

CLASS DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: 1st grade

COURSE: Croatian language

TEACHING AREA: Culture and media

TEACHING UNIT: *The Writer*

CLASS TYPE: Analysis of a short fiction film

DURATION OF A TEACHING UNIT: 45 minutes

THE WRITER (Mihael Kuzmičić, Zagreb, 2021.)

MOTIVATION

Conversation with the students

1. What motivates you or inspires you?
2. How do you imagine artistic inspiration?
3. What are muses? What is the relationship between the artist and his muse?
4. How hard is it to get inspired, to create something out of nothing?

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FILM

You will watch a short film *The Writer* by Mihael Kuzmičić from Zagreb.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WATCHING

1. Pay attention to how the film shows what the main character does and what bothers him.
2. When and how do supporting characters appear in the film?
3. What are the relationships between the characters like?
4. What kinds of shots prevail in the film?

WATCHING OF THE FILM

EXPRESSION OF STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Did you like the film? Why?

What did you find funny or interesting about the film?

What got you thinking in the film?

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FILM

1. What do we see and hear first in the film?

First we can see an extreme close-up of a shelf, over which the name of the film "The Writer" appears. We hear a book closing and we see an extreme close-up of a hand placing the book on a shelf ("The Empty Space" by Peter Brook).

2. How is the protagonist smoking a cigarette on the balcony shown? What kinds of shots and sounds are used?

The main character is shown in a medium shot as he goes out onto the balcony and lights a cigarette. We see close-ups of the character inhaling smoke and extreme close-ups of his hand, the cigarette and the ashtray. We can only hear the diegetic sounds of traffic in the distance. There is no music.

3. What do we call the movement of the camera when the main character looks to the papers on the table on his left and to the glass and pills on his right?

It's called a whip pan. A pan is a circular movement of the camera around its axis, and it serves to redirect the viewer's attention by turning. A whip pan is so fast that you cannot recognize what you're seeing during the movement, but the objects merge into "smeared" lines that move in the opposite direction to the movement of the field of vision.

4. What is the purpose of a whip pan?

A whip pan is mostly used for transitions between scenes and sequences. It is also used as a means of achieving the stylistic figure of comparison.

5. What do we hear while the writer is looking at the papers on the table?

Besides the noise in the room, we can hear non-diegetic quiet, odd music.

6. In what kinds of shots do we see the protagonist preparing to write?

Him preparing to write is shown through a sequence of extreme close-ups. In one extreme close-up, his hands organize the papers, in another his hand moves the glass and the

tablecloth, and in the third his hands open the computer... At the end of that sequence, we see the writer at the computer in a medium close-up.

7. How do we hear the beginning of the screenplay? Whose voice do we hear?

At the beginning of writing the screenplay, the writer speaks, and we hear him as the narrator. We see the writer at the computer, his lips don't move, but we hear him speaking - therefore, we hear a non-diegetic, narratorial sound (narration in the background).

8. How is it visually suggested we're not watching the writer's real situation, but the one he imagines?

The frame size is different, the frame is narrower. The framing should lead us to realize we're in the writer's imagination.

9. What is the framing like when the characters (NN and MM) talk to the writer?

Given that the writer is speaking to himself because his thoughts are part of his imagination, the framing is wider. This procedure reminds the viewer that they're seeing reality. But while we are watching the unfolding "film", i.e. while we are listening to his script being written, we find ourselves in the writer's imaginary, fictional world that he is creating, and thus we're in a narrower frame.

10. How is the difference between reality and fiction indicated in the film's costume design?

The writer (the real character) is dressed normally, in a plain T-shirt. The characters he made up are emphasized by their costumes: they have dress shirts on, one has a coat, another a jacket, one a hat, another an old-fashioned cap. Clothes and props (a gun, a shot glass) emphasize the fictional context.

11. When and how do film props appear in scenes?

Props appear at the words of the narrator, i.e. the writer. When the narrator mentions the nine millimeter revolver, it appears in the shot. When he says that NN has glasses, they appear on his face in the next shot.

12. Why do fictional characters keep interrupting the writer? How is it explained in the film that they are able to do that?

They interrupt him because he has no inspiration and doesn't know what to write, and the characters represent his thoughts. If he knew what he wanted and how to write them, they wouldn't interrupt him. Talking to the characters, the writer is talking to himself.

13. How is the illusion of imagination broken in this film?

The illusion of imagination is broken by the fact that fictional characters talk to the author, ask him questions, give suggestions as to how the story should proceed, i.e. they interrupt the basic plot and change it how they like. In one moment a character is shot, in another he is unharmed. The characters themselves admit that they are fictional and behave that way.

14. What is it called when a work breaks its own illusion in theater and (colloquially) in film?

Breaking the fourth wall.

15. What kinds of shots prevail in the film?

Medium shots and medium close-up shots predominate in the film. Medium close-ups are suitable for dialogues, for establishing relationships between characters and observing their reactions. In this film, the dialogues are very pronounced.

16. How does the viewer know that the writer was inspired at the end?

At the end, the author of the film gives an indication that the writer has found his inspiration because, finally, his thoughts (which look the same as him) don't sit across from him, but we see his first character (played by another actor). The writer also smiles with satisfaction. The scene is accompanied by non-diegetic music that enhances the ambiance, and the frame is narrowed, as if we are watching a film. The film ends with a fade to black.

EVALUATION

- monitoring student activities while watching a film
- checking the understanding of the film by asking directed questions
- teaching sheet (quiz)

THE TEACHING SHEET (QUIZ) is available on the Film EDUcation website.