to motivate. However, there must be accountability regarding how, let alone if, film is utilised after screening.**

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- // **Filmmaking projects require confidence-building on the part of both young people and educators. By viewing filmmaking projects as a means of encouraging collaboration, problem solving skills and creative, participatory engagement rather than focussing on the end result, such projects can have resonance across curricula.**

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- // **Film requires time. Whether it is watching and analysing a feature or attempting to script, shoot and edit a short film, in the time-poor school day, such factors must be considered. Engaging with film within the typical school day often involved negotiations with school management and fellow educators alike.**

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- // **Given its place within the contemporary landscape, the argument for inclusion of film-based and film-supplemented lessons still depends on keen teachers. Those who already have such passions and momentum will continue to use film. Those who do not will not under the present curricular demands.**

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- // **The establishment of networks of likeminded individuals – educators, filmmakers, facilitators and venues – is invaluable. Many of those with whom Film Focus worked thought their own efforts existed in a vacuum; discovering that there are others who shares passions, approaches and skillsets opened forth dialogue about film-in-education that was of great benefit for all.**

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# Film & Media Literacy

Film & Media Literacy – the skills which enables us to access, create, make meaning from and critique forms of cultural expression conveyed in print, audio and visual media, including film, television, gaming, and online.

*Film Focus* acknowledges the many and varying definitions of Media Literacy that exist. To inform our study and the pilot projects within, (see Overview p.6) we examined various definitions and looked to the widely recognised three Cs of media literacy – **critical understanding**, **cultural access**, and **creative engagement**. To this, we added **communication** in recognition of how media, including film, is utilised today, resulting in a new framework that encompasses these four key skillsets.

We placed each of our Pilot Projects into this framework (Fig.1). Fig.2 defines the four skillsets within the concerns of film, visual and digital media. The final chart indicates where these media literacy skills are used in daily life.

## MEDIA LITERACY KEY

CRITICAL	<span style="background-color: #4CAF50; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span>
CULTURAL	<span style="background-color: #2196F3; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span>
CREATIVE	<span style="background-color: #9C27B0; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span>
COMMUNICATIVE	<span style="background-color: #E91E63; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span>

FIG. 2

MEDIA LITERACY				
	WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR FILM?	WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR VISUAL MEDIA?	WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR DIGITAL MEDIA?	
WHAT ARE MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS?	<b>CRITICAL SKILLS</b>	The ability to access, analyse and evaluate film and moving image media and make informed choices	The ability to access, understand and critically appreciate visual media in the world around us.	The ability to access, understand, evaluate and navigate online and with new communication technologies
	<b>CULTURAL SKILLS</b>	To have an awareness and knowledge of, and interest in, film heritage. The acknowledgement of European cinema traditions	The ability to recognise how culture and perceptions are shaped by visual media	The ability to recognise how culture and perceptions are influenced by and disseminated through digital media
	<b>CREATIVE SKILLS</b>	The ability to make film and moving image. To collaborate and problem solve as necessary in the production	The ability to create informed messages and products through a variety of media	The ability to use digital communication technology to innovate, to create messages, programmes and interfaces. The capacity to problem solve as necessary
	<b>COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS</b>	The ability to use moving image media to foster dialogue, including intercultural dialogue	The ability to access, understand and develop dialogue and active citizenship through participatory visual media	The ability to promote an online self. To have an understanding of the issues of rights and privacies in online participation
EXAMPLES OF 21ST CENTURY MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS				
WHERE ARE THESE SKILLS UTILISED?	<b>PERSONAL</b>	Films on TV, Cinema, DVDs, Streaming Content, Film downloads	Advertising, Poster campaigns, Print-based media, Visual art, Photography	Mobile phone/personal digital devices, Personal computers, Internet browsing, Social networking, Gaming, Streaming/Downloading
	<b>EDUCATION</b>	Film in subject areas e.g. English Film as subject support Film as subject (e.g. TY)	Visual content of Textbooks and Resource materials Visual Arts curricula	ICT Using IT in Education
	<b>INDUSTRY</b>	Production of Film, TV, Animation, Digital Content, Games	Design, Marketing and Communications	Information Technologies 'Knowledge' economy; Innovation
	<b>POLICY</b>	Issues of Copyright, Intellectual Property & Film classification	Media Literacy – Broadcasting Act Creative Europe National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy	Broadband infrastructure, Broadcasting regulation



**FIG. 1**

**PROJECT 1**

Film adaptation of a poem  
(p. 28 - 29)

Students accessed, analysed and evaluated the film using film language, to interpret unfamiliar literary themes and historical settings. They responded to the poem using relevant digital media in the creation of their own short film.

1

**PROJECT 3**

Film and EAL Development  
(p. 32 - 33)

Students accessed and evaluated examples of World Cinema (African, New Zealand) to learn about, and accept, wider cultures. English was not the native language of the majority of students; the films and wider activities drawn from them had direct implications for learning about one another.

3

**PROJECT 5**

Film, School Completion and Classroom Learning (p. 36 -37)

Students at risk for early school leaving accessed and evaluated L2 films in cultural venues throughout Dublin. The exposure to, and viewing and analysis of, French films introduced students to another culture. In subsequent class periods students analysed the films in groups and carried out further work with them.

5

**PROJECT 7**

Community-based Filmmaking Project (p. 40 - 41)

Students from two schools collaborated on films exploring the subject of suicide prevention within their wider South Dublin community. Teaming with *Headstrong*, they produced an original film that was debuted at Mental Health Action Week.

7

**PROJECT 9**

Filmmaking for Young Social Innovators (p. 44 - 45)

Students spent the Transition Year exploring and evaluating films to inform their own filmmaking practice. Working together and experiencing multiple production roles, the students created a series of films around social issues which teenagers face in their daily lives

9

**PROJECT 11**

Whole-year cinema trip  
(p. 52 - 53)

This educator conducted a year-long cinema studies class as well as bringing the entire 1st year cohort to a special programme under the rationale that the cinematic experience and dynamic, group viewing of films on the big screen would bolster a love of cinema. Subsequent work was carried out regarding the films screened.

11

**PROJECT 13**

Film as Collaborative and Inclusive Project (p. 58 - 59)

TY students worked collaboratively with a cohort from a national deaf school in the creation of an animated short film. As well as solving the technical problems inherent to film production, the collaborators learned how to work with one another, and the hearing students learned about the deaf students' world.

13

**PROJECT 2**

Filmmaking in the German Language Class (p. 30 - 31)

Students accessed and analysed film in L2, learning about German history and cultural distinctions. Working with the cinematic vocabulary in L2, the students then produced their own film and organised its exhibition for their school without the use of English.

2

**PROJECT 4**

Film and Literacy  
(p. 34 - 35)

Film adaptations were accessed and evaluated with their text-based counterparts in a classroom of students with special needs [dyslexia]. Examples included classic American, English and contemporary Irish literature. Students worked together to understand cinematic convention and bolster their reading comprehension. Further projects were undertaken by individuals.

4

**PROJECT 6**

Documentary Filmmaking  
(p. 38 - 39)

Students watched and critically assessed *Oliver!* in advance of their own stage production. During the rehearsals students created a film informed by popular cultural forms of television. They presented their collaborative efforts to the audiences at the end of year productions.

6

**PROJECT 8**

Film at Senior Cycle and after school (p. 42 - 43)

Students were exposed to films in both English and L2 classes. In the latter, the teacher used her own familial experience to make *Spirit of the Beehive* and the cultural history of Spain relevant to the students. These viewings informed their own filmmaking efforts in an after school setting.

8

**PROJECT 10**

Film and Literacies  
(p.48 - 49)

Students accessed and evaluated different films in school and visited a city centre cinema to see a non-mainstream film. They were encouraged to discuss and examine the themes from the film and then completed follow-up work to the film back at school.

10

**PROJECT 12**

Film and Transition Year  
(p. 54 - 55)

This year-long project encapsulated many aspects of the study of film. Exposure to and analysis of cinematic convention and a survey of film history informed the production of student-produced short films. As well as collaborating on the film, the young filmmakers had to negotiate with faculty to shoot and exhibit their finished product.

12

**PROJECT 14**

Filmmaking Collaboration during and after school (p. 60 - 61)

Students enrolled in a school completion programme spent a week with a young persons' filmmaking initiative working on a series of short films. After learning about the mechanics and language of film, the students debuted their films in the 250 seat IFI Cinema 1.

14







**Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot  
Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot  
Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot  
Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot  
Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot  
Project  
Reports**

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**Pilot**

# Pilot Project 1 – Film adaptation of a poem

28

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support: English, Film, TY

## Pilot group

Transition Year English students who were also doing a Film Studies Module

## Could be adapted for

Junior Certificate English, Junior Certificate Short Course

// “GETTING EXPERT HELP IS FANTASTIC – A REAL AUDIENCE AND A REAL SENSE OF PURPOSE FOR STUDENT WORK”

## Project Outline

Following the study of a number of poets, the group selected the British Romantic poet John Keats’ sonnet *Bright Star* as a poem to which they would directly and creatively respond.

After a reading and analysis of the poem, the TY students came to a screening in IFI of the biopic *Bright Star* (2009, dir. Jane Campion). IFI’s introduction addressed issues such as the adaptation of a poem to another art form. The film revolves around the last three years of Keats’ life and his doomed relationship with Fanny Brawne. Following the cinema outing, students then set about creating their own short filmic response to the poem.

## Synopsis

Students began by storyboarding the poem line-by-line; from this they nominated a director, actors and ‘crew’ to look after lighting, props, costume and other elements of the *mise en scène*. The film was shot and they then began the process of editing the work. This presented a number of problems for the teacher. Editing with the provided software package proved to be ‘very difficult’, to the extent that the students downloaded a ‘very basic software package’ in an attempt to facilitate the film’s completion.

This particular school has a timetabled TY Film Module, certainly an avenue to explore for future screenings. Despite this, the addition of cinema outings, which hadn’t been timetabled in advance, led to timetabling difficulties, which highlights the need for whole-school commitment to the area. The educator felt that, should she repeat the exercise, she may well drop the film screening in lieu of more time for production, such was the effort involved in realising it.

During Film Focus meetings, the teacher’s comments regarding the difficulties she encountered in trying to complete the filmmaking project were echoed by other participants. There was some surprise at the demands of practical projects. Lack of filmmaking expertise is not unusual in Irish schools, echoing the Phase One Survey result of 44.5% who declared that they had no training in filmmaking, despite attempting filmmaking projects. However, she expressed that it was both filmmaking skills and ‘life skills’ that were accrued during the project.

### Strengths of Project

- / TY Film Studies Module was timetabled at the start of the year allowing for some experimentation with film and moving image outside of regular subjects
- / Students were motivated by the film and the poem itself, having studied the poem in advance of the screening
- / Word of the project spread through the year group and generated excitement and curiosity among all classes, not just those involved
- / The project promoted friendship, group dynamics, life skills, knowledge and understanding

### Challenges

- / Time and effort required in running a filmmaking project
- / Lack of training or expertise in the practical field
- / Getting whole school support for such a project in order to include outings, flexibility for film shoot etc.

// “BRIGHT STAR, WOULD I  
WERE STEDFAST AS  
THOU ART”

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

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### Media Literacy

- / Access, analyse and evaluate the film using film language
- / Develop an understanding of this film and the filmmaker within film culture.

### Information Processing

- / Access information on Romantic poets from a range of sources
- / Present information using a range of ICT tools

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Examine similarities and differences between poetry and film
- / Recognise effects of using emotive words/imagery

### Communicating

- / Analyse and interpret written & visual texts
- / Engage in dialogue when deciding how to interpret the poem visually
- / Present using the media of storyboards & film, using a range of ICT tools

### Working with Others

- / Identify tasks & assign filmmaking roles
- / Work together to agree an action plan
- / Personally reflect on one's own contribution & identify strengths & weaknesses

### Being Personally Creative

- / Take the initiative, be flexible, reliable and persevere when difficulties arise
- / Identify resources needed to reach targets set
- / Evaluate one's own performance within the group

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### Learning Outcomes

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#### On completion of this Module, students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate knowledge of the poetry of John Keats
  - / Interpret & analyse a film using film language, understanding a film's point of view
  - / Compare & contrast the presentation of a literary work in written & visual form
-



# Pilot Project 2 – Filmmaking in the German Language Class (L2)

30

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as L2 Subject Support: German

## Pilot group

2nd Year German

## Could be adapted for

Irish, L2 French/Spanish/Other

// “START SMALL  
OTHERWISE  
THE PROJECT  
WILL BECOME  
CUMBERSOME  
FOR STUDENTS”

## Project Outline

Using filmmaking in a 2nd year German language class to bolster language comprehension and speaking skills with an emphasis on ‘outside of the book’ learning in L2 (Second Language).

## Synopsis

The students devised and wrote a short film (6 mins) which detailed different parts of their school and what comprises a school day.

The principal was very keen on the project and despite their teacher’s lack of knowledge or experience of the filmmaking process, with assistance from IFI (specifically on-site visits; supervision of the shooting of the film; editing the material) the class undertook the construction of a project that was ‘a little bit different’ than what they were accustomed to. The results of which ‘helped raise the profile of German’ in the school.

The project was scheduled for 1 or 2 class sessions per week over 6 weeks. The project began with students learning vocabulary relating to the layout of the school and the events of each locale. The students also began to determine the form which their film dialogue would take. The class used *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003, dir. Wolfgang Becker) to show how a straight-on news delivery looks in the German language. In the second week the students learned a basic film lexicon in German. This was presented to them in a hands-on manner with IFI providing on-site demonstrations with a camera. In week three the students finalised their scripts and rehearsed them in the various places throughout the school. All filming took place over the course of one school day in the fourth week. The IFI facilitator then edited the footage. During the fifth week the students learned vocabulary relevant to a cinema as they discussed how and here to show their work. An announcement was written and delivered on the school public address system, posters were made and items necessary for a screening venue (projector, chairs, refreshments etc.) were discussed. On the final week, the film was screened for the entire school during the lunch break.

### Strengths of Project

- / As the students decided the content of the film, and scripted it, the production was 'not a usual learning approach for the students'
- / Informed critical and creative thinking in students
- / Coupled language skills with visual literacy
- / Very positive 'all round' with marked support from students, principal and other teachers
- / Students learned a new lexicon in German and reinforced this knowledge through their engagement with the project

### Challenges

- / The teacher did not realise how much effort is involved in the production of a short film.
- / None of the students were especially 'competent in film making' so IFI personnel had to assist in the production, making the project very resource heavy

// “KEEPING SIMILAR PROJECTS TO A ONE - WEEK LIMIT MAKES FOR A USEFUL TIME OUT FROM THE BOOK.”

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## Sample Key Skills from Proposed Junior Cycle Framework for Learning

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### ITC/Media Literacy

- / Use media literacy skills to access and critically engage with film and create their own
- / Participate in discussion about film

### Managing Information and Thinking

- / Record and organise German vocabulary of school locale, cinema and filmmaking
- / Think creatively and critically using other German film to inform their own
- / Use ICT to access film language and share German language through digital technology

### Communicating

- / Communicate using new German vocabulary
- / Use visual and other media to promote their film event
- / Discuss and debate in L2 during filmmaking project

### Staying Well

- / Be confident in the group project
- / Be positive about different types of learning
- / Use digital technology safely and ethically

### Managing Myself

- / Recognise their personal strengths and weaknesses
- / Direct their own learning in the collaborative project
- / Express opinions on their performance and how it can be improved

### Working with Others

- / Relate effectively with others in group and resolve conflict
- / Co-operate
- / Respect difference both in group and on film
- / Participate in collaborative process of filmmaking

### Being Creative

- / Brainstorm ideas for a film
- / Use digital technology to facilitate creating their own film

### Statements of Learning

#### On completion of this Module students will be able to:

- / Reach a level of personal proficiency in L2 through filmmaking in German language
  - / Create, present & appreciate artistic works by drawing from other film genre to create their own
  - / Bring an idea from conception to realisation to make a film
  - / Use ICT effectively and ethically in learning filmmaking technology
  - / Take action to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and that of others in the filmmaking process
-

# Pilot Project 3 – Film and EAL Development

32

## Pilot Project

Using film to develop the aural and oral abilities of a class with predominantly EAL students (English as Additional Language)

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Learning Support, Film as Cultural Experience, Film as Subject Support (EAL)

## Could be adapted for

SPHE

## Pilot group

2nd Year



Whale rider

## Project Outline

This project was undertaken in a school that had its first intake of students in September 2009. The students were of many different nationalities and had not yet developed confidence in communicating with one another either in school or socially. For many, English was not their first language and this created another barrier to communication. The teacher expressed an interest in using film with the group to support their EAL, social and cultural development. Another aspect to the development of her project was the inclusion of a trip to IFI. She felt a 'trip to town' could be of benefit with regard to orientating the students in the navigation of the city centre. While film is a cultural experience of which all had direct previous experience, the IFI can be viewed as a distinctly Irish experience.

## Synopsis

Students were brought into IFI for a screening of *Whale Rider* (2002, dir. Niki Caro). The film was selected for its exploration of the values and rituals of Maori culture, shown with respect to their own divergent cultures. The shared viewing experience offered a learning opportunity that was both alternative and inclusive, using international film language as an access point, rather than a command of English language.

Prior to the IFI visit, the teacher did several pre-viewing sessions that included learning about the cinema and the language employed in film, exploring the cultural relativism of cinema-in-Ireland and comparing this visit to experiences they may have had previously, and looking at examples of posters, trailers and stills of different films and images of Maori culture. These pre-viewing sessions were to give the students a relative overview of the subject matter which they would then encounter through the film screening at IFI.

When students arrived at IFI, they were led through a welcome activity that involved getting to know the venue through a fact-finding hunt around the premises. Oral report-back in the cinema led to discussion about IFI and cinema in general, before leading into the film screening. The film was introduced in the context of topics that students would have already encountered in classroom preparation. The choice of film was explained with reference to non-mainstream cinema.

Following the screening, students were invited to discuss the film and offer their opinion through visual stimuli created from stills. Initial physical response following prompts (e.g lying down if you liked the film etc.) ruled out the oral language component initially. They were then invited to contribute to a brief discussion but also use visual cues from the film itself in the form of stills which were handed out.

The cinematic experience was used to contextualise critical thinking and learning in a more engrossing manner. Empathy was employed as a teaching tool to discuss narrative. A series of exercises were carried out to foster language skills. The screening, therefore, became a multi-platform learning experience that engaged different types of learners and appealed to students with various levels of English.

### Strengths of the Project

- / Using the film *Whale Rider* with a group of culturally diverse students brings the material, and the lessons that can be derived out of it, into the realms of CSPE and geography as well as language skills/reinforcement
- / The relative newness of the school allowed for greater flexibility with regard to scheduling

### Challenges

- / To maintain confidence in students' abilities for dealing with new material in unfamiliar setting, considering the very mixed ability of group
- / Difficult to gauge the follow-up and extent to which wider learning could be drawn from the film

// “FILM SEEMS A VERY APPROPRIATE MEDIUM TO ENGAGE STUDENTS ACROSS ALL LEVELS.”

## Sample Key Skills from Proposed Junior Cycle Framework for Learning

### Managing Myself

- / being flexible and assertive in
- / film-related discussion and out of school visit

### Staying Well

- / Being social and safe in school and during visit to and from IFI
- / Being confident, positive about learning

### Being Creative

- / Learning creatively using film and visual imagery as stimulus

### Communicating

- / Using L1 with increasing confidence in learning/social situations/discussion

### Managing information and thinking

- / being curious about new school/cultural venue/town

### Working with Others

- / Respecting difference, cooperating, contributing

### Sample Statements of Learning

#### On completion of this unit, the student will be able to:

- / Communicate more effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1
- / Value local and national heritage
- / Appreciate artistic works, critically interpret texts
- / Take action to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and that of others
- / Appreciate and respect how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which they live

# Pilot Project 4 – Film and Literacy

34

## Pilot Project

Using film as a tool to aid, enrich and consolidate the oral and literacy skills of children with special needs (dyslexia)

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Learning Support

## Pilot group

Senior Primary



*The Fantastic Mr Fox* © Twentieth Century Fox Film Co. Ltd

## Project Outline

A series of exchanges – both visits to the cinema (IFI and other Dublin cinemas) and on-site – between Film Focus and a class of identified dyslexic students attending a special school. In each instance film was utilised as a way of approaching literacy skills - reading, writing or structuring a story.

## Synopsis

The recurrent theme of the workshops in this project was book-to-screen adaptation and the manner in which narrative and storytelling function in each. In each instance, further exercises and other subjects were incorporated into the core discussion. The films chosen were *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009, dir. Wes Anderson); *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009, dir. Spike Jonze); and *Lost and Found* (2008, dir. Philip Hunt). A further screening was undertaken with *Furry Vengeance* (2010, dir. Roger Kumble) followed by discussions about environmental issues, a lesson on animal habitats and an exploration of narrative and the visual construction of a story.

*The Fantastic Mr. Fox* had been worked through prior to the class visit to the cinema. With the two shorter books, the texts were scanned and projected onto the wall; on these occasions the students worked in groups of two or three with a copy of the book. Reading the story became interactive – with individual students taking a sentence or a line, or the entire class reading together in unison. During Film Focus visits to the class, the teacher, a teaching assistant and (in some instances) another classroom cohort, an on-site reading specialist and/or a doctoral student in Special Education were also in attendance. Pupils worked through the texts and compared them with the films. In each instance they were asked to complete the narrative, respond to what they liked/disliked or write ‘the next adventure’ of the story’s characters. The project proved to be very successful. Children who were usually reticent in reading and writing were keen to put pen to paper when introduced to such a multi-modal learning experience. Anecdotally, a number of the class – including one student who was the most antagonistic to the project on its first day and was disparaging of any writing exercise – asked to stay in the classroom during break-time in order to finish his further adventure story of Max and the Wild Things. Such a response to a lesson was unprecedented.

After the success of the initial pilot project, the exercises and teaching strategies are to be rolled out school-wide. Of note, the NCCA Guidelines for teachers working with pupils with mild learning difficulties (2007, p.13) specifies the usefulness of ICT in making multi-sensory and interesting materials for reading. Most significantly, the scaffolding of existing film knowledge to the new viewing of film adaptations can facilitate their comprehension and response.

### Strengths of the Project

- / The use of books, projected media, film and creative writing in similitude has uptake across learners of varying abilities
- / Film allowed a more colloquial investigation in-class students became aware of other's perceptions and opinions
- / Pairing film and text in an exploration of adaptation fosters interest in students with reading and writing difficulties
- / The teacher was initially very apprehensive about using technology. Within a few sessions she was extremely comfortable incorporating it into her teaching style

### Challenges

- The project benefited greatly from the fairly extensive technology at hand in the particular classroom
- / Very resource heavy and a number of educators were on hand to deliver the project. And while the remit of this school allows for a ratio of 9:1, this is not in keeping with mean classroom numbers
- / Flexible schedule needed to allow for cinema visits and evolution of the project over weeks

// “STUDENTS ARE MORE OBSERVANT OF DETAILS IN FILM, A MEDIUM THAT THEY ENGAGE WITH OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM AS WELL.”

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## Sample Learning Objectives from Primary Curriculum

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**Strand:** Receptiveness to language

### Writing

- / Experience a classroom environment that encourages writing

### Reading - Developing strategies

- / Engage with a range of texts

### Oral Language

- / Interpret mood, attitude, emotion and atmosphere in film

---

**Strand:** Competence and confidence in using language

### Oral Language

- / Converse freely and confidently on a range of topics

### Reading

- / Engage with books in group or in whole-class settings

### Writing:

- / Write for a sustained length of time
- 

**Strand:** Developing cognitive abilities through language

### Oral Language

- / Argue points of view through informal discussion

**Strand:** Emotional and imaginative development through language

### Oral Language

- / Express individual responses to poems and literature and discuss different interpretations

### Reading

- / Examine similarities and differences in various types of text e.g. print-based/film/projected text



# Pilot Project 5 – Film, School Completion and Classroom Learning

36

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as L2 Learning Support (French) & Film as Subject

## Could be adapted for

Any L2, History, CSPE, Geography, English

## Pilot group

5th Year French/School Completion Project (SCP)



*Entre les murs / The Class* © Artificial Eye

// “THEY SEEMED MORE WILLING TO CALL UPON THEIR FILM KNOWLEDGE WHEN POSSIBLE THAN ANY OTHER SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE.”

## Project Outline

This was a multi-organisational two-phase project involving IFI, CPLN Area Partnership and a southwest-Dublin designated school taking part in the School Completion Program.

It originated from contact between the school’s French teacher and IFI to determine whether IFI Education could assist in bringing a ‘greater cultural and linguistic input’ to students identified as being at high-risk of early school leaving. IFI Education connected the teacher with the CPLN Area Partnership to see if resourcing could be made available to fund activity and a two-phase project developed from there. Students were encouraged to engage with film as a subject, as learning support and as an extra-curricular activity.

## Synopsis

To gauge whether there would be interest in bringing the students to IFI, the school and CPLN organised a trip to the local venue Áras Chrónáin Arts Centre for a screening of *Entre les murs / The Class* (2008, dir. Laurent Cantet)<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the success of this event, the on-campus SCP officer assisted in organising transport to IFI for a larger group of students for further screenings and discussion. Only one student of the cohort had previously been to IFI, and the sense of occasion that a trip to the venue provided (the cinema was ‘quite posh’) fostered enthusiasm for the project.

The project incentivised learning but also involvement in a school-based initiative. Despite the students’ marked interest, attendance did become an issue. There were multiple instances of students showing interest in the run up to a visit (with the requisite organisation involved) only to not show up on the day (See p.122 for full report). It was agreed that students be asked to pay a nominal cost (€2, approx. 25% of a regular ticket to the cinema) in an effort to obligate those who showed initial interest to attend the screenings.

### Strengths of Project

- / The project created ‘an excitement in the schools’ which will hopefully lead to wider involvement in the future
- / Using a local venue for a screening (Áras Chraonain) acknowledged its film club (the venue was free-of-charge) and allayed the cost of travel to the city centre
- / As a collaborative effort between a School Completion Project, a school, a local partnership, IFI and a teacher, the project made a significant amount of headway
- / When they came in to IFI, the students were amazed to find that they could sit through, and enjoy, a black and white film<sup>2</sup>

### Challenges

- / The programme was only as strong as the enthusiasm of the teachers in the catchment area
- / Preference for trip to IFI rather than local venue ‘less sense of occasion’
- / Initial reticence on the part of the students to be involved with anything that might be construed as extra-curricular
- / Attendance: on a number of occasions students signed on to attend screenings only to not show up on-the-day

<sup>1</sup>This film was selected from IFI Education programme

<sup>2</sup>*Psycho* – was showing in IFI at the time so a special screening was organised for the group

## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

### Media Literacy

- / Access and critically engage with film
- / Learn about film heritage & communicate their opinions

### Information Processing

- / Organise and integrate film language information
- / Students will identify the main themes of film

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Use film as a basis for comparing & contrasting themes across a range of subjects
- / Recognise film’s point of view and offer alternatives

### Communicating

- / Interpret a film in a foreign language & explain their own personal response
- / Engage in dialogue

### Working with Others

- / Listen to the opinions of others
- / Collaborate on group cinema visit or classroom viewing experience

### Being Personally Effective

- / Identify what they want to get from the cinema experience
- / Develop the personal qualities of being reliable, by following through with commitment to attend

### Learning Outcomes:

#### On completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- / Compose and express their personal response to a film in L2
- / View a complete subtitled film from a different culture Listen attentively to the responses of others
- / Compare and contrast the topics and themes of the film to other subject areas
- / Discuss different film genres
- / Recognise the value of film as a cultural and learning experience

# Pilot Project 6 – Documentary Filmmaking

38

## Pilot Project

Making a Documentary at rehearsals of *Oliver!*, the school musical

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Filmmaking & Film as Subject

## Pilot group

6th Class Primary

// “FILMMAKING ALLOWS FOR A DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM. IN CHANGING THE WAY LEARNING IS MEDIATED, AS WELL AS THE OUTCOMES SOUGHT (IN THIS INSTANCE A COLLABORATIVE FILM) STUDENTS WHO OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH OTHER TYPES OF LEARNING EXCEL QUITE NATURALLY.”

## Project Outline

The teacher, who is already a keen and highly experienced participant in the FÍS<sup>1</sup> (Film in Schools) programme, led her class in the creation of a “behind-the-scenes” documentary of the school’s stage production of *Oliver!*

## Synopsis

After watching the 1968 film version of *Oliver!* the class who had the technical skills to work on a film from inception to completion from their FÍS experience, wanted to create a film project around the school’s stage production. Owing to the popularity of reality talent programmes such as *The X Factor*, the group took this popular cultural format and set to make their own example. Already extremely familiar with the protocols necessary for an in-class production through FÍS, the teacher also had the equipment for filming and editing the final work at her disposal.

Aiming to document the creation of the stage performance and to critically assess how the format is constructed at the same time, the students loosely scripted and then shot what became a 12-minute documentary, moving from the early stages of cast selection, choreography and line rehearsals through costuming and in-front-of-an-audience performances.

The short film incorporated elements of behind-the-scenes coverage, performance and photomontage. The students who were participating in the production were responsible for shooting the proceedings, which made fantastic use of rehearsal time when not on stage. This also allowed the students to work in different groups and take on different aspects of the filming, as the demands of the rehearsals had students on-stage in different intervals. Editing of the final work was assisted by another educator in the school. Two final edits were constructed as two separate casts ultimately performed.

The short film was shown as a preamble to the performances.

## Strengths of Project

Projects of this nature bring a parity to the classroom-based project and the world outside of school. Such a ‘What Would Simon Cowell Do?’ approach incentivises learning, group work, and problem-solving skills.

- / The endeavours of the students and teachers results in a tangible product screened for colleagues, parents and the collected audience
- / Students had a greater level of media literacy, filmmaking competence and self-esteem with regard to solving problems as individuals and as a group in the wake of the short project
- / Both students and educator are eager to continue working on filmmaking projects

### Challenges

- / Without focused emphasis on active critical viewing of film, such projects run the risk of becoming simply about making work. While fun for students, the educative content and criticality can be open to question.
- / Such projects require a teacher or facilitator skilled in filmmaking.
- / Filmmaking can be time and resource heavy; there is a learning curve for both educator and students.

<sup>1</sup> Case Study p. 92

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## Sample Learning Objectives for Primary Curriculum

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**Strand:** Receptiveness to language

### Oral Language

- / Listen to expressions, reactions, opinions and interpretations on film and retell or summarise them.
- / Watch film and discuss how sound effects enhance the content

### Writing

- / Experience a classroom environment that encourages writing

**Strand:** Competence and confidence in using language

### Oral Language

- / Acquire the ability to give detailed instructions and directions in a tolerant environment

### Writing

- / Choose a register of language appropriate to subject, genre and audience for their script
- / Develop skills in the use of information technology

**Strand:** Developing cognitive abilities through language

### Oral Language

- / Use a discussion of the familiar e.g. reality show as the basis of a more formal or objective grasp of a topic or concept e.g. making their own show

- / Argue points of view through informal discussion

### Reading

- / Distinguish between fact and opinion, and bias and objectivity in the media

### Writing

- / Write in the genre of film script
- / Write for a particular purpose and with a particular audience in mind

**Strand:** Emotional and imaginative development through language

### Oral Language

- / Discuss plays, films and television programmes
- / Discuss ideas, concepts and images encountered in media

### Reading

- / Examine similarities and differences in various types of text, written and moving image

### Writing

- / Express personal response to films, television programmes.
  - / Write for a particular purpose and with a particular audience in mind
-

# Pilot Project 7 – Community-based Filmmaking Project

40

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Filmmaking as Collaborative Ventur

## Project Group

Group targeted through the School Completion Programme (SCP) of a local area partnership  
Contact with IFI came through the Education Officer and a teacher from a local school.

## Could be adapted for

TY, Subject Support, SPHE, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

// “FILM WAS JUST A MEDIUM WE USED TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES NO MATTER THE ISSUES/TOPIC.”

## Project Outline

This was one of two projects developed with the Partnership facilitator, a local teacher and a group of students, that took place over the duration of Film Focus. Contact was first made with IFI and Film Focus in relation too French classes from the area and the Pilot Project was developed (see p.36).  
Alongside this, a group of students from two schools in the community were brought together to develop a short film about mental health issues.

## Synopsis

Young filmmakers from both schools teamed with *Headstrong* (The organisation for Youth Mental Health) and the North Clondalkin Community Action on Suicide to create a short film (3 mins) for Mental Health Awareness Week.

The short film depicts a day in the life of two teenagers struggling with depression. One seeks help from her parents to discuss how she is feeling; the other, who remains silent, ends his life in tragedy. The film was screened for the young filmmakers’ peers and in the community. The production of the film occurred without assistance from IFI, though the participant coordinators were in contact with IFI/Film Focus throughout. The project was directly observed by IFI, rather than informed and undertaken for Film Focus, but it was an element of the overall collaboration for Film Focus with the Partnership and the facilitators involved. They have a Mental Health Film Week now in the area which has come about from filmmaking training for teachers.

They have used film recently for intergenerational projects, racial issues in schools and LGBT issues, which the students have come up with themselves. They have also used film to discuss housing issues and the effects of these issues on a community.

## Strengths of Project

- / The project created ‘an excitement in the schools’ and an incentive for wider involvement and cooperation across schools in film-related learning
- / The students who worked on the film showed increased confidence in their own abilities
- / The facilitator ‘explored the challenges of setting up projects’ and ‘learn[ed] about the process of building up projects in schools and communities’

- / As a collaboration, the Partnership was able to set aside money for this project

### Challenges

- / Such a project hinged on finding enthusiastic educators (or professionals) willing to work with students after hours
- / Young filmmakers had no experience of making this type of film. Preparation in film language would have benefitted them in advance

// “FILM (AND FILMMAKING) ARE PERTINENT MEDIUMS FOR TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, POLITICS, CULTURE, SUBJECTS THAT MAY BE OTHERWISE DIFFICULT TO BROACH WITH TEENAGERS.”

## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

### Media Literacy

- / Use digital media to create & communicate a message
- / Develop understanding of persuasiveness of media

### Information Processing

- / Research the topic of suicide & mental health in young people from a range of sources
- / Present information using a range of communication technologies

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Express their opinions, learn to take opposing arguments on board,
- / Engage in dialogue, develop empathy with people suffering from mental health issues
- / Show the capacity to plan, draft and revise their script

### Communicating

- / Engage in dialogue, listening to others opinions and asserting their own
- / Recognise film viewpoint and develop empathy for fictional situation

### Working with Others

- / Work with others both from in and outside their school and outside facilitators
- / Assign tasks, motivate and share the work of the group

### Being Personally Effective

- / Evaluate their own performance & respond to feedback
- / Develop personal qualities such as taking the initiative, flexibility, reliability and following through

### Learning Outcomes

#### On completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate understanding of mental health issues
- / Analyse and evaluate research from various sources
- / Identify the purpose and target audience of a film
- / Work collaboratively on all stages of the filmmaking process
- / Organise a film screening event



# Pilot Project 8 – Film at Senior Cycle and after school

42

## Pilot Project

Using Film and filmmaking across the spectrum of TY, Senior Cycle and After-school

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support

Film as Subject, Filmmaking with an After-school club

## Could be adapted for

History, Geography



Volver © El Deseo

// “THERE SHOULD BE A STAND-ALONE QUESTION ABOUT FILM ON BOTH THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE AND JUNIOR CERTIFICATE ENGLISH SYLLABUS.”

## Project Outline

The teacher at the helm of these efforts is highly adventurous in her approach to film education and perhaps atypical in the level of her film education involvement. Over the course of the school year during which she engaged with Film Focus, she used film to support both French and English at Leaving Certificate Level and she delivered a TY Module in film language. The educator also set out to establish an after-school film club with a colleague which revolved around practical filmmaking projects. Teaching with film, for this educator is ‘sharing something that I love’.

## Synopsis

While having a background in English, which incorporated film study, the educator has always maintained a ‘hobby’ in film and has ‘conducted [her own] research out of interest over the years’. She attends to all aspects of film education with passion and a cultivated interest. Furthermore, her ability to bring empathic, familial anecdotes to screenings such as *The Spirit of the Beehive / El espíritu de la Colmena* (1973, dir. Victor Erice) is indicative of her ability to go beyond the requisite syllabus and utilise film as individually tailored teaching tools, as well as engaging students through her own personal enjoyment of the medium. The teacher has also routinely used films such as *Maria Full of Grace* (2004, dir. Joshua Marston), *Pan’s Labyrinth / El laberinto del fauno* (2006, dir. Guillermo Del Toro) and *Volver* (2006, dir. Pedro Almodóvar) in her Spanish classroom.

Given the breadth of her participation, the educator’s comments regarding film education were aimed across both the study and production of film. With regard to the inclusion of film analysis in classroom situations, she suggests an approach that ‘start[s] out small and simple’ which requires the teacher to ‘choose a film that will grip the students as a starting point that can be analysed effectively’. Instrumental in this is getting students ‘hooked’ on film – its critical viewing and analysis. The teacher asserts that her students – and indeed all students – have the capacity to actively engage in film viewing and that once the confidence to tease out critical analysis is in place, the students will be more than happy to accurately and effectively engage with media.

With regard to filmmaking projects, the teacher as facilitator suggests clearly demarcating the roles the young people play in the filmmaking process and making them stick to those roles. It not only gets the films made but also allows all of the students

### Strengths of the Project

In many ways this teacher evinces the wide variety of ways in which film can be incorporated into the secondary classroom. Her enthusiasm for film is infectious and spread to her students, serving to motivate them to tackle more challenging films. Both in the classroom and at meetings with colleagues, her stance on the place of film in education – and her willingness to try new and immersive things – is a testament to the underlying argument that there are numerous points across the spectrum of education where film can provide ideal content for engagement and analysis.

### Challenges

- / In order to allow for greater investigations of the film form, there is a need for more written work/projects based around the films screened. Given the amount of time necessary to screen films, however, the ability assign further work can be limited
- / Greater structure would have been beneficial to the filmmaking process. Also, greater time spent in pre-production, storyboarding shots, etc., would have made the filmmaking process run more smoothly

// “CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO COMPLETE A WIDE VARIETY OF SECONDARY ASSIGNMENTS MAKES STUDENTS FURTHER ENGAGE WITH AND CONTEXTUALISE THE FILMS SCREENED.”

## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

### Media Literacy

- Access and critically engage with film
- / Develop awareness of European cinema through dialogue and collaborative work

### Information Processing

- / Access background information on films from various sources, on cinema and on filmmaking
- / Organise and summarise film language information and identify themes of films

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Compare and contrast films
- / Examine directors' point of view and imaginatively consider other viewpoints and opinions

### Communicating

- / Engage in dialogue, listening to others opinions and asserting their own
- / Recognise film viewpoint and develop empathy for fictional situation

### Working with Others

- / Collaborate with others in responding to film
- / Developing a sense of group responsibility to project work

### Being Personally Creative

- / Evaluate their own contribution
- / Set goals and respond to feedback during class and project work
- / Develop personal qualities such as taking initiative, being reliable, able to see a task through to the end

### Learning Outcomes

#### On completion of this Module, students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate knowledge of visual literacy and an ability to analyse moving image using film language
- / Use film to develop skills in a second language
- / Work collaboratively
- / Discuss, evaluate and compare other text
- / Engage with non-mainstream film

# Pilot Project 9 – Filmmaking for Young Social Innovators

44

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Filmmaking; Film in TY

## Pilot Group

TY Group

## Could be adapted for:

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Communications  
Junior Cycle Short Course

// “THOSE INITIATING THEIR FIRST FILMMAKING PROJECTS SHOULD GET IN CONTACT WITH OTHER EDUCATORS, FILMMAKERS OR EXPERIENCED YOUTH WORKERS FOR INSIGHT INTO THE PROCESSES.”

## Project Outline

This year-long project saw a group of young filmmakers produce a series of short films around social issues in an afterschool project, as part of the Young Social Innovators (YSI) initiative. Young Social Innovators is a countrywide, not for profit engagement with 15-18 year olds with a remit of ‘fire[ing] young people’s imagination to change the world for good’. Participants work as teams to choose a social issue to investigate and must create real world responses based upon their efforts. The teacher who authored this project with Film Focus has made a number of films (generally 3-5 a year) with her students in response to topics culled from their YSI engagement. These have included films about bullying, jealousy, teenage pregnancy and suicide. For this, the students undertook the practical filmmaking projects in conjunction with the study of the elements of film.

This teacher has a history of assisting students through multiple short films at the same time. Her students are certainly prodigious in their output, and they have gone on to succeed with their films in events such as the Mullingar and Fresh Film Festivals.

Both the students and the school maintained their excitement for the project throughout the year. The management of the school itself is very supportive of filmmaking projects and, as has been noted elsewhere, schools are very amenable to films made by their students being short-listed for festivals and winning awards.

## Strengths of the Project

- / The educator’s particular training for her Higher Diploma in Education (H.Dip) at The National College of Art and Design (NCAD) and her experience facilitated her extensive engagement with film
- / Making films about specific issues such as those created for the YSI initiative, can have both cross-curricular and macro-critical benefits
- / Being part of a wider initiative, such as YSI, places students in a network of like-minded young people in both school and community-based groups, thus yielding a wide potential for subject support

**Challenges**

- / Not all educators have the access, know-how or prior knowledge in filmmaking or film language held by the leader of this project
- / If time was running short, some students finished the editing at home

// “STUDENTS REALLY ONLY THINK LIKE ‘FILMMAKERS’ AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE EDITING PROCESS.”

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

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**Media Literacy**

- / Develop critical skills, accessing and analysing media representations of social issues. They will communicate their own response to a particular issue using digital media and use this to raise awareness among audiences

**Information Processing**

- / Access information from a range of sources to research social issues and devise a theme for their own film

**Critical & Creative Thinking**

- / Analyse topics and develop arguments for their choice of topic

**Communicating**

- / Express their opinions, learn to take opposing arguments on board, be open-minded
- / Empathise with issues explored
- / Compose their response using film, taking audience and purpose of film into account

**Working with Others**

- / Work with their peers in groups to create their films. Identify goals, learn to problem solve and reflect on their own contribution

**Being Personally Creative**

- / Students will identify and evaluate own goals, take initiative and respond to feedback

**Learning Outcomes****On completion of this Module, students will be able to:**

- / Identify, analyse and critically engage with film language
  - / Compose and articulate ideas using film
    - Determine an aesthetic for their production and visually communicate this across the piece of work
  - / Contribute to group research into a social issue and the cultural significance thereof
  - / Analyse and evaluate research findings
  - / Offer opinions and listen to others with empathy
  - / Recognise the power of visual image to convey a viewpoint to a target audience
-







**FILM BRINGS OUT OUR EMOTIONS,  
IT'S THE STORY,  
IT'S AN ESCAPE FROM THE EVERYDAY  
– IFI TEEN CLUB PARTICIPANT**



# Pilot Project 10 – Film and Literacies

48

## Pilot Project

Using Film to Promote Oral, Written & Cultural Literacies

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support

## Could be adapted for

L2, English, TY, CSPE



*Africa United* © Pathé

## Project Outline:

This project centred on using film for subject support with Junior Cycle secondary school students who needed opportunities to develop their cultural awareness of Ireland, as well as find ways of interacting and engaging in a class and local area comprising many different nationalities and first languages. The teacher had already used a number of different films to promote criticality in subject specific areas as well as to engage general writing and verbal literacies in inviting response to the films. However she felt that students needed stimulus of a different kind of film, as well as a school trip which would require them to step out of familiar surroundings together.

## Synopsis:

From connecting with IFI, the teacher arranged to bring a group of students to a city centre cinema for a regular film screening of the film *Africa United* (2010, dir. Debs Paterson). The film was selected on the basis that it was non-mainstream, represented another culture and was unlikely to be the type of film students would usually access.

Many issues beyond the English curriculum, such as questions of geography and the concerns of CSPE and developmental education featured in the conversations that took place after the screening. As well as narrative analysis, the film stimulated topics such as cultural difference, regionality and many of the difficult issues raised by the film (eg. child soldiers, prostitution, poverty, the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa) to be discussed in an informative, critically respectful manner. Some students who were normally reticent were prompted to speak with confidence in response to the film.

Along with using the film to support curricula, both the teacher and IFI believed that the experience of travelling from suburban Dublin into the heart of the city would provide a cultural experience and require culturally specific types of negotiation that the young people would not necessarily get on a daily basis. Furthermore, the organisation of a trip, catching buses to the city centre, and simply doing something different than the typical school day required interaction on a larger scale. This was determined to be a worthwhile endeavour for the group.

The enthusiasm engendered by the trip was evident in the work that the students completed in response to the films afterwards. To the teacher, there appeared greater confidence in the

homework and classwork presented on the screened material rather than material from books which ‘often alienated’ many of the students. Across the (English) subject department as well as the school administration, this approach to the English syllabus was determined to be highly successful.

It should be noted that the educator who participated in this (Pilot Project 3) project had also delivered an earlier project for Film Focus. Given the successes of her previous involvement she wished to continue her engagement with IFI Education/Film Focus and agreed to participate in meetings as someone who had been through the reflective process of providing feedback. While the teacher in question has taught across Junior and Senior Cycle for a decade, previous to her engagement with Film Focus she had no prior experience with film in education. Furthermore, the school at which she is presently employed is still very young. There is flexibility in their schedule, and, crucially, there are still resources for travel and other initiatives as well as a general atmosphere that allows for ‘trying something new’. There is an acknowledgement that such learning environments are often the exception rather than the rule.

This relative newness allowed for a series of connections to be made between the teacher’s school and other Film Focus participants. Over the course of her eighteen month engagement with the project, she became aware of and connected with vast network of primary school and community-orientated projects and practitioners of whom she was not aware, leading her to conclude that, ‘despite all the difficulties that exist “the arts” are very much alive’.

### Strengths of the Project

- / Film is fantastic for energising all levels of learners, this can be especially important in classrooms and out-of-school settings where verbal and written language issues, and thereby general confidences, are on display
- / The use of film for bolstering general written and verbal skillsets was viewed to be a great success by the school’s principal
- / ‘Support from the top is essential’ and in this instance the participant educator received very positive feedback

### Challenges

- / The educator was new to using film in her general English teaching
- / Much of the engagement with film was inserted into the school syllabus in an ad hoc manner. If there was something within the IFI Education programme that would be of use to the teacher, she worked it into her programme
- / The educator felt that a year-long plan, established at the beginning of the year, would yield the maximum benefit from the screenings attended

// “AN ENGAGEMENT WITH FILM ENERGISED THE CLASSROOM. STUDENTS WERE STIMULATED TO ASK QUESTIONS OF THE FILMS BEING ANALYSED, AS WELL AS MORE GENERAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING CULTURAL DIVERSITY. IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM, THIS ENCOURAGED A GENUINE INTEREST IN ONE ANOTHER.”



Where the Wild Things Are © Warner Bros

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## Sample Key Skills from Proposed Junior Cycle Framework for Learning

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### Managing Myself

- / Learn how to direct my own learning
- / Be flexible and assertive in different learning situations

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### Staying Well

- / Be social and safe in visit out of school
- / Be positive about using different styles of learning

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### Being Creative

- / Explore options and alternatives in film-related discussion
- / Learn creatively through film and media

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### Communicating

- / Listen and express myself
- / Use EAL in discussion and debate
- / Discuss and debate

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### Working with Others

- / Relate effectively
- / Cooperate on out-of-school trip
- / Respect difference in group work and in film representation

- / Contribute, learn with others

### Managing Information & Thinking

- / Gather and evaluate information
- / Think critically & creatively

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### Statements of Learning

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#### On completion of this Module, students will be able to:

- / Communicate effectively in a range of contexts in EAL
- / Reach a level of personal proficiency in EAL
- / Create, appreciates and critically interprets a range of texts and artistic works
- / Value what it means to be an active citizen
- / Have an understanding of distribution of social, economic and environmental phenomena
- / Appreciate and respect of diverse values, beliefs and traditions that have contributed to the communities and cultures in which they live



**I ABSOLUTELY LOVE TEACHING**

**WITH FILM WHICH COMES ACROSS**

**TO THE STUDENTS**

# Pilot Project 11 – Whole-year cinema trip

52

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as cultural and cinematic experience

## Group

1st Year

## Could be adapted for

TY



*Into the West*

## Project Outline

As well as a year-long film studies module, the teacher at the head of this project organized a special screening at IFI of *Into the West* (1992, dir. Mike Newell) for Year 1 (120 students) at his Dublin-based secondary school, arguing that the experience of seeing a film in the cinema is an experiential type of engagement that cannot be replicated when viewing is broken up over class periods, with interruptions and other concerns of the typical school day. This film was particularly chosen for its resonance within Irish cinema, for indigenous storytelling and for its relevance for a number of subjects (eg. English, CSPE, Art, Geography).

## Synopsis

The teacher distributed the IFI study guide for the film *Into the West*. To the teachers who were attending and hoped that the film could be used in-class with all of the students after the screening. Whether or not this took place is unknown. The teacher felt that the trip to the IFI was seen as a ‘day out’ and a treat but not necessarily as an educational activity. With the prevalence of data projectors and the restrictions on pupil supervision it can be difficult to argue for the merits of a cinema screening over an in-class viewing.

The teacher holds a MA in Media Studies and teaches film to Junior and Leaving Certificate English students. He also introduced a ‘film studies’ module in Transition Year at the school.

Organising the trip for 120 students had significant ‘knock-on effects’ for both the students taken out of school and, crucially, the teachers who accompanied them. As the project facilitator was unable to gauge the extent to which the film and study guide were used beyond the screening meant that it was unclear whether the film was regarded as something that could be worked through within the classroom rather than ‘a good day out [...] a way of celebrating [the students’] successful transition into secondary school’.

While a film screening in a cinema (the IFI, a local cinema, art space or otherwise) can thus still seem like a treat, though it can incentivise in-class attention and engagement, the educator



involved hoped that it would be more than that. However, he was unsure as to whether other ‘all class’ trips to the IFI would be scheduled for the next year, believing that it would place a large demand on the already stretched school resources.

He had attempted to get ‘some good PR’ behind the trip, acknowledging that the school is quite receptive to any local news interest. While he was unsuccessful in his attempts, it is interesting to note his observations that turning any kind of project that goes beyond the remit of the daily school experience into an event that can be shared community-wide may make schools more amenable to such endeavours, filmic or otherwise.

### Strengths of the Project

- / Film provided a means of social engagement. Bringing the whole year group together can celebrate this aspect of the cinematic experience and gives all the students an equal opportunity to engage in something about which they will have an opinion, allowing for a common start point from which to create dialogue
- / Screenings at local arts venues and of Irish films lends further cultural value to large group viewings
- / The availability of IFI or other published study guide can be of great benefit when exploring the film further across curricula or promoting film literacy

### Challenges

- / The student experience of the cinema can only extend as far as the teacher is willing to work with material afterwards and can vary from class to class
- / Setting up a special screening for a large audience is resource heavy for both the venue and the school.

// “PROJECT CAN BE SEEN AS A MODEL FOR ENGAGING A NUMBER OF TEACHERS WITHIN THE SAME SCHOOL OR ACROSS A NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN A FILM PROGRAMME.”

## Sample Key Skills from Proposed Junior Cycle Framework for Learning

### Media Literacy

- / Access, view and engage with Irish cinema and cultural venue

### Managing Information & Thinking

- / Be curious and think critically about Irish film

### Being Creative

- / Learn about their subject using film as stimulus

### Communicating

- / Express their own opinion and listen to others

### Working with Others

- / Cooperate on cinema outing, contribute to success of trip, contribute to follow-up work

### Staying Well

- / Be social and safe on whole year outing to unknown venue

### Managing Myself

- / Be flexible in alternative approach to learning

### Sample Statements of Learning

#### The student will be able to:

- / Communicate effectively in a range of contexts in L1
- / Appreciate and critically interpret ‘text’ (film)
- / Value local and national heritage including national cinema
- / Appreciate artistic works
- / Develop moral and responsible decision-making and a sense of personal values with regard to participation in a whole year outing



# Pilot Project 12 – Film and Transition Year

54

## Pilot Project

Film & Filmmaking in Transition Year

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject/Filmmaking

## Group

TY Students

## Could be adapted for

Art, TY English

// “STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE WRITTEN WORD VIA ‘THE GREATS’; HOWEVER, FILM SEEMS TO BE APPROACHED VIA ‘THE GREATS’ OF THE WRITTEN WORD AS WELL, RATHER THAN LEARNING ABOUT THE AUTEURS OF CINEMA.”

## Project Outline

This project consisted of a year-long film studies course for a group of TY students in a West Cork boys’ school. The students spent the first term learning about the mechanics and language of cinema and then set about making a 10 minute short film.

Crucially, the teacher at the head of this project has a history of film scholarship from undergraduate level to a post-graduate degree in Film Studies, as well as a twelve-year track record of teaching film in secondary school. His enthusiasm for film proved infectious. Rather than simply teaching filmmaking techniques, he provided students with historical explanations of elements of production and made century-old techniques relevant to a contemporary audience.

## Synopsis

The teacher began the project by introducing the students to cinema at a high level, perhaps more typical for undergraduate study. They viewed and analysed a number of canonical moments in cinematic history, including early films of the Lumière Brothers, examples drawn from classic jidaigeki and Italian neorealism. Following this phase, students then worked together on a screenplay, storyboarding a shot list – looking to other films for inspiration and even paying homage to specific sequences in the likes of *Rashomon* (1950, dir. Akira Kurosawa). They then proceeded to shoot and edit a film that included rudimentary special effects and postproduction sound. Clearly delineating roles in front of and behind the camera, and despite their introduction to classical cinema, the students opted to create a short, no budget ‘slasher’ film.

The filmmaking project created a general sense of excitement around the school and while the particular class was largely left to their own devices, the whole school were ‘entertained by the results’.

As well as being in charge of TY Film, the teacher also teaches English across second level. In his evaluation and at Film Focus meetings, he offered observations drawn from his experiences of locating film within school curricula and his concerns with its inclusion on the English syllabus – rather than having a distinct film education perspective.

### Strengths of the Project

- / The enthusiasm of the teacher in question was infectious. Students were just as willing to learn about the language of cinema as they were to use a camera. His emphasis that watching film will make one a better filmmaker is at the crux of this
- / In the film language phase of the project, the clips utilised drew heavily from the cinema history 'canon'. Despite the film being quite unlike the mainstream cinema, many students went on to source and watch the films in their entirety after school
- / During the production half of the year, students learned to respect each others innate and new-found talents. This was not implicit and the students had to earn one another's trust and respect; however, once the production got rolling, the young people's different skills came to the fore
- / The school enjoyed the results of the film; The fact of young people making a film in the first place seemed like 'an event'

### Challenges

- / Time. Given the schedule for fourth year students, they were limited to one 35-minute engagement per week. This makes introducing a concept, exemplifying it through a series of clips and discussing it further incredibly difficult. Furthermore, any momentum gained during the pre-production phase of the second half of the project was lost when class time ended
- / Technology and training. The teacher has not had any training in multimedia software and as such any clips utilised in class were done by queuing up a series of DVDs and locating the requisite materials one-at-a-time
- / Similarly, the lack of technology at-hand when learning about the language of the camera meant students were talked through a particular element of film and could only write about or draw it for themselves

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

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### Media Literacy

- / Critically engage with film, communicate their ideas
- / Share with others and develop critical vocabulary
- / Create and produce their own film

### Information Processing

- / Access information from books, internet, video clips, on the topic of film language, film analysis and auteur theory
- / Present their findings using a range of ICT

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Compare and contrast films of different genres
- / Seek to problem solve during filmmaking by exploring alternate options
- / Creatively utilise film language in their own film

### Communicating

- / Analyse film in terms of genre, viewpoint of the director and the cultural viewpoint
- / Identify how shots elicit a response from the audience
- / Communicate their own personal response to the films they have viewed

### Working with Others

- / Work with others
- / Be flexible, goal orientated
- / Develop good relationships and help motivate the group

### Being Personally Creative


- / Evaluate their own performance and respond to feedback
- / Develop personal qualities such as taking the initiative, reliability and following through

### Learning Outcomes

#### On completion of this Module, students will be able to:

- / Use film language to analyse key moments from classic cinema
  - / Compose a screenplay & storyboard utilising film language
  - / Shoot & edit a film
  - / Work effectively as a group
  - / Organise a film screening
-





**STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE  
MECHANICS OF LANGUAGE  
EARLY IN SECONDARY SCHOOL –  
FOR EXAMPLE, LEARNING  
ABOUT HOW POETRY OPERATES.  
WITH FILM, HOWEVER, THEY  
ONLY ANALYSE IT FOR LEAVING  
CERTIFICATE ENGLISH, MEANING  
THEY HAVE NO BUILDING BLOCKS  
UPON WHICH TO DRAW, LEADING  
TO ONLY ‘A VERY SUPERFICIAL  
LEVEL’ OF UNDERSTANDING. THE  
LANGUAGE OF FILM NEEDS TO BE  
TAUGHT FROM EARLY ON**

# Pilot Project 13 – Film as Collaborative & Inclusive Project

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## Group

TY group & group from a local school for hearing impaired young people

## Could be adapted for

Art, SPHE, CSPE

## Project Outline

In this project, students from a Transition Year class in a girls' school worked with pupils from a School for Hearing Impaired children on a collaborative short film using a stop-motion animation kit (*Animatazz*).

## Synopsis

The teacher at the head of this project has been teaching English and History for 13 years, and a participating teacher in the Transition Year Moving Image Module Pilot Project. Despite film and drama teaching experience, and experience of guiding students through small productions, the amount of time required to complete a stop-motion animation came as a surprise. The project involved students from across two schools, and with only one set time per week for collaboration it made the schedule even more problematic. The project lost further time and momentum during the unseasonably cold winter of 2010-11.

Working with stop-motion animation and its table top format with a large group was not easy, in particular keeping everyone interested and involved. If they had spent greater time in the script writing stage they might have got more of the students on board. In the end, however, the students enjoyed the project and the final result was 'well received by the school'. His students learned as much about the implications of working with disability as they did about animation as a process.



*Animatazz* © Animatazz

### Strengths of the Project

- / The project was viewed as a success by both schools and all students involved. Given the amount of precision work required to complete a stop-motion animation piece, the students were delighted to see the finished product up on the screen
- / There are a large number of tasks involved in the creation of a stop-motion animation making collaboration and delegation necessary. The collaborative effort was further encouraged by both schools and the students' different capabilities

### Challenges

- / Stop-motion animation is extremely time-consuming. While some students revelled in its production, for others their interest waned long before the project was finished
- / The table-top format made it difficult to keep all of the students occupied
- / Working a filmmaking project into one school schedule is difficult enough; when working across two schools, the difficulty is compounded
- / The funding implications of engaging a professional animator highlighted the need for school and wider support to deliver such a project

// “TRY TO KEEP THE NUMBERS DOWN ON ANIMATION PROJECTS AND REALLY WORK ON SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS.”

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

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### Media Literacy

- / Engage with visual language and create their own media message
- / Develop competence in digital media technologies

### Information Processing

- / Create their film using stop-motion animation software package

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Think imaginatively to create ideas for their film
- / Consider how information is communicated both in the film and group work

### Communicating

- / Engage in dialogue within their group, listen to the opinions of others and express their own
- / Develop awareness of how others communicate
- / Compose their film in storyboard and script form

### Working with Others

- / Work as a group to identify, evaluate and achieve collective goals
  - / Work flexibly in a group respecting all and sharing the work
-



# Pilot Project 14 – Filmmaking Collaboration during and after school

60

## **Pilot Project:**

Filmmaking in After-school Project

## **Film Focus Mode of Engagement:**

Filmmaking/Film as Learning Support

## **Could be adapted for:**

SPHE, TY

// “EDUCATORS AND FACILITATORS MUST BE AWARE OF THERE WILL, IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, BE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY THAN THOSE AT THE ‘HEAD OF THE CLASSROOM.’”

## **Project Outline**

This project focused on a group of School Completion Programme students aged 12 to 16 at a DEIS-designated school, who had been identified as ‘at risk’ of early school leaving. As participants in the school’s ‘homework club’, the young people were already involved in an after-school programme that aimed at supporting their learning. The teacher leading this project had an interest in film education but no previous experience. To facilitate filmmaking with the group for Film Focus, IFI connected him with Young Irish Filmmakers (YIFM) based in Kilkenny. With twenty years of youth-centred filmmaking and a strong outreach programme throughout Ireland, YIFM Outreach Coordinators travelled to this school to participate in a week-long film boot-camp with the fourteen ‘homework club’ participants.

## **Synopsis**

During their week, the young people learned the basics of film production as well as how to work together on different filmmaking projects. After a series of icebreakers, the young people had to come up with a series of ideas that would make interesting films. The facilitators then challenged the participants to fold all of their ideas into one cohesive narrative that required every idea to be respected and worked through. The resultant film is the most polished and longest running of the three films they shot during the week. It involves a local band securing an opening spot for a local Rihanna concert, but their plan is foiled when she unwittingly eats a peanut butter sandwich. Fortunately she is saved from anaphylactic shock by a host of doctors including a puppet constructed out of a cucumber in a lab coat. The doctor and the pop princess fall madly in love. Using the school’s interiors and exteriors, including the kitchen and nurse’s office to double as real-world sets, the film’s somewhat disjointed narrative works quite well. Cutting away to MTV News-type broadcasts that detailed every twist and turn of the surreal scenario, the film echoed the marked interest in the minutiae of celebrities’ lives (“this just in, Paris Hilton has broken a nail”...). Furthermore, having to combine a host of potential narratives in a single film meant that they had to learn about differing camera techniques, rudimentary puppetry, the clichés of editing (e.g. using ‘wipes’ to introduce the news), post production sound design and green screen amongst other principle filmmaking devices.

After *A Random Story* wrapped, the group made two other films *Psychos on the Loose* and *Vodka Where Art Thou?* Each was a short comedy and, crucially, Garry allowed the students only 10 takes for each film, regardless of the number of shots storyboarded. It should be noted that due to the time constraints of the week, the film was edited by YIFM, rather than by the students themselves.

The students' films were presented in IFI Cinema One, followed by questions from the Film Focus team.

After the initial week, both the teacher who organised the project and his school were keen to further develop their capacity to use filmmaking projects for learning support, and contacted both YIFM and IFI to discuss possibilities for future support. Although the initial outlay may be 'an expense...it is money well spent as it benefits the teacher as well as students'.

Despite this effort being the teacher's first foray into using film in the classroom, he is looking forward to introducing more film – critical viewing as well as production-orientated thinking – to his classes.

### Strengths of the Project

- / The week gave students confidence in their own abilities as well as a sense of responsibility for delivering a product. It was well received by their colleagues and the school at large by 'generating a buzz' and making 'the students who weren't involved want to be part of it'

- / The project was an education in technology and aesthetics of filmmaking as well as a confidence building exercise for both the teacher and the students. Working alongside the filmmakers allowed the teacher develop the skillset to build upon the project in future classes

### Challenges

- / The strength of the parachute model relies on the teacher's own capabilities to further promote such efforts, even if the students are keen to continue on film education
- / For schools and communities where resources are scarce, the initial set-up costs for film and video production can seem daunting. Awareness of other possibilities such as mobile phone recording, using stills camera etc. can encourage an emphasis on creativity rather than technology

// “THE SCHOOL BECAME A DIFFERENT PLACE FOR THREE DAYS, WHERE EDUCATION BECAME GENUINELY ENJOYABLE”

## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle

### Media Literacy

- / Critically engage with the visual language of media
- / Express themselves creatively through film using digital media technology

### Information Processing

- / Make choices about film genres and form, taking audience and resources into account
- / Use digital media technology effectively

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Think imaginatively, using brainstorming techniques to come up with ideas for their films
- / Consider different points of view and perspectives

### Communicating

- / Communicate their message using the visual language of film and dialogue

### Working with Others

- / Work in groups to plan, execute and produce their film
- / Identify roles, assign tasks, agree goals
- / Develop good relationships and help motivate others

### Being Personally Creative

- / Evaluate their own performance within the group and respond to feedback
- / Develop personal qualities such as taking initiative, flexibility, reliability

### Learning Outcomes

#### On completion of this Module, students will be able to:

- / Identify the purpose and target audience of a film
- / Work collaboratively on all stages of the film making process, demonstrating effective communication skills
- / Demonstrate understanding of, and ability to use, filmmaking and editing techniques

IT'S ALL ABOUT GETTING AWAY  
FROM THE HECTIC TIME IN SCHOOL





**IFI  
Gaming  
Camp**

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# IFI Gaming Camp 2011

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The IFI Gaming Camp 2011<sup>1</sup> was a four-day workshop for young people (ages 10 – 16) to explore the learning possibilities and fun elements within commercial off-the-shelf (OTS) video games. Drawing on the concept of visual literacy underlying Film Focus, we wanted to encourage gamers to be more ‘literate’ in their gaming activities as well as explore possible links between film and gaming literacies. To do this, we observed young gamers operating skilfully in a medium they generally accessed ‘out of school’ and we facilitated their critical analysis of this medium.

The interactive domain of video games is a complex territory of signs, symbols and systems. Gamers acquire a wide range of language and skills in gameplay and apply them to increasingly challenging situations. Games are highly immersive and extremely popular. A very new area for IFI Education, we drew on previous research and applied this to a set of structured activities in order to observe our participants’ learning during gaming. We also wanted to see if such learning could be applied to other learning environments.

## Content and Approach

Our research was informed by the work of, among others, James Gee and Daniel Schwarz. We focused on principles of good learning found in well-designed video games that included risks, challenges, well-ordered problems and the concept of ‘just-in-time’ learning. Following this, we looked at the concept of ‘pleasure’ – what makes gaming fun? For this we referenced the work of Dr Aphra Kerr and Dr Pat Brereton et al whose paper, *New Media, New Pleasures*, explored how to measure the pleasure/fun offered by new media texts, in this instance video games, using identifiable concepts of Control, Immersion and Performance (CIP).

Each day of the Camp was structured around the demonstration of a principle or concept, focused timed gaming sessions and participant feedback. Below is a brief outline of the tasks, methods and learning outcomes of each stage of the Gaming Camp.

## Task One

Introducing and identifying key concepts of ‘good’ learning when gaming: risk, challenge and just-in-time learning.

## Method

Brief presentation and group brainstorming of concepts (See Fig. 1 – Fig. 4). Timed gaming session playing *Lego Star Wars 3: The Clone Wars* where the participants had to observe and identify instances of these concepts during gameplay and record their observations.

Gamers in general found that this particular game presented a constant stream of risks and challenges. They noted that the risk factor wasn’t very high evidenced by few participants being ‘killed’. The game was very good at providing information about solving problems as they arose. This principle of ‘just-in-time learning’ was something they grasped very quickly. A noted disadvantage of this was that it didn’t take account of a player’s learning and would repeat the same advice everytime a challenge was encountered.

## Task Two

Further learning principles of good games: production, customisation & well-ordered problems.

### Method

Following introduction of the above concepts, participants had to create their own game level using the in-built level designer in *Little Big Planet 2* and embed the concepts within as evidence of their understanding. Working in pairs, to a fixed time, participants took different approaches to design, such as one which challenged the dexterity skills of the player and their performance, to another which had a carefully chosen aesthetic and setting. On completion, participants had to present their level to the group, explaining the decisions they made in relation to structure and aesthetic. They then had an opportunity to play each other's levels before engaging in a critique.

### Observations

Those who were already familiar with the game were at an advantage as the further you progress in the game, the more elements you unlock to allow you to customize even further. This task also demonstrated group collaboration and consolidation of learning through application.

### Task Three

Building on Task Two, to reinforce learning around good game design.

### Method

'Gamer's Den'. As the name suggests, participants had to pitch an idea to a panel of judges who would decide on which one to invest in based on a set of criteria such as gameplay, learning principles, target audience, visual style etc. This task gave us an opportunity to gauge their understanding of content to date according to how they used it in their pitch.

What makes gaming fun? Identifying aspects of pleasure during gameplay: control, immersion and performance.

### Method

Through this activity, we aimed to raise participants' awareness of what elements made gaming so much fun? Following Kerr, Brereton et al, we introduced concepts of control, immersion and performance. We wanted participants to be able to engage critically with games, beyond merely expressing that "it was fun". The concepts were introduced initially to participants through an outdoor game where one participant had to lead another blindfolded around a maze in the quickest time. Back in the workshop space, the concepts were brainstormed further and discussed further with the group before a focused gaming

session using *Little Big Planet 2*. Following gaming, participants measured the level of control, immersion and performance they had experienced during gaming by placing themselves along a 1-5 scale marked on the floor.

### Observations

Participants were able to grasp the concepts very quickly. They felt that games which were too easy and didn't offer enough control or vice versa were examples of 'bad' games. Regarding immersion, most participants noted that during gameplay it was very common, if not a given, for them to be completely unaware of external sounds or activities. When rating their own level of control, immersion and performance along the scale, we noted in general that a high rating of control and performance had an equally high rating for immersion. One of the most interesting outcomes of the task was how the participants began building the vocabulary of the concepts into their critique and praise of other games during the week.

### Visual Literacy & Cinematic Codes – The Cut Scene

The increasing intertextuality between video games and cinema is apparent in the 'cut scenes' which are interspersed during gameplay and which draw on generic conventions of cinema. Certain games are direct adaptations from film, created to coincide with a theatrical cinematic release as part of a larger franchise. Promotional trailers for games often play just like their cinematic counterpart.

### Task Five

Analysing the visual language used in cut scenes and game trailers and combining film and visual literacies.

### Method

In introducing elements of cinematic language we used a trailer for the game *Gears of War* that asked participants to focus on certain cinematic elements while watching: camerawork, *mise en scene* and sound. As with film scene analysis, participants were asked to explain the narrative, their expectations of the game and how each element contributed to creating this expectation. Following this, participants were then asked to apply this learning to analyse a number of cut scenes from different games.



### Observations

Participants were highly responsive and eager during this session. The trailer for *Gears of War* was very familiar to most of them, as was the game itself, and they displayed an ability to read it on a number of levels. They noted that this was very different to watching a trailer for a film which prompts expectation of a storyline whereas certain game trailers use elements of a storyline to build expectation for gameplay. Interestingly, for many, cut scenes were an annoyance as they delayed playing the game. For others, they are an essential part of the experience of gaming, particularly when they integrate smoothly with the flow of the game.

### Signs, Signifiers & MMORPGs

A gamer must quickly acquire a wide range of language and skills in order to understand the signs and symbols within the system of a particular game. Participants themselves remarked that the desire to interact with the game is sufficient motivation to 'learn' the language of the particular domain. The goal of day three, therefore, was to introduce participants to the use of signs and symbols in real and virtual worlds, followed by a closer look at the semiotic domain of the MMORPG (massively-multiplayer-online-role-playing-game)

*World of Warcraft*.

### Task Six

Understanding signs, symbols and their function.

### Method

Using the example of signs within the local area, participants documented examples of street, building, commercial and private signs and symbols in the local neighbourhood. These were analysed through discussion and assigned to various systems. Further discussion was prompted by different signage from around the world, and how different systems created different meanings. Participants were also given written statements such as: 'a bread knife on a dressing table' and had to discuss what meaning and associations they attached to it.

### Observations

As this task was set up as a challenge, mirroring a 'mission' from a video game, the participants took to it very enthusiastically. They demonstrated keen observational skills. There was some discussion of risk such as with road signage compared to risks within a game from lack of understanding.

### Task Seven

Reinforcement of learning on signs and symbols through introduction to the semiotic domain of *World of Warcraft*.

### Method

Although some participants were already familiar with this game, the facilitator guided each from the beginning through the experience of selecting a character and forming an identity within this world, customising aspects such as race, faction and class. The challenge was to complete enough quests in that character to reach level 5 (the endpoint of the game is level 80) while trying to incorporate an awareness of the learning from previous days e.g. risks, well-order problems etc. Following the gaming session, each participant reported back to the group.

### Observations

Most of the participants, including new players, were adept at playing the game, although some became frustrated with its complexity and found it difficult to achieve targets. Although asked to choose a character of opposite gender, they all objected to this. Explaining character choices, for the novice the decision was informed mainly by physical characteristics whereas for the more experienced players, choices were governed by a character's abilities.

### Industry

The fact of Ireland's success in the gaming industry prompted us to devote the final day to presentations from a games designer and software developer, a tutor on a games design course and a games journalist. Although at times the presenters pitched a little bit too high for some of the group, in general the participants responded well and were eager to ask questions about the presenters' career paths, courses taken in college and daily work routine.

### Observations & Recommendations

As gaming is an area outside of our expertise, one of the most challenging aspects of this camp for us was deciding on a focus for each day that would be enjoyable for these experienced gamers but also enable us to realise learning objectives around a key topic. For this the literature review was essential.

When planning any workshop for young people, there are a number of considerations. One of our first concerns was choosing suitable titles for the age profile of participants. Questions on the application had yielded some unsurprising yet notable facts: Most if not all of the participants regularly played games aimed at much higher age groups, (eg. *Call of Duty*, *Black Ops*, which is given a PEGI<sup>2</sup> rating of 18). Despite this, we observed PEGI age recommendation guidelines and used the opportunity of the camp to draw participants' attention to them.

We also made sure to adhere to health and safety guidelines which state that gamers should take a 15 minute break for every hour of gaming. None of the practical sessions went beyond the 45 minute mark before we took a break which generally involved some form of physical activity outside. These activities were designed to tie into the prior aspect of gaming which helped reinforce learning in a different context.

### Conclusion

As a case study for Film Focus, the Gaming Camp afforded us a unique opportunity to observe gamers' use of visual literacy skills and gaming skills over an extended period, structured around key concepts in gaming research. The participants' positive response to all activities and their openness to critically engage with game analysis creates an opportunity for further engagement and application of game-based learning to other contexts.

<sup>1</sup> For full report please see our website (<http://www.ifi.ie/learn>)

<sup>2</sup> Pan European Game Information

**IT'S GREAT TEAM AND GROUP WORK  
– YOUNG PEOPLE GET USED TO  
WORKING TOGETHER**



**Fig 1 –  
Participant responses to  
‘Why do we play games?’**

You can do whatever you want  
 Violence with no consequences  
 Choice/decision making  
 Feels good to win  
 Better than work/school  
 To escape reality  
 Keeps you awake  
 Competition  
 Excitement  
 Characters  
 Story/narrative  
 Control/power  
 Bored

**Fig 2 –  
Participant responses to  
‘How do we learn to play games?’**

Instruction manual  
 Just go-with-it / wing-it  
 Tutorial at the start of a game  
 Learn from others  
 Experiment  
 Guess

**Fig 3 –  
Participant responses to  
‘What do we learn when we play games?’**

History – learn about war, ancient  
 civilisations  
 How to craft/make things  
 Make choices  
 Decision making

**Fig 4 –  
Participant responses to  
‘Why do you keep playing games?’**

To find out what happens  
 To finish the game  
 Because it's addictive  
 To learn different controls

# Scannáin sa Seomra Gaeilge

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The place of Irish language in Irish society, culture and education is a frequent topic of discussion. As a compulsory subject within school curricula, or as identified first language it can be contentious. As a form of cultural expression, its importance is widely acknowledged. As a medium for Irish short film production it is often illuminating through the stories the films tell.

Since 2006, an Irish language short film has been part of the Senior Cycle Irish curriculum. The first short film selected, *Clare sa Speir* (2001, Dir. Audrey O'Reilly), featured on a DVD of nine short films produced by the Irish Film Board/ Bord Scannáin na hÉireann (IFB) in collaboration with IFI, which has provided hugely popular and stimulating content for classroom discussion. Coupled with this, the compulsory nature of Irish as a subject that includes film, the interest in making the subject contemporary and relevant for students, the opportunity that Irish film in school offers to promote film heritage all combined to support our interest in surveying Irish language film in education contexts for Film Focus.

## Outline

Throughout the Film Focus project a number of individual and group activities took place that utilised Irish language short films – gearrscannáin – or original footage from the Gael Linn newsreel collection housed in the IFI Irish Film Archive. These activities were as follows:

1. Screening of a selection of gearrscannáin & archive footage at IFI for school students and teachers, with accompanying presentation on studying gearrscannáin for Senior Cycle Irish, through Irish language & follow-up survey of students
2. Distribution of DVDs and a selection of archive footage to teachers of Irish through the Irish teachers' network and follow-up questionnaire response
3. Survey and detailed feedback from teacher/lecturer of Gaeilge of use of film in the second level Irish language classroom

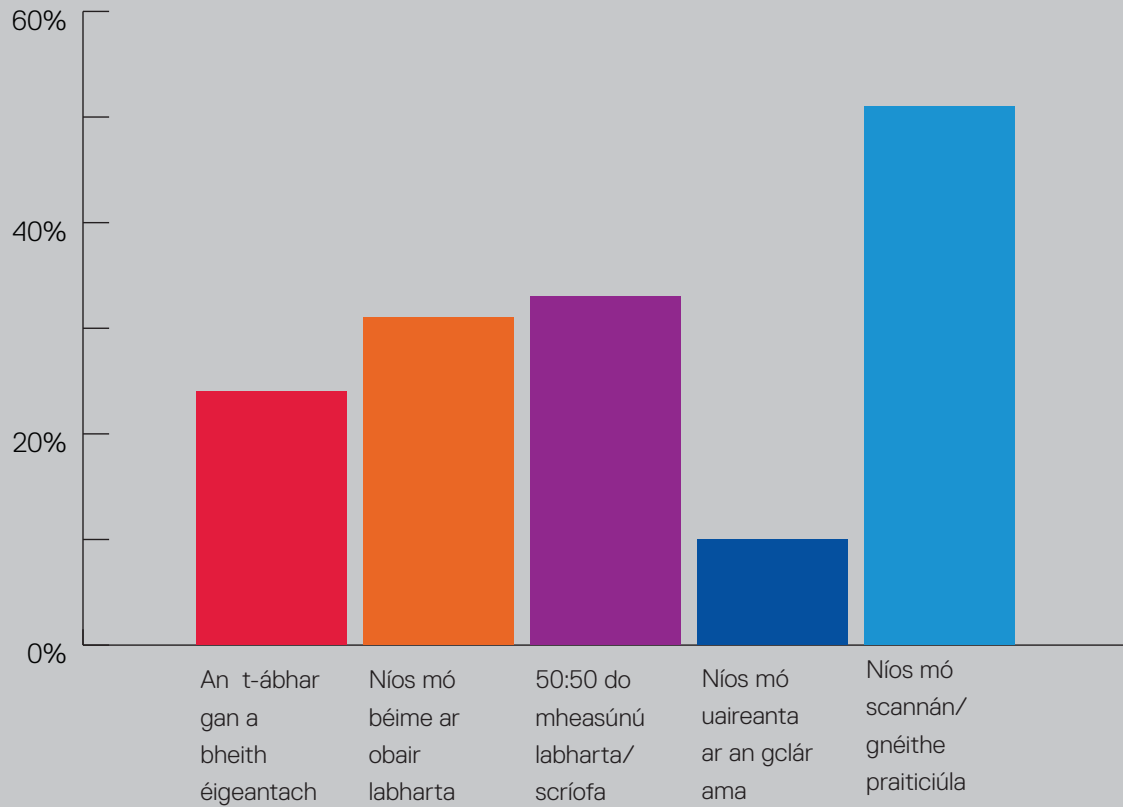
## 1. Student Survey (See Fig.1)

After the screening of the short films, members of the Film Focus team surveyed the 100 students in attendance, on the role of film in learning Irish and on the nature of films on offer to support the subject. The overlap and discrepancies between the students' voices and those of their teachers makes for interesting reading. Notably, among the students, the use of historical footage in the teaching of Irish was largely panned. Of the nine elements to the programme, three were archive extracts, the remaining six were short films, including the set film, *Caca Milis* (2001, Dir. Jennifer Keegan). Those who liked the extracts (Thaitin sé go mór liom) ranged from 1 – 4% in contrast with the highest number of 59% who liked the short film *Na FíorGhaeil* (2005, Dir. Macdara Vallely). One reason for this, as suggested by a teacher, was that the language was more difficult to catch than more current fare and that the cultural references in the archival clips bore little resemblance to life today.

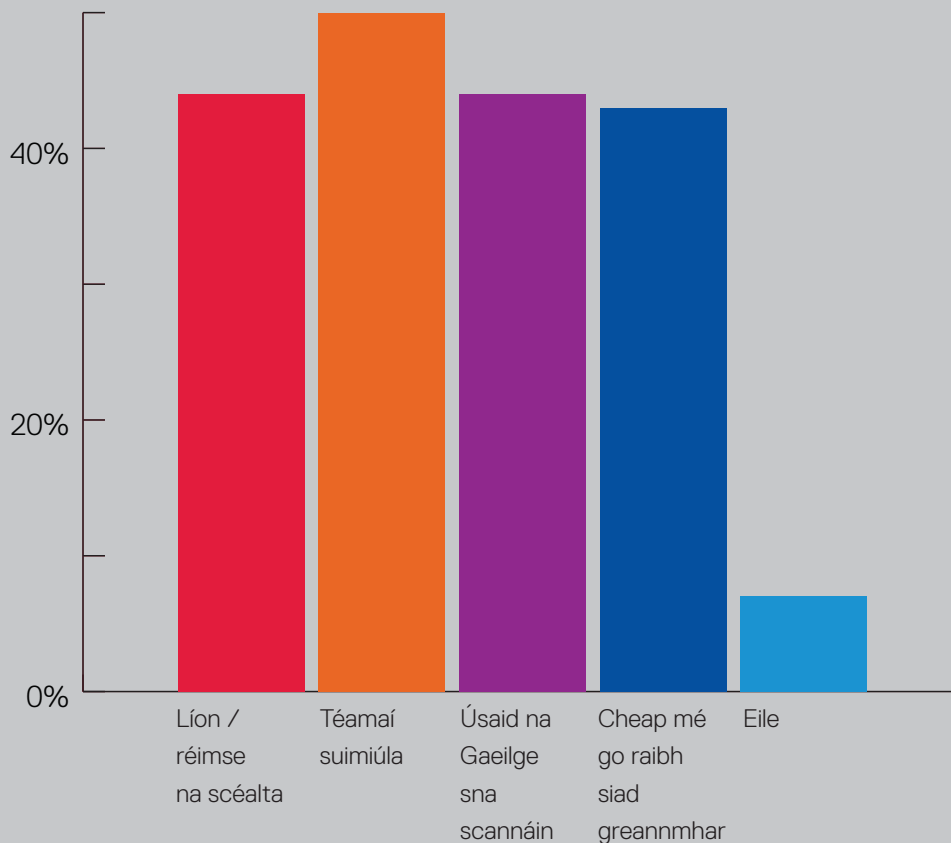
Nearly 90% of respondents said that seeing the films in the cinema was very positive, and that simply hearing the Irish language was of great importance. (See Fig.2) Similarly **80% felt that film helped bring the language to life**, while an additional 70% called for more film in the Irish classroom, with 60% of total respondents arguing that the medium is very relevant to their lives.

**98% of respondents felt that the inclusion of subtitles is either very useful (66.7%) or useful (31.3%)** When asked how they felt the study of Irish could be made more interesting is particularly significant when we consider the upcoming changes



**Fig. 1 – Cad a thaitin leat faoi na scannáin?**

The themes contained within the stories appeared to be the biggest draw for the audiences. The stories themselves, their use of the Irish Language and general enjoyment of the films all came in behind the themes with fairly comparable returns. A handful of students praised the acting as well.

**Fig. 2 – Cé acu de na rudaí seo a leanas a chothódh níos mó suime i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge, dar leat?**

to assessment in Senior Cycle Irish<sup>1</sup>. The overwhelming majority felt that a greater emphasis on film and practical applications of the language would benefit the curriculum most. A greater emphasis on oral work, and the move toward a 50/50 assessment based upon oral and written components found favour with students as well as the move to make Irish non-compulsory. In a distant fifth place, a few students called for more hours for Irish timetabled within the school day.

## 2. Teacher Response (See Fig.3)

Following the distribution of short films and archival excerpts on DVD to teachers through the Irish teachers' network, we invited them to share their opinions and experiences of using the material in their own classrooms through an online questionnaire. The results cast the role of Irish film, and the manner in which it can most effectively be used, in an interesting light:

Two thirds of the educators questioned felt that working with gearrscannáin greatly developed the students listening comprehension abilities. Two thirds also responded positively to film's capacity to bolster the speaking abilities and language awareness of Irish students. An additional 60% responded positively to the capability of gearrscannáin to raise Irish students' cultural awareness and writing abilities.

When the same questions were asked of archival films, the responses differed slightly upwards of **80%** responded positively about films' capacity to bolster reading, listening and social and cultural awareness. The use of archival film to assist in writing exercises was less (**50%**).

Regarding how to supplement the use of film, two thirds of the respondent teachers prepared their students for the films in advance by discussing the themes. Equally two thirds of educators followed on from the screenings with critical, oral evaluation and an overwhelming majority (83.3%) set students the task of completing written work, derived from their own understanding of the films. Once again, the contemporary shorts seemed to have greater appeal for both students and teachers alike.

## 3. Individual Detailed Response

/ For the final element of this engagement with Irish language film, we obtained detailed feedback from a teacher/lecturer/Irish language advocate who has extensive experience of teaching Irish to Leaving Certificate standard but also to pre-service teachers and adult learners.

### Regarding his experience of using films in the classroom, he offers the following observations:

- / Films longer than 20-25 minutes tend to lose their audiences.
- / Using a short film, or two to be compared, that can comprise a block of three class periods (preparing the students regarding cinematic convention and specific themes; viewing and critically discussing the works; presenting the students' own responses to the films) make for the most rewarding engagements with film.
- / An exception is the 20-part series *An Grá faoi Ghlas* (2007, Tadhg Mac Dhonnagáin and Éamonn Ó Dónaill) which is comprised of 5-minute installments specifically designed to cater for Irish language learners.

### The most successful films in class include:

- / Clearly discernible themes and emotions,
- / Clearly identifiable problems with which students can connect.
- / Notable Irish actors 'making the language valid and alive outside the classroom'.
- / Finally, the ability to stream Irish language films online, or refer to a widely available DVD would be of great benefit for a broader, standardized use of Irish language cinema in the Irish language classroom.

## Conclusion

These three short engagements with Irish language film, and related findings, confirmed the value of film as a medium for supporting language learning. They also gave us a snapshot of how film was being used and, with a view to future funding opportunities, how filmmakers and the industry could best support Irish language learning and culture through appropriate content and genres which would have classroom use.

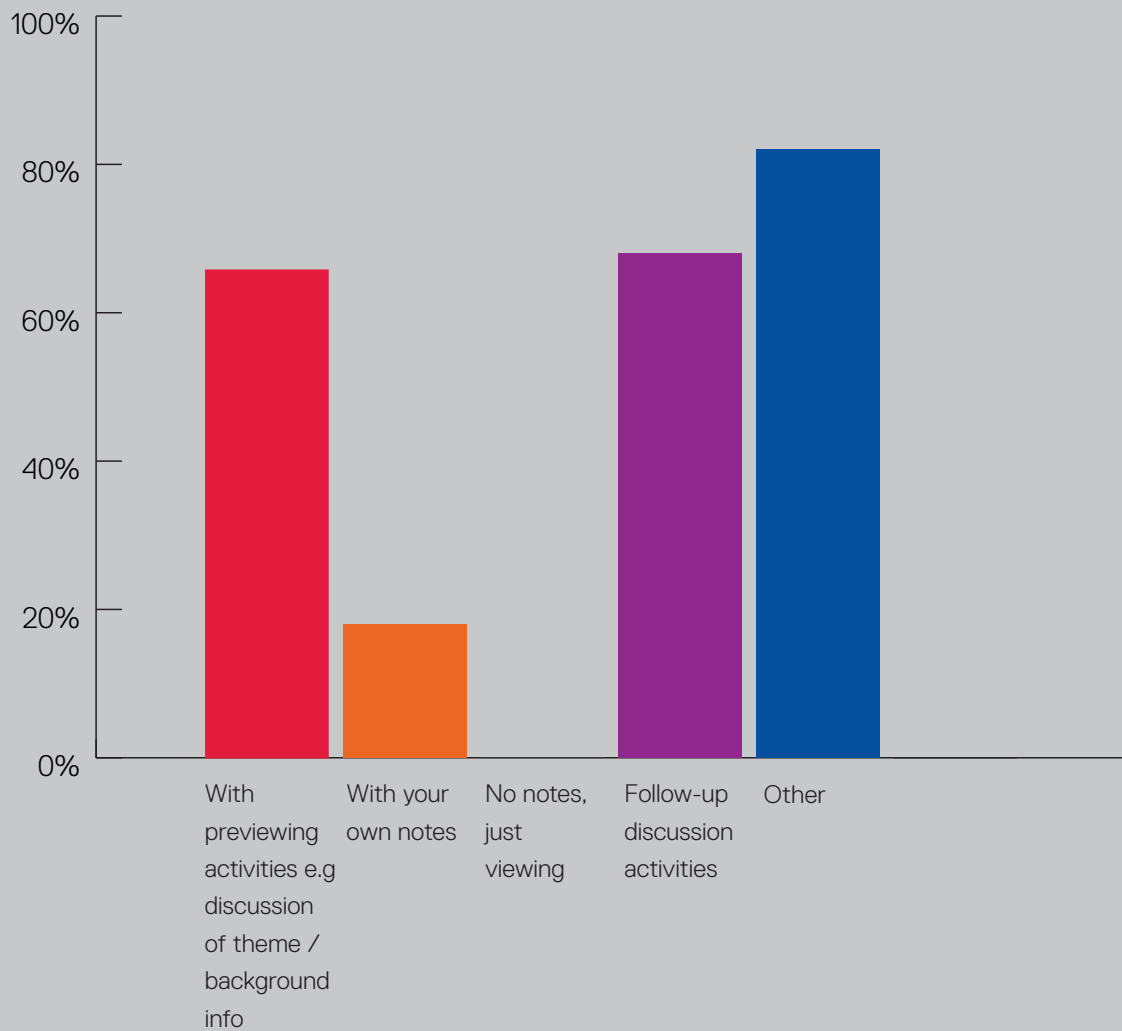
<sup>1</sup>From 2012, 40% of total marks at Senior Cycle will be based on oral assessment



*Fluent Dysphasia (Irish)* © The Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann

**Fig. 3 – How do you approach these gearrscannáin with your students?**

Please select from the following:









**Recomm-  
endations**

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**Conclu-  
sions &  
Recomm-  
endations**

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**Conclu-  
sions &  
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**Conclu-  
sions &  
Recomm-  
endations**

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**Conclu-  
sions &  
Recomm-  
endations**

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**Conclu-**



# Conclusions & Recommendations

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## // “FILM GETS YOU THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE WORLD.”

This quote from a secondary school student participating in a Film Focus event encapsulates the work of our two-year action research project in many ways.

The world pertaining to Film Focus concerned film and media literacy and their place within school curricula and the wider mediated world. It related to revisions in Junior and Senior Cycle and supported wider learning in the youth sector and out of school. It referenced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy but promoted a broader definition to encompass the creative field. Film Focus acknowledged the Arts Council Points of Alignment report on the Arts and Education and the lobbying work of Encountering-the-Arts. It looked to the creative industries report and its recommendations for education and training. It was delivered in tandem with the IFI Education programme and attracted participant researchers from the fields of education, the youth and community sector, and arts personnel.

### Mapping Exercise – the findings

Setting out to draft a national strategy for film education and young people, the initial mapping exercise revealed much exciting activity taking place around the country but the fact that not much of it was connected. Outside of specific curricular links such as English or Modern Languages, most of the activities reported were being delivered by singular teachers in a vacuum removed from any type of broader policy. What the teachers’ shared, along with an enthusiasm for film, was a recognition that both the engagement with film and media, and the collaborative learning environments which film encouraged, where ‘teamwork is real’ and in which students are ‘more motivated to learn’, were conducive to learner and teacher enjoyment. There was recognition too of the wider learning aspects, such as creative thinking or film literacy.

Along with the use of film for specific subject support, there was sufficient evidence of film activities in Transition Year and of filmmaking projects to confirm teachers’ interest in promoting creative and critical engagement with film – ‘to increase awareness that film is an artform’. The range of activities reported gave us a clear idea of how we might draw a cross-section of educational professionals together and elicit a number of modes of engagement from which the pilot projects would develop.

### The Pilot Projects

Positing an action research model, we invited participant educators to conceive and deliver pilot projects with support from the Film Focus team, either 1:1 or through the scheduled meetings. The projects yielded a host of ways of working with film. In evaluating, the facilitators outlined the challenges they encountered in realising new work over and above their regular school timetable. But, most significantly, they cited the positive outcomes for their subject and the wider educational landscape. The projects could:

- / Promote participatory, creative and active teaching and learning environments where the teacher was often facilitator
- / Enable students to bring ‘out of school’ media skills to classroom learning
- / Bolster written and oral literacy in L1 and L2 and English for EAL students
- / Foster media literacy skills which encouraged creative and critical engagement
- / Promote film as an art form and Irish film heritage
- / Highlight how film clubs can create out-of-school communities or motivate learning
- / Utilise film as a way into greater discussions of culture

All of the projects showed that a number of methodologies for classroom-based and wider film-centred engagement can yield myriad, immediately measurable positive effects. A series of practical filmmaking projects reinforced storytelling and visual literacy capacities through groupwork, as well as developing participants technological and aesthetic skills more easily than through traditional text-based learning. Such skills were also manifest in the Film Focus Gaming Camp project. It offered highly useful insights into gaming culture and a means

by which to observe young people as they learned through gameplay. The particular concern for boys' learning and skills' development identified in the Literacy Strategy finds certain relevance in this initiative as it capitalised on the popularity of interactive media, video games and online multiplayer environments, especially among boys.

### Film education – A Nationwide Commitment

Case Studies and Observations carried out for Film Focus echoed many of the findings of the pilot projects. Organisations profiled included the filmmaking association YIFM, Ireland's Young Filmmaker Competition, the annual Junior Galway Film Fleadh and the schools' programme of the Kerry Film Festival. These examples of successful engagements with film validate the position that, while film education takes on many forms, there is a distinct commitment to the field from facilitators across the arts, youth and education sectors; the task at hand, acknowledged by all involved, is to make the relevant policymakers from the fields of education and arts acknowledge and exploit this.

### The Literacy Debate & Curricular Reform

Film Focus findings have highlighted the urgent need to assert film and media literacy as a vital component of wider thinking around literacy across all levels as foregrounded by the DES Literacy Strategy. Equally, the recently proposed Framework for Junior Cycle provides an opportunity for the inclusion of media literacy as a Key Skill over and above the reference to ICT. Contrary to previous mindset, when film was regarded as stimulus for less-motivated students, Film Focus proves that this medium has application across the spectrum of learners' capabilities and interests.

In calling for specific inclusion of film and media literacy across all curricular reform, Film Focus acknowledges that curricula is already overcrowded and the fact that amid our current economic crisis, as often happens when systems have been deemed to fail, people are looking to education for solutions. One might well argue that this is not the job of education. But the fact of Ireland's growing creative industries, and a recognition Europe-wide that a commitment to a creative and critical education is vital for future economies, strengthens the

argument that film and media literacy should be recognised as central components of such an education. Film Focus confirms the fact that these components offer a way into curricula – including modern languages - that other more conventional methodologies may not.

### Learning Principles

The work of Film Focus acts as a point of departure for methods and approaches to film and moving image media that can pose engaging avenues for working with young people as aspects of their literacy, cultural, aesthetic, critical, participatory and creative development. All of these approaches are exploratory in nature. Across the Irish educational landscape, both in and out of school, the strategies to embrace these aspects can be established within the following principles:

#### Literacy Skillsets are Diverse

This needs to be reflected in the implementation of the Literacy Strategy which must fully address the essential nature of media literacy today in all its forms. Media Literacy must be acknowledged as the creative and critical capacity to negotiate the audiovisual and digital world.

#### Media Literacy is a Fundamental Entitlement for all

Media Literacy is an entitlement and a necessary part of civic participation with potential for learning opportunities across home, school and wider community. While the Broadcasting Act assigns a statutory responsibility for media literacy to BAI, this must be matched by resourcing to organisations capable of satisfying this responsibility. The planned Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights should also include media literacy via the inalienable right to Education.

#### Media Literacy Inclusion is Necessary Across the Irish Educational Landscape

##### / In Primary and Early Learning Curricula

NCCA investigations into Language in the Primary School Curriculum, acknowledge the need for multiple literacies to be taught across curricula to all abilities. This needs to be implemented through CPD in delivering the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

### ✓ **In Proposed Junior Cycle Framework**

Media Literacy with particular reference to film to be embedded as Key Skill across the curricula as well as ICT, to incorporate the critical, cultural, participative, measurable and creative capacities inherent in media literacy

### ✓ **In Proposed Senior Cycle reform**

Media Literacy to be identified as a required aspect of the proposed foundational Key Skills necessary for completion of requirements at Senior Cycle

### ✓ **In EAL teaching and learning**

The potential of media literacy projects to facilitate EAL development should be exploited, where former knowledge of international film language can be used to develop new oral and written language skills

### **Media Literacy as Key Skill in all Initial Teacher Education**

The commitment to overhaul teacher education combined with the fact of young people now entering the profession with significant competence in media literacy, provides ideal opportunity to fully exploit this competence through their teacher education and ongoing CPD.

### **Film Offers a Way into Modern Languages & Related Cultures Through the Shared International Language of Film**

The commitment to address Modern Languages proficiencies at Senior Cycle opens an avenue for the development and strategic implementation of a film module for Modern Language curricula, including Chinese, following the model of IFI's French and German film projects.

### **Arts Education Including Film are Fundamental Aspects of Our Development**

Education in the creative arts must not be regarded as something 'optional' or an aspect of vocational training. Government commitment to arts education must be matched with adequate resourcing, and an opening of dialogue between practitioners, funders and organisations to maximise resources and capitalise on expertise.

### **Film is Art**

As an artform, film's potential to inspire creative, cultural and aesthetic development and its immediate relevance for young people further the case for it to be given full recognition in any reforms to the Senior Cycle Art curriculum.

### **Irish Film & Moving Image Provide Unique Access to Cultural Heritage & to Indigenous Creative Industries**

The popularity of Irish film across all our Modes of Engagement confirm its significance for young peoples' cultural and creative development as well as equipping them for participation in future creative careers.

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# Conclusions & Recommendations > ACTIONS

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## Short Term

- > Develop a Short Course in Film to National Council for Curriculum and Assessment guidelines for proposed Framework for Junior Cycle
- > Pilot a Film Club for Junior Cycle across a number of platforms such as Video-on-Demand (VOD)
- > Work with the Encountering the Arts lobbying group to ensure the implementation of the proposed Charter for Arts Education
- > Consolidate film education networks nationwide
- > Contribute to raising the profile of Modern Languages through our film tours by forging new partnerships and exploring young audiences for Chinese language films

## Medium Term

- > Deliver a further research document on media education and media usage in Ireland among 12-13 year olds in conjunction with the BAI
- > Develop a Module for Continuing Professional Development for teachers in film and media literacy to support the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- > Bring Irish film into the classroom through collaboration with IFB/BSÉ media hub
- > Explore the possibilities for a collaborative project in digital media and young people with The Ark







EACH CHILD AND ADULT HAS THE  
OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE  
EXPRESSION AND THE WILL AND  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE  
AT EVERY LEVEL AND IN EVERY WAY





A professional video camera is mounted on a tripod, shown from a rear-quarter perspective. The camera's LCD screen is open and displays a portrait of a young man. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Case Studies' is positioned to the right of the camera, with a thin white horizontal line above it.

**Case  
Studies**

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**Case  
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# Case Study – Kerry Film Festival (KFF)

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## Organisations Featured

The Kerry Film Festival,  
The Happy Artist Filmmaker & a local school

## Film Focus Modes of Engagement

Filmmaking, Film as Subject Support,  
Film as Cultural Experience

## Open To

Junior, TY, Senior Cycle, Primary



## Background

Now in its 13th year, the Kerry Film Festival was established as the film component of the former Kerry-based arts organisation, *Samhlaíocht Chiarraí / Imagination Kerry*. Since its early days, the festival has moved from being the first Irish short film festival to an endeavour that takes place over three weeks each October and utilizes venues across six towns in the county – Listowel, Killarney, Tralee, Waterville, Kenmare and Dingle. *Samhlaíocht* itself began in 1991 with a local community arts festival. Within a few short years it had become an official FÁS Community Employment project. In 2001 the organisers sought to pair the annual Rose of Tralee Festival with a film festival, leading to the inaugural Kerry Film Festival. Kerry Film Festival now exists as a stand-alone festival in its own right.

## Kerry Film Festival and Film education

The Kerry Film Festival has been keen to cater for young people in its programme from the outset. As well as a series of films that link in with curricula, some in collaboration with IFI Education, there are short film programmes both directed at and directed by young people. In interview, former Director Jason O'Mahony stated that since its inception, KFF has been extremely supportive of screenings for primary schools, and between 2008 and the present, the number of screenings for this audience rose from a total of two to sixteen during the festival week. For Jason, the success with primary level should be no surprise, given the fact that primary school teachers 'own their classes for the whole day' rather than at secondary level where teachers have to negotiate with others for time away from school.

As stated by other festival organisers too, unless a screening offers distinct subject support, such as for Modern Languages or for Leaving Certificate English, it is less likely that a secondary school will organise buses and change around the schedule of a school day to bring a group to the cinema. Another deterrent is the fact that Kerry is extremely spread out with 146 primary schools including 'schools with 6 or 10 pupils' who have to travel across less than ideal roads in order to get to venues. This geography makes it virtually impossible to centralise a festival, as opposed to running screening in venues across six towns. Such consideration is not only for Kerry, but for film and arts education programmes in other rural areas too.

## Filmmaking

During the Festival which coincided with Film Focus, one of the short films included in the screening programme was *Blink*, made during an 8-week long after-school project with five budding filmmakers and facilitated by resident artist Lisa Fingleton (The Happy Artist). The filmmakers behind *Blink* had four filmmaking workshops with Lisa before setting about making their own film. In these workshops they learned about the techniques of filmmaking and animation as well as watching and critically evaluating a number of larger productions.

The students, from a local secondary school, were chosen through an open script competition. Only one student had had a modicum of filmmaking experience before and a few 'never thought [we'd] be doing something like this in school'; 'It was a complete surprise'. Furthermore, the filmmakers enjoyed it 'when everything started coming together and you could really see what you were doing and how it would translate onto the screen'. Working together with MiniDV, still cameras and Final Cut Express editing software, the students naturally fell into roles with one taking over as creative director, another directing the film, a third acting as the producer keeping 'everybody in line', a fourth providing an original score – courtesy of some donated recording facilities in the Kerry School of Music – and a fifth finding strength in her technical aptitude particularly in drawing and manipulating the puppets which they had

constructed. The filmmakers specified **teamwork**, a sense of **personal achievement** and the learning of **technical skills** as the elements of the process that particularly resonated with them during the project. All were certainly intrigued by the prospect of pursuing fine art or film at third level.

During the Festival short film programme in which *Blink* made its big screen debut, the young filmmakers had the opportunity to introduce the film in front of a sold out audience in the 350-seater theatre of Siamse Tíre, Tralee. The local media was there to interview and photograph them as well. The film was met with raucous applause.

## Conclusion

The filmmaking project added a very practical and relevant aspect to the Kerry Film Festival. A small number of students were facilitated to learn the filmmaking process, from concept through production to final edit and exhibition. The fact that resources were in place to fund the filmmaker was of huge significance. However, there was no way of knowing if a teacher or youth worker might continue this aspect of KFF each year, without the input and expertise of a resident artist.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with KFF

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### Media Literacy

- / Critically engaging with film
- / Creating and producing their own film

### Information Processing

- / Accessing information from a range of sources on filmmaking and film language
- / Using digital technologies

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Comparing and contrast films of different genres
- / Creatively using film language

### Communicating

- / Communicating their own personal response to films viewed

### Working with Others

- / Sharing the work of the group
- / Developing good relationships and motivating

### Being Personally Creative

- / Evaluating their own performance and respond to feedback
- / Taking the initiative, being reliable and following through

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate filmmaking skills through group film
  - / Demonstrate awareness of different film genres
  - / Listen with respect to others views and respond to the facilitator
  - / Contribute to the group positively in out of school situation
-



# Case Study – Junior Galway Film Fleadh & *Hamlet* Workshop

86

## Organisations Featured

Junior Galway Film Fleadh, local school

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support

Film as Cultural Experience

## Open To

Primary, Junior, TY, Senior Cycle

## *Hamlet* project adaptable to

Junior, TY



## Background

An offshoot of the Junior Galway Film Fleadh which takes place in July each year, the Junior Film Fleadh (or, just 'Junior') has been in existence since 1995. Initially run concurrently to its senior counterpart, the Junior has been a standalone autumn event for the last dozen years, and attracts an audience from as far away as Clare, Limerick and Mayo, with the occasional audience from Sligo or Tipperary as well.

With a primary remit in film as curricular support, through screenings for Senior, Junior Cycle, TY and Primary, the Junior programme also includes:

- / Production based workshops that include animation, acting, radio and television production, presenting and make-up
- / Script competitions
- / A showcase for co-produced, young-person led short films

The script competition has just completed its third year, and previous winners have gone on to see their work screened on RTÉ Television. In 2011, the festival was also working with an Irish-speaking filmmaker to assist in the production of a Galway County Council funded Irish-language short, and this was entered into competition at the Fresh Film Festival.

## Junior Galway Film Fleadh and Film education

Annette Maye, Festival Co-Ordinator, spoke to Film Focus about her work with the past six Juniors, about the history of the festival, and cinema and young people in general. In particular, she identified the documentaries screened in recent festivals as being especially useful for 'getting young people to think' critically about the art of film.

Having a background in 'art house' cinema as well as a previous career as a buyer for UK television's Channel Four, Annette is aware of what can challenge an audience, but also what keeps an audience as well. Annette also spoke about the strong French and German titles screened in participation with the IFI Education programme, which had yielded fantastic audiences. Critically, each of these three genres (documentary, French and German film) is largely aimed at older, secondary school audiences, and Annette stressed how the Junior was actively looking to establish wider audiences at both primary and third level. Much of the

festival marketing and energy is aimed at teachers, rather than young people themselves. However, with a more concerted effort on their Facebook and Twitter campaigns recently, the Junior has attempted to address younger audiences outside of school hours more directly.

### Film Education and Participation

The staff of the Fleadh are also attempting to create an active youth council to help determine how the festival operates. It is hoped that this youth voice will have three effects:

- (i) to further perpetuate the festival
- (ii) to further incorporate young people into the programming and
- (iii) to make the Junior into a year-round endeavour, rather than just an annual event.

Further assistance will hopefully be provided by the Solas Arthouse cinema, as, at present, the entirety of the festival takes place within the single screen, multi-use Town Hall Centre, which must be vacated by 4.30 p.m. each day.

### Practical Implications for Film Education Projects

As is in evidence across Ireland, the question of funding is ever present. While the Junior itself has retained its funding, the cost of buses – especially from neighbouring counties – has caused a drop-off in audience numbers. Likewise, where the Cinemobile was previously hired for a day in Co. Galway, it is now deemed too expensive. When off-site films are programmed, they are often aimed at subject-specificities to guarantee numbers, rather than more decidedly ‘art house’ titles for which audiences are more tentative. Even with a nominal ticket price of €4 per

pupil, Annette sees some people struggling to pay. Furthermore, receiving funding from both Galway County and City Council(s), the Junior must actively seek to create events within and beyond district lines. To this end, workshops are convened both in schools and at venues accessible to students from the city as well as from schools in the wider region.

### Hamlet Workshop:

Film Focus observed a *Hamlet* workshop which was convened by the Junior and facilitated by John, an actor based in the West who had played both Hamlet and Lear on stage. His presentation on Shakespeare was targeted at two Leaving Certificate English classes who were studying the play and watched a screening of *Hamlet* during the festival. John discussed the language of the play, how actors interpret the cadence and stage direction of the text, as well as some historical background to both the play and Shakespeare.

Along with this input, John also directed some of the students in the opening sequence of *Hamlet*, using this to discuss the nuances and symbolism of Shakespeare’s language. Much like dealing with film, this dialogic approach seemed to be preferable to a lecture at the tail-end of a school day. Having already watched the film and worked through the play, it was hoped that John’s delivery would further help students at both Higher and Ordinary Level English. The Junior’s engagement with Leaving Certificate students is noteworthy. Annette remarked that it was easy to get students invested in film at TY and many return to it at third level, but in the few years spent cramming for final exams, much film-related work and support is lost. To grow young audiences and keep them interested in film throughout their lives is truly what the Junior is all about.

## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with Junior Galway Film Fleadh

### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with non-mainstream film
- / Using film language to discuss adaptation

### Information Processing

- / Gathering information from a range of sources on *Hamlet*

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of film adaptation
- / Creative use of language in performance

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on play, film and workshop
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating on group performance and cooperating in out of school situations

### Being Personally Creative

- / Use initiative
- / Assess own contribution to group

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Watch complete subtitled film
- / Evaluate mainstream and non-mainstream films using film language
- / Demonstrate awareness of European film heritage e.g. German/French
- / Listen with respect to others views
- / Participate in Junior ethos through Youth Council

# Case Study – Fresh Film Festival

88

## Organisation Featured

Fresh Film Festival

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support,  
Film as Cultural Experience

## Open To:

Junior/Primary Cycle, Senior Cycle, TY,  
Young filmmakers, Youth Clubs and Young Film schools



## Background

The Fresh Film Festival is an annual event as well as a production house, distribution network and educational outreach for all things concerning young people and filmmaking, including Ireland's Young Filmmaker Competition. Starting life as the Irish Schools Video Competition in 1997, Fresh has moved from an annual collection of '70-odd VHS cassettes of varying quality submitted for judging' to the present day where up to 200 films from both Ireland and abroad compete for a host of prizes including that of Ireland's Young Filmmaker. Aiming to have every film viewed on the big screen, Fresh undertakes a series of showcases, school jury panels and regional heats including one at IFI, before the final, week-long festival in Limerick each year. Much like the Junior Galway Film Fleadh, Fresh receives annual funding from the Arts Council and Limerick City Council and strives to undertake events locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The Fresh Film Festival programme includes:

- / Production based workshops that include animation, acting, radio and television production, presenting and make-up workshops, camps and small-scale co-productions
- / an international shorts programme
- / filmmakers' fora
- / the Hothouse Group – an intensive programme aimed at 15-18 year olds, many of whom intend to pursue film, media and related professions at third level and beyond

## Fresh Film Festival & Film education

When programming films beyond the work of young filmmakers, Ciarda Tobin, Programme Co-Ordinator, says that while they aim to provide a cultural experience and teachers are happy to come, young people 'don't want anything with subtitles – or more than a year old', a direct contrast to findings of Film Focus surveys.

In judging the Young Filmmaker Competition, films are placed 1st, 2nd and 3rd, and specialist awards are given by specialised juries for animation, 60 second and documentary films. Audiences at the screenings also have the opportunity to nominate their favorite film for an audience award.

It is a policy that the subject matter of the films are not dictated

to the filmmakers. As Festival Director Jayne Foley says ‘The films come from the young people themselves, we don’t want to dictate what kinds of films they are making (through categorization)’.

In addition to the annual festival, which Ciarda calls ‘an organisation in flux [as] it is constantly responding and adapting to the needs and demands of [their] young people’, Fresh is now in a position to assist in the distribution of filmmakers’ films throughout the world. Recently Fresh filmmakers have met with success across Europe and have just won an award at Seoul International Youth Film Festival (SIYFF).

### Supporting Future Filmmakers & a Creative Economy

Responding to a question about the strength of the organisation, Fresh personnel offered many different suggestions. These included: the ability for young people to see their work on the big screen and the support they got from their peers in this respect; the ability for these young filmmakers to grow on the strength of seeing others work and the networks, both formal and informal, that develop, the fact that there are events and staff at the other end of a phone, throughout the year, and the place of Fresh alumni returning to the festival in leadership capacities, whether on judging panels, as educators or board members. Simply having advocates who are contactable year-round is invaluable. As former Company Manager Gill Fenton argued: ‘Young people get knocked a lot. To be able to say “we picked your film because this is good” [...it’s our job] to make them feel special and delighted to be here – to nurture and mentor them as they are the filmmakers of [Ireland’s] future’.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with Fresh Film Festival

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with film culture
- / Using digital media technologies to create own film

### Information Processing

- / Accessing filmmaking information from a range of sources

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on film
- / Listening to others
- / Communicating film through film language and digital technology

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on play, film and workshop
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating on filmmaking/festival visit

### Being Personally Creative

- / Reliability and flexibility in filmmaking process
- / Seeing project through

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Watch complete subtitled film
  - / Evaluate mainstream and non-mainstream films using film language
  - / Demonstrate awareness of European film heritage e.g. German/French
  - / Listen with respect to others views
  - / Participate in group project from beginning through to completion
-

# Case Study – Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM)

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## Organisation Featured

Young Irish Film Makers (YIFM)

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Filmmaking after school

## Open To:

Young filmmakers after school

Outreach programmes



## Background

Young Irish Film Makers is a Kilkenny-based production house, training centre and community outreach initiative that celebrated its 20th year in operation in 2011. It was established to provide a platform for young people to make feature-length, broadcast and exhibition quality films by themselves, and aims at developing filmmaking skills and proficiencies among participants aged 13-20. As Artistic Director, Mike Kelly, points out, '[i]t is the only organisation of its kind in Ireland or, indeed, Europe'. YIFM is funded by The Arts Council and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

## YIFM, Film education & Participation

As well as developing feature length scripts, the YIFM organisation works both in Kilkenny and in disadvantaged areas throughout the country on various filmmaking and practical film education projects. Arguing that the collaborative efforts necessary for filmmaking reveal inherently developmental processes, Mike says that the actual end-result of the filmmaking endeavour is often less important than the steps taken by the participants in order 'to get there'. The core aim is developmental Youth work through media production.

Projects include under the YIFM umbrella include:

- / **YIFM Outreach:** this programme offers film training and digital literacy workshops nationwide. The service is provided for youth and community development organisations with an emphasis on serving disadvantaged and rural areas in an effort to bridge the digital divide.
- / **National Youth Film School:** this is YIFM's annual summer programme for advanced young film makers. It is an intensive four-week programme where young film makers from YIFM training programmes shoot a feature film on location.
- / **Summer Camps:** run across four sessions, each with up to 50 participants. During the week-long proceedings, the young people are divided into four groups with each responsible for the production of two short films in that time. As well as filmmakers from Northern Ireland, keen filmmakers from as far afield as the Czech Republic, Spain and the United States have travelled to Kilkenny to take part.
- / **Weekly film-centred workshops:** these are grounded in both analysis of film and the production of independent material.



- / **YIFM Caffeine:** takes a number of YIFM's regulars and facilitates the group to script, shoot, edit and deliver a short film in a 24-hour period.
- / Short and feature-length film productions made in both the technical and creative register by young people

### Using digital technologies

While YIFM stresses the importance of young people being up-to-date with the latest technology, facilitator Garry McHugh also argues that films can certainly be made on mobile phones. Genres such as comedies or horror films can be a great way to get young people into thinking about the nuances of film. The confidence that comes with being able to execute an off-the-shelf narrative can pave the way for wider, more critical forms of filmmaking.

### YIFM Outreach

YIFM facilitated a pilot project for Film Focus (See Pilot Project 14) drawing on the funding they receive for needs-based outreach projects as well as Film Focus resources. The organisation also has strong links with local animation company, Cartoon Saloon, who have provided expertise to workshops as well as general support of the organisation.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with YIFM

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and creating film using digital media technologies

### Information Processing

- / Accessing filmmaking information from a range of sources

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of film genres
- / Creative use of technologies to make own film

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Sharing ideas and cooperating in out of school situations
- / Using film as means of participation in group process
- / Problem solving and conflict resolution

### Being Personally Creative

- / Using initiative in project
- / Being reliable

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate filmmaking skills through own/group film
  - / Demonstrate ability to see project through from beginning to end
  - / Demonstrate awareness of different film genres
  - / Listen with respect to others views
  - / Contribute to positive ethos of YIFM
  - / Organise film screenings
  - / Work as part of a creative and technical team
-

# Case Study – FÍS: The Film in Schools Project

92

## Organisation Featured

FÍS

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement:

Filmmaking, Filmmaking as Learning  
Support

## Open To:

Primary/Secondary Subject Support, ICT

## Background:

Based on the power of digital storytelling, FÍS is an inter-related group of projects for schools, community and development across Ireland. The film schools project is one of Ireland's most widely recognised film education initiatives.

FÍS promotes an active engagement with film production and wider media literacy skillsets, across a number of online platforms. Projects include:

- / The Digital Cre8tor online tutorials for producing digital content
- / The annual FÍS Film Festival
- / The FÍS Book Club

## FÍS and Film education:

Established in 1999 in an effort to launch creative learning experiences at primary level via audiovisual production, and under the directorship of Ciarán McCormack<sup>1</sup>, FÍS has a mandate for 'simplicity, connectivity and creativity'.

Among the major successes of FÍS have been the Book Club and most recently, School in a Box.

FÍS Book Club is a nationwide initiative that allows young people to create and upload their own book reviews to a secure web channel only available within school networks. The aims of the Book Club are to encourage reading as well as foster digital networks as young readers swap, share and engage with one another's reviews. It has met with unprecedented success with primary schools throughout Ireland and beyond using this model to incentivise young people to read. As Ciarán McCormack notes, 'the inherent digital skillsets of today's young people means that the participants themselves can read, record and upload digital book reviews to the 'walled garden' Book Club website, without the teacher having to be involved in any capacity'. Such efforts not only cast reading in a different light, but also add an element of confidence-building and direct participation which change the dynamic of the classroom.

In February, 2012, FÍS and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire (IADT) announced the first 15 'School[s] in a Box' (SIAB) shipment South Africa. Each box comprised a solar-power-rechargeable iPad, a digital projector,



speakers and a collapsible power supply. The units were shipped in highly reinforced, wheeled containers and are small enough to be allowed on a flight as hand luggage. Each unit will come supplied with pre-loaded curricular materials, and software can be tailored to specific local, regional and curricular concerns. In the stakes of social capital and equality of access to educational technology, it is clear that FÍS has become a global player.

### FÍS & Film Focus

Film Focus' engagement with FÍS was twofold<sup>2</sup>:

- (i) a FÍS-trained educator who undertook deliver a project beyond her curricular engagement with FÍS and who acted as a mentor for a secondary teacher who wanted to engage in a filmmaking project but who lacked the filmmaking skills to bring her own project to light. (See Pilot projects 2 and 6).
- (ii) Film Focus investigated the potential for teachers already involved in the research project to access CPD in filmmaking, such as that available through FÍS Interactive, which has been delivered through Education Centres across Ireland. By way of a pilot engagement with

FÍS, Ciarán met with a number of secondary teachers involved in Film Focus who came from a variety of disciplines and hosted a number of CPD evenings in the Blackrock Education Centre. Providing support and demonstrating how to engage with the disparate equipment – some brand new, some very antiquated – available to them at their schools, he led the group through the FÍS Interactive training module. The goal was to make each educator leave the final session with the capability to create media content for the classroom as determined by his/her own needs.

Intended as a brief and targeted 'upskilling' rather than an overarching foundational course, the FÍS teacher training highlighted the need for resources for secondary school educators genuinely keen on developing filmmaking skills in order to implement media-based lessons in their classrooms.

<sup>1</sup>At time of writing

<sup>2</sup>IFI was involved in the establishment of FÍS through membership of the steering group and subsequent advisory group for FÍS a dó

## Sample Key Skills at primary level as Related to Engagement with the FÍS Project

### Media Literacy

- / Developing skills in digital media technology to create own films

### Information Processing

- / (FÍS Book Club) Gathering information from a range of sources on a chosen book
- / Organising and presenting using ICT

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of e.g. book
- / Creating own short film/online book review

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating on film project
- / Sharing ideas
- / Problem-solving

### Being Personally Creative

- / Using initiative in project
- / Being reliable

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Make a short film
- / Demonstrate an understanding of film language e.g. camera shots, sound techniques
- / Demonstrate awareness of film genre
- / Listen with respect to others views
- / Read and review a complete book using ICT

# Case Study – IFI Teen Club

94

## Organisation Featured

IFI

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Cultural Experience,  
Film as Cinematic Experience

## Open To

Young people aged 15+



## Background

During Spring 2011, Film Focus convened a forum with a number of participants from the IFI Teen Club to canvass their opinions on cinema, films in school, media literacy and the social aspects of watching film. IFI Teen is a monthly out-of-school offer to enable young people to engage directly with IFI's regular screening programme. A title is selected from the programme and designated an IFI Teen screening (open also to general public). Free tickets for early sign-up, two-for-one offers and a loyalty scheme are added as incentives. The premise of the Teen Club is to foster an interest in cinema in young people, but it has also successfully been used to incentivise school attendance (See Pilot Project 5).

## Synopsis

This forum was motivated by a concern that a youth voice was under-represented in our research project. Eight students and one representative of the Temple Bar Cultural Trust youth panel responded to our call out and joined the meeting. Toward the end of the session, another five students turned up. A facilitator from the National Youth Drama Council of Ireland, Alan, was drafted in to chair the event, making sure that the young people were engaged and that group-based activities ran smoothly. His approach to generating discussion through activity, physical response and open questioning to both groups and individuals ensured that everyone was involved and prompted to share their opinion.

## Outline of Programme

### Icebreakers

While some of the participants knew one another from the Teen Club, or from school, several were new to the group starting with a series of introductory questions this seamlessly blended into a reflective statement about each participant's filmgoing habits. Questions prompted discussion of such as *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991, dir. James Cameron) and the James Bond franchises. Everyone had watched subtitled films. 'A' commented that many had seen *The Beat that My Heart Skipped / De battre mon coeur s'est arrêté* (2005, dir. Jacques Audiard) as an IFI event organised in their local arts venue. Many were surprised to find that they had 'really enjoyed' the film.

Only three expressed an interest in seeing ‘really old films’. ‘I’ stated that he had watched *12 Angry Men* (1957, dir. Sidney Lumet) for class. Others had seen the film in school and while ‘G’ thought the film brilliantly portrayed social issues and the idea that ‘people shouldn’t judge people’, ‘H’ admitted that he had only managed to watch half of it.

‘H’ also commented upon the fact that in many ‘big’ (blockbuster) films, ‘young people only play side characters’; ‘C’ agreed saying that ‘most films put teenagers to the side’.

When asked if films could be ‘more than just entertaining’ all of the students answered ‘Yes’ and volunteered the following comments:

‘In school’, film could provide great insight in History lessons. The old footage out there (could) make you more interested in reading the history, once you’ve seen it’.

‘More documentaries could enliven Science class’.

Conversely with regard to English class – the only syllabus that specifically includes a complete feature film – a small debate broke out. ‘F’ thought that he had already watched enough films in English, and that the failure of film was that ‘you don’t get anything more than the main points [of a story]’. ‘G’ offered that she often got ‘bored watching films in English class’, and that she could ‘watch DVDs at home’.

The students then began to discuss the merits of particular book-to-film adaptations and weigh up each version. Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, dir. Robert Mulligan) (a popular title for Junior Cycle) came under significant fire and many agreed that ‘it was a better movie than book’.

On the broader question of media literacy, Film Focus was keen to determine whether students understood the debates which were current following the launch of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. When asked ‘Who knows what media means?’, all of the participants responded in the affirmative. ‘G’ stated it was ‘advertising, journalism, some people’s opinions against others, communication’. ‘A’ offered that media is ‘trying to get a message out, trying to reach out to people’ though acknowledging ‘We know what it is; it’s hard to explain’.

When asked if they knew what media literacy was, ‘A’ ventured a guess: ‘Trying to understand how the media works’. ‘B’ stated

that when the word literacy is used, they were all conditioned ‘to think of English’.

At that point participants were divided into three groups of three to engage with short film clips from *Billy Elliot* (2000, dir. Stephen Daldry), *Persepolis* (2007, dir. Vincent Paronnaud, Maryane Satrapi) and *Inception* (2010, dir. Christopher Nolan), chosen from the 2010-11 IFI Education programme. Each group was asked to respond to one clip, using the following questions as prompts:

- / What is happening in this clip? How do we know? What do you think happens next?
- / What do you find interesting about this clip? Are you intrigued to learn more about it?
- / Do you think this film could be used to learn more about other subjects and, if so, how?

The responses from each group were hugely articulate and demonstrated implicit media literate capabilities.

During the film analysis, some students talked about their own experience of making films. All but two of the participants had experience behind the camera ‘even if only on a mobile’. Of those who hadn’t, ‘D’ expressed great interest in taking part in a filmmaking project, whether in-school or of her own volition.

Of those six who had made films, half of them had studied filmmaking techniques all in TY contexts. A number of students had no TY at their schools. ‘A’ would have liked to have studied film production during Senior Cycle; Four of the nine young people asked had plans to choose film or other media-related fields as their first choices for Cental Applications Office (CAO) application.

When asked if they would like to study film as a stand-alone subject, 6 of the group – which now numbered 15 – replied ‘yes’, 8 said ‘no’ though much of this was based on simply not wanting any more subjects at all; one final participant could not make up her mind. The final question of the day invited each person to say what film meant to them.

Their answers were quite intriguing, largely focussed around the social aspects of film viewing, or auto-critical questions of why we find ourselves in the cinema, or in front of You Tube, and are transcribed in full:



**'I':** It's the social aspect, getting the lads together, even if it's something you've seen before

**'A':** It's a way to go away from the busy schedule you have, you get to interact with the film, almost as if you're in the film

**'H':** It's a way to escape from reality, it's a social event and it expresses who you really are

**'C':** It's on the social side, you can become friends with people who like what you like; it's entertainment

**'G':** Film helps people learn and it brings people together; I love acting and seeing different sides [of a story]

**'E':** Film brings out our emotions, it's the story, it's an escape from the everyday

**'F':** Oh, God, films teach us a lot, a lot about life; look at actors – they speak to what you're going through in life

**'D':** It's all about getting away from the hectic time in school

**'B':** It's the social aspect: do you want to go to the cinema? Watch a DVD? If you're in exam year it allows you to get away; it's the easiest way to get away

**'J':** Everything about films [is my favourite], film gets you thinking about what happens in the world

**'K':** I've learned a lot about relationships, about everyday life

**'L':** Film is entertainment; it's inspiring. *To Kill a Mockingbird* made me think more about my family

**'M':** I just like films!

**'N':** It's an insight into yourself; what you like, who you are

The fact that these young people were already engaging with cinema through IFI Teen suggests that they were already predisposed to the media and therefore it wasn't surprising that their responses were so positive. It should be noted that while IFI Teen has continued, it has been hugely difficult to sustain members despite the programmer taking a range of approaches to the selection of titles, or simply making IFI programme available to this audience at extremely reduced ticket price. The Teen Forum findings were by and large compatible with findings from school-based activities i.e. that young people were highly media literate and, by and large, motivated by film and moving image, and not just mainstream fare.

Following this event, the participants moved to the cinema to view *Submarine* (2010 dir. Richard Ayoade) for IFI Teen.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with IFI Teen Club

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with film culture
- / Using digital media technologies to create own film

### Information Processing

- / Accessing filmmaking information from a range of sources

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Follow-up critical analysis of film through discussion

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on film
- / Listening to others

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating on cinema visit


### Being Personally Creative

- / Making time to attend IFI Teen

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Watch complete subtitled film
  - / Evaluate mainstream and non-mainstream films using film language
  - / Demonstrate awareness of film heritage
  - / Listen with respect to others views
  - / Participate in discussion
-



**I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT  
RELATIONSHIPS, ABOUT EVERYDAY  
LIFE, ON FILM**

# Case Study – Tallaght Young Filmmakers (TYF)

98

## Organisation Featured

Tallaght Young Filmmakers (TYF)

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Filmmaking, Film as Subject

## Open To

Young people aged 14-19



## Background

Among the case studies profiled for Film Focus, TYF is an example of one organisation with whom Film Focus had several contacts through visits to the project and the facilitator's contribution to Film Focus meetings. Although the project was not developed for Film Focus, through the observations and engagements with participants, Film Focus was enabled to assess the projects' strengths and challenges.

## Project Outline

Established in 2008, Tallaght Young Filmmakers (TYF) is a youth-led filmmaking initiative of South Dublin County Council Youth Arts Office that draws from two local secondary schools and that meets after the school day. The ages of the participants have thus far ranged from 14-19 and TYF has, in its two years existence, included 26 local young people amongst its ranks. The programme is presently housed in RUA RED multi-purpose arts venue in Tallaght. The programme focuses on the production of one short film per project-run, and has just completed work with their second run. When not "in production", TYF's participants continue to meet – holding workshops and master-classes with Dublin-based professionals from various aspects of the filmmaking process.

## Synopsis

Tallaght Young Filmmakers focuses on a 'youth-led' approach to all of its endeavours. In the second run, the young people were made acutely aware of the budgetary and time constraints under which they were working and, while guided by Arts Co-ordinators, Welfare Officers and filmmakers, they are left to their own devices when it comes to the project "sinking or swimming".

Film Focus made numerous trips to RUA RED to observe and engage with the young filmmakers before and during the production of their 10-minute horror-orientated short *Spooked* (2010); in one instance a 30-minute session was set aside for the young filmmakers to discuss their experience of TYF with Film Focus personnel.

Today TYF continues to move from strength to strength. Now working at a full capacity of 18 members (with a waiting list), the group has found festival successes with further films that have incorporated the likes of special effects and original, self-produced scores. Three of the original TYF participants have gone on to study film at third level; others have facilitated subsequent youth filmmaking initiatives, worked alongside crews on professional sets and acted in feature films. A number have worked specifically to bolster the efforts of TYF, providing support for newer cohorts of young, local filmmakers.

### Strengths of the Project

- / Empowers young people to develop their particular interests in the filmmaking process; some found themselves happier writing and acting, others shooting or editing
- / Young people gain confidence in their own abilities, grow creatively and have access to equipment and the experience of local professionals
- / Young filmmakers develop a portfolio of work
- / The extension of the young filmmakers' community of collaborators and professional network

### Challenges

- / Not enough focus on watching before setting to make a film. The participants expressed an interest learning how to critically read a film moving into production
- / Learning on the job was a recurrent theme in the TYF production
- / The equipment and facilities available to the participants free-of-charge are of industry standard. The filmmakers had a budget of €5,000 for their production, a sum not many youth programmes can match

### Concluding Observations

- / Give the young filmmakers a 'greater lead-in time' to the production of their short film
- / Establish a 'peer-learning structure' for the continued participation of young people who have moved on from secondary school

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with TYF

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and creating film using digital media technologies

### Information Processing

- / Accessing filmmaking information from a range of sources

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of film genres, creative use of technologies to make own film from scripting, production through to edit

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Sharing ideas and cooperating in out of school situations
- / Using film as means of participation in group process
- / Problem solving and conflict resolution

### Being Personally Creative

- / Using initiative
- / Self-assess
- / See project through

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Demonstrate filmmaking skills through own/group film
  - / Demonstrate ability to see project through from beginning to end
  - / Demonstrate awareness of different film genres
  - / Listen with respect to others' views
-

# Case Study – *The Seasons*

100

## Organisation Featured

The IFI Irish Film Archive  
Irish Country Life Museum

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Cultural Experience, Film as Subject Support  
(Music/Local History)

## Open To

Senior Cycle Music, TY Music, young musicians after school

## Background

As part of the IFI National touring programme, a recently restored amateur film *The Seasons* (1935) travelled ‘home’ to Co Mayo, a to be screened in the Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar. Shot by John Benignus Lyons, a local dispensing pharmacist, the silent, 16mm film chronicles a year in the life of Kilkelly, Co. Mayo, a village of approximately 250 residents today. Made in black and white and with colour stock, the film stands as a visual testament to rural Ireland of 80 years ago. Along with the film, an original accompaniment had been commissioned for and presented by Rossa and Colm Ó Snodaigh of the Irish traditional group Kíla and harpist Cormac De Barra.

Film Focus’ interest in the event stemmed from a workshop convened in the Irish Country Life Museum in Turlough, Co. Mayo the following day. Local secondary school students with an aptitude for traditional music and instrumentation from across the area were taking part in a week long music camp. Given the prestige of the musicians in attendance with *The Seasons*, a one-day master-class on scoring for film, albeit with a very traditional Irish flavour, was arranged.

The afternoon saw the participants split into three groups to score an excerpt of *Browne’s Providence*. After some time to hone and practice their creations, each performed their short score. Much like other film education projects, or indeed collaboration, the results were as much a lesson in group work, listening to and synthesising lessons, and trying out a number of ideas before committing to one. Questions and critique from both their peers and the professionals followed and the day ended with a much needed jam session.





### Film Literacy/Music Literacy

What is interesting in this exercise is that so often Film Focus maintains the place of visual literacy that is taught, or at least brought to the fore, through an engagement with film. From the perspective of the Music for Film workshop, the visual actually fostered thinking about music in different ways and how visual and audio tracks in this instance further actioned cultural thinking. Given the Irish, and indeed Mayo-specific, subject matter in the films shown simple questions such as ‘What should the bodhrán represent?’, or ‘Should we use a harp or a fiddle for the stringed accompaniment?’ presented students with questions of heritage and brought elements of traditional Irish music both into the present day and into the cinema.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with *The Seasons*

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with Irish film heritage.

### Information Processing

- / Gathering information from a range of film on musical scores and analysing

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of film score
- / Creating own accompaniment

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on film and workshop
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating on group performance and cooperating in out of school situations and with facilitators

### Being Personally Creative

- / Using initiative in composition
- / Self-assessment of performance

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Evaluate silent films and film scores using language of film and music
  - / Demonstrate awareness of Irish film heritage
  - / Listen with respect to others views
  - / Participate in live accompaniment
-

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# Case Study – LiFT Ballymun Youth Arts Festival

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102

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## Organisation Featured

Ballymun Festival Steering Committee

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support, Film as Cultural Experience

## Open To

TY, Senior Cycle

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## Background

The LiFT Youth Arts Festival has been running since 2005. It incorporates drama, fine art, fashion and filmmaking throughout its week of events.

In conjunction with Film Focus and IFI Education, LiFT incorporated screenings in axis, Ballymun Arts Centre into their general programme.

The agencies involved in organising the festival are, Ballymun Festival Steering Committee, a multi-agency organisation made up of representation from Dublin City Council, axis Ballymun, Poppintree Youth Project, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource, Ballymun Womens' Resource Centre and the wider Ballymun Community. They created the LiFT series of screenings aimed at young people, targeting their audience through the school in the area.

## LiFT and film education

Films were selected from the IFI Education programme according to what it was felt students and teachers would want to see at axis. The films were screened during the day and tickets cost €2 per person.

The films selected and screened were *The Hurt Locker* (2009, dir. Kathryn Bigelow), *Coraline* (2009, dir. Henry Selick) and *The Class / Entre les murs* (2008, dir. Laurent Cantet).

Organisers felt that the programme introduced young people to a wider range of film than usually available – specifically with regard to *Entre les Murs*. The programme was a collaborative effort between the Festival committee, the students by way of their teachers, and IFI. As part of a wider festival, inclusion of a film programme was easily managed.

## Challenges for the Project

The scheduling conflicted with school-time and approaching Easter holidays which affected turnout. Teachers expressed a reticence to pull their students from class. The festival did not offer pre-screening or post-screening work for the audience, despite the fact the films were running during the school day.

### Concluding Observations

With turn-out lower than expected, partly due to scheduling and a work-to-rule that was in place at the time, the festival organisers were underwhelmed with the response from young people. The film event highlighted the need to open communications with local teachers about the scheduling of the **entire** festival. Stronger co-ordination may lead to larger turn-out/more support.

Despite relatively poor response, however, festival organisers argue that there is a place for film in critical and creative thinking among their target group and acknowledged the need for more development in the area. Schools @ LiFT programme ran in 2012 which proved very popular all round.

A pre-screening introduction and a post-show Q & A, facilitated by a member of the Ballymun Festival Steering Committee and one of our young Festival Youth Committee members, was well received by students and teachers.

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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with LiFT

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with non-mainstream film

### Information Processing

- / Gathering information from a range of sources on the films before making their choice

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Creative approach to subject learning through film

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion, listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others

- / Cooperating in out of school situations

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Watch complete subtitled film
  - / Evaluate mainstream and non-mainstream films, showing understanding of themes
  - / Demonstrate awareness of European film heritage e.g. French
  - / Listen with respect to others views and behave responsibly in out of school situation
-

# Case Study – Co.Wexford Youth Film Project (CWYFP)

104

## Organisation Featured

Co.Wexford Youth Film Project (CWYFP)

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support, Filmmaking

## Open To

Young people aged 13 - 20

// “ANYTHING THAT COULD BE DONE TO PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE FILMS, AND CHANNEL THEIR CREATIVITY, WOULD BE A VERY POSITIVE THING”

## Background

Based out of St. Michael’s Theatre in New Ross, the Wexford Youth Film Project – formerly Reel New Ross – has had more than 400 young people participate in the writing, production and screening of filmmaking projects since 2005. Re-launched in January 2012 as a countywide initiative with continued support from the Arts Council and Wexford County Council, under the directorship of Terence White, all of the projects in which young people participate in the Wexford Youth Film Project are free of charge, and each stresses the ‘promotion of accessibility and inclusivity’ as well as an insistence on fun.

## CWYFP

The programme also has a history of outreach initiatives. In 2009, a three-month project saw young people from traveller and settled communities work together on a short film entitled *Girls in the City*. Last Spring a similar endeavour was undertaken as students from regional special schools collaborated with mainstream education partners on the production of a *Good Spirits* a short film that was made its debut at the Wexford Arts Centre in May 2011. *Good Spirits* was completed as part of the Focus on Ability initiative, itself a recipient of an Arts Council Young Ensembles award. The film also screened at the inaugural Wexford Widescreen Youth Film Festival, a programme of screenings dedicated to the filmmaking work of the CWYFP participants and other individual young filmmakers from across the Wexford region.

## Film education

Terence White stresses that the facilitation of filmmaking requires a fine balance that needs to be struck between ‘people skills, fostering creativity and technological skills’, the last component of which, he states, is something that regularly needs to be updated. Filmmaking takes time, both in production and in the background efforts of the teachers, filmmakers and facilitators who bring such efforts to their audiences. As the project has grown, its annual showcase now includes both the work of young filmmakers, but also productions from a number of collaborations between CWYFP members and different community groups.

For more information on the Wexford Youth Film Project, see: <http://www.stmichaelsnewross.com/> or via Facebook, see: <http://www.facebook.com/wefordyouthfilm>




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## Sample Key Skills at Senior Cycle as Related to Engagement with CWYFP

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### Media Literacy

- / Using media technologies to create own film, drawing on film language and collaborative filmmaking process

### Information Processing

- / Accessing filmmaking information from a range of sources
- / Ordering and presenting to the group

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Taking creative approach to problem-solve during filmmaking process
- / Creating own film narrative and production

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on film
- / Listening to others; presenting through film language and digital technology

### Working with Others

- / Collaborating
- / Sharing ideas and cooperating in filmmaking
- / Respecting different views

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Listen with respect to others' views and different viewpoints
  - / Participate in group project from beginning through to completion
  - / Listen and respond to facilitator
-



OVER THE YEARS, I'VE COME TO  
REALISE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE  
USUALLY PARTICIPATE IN  
FILMMAKING FOR ONE REASON –  
FUN! FORTUNATELY WHILE THEY  
ARE HAVING FUN THEY ARE ALSO  
BEING CREATIVE, LEARNING NEW  
SKILLS, DEVELOPING THEIR SOCIAL  
SKILLS, AND COMMUNICATING  
THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS  
TO A WIDER AUDIENCE.





# Case Study – Cinemobile

108

## Organisation Featured

Cinemobile

## Film Focus Mode of Engagement

Film as Subject Support, Film as Cultural Experience,  
Film in TY

## Open to

All school levels



## Background

Now in its tenth<sup>1</sup> year, the Cinemobile is Ireland's travelling cinema in the form of a purpose-built articulated lorry that can be converted from a tractor trailer to a fully climate-controlled 100 seat cinema in the space of three quarters of an hour. On the road twelve months a year, the Cinemobile travels the length and breadth of the island of Ireland, across both the Republic and the North, stopping off in towns and schools where local cinema access is limited or non-existent

The remit of the Cinemobile is twofold:

- / Making a range of film – mainstream and arthouse - available to the public
- / Offering an annual programme of available titles from which primary and secondary teachers can select and organise a visit of the cinema to their school or vicinity. The education programme includes titles that are applicable to school curricula in both the Republic and Northern Ireland

Crucial to the Cinemobile's operation is their delivery of a total cinematic package. As well as landing a fully equipped cinema on a town or school's doorstep, the Cinemobile team, under the management of Noreen Collins, engages distributors, sources film prints and clears copyright in advance of the chosen screenings.

## School Audiences

From 2007 - 2009, the Cinemobile had in excess of 8,000 young people in attendance per annum, with over 10,000 in 2008 alone. This number dropped to 5,500 in 2010, but, as Noreen notes, there was an unprecedented amount of snow on the ground in December and January – both key points for schools on the Cinemobile's calendar. 2011 realised audiences of 12,432 for the education programme.

Cinemobile's schools programme sees audience numbers of about 3:1 in favour of the primary sector. The availability of the mobile venue at a school, and primary teachers' 'having all the pupils in one room' all day, rather than needing to borrow time against other subjects, means that the return from national

schools ‘has been bigger from the start’. Noreen says that as they get to know the teachers, they can slowly bring them round to trying an alternative to Hollywood films. Many see the films as a ‘treat’ rather than an educational tool.

### Film as Cultural Experience

Regardless of the films screened, Noreen advocates that the social element to watching cinema together, as well as the fascination with a massive transforming truck, is what is vital. More populist offerings in the programme also bring in many schools that otherwise would not be keen to engage with film during the school day.

### Film as Subject Support

Within the secondary school setting, the Cinemobile generally finds wide uptake with the modern language films on offer, usually coinciding with those being offered by IFI Education, so there is an awareness through both programmes of the films that are on tour. Noreen also notes that ‘The role of film is secure in English’ (curricula), where film exists as text for Comparative Study, though she believes there is plenty of room to expand upon this particular interpretation. Indigenous Irish films and Irish language productions are an element of the programme which Noreen would like to see expanded, though she admits that programmes of Irish-made shorts seem to get little interest from schools.

Two projects undertaken annually by the Cinemobile are of note. The first takes place during Science Week<sup>2</sup> and comprises a week of free screenings and workshops across four counties, to stimulate thinking around science and innovation. This project is highly successful for Cinemobile in terms of interest from schools, promotion and managing the events.

The second is the cross-border ‘school twinning project’<sup>3</sup> where four schools from the Republic and four schools from Northern Ireland met for group screenings and jointly convened workshops. Students from border counties travelled to a school on the opposite side, where the school ‘hosted’ a screening and series of workshops (either *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008, dir. Mark Herman) or *Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame / Buda as sharm foru rikht*, (dir. Hana Makhmalbaf, 2007).

Workshops on the second film – a film detailing the attempts of a young Afghan girl to attend her local school – dealt with the concerns of ‘sexism, religious intolerance, religious fundamentalism, peace and violence, and solutions to the problems encountered’. The opportunities for SPHE/CSPE-oriented learning, pedagogical approaches to empathic thinking and cross-border collaboration are obvious. As noted in the local Dundalk newspaper *The Argus*:

‘the programme gave the students, who are from very different cultural and political backgrounds, an opportunity to mix socially and discuss common topics that affect young adults of their age [... it was] a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all’. (17/11/2010)

### Cinemobile & Participation

Noreen acknowledges that while a cinema/venue-based film screening during school hours may only cost €4-5 euros, transport to the venue is usually required. ‘Ten Euros, that’s a lot to ask of a kid – and his parents. With the Cinemobile we can do things differently’. The idea that the Cinemobile brings both cultural product and an arts agenda to towns with no access to local cinema is central to the efforts of the project. As budgets cuts reduce the availability of trips a bus ride away, and the trouble with teachers getting substitution cover for time out of school, the Cinemobile is a cheaper and less time-hungry alternative within the schoolyard.

As she notes, the Cinemobile provides a service that no one else in Ireland can. When talking about future efforts, Noreen hopes that the resources of each particular locality could be better utilised, perhaps tapping into local people to deliver workshops and insight – therefore being able to ‘provide more packages for all subjects’. Since ‘professionally directed workshops are very expensive’ and such costs have to be reflected in the ticket price, a more community-orientated engagement would be ideal; for Noreen ‘it’s simply figuring out how to do it’.

<sup>1</sup>At time of writing, 2011

<sup>2</sup>Annual January nationwide event to encourage interest in science and related themes

<sup>3</sup>School Twinning: Collaboration Along The Border Project 2010-2011




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## Sample Key Skills & Evidence as Related to Engagement with Cinemobile

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### Media Literacy

- / Accessing and engaging with non-mainstream film or Irish film heritage

### Information Processing

- / Prompt to gather information from a range of sources on film pre/post-screening

### Critical & Creative Thinking

- / Critical analysis of film in class
- / Creative application of film's themes to school subject

### Communicating

- / Sharing own ideas in discussion on film and workshop
- / Listening to others and responding to facilitator

### Working with Others


- / Collaborating on groupwork
- / Sharing ideas and cooperating in out of school situations

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- / Watch complete subtitled/non-mainstream film
  - / Evaluate mainstream and non-mainstream films using film language
  - / Demonstrate awareness of European film heritage e.g. German/French/Irish
  - / Listen with respect to others views
  - / Actively participate in film-based workshops
-



A photograph of two men sitting in a room filled with many wooden chairs. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a dark jacket, and is holding a white document. The man on the right is wearing a dark jacket and is looking at the document. The room has a brick wall in the background and many rows of empty wooden chairs. The entire image has a blue tint.

**THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF WATCHING AND THEN ANALYSING CINEMA AS INTENDED, IN AN ENVIRONMENT FREE FROM DISTRACTION – IS AN APPROACH TO MATERIAL THAT CANNOT BE REPLICATED BY THE LIKES OF GROUP READING**

# Further Projects of Interest

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During the course of our research a number of further filmmaking projects, training initiatives, educators and enthusiasts passed on their opinions and expertise to the research team. The recurring theme amongst all of these participants was encapsulated by Kerry-based filmmaker Lisa Fingleton (*The Happy Artist*) as she states that allowing young people to be ‘the creators and not just consumers of film and digital media’ creates ‘a unique and unparalleled learning experience’. Simply, it ‘equips young people to’ manifest ‘their own culture’.

A number of dedicated filmmaking organisations also shaped Film Focus’ attitudes toward practical film projects. Action School of Film (formerly Northwest Film School) is a programme based in Leitrim that caters for both in and out-of-school projects. Ruth Earley, head of the project works in both Irish and English and has successfully led young filmmakers to the completion of award-winning projects that have been screened across the globe. Operating since 2008, recent awards and accolades for Action shorts include a Golden Clip award in the Berlin Youth Film Festival, an official selection in Seoul and numerous Irish youth festivals. (For more information see [www.actionfilm.ie](http://www.actionfilm.ie))

Dublin’s Digital Film School runs 3-day, 5-day and week-long courses for students throughout the wider Dublin region, both from their Pearse Street location and in local venues. Aimed at 12-18 year olds, as well as special summer courses for adults, the Digital Film School also provides a ‘make a movie in a day’ programme for TY students that can be delivered nationwide. Established in 2006 by Julianne Forde and Ruth Treacy, the Digital Film School has recently developed their remit further by devising a partnership with the Irish Cancer Society which sees young filmmakers producing their own content revolving around smoking cessation initiatives. (For more information see [www.digitalfilmschool.ie](http://www.digitalfilmschool.ie))

Bridge to College (B2C) is a school-based project operating from Trinity College, Dublin. A collaborative project between TCD, The Centre for IT Research in Education, The Trinity Access Programme and Suas Educational Development.

The B2C programme offers young people from designated disadvantaged second-level schools an innovative third level learning experience using technology. As part of our Film Focus research project IFI Education observed students participating in a practical filmmaking class and invited them to develop their learning experience through viewing a film in the IFI.

Many organisations assist in the training of filmmaking facilitators who may go on to working with young filmmakers. Filmbase, a not-for-profit resource for filmmakers in the heart of Dublin’s Temple Bar provides a space for training and support. Seasoned filmmakers and new members alike can hire equipment and engage with others in the industry. Filmbase is also home to Film Ireland, Ireland’s cultural magazine dedicated to film. Other resource centres such as Galway Film Centre ([www.galwayfilmcentre.ie](http://www.galwayfilmcentre.ie)) provide specially designed programmes for schools, youth and community groups. Cork Film Centre ([www.corkfilmcentre.ie](http://www.corkfilmcentre.ie)) is a resource organisation that provides training courses for filmmakers.

In the youth sector itself, the National Youth Council of Ireland ([www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)), the representative body for voluntary youth work, also plays a part in training and providing assistance for

facilitators working with young persons' initiatives – including filmmaking projects. Certain youth centres, such as The Base ([www.thebase.ie](http://www.thebase.ie)), Ballyfermot, are extremely well equipped to deliver film and new media training. Bradóg Regional Youth Service has been using video making and animation as sustainable youth work practices for over four years ([www.bradóg.com](http://www.bradóg.com)).

For young people already working on films – a number of websites enable them to stay aware of funding schemes, festivals and prizes. As well as Filmbase's own website ([www.filmbase.ie](http://www.filmbase.ie)), the Irish Film and Television Network ([www.iftn.ie](http://www.iftn.ie)) and the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann ([www.irishfilmboard.ie](http://www.irishfilmboard.ie)) maintain directories of current funding programmes. On the exhibition front Access Cinema ([www.accesscinema.ie](http://www.accesscinema.ie)), the resource organisation for regional cultural exhibition in Ireland, operates a youth film club, Zoom, through some of their venues.

Throughout all our research and contact with various organisations, while they may have differed greatly in their remits and practices, what unified them was a sense of enthusiasm for working with film and young people but also, and to echo filmmaker Lisa Fingleton above, for the creative, critical and cultural potential that this activity could unlock across a whole range of abilities.

# Working with an Educate Together School

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As mentioned previously in this report, much Film Focus activity occurred within the post-primary education sector – a reflection perhaps on the weighting of activity within IFI Education programme. Among the pilot projects, two from the primary education sector were delivered. Also of relevance were case studies of FÍS and Cinemobile, whose activities occur mostly in the Primary Sector. In the course of the annual IFI School screenings, we encounter a large number of schools from the primary sector, several of which belong to the Educate Together network. As the primary pilot projects had taken place in a mainstream boys' national school and a special school, we were interested in engaging with a teacher and group of pupils from an Educate Together school, to observe how film and media literacy would fit within their practice and ethos.

We made contact with a school who were interested in getting involved. This short project which, was developed with an Educate Together school, took place towards the end of the school year and comprised a visit to the IFI for a screening and related activities and two in-school workshops provided by IFI. The project was structured as follows:

## Pre-screening workshop – Introduction to Animation

**IFI Screening:** *Ponyo* (2008, dir. Hayao Miyazaki)

and a 'Get to know the IFI' activity

### Post-screening workshop:

'Describing Films and Writing Reviews'

The class teacher participated in both in-school workshops plus the visit to IFI.

**Workshop 1** included introducing children to different genres, styles and directors through viewing a range of clips that included examples of mainstream and non-mainstream film as well as a practical activity and group work. The IFI visit also included a treasure hunt around the building as well as a film introduction, inviting class response which required use of the new terminology they had acquired in school.

**Workshop 2** focused in more detail on Japanese anime, with particular reference to *Ponyo*. Close scene analysis through group discussion and follow-up written reviews drew on film language acquired.

After the events, the class teacher commented that she had never previously considered covering 'film studies' in first class but, as she had witnessed her pupils' enthusiasm, she was determined to cover film again. The reviews the students completed 'included wonderful descriptions' of the film viewed, and used some of the film language terminology that they had learnt in the workshops such as genre, animation, scene, etc. As we had found in previous film education activities, she commented that the workshops facilitated 'cooperative learning'. This was a worthwhile area of study that 'ties in with the English curriculum (and) it also gives children the tools to begin to look objectively at this very influential medium'.







# Subject Associations

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During the course of Film Focus, we spoke to many teachers who regularly use film in their teaching. As acknowledged previously, film has a distinct place on the Leaving Certificate English course, but also in Irish through short films; a single question appears on the Art exam; there are possibilities for film discussion in Modern Languages. Given this limited representation across curricula, Film Focus sought the opinions of the 26 secondary cycle subject associations to get a sense of the group's views on the place of film in their particular subject area.

Of the thirteen responses, only two organisations felt that their curricula had achieved a balance regarding the amount of media being utilised. Both representative groups revolve around the teaching of English. The representatives of these organisations, however, felt that there was a place for greater engagement with mediated content in the delivery of their subjects. All but one of the remaining who responded felt that media was either 'under-represented' or 'very under-represented' within their curricula.

When asked where they believed film could be of greatest benefit within their specific subjects, an overwhelming majority felt that it was in engaging disinterested students at Junior Cycle 92% and at Senior Cycle 91.7%, which is the more conventional view of the potential of film in the classroom.

As per the responses we received, film can be of benefit in Junior Cycle in a number of areas. (See Fig. 1)

Film can be of benefit in Senior Cycle in a number of areas. (See Fig. 2)

What is clear in both of these instances is that educators see the potential of film and media across a wide variety of curricula. What is also interesting is that the choices that scored lowest in both instances are the ones that sought to use film in a wider context than subject specificity ie 'wider learning outcomes' and 'cross-curricular projects'. Whether this alludes to an awareness

of the huge curricular demands on teachers already, or that any type of engagement ought to be fenced in for one specific type of lesson without considering the benefits beyond that particular remit remains a question.

Both rubrics identify that most see film as a manner of energizing the classroom, both for engaging disinterested students as well as introducing concepts and topics that are difficult to approach via traditional 'chalk and talk' methodologies. This was more apparent regarding senior cycle.

A number of subject representatives acknowledged that while their curricula did not make specific space for film and moving image media, a number of teachers were using the medium in interesting and pedagogically worthwhile ways.

From Physics to Physical Education, the representatives put forth examples such as the classic 1940 Tacoma Narrows Bridge Collapse newsreel to introduce waves, as well as examples of films made to promote healthy eating and the benefits of exercise to young people. As noted, such implementation is left up solely to each individual educator. For a wider implementation of film in the classroom, there were concerns over resources: digital white boards, provisions for ICT and camera equipment, and wider banks of material were all cited as requirements. The teachers were advocating the role of technological and film studies-oriented upskilling, and also looking for advice regarding subjects such as rights clearance as well.

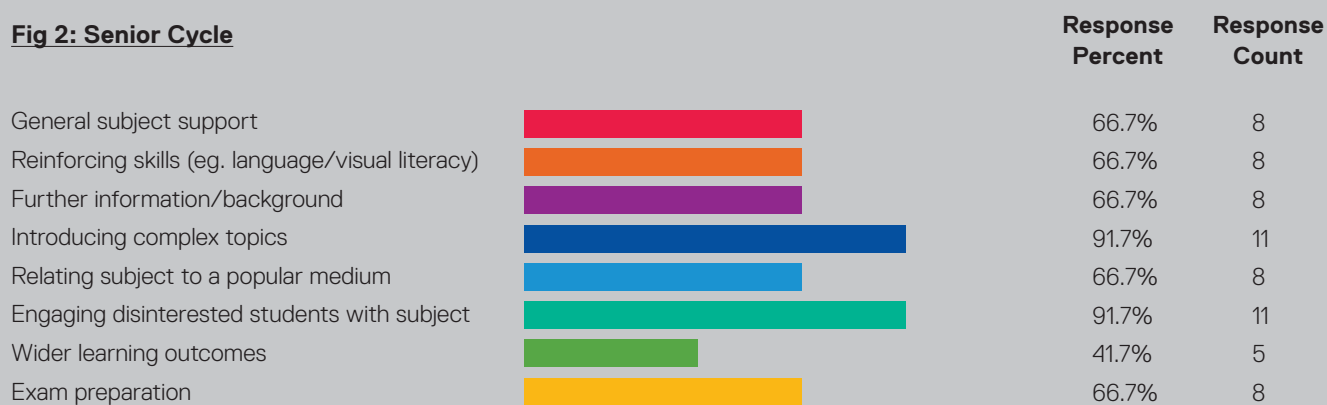
### Conclusion

While several of the responses from Subject Associations differed widely to those received from individual teachers, it was useful to note that from those who did reply, there was a genuine interest in engaging with film and moving image in some capacity through their subject. There was also a strong awareness of the constraints in which teachers were operating, including scheduling, fulfilling curricular demands for examination and the need for adequate resourcing and professional development.

**Fig 1: Junior Cycle**



**Fig 2: Senior Cycle**









**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

**Appendices**

# Interview – Lenny Abrahamson

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Born in Ireland, Lenny Abrahamson started shooting shorts while studying philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin. After a period of post-graduate study in philosophy at Stanford University in California, he returned home to concentrate on film-making. *What Richard Did* is his third feature. His previous award-winning films were *Garage*, which was the recipient of the CICAÉ Art Cinema Prize in the Director's Fortnight at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival and *Adam & Paul*, which was an Official Selection at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival. In 2008 he also made *Prosperity*, four one-hour films for RTÉ television.



**Film Focus:** As a filmmaker with first-hand experience of the Irish education system, now producing nationally and internationally acclaimed work, what in your view is the importance of film and moving image education for young people today?

**L.A.:** It seems amazing to me that we still have to ask this question. The moving image has been the dominant medium for the better part of a century. Film and television saturate our culture, and the fact that they are so little discussed in our education system is hard to fathom. It is essential that we provide our children with critical tools that will enable them to engage with moving images as more than passive consumers. Film as a bolted-on module within the English syllabus is not enough.

**Film Focus:** Both of your films, *Adam and Paul* and *Garage* have been very popular with teen audiences at IFI. *Garage* is the Irish film component of six films prescribed for the Leaving Certificate English Comparative study. Is it important that young people have access to new Irish film and filmmakers?

**L.A.:** Yes, in the same way that it is important that they have access to new Irish writing. I would like to think that young people coming out of school would feel empowered to engage with Irish film culture with criticality and confidence. Art is nothing if it is not in a conversation with the society it comes from. So not only is it important for the young people but it is also important for the filmmakers.



**Film Focus:** Several of the projects featured in our study include practical filmmaking using digital technologies. Do you think that all young people should have access to training in this field?

**L.A:** I think it would be wonderful if young people who want to had the opportunity to experiment with a camera and an editing system (however basic) and to learn from the inside something about how storytelling with moving image works. For those who discover an aptitude and an appetite for filmmaking this might mark the start of something more; for others, learning in a practical way how film makers can shape the experience of an audience will help them engage with the film and TV they encounter at a deeper level.

**Film Focus:** How can young filmmakers best be supported?

**L.A:** That is a huge question. Unlike when I started, the technology is cheap and easily available. Perhaps the most important thing is simple encouragement from teachers and parents. To have your desire to make something taken seriously by those you respect is a huge boost to someone flexing their creative muscles for the first time.

**Film Focus:** In many filmmaking projects the technology becomes the emphasis or the collaborative endeavour rather than development of an aesthetic sense. How might you advise a young filmmaker (s) in this regard?

**L.A:** Young film makers should spend a lot of time watching films. That is the most fundamental part of any filmmaker's aesthetic education. And not just contemporary films – it surprises me how often I meet filmmakers who haven't explored the history of film, even glancingly. A certain fetishisation of slick shot-making, camera-movement and so on is inevitable when people start out, but it usually eases off after a while and concern with deeper stylistic questions and, above all, content comes forward. Exposure to great cinema is the best way of developing these deeper instincts.

**Film Focus:** By framing Film Focus within the broader sphere of media literacy, we remove it from the creative arts sphere to the more general field of literacies including digital, film, visual and collaborative skills. Do you think this dilutes the validity of film as artform?

**L.A:** This is a great question. There is certainly a danger that the critical tools/film studies approach can have a flattening effect. What I mean by this is that the idea that some films have value and some don't – basically, that some are good and some are bad – can be lost in debates about cultural meaning and so on. So it is vital that students be encouraged to talk also about films in terms of how they feel about them, whether and why they are affected by them.

**Film Focus:** What is your view on the Creative Arts report that emphasises the role of education in providing training to ensure future creative industries?

**L.A:** I'm inclined to look at education in this area as something purely and simply of value to the development of the young person as a person, and to their ability to engage critically with all the media around them. The existence of practice-based 3rd level film schools, a vibrant production sector and state support for film-makers (especially at the beginning of their career) is where we can ensure that we will continue to have people to work in the creative industries.

**Film Focus:** Finally, your upcoming title, *What Richard Did*, focusses on the story of an Irish teenager. Why do you think so few Irish films reflect teen stories and what, for you, have been the major challenges in realising this film?

**L.A:** I really don't know, but I hope there will be more Irish films in future about children and teens. In terms of challenges – I hope it's well received, but it's always impossible to tell in advance.

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# Pilot Project 5 – Teacher’s Response

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## Project Title

Film and School Completion

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### A. Preparation and Planning

The students involved with the project were recruited from the School Completion Programme, meaning that these were students who had been identified by the school as being at high risk of leaving school early i.e. without any qualifications. The reason for choosing these students was because it was felt that the students would enjoy a ‘non-academic’ activity within the scholastic framework and would hopefully be able to transfer any skills etc. acquired to their school work.

The idea for the project happened in a very organic way. I, as a French teacher, was looking for a way to get greater cultural and linguistic input in the students’ school life. After getting in touch with the IFI, Dee Quinlan of the Education Department, put me in touch with Miriam McNamee, of the Clondalkin Social Partnership, who coincidentally was setting up just such a project and was looking for Clondalkin schools to get involved. Along with Baz Al-Rawi, also of the IFI Education Department, we then put the project into place by organising a series of three Wednesday afternoon screenings, to be shown on a monthly basis in the IFI.

At the same time, with great assistance from the IFI, Miriam and I tested another similar but smaller project with the students. This involved bringing a larger group of students (i.e. a whole year) to a local venue for a film screening, in this case Áras Chrónáin in Clondalkin. And while this screening didn’t have the same success as the main project, it is interesting as the feedback provides an excellent contrast between the two.

The school involved, St Kevin’s Community College, is a VEC school of 330 students and has received DEIS status over the past few years. This means that the school is officially labelled as being in a disadvantaged area where unemployment levels are very high. Many families would only have one parent or a high percentage of students live in care, families and issues such as drugs are commonly present. This status has also meant that the school has access to a School Completion Programme (SCP) officer on a full-time basis. The SCP officer in this case is John Patterson. He was a great support within the school and could instantly see the value of what we were trying to achieve. Thanks to the funding we received through him we managed to get a free bus to bring the students to and from the IFI. The transport

provided meant that the students, who wouldn't necessarily have the money to pay for it, were able to part-take in the screening and it also removed any potential excuses for not attending. As implied in the SCP title, the students find it quite difficult to see a project through to completion and live in an environment of apathy towards certain school-led activities. The bus being provided meant that they could commit to the project without too much difficulty.

### B. Delivering the Project

The resources required for this project were quite simple, insofar as all that was needed was a bus, a screening venue and the students' willingness to give up their (normally free) Wednesday afternoon. The screenings in the IFI seemed more successful than the screening in Áras Chrónáin. The students who attended both felt there was a greater sense of ceremony when attending a 'real cinema'. It was also the first time any of the students had been to the IFI and they were instantly attracted to the building and its history.

Timetabling the screenings was not a huge issue as the students do not attend classes on Wednesday afternoons. However, as part of the SCP, other activities are provided at that time. Again it is thanks to the cooperation of the SCP Officer and the Education Department in the IFI that we managed to find a time outside the students' other activities for the screenings.

Having come to the project at a later stage than others, St Kevin's could have easily fallen by the way side were it not for the support of the Education Department in the IFI. The flexibility that was required to screen the films at a time that suited the students meant, I'm sure, a lot of organising and reorganising at the cinema, but this was never portrayed as being a problem. Dee and Baz put a great deal of effort into selecting a variety of films that would interest the students and I was very happy to leave this in their capable hands. Any issues that may have cropped up were always dealt with in an incredibly swift and friendly manner; so much so that we certainly felt that we were working with them as part of a team. The knowledge of this alone meant that communication was fluid and that ultimately the project was a success.

After the first screening, all of the students who had attended spoke to their classmates about it in such glowing terms that suddenly all of them wanted to attend the next screening.

Unfortunately this didn't come to pass but we did have a core number of students who attended each screening. After each one the students seemed very excited and looked forward to the next one. They especially enjoyed the feedback session at the end of the film where they got to give their ideas and opinions. I think they enjoyed the idea of someone from the IFI, such as Baz or Dee, taking their ideas into consideration and really listening to what they had to say, and the more screenings they went to, the more confident they became in discussing the film; so much so that teaching them French the next day meant giving the start of the class over to a film discussion. The main thing for me as a teacher was that they could see how their viewing and analysis of the film could be applied to the school work. This was the first time for many to see art-house film and they surprised themselves with how much they enjoyed it. The difference of styles and cultures really appealed to them and engaged them in some interesting debates on the topics in class. The ability to compare and contrast between films was also something they enjoyed and could see the value of applying it to their class work such as in English or History. I think they felt that a special interest was being taken in them and that they were being taken seriously which only added to their motivation.

### C. Action Research

Initially, my reasons for getting involved in Film Focus was primarily to give students an opportunity to experience some French culture. A French trip we'd tried to organise had to be cancelled due to lack of funds so this was the only way I could see that they would get some form of immersion in French culture. It was then, by talking to Miriam, Dee and Baz, that I could see how film could be beneficial to a variety of aspects of their lives, not only to their French, and therefore it became a more holistic project.

As I came to the project a little later than others, I was unsure at the beginning of what was expected of me and what the main focus of the project was but the meetings greatly clarified the situation for me; especially hearing about other people's research

into bringing film in all its forms, from creation to appreciation, into the school surrounds. These meetings were a great help in defining the targets and also being able to discuss various ideas. Meeting others involved in the project also gave an opportunity to meet like minded people with an interest in a broader school curriculum.

As our project was not specifically part of the school programme and was set outside of school hours, it was decided to do an informal feedback session the day after each screening, once the excitement had died down. The students from this school are not shy and have no qualms about voicing any problems they may have had. Fortunately, all who attended thoroughly enjoyed the screening.

I believe the project to have been a great success within my school. It is a difficult task getting these students motivated enough to leave their area or attend something outside of school hours but the screenings seem to have captured their imagination and they all enjoyed the project. It was a pleasure for me to see them so interested and keen to be involved. I would certainly like to be able to continue with the project through the next scholastic year, as I know the students would be.

The one issue I encountered with the students was a lack of commitment to the project when the time came to attend, insofar as they would be very motivated in the lead up to the screening but on the day dropout rates were quite high. Having discussed this with the SCP officer, we thought that for future screenings we would charge a nominal fee of a euro to attend and then by the end of the year it could be put towards some kind of treat. This would only be to ensure attendance at the screenings.

#### D. Film education/Learning

The film education involved with my project was using film to support learning and both I and the students felt this was achieved. Many students, without prompting, used the films as part of compare and contrast activities in school. It seemed that the films had a more lasting effect on them and they seemed more willing to call upon their film knowledge when possible than any other subject knowledge. Some colleagues of mine wanted me to open the project up to the younger students of 1st, 2nd and 3rd years, but I felt that the film screening should be something that the older students could apply to their school work. I didn't want the screening to be seen as some kind of a treat or reward but rather a subject in itself that would help them

work towards their Leaving Cert. Also, there is no TY in St Kevin's, and I felt that the 5th years could benefit from having a project of their own.

None, with the exception of one student, had ever seen an arthouse film or had ever been to the IFI. Their knowledge of world cinema was very limited but all loved going to the cinema (their local cinema being Vue in the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre). Before the project most of the students would have balked at the idea of going to see a black and white or a foreign language film but I believe this changed after the project. Firstly, the students enjoyed the environment in which the films were shown. It greatly contrasted with the 'blockbuster' setting of the Vue cinema but all commented on how unusual it was to see a film in what looked like 'a house' from the outside. They thought the IFI was a great place to see a film and found it to be quite 'posh'. Secondly, all the students seemed somewhat amazed that they actually enjoyed a black and white film or a film like *Fish Tank* which was made without the steady-cam and blockbuster style music they were used to. All said that they'd definitely go back to the IFI of their own accord but I'm not too sure whether this would happen without a bus being provided etc.

One of the great resources provided by the IFI (outside the facilities etc.) was work books to accompany the film *De Battre Mon Coeur S'est Arrete*, which was shown in Áras Chrónáin. Unfortunately, due to employment constraints, I was unable to use them myself but passed them on to another French teacher for the class. These workbooks were well thought out and would have extended the learning even further. They gave me a lot of ideas for creating activities around the screenings and included several different topics that I could plan lessons around.

As a newly qualified teacher, this was my first experience of being involved in a film education project but having taught in England last year where film education is a cross-curricular subject that takes pride of place in most language departments, it inspired me to get involved in a similar fashion when back in Ireland.

The project introduced me to an adolescent level of film that I wouldn't necessarily have experienced otherwise. All of the films shown were age appropriate for the students but also very interesting to me and the other people accompanying the group. It gave a certain insight into teenage life and their perceptions of it. The way the students responded to the films also allowed

me a certain understanding of their day-to-day living; and while this was perhaps a secondary outcome to the project, I feel that it perhaps equally as important given the school and the environment the students grow up in.

As I stated before, the main issues we encountered with the project was the drop-out rate on the day of the screening. Despite the enthusiasm the students had shown, they needed a push on the day. This perhaps says more about their general attitude towards 'optional' activities than the project itself and was the project to continue next year, I would certainly implement a nominal fee action. Another, smaller issue was a lack of continuity with the follow-up on the films. This could perhaps be remedied by getting the school principal more involved and up-dated by myself and the SCP officer, thereby making it a more school-wide project.

#### **E. Film education as process/product.**

Fortunately this project only involved minor disruption to the school week as it was set outside school hours. It meant I wasn't taking students from another class or requiring them to miss out on other school events. Also, as their French teacher, it meant that the film could be discussed as part of my class. Since not all the students in the class attended the screenings, one student was chosen to tell the rest about the film and on the prompts given by Dee and Baz after the film, we could discuss it in greater depth. The elucidation of themes in the films and recognising common traits and differences often led to interesting discussions in the classroom. The students often paralleled what they had observed with other situations encountered either in an academic setting or otherwise. Unfortunately, due to my contract as a French teacher terminating with the school, I had to hand over to another teacher and therefore wasn't able to encourage the learning any further but I do believe that it was an effective learning tool and one that could be used in a cross-curricular fashion.

As I am now due to continue working in St. Kevin's I sincerely hope that this project can be run again next year as I believe there is certainly teaching and learning strategies that can be implemented and improve my teaching practice. The initially informal discussion had in the classroom after the screening led to a more insightful and better grounded debate as we progressed through the screenings. The originality of the project meant that it was a steep learning curve for me but a very enjoyable one too. If we had the possibility to continue next year I'm sure my preparation would be better and planned activities could take place in a way that could further enhance the students learning and my teaching.



# Resource – Film Language

## Lesson Plan (Pilot Project 12)

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### Learning Intention:

The aim of the class is to give a basic understanding of the various shots in any given film. This is an introductory class into film language so no previous knowledge is needed on the student's part.

### Time:

4 x 40 minute classes.

### Resources:

3 DVDs

*WALL-E* (2008, dir. Andrew Stanton)

A copy of Lumiere's *Le jardinier et le petit espiegle* (1895)<sup>1</sup>. The silent short is in the collection Early Cinema,

Primitives and Pioneers, a BFI DVD.

A copy of *The Searchers* (1956, dir. John Ford) is also needed, if time allows.

White board/blackboard.

Clips from a selection of films would be helpful or some photographs or stills could also be used.

The students themselves should have a notebook and pencils.

### The Lesson:

On the board write the quote from Alexander Mackendrick "Comedy plays best in a mastershot".

Ask if anyone knows what this means.

Following the discussion show the Lumiere short, followed by the short clip from *WALL-E* where he is sprayed by the fire extinguisher (10 minutes 25 to 11 minutes in). This is an example of the longshot/mastershot. The point can be made that this is similar to verbal language, that despite the difference of over 100 years we are still laughing at the same joke, told in the same way (the longshot).

From here using clips/photographs or simple drawings on the board go through a selection of shots, eg: close-up, mid-shot, two-shot, high angle, low angle, canted, steadicam/tracking/dolly etc.

Through discussion with the students, and examples from yourself, tease out why these various shots may have been chosen by the makers of any given film. How the director is talking to the audience.

Get the students to draw these shots into their copies.

Show the first part of *The Searchers*, up to the point where the posse leaves the ranch. Pause the film to demonstrate the shot choice of the director, John Ford, and what he is trying to say. For example the two shots with Ethan and his sister-in-law, how the camera is still when Ethan enters the house but more dynamic when Martin enters, where the audience is positioned by the shot choice.

Now get the students to write a simple bank robbery scene, about three short paragraphs long.

Get them to draw the shots that they would choose to tell that story visually.

This will lead onto the next class, storyboarding and then cinematography.

These classes may take more than the 4 classes set out, depending on the class you have and the technology you use!

<sup>1</sup> [ed. note, also known as L'Arroseur Arrosé this film and its resultant 'hose gag' is often cited as being the first example of a fiction film ever produced; it can also be found, widely, on youtube]



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#### **Useful Blogs:**

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