



*The Sound of Silence: Art and
Culture in Early Cinema*

A Series of Lesson Plans for Middle School AIG Students

By Angela Agüero, M.Ed.

July 20, 2017

Introduction

Rationale

Why are the skills, content, and concepts presented in this unit important for students to learn?

The history of cinema is nothing less than history itself. Once photographs began to move almost 130 years ago, the race was on to create records of the time and its culture. An entirely new entertainment industry was born, and extant film¹ from the “silent years”² speak to us today of a time that is past, but at the same time lives on through its captivating images. Thanks to movies, students are uniquely able to go back in time – relating to and empathizing with the people who appeared in and watched the same images one hundred years before.

Through the lesson plans in this unit, students not only have the chance to reflect on the history and culture of the earliest movies, but they also gain the skills needed to examine and understand the essential understanding – that “Culture Influences Art.” This governing idea is inherent in all forms of art, not just cinema. This unit also encourages students to reach an even higher level of understanding as they compare and contrast the culture of the silent era to the societal sensibilities of the present day.

Differentiation for Gifted Learners

What elements of this unit make it particular beneficial or appropriate for gifted learners?

The study of the beginnings of cinema and the era of silent film that followed requires a complex capacity to understand and analyze culture within – and beyond – its historical context. Attitudes and sensibilities typically differ dramatically through the passage of time, and the 40-year period of silent film is a case in point. At the same time,

many sentiments are universal and enable students to personally relate to the people of another era. The ability to intellectually accommodate these concepts, particularly as they compare and contrast with contemporary perceptions in society, requires challenging higher-level thinking processes.

The teaching models used in this unit include Visual Thinking Strategies, Socratic Seminar, and Creative Problem Solving. All of these approaches are applied to the conceptual lens of art, and the essential question: “How does culture influence art?” In every instance, the learning environment is one of the teacher as facilitator rather than instructor, with the students acting together in groups and individually to analyze the material and draw their own conclusions, as revealed through the assessment tasks. The opportunity to focus directly and predominantly on primary over secondary sources in order to make new discoveries creates ideal learning content for gifted students, who are better equipped than average students to learn about the relatively sophisticated subject of silent cinema, which is rarely if ever offered outside of higher educational institutions, and which encompasses an array of academic disciplines: art, history, sociology, psychology, technology, etc.

The variety of teaching models and activities in which students are engaged throughout this unit aims to accommodate individual learning styles, a process that encourages the involvement of all students, who are also able to enjoy wide-ranging opportunities to be as creative as possible in the production of their assessment products, allowing gifted children to unleash their imaginations along with their enthusiasm.

The five features of differentiation are also well served in this unit:

(1) Complexity

Gifted students respond well to the complex process skills outlined in each lesson plan, and the wide variety of sophisticated resources they must navigate – early movie clips, adult-level film critiques, etc. – add to the differentiation needs of these children.

(2) Challenge

The AIG students for whom this unit is designed are sufficiently challenged through all the complexities noted above and the connections they are expected to make across academic disciplines, as well as the inherent sophistication of film study, as referenced earlier.

(3) Depth

Students engaged in this course of study will have to opportunity to closely examine the concepts of art and culture from a variety of perspectives. They will also be able to carry out scholarly research on their own in order to develop products for assessment.

(4) Creativity

Through the Final Task (see Lesson 4), students will apply the content knowledge they have gained in class to produce a silent film from their own limitless imaginations, and explain their product and the reasoning behind it to an audience of their teacher, parents, and peers.

(5) Acceleration

Gifted students who engage in this course of study will generally require less background information to delve into its substance, allowing them to move more quickly through the curriculum.

Demographics of Gifted Learners

What is the population of gifted children for whom this unit is intended?

Many students in the 6th through 8th grades within the Durham County Public School System who have been designated AIG – Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted – possess the ideal requisites to successfully navigate the demands of silent film study. This proved to be the case with the middle-school students who undertook this course at Spark Camp in June 2017. These children were self-selected; their choice of subject reflected their interests and background knowledge, and they already boasted a fundamental schema of the history and cultural milieu of the period of silent film; the primary requirement for the teacher was to “plug in” the content and watch the students take off.³

Certainly, it is impossible to characterize a “typical” AIG student within DPSNC – as no such child exists – and it is hardly surprising that not all gifted students possess the same academic interests, and are often not as interested in early cinema, nor in this particular period of history – or even history in general. Furthermore, due to a lower socioeconomic demographic that is not uncommon within the Durham County Public Schools student population, accompanied by characteristically concurrent gaps in their background knowledge and education, it is not unusual to find that many students who have been designated as AIG within DPSNC do not possess the historical and cultural contextual knowledge to readily incorporate this content. In these cases, the unit can still be used, but will likely require significantly more time to provide background information in order to enable full comprehension. For example, historical events such as World War I and the Great Depression, which were major influences on silent film, will need to be explained within a clear timeline of the period before or during this unit.

Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1: To gain a fundamental general knowledge of silent films.

Students will be able to ...

1. Discuss the time period in which silent films were born and produced, with an awareness of major events that occurred during this era.
2. Identify the major hallmarks of silent film – its beginnings, its technical development, and its leading productions, actors, and directors.
3. Analyze silent cinema within the historical and cultural context of its time period.
4. Explain singular conventions of silent movies, such as film speed, melodramatic action and sentimentality, make-up, and intertitles.
5. Recognize and explain major vocabulary words and technical terms unique to the production of silent film.

Goal 2: To develop and apply reasoning skills related to art; specifically, early cinema.

Students will be able to ...

1. Understand and appreciate silent cinema as an art form.
2. Recognize and interpret contrasting perspectives of silent film: contemporaneous and present day.
3. Specify the assumptions behind their reasoning.
4. Support their conclusions, citing clear evidence.
5. Deliberate and debate film critiques.

Goal 3: To discover how culture influences art; specifically, how the cultural context of the late-19th and early 20th centuries shaped the film art of the period.

Students will be able to ...

1. Discuss how the social and cultural perspectives of the silent era influenced its movies.
2. Compare and contrast the culture of the silent era with that of the present day.
3. Define and creatively solve problems related to the differences and similarities between popular culture of the silent era and the present day.

Assessment Plan

Every class plan contained in this unit features numerous questions to gauge student's formative understanding of the material before, during, and after each lesson, which is based on a complex grouping of movies from the silent era.

The summative evaluation for the first lesson plan requires students to create a poster for an imaginary parent's night at their middle school, encouraging visitors to view two of the earliest short silent films that will be shown several times that evening. Students are instructed to produce a convincing promotion for the movies by emphasizing why they are historically and culturally important.⁴

Two of the summative evaluations, which are assigned on Days 2 and 4 of the four-day unit, task groups of 4-5 students with the production of a silent film short of their own creation. The task on Day 2 is to produce a scene that might be typical of the silent era, while the films students produce on the final day of the unit is more complex in nature, reflecting either the sensibilities typical of the silent film era, or those of contemporary culture, with a brief presentation at the end of the performance explaining how the film would have differed if produced according to the norms of the alternative period.⁵

Day 3 allows students to explore the ideas and issues surrounding a particular major silent feature film through a leading critical review, within the discussion format of the Socratic Seminar.⁵

V. Lesson Plans

TEACHER NAME		Lesson #
Angela Agüero		1
MODEL	CONTENT AREA	GRADE LEVEL
Visual Thinking Strategies	Silent Movies	6-8
CONCEPTUAL LENS		LESSON TOPIC
Art		How moving pictures began
LEARNING OBJECTIVES <i>(from State/Local Curriculum)*</i>		
<p>6-8.CU.1 Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.</p> <p>6-8.CU.1.1 Understand theatre arts in relationship to the geography, history, and culture of modern societies from the emergence of the First Global Age (1450) to the present.</p> <p>6-8.CU.2 Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form.</p> <p><i>* Note: Common Core Standards for other middle school grades are similar.</i></p>		
THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING <i>(What is the overarching idea that students will understand as a result of this lesson?)</i>		THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION <i>(What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding)</i>
Culture Influences Art		How does culture influence art?
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE <i>(What factual information will students learn in this lesson?)</i>		PROCESS SKILLS <i>(What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?)</i>
<p>Students will learn ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That film is a vital resource in learning about everyday life as experienced in a different place and time. - That film is an art form that reflects the culture in which it was created. - The following vocabulary words and technical terms (already in students’ binders): novelty, magic lantern, Kinetoscope, nickelodeon, reel, stop-action, travelogue, and colorization. 		<p>Students will be able to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Critically examine and reflect upon the art and culture behind early film. -Recognize some of the hallmarks of the birth of silent film.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What questions will be asked to support instruction?

Include both "lesson plan level" questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding

Pre-Lesson Questions:	During Lesson Questions:	Post Lesson Questions:
<p>-What is "art"? How do you think that movies can be considered art?</p> <p>-What is "culture"? How do you think that culture influences art?</p> <p>-How do you think that culture might have influenced silent movies?</p> <p>-What are some of the things you know about life during this period? What was different about the way people lived? What was going on in the world? Why are these things important to consider when thinking about movies from the period?</p> <p>-Are there any stills that really interest you and make you especially want to see that movie? Why? What do you think that movie is about?</p> <p>-What do these pictures tell you about early film? What else do you know about silent movies? How do you think these early films were different from more recent movies that you have seen?</p> <p>-Why do you think movies didn't have any sound in the beginning?</p> <p>-How do you think sound was added to the movies in theaters?</p> <p>-Around when do you think movies began? About when do you think silent film ended and movies with sound began?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-What did you see in this clip?</p> <p>-What does this film have in common with the other clips you've seen? What is different about it?</p> <p>-How does this film relate to the images that are up on the wall? How is this film different from some of these images?</p> <p>-What do you think is going on? Who do you think these people are? What time of day is it? What kind of mood are the people in?</p> <p>-Where is the camera, and how does it move?</p> <p>-How long ago do you think this movie was filmed? What makes you think this?</p> <p>-Where do you think the action is taking place? Why do you think this?</p> <p>-What evidence do you see that the filming was unrehearsed (or rehearsed)?</p> <p>-What is different about the clothes the people are wearing?</p> <p>-What is different about the modes of transportation? Which different types of transportation do you see? What do you think about the way the traffic is managed, and why?</p> <p>-What do you see people doing?</p> <p>-What observations can you make about the quality of the film?</p> <p>-What do you think of the sound that was later added to the original film? How does it help (or not help) your viewing of the film?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-How do you think art reflects the culture in which it was created? How do movies do this? How do you think culture influences art in this clip?</p> <p>-Why do you think the director decided to make a film like this?</p> <p>-What is it about this film that makes it worth watching today? Be specific!</p> <p>-If you could go back in time to this period to make a movie, what would you have wanted to record on film for later generations to see?</p> <p>-What do you think people thought the first time they ever saw a movie?</p> <p>-How do you think movies changed people's lives?</p> <p>-How do you think culture not only influenced silent movies, but was also influenced by them as well?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.

Content	Process	Product	Learning Environment
<p>-Students will view and discuss and categorize a complex grouping of clips from several different films during the earliest years of silent pictures, then examine and analyze the last clip in greater detail, taken in San Francisco in 1906, just weeks before the Great Earthquake.</p>	<p>-Students will be asked to reflect on and respond to higher-level (Costa Level 3) questions about art and culture as they apply to the early era of moviemaking.</p> <p>-Students will record their observations in notebooks and use their recorded observations to support their discussions and final products.</p>	<p>-Students will produce a promotional movie poster that reflects what they have learned about how culture influences art.</p>	<p>-Students will rely on their own impressions and deductions to discuss and analyze their ideas in groups and as a class, with the teacher acting mostly as the facilitator. Groups will work together to form their own conclusions.</p>

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - *This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.*

Teacher will encourage the students to do a "gallery walk" by viewing images or "stills" from some other, widely varying, silent movies, which are hung along the wall in the classroom. (Some examples may include: <http://nerdist.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Charlie-Chaplin-the-Kid-022316.jpg> or http://m.cdn.blog.hu/di/difisz/image/2015/ob_5f9478_sortie-des-usines-lumiere.jpg or <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/0a/98/26/0a98268ec314189ec67b9db1264992a1.jpg>.)

In their notebooks, students will be prompted to write their reactions to 4-5 of the images that interest them the most through adjectives, briefly recording *why* they feel that way about each still, for their own reference during the subsequent lesson.

When students return to their seats after studying the images, the teacher will lead a discussion by introducing the Pre-Lesson guiding questions, recording some of the observations and hypotheses on the board ("Around when do you think movies began?" etc.) to revisit later in the lesson.

Explore - *In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.*

Students will quietly view several short clips that represent the earliest years of film. They will be instructed to take brief notes on each clip (which will already be listed on a page in their binders) in order to remember and analyze them:

Roundhay Garden Scene (1888): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1i40rnp0sA>

"First Motion Picture" (Edison, 1889): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDmAxLvdQ4>

The Sneeze (Edison, 1894): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wnOpDWSbyw>

Snowball Fight (Lumière, 1895): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KL0th6vWe-8>

The Kiss (Edison, 1896): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUyTcvTPu0>

As Seen Through a Telescope (Smith, 1900): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEBhRdOmtuE>

A Trip to the Moon (Méliès, 1902): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrdVdKlxUk>

The Great Train Robbery (Porter, 1903): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuto7qWrplc>

Humorous Phases of Funny Faces (1906): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGh6maN4I2I>

Finally, students will view a three-to-five-minute clip (with sound) from the 1906 film "A Trip Down Market Street" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q5Nur642BU>). (The teacher will begin the film a few seconds late in order to conceal the year it was made.)

After each showing, students will offer some of their observations about the clips to each other as a class. The teacher will refrain from speaking too much, and only facilitate the discussion.

Finally, the teacher will divide students into small groups and instruct them to sort the films into two or more categories of their choice. Each group will briefly present their chosen categories and why they sorted the films as they did.

Explain - *Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding.*

The instructor plays the entire 11-minute clip of "Market Street" again – this time without sound, as visual background for the "During Lesson" questions that follow. These questions will be on large individual cards that the teacher silently holds up following each class discussion. Students will be instructed to acknowledge their classmates' ideas and expand on them.

As the discussion progresses, the teacher will inject follow-up questions as appropriate; particularly: "What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?"

At the end of the question and discussion period, the teacher will reveal some of the facts the students may not know about the film, revisiting some of the initial ideas that are already on the board from the first phase of the lesson plan. For example: If students guess that the film takes place in San Francisco, the teacher will ask, "What happened in San Francisco around this time?" In fact, this movie was filmed just a few weeks before the Great Earthquake, which devastated most of San Francisco in 1906. The teacher will show students an image of Market Street in San Francisco after the earthquake: <http://www.shorpy.com/files/images/4a13220a.jpg>.

Elaborate — *Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways*

-Students are divided into groups of 3 to 4. Each group is given a card with the first three "Post Lesson" questions (first bullet) to consider and discuss, as well as one extra post-lesson question that is different from the other groups' questions. Students in each group will record some of their observations and ideas in their notebooks.

-Each group of students will present their findings to the entire class, welcoming and addressing questions and comments.

Evaluate: *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

The teacher will ask students to provide some final, summarizing thoughts about American culture of the early 1900s, and how it influenced the art of the period, as demonstrated through the variety of clips students have viewed. The teacher will then direct pairs of students to gather materials to make a poster, providing the following “problem-based” instructions:

Your school will be showing the film “A Trip Down Market Street” and one other early film from this collection several times in one of the classrooms at your school on Parents’ Night. Design a poster that will convince as many people as possible to watch one of the showings of both films. What can you say about the movies *as they relate to the culture of the time they were made*, and what images can you feature in the poster that illustrate this and will convince students and their parents that this movie is worth going to and *watching through to the end due to its cultural relevance and importance*? The teacher will encourage students to consult the notes they took during the lesson, and will show the clips again as students carry out their activity.

With time left at the end of this activity, the teacher will present (or revisit, if already brought up) the vocabulary words and technical terms and how they relate to some of the hallmarks and features of early film.

For the final vocabulary word – *colorization* – the teacher will introduce the phenomenon of color in silent films, and the various means by which color was used in film at the time (i.e., colorization through hand-tinting and mono-tinting, as well as some natural color processes – including one recently discovered and surprisingly early). Color was used much more frequently in silent films than many people realize.

Students will view some original examples of various color processes available at the time through the following clips:

Hand-tinting: *Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (Edison, 1895) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kplgI09F7Pg> and *A Trip to the Moon* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXgTFBlwDCc>

Natural Color Processing: *Home Movie* (Turner, 1902) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53kN4t0MRa0>

Mono-tinting: *Blood and Sand* (Niblo, 1922) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=catnNrUIEHQ>

TEACHER NAME		Lesson #
Angela Agüero		2
MODEL	CONTENT AREA	GRADE LEVEL
Visual Thinking Strategies	Silent Movies	6-8
CONCEPTUAL LENS		LESSON TOPIC
Art		Comedy in Silent Film
LEARNING OBJECTIVES (from State/Local Curriculum)*		
6-8.CU.1 Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.		
6-8.CU.1.1 Understand theatre arts in relationship to the geography, history, and culture of modern societies from the emergence of the First Global Age (1450) to the present.		
6-8.CU.2 Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form.		
* Note: Common Core Standards for other middle school grades are similar.		

<p align="center">THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING <i>(What is the overarching idea that students will understand as a result of this lesson?)</i></p>	<p align="center">THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION <i>(What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding)</i></p>
<p align="center">Culture Influences Art</p>	<p align="center">How does culture influence art?</p>
<p align="center">CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (What factual information will students learn in this lesson?)</p>	<p align="center">PROCESS SKILLS (What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?)</p>
<p>Students will learn ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That film is a vital resource in learning about everyday life as experienced in a different place and time. - That culture influences film as an art form; film, in turn, influences the wider culture. - The names and acting styles of some of the most famous silent film comedians: Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Mary Pickford. - The following vocabulary terms: retronym, genre, intertitles, slapstick, improvisation, sensibility, sentimentality, poignancy, melodrama, romanticization, close-up shot, suffrage, Prohibition, the Great Depression. 	<p>Students will be able to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Critically examine and reflect upon the art and culture behind early film comedies. -Discuss some of the hallmarks of comedy in silent film. -Name some of the leading silent film comedy stars and identify their individual styles. -Develop and produce their own silent short, which reflects their personal interpretation of how culture influenced art during the silent film era, based on what they have learned through the first two Sound of Silence lessons.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What questions will be asked to support instruction?

Include both "lesson plan level" questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding

Pre-Lesson Questions:	During Lesson Questions:	Post Lesson Questions:
<p>- Why do people enjoy comedies? How is laughter universal? How can laughter be an art form?</p> <p>- How do you think culture influences comedy?</p> <p>-What is "slapstick," or "physical comedy"?</p> <p>-What are some other styles of comedy?</p> <p>-What are some of the things you know about life during this period (1914-1931)? What was different about the way people lived? How were people different? What was going on in the world? Why are these events important to consider when thinking about funny movies from the period?</p> <p>-Are there any stills from silent film comedies that really interest you and make you especially want to see that movie? Why? What do you think that movie is about?</p> <p>-What do these pictures tell you about early film? Which silent film stars do you recognize (if any)? What else do you know about silent comedies?</p> <p>-In what ways do you think that the humor in early cinema may have been different from today's comedies?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-What did you see in this clip?</p> <p>-What does this film have in common with the other clips you've seen? What is different about it?</p> <p>-How does this film relate to the images that are up on the wall? How is this film different from some of these images?</p> <p>-What do you think is going on? Who do you think these people are?</p> <p>-What kind of make-up was used on the actors' faces? What was its purpose?</p> <p>-Where is the camera, and how does it move?</p> <p>-What makes this scene so humorous? What would make you think that this humor can be just as appreciated by today's audiences (or not)?</p> <p>-What kind of comedy is this? Is it "humor with a purpose"? Strictly for laughs? What else do you think is going on here?</p> <p>-Where do you think the action is taking place? Why do you think this?</p> <p>-What evidence do you see that the acting was rehearsed (or improvised)?</p> <p>-What is different about the clothes the people are wearing?</p> <p>-What observations can you make about the quality of the film?</p> <p>-What do you think of the music that accompanies this film? How does it help (or not help) your viewing of the film?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-How do you think art reflects the culture in which it was created? How does this movie do that?</p> <p>-Why do you think the director decided to make a film like this?</p> <p>-What is it about this film that makes it worth watching today? Be specific!</p> <p>-If you could go back in time to this period to make a movie, what major event or events would have influenced your work?</p> <p>-How do you think audiences of the period responded to this film? To what kind of sensibility did this film appeal?</p> <p>-What kind of purpose (if any) does this humor serve? Or is this comedy purely for the sake of entertainment? What makes you think this?</p> <p>-How do you think the culture of the time not only influenced these comedies, but was also influenced by them as well?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.

Content	Process	Product	Learning Environment
<p>-Students will view, discuss and categorize a complex grouping of clips from several different silent film comedies, then examine and analyze the last clip in greater detail.</p>	<p>-Students will reflect on and respond to higher-level questions about art and culture as they apply to silent film comedies and still images through the Visual Thinking Strategy model.</p>	<p>-Students will produce their own original comedic silent film skit based on their own interpretation of how culture influenced art during the silent film era.</p>	<p>-Students will rely on their own impressions and interpretations to discuss and analyze their ideas in groups and as a class, with the teacher acting mostly as the facilitator. Students will work together to form their own conclusions.</p>

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - *This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.*

Teacher will encourage the students to do a "gallery walk" by viewing images or "stills," and some promotional posters, from several silent film comedies, which are already hung along the wall in the classroom. The names of these stills and posters will already be contained in students' notebooks.

In their notebooks, students will be prompted to write their reactions from a cultural standpoint to 4-5 of the images that interest them the most through adjectives, briefly recording *why* they feel that way about each still or poster, and why they feel it reflects an important cultural influence, for their own reference during the subsequent lesson.

When students return to their seats after studying the images, the teacher will lead a discussion by introducing the Pre-Lesson guiding questions, recording some of the observations and hypotheses on the board to revisit later in the lesson.

Explore - *In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.*

Students will view several short clips from silent film comedies, ranging 16 years in production, from 1914 through 1931. Students will be instructed to take brief notes on each clip – which will already be listed in their binders with accompanying synopses.

After each showing, students will rate each clip on a scale of 1 to 5 in humor, and offer some of their observations and comments to each other as a class. The teacher will avoid speaking more than necessary to facilitate the discussion.

Tillie's Punctured Romance (Chaplin, 1914): DVD or https://archive.org/details/CC_1914_11_14_TilliesPuncturedRomance

Rags (Mary Pickford, 1915): <https://vimeo.com/155252762>

The Immigrant (Chaplin, 1917): DVD

Safety Last! (Lloyd, 1923): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEcTjhUN_7U

The General (Keaton, 1926): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2X58jc09G4>

City Lights (Chaplin, 1931): DVD

Finally, students will view a 15-minute clip of selected excerpts from the 1936 film "Modern Times" (Chaplin, DVD).

(NOTE: There will be a bathroom/stretching/socialization break as needed during the film viewing. Students will also be encouraged to start planning for their final performance task by choosing groups, preparing storyboards, etc., in order to vary their activities.)

The teacher will divide students into small groups (different or perhaps the same as their final performance task groups, depending on the students) and instruct them to sort the films into two or more categories that reflect cultural influences in the movies. Each group will briefly present how they sorted the films and why they chose their particular method.

Explain - *Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding of each film and the culture in which it was produced.*

As the discussion progresses, the teacher will inject foundational questions – "What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?" – in order to keep the conversation going if it lags. Some of the "During Lesson" questions that follow will be pre-printed on large individual cards that the teacher silently holds up following each class discussion if the conversation loses focus. Students will be instructed to acknowledge their classmates' ideas and expand on them.

At the end of the question and discussion period, the teacher will reveal some of the facts the students may not know about the film, revisiting some of the initial ideas that are already on the board from the first phase of the lesson plan. For example: If students notice that this is a late silent film, the teacher will reveal that "Modern Times" is, in fact, a chronological outlier, as Chaplin made it nine years after the first talkie, "The Jazz Singer," appeared in theaters. The teacher will also allow students to reflect upon this decade of the Great Depression, and how Chaplin uses comedy to comment on the exploitation of the poor during that period.

Elaborate — *Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways*

-Students are divided into groups of 3 to 4. Each group is given a card with the first three "Post Lesson" questions (first bullet) to consider and discuss, as well as one extra post-lesson question that is different from the other groups' questions. Students in each group will record some of their observations and ideas in their notebooks.

-Each group of students will present their findings to the entire class, welcoming and addressing questions and comments.

Evaluate: *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

The teacher will ask students to provide some final, summarizing thoughts about American culture during the period of 1914-1936, and how it influenced the cinema art of the period, as demonstrated through the variety of clips that the students have viewed. The teacher will then direct groups of students to plan and produce their own silent film comedy, which utilizes one or both of the major comedy genres popular at the time (slapstick and romantic/sentimental), and which also clearly demonstrates some kind of major cultural influence that stems from the period – for example: World War I, women’s suffrage, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, etc. Students will write and act in the skit together; one student will be selected by each group to direct the actors.

With time left at the end of this activity, the teacher will present (or revisit, if already brought up) the following vocabulary terms and how they relate to some of the hallmarks and features of early film by: *retronym, genre, intertitles, slapstick, improvisation, sensibility, sentimentality, poignancy, melodrama, romanticization, close-up shot, suffrage, Prohibition, the Great Depression.*

TEACHER NAME		Lesson #
Angela Agüero		3
MODEL	CONTENT AREA	GRADE LEVEL
Socratic Seminar	Silent Movies	6-8
CONCEPTUAL LENS		LESSON TOPIC
Art		Dramatic Silent Film
LEARNING OBJECTIVES <i>(from State/Local Curriculum)*</i>		
6-8.CU.1 Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.		
6-8.CU.1.1 Understand theatre arts in relationship to the geography, history, and culture of modern societies from the emergence of the First Global Age (1450) to the present.		
6-8.CU.2 Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form.		
<i>* Note: Common Core Standards for other middle school grades are similar.</i>		
THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING <i>(What is the overarching idea that students will understand as a result of this lesson?)</i>		THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION <i>(What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding?)</i>
Culture Influences Art and Art Influences Culture		How does culture influence art? and How does art influence culture?
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE <i>(What factual information will students learn in this lesson?)</i>		PROCESS SKILLS <i>(What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?)</i>
Students will know ... - How film is a vital resource in examining popular culture and attitudes as experienced in a different place and time. - That culture influences film as an art form; film, in turn, influences the wider culture. - The titles and plots of some of the most consequential		Students will be able to ... - Critically examine and reflect upon some of the prevalent societal sensibilities and prejudices behind dramatic film of the silent era. - Analyze and determine how silent movies, in turn, influenced the popular culture and attitudes of their time.

dramatic silent pictures produced in the United States and abroad. - The following vocabulary terms (already listed in student binders): genre, subgenre, intertitles, improvisation, sentiment, sensibility, sentimentality, melodrama, close-up shot, Prohibition, and the Great Depression.	- Examine some of the major innovative film styles of early dramatic cinema.
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GUIDING QUESTIONS
What questions will be asked to support instruction?
Include both "lesson plan level" questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding

Pre-Lesson Questions:	During Lesson Questions (if needed; see "Explore," under "Planned Learning Experiences" on the next page):	Post-Lesson Questions:
<p>-What are some things you know about life during this period (1912-1927)? What was going on in the world – particularly the United States and Europe, where these movies were made? What were some of the popular ideas and sentiments at the time, and where did these come from? Why are these events and societal attitudes important to consider when thinking about dramatic movies from the period?</p> <p>-How are people today different (or the same) when it comes to particular cultural sentiments? Why do you think that?</p> <p>- What kinds of dramatic sentiment are universal? How do popular attitudes and sentiment change (or not change) over time?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-What did you see in this clip?</p> <p>-Is there a particular cultural or historical event that you think made its impression on this movie?</p> <p>-What kinds of cultural attitudes (and prejudices, if any) clearly come through in this clip? How do you know?</p> <p>-What does this film have in common with (name another clip)? What is different about it?</p> <p>-What makes this scene so effective (exciting, touching, etc.)? What makes you think that this film can also be appreciated by today's audiences (or not)?</p> <p>-What kind of filming techniques do you see demonstrated in this clip?</p> <p>-How realistic (or unrealistic) do you think this situation is?</p> <p>-What do you think of the music that accompanies this film? How does it help (or not help) your viewing of the film? [Some of the movies, such as 7th Heaven, used special sound effects, which will be discussed.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>- Use these questions to begin and sustain the discussion: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>	<p>-How do you think art reflects the culture in which it was created? How does this movie do that?</p> <p>-What kinds of sentiments did you see expressed in this film that you would not expect to see in a contemporary movie?</p> <p>-How did you personally feel when watching this clip?</p> <p>-Why do you think the director decided to make a film like this?</p> <p>-What is it about this film that makes it worth (or not worth) watching today?</p> <p>-If you had been a movie director during this period and were working on the same subject as this film, what changes (if any) would you make?</p> <p>-How do you think the culture of the time not only influenced these movies, but was also influenced by them as well?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____</p> <p>-Include follow-up questions as appropriate: <i>What do you see? Why do you think that? What else do you see?</i></p>

DIFFERENTIATION
(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.

Content	Process	Product	Learning Environment
Students will view a complex grouping of clips from several major dramatic silent films, and read an advanced, adult-level analysis of one of the movies they have viewed. Vocabulary listed in student binders: genre, subgenre, sentiment, sensibility, melodrama, panning, montage, tracking, and crosscutting.	Students will rely on their own interpretations of the film clips and text to discuss and analyze their ideas in a Socratic Seminar.		

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.

- After greeting students for the lesson, the teacher will point to writing that is already on the board:

No matter how different their cultures, most people share the same perceptions of what they believe are important, or "universal," truths" – such as kindness, helping others, etc. What examples of universal truths can you identify in these dramatic films? On the other hand, which cultural sentiments common to the Silent Era do you consider to be different when compared to today, particularly in movies?
- The teacher will then lead a class conversation on human consistency - or change - in thinking. This dialogue can encompass many aspects of shifts in popular attitudes, and consequently, cultural development and artistic expression. Examples may include attitudes toward marriage, children, illness, the representation of ethnic minorities, etc. Students may also mention differences in the way drama was perceived as exciting or touching. The teacher will introduce pre-lesson questions where appropriate to add to the discussion.
- Students may also use the stills, posters, and publicity photos on the wall of the classroom, as well as the film clips, as examples of popular sentiment or culture during the Silent Era.
- The teacher will create a simple timeline on the board and help students fill it in for this pre-lesson question: *"What are some things that you know about life during this period (1912-1928)? What was going on in the world? What were some of the popular ideas and "universal truths" at the time, and where did these come from? Why are these events and societal attitudes important to consider when thinking about dramatic movies from the period?*
- During this discussion, the teacher will write some of the students' major questions and ideas on the board for possible later reference.

Explore - In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.

- Students will view highlights from several major silent film dramas, ranging 16 years in production – from 1912 through 1928. Students will be encouraged to take brief notes on each clip – which will already be listed in their binders, along with accompanying synopses.
- After each showing, students will rate each clip on a scale of 1 to 5 stars, and briefly offer some of their observations and comments to each other as a class. The teacher will inject the During Lesson Questions **only as needed to keep the discussion going**, and avoid speaking more than necessary to facilitate the discussion.
- The teacher may choose to record some particularly adroit comments and questions, which may become relevant to the subsequent Socratic seminar, on the board.

Falling Leaves (Short; Alice Guy, 1912): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_cYhqVbLLc&feature=youtu.be

Intolerance (Trailer; D.W. Griffith, 1916): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd6NPuhXUAo>

The Last of the Mohicans (Brown & Tourneur, 1920): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1JdtEtCCsQ>

Greed (Von Stroheim, 1924): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6Mppy2VQB8> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hvz9eBgA>

7th Heaven (Borzage, 1927): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hBMwZRTsc0>

The Passion of Joan of Arc (France; Thomas Dreyer, 1928): DVD

Metropolis (Germany; Fritz Lang, 1928): DVD

- (Note: There will be a bathroom/stretch break in the middle of the film viewing and discussions.)

Explain - Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding of each film and the culture in which it was produced.

- As the discussion progresses and builds, and once students have viewed all the clips, the teacher will reveal some major facts about dramatic silent movies, many of which will likely contribute to the subsequent Socratic seminar – for example, *7th Heaven* won several honors at the very first Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Actress; none of the major actors in *Last of the Mohicans* was Native American; etc.
- The teacher will also note some of the most important film innovations during the period, focusing on *panning*, *close-up*, *tracking*, and *crosscutting*, while revisiting or introducing other key vocabulary: *genre*, *subgenre*, *sentiment*, *sensibility*, *miscegenation*, and *melodrama*.

Elaborate —Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways

- Students are divided into groups of 4 to 5. Each group is given two texts; one will be an analysis of drama in silent film, which everyone will read; the second will be a briefer analysis of one of the films shown, which will be different for each group. Students will then have 15-20 minutes to read and annotate both texts.
- A Socratic seminar will be conducted for each group, with the other students as listeners and recorders.
- Each group will tailor their discussions around the first and last of the post-lesson questions, plus one of the others.

Evaluate: This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.

- The teacher will ask students to come together as a class in a “debriefing” of their Socratic discussions. What kind of summarizing thoughts do they have about American and European culture during the period of 1912-1928, and how it influenced the cinema art of the period? How do they feel that the stories and sentiments expressed in these films influenced the wider society in turn?

With time left at the end of this activity, the teacher and students will continue to discuss the final Participation Task, which they received on Monday and will be expected to perform on the next and final day of “The Sound of Silence” Seminar. Each group of students will have the opportunity to revise and rehearse their “New Silent Film.”

TEACHER NAME		Lesson #
Angela Agüero		4
MODEL	CONTENT AREA	GRADE LEVEL
Creative Problem Solving	Silent Movies	6-8
CONCEPTUAL LENS		LESSON TOPIC
Art		New Silent Film
LEARNING OBJECTIVES (from State/Local Curriculum)*		
6-8.CU.1 Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.		
6-8.CU.1.1 Understand theatre arts in relationship to the geography, history, and culture of modern societies from the emergence of the First Global Age (1450) to the present.		
6-8.CU.2 Understand the traditions, roles, and conventions of theatre as an art form.		
* Note: Common Core Standards for other middle school grades are similar.		

<p align="center">THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING <i>(What is the overarching idea that students will understand as a result of this lesson?)</i></p>	<p align="center">THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION <i>(What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding)</i></p>
<p align="center">Culture Influences Art</p>	<p align="center">How does culture influence art?</p>
<p align="center">CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (What factual information will students learn in this lesson?)</p>	<p align="center">PROCESS SKILLS (What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?)</p>
<p>Students will learn that ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture is a major influence on film as an art form. - Cinema art is a vital resource for exploring popular attitudes and sensibilities as experienced in a different place and time. - Certain acting, staging, and technical conventions unique to the silent film period. 	<p>Students will be able to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Critically examine and reflect upon the culture behind motion pictures of the silent era and today. -Use their new knowledge and research of movie conventions during the silent era, as well as their own background knowledge and research of modern film conventions, to develop and produce their own silent short, which will reflect their choice of either silent era or contemporary culture. Students will also be able to explain how the film would be different if the historical context had been reversed.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What questions will be asked to support instruction?

Include both "lesson plan level" questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding

Pre-Lesson Questions:	During Lesson Questions:	Post Lesson Questions:
<p>- Considering all the different kinds of silent movies we have seen that span the 50-year silent era – from the beginnings of cinema in the late 1800s, all the way through to the middle of the 1930s – what would you say are some of the standard cultural conventions as reflected in popular film entertainment that held steady throughout?</p> <p>- On the other hand, which cultural conventions changed or “evolved” over this period, and why?</p> <p>- At the same time, what are some of the technical conventions of film – such as make up and filming techniques – that either persisted throughout this period or else evolved? What were some of the reasons for these changes?</p> <p>- As you think about the cultural (and technical) conventions of film during the silent era, how can you compare and contrast those typical of movies today?</p>	<p>(These questions will be asked of student groups as they work together to produce their movies, but only if necessary to help them come up with ideas if they are having trouble.)</p> <hr/> <p>-Why did you choose this cultural lens for your film?</p> <p>-What made you decide on this particular genre/subgenre/scenario/casting/etc.?</p> <p>-How would a typical audience of the silent era (or today) react to this scene? How would they find it appealing/familiar (or not)?</p> <p>-How does this film relate to some of the silent movie clips you’ve seen in class?</p> <p>-How do you think this character would react in this situation? How can you show this?</p> <p>-What kind of make-up (if any) should the actors use? What are the reasons for this?</p> <p>-Where is the camera, and how does it move?</p> <p>-What makes this scene so humorous/dramatic/touching/exciting/etc.? What can you do to intensify the audience’s reaction?</p> <p>-What kind of comedy (or drama) is this? Is it “humor (drama) with a purpose”? Strictly for laughs (or a tearjerker)?</p> <p>-Where is the action taking place, and how can you show this?</p> <p>-How frequent (or infrequent) are your intertitles? Why have you chosen to use them as you have?</p> <p>-What kind of music have you chosen to accompany this film? How will it help the audience to respond to your work, and add to their enjoyment?</p>	<p>-How do you think art reflects the culture in which it was created? How does your movie demonstrate that?</p> <p>-What made you decide to make a film like this?</p> <p>-What is it about this film that makes it attractive to its intended audience?</p> <p>-What kind of purpose (if any) does your film serve? Or is your movie simply a matter of pure entertainment?</p> <p>-If you had more time to work on this film, what else would you want to do with it?</p>

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.

Content	Process	Product	Learning Environment
	<p>-Students will use Creative Problem Solving to plan, write, and act out a “new silent film” that will reflect the culture of a period during the silent era or today’s culture, then include an explanation as to how the film would be produced differently if the period were reversed.</p>	<p>-Students will produce their own original “new silent films” based on their interpretation of how culture influences art during the silent film era and today.</p>	

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - *This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.*

- The teacher will bring students together as a class to formally present the "new silent movie" problem (attached) to the class. (Students will have had time since the beginning of Camp Spark to think about and discuss preliminary plans for this within their groups.)
- The teacher will begin a discussion with the class as a whole, using the Pre-Lesson Questions. Some of the During Lesson Questions may be integrated into this whole-class discussion as needed, such as *Why did you choose this cultural lens for your film?* as examples of individual creative solutions to the problem are offered.

Explore - *In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.*

- Students will separate into their groups and begin working on their creative solution. As they plan and write, they will have the opportunity to research some of their ideas online.
- During this time, the teacher will circulate and observe each group's activities, helping students and using the During Lesson Questions only as needed.
- As they prepare to make their film, students will "bounce" their ideas on the teacher for any desired final input.

Explain - *Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding of each film and the culture in which it was produced.*

- As students film and prepare their clip, the teacher will circulate and assist or offer information as requested.

Elaborate* - *Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways*

- In turn, each group will present their "new silent film," elaborating on their production afterwards, and explaining how they would have changed the product if they had planned it around the cultural conventions of the alternate (silent or contemporary) era.
- Each group will respond to questions and comments from the other students at the conclusion of their presentation.

Evaluate* - *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

- Through the use of some of the Post-Lesson Questions (which may be modified depending on the discussion), the teacher will ask students to provide some final, summarizing thoughts about popular culture and how it influences cinema art, as demonstrated through the students' final project, as well as their experiences in class. Parents will also be welcome to ask questions or comment.

**Parents will have received prior notice that they are welcome to observe this part of the final class, and may choose to attend.*

(NOTE: In the unlikely event that there is any spare time at the end of this lesson, the teacher will play an entertaining silent short - TBD, depending on length of time available - for the students and their parents.)

The Sound of Silence

Final Performance Task for Lesson Four

MGM Studios has announced a “New Silent Film” nationwide contest for its annual silent film festival. The prize is an all-expense-paid trip to Hollywood, but each school may submit one entry only. Because you have all taken a course in silent movies, your school has nominated your group to submit its entry for the contest.

Having viewed numerous film clips that reflect the varied cultural milieux of the period of silent cinema, your group of film producers and actors will choose a year from this period in which to develop and produce an original silent film scene that appeals either to

- (a) the perspective of a typical audience at the time, or to
- (b) the students’ own present-day sensibilities.

Once students have agreed upon an early or contemporary cultural lens, they will choose a comic or dramatic genre, create a scenario, then plan, write, and produce the film together, *using intertitles and music instead of spoken dialogue*, with one student chosen by the group to act as the director.

The final product can use elements of any subgenres of romance, adventure, science fiction, etc., *but should reflect the social and cultural hallmarks of either the silent era or today*. Students will also give a short explanation after their performance that describes how their film would have differed if it had been influenced by the alternate historical period.

Unit Resources

All of the silent film clips included in this unit are public domain, and can be readily accessed on the Internet, particularly through YouTube. Web addresses for these movies appear in the “Planned Learning Experiences” section of each of the first three lesson plans, under “Explore.” Early films are also widely available on DVD; the Criterion Collection of DVDs is particularly recommended due to the generally high quality of film cuts it offers, as well as the inclusion of supplementary video material.

A list of stills from selected silent movies, as well as related posters, advertisements, and publicity photos that are used in these lesson plans can be found in Appendix B.

Recommended bibliographical resources follow here:

Kobel, P. (2007) *Silent Movies: The Birth of Film and the Triumph of Movie Culture*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.
This large, lavishly illustrated monograph provides a very good survey of silent movies from their beginning to the end of the era.

Kerr, W. (1990) *The Silent Clowns*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, Inc.
A scholarly approach to silent comedy is contained in this large, generously illustrated volume, providing an informative overview of comedians from the period, with a particular focus on Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd.

Musser, C. (1990) *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
A detailed examination of how movies got started, beginning with their “magic lantern” precursors in the 18th century.

Notes

¹ Unfortunately, most silent movies have been lost forever, primarily due to film disintegration and fire. Reliable estimates of missing film range from 70% to as high as 90%.

² The term “silent film” is a retronym, or a phrase that was coined after the advent of sound movies.

³ Interestingly, a group of elementary school students who had signed up for a soccer class within the same Spark program and were present in the same room during lunch asked me what I was doing as I prepared for the Sound of Silence class. When I told them I was going to show silent movies, they asked if I could project one while they ate. I chose the 1925 Chaplin comedy *The Gold Rush* on DVD, and was delighted to see the children watch the movie closely and roar with laughter. These children asked to keep seeing the film every day until they reached the ending. Another interesting note: Chaplin added spoken narrative to the film in 1942, and as I also had that version available, asked the children on the second day if they would like to view that version instead. To a child, they all responded firmly that they wanted the original, silent version. “It’s more fun when it’s silent,” declared one of the boys.

⁴ See Appendix C for examples of these posters from Camp Spark.

⁵ See Appendix E for examples of “new silent movies” produced by students from Camp Spark:

⁶ See Appendix D for four critical analysis texts for the Socratic Seminar.

APPENDIX A: Material for Student Binders

Day One

Hello “Sound of Silence” Spark Campers! You are about to embark on an amazing journey back in time to the very first movies ever made!

Please make a few notes here on the following (mostly very brief) clips that you will see today. How do you think the culture of the day contributed to these movies? Why do you think people like Thomas Edison and the Lumière Brothers made them?

1. *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888): The first real movie ever made, this clip lasts just a couple of seconds. (Don't blink, or you'll miss it!)
2. *“First Motion Picture”* (1889): Not THE first motion picture – just Thomas Edison's!
3. *The Sneeze* (Edison, 1894): More evidence that the invention of movies led to the filming of just about anything!
4. *Snowball Fight* (Lumière, 1895): How can you relate to the people in this scene?
5. *The Kiss* (Edison, 1896): Can you imagine the reaction to this film – a prolonged kiss at the end of the 1800s – blown up on a theater screen for all to see?
6. *As Seen Through a Telescope* (1900): What is the joke here? How was this humor at once different and the same as humorous scenes today?

7. *A Trip to the Moon* (Méliès, 1902): The first science fiction movie – colorized!

8. *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903): This little movie caused quite a sensation in the first movie theaters! Why do you think that was?

9. *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906): One of the very first animated cartoons, this film used stop-action photography to make the images “move.”

10. *A Trip Down Market Street*: Time and place to be revealed!

Vocabulary: retronym, novelty, magic lantern, Kinetoscope, nickelodeon, reel, stop-action, travelogue, and colorization.

Tuesday, June 20

Welcome to Day 2 of “Sound of Silence,” Spark Campers! Today we’re delving into the hilarious world of classic silent comedy!

Today’s features will be:

1. *Tillie’s Punctured Romance* (Chaplin, 1914): Chaplin without his tramp costume!

2. *Rags* (Mary Pickford, 1914): Why was this film considered to be so charming and funny at the time?

3. *The Immigrant* (Chaplin, 1917): This short movie is perhaps best known for its Statue of Liberty scene. What do you think Chaplin’s intention was for this sequence?

4. *Safety Last!* (Lloyd, 1923): Harold Lloyd was known as an impeccable stuntman. How do you think he was able to create such a convincing thriller?

5. *The General* (Keaton, 1926): Buster Keaton's "stone face" really comes through in this feature film, considered by some critics one of the best silent movies ever.

6. *City Lights* (Chaplin, 1931): How does Chaplin's poignant sensibility come through in this film?

7. *Modern Times* (Chaplin, 1936): The last of the silent era, this film can be thought of as a bridge to sound pictures. Why do you think Charlie Chaplin chose to produce this movie nine years after the first "talkie" came out in theaters?

Vocabulary: genre, subgenre, intertitles, slapstick, improvisation, sentiment, sensibility, sentimentality, poignancy, melodrama, close-up shot, suffrage, Prohibition, and the Great Depression.

Wednesday, June 21

Well, it's Day 3 already, "Sound of Silence" Scholars! Let's pull out the Kleenex and cue up the dramatic silents!

Our featured films today will be:

1. *Falling Leaves* (Short; Alice Guy, 1912): The basis for this adorable little film is a short story by O. Henry. Another fun fact: it was directed by one of the best American women directors!

2. *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith, 1916): D.W. Griffith was one of the best-known American directors – especially of silent epics.

3. *The Last of the Mohicans* (Brown & Tourneur, 1920): Action! Adventure! And, of course ... romance!

4. *Greed* (Von Stroheim, 1924): From one of the most famous international movie directors, *Greed* is widely considered to be one of the best films ever made – period.

5. *7th Heaven* (Borzage, 1927): Another silent drama of gargantuan proportions in the pantheon of best movies ever, set against the backdrop of the “war to end all wars.”

6. *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (France; Thomas Dreyer, 1928): Yet another behemoth of great pictures of all time, this silent gem, once thought lost forever, was fortunately discovered in the closet of a psychiatric institution in Scandinavia in the 1980s.

7. *Metropolis* (Germany; Fritz Lang, 1928): The last – and greatest, hands down! – of the silent science-fiction genre.

Vocabulary: genre, subgenre, sentiment, sensibility, melodrama, panning, montage, tracking, and crosscutting.

APPENDIX B: List of Images Used for Lesson Plans in the Classroom

Silent Film Stills, Posters, Advertisements, and Publicity Photos

(*Asterisks* indicate **color**)

LARGE IMAGES (11" x 17")

Rudolf Valentino Poster

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/66/fa/fb/66fafb6d32238be87d27c92b1af1ab39.jpg>

The Kid Poster

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/48/bf/28/48bf28688ab88cd0fced4fcf6f9e64e5.jpg>

Theda Bara – Cleopatra

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/74/ae/d5/74aed5db3376c03e0c936f075f69b4ea.jpg>

Napoleon Poster

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/fb/45/cd/fb45cd1926b4642197f5b3d21a1cbf18.jpg>

A Trip to the Moon Poster

<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-dSoBK1OWZqw/U8tc8VyKvil/AAAAAAAAAleg/ifhlx0Q0aDU/s1600/a+trip+to+the+moon.jpg>

Lillian Gish – The Scarlet Letter Poster

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/6d/73/e3/6d73e38534d7c2706e5afb9901c2ef61.jpg>

Clara Bow Poster

<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-7bLq9Va2zo4/UY58ZFGYK0I/AAAAAAAFww/624rxVIhr5M/s1600/1928+Three+Weekends.jpg>

Harold Lloyd “Safety Last” Clock Scene (still)

https://greatfilmsblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/lloyd-harold-safety-last_01.jpg

Battleship Potemkin Baby Carriage Scene (still)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/0c/74/ce/0c74cebc8a578917fe6adf3f426ffaf3.jpg>

City Lights Close-Up Finale (still)

<https://humbertgray.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/city-lights.jpg>

The Freshman (still)

<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-aF971xgXa7A/U3DF1M-ImFI/AAAAAAAAAChY/j1KrnI6kZBw/s1600/The+Freshman+2.jpg>

SMALL IMAGES (8 ½" x 11")

Toll of the Sea (Anna May Wong color still)

<https://i0.wp.com/moviessilently.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/toll-of-the-sea-1922-image-34.jpg?fit=720%2C540>

Nanook of the North Poster

<https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51NBS7G7RFL.jpg>

Broken Blossoms (still)

<https://kwadswords.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/broken-blossoms.jpg>

Buster Keaton – How to Be a Detective (still)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/b8/a5/1f/b8a51ffbfaa11419e4c9c06c9c9af6f7.jpg>

Keystone Kops (still)

<http://animationresources.org/pics4/sennett07-big.jpg>

Valentino (still)

<https://nenaghsilentfilmfestival.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/rudolph-valentino-silent-movies-13885650-1560-1045.jpg>

Chaplin – Gold Rush (still)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/f0/01/24/f0012463e3688a4a860a83230ccb7ab6.jpg>

Metropolis (still)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/05/ba/14/05ba14db63eb9efcce92cf09cb747020.jpg>

The Passion of Joan of Arc (still)

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/c2/e6/a2/c2e6a2a56e04a65076123d98f62fbe40.jpg>

A Trip to the Moon (still)

<https://i1.wp.com/www.aviewtoqueue.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Trip-to-the-Moon-3.jpg>

A Trip to the Moon (color still):

<http://silentfilm.blob.core.windows.net/assets/Standard/PAGE/21382/large/TripMoonColor.WEB.jpg>

Symbol of the Unconquered (still)

http://www.newyorker.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/150608_r26623-1200.jpg

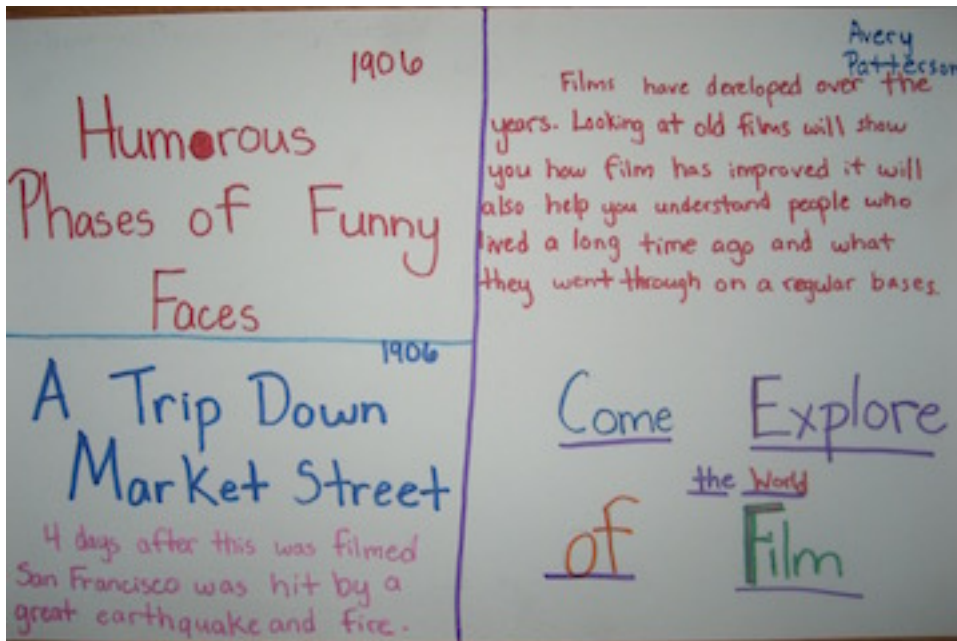
Micheaux Cinema Advertisement

http://cms.ipressroom.com.s3.amazonaws.com/173/files/20169/580960742cfac20bfb01d4c8_The+Homesteader+newspaper+ad/The+Homesteader+newspaper+ad_cd974a21-4a9c-47a0-8b78-eb0ca8a49098-prv.jpg

Exit from the Factory (still)

http://img.over-blog-kiwi.com/0/84/34/71/20150329/ob_5f9478_sortie-des-usines-lumiere.jpg

APPENDIX C: Examples of "Parent Night" Posters from Camp Spark



A Trip Down Market Street and Humorous phases of funny faces

Humorous phases of funny faces
at your next Parent Night

This Tuesday @ 6:00pm

Explore the World of Silent Films!

A Trip down Market Street

A silent tape taken of market street before an earthquake & fire broke out shortly after

CULTURAL IMPACT!

Witness the beginnings of modern cinema

Humorous Phases of Funny Faces

An animated film that introduced stop motion. It would wow audiences

In Theaters Now

A Trip Down Market Street

This film depicts an everyday scene on Market Street, for that is what is happening. It was taken in April of 1906 before the earthquake and fire. It is a gem for historians because it shows life in the old days and what the street looked like.

New Showing

The Great Train Robbery!

It is a great ACTION movie of 2 men robbing and killing people on a train. In 1903 people thought that doing a film about a robbery was scandalous. It is great because it is different.

The Daily Mirror

LOS ANGELES HISTORY

From the Vaults: “The Last of the Mohicans”



“The Last of the Mohicans” (1920, directed by Clarence Brown and Maurice Tourneur): What a surprising movie!

I was all set for 70 minutes of Boy Scout action, with lots of tramping through the woods and maybe some close-ups of moccasin prints. But the movie is both lavishly romantic and filled with over-the-top action.

Screenwriter Robert Dillon makes free with James Fenimore Cooper's novel. The basic structure is similar: Two white women are escorted through the woods by a pair of Indians and their faithful companion Leatherstocking, or Hawkeye. But interestingly, the role of big white hero Leatherstocking has been reduced to almost nothing; he's pretty much just a sidekick to Mohican Chingachgook (Theodore Lorch) and his son Uncas (Alan Roscoe). The trio tries to protect the girls from evil Huron warrior Magua (Wallace Beery – isn't that a great name?), with varying degrees of success.

The scenery and composition are gorgeous. I particularly love a sequence when the heroes are hiding in a cave from Magua, and the cave mouth frames a series of beautiful shots: Uncas lounging in the doorway as Cora (Barbara Bedford, as still and beautiful as a sculpture) watches him yearningly; the sunset outside; Magua's warriors creeping by; the terrified group hiding within.

Also fantastic is a later scene when Magua's lethal band (mad with "fire-water from the French") overruns the abandoned Ft. William Henry, swarming into a hospital room full of wounded British soldiers too weak to leave the fort. Their shadowy figures gradually fill the confined space, and the silence makes it

COOPER MASTERPIECE.

Tournour Presents "Last of Mohicans" at Symphony Today.

James Fenimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans" has been translated into dozens of languages and through Maurice Tournour has at least reached the motion picture and will be on view this week at the Symphony Theater starting today.

It is odd that this epic of American history and early pioneer-should be left to a Frenchman to bring to the screen, but nothing of the wonderful love story has been lost, nothing in the stirring historical scenes has suffered. Through the Tournour artistry "The Last of the Mohicans" has been made to rank, it is said, with the big achievements of the screen.

Uncas, prince of the fast-vanishing tribe of Mohicans, is portrayed by Albert Roscoe, who is himself one-eighth Osage. Barbara Bedford has the role of Cora Munro. Magua, the cowardly Huron, is played with all his villainy by Wallace Beery, known to film fans as one of the best of all the screen heavies. Lillian Hall, Henry Woodward and other players fill the other principal roles.

"The Last of the Mohicans" is a tale too well known to need repetition. The suspense, the humor, the thrills, the humanness of the book, all lend themselves admirably to screen portrayal, and Maurice Tournour has made of this American classic a screen drama that is said to be in itself a classic.

Magua's white face paint, delineating exaggerated features, struck me as downright minstrelsy. A clifftop sequence at the end, while gorgeous and genuinely heartstopping, seems lifted straight from "Birth of a Nation." And I was interested anew in how none of the Native American characters have their own motivation about anything, not even Magua; they're all just pawns of the French and British. But political issues are pretty much to be expected going in. For me they mostly dissolved against the romance/high camp.

One particularly fun thing about this movie is that the title cards rarely involve actual dialogue. The characters will chat it up onscreen for several minutes, and then the title card will say something extremely vague, like this: "The eternal spirit of youth, joying while it may – heedless of the gathering storm." (The title cards have been redone, I'm told, but I'm not sure if the Netflix version I saw has the original ones.) It would be fun to watch this with a group and supply your own dialogue.

My favorite unexplained moment comes toward the end, as brave Cora has just offered herself in a prisoner exchange for her sister Alice (Lillian Hall). Leatherstocking (Harry Lorraine) comes up and speaks to Cora at some length. They've never talked before and you just have no idea what he might be saying: "Think of England?" "Do you have any gum?" Finally Cora, never looking at him, reaches up and gently turns his face away from hers, as absently as if he were a housefly. There's no title card, and they don't talk again. It's bizarre and really incredibly endearing.

[Side Note] Boris Karloff, according to IMDb, plays "Indian (uncredited)." Spotting him, sadly, is quite impossible. It was fun to look though. A favorite game of mine with the 1992 version is looking for Irish actor Colm Meaney, who was by no means an un-famous actor at that time but whose role as a British major is pretty well cut out of the film. One of my good friends finally spotted him in a fight scene, but only after repeated viewings, during which his (my friend's, not Meaney's) wife observed, "This game is hard when they all dress the same and wear wigs."

-- Anne Elisabeth Dillon

Photo: Maurice Tourneur Productions.

GREAT MOVIE

"Greed"

Review by Roger Ebert



Erich von Stroheim's "Greed" (1925), like the Venus de Milo, is acclaimed as a classic despite missing several parts deemed essential by its creator. Its unhappy history is well known. Von Stroheim's original film was more than nine hours long. After it was cut, cut and cut again, it was released at about 140 minutes, in a version that he disowned--and that inspired a fistfight with Louis B. Mayer. It is this version that is often voted one of the greatest films of all time.

The inspiration for "Greed" was *McTeague*, a novel by Frank Norris about the rough, simple son of a drunken miner, who learns dentistry from a quack, moves to San Francisco, marries a woman who is a miser and ends up in Death Valley next to the body of his rival for the woman and her lottery winnings. It was a bleak and sardonic story for the Roaring '20s, and neither Mayer nor his new MGM partner, Irving Thalberg, thought the public wanted it--not at nine-plus hours, certainly.

For von Stroheim, a martinet who affected the dress, bearing and monocle of a Prussian officer, their opposition was like a curse that followed him. At Universal, where Thalberg was then employed, von Stroheim's "Foolish Wives" (1922) was cut by a third, and Thalberg fired him from his next film, "Merry-Go-Round." He fled to MGM to make "Greed," which cost \$750,000 and took a year to shoot, only to have Thalberg catch up with him there and demand more cuts.

No one now alive has seen the original version, but a San Francisco drama critic named Idwal Jones was present at its first studio screening, which began at 10 a.m. and continued

without breaks for lunch or anything else, von Stroheim sitting ramrod straight through the whole thing as an example to the others. Jones was a friend of the director's, but his account of that experience does not inspire our envy. He liked the individual parts well enough; it was just that there were so many of them: "Every episode is developed to the full, every comma of the book put in, as it were." He noted that von Stroheim "worships realism like an abstract ideal; worships it more, and suffers more in its achievement, than other men do for wealth or fame."

Indeed the film is realistic. Opening scenes were shot in the very gold mine that Norris wrote about; it was reopened for the movie. The San Francisco dentist's office was not a set but a real second-floor office, which still exists. Von Stroheim could have shot his desert scenes outside Palm Springs, but insisted on shooting in the 120-degree heat of Death Valley itself; the camera had to be cooled with iced towels. Some of his crew mutinied and others complained. Von Stroheim slept with his pistol, and as his two actors engaged in their death struggle he screamed: "Fight! Fight! Try to hate each other as you hate me!"

These memories and others are recalled in a book about von Stroheim by Thomas Quinn Curtis, a longtime friend of the director's, who until fairly recent years was the Paris Herald-Tribune's film critic. He recalls lunching one day in Paris with Louis B. Mayer, who told him the story of his fight with von Stroheim. That evening, Curtis had dinner with the director, who said, "That's entirely accurate." Their fight began when von Stroheim took up his gloves to stalk out of the mogul's office. "I suppose you consider me rabble," Mayer said. "Not even that," said von Stroheim. Mayer struck him so hard that von Stroheim fell out through the office door and onto the floor, still clutching gloves and cane. "You see, my hands were occupied," he told Mayer's secretary.

Why were their tempers so inflamed? Partly because in Mayer's view a fortune had been squandered on an unreleasable picture. But also because the film's view of human nature was so sour and cynical. McTeague (Gibson Gowland) is a quack who first falls in love with Trina (Zasu Pitts) after chloroforming her in his chair, then leaning over her to inhale the perfume of her hair. Trina is a miser who begrudges her man a five-cent bus fare on a rainy day, and polishes her coins until they glisten. Trina's original suitor Marcus (Jean Hersholt, of the humanitarian award) essentially gives her to McTeague, then wants her back after she wins a lottery. And there is a good possibility that McTeague and Trina engage in premarital sex, which was scandalous in 1925. (Much depends on a title card that says, "Please! Oh, please!" Does she mean? – "Please do," or "Please don't"?)

The missing seven hours of "Greed" have been called the Holy Grail of the cinema. Apparently, they were destroyed to extract the silver nitrate used in their manufacture. The movie that remained had a decent run in the 1920s, and was later restored by silent film historian Kevin Brownlow; it is that version that is considered a masterpiece. Now an ambitious new approach has been made to the material by the film restorer Rick Schmidlin, who discovered a trove of original production stills and a copy of von Stroheim's long-lost 330-page original shooting script. He has taken that material and edited it together with the surviving footage to produce a four-hour version that premiered on the TCM channel and will be available on video.

Comparing the two versions, we can see how not only length, but also prudish sensibilities, went into MGM's chop job. Early in their relationship, McTeague and Trina take the interurban train out into the countryside. As they're standing at the station, Trina's title card in the shortened MGM version reads, "This is the first day it hasn't rained in weeks. I thought it would be nice to go for a walk." In Schmidlin's reconstruction from the shooting

script, it reads: "Let's go over and sit on the sewer," and so they do, perching on a manhole cover.

The original version of "Greed" is perhaps a masterpiece more lamented than missed; there is a point after which an audience will simply not sit still. Even von Stroheim's friend Jones wondered if it could be shown "on the installment plan," and muses about how "German professors sit for years before they develop *sitzfleisch*," loosely translated as iron rumps. My own feeling, having seen both versions, is that movie lovers will want to begin with the familiar 140-minute film (which after all is a great experience) and then, if their curiosity is aroused, look at Schmidlin's version to get an idea of all they have missed.

The surviving "Greed" is an uncompromising exercise in naturalism, capturing the rough working-class lives of the new U.S. cities, where saloons doubled as living rooms. And there is a real poignancy in the plight of McTeague, who may by the end be a double murderer but is essentially a gentle, simpleminded soul. One of the scenes cut out by MGM is reconstructed by Schmidlin; it shows McTeague buying theater tickets for his engagement party. He wants the tickets on the right side of the theater. "As you face the stage, or the audience?" asks the ticket seller. "The side away from the drums," says McTeague, confused, and after he becomes convinced the man is toying with him, he explodes.

Here is a man who only wants to be a dentist and inhale Trina's lovely fragrance, and his bones end up in Death Valley. His last act is to set free his pet canary, which flutters a little, and dies. No wonder Mayer and Thalberg thought the Jazz Age wasn't ready for this film.

GREAT MOVIE

"The Passion of Joan of Arc" by Roger Ebert



You cannot know the history of silent film unless you know the face of [Renee Maria Falconetti](#). In a medium without words, where the filmmakers believed that the camera captured the essence of characters through their faces, to see Falconetti in Dreyer's "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (1928) is to look into eyes that will never leave you. Falconetti (as she is always called) made only this single movie. "It may be the finest performance ever recorded on film," wrote Pauline Kael. She was an actress in Paris when she was seen on the stage of a little boulevard theater by [Carl Theodor Dreyer](#) (1889-1968),

the Dane who was one of the greatest early directors. It was a light comedy, he recalled, but there was something in her face that struck him: "There was a soul behind that facade." He did screen tests without makeup, and found what he sought, a woman who embodied simplicity, character and suffering.

Dreyer had been given a large budget and a screenplay by his French producers, but he threw out the screenplay and turned instead to the transcripts of Joan's trial. They told the story that has become a legend: of how a simple country maid from Orleans, dressed as a boy, led the French troops in their defeat of the British occupation forces. How she was captured by French loyal to the British and brought before a church court, where her belief that she had been inspired by heavenly visions led to charges of heresy. There were 29 cross-examinations, combined with torture, before Joan was burned at the stake in 1431. Dreyer combined them into one inquisition, in which the judges, their faces twisted with their fear of her courage, loomed over her with shouts and accusations.

If you go to the Danish Film Museum in Copenhagen you can see Dreyer's model for the extraordinary set he built for the film. He wanted it all in one piece (with movable walls for the cameras), and he began with towers at four corners, linked with concrete walls so thick they could support the actors and equipment. Inside the enclosure were chapels, houses and the ecclesiastical court, built according to a weird geometry that put windows and doors out of plumb with one another and created discordant visual harmonies (the film was made at the height of German Expressionism and the French avant-garde movement in art).

It is helpful to see the model in Copenhagen, because you will never see the whole set in the movie. There is not one single establishing shot in all of "The Passion of Joan of Arc," which is filmed entirely in closeups and medium shots, creating fearful intimacy between Joan and her tormentors. Nor are there easily read visual links between shots. In his brilliant shot-by-shot analysis of the film, David Bordwell of the University of Wisconsin concludes: "Of the film's over 1,500 cuts, fewer than 30 carry a figure or object over from one shot to another; and fewer than 15 constitute genuine matches on action."

What does this mean to the viewer? There is a language of shooting and editing that we subconsciously expect at the movies. We assume that if two people are talking, the cuts will make it seem that they are looking at one another. We assume that if a judge is questioning a defendant, the camera placement and editing will make it clear where they stand in relation to one another. If we see three people in a room, we expect to be able to say how they are arranged and which is closest to the camera. Almost all such visual cues are missing from "The Passion of Joan of Arc."

Instead Dreyer cuts the film into a series of startling images. The prison guards and the ecclesiastics on the court are seen in high contrast, often from a low angle, and although there are often sharp architectural angles behind them, we are not sure exactly what the scale is (are the windows and walls near or far?). Bordwell's book reproduces a shot of three priests, presumably lined up from front to back, but shot in such a way that their

heads seem stacked on top of one another. All of the faces of the inquisitors are shot in bright light, without makeup, so that the crevices and flaws of the skin seem to reflect a diseased inner life.

Falconetti, by contrast, is shot in softer grays, rather than blacks and whites. Also without makeup, she seems solemn and consumed by inner conviction. Consider an exchange where a judge asks her whether St. Michael actually spoke to her. Her impassive face seems to suggest that whatever happened between Michael and herself was so far beyond the scope of the question that no answer is conceivable.

Why did Dreyer fragment his space, disorient the visual sense and shoot in closeup? I think he wanted to avoid the picturesque temptations of a historical drama. There is no scenery here, aside from walls and arches. Nothing was put in to look pretty. You do not leave discussing the costumes (although they are all authentic). The emphasis on the faces insists that these very people did what they did. Dreyer strips the church court of its ritual and righteousness and betrays its members as fleshy hypocrites in the pay of the British; their narrow eyes and mean mouths assault Joan's sanctity.

For Falconetti, the performance was an ordeal. Legends from the set tell of Dreyer forcing her to kneel painfully on stone and then wipe all expression from her face--so that the viewer would read suppressed or inner pain. He filmed the same shots again and again, hoping that in the editing room he could find exactly the right nuance in her facial expression. There is an echo in the famous methods of the French director [Robert Bresson](#), who in his own 1962 "The Trial of Joan of Arc" put actors through the same shots again and again, until all apparent emotion was stripped from their performances. In his book on Dreyer, Tom Milne quotes the director: "When a child suddenly sees an onrushing train in front of him, the expression on his face is spontaneous. By this I don't mean the feeling in it (which in this case is sudden fear), but the fact that the face is completely uninhibited." That is the impression he wanted from Falconetti.

That he got it is generally agreed. Perhaps it helps that Falconetti never made another movie (she died in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1946). We do not have her face in other roles to compare with her face here, and the movie seems to exist outside time (the French director Jean Cocteau famously said it played like "an historical document from an era in which the cinema didn't exist").

To modern audiences, raised on films where emotion is conveyed by dialogue and action more than by faces, a film like "The Passion of Joan of Arc" is an unsettling experience--so intimate we fear we will discover more secrets than we desire. Our sympathy is engaged so powerfully with Joan that Dreyer's visual methods--his angles, his cutting, his close-ups--don't play like stylistic choices, but like the fragments of Joan's experience. Exhausted, starving, cold, in constant fear, only 19 when she died, she lives in a nightmare where the faces of her tormentors rise up like spectral demons.

Perhaps the secret of Dreyer's success is that he asked himself, "What is this story really about?" And after he answered that question he made a movie about absolutely nothing else.

An excellent essay by Matthew Dessem on "The Passion of Joan of Arc" here:

<http://criterioncollection.blogspot.com/2006/11/62-passion-of-joan-of-arc.html>

This is part of his undertaking to watch and write about every film in the Criterion Collection.

GREAT MOVIE

"Metropolis" by Roger Ebert



The opening shots of the restored "Metropolis" are so crisp and clear, they come as a jolt. This mistreated masterpiece has been seen until now mostly in battered prints – missing footage that was, we now learn, essential. Because of a 16mm print discovered in 2008 in Buenos Aires, it stands before us as more or less the film that [Fritz Lang](#) originally made in 1927. It is, says expert David Bordwell, "one of the great sacred monsters of the cinema."

Lang tells of a towering city of the future. Above ground, it has spires and towers, elevated highways, an Olympian stadium and pleasure gardens. Below the surface, however, is a workers' city, where the clocks show 10 hours to squeeze out more work time, the workers live in tenement housing, and work consists of unrelenting service to a machine. This vision of plutocracy vs. labor would have been powerful in an era when the assembly line had been introduced on a large scale, and Karl Marx had encouraged class warfare.

Lang created one of the most unforgettable original places in the cinema. "Metropolis" fixed for countless later films the image of a futuristic city as a hell of material progress and human despair. From this film, in various ways, descended not only "Dark City," but also "[Blade Runner](#)," "[The Fifth Element](#)," "Alphaville," "[Escape From L.A.](#)," "[Gattaca](#)," and Batman's Gotham City. The laboratory of its evil genius, Rotwang, created the visual look of mad scientists for decades to come, especially after it was so closely mirrored in "[Bride of Frankenstein](#)" (1935). The device of the "false Maria," the robot who looks like a human being, inspired the Replicants of "Blade Runner." Even Rotwang's artificial hand was given homage in "[Dr. Strangelove](#)."

The missing footage restored in this version comes to about 30 minutes, bringing the total running time to 150 minutes, more or less. Bordwell, informed by the chief restorer, Martin Koerber of the German *Cinematheque*, observes that while the cuts simplified "Metropolis" into a science-fiction film, the restoration emphasizes subplots involving mistaken identities. We all remember the "two Marias": the good, saintly human, and her malevolent robot copy, both played by [Brigitte Helm](#). We now learn that the hero, Freder, also changes places with the worker Georgy, in an attempt to identify with the working class. Freder's father, Fredersen, is the ruler of Metropolis.

The purpose of the tall, cadaverous Thin Man, assigned by Freder's father to follow him, is also made more clear - and we learn more about the relationship between Fredersen and the mad scientist Rotwang, and Rotwang's love for the ruler's late wife. This woman, named Hel, was lost in the shorter version for the simplistic reason that her name on the pedestal of a sculpture resembled "Hell," and distributors feared audiences would misunderstand.

"Metropolis" employed vast sets, thousands of extras and astonishing special effects to create its two worlds. Lang's film is the summit of German Expressionism, with its combination of stylized sets, dramatic camera angles, bold shadows and frankly artificial theatrics.

The production itself made even Stanley Kubrick's mania for control look benign. According to Patrick McGilligan's book, *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast*, the extras were hurled into violent mob scenes, made to stand for hours in cold water and handled more like props than human beings. The heroine was made to jump from high places, and when she was burned at a stake, Lang used real flames! The irony was that Lang's directorial style was not unlike the approach of the villain in his film.

The good Maria, always bathed in light, seems to be the caretaker of the worker's children — all of them, it sometimes appears. After Maria glimpses the idyllic life of the surface, she becomes a revolutionary firebrand and stirs up the workers. Rotwang, instructed by Fredersen, captures this Maria, and transfers her face to the robot. Now the workers, still following Maria, can be fooled and controlled by the false Maria.

Lang's story is broad, to put it mildly. Do not seek here for psychological insights. The storytelling is mostly visual. Lang avoided as many intertitles as possible, and depended on images of startling originality. Consider the first glimpse of the underground power plant, with workers straining to move heavy dial hands back and forth. What they're doing makes no logical sense, but visually the connection is obvious: They are controlled like hands on a clock. When the machinery explodes, Freder has a vision in which the machinery turns into an obscene, devouring monster.

Other dramatic visual sequences: a chase scene in the darkened catacombs, with the real Maria pursued by Rotwang (the beam of his light acts like a club to bludgeon her). The image of the Tower of Babel as Maria addresses the workers; their faces, arrayed in darkness from the top to the bottom of the screen; the doors in Rotwang's house, opening and closing on their own. The lascivious dance of the false Maria, as the workers look on, the screen filled with large, staring eyeballs. The flood of the lower city and the undulating arms of the children flocking to Maria to be saved.

Much of what we see in "Metropolis" doesn't exist, except in visual trickery. The special effects were the work of Eugene Schufftan, who later worked in Hollywood as the cinematographer of "Lilith" and "[The Hustler](#)." According to Magill's Survey of Cinema, his photographic system "allowed people and miniature sets to be combined in a single shot, through the use of mirrors, rather than laboratory work." Other effects were created in the camera by cinematographer Karl Freund. The result was astonishing for its time. Without all of the digital tricks of today, "Metropolis" fills the imagination. Today, the effects look like effects, but that's their appeal. Looking at the original "King Kong," I find that its effects, primitive by modern standards, gain a certain weird effectiveness. Because they look odd and unworldly compared to the slick, utterly convincing effects that are now possible, they're more evocative: The effects in modern movies are done so well that we seem to be looking at real things, which is not quite the same kind of fun.

The restoration is not pristine. Some shots retain the scratches picked up by the original 35mm print from which the 16mm Buenos Aires copy was made; these are insignificant compared to the rediscovered footage they represent. There are still a few gaps, but because the original screenplay exists, they're filled in by title cards. In general, this is a "Metropolis" we have never seen, both in length and quality.

Although Lang saw his movie as anti-authoritarian, the Nazis liked it enough to offer him control of their film industry (he fled to the United States instead). Some of the visual ideas in "Metropolis" seem echoed in Leni Riefenstahl's pro-Hitler [Triumph of the Will](#) (1935) — where, of course, they have lost their irony.

"Metropolis" does what many great films do – creating a time, place, and characters so striking that they become part of our arsenal of images for imagining the world. Lang filmed for nearly a year, driven by obsession, often cruel to his colleagues, a perfectionist madman, and the result is one of those films without which many others cannot be fully appreciated.

Note: Some of the restored footage shows small black bands at the top and left side, marking missing real estate. Expert projectionist Steve Kraus says this image area was lost due to shortcuts taken either in making the 16mm negative or quite possibly years earlier when the 35mm print they worked from was made.

This article is based in part on my 1998 Great Movies essay.

APPENDIX E: Student-Produced Practice and Final “New Silent Movie” Projects

(To follow via email)