

The British Connection

Great films from the Queen's Jubilee years

Key Stage Target ✓ KS1 ✓ KS2 ✓ KS3 ✓ KS4 ✓ KS5

Curriculum Links ✓ History ✓ Citizenship ✓ PSHE ✓ Food Technology
✓ Geography ✓ English ✓ Art & Design ✓ Politics



Overview

With the Queen's Diamond Jubilee this year Britain is in the world spotlight. What better time to look back on the best in cinema our nation's produced over the decades of the monarch's reign? We've picked a gem per year for all 60 years. Spoilt for choice, we've had to leave out some wonderful faves. One film per decade also has a teaching resource attached, spotlighting the sheer diversity of talent and richness of our recent movie history – from famed director David Lean's **Hobson's Choice**, a classic comedy set in Victorian-era Manchester to Ken Loach's social-realist drama **Kes**, about a lonely boy who befriends a kestrel hawk, and **Wallace & Gromit – The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit**, a much-loved animation from Bristol's Aardman studios. Horace Ove's gripping portrait of '70s London **Pressure**, that kick-started black British cinema, is a focus, as is the Glasgow-set **Ratcatcher**, the lyrical first film of acclaimed Scottish filmmaker Lynne Ramsay. And let's not forget the Queen herself! Who's enlisted for help by the young girl in **The BFG**, an adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic story.

The Films

Hobson's Choice (1954, U) 107 mins

Kes (1969, PG) 110 mins

Pressure (1976, 15) 120 mins

The BFG (1989, U) 87 mins

Ratcatcher (1999, 15) 94 mins

Wallace & Gromit - The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit (2005, U) 85 mins

Sixty diamonds of British cinema...

1952 – Limelight (U) A classic of British silent-era comic master Charlie Chaplin's later career, this sees him as an ageing stage actor who helps a young, shy girl make it as a successful dancer.

1953 – Genevieve (U) BAFTA-winning British comedy in which two couples race their vintage cars back to London from Brighton, turning to fierce scheming as their rivalry heats up.

1954 – Hobson's Choice (U) From legendary English director David Lean, a warm-hearted comedy-drama about a tyrannical Victorian-era shoe-shop owner whose daughters work for free - until one has enough and hatches a scheme.

1955 – Animal Farm (U) The first British animation feature to be released worldwide, and a faithful retelling of English novelist George Orwell's tale about farm animals who are set against each other.

1956 – The King And I (PG) A rich musical based on the autobiography of an Englishwoman invited to Siam to teach the King's children and, in turn, his Highness about the ways of Victorian Britain.

1957 – Five On A Treasure Island (U) The much-loved four cousins and their dog set out on an island adventure in the first of the popular Famous Five books by Enid Blyton to be adapted for the screen.

1958 – Vertigo (PG) A retired policeman is caught up in a tense thriller of obsessive love and paranoia. From the master of suspense, the great British director Alfred Hitchcock.

1959 – Tiger Bay (PG) Celebrated for its authentic setting amongst the docks of Cardiff, this sensitive drama tackles an unusual friendship between a young girl and a Polish sailor.

1960 – Saturday Night, Sunday Morning (PG) A pivotal piece of British New Wave cinema depicting the reality of working class life through the eyes of a rebellious factory worker, played by important '60s actor Albert Finney.

1961 – Whistle Down The Wind (PG) The most popular child star of the time, actress Hayley Mills, plays the oldest of three children living on a Lancashire farm who find a man hiding in their barn and believe he is Jesus Christ.

1962 – Dr No (PG) Marking the 50th anniversary of Britain's favourite spy adventure franchise, this is the first James Bond film in the series. It stars Scottish actor Sean Connery as 007.

1963 – Jason And The Argonauts (U) An epic mix of live action and animation from British director Don Chaffey, this adventure, based on a Greek myth, features the unforgettable creatures of the father of stop-motion, Ray Harryhausen.

1964 – A Hard Day's Night (U) THE icons of popular British culture in the 1960s, The Beatles give us a slice of their mad-cap life of fame and pop music in this rollercoaster mockumentary.

1965 – The Ipcress File (PG) Less glossy but more realistic than the James Bond approach to espionage, Michael Caine stars as a spy investigating the disappearance of high-profile scientists in this career-defining role.

1966 – Blow Up (15) An intoxicating story of a fashion photographer who has his shallow life turned upside down when he captures something suspicious on his camera in a film that defined the fashion and culture of swinging '60s London.

1967 – Far From The Madding Crowd (U) Faithful adaptation of the classic Thomas Hardy novel about a head-strong young woman in rural Victorian England who has to choose between three men. Iconic British actress Julie Christie stars.

1968 – Oliver! (U) Oscar-winning musical version of the famous Charles Dickens novel, about the adventures of a Victorian orphan who falls in with a London street gang.

1969 – Kes (PG) A bare but sensitive film from famed British social-realist director Ken Loach, about a young lad with an unhappy life, who befriends and tames a kestrel hawk.

1970 – The Railway Children (U) One of the best-loved children's films of all time, this follows the lives of three London children forced to move to rural Yorkshire when their father is falsely imprisoned.

1971 – Walkabout (12) From one of the most distinctive and daring British filmmakers, Nicolas Roeg, this strange, haunting story is set in the Australian outback, and sees a lost brother and sister learn survival from an Aboriginal boy.

1972 - The Boy Who Turned Yellow (U) A Children's Film Foundation classic and the last film from iconic British duo Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, this puts a spin on electricity and the history of the Tower of London.

1973 - Don't Look Now (15) This psychological thriller from world-renowned director Nicolas Roeg is considered a key work in British film history. Starring Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland, it's based on a short story by English novelist Daphne du Maurier.

1974 - Swallows and Amazons (U) A heartwarming British family favourite based on Leeds born author Arthur Ransome's novel, this is a summer holiday sailing adventure set in the Lake District in the '20s.

1975 - The Rocky Horror Picture Show (15) The ultimate cult movie musical, loved for its audience participation potential, set in a Berkshire made to look like Transylvania! Brit actor Tim Curry steals the show as the cross-dressing Dr Frank-N-Furter.

1976 - Pressure (15) This was the UK's first feature film from a black director. It captures the raw realism of the '70s West London scene from the point of view of a young black teenager fed up with the racism he encounters when job-hunting.

1977 - Jabberwocky (PG) Evoking medieval England at its grimmest, the much-loved comic Monty Python team take inspiration from Lewis Carroll's playful nonsense verse poem.

1978 - Watership Down (U) A powerful and emotional tale of life, love and loss, this British animation based on the novel by Richard Adams features a stellar voice cast that includes some of Britain's finest actors.

1979 - Monty Python's Life of Brian (15) Considered controversial for its choice of subject matter - Christianity - the Monty Python gang's hilarious story of mistaken identity is British comedy at its best.

1980 - The Elephant Man (PG) The murky, fog-shrouded underworld of Victorian London is artfully conveyed in black and white in this take on the true story of deformed, mistreated man Joseph Merrick. He's masterfully and tenderly portrayed by John Hurt, with a supporting cast that includes Anthony Hopkins.

1981 - Gregory's Girl (12) It's hard to be a teenage boy with a crush, especially when it's on a girl who's better at football than you are. Set in the suburbs of Glasgow, writer/director John Forsyth's comedy-romance is sweet, charming and reminds us all that unrequited love sucks!

1982 - Gandhi (PG) Epic and historically significant, Gandhi's multi-award-winning haul included 8 Oscars, among them best picture, best cinematography, best director for Richard Attenborough and best lead actor for Ben Kingsley.

1983 - The Wind in the Willows (U) Based on Kenneth Grahame's classic British stories of life on the river Thames for woodland creatures, Mark Hall and Chris Taylor's film magically brings the loveable characters Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad to life with the use of stop-motion animation.

1984 - 1984 (15) One of the most widely read novels of all time, George Orwell's 1984 describes a bleak, dystopian future, and is the source of the now infamous 'Big Brother' idea. Orwell's nightmare is brilliantly translated to film with the acting talents of John Hurt, Richard Burton and Suzanna Hamilton.

1985 - My Beautiful Launderette (15) From respected British director Stephen Frears and writer Hanif Kureishi comes this fascinating window onto the 'modern' Britain of the 80's. The film subtly grapples with the still-relevant social issues of culture clash, homophobia, racism, capitalism, and immigration - wrapped up in an astonishing performance from Daniel Day-Lewis.

1986 - When the Wind Blows (PG) This emotive animation from London children's author/illustrator Raymond Briggs is a chilling depiction of the fall-out of a nuclear attack on an ordinary, elderly couple. It's voiced by the legendary John Mills and Peggy Ashcroft.

1987 - Withnail and I (15) A cult hit with students, Bruce Robinson's debut feature and labour of love received a luke-warm reception on release but has come to be considered one of the finest British comedies of all time, with some of the most quotable dialogue in film history.

1988 - Distant Voices, Still Lives (15) Regarded as a 'film poet', acclaimed director Terence Davies draws on his own memories of growing up in the working-class Liverpool of the 40's and 50's for this tragic depiction of a family with a domineering father.

1989 - The BFG (U) Roald Dahl's adorable BFG (Big Friendly Giant) is voiced by Brit favourite David Jason and brought to life by the animators of respected British animation studio Cosgrove Hall, a major producer of children's television and animation until 2009.

1990 - The Witches (PG) We secretly all love scary stories and this is one of the best. An unusual choice of director for a children's film, Nicholas Roeg adds something deliciously sinister to Roald Dahl's funny, freaky story about witches who turn children into mice.

1991 - The Commitments (15) You're left unsure as to whether the Commitments are a real band or just one made up for the film in Alan Parker's rip-roaring, energy-packed, life-enriching tribute to soul music. Set in Dublin, it's based on a novel by Irish writer Roddy Doyle.

1992 - Into The West (PG) Mixing a realistic setting with fairytale events, this Irish film sees the lives of two children living on a tough Dublin council estate turned around when their grandfather gives them a white horse.

1993 - The Secret Garden (U) Based on a great classic of English children's books. A young girl who's lost her parents is taken to live in her uncle's strange, gloomy house – where she finds many hidden places and stories.

1994 - Four Weddings And A Funeral (15) Witty, bittersweet British romantic comedy that became a big international blockbuster, with Hugh Grant in the role that made him a star as a bumbling guest at various nuptials.

1995 - Sense And Sensibility (U) Starring Emma Thompson and Kate Winslet, this is an excellent adaptation of the 19th-century English classic by Jane Austen, about two sisters fallen on tough times who must balance the search for love with their need for financial security.

1996 - Secrets And Lies (15) Long-hidden family secrets are the focus of this gritty British drama from famed director Mike Leigh, in which a successful, adopted black woman seeks out her birth mother. It won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival.

1997 - Wilde (15) Stephen Fry, the most famously witty man in Britain, plays Oscar Wilde, his equivalent a hundred years ago - when being a gay man with a clever comment for every occasion could land you in court.

1998 – Shakespeare In Love (15) Oscar-winning romantic comedy about a young woman living when only men were allowed to act, who disguises herself as a boy and auditions for William Shakespeare.

1999 – Ratcatcher (15) The first feature of Scottish director Lynne Ramsay, who's since shot to British filmmaking's forefront, the film is a raw yet poetic portrait of her hometown of Glasgow in the '70s, through the eyes of a boy living on a tenement estate.

2000 – Billy Elliot (15) Set in a small northern town during the '80s miners' strike, this is the heart-warming story of an ordinary boy who prefers dancing to being pummelled in a boxing ring.

2001 – Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone (PG) The first in a series of seven magical adventures with schoolboy wizard Harry Potter, based on the stratospherically popular books by British author J. K. Rowling.

2002 – Bend It Like Beckham (12) This feel-good, London-set comedy from director Gurinder Chadha follows the dreams of Jessminder and Jules, whose shared passion for football brings them together in a local girls' team.

2003 – Sylvia (15) This biopic examines the tragic life of celebrated writer Sylvia Plath and her intense relationship with English poet Ted Hughes, who she met at Cambridge in the '50s.

2004 – Millions (12) Comedy from English filmmaker Danny Boyle about two brothers who find a bag containing £265,000 - which they have a few days to spend before the pound is replaced with the Euro.

2005 – Wallace & Gromit – The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit (U) The only feature-length film about much-loved British characters Wallace and Gromit, the absentminded inventor and his smart dog, brought to life by Bristol animation studio Aardman.

2006 – Peter And The Wolf (U) Set to Sergei Prokofiev's classic orchestral composition, this Oscar-winner from British animator Suzie Templeton contains all the ingredients of the timeless folk tale, with memorable added touches.

2007 – The Water Horse: Legend Of The Deep (PG) This likeable family film, set in a remote corner of Scotland in the early '40s, sees a young boy find a mysterious egg – which hatches into a sweet-natured loch serpent.

2008 – Hunger (15) This visually stunning, intense drama from acclaimed British filmmaker Steve McQueen is based on the real-life '81 prison hunger strike of IRA member Bobby Sands, played by actor-of-the-moment Michael Fassbender.

2009 – An Education (12) In this stylish Nick Hornby adaptation, starring English actress Carey Mulligan, a bookish girl's life takes a romantic turn on the eve of her A-levels in '60s London.

2010 – Four Lions (15) Chris Morris's much-talked-about comedy makes a gang of inept Islamic terrorist its controversial focus.

2011 – Attack The Block (15) Directed by Joe Cornish, this acclaimed and inventive sci-fi horror sees aliens attack the tower block of a bunch of tough south London teenagers, slyly playing with the genre to examine racial prejudice.

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FILMCLUB Guide to... Hobson's Choice (1954, U) 11+

Key Stage Target

✓KS3 ✓KS4 ✓KS5

Curriculum Links

✓PSHE ✓History
✓Citizenship



Why this film?

One of Britain's truly legendary directors, the films of David Lean include classic epic Lawrence Of Arabia and his adaptation of the Dickens novel Oliver Twist. His warmhearted comedy Hobson's Choice, set in nineteenth-century Lancashire, tells of the dangers of greed. Hard-drinking, tyrannical widower Henry Horatio Hobson (a great performance by Charles Laughton) runs a shoe shop, with his three daughters working without wages and the talented but shy and unappreciated bootmaker Willie Mossop bringing in the customers. His eldest daughter Maggie finally has enough, and hatches a plan using her business sense and Willie's skills to turn the tables on her father.

What the critics think

"A delightful and rewarding British film."

Bosley Crowther, New York Times

"Lean's sharp direction and impeccable performances all round transform a slight comedy into a timeless delight."

Time Out

Before the film

What do the photos on the right show? What do they have in common?

What do you think is the most important thing for a marriage to be successful? Is it love? What else might be important?



Willie and Maggie



David and Victoria



William and Kate

After the film

1. What was life like for women in Manchester in the 1880s? How was it different for men? (KS3, 4, 5)
2. Why do you think Maggie is different from other women of the time? What are some of her characteristics? (KS3, 4, 5)
3. Why does Maggie want to marry Willie? How does he change throughout the film? (KS3, 4, 5)
4. What are modern views to marriage and women's rights? How have they changed from the 1880s? How have they changed from the 1950s? (KS4, 5)

Next Steps

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KS3: Find out about women's rights and design a poster to show changes since the 1880s.

KS4 & 5: Are people free to marry who they want? Organise a debate on marriage and choice. Some of the things to consider are social position, race, religion and sexuality. Are some of these things more of an issue than they were in the 1880s?

Teacher Notes

1. Women did not work for a living and were expected to look after the house and the children. Men went out to work and earned the money whilst women stayed at home.
2. Maggie is different because she fully takes control of her life. Initially she dominates Willie, telling him what to do. Amazingly for the period she is the one who proposes marriage to him. She is strong willed and domineering but she wants the best for Willie as well as herself.
3. Firstly, Maggie doesn't want to be left a spinster (as her father wishes) but she also sees Willie's skills and a potential to rise above the life of a humble boot-hand. Willie changes as Maggie builds his self-esteem and gives him confidence to be a better man.
4. Students can debate modern views on marriage and women's rights. Much changed during the two World Wars when women gained the freedom to work and to vote. In the second half of the 20th century women's rights improved and various choices, including to marry or not marry, became their own.

FILMCLUB Guide to... Kes (1969, PG) 9+

Key Stage Target

✓ KS2 ✓KS3 ✓KS4 ✓KS5

Curriculum Links

✓ PSHE ✓ History
✓ Citizenship



Why this film?

Celebrated for his social realist dramas that depict the reality of working-class life, director Ken Loach is regularly listed as one of Britain's best directors. *Kes*, based on the famous novel by Barry Hines *Kes: A Kestrel for a Knave*, centres on Billy Casper - a young Yorkshire lad who seems to have little going for him. He is picked on by his teachers and classmates, he is tormented by his older brother, and he is ignored by his mother. But then, all alone in the world, Billy finds a kestrel hawk - and manages to befriend and tame it.

What the critics think

"When a film makes you feel the way that Kes made me feel, it is a rare thing. "

FILMCLUB member Eleanor, age 11

"Kes is one of the most astute, engaged films about education and what it takes for kids to be excited about learning or passionate about anything, really, whether in the classroom or roaming the fields with a feathered friend."

Dave Calhoun, Time Out

Before the film

This film was made in Barnsley in the north of England in the last year of the 1960s. What do you know about that place and that time?

From the picture opposite, what kind of character do you think Billy is? What words would you use to describe him? Do you think it will be a happy or sad story?



After the film

1. Why is Kes so important to Billy?
(KS2, 3, 4, 5)
2. Who is a bully in this film? Who is bullied? What different kinds of bullying are there? What do you think can be done about bullying? (KS2, 3, 4, 5)
3. What is Billy's school like? How is it different to your school?
(KS3, 4, 5)

Teacher Notes

1. Billy loves nature and the countryside surrounding his home. He has an interest in birds and trains a baby kestrel that he finds at a nearby farm. When he is with the kestrel, Billy finds an escape from the other troubles in his life.
2. Billy is bullied by his brother Jud and by other students and teachers at his school. Billy's mother is also bullied by Jud. There is verbal, physical and psychological bullying in the film. Students can discuss what they think should be done about bullying.
3. The secondary modern school in late '60s Britain will seem very different to secondary schools today. The teachers had the use of corporal punishment in 1969 and they seem to pick on Billy for no reason. There is little onus on the teachers to care about Billy's life outside of school and when he leaves school the careers advice he receives is of little relevance.

Next Steps

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KS2 & 3: Think about how you could stop pupils from being unkind to each other at your school. In pairs create an "anti-bullying" code of conduct. Make a poster, illustrating the things that pupils should do to show kindness towards each other.

KS4 & 5: The director of the film, Ken Loach, often surprised his actors by not telling them what was going to happen next. Why do you think he did this? Imagine you were making a sequel to the film but set in the 21st Century. What might have happened to Billy and the other characters? Would the mood of the film be different or the same?

FILMCLUB Guide to... Pressure (1976, 15) 14+

Key Stage Target

✓ KS4 ✓ KS5

Curriculum Links

✓ PSHE ✓ History
✓ Citizenship ✓ Geography



Why this film?

Made by Trinidadian director Horace Ové, *Pressure* is widely acknowledged to have kick-started black British cinema. With a story considered very risky in those days, the film encountered big problems with funding, and was eventually made with a minimal budget. It highlights the struggles of Tony, a young black school leaver and son of immigrants who despite having good academic qualifications finds it all but impossible to find a job. Treated as an outsider even though he was born in Britain, his growing frustration with the institutional racism that prevents him from gaining employment leads him to open up to radical ideas - and question a system that denies him opportunities and benefits.

What the critics think

"With wit, vigour and compassion it examines the causes and effects of tensions in a multi-racial society and its impact is real and timely."

Sunday Times

"The first tough, funny, shaming, shocking, ultimately, against all the odds, optimistic, on-rush of that New Wave in the British cinema."

The Times

Before the film

What can we tell from this photograph?
What questions can you ask about the character shown?

Who is he? How old is he? Where does he live?
Where are his family from? When is the film set? Is he happy or discontented? Why?



After the film

1. In an interview near the beginning of the film, Tony is asked how long he has been in the country and whether he's ever been in trouble with the police. Why was he asked these questions? (KS4, 5)
2. Tony's parents say: "We work hard and mind our own business." His brother Colin has a very different attitude towards the society they are living in. Who does Tony listen to more? Who do you think he should listen to? (KS4, 5)
3. What problems does Tony face? Do the same problems still exist for second-generation immigrants in Britain today? (KS4, 5)

Next Steps

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KS4 & 5: Pressure's release was delayed for two years because of a controversial depiction of police brutality towards a peaceful gathering of black people who were then framed for drug offences. It then paved the way for a surge of black filmmaking in Britain. Find out about Horace Ové's later films and those of other black British directors. Why is this film so important?

Teacher Notes

1. It is likely that the man didn't want to employ Tony because he was black. However, he couldn't bring himself to admit this and looks for other excuses. In the end it seems as though Tony's preference for football over cricket is the reason he's not given a job.
2. Tony initially seems to avoid what his brother has to say about militant Black Power. He was born in Britain and has good qualifications from school. It is only when he faces the prejudice of others when looking for a decent job and sees the way people behave (including the police) that he takes more notice of his brother's politics. Students can debate whether this was the best outcome for Tony.
3. He is caught between being 'too British' for his brother and his friends (he prefers bacon and eggs to Trinidadian zaboca for breakfast) yet he experiences racism first-hand when he can't get a job and is refused entry to his friend's house by her landlady. Though the film is clearly a product of the 1970s, the issues about education, unemployment and the police remain relevant today.

FILMCLUB Guide to... The BFG (1989, U) 5+

Key Stage Target

✓KS1 ✓ KS2

Curriculum Links

✓English ✓ Art & Design



Why this film?

Roald Dahl is a much-loved Welsh children's author and many of his stories have been turned into films. This animated adaptation of his classic *The BFG* – made by respected British children's animation studio Cosgrove Hall - tells the tale of a lonely little girl and her unlikely friendship with the Big Friendly Giant. In her orphanage one morning Sophie catches the BFG doing something odd with a large trumpet. Soon, she discovers his mission is to harvest the children's dreams and together they embark on a quest to quash the mean-spirited giants responsible for nightmares.

What the critics think

"I think it was brilliant. I liked the whole film. I liked the bit where they caught the dreams."

FILMCLUB member Alex, age 6

"I loved the BFG it was so fab. The thing i like the best about The BFG is that it was happy, sad, a little bit scary and exciting."

FILMCLUB member Aimee, age 9

Before the film

This picture is of the BFG in Dream Country.

Describe your favourite dream. What happened?
How did it make you feel?

Think of a nice dream that you could mix for a friend or a member of your family. What would the ingredients be?



After the film

1. What job does the BFG have? What makes him different from the other giants? (KS1, 2)
2. The BFG describes snozzcumbers as disgusterous, rottsome and tasting of slimewendlers. Can you make up some words to describe something you don't like the taste of? (KS1, 2)
3. What is the Queen of England like? Why does she believe what Sophie says? (KS1, 2)
4. How does the BFG save the day? How does the Queen reward him? (KS1, 2)

Teacher Notes

1. He catches dreams in the Dream Country, bottles them and blows them through windows into children's bedrooms. He doesn't eat 'human beans' and instead feasts entirely on snozzcumbers - which he doesn't like very much. He describes himself as freaky and friendly. He is honorable and doesn't snitch things (except Sophie).
2. Students can get creative with their own made-up words.
3. The Queen of England is in charge of organising the mission to capture the giants. She is kind and listens to Sophie and the BFG who she welcomes into Buckingham Palace. She believes what they have to say because it was in her dream.
4. He blows a bad dream (nightmare) into the giant's head. It is about the only human being that giants are afraid of, Jack. The Queen offers the BFG the tallest castle she has for him to live in, but he refuses to live there as he has a job to do catching dreams.

Next Steps

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KS1 & 2: Get into pairs. One partner picks a bad giant (Fleshlumpeater, Bonecruncher, Manhugger, Childchewer, Meatdripper, Gizzardgulper, Maidmasher, Bloodbottler and The Butcher Boy) and describes it to the other until they guess which giant it is. They can make a drawing of the giant based on the description.

FILMCLUB Guide to... Ratcatcher (1999, 15) 12+

Key Stage Target

✓KS3 ✓KS4 ✓KS5

Curriculum Links

✓ History ✓ Geography
✓ Citizenship ✓ PSHE ✓ Politics



Why this film?

Scottish director Lynne Ramsay has shot to British filmmaking's forefront recently for *We Need To Talk About Kevin*. Her first feature *Ratcatcher*, shot in her hometown, is a raw yet poetic portrait of '70s Glasgow. When a young boy drowns, his friend James blames himself. But for a while at least, life goes on for James as usual - making the best of things in the council flat he shares with his family, and a friendship with an older girl who's bullied by the local kids. While the film fits with a rich tradition of British films portraying working-class problems, for Ramsay mood and visual images are as important as plot.

What the critics think

"Ramsay's bold visual sense, droll wit and tender but unsentimental take on the various characters and their relationships makes for a distinctly poetic brand of gritty realism."

Geoff Andrew, Time Out

"There's a light touch in evidence, balancing the bleakness with odd lyrical moments and unexpected humor."

David Rooney, Variety

Before the film

Look at these images.

Which decade are they from? Which one might be the odd one out? Why?

How might one of the pictures relate to the title of the film "Ratcatcher"?

1. Platform shoes
2. David Bowie
3. Piles of rubbish during the dustman strikes of the '70s
4. Flared trousers



After the film

1. What is James's life like? (KS3, 4, 5)
2. What are some of the problems of life on the estate? (KS3, 4, 5)
3. Guilt over his friend's drowning gnaws at James. Ramsay uses a very visual way of expressing this. What images do you remember? (KS4, 5)

Teacher Notes

1. James is a quiet, shy boy who lives with his mother, father and two sisters in a flat that is too small for the five of them. He doesn't get on with his father who drinks too much and gets in to fights. He does make some connection with his neighbour Kenny and an older girl, Margaret Ann. He is happiest when he escapes the estate altogether to a half built council house on the edge of a wheat-field.
2. James's family is waiting to be re-housed from a housing scheme with very poor conditions. The estate's problems are compounded by the amount of rubbish left to rot on the streets during the nine-week strike of the rubbish collectors in 1973. This would have meant the children were playing in very unsanitary conditions.
3. Watch for the recurring scenes with water, and James's mood in them.

Next Steps

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KS4 & 5: Find out why the rubbish was not collected in Glasgow in the summer of 1973. What other industries were affected by strikes? Industrial unrest is seen by many as one of the main problems of 1970s Britain. If you were in government in the 1970s what decisions would you make to try to solve these problems?

FILMCLUB Guide to... Wallace & Gromit - The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005, U) 5+

Key Stage Target

✓KS1 ✓KS2

Curriculum Links

✓Citizenship ✓ Art & Design
✓ Food Technology



Why this film?

This is the only feature-length film about much-loved British characters Wallace and Gromit. Moulded from plasticine, the absentminded inventor and his smart but silent dog have been brought to life by famed Bristol animation studio Aardman. It's time for the annual Giant Vegetable Fete, and it's vitally important that the extra large carrots are protected – and Wallace and Gromit are on duty keeping hungry bunnies out of the way without harming them. Everything seems under control until the appearance of the dreaded giant Were-Rabbit. Will Wallace's inventions and Gromit's good sense save the day? This Academy Award-winner is truly one for all ages.

What the critics think

"Wallace & Gromit is a hilarious, crazy and imaginative film."

FILMCLUB member Jake, 10

"In Nick Park, Britain has its own authentic animation genius."

Paul Arendt, BBC

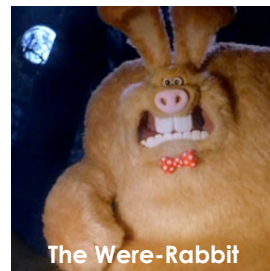
Before the film

Look at the characters from the film in the photographs.

What words would you use to describe them?

Who would you match the following words to... posh, scary, silly, friendly, useless, brave, old-fashioned, lovely, destructive, British, hard-working, annoying.

Who do you think will be the hero of the story?



After the film

1. What service do Wallace and Gromit provide for the people of the village? Are they any good at it? (KS1, 2)
2. What is Victor Quartermaine like? How is his method of dealing with the rabbits different to that of Wallace and Gromit? (KS1, 2)
3. There are lots of gadgets and contraptions in the film. Which ones can you remember? (KS2)
4. How does Gromit help to save everyone in the end? (KS2)

Teacher Notes

1. Wallace and Gromit operate Anti-Pesto, a service to protect the villagers' prize vegetables. They operate a series of traps and alarms. They're good at it - until the Were-Rabbit turns up!
2. Victor Quartermaine likes hunting animals and wants to shoot all of the rabbits in order to impress Lady Tottington. Wallace and Gromit prefer the approach of capturing the rabbits and keeping them at their house.
3. They have gadgets to wake them up, help them get dressed and make them breakfast. The Bun Vac 6000 sucks up the bunnies in a humane way. The Mind Manipulation-O-Matic is a way of brainwashing the rabbits that goes wrong.
4. Gromit knows that Wallace is the Were-Rabbit and helps him escape from Victor. He uses an aeroplane from the fair to protect the Were-Rabbit on the top of Tottington Hall and eventually he revives Wallace with some Stinking Bishop cheese.

Next Steps

Get your students' voices heard by joining FILMCLUB and writing reviews at www.filmclub.org

KS1 & 2: Wallace and Gromit try to solve the problems the rabbits cause using technology that they've invented themselves. Can you design a machine that would help you solve a problem? Think about what you would need to build it, and then draw it.