

Educational material

The Herald



CLASS DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: 4th grade

TEACHING AREA: Culture and media

TEACHING UNIT: *The Herald*

CLASS TYPE: Analysis of a short fiction film

DURATION OF A TEACHING UNIT: 45 minutes

THE HERALD

School of Design, Graphics and Sustainable Construction / Playbill Productions, Split, 2023

MOTIVATION

Conversation with the students

1. How would you define investigative journalism?
2. What kinds of problems can investigative journalists face?
3. Why is investigative journalism important?
4. Do you know the names of any investigative journalists who were killed for their work?
5. How prevalent is censorship in today's society? In what way?

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FILM

You will watch a short film *The Herald*, produced by filmmakers from the School of Design, Graphics and Sustainable Construction and Playbill Productions from Split. The film is directed, written and produced by Dražen Bošnjak, who also plays the lead role, alongside Anja Ćosić.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WATCHING

1. How do the image and sound in the cold open and the opening credits announce the film's topic?
2. Pay attention to the beginning of the film. What kinds of shots prevail in the first scene? What sort of effect do they achieve?
3. Pay attention to the main character. How does he evolve in the film? How and why does the relationship between the two main characters change?
4. What's the cinematography like? At what point does it change? Why?
5. What is the sound in the film like? How does it contribute to the film's atmosphere?
6. Pay attention to how the dynamic atmosphere is achieved.
7. What is revealed in the end credits?

WATCHING THE FILM

EXPRESSION OF STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Did you like this film? Why?

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FILM

1. How does the film start? What does the first scene, which is part of the opening credits, look like, and what kind of shots were used in it?

Over the first titles (white on a black background), we can hear the sound of printing presses. If we don't know what the film is about, we can't connect it to the story yet. Then we see a conversation between the main character and the people who are interrogating him. The entire scene is shot in extreme close-ups (of eyes, mouths, hands, pens, lighters, cell phones).

2. What do the opening credits look like?

The credits are a collage consisting of four or five frames of different sizes and shapes, with different compositions in each shot. In them, scenes of newspapers printing and everyday school life are alternated. The name of the film is written in green, and the other names are written in white on a black background. The non-diegetic music is a famous melody, Piano Concerto No. 1 by P. I. Tchaikovsky.

3. When does the cinematography drastically change for the first time and why?

In the scene when Mirko realizes that Josipa's text has met with a reaction from the other side (the 18th minute). He exits the school and the color fades (it's desaturated). The next shot on the stairs is almost in black and white (Mirko's T-shirt retains a slightly visible green tint). Then Mirko returns to the school, and the shots slowly return to saturation and everything in the principal's office is in colour again. Also, the camera is noticeably tilted. This scene represents the character's inner thoughts, danger and the realization that the final showdown is coming.

4. What is the camera like when Mirko returns to the school?

Besides the camera turning, there's a double (or multiple) exposure ("gluing" one shot over another). Double exposure should not be confused with a dissolve even though they are technically the same process. Double exposure extends through the majority of a shot or scene and is a very emphasized and noticeable stylistic and rhetorical figure. On the other hand, the dissolve appears at the beginning/end of the shots and is a classic editing transition that most often refers to the passage of time.

5. Which scene is the darkest and why?

The scene in the hallway where Frane takes Mirko to a hidden room, stylistically emphasizing that they are doing something forbidden, but also that Mirko doesn't know where he is going.

6. Where do editing sequences appear in the film?

In the scene in the hidden room (which begins with a shot of a worn, yellowed film strip; the 15th minute) and in the scene of reactions and consequences after Mirko addresses the entire school over the loudspeaker (it begins with Mirko's voice off camera when he says: I won't tell the whole story again now, but I will say that there was a lot going on; the 20th minute). Editing sequences are a series of shots that "condense" the time of the action. They can connect different locations and are most often rhythmically edited to a musical background.

7. What are the angles like in the first scene after the opening credits?

Noticeable upper and lower angles, Josipa is on the ground floor, and Mirko is on the first floor. At the same time, these are their subjective shots.

8. Are there any more shots with noticeable angles in the film?

There are many of them: for example, Mirko typing on his cell phone under the table, Mirko seeing the redhead girl for the first time, Mirko at the top of the stairs (the black and white scene), Frane digging something up among the plants in front of the library, etc.

9. **What are the key events or turning points in the story? Try to list the key events and turning points in order, with an emphasis on how the relationship between Josipa and Mirko changed.**

Students answer freely.

10. **What is the plot structure of the entire film?**

Most of the action is told in flashback, framed by the scene in which Mirko is being interrogated. This scene takes place in the present and consists of two parts: before the opening credits and near the end of the film. The last two scenes (the principal's arrest and Josipa's entrance) are a part of the present, taking place after the scene where Mirko is interrogated.

11. **How is the retrospection further emphasized on screenplay level?**

With Mirko's voice-over in which he comments on some important moments, his observations and feelings.

12. **What is the sound in the film like?**

The sound consists of voices, noises, and non-diegetic music. The music is quite emphasized and underlines the atmosphere of the film, but it also functions as ironic commentary (for example, older viewers might associate the Tchaikovsky composition in the opening credits with its sample in the song *Ljubav za sve/Love For All* performed by E.T. and Sandi Cenov, but the lyrics are in contrast to the film's topic of censorship and corruption). In addition to commenting on the plot, the compositions *Da mi je biti morski pas/I Want to be a Shark* and *Genije/Genious* emphasize the setting and location of the action – Split.

13. **What motif appears in the film multiple times both as a prop and as an element of Mirko's character?**

He keeps asking for a cigarette, and a lighter is associated with that. This could be symbolically interpreted as Mirko's search for the truth that constantly eludes him, and then in the last shot, after they have solved the case, he lights a cigarette triumphantly and "coolly", with a wink aimed at Josipa.

14. **Which colour appears as a leitmotiv?**

Green – the color of the name of the film and the color of Mirko's shirt that fades in the key scene. It is also present in production design (the classroom, hallways) and props (filing folders).

15. **What do we learn from the end credits? What is the film dedicated to? What is the last title of the credits?**

The end credits state: "Dedicated to censorship, rest in peace." The word censorship is framed in a rectangle, which is the customary format for the name of a member of a film crew who died between the production and the release of the film. The last title is the name of the film, *The Herald*, crossed out, which could be interpreted as a journalistic note, but also as an allusion to censorship. We have to mention the graphic design of the end credits, which is also in line with the film's topic (journalism).

16. **How many crew members were there and what other information is presented in the end credits?**

The film has a very large crew, almost like a professional production, there is a lot of music, and the audition process is mentioned. For a high school production, it is an extremely complex film with a carefully developed screenplay and mature authorial expression that is visible in all cinematic means of expression (camera, editing, acting, sound, etc.)

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.