

***Teaching the Screen* by Michael Anderson & Miranda Jefferson**

Growing up in as a member of a visual generation has allowed me to see film as the cultural medium of our time. Our stories are explicitly linked to our ability to tell them to a wide and varied audience. Film is the one medium of our time that is accessible on all levels - personal, critical - for all. If Shakespeare was alive today, he'd be in the film business. This text is a richly layered research based endeavour. It is clearly written, structured to allow the reader to dip into chapters or to read as professional development. Teachers who are not overly confident with film analysis or film construction are welcomed by the structure. As someone attempting to build a film studies curriculum with film making at the centre, the chapter on developing a film curriculum was invaluable. The concise chapters are linked, but each, particularly 'Scaffolding Learning in film aesthetics', do stand alone for a teacher with a strong background into film studies. As an accompanying guide to formal studies or further education, this book is a must for all new and old teachers of communication.

Troy Martin, Lisarow High School, NSW

I've seen other books on aspects of film education, but they're mostly from overseas authors. This one is not only written by two Australian practitioners and educators, but it is current, relevant and includes references to NSW Board of Studies criteria!

The authors have supplied us with a comprehensive compendium of filmic study. It sets out a philosophical approach to screen teaching, but it is neither dry nor technically overdone: think stimulating and thought provoking, mind-expanding and thorough. This is not a book of lesson plans ready for teachers to use; rather it educates teachers in how to teach film. There is, however, an appendix of scaffolded film learning modules for adaptation and use. A very extensive bibliography is included and a filmography that ranges from 1913 (*Death's Marathon*) up to 2007 (*Sweeney Todd*).

The rationale for this book is set out by the authors in their Introduction.

"Young people are, of course, right now all over the world attempting to make film by pointing a camera and shooting and then transferring the product on to YouTube. To us, this is not really filmmaking. It is the digital equivalent of doodling with pen and paper. There is often no understanding of the aesthetics of film or of how to use those aesthetics to communicate effectively. *Teaching the Screen* is an attempt to use what has been learnt through this familiarity with film technologies as a starting point and enrich it by bringing to it aesthetic control."

I highly recommend this book for all schools teaching screen studies at any level. Surprisingly perhaps this book's chapter on Developing a film curriculum starts with Early Childhood. Give it to your Head of English for starters, but make sure it gets around other staff members too.

Julie Davies, Sutherland Shire Christian School, NSW

Congratulations Michael and Miranda for creating a book that will never be far from my desk. This book arrived just as I was beginning a unit of work on the topic of; 'Telling the Story': the Narrative, through reading a prose novel, a verse novel and viewing a film, for year 7. It was a life saver really, because I was daunted by the idea of having to research so much. The book became holiday reading and I really enjoyed it. Mainly, because whilst it reiterated a lot of information that I already knew but had forgotten, it provided me with great ideas, scaffolds and explanations that were simply illuminating.

Who would have thought that the collaboration theory by our friend Vygotsky, from 1978, could be explained so well?

I imagine that many schools will be just like mine in so far as teaching about the narrative in film, however, do we really explain the 'nuts and bolts'? Do we explain the film making process correctly? Do we assess film learning correctly? I know that from engaging with this text, I can now get it 'right'. Based on recent trials in Australian schools, this book is a must have in all schools to allow teachers to create interesting lessons which include interesting, modern and factual information required for teaching about the 'screen'. There is even a chapter for us as researchers with ideas and suggestions of where to look for more in depth information if required.

The writers acknowledge that there is much to teach about film and film making, "pointing a camera, shooting and then transferring the product on to You Tube" is not really film making. It is our

responsibility to keep up with modern practices but we need to ensure that throughout the changes in technology, we still teach the foundations of film. This text allows us, as busy teachers, to use the extensive information in it, to do just that.

Suzanne Daw, Gosford High School, NSW

It's great to read an up-to-date, Australian text that specifically focuses on engaging secondary students in cineliteracies. Michael Anderson and Miranda Jefferson clearly establish the role and place of teaching digital narratives in chapter one, linking film learning with productive pedagogies (Quality Teaching in New South Wales). Of particular use is chapter three which discusses how meaning is created in film; an essential aspect in the teaching of both theory and practice to students. Addressing film components such as music, graphics, sound, speech, visual imagery, montage, mise en scene and techniques this chapter is just as valuable for the deconstruction of films as it is for the construction of them.

Teaching The Screen also explores aspects of collaborative learning, creativity, telling stories, film genre, etc.

Teachers questioning how to implement film within their own teaching or the curriculum will find chapter 8: 'Developing a film curriculum' both motivational and practical. This chapter offers suggestions and examples, case studies and a teacher's perspective which consolidates theory in to practice. This realistic approach is further enhanced in chapter 9: 'Assessing the screen' with suggestions on effective outcomes based film assessment within the classroom.

This useful teacher resource is beneficial for all English faculties particularly as its content is applicable for Stages 4, 5 and 6 of the NSW syllabus.

Jodie Webber, Hurlstone Agricultural High School, NSW

Teaching the Screen is a worthy text for perusal as it's one of those books that is good to keep handy when teaching film. I found that its comprehensive detail of film history and theory really made it a more teacher friendly resource, or a good reference point for senior school students who have a certain fetish for screen literacy. In South Australia we are moving towards a compulsory Year 12 subject where the student must run a research project of their choice; it is in this context that I thought *Teaching the Screen* would come in handy as a reference point and useful tool in developing a focus study in film. Other than this, *Teaching the Screen* offers a good chapter on 'Developing a film curriculum' – which I saw as particularly useful when applying it to texts we currently study (e.g. extending the horror genre teaching in *Sleepy Hollow* and *Sweeny Todd*); I especially appreciated looking at what understanding a student should have of film from year level to year level. All in all, a lot of theory and a lot of theorising, so it's not a book I would necessarily teach from explicitly, however it provides a good contextual knowledge that is valuable to any teacher who is looking to enhance their understanding of film, visual literacy and communication.

Sara Nigro, St. Dominic's Priory College, SA

This film study would make an excellent addition to any Secondary English Department's library, individual teacher's aides and the school library Teacher's Reference collection.

Both the academic and practical backgrounds of the co-authors make for a real strength in the scope, practicality and relevance of the material covered here.

I especially found Chapter 8, Developing a film curriculum, of great use for implementation of English Stages 4, 5 & 6, with case studies from the real world for evidence of success. Anything which makes for better teaching & easier paperwork has to be a real bonus!

The current Australian content is top quality; I've used already ideas in presenting *Rabbit Proof Fence* with a mixed ability Year 10 English class successfully.

Engaging in effective teaching and learning activities can be much enhanced through reference to *Teaching the Screen* for all English teachers and students within Australian Secondary and Primary Schools. I recommend at least 2 copies for each English Staff to raise the level & interest of Film studies in our schools.

Susan Hill, McCarthy Catholic College, Emu Plains, NSW

Teaching the Screen by Michael Anderson & Miranda Jefferson explores ways of teaching video and film effectively in secondary school classrooms. This book offers a new pedagogy of film storytelling that draws on research from effective classroom film learning practice. It is clearly written and is structured to allow the reader to dip into chapters or to read as part of professional development. This book is a great resource for teachers who want to create engaging learning experiences for their students.

Highlights of the book include Chapter 2 which delves in the subjects of creativity, multiliteracies and screen learning. Chapter 3 provides detailed information on screen theory, practice and learning including the importance of movement in visual imagery. Chapter 4 looks at narrative, genre and film learning while Chapter 5 includes information about scaffolding learning in film aesthetics. Chapter 7 examines why filmmakers tell stories and why school students need to tell stories. Chapter 8 is particularly helpful for teachers new to developing a film curriculum as it offers suggestions, case studies and examples of how teaching theory is turned into successful teaching practice. Chapter 9 discusses the principles for effective film assessment. The appendix provides a sample of 'scaffolded film learning modules' which are helpful to educators new to teaching film. *Teaching the Screen* provides a thorough account of the theoretical issues and practical techniques used to successfully teach film appreciation and film making.

Mark Draga, Auckland, New Zealand