

Educational material

# Film noir / Soap



**CLASS DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:** 6th grade

**TEACHING AREA:** Culture and media

**TEACHING UNIT:** *Film noir, Soap*

**CLASS TYPE:** Analysis of short workshop films

**DURATION OF A TEACHING UNIT:** 45 minutes

## FILM NOIR

DraMeDrag, Dragalić Primary School, Dragalić, 2023

### MOTIVATION

Conversation with the students

1. Are you preoccupied with getting straight A's? Why?
2. What does it take to get an A in school?
3. Are grades the most important thing in school? Does getting the best grades mean you have the greatest knowledge?
4. Why are your teachers important? How do they influence you?
5. Do you agree that the time spent in school is the best period of your life? Why?

### THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FILM

You will watch a short freestyle film called *Film noir* produced by DraMeDrag from Dragalić Primary School in 2023.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR WATCHING

1. Pay attention to the beginning and the end of the film.
2. What is the sound in the film like? What does it consist of? Who is the narrator?
3. How many witnesses are there in the film? What kind of shot were they filmed in?
4. How do we find out what the detective is looking for? What cinematic techniques are used?
5. Pay attention to the end credits. What do they reveal?

### WATCHING THE FILM

### EXPRESSION OF STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Did you like this film? Why?

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FILM

1. How does the film begin? What can we see and hear?

The film begins with the opening credits consisting of white letters on a black background, and noticeable jazz music, specifically a saxophone, plays. The music is reminiscent of the past, of something old, "retro".

**2. What does the name of the film mean?**

The name of the film is the name of a film genre, i.e. a stylistic direction, and the entire film is a parody of it.

**3. What does the sound in this film consist of?**

Non-diegetic music, noises and speech (dialogues and the narrator's voice).

**4. Who is the narrator and what do we call that type of voice in a film?**

The narrator is the main character, the detective. The film is narrated from his perspective, in the first person. This type of voice is called a voice-over.

**5. How many witnesses are there in the film? What kind of shot were they filmed in?**

There are seven of them in total. They were filmed in a medium close-up.

**6. How else can we define the composition of the interrogation shots?**

Besides the witnesses being filmed in medium close-ups, which is also emphasized by the production design (the table), the camera is tilted, which is a very clear stylistic choice. Since the detective is also visible in some of these shots (either his legs or the silhouette of his body), we can also say that these shots are two shots. Also, the shots in which we see the detective from behind can be interpreted as semi-subjective.

**7. What methods, which are also cinematic means of expression, does the detective use to investigate the case?**

He questions witnesses (screenplay, acting), connects clues (objects – props, production design) and thinks (internal monologue – screenplay).

**8. How was the clue board filmed?**

It was filmed with a handheld camera, just like when the detective "searches" the table. Although the camera moves, the shot is mostly an extreme close-up.

**9. What genre elements and stylistic elements of noir are present in this film?**

The main character is a detective and this is a detective story because a specific crime, i.e. the case of the missing A's, is being investigated. The cinematography is black and white, and the music is reminiscent of old Hollywood films. The contrast of light and shadow is present, and the ambient and subject matter of noir films are also mentioned in the narration (light, shadows, rain, night, darkness, mystery, secrets, hidden clues, a labyrinth of lies, the game of fate, hidden truth, wandering through gloomy streets...). The genre is emphasized by the costumes and the production design as well as the props (the main character's coat and hat, the clue board, an old typewriter). The humorous element of the props is the drink because a real detective in noir would drink an alcoholic beverage, and here the detective drinks out of a juice box with a straw. Also, although she's not present as a character but only as a motif, the teacher is an antagonist who corresponds to the character of the so-called *femme fatale*, who is parodied in this film.

**10. Where in the dialogue can we notice a meta film element?**

When the detective says, "My life is like a black and white film."

**11. How are the beginning and the end of the film connected?**

The composition is circular because the character wanders through the streets of the city (the school) both at the beginning and the end of the film. It is also an allusion to the urban environment (specifically Los Angeles) in which the action of noir films often took place.

**12. What is the meaning of the film's ending?**

A clue falls out of the detective's pocket (a piece of paper with *teacher Lidija* written on it), but the case is not solved, as he explains in the narration, which is another distinctive feature of film noir. Film noir often ended in ambivalent situations, investigations that went back to their beginning and that represented the corruption of society and the moral inscrutability between the "good" and "bad" sides (good and bad guys).

**13. What do the end credits reveal about the making of the film?**

We learn that the film's story is dedicated to the film crew's homeroom teacher they had until the fourth grade and it is possible that it was inspired by real events.

**14. What do the end credits reveal about the main character?**

We find out that he is portrayed by two actors – one physically, the other with his voice.

**15. The film was submitted to the Croatian Children's Film Festival as a freestyle film. What type of film do you think this is?**

This is a fiction film.

## SOAP

Petar Perica Primary School Film group, Makarska, 2023

### MOTIVATION

Conversation with the students

1. Do you know of any films where an object appears as the main motif or even as a character?
2. Have you seen the French film *The Red Balloon* (Albert Lamorisse, 1956)? If you have, how did you like it?
3. What do we use soap for in our everyday lives?

### THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FILM

You will watch a short film *Soap*, produced by Petar Perica Primary School Film group from Makarska.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR WATCHING

1. Pay attention to how the leitmotif is introduced in this film.
2. How is rhythm established in the film?
3. What is the editing in the film like? How are the editing transitions coordinated with the image?
4. How are the closing credits designed?
5. Think about the genre of this film.

### WATCHING THE FILM

## EXPRESSION OF STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Did you like this film? Why?

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FILM

### 1. What is the leitmotif of this film?

The leitmotif of this film is soap, which is already indicated in the name of the film.

### 2. How is this soap motif introduced in this film?

It is introduced by showing a sink in the first shot, from a slight high angle. Also, we see someone washing their hands in an extreme close-up, and the soap they use to wash them flies out the window at one point.

### 3. How is rhythm established in the film?

With short shots, editing and music.

### 4. What is the editing like in the film? Which editing transitions are used most often?

Cuts are used most often, and these are often cuts on action. This means that the cut happens just before a physical action ends and after the cut, a new shot begins in which the action coincides with the end of the action in the previous shot (before the cut). For example, a bar of soap moves down a slide and the shot ends with a cut to action as the soap bounces off the slide. The next shot shows a baseball player looking up into the air and hitting the soap that bounced off the slide in the previous shot.

### 5. Which elements of sound are present in this film and which is missing?

We hear noises and music, but speech is missing. Music is dominant and "covers" most of the sound, noises appear at the end (ambient sounds, bird sounds).

### 6. Is the music diegetic or non-diegetic?

The music is non-diegetic. However, there is one scene in which the music is diegetic, and that is the scene in which the boy plays the saxophone.

### 7. What is the cinematography like?

The cinematography is black and white.

### 8. How are the closing credits designed?

We can see a shot of a soap holder, and the names of the film crew appear over that shot.

### 9. Who is the main character?

The main character is the boy who drops a bar of soap and tries to catch it, and succeeds in the end. However, although the soap is the leitmotif and an object, we can also interpret it as a character, because he seems to have his own will and a goal (he wants to escape).

### 10. What genre could this film belong to and which films does it remind you of?

This is a comedy whose style and plot are reminiscent of early silent comedies, slapstick comedies, and the films of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and others.

## EVALUATION

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

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