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Abstract

Although English teachers have integrated narrative film into their classroom instruction for over a century, the medium remains highly vulnerable to suspicion of its pedagogic value. While film has become ubiquitous in the English classroom, training for teachers in instructing with the medium remains nearly non-existent. This has led to the regular misuse of film as a time-filler, babysitter, reward, or mere break for student and teacher, alike. Such malpractice has only reinforced skepticism of film's instructional value in the classroom despite the ample scholarly literature supporting its inherently cognitive nature and literary and linguistic likeness. Though film has been codified in the English Language Arts standards, none offer best-practice teaching methods. Therefore, this dissertation investigated how high school English teachers in central New York make sense of and instruct with narrative film in the classroom.

Twelve high school English teachers from five school districts participated in this study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis and was informed by a multi-layered theoretical lens consisting of structuralism and its related offshoots, as well as schema theory and critical pedagogy. The results of this study revealed that these teachers understood film as another narrative form of text, with the same active learning potential as printed literature when employed purposefully, and with particular benefit for struggling and marginalized students. Effective practices, as participants understood them, took three distinct pathways, relating to what the teacher does in the classroom while film plays, and through centering instruction on either *what* or *how* film communicates. Participants saw the power of the visuals in film as particularly effective for teaching plays, for helping students critically examine their world and themselves, and for teaching skills related to evidence-based writing, analysis of literary techniques, and the Common Core Regents exam and state standards by transferring student understanding from the screen to the printed page.

HOW HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS
MAKE SENSE OF AND INSTRUCT WITH
NARRATIVE FILM IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

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Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Curriculum

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

My life-long affinity for film led me to take several film courses to fill my elective credit requirements as an undergraduate English major. Though my secondary English teacher preparation program in graduate school offered no film or media pedagogy opportunities, my second student teaching experience satiated my interest when I had the opportunity to teach a film elective course. Soon after, upon securing my first teaching job as a high school English teacher, I was able to incorporate film into both my core English classes, as well as into a film elective course I created at my school. Though I had several college film courses to draw from, I mostly followed my instincts regarding teaching with film in the context of a high school English classroom, used trial and error, and evolved my instruction with film over the ensuing years of my teaching career.

While film was always an easy sell with students, many expected to experience it in the classroom as they consume it at home: as entertainment, not education. So, too, did many of my colleagues presume that to be my lone classroom goal. However, I instinctually knew that film was a uniquely positioned medium with the potential to be at once both entertaining *and* educating for students, as the two categories, of course, are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, media scholar Marshall McLuhan admonished that anyone “who tries to make a distinction between education and entertainment doesn’t know the first thing about either” (as quoted in Bogart, 2007). Yet striking the ideal balance proved to be challenging. Though the several college film courses I had taken afforded me uncommon training in analyzing how film communicates, none of them trained me on how to teach with the medium in a high school English class.

I share my personal experiences here to illustrate several common issues and challenges related to teaching with film in an English classroom, from the inescapable stigma to the lack of pre- and in-service training. My personal interest in film and my experiences with it in the classroom gave impetus to this dissertation. While film has been so common in the English classroom for so long that it seems to simply be engrained, it has nevertheless continued to suffer being considered a serious pedagogic medium at all. Consequently, I wanted to investigate how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with film in the English classroom.

Statement of the Problem

A preponderance of literature reveals English teachers' ubiquitous use of narrative film in their classrooms (Lynch, 1980; Costanzo, 1987; Weller & Burcham, 1990; Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Hobbs, 2006; Donaghy, 2015). This hardly surprises given students' remarkable familiarity with and fondness for film, and film's inherently literary nature. However, teaching with film continues to be questioned, viewed with suspicion, and even vilified for pedagogic practice (Kreuger & Christel, 2001; Lambirth, 2004; Kavan & Burne, 2009; Lipiner 2011). Many view film merely as "entertainment" (McLuhan, 1960; Culkin, 1965; Selby, 1978; Vetrie, 2004; Lee & Winzenried, 2009; Lipiner, 2011), and still others call for its exclusion from the English classroom altogether (Jago, 1999).

The dim view of narrative film would seem not to owe to any lack of learning potential with film itself (Culkin, 1965; Denby, 1969; Selby, 1978; Lynch, 1980; Krueger & Christel, 2001; Golden, 2001; Costanzo, 2004; Donaghy, 2015) but to the paucity of teacher training and best-practice instructional strategies, given the documentation of teachers' routinely "non-optimal" (Hobbs, 2006, pp. 40-44) and "fluffy" (Goble, 2010, p. 29; Lipiner, 2011, p. 376) uses of film in the classroom (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Vetrie, 2004).

Indeed, the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) have all codified film as an essential form of literacy in the ELA teaching standards (Costanzo, 1992; Krueger & Christel, 2001; National Governors, 2010), yet none detail *how* film instruction in the English classroom should be done. With state and national directives to utilize film in instruction, and “little scholarly inquiry concerning the *instructional methods* [emphasis in the original] of using video in secondary classrooms, or about teachers’ perceptions of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of various methods or approaches” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 38), this research study seeks to answer how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film.

A Changing Landscape

The need for instructors to educate students on how to read the screen is more important now than ever before given that screens have become ubiquitous in students’ lives. The average American home for many years now has featured more televisions than people. The birthrate of iPhones (4.37 per second) surpassed the global birthrate of human babies (4.2 per second) five years ago, and 95% of teenagers have access to a smartphone (Apkon, 2013). On average, teenagers now spend over 11 hours a day consuming media (including television, cellphones, iPads, and similar forms), exceeding the amount of time they spend in school or on any other activity in their lives except for sleep (Children, 2013). Though many presume that these ‘digital natives’ are therefore naturally more tech savvy, their daily technology-based activities may not prepare them well for academic practices (Bennett & Maton, 2010), they are not necessarily as skilled with technology as often assumed (Kennedy et al., 2009), and they require facilitation to promote critical thinking skills in order to develop their visual literacy (Neumann, 2016).

While new technologies such as streaming services have only augmented availability of movies for students, with 27% of consumers citing Netflix as their platform of choice for

watching videos over cable broadcast or YouTube (Toy, 2018), they have not blunted the thirst that 21st century students have for consuming film in the theater. Rumors of the movie theater's death—first declared with the advent of the television, reiterated after the invention of the home video cassette recorder, and echoed with the arrival of modern home streaming services—have been greatly exaggerated. The 2018 Box Office broke multiple records, raking in over \$11 billion domestically, and The Motion Picture Association of America reported an increase of teenage frequent moviegoers (those who average one or more movie per month) in recent years (Kaufman, 2017) despite their affinity for television and the mobile devices and platforms that carry movies. Yet, these many new pathways to film and the resulting exponential increase in hours students spend on media only make film more relevant to the classroom and provide still greater cause for educators to study the pedagogy related to it.

Defining Narrative Film

In this section I define both the terms and the parameters of this study since making the object of investigation explicit is an essential step in the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1984), and binding the scope of its focus is likewise critical to enable thorough examination (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this way, a brief discussion of terminology and choices that informed this research is productive, particularly given the complex nomenclature associated with as well as the polysemous nature of the word 'film'.

Research Terms

Historically, a panoply of terms have been used to describe the moving image: photoplay (Costanzo, 1992), motion picture, moving picture, picture, film, cinema, movie (Monaco, 2009), and video (Corrigan & White, 2004). Monaco (2009) noted the French theorists' fondness for differentiating between the 'filmic' and the 'cinema'—the former connoting "that aspect of the art that concerns its relationship with the world around, the latter connoting "the esthetics and

internal structure of the art” (p. 252). Monaco acknowledged ‘movies’ as yet another term commonly used for the medium, “which provides a convenient label for the third facet of the activity: its function as an economic commodity.” He further complicated the issue by noting that all three terms he trifurcated are nonetheless “closely interrelated” and concluded that ‘film’ is “the most general term we use with the fewest connotations” (2009, p. 252).

Monaco’s understanding is cogent when situating ‘film’ in the context of what one views on a screen, but ‘film’ may additionally be used to refer to the act of recording a scene in a motion picture (Film Terms Glossary, 2017) or to the strip of celluloid material with pictures imprinted on it, projected with the aid of light (Corrigan & White, 2004). Bordwell and Thompson (2004) distinguished that while both are “moving image media,” the differing materials used for making (even the very same) moving picture are assigned their own terms: “cinema” or “film” for moving images captured on film stock, and “video” for moving images recorded on tape, disc, hard drive, or computer chip (p. 10).

Drawing not from the material it was captured on but from what he saw as its emerging equivalence with the term ‘literature’, Selby (1978) preferred the term ‘film’ over ‘the film’ or ‘films’ in reference to the “serious products of the motion picture medium” and for “motion pictures as a field of study” (p. 2). For Selby, ‘film’ equally satisfied the portion of the American College Dictionary’s definition of ‘literature’ in which ““expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features.”” Thus, he viewed the ‘study of film’ as interchangeable with the ‘study of literature’” (pp. 2-3). Culkin (1965) likewise defined “film study” as referring to “the study of motion pictures as a parallel to the study of literature” with “attention to historical development, form, criticism, symbolism, and levels of meaning” (p. 4). Though much of the aforementioned jargon is used in the literature

interchangeably and divergently, for the sake of clarification, I will use the term ‘film’ to capture all three of Monaco’s “closely interrelated” (2009, p. 252) meanings, as well as Selby’s (1978) and Culkin’s (1965) view of film’s reciprocity with literature—regardless of the material the filmic work was captured on. I make this choice because depending on whom you ask, film may be a commercial product, a revered art form, a medium akin to literature, or a coalescence of all three, as the participants in this study demonstrate.

Research Parameters

There are, however, short and feature-length films, theatrical and non-theatrical films, silent and sound films, documentary and educational films, mass-entertainment and specialized films, foreign and independent films, made-for-television and home video films, and beyond (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004, p. 8). Using Monaco’s (2009) tripartite understanding of film as a framework precludes educational films from the primary focus of this research, though it will be tangentially discussed for the purpose of historical context. Excluding film that is specifically made for the classroom, on the grounds that it generally lacks “the esthetics and internal structure of the art” (Monaco, 2009, p. 252), helps limit the scope of film under examination, and appropriately so, as educational films do not attract suspicion for the classroom given that their *raison d’être* is exclusively pedagogical. Further, educational films fall well short of Selby’s (1978) mark as “serious products of the motion picture medium...in which expression and form” are the *sine quo non* (pp. 2-3).

Instead, my interest centers on the popular culture form of film favored by children (and adults) above all others: the theatrical film (Vetrie, 2004). Indeed, its first appearance in the classroom follows closely on the heels of its first appearance in general society in the early decades of the 20th century. Furthermore, theatrical film is chiefly made for entertainment

purposes—a primary objection of its detractors in the classroom—and it carries complicated implications as an “economic commodity” (Monaco’s tertiary connotation, 2009, p. 252) whose profit margins have often contributed to it being at odds with the moral sensibilities of those who oppose its exposure to children, particularly in the classroom. My research focus will include both silent and sound varieties given that film was in its silent form when it first began appearing in the secondary English classroom following the turn of the century until technological advancements allowed “talkies” to rapidly take their place. Regardless, both communicate chiefly as a visual medium, and the arguments for and against their inclusion in the classroom apply equally to both.

However, theatrical film as a label is still a relatively broad term, as it encompasses highly disparate forms of film since both Hollywood blockbusters and documentaries can receive theatrical releases. Echoing Selby’s (1978) literary parallel as an “expression and form” (p. 2), Bordwell and Thompson (2003) noted that film’s form is a coalescence of its narrative and stylistic elements. They differentiated ‘narrative’ form—in contrast to ‘categorical’, ‘rhetorical’, and ‘abstract’ forms—as featuring “a chain of events in cause-effect relationships occurring in time and space...thus what we usually mean by the term is story” (p. 69). Similarly, Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2005) traced the dawn of “narrative films,” which they similarly defined as “movies that tell stories,” to the silent era of film, when movies transitioned from the “early development” to the “mass media” stage (p. 226). Likewise, Giannetti (1990) parsed motion pictures into the three broad categories of “fiction, documentary, and avant-garde, and helpfully clarified that the latter two “nonfiction narratives...usually don’t tell stories, at least not in the conventional sense,” nor do they utilize “a plot” (p. 316). In this way, fiction as a category of film will not preclude film based on real life people or events, as they traditionally adhere to the

narrative structure and other conventions of the “classical Hollywood cinema” that wholly fictional stories employ (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003, pp. 89-80). Bordwell and Thompson (2003) simplified that when “we speak of ‘going to the movies,’ what we inevitably mean is seeing a “narrative film—a film that tells a story” (p. 68). Consequently, ‘theatrical fictional narrative film’ hews closest to the spirit of Selby’s (1978) literary bar.

I chose to further constrain the parameters of this study by restricting it to ‘theatrical fictional narrative *feature* films’ for several reasons—the first owing to feature-length film’s contemporaneous advent both outside (in 1912; Monaco, 2009, p. 254) and—tentatively—inside the classroom in the early 20th century. The term ‘feature film’ is indeed often synonymously used to connote theatrical film (Film Terms Glossary, 2017), however, it technically denotes the running time of the film, as non-narrative film can be of feature length, too. In the era of its inception, this was arbitrarily defined as constituting “four or more reels” (Cook, 2004, p. 35), but would eventually be defined as having a running time of sixty minutes or longer (Phillips, 2005, p. 272).

The inherently different experience of feature-length film provides further reason for this constraint, as it offers the distinct advantage of “a deeper pedagogical register” than “a three-minute pop song or a twenty-two minute sitcom” (Giroux, 2002, p. 7). Feature films held several distinct advantages over the customarily short films from 1895-1906 (Phillips, 2005, p. 256) which typically ran between “10- to 20-minute lengths” (Corrigan & White, 2004, p. 11). Feature length film afforded a format parallel to legitimate theater and suitable for the adaptation of middle-class novels and plays. It further allowed the possibility of more complicated narratives and offered filmmakers a form commensurate with serious artistic creations (Cook, 2004). Feature-length narrative film therefore carries a closer parallel to novels in the English classroom

than do short film (Teasely & Wilder, 1997). Moreover, as the short film, a form in its own right, has been seldom screened in theaters since 1960 and largely relegated to showings by museums, libraries, film societies, and other niche outlets (Phillips, 2005), short film does not have the disproportionate exposure to or popularity among students that feature-length, theatrical, fictional, narrative film enjoys. Finally, privileging feature-length film in this research intentionally broaches a logistical point of pedagogic contention since its running time must be accommodated by the strictures of valuable class time if it is to be shown *in toto* (Costanzo, 1992; Golden, 2001; Donaghy, 2015). This restriction therefore excludes a wide swath of film that might be used in the classroom but merits its own study.

Lastly, I have chosen to limit this study to how *high school* teachers make sense of and instruct with feature length, theatrical, fictional, narrative film. I drew this line because of the significant disparity in stages of childhood development between primary, middle, and secondary school levels, and the attendant pedagogic strategies for each respective level. Additionally, the length of class periods typically differ dramatically between the three levels, thus impacting how teachers make sense of and instruct with film. Furthermore, while age-appropriate viewing is a concern on all levels, the issue of ‘R’ rated content, a significant reservation for skeptics of film in the classroom, is likely relevant in the secondary classroom only.

Thus, how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with ‘feature length, theatrical, fictional, narrative film’ in the classroom space will be the object of study in this research endeavor. For purposes of concision, ‘feature length, theatrical, fictional, narrative film’ will hereafter be referred to only as ‘narrative film’ or merely ‘film’, unless otherwise specified, and its purposeful inclusion in the classroom for educational benefit will be referred to as ‘film study’. Though narrative film is the primary concern of this research project, the use of all

previously described forms of film by participants in the study will be included in the data collection and analysis, as undoubtedly relationships exist between the various forms of film and the way English teachers make sense of, and instruct in tandem with, narrative film. When possible to determine by the context, I will clarify the intended meaning of the terminology used by the authors of any works cited.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

I begin chapter two by tracing the history of film in the English classroom from its origins shortly after the turn of the 20th Century until today. Next, I review the literature on the issues relevant to teaching with film and the arguments for and against film's inclusion in the English classroom before concluding the chapter with a discussion on the gaps and limitations in the literature.

In chapter three, I explain my rationale for employing qualitative methodology and methods in this study, including my use of interview, observation, and document analysis. Additionally, I describe the need for using a multi-layered theoretical framework to make sense of the data I collected, and I briefly provide an overview of each theory and how they intersect. Finally, I address issues related to my positionality in the research and the multiple considerations I have given and protections I have employed in deference to my subjectivity.

I begin chapter four by describing my findings regarding the pervasive stigma that the participants perceived with film in the classroom, which informed the way that they made sense of and instructed with film. Following that, I catalogue the multiple and varied reasons the participants described for why they teach with film in their English classrooms, employing it as a purposeful instructional tool with myriad learning benefits.

I share my findings in chapter five on how the participants instruct with film, detailing the disparate instructional approaches they described and I observed them use in their classrooms. In addition to detailing specific pedagogic practices that the participants use with their students before, during, and after a film plays, I bifurcate the focus of their instruction into two strategic approaches: having students analyze *what* film communicates and having students analyze *how* film communicates.

In chapter six, I include a discussion of the key findings from this investigation, how those findings are oriented in the context of the literature, the limitations of this research, and potential next steps in regards to teaching with film in the English classroom. I conclude with recommendations for high school English teachers and pre- and in-service training for English teachers.

Summary

Despite narrative film first appearing in the English classroom over one hundred years ago, and becoming a staple in the English classroom over the last half century, scant attention has been given to this potentially powerful pedagogic tool. Although film's footprint in the English classroom has only been reified by its increasing presence in the English Language Arts standards, it remains under suspicion, and oftentimes justifiably so given the all-too-common poor instructional practice associated with it. This dissertation aims to contribute to the field of English education by investigating the disparate ways high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film in the English classroom. In doing so, scholars, teacher trainers, high school teachers, and administrators will hopefully gain from this study's findings so as to ultimately implement changes that may improve instructional practices and therefore learning outcomes with film in the English classroom.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to situate current thinking, debates, and pedagogic practices regarding narrative film in the English classroom, I begin this chapter by tracing the history of film in the English classroom from its advent to its modern orientation in the first section. I start here because fully understanding the competing perceptions of and pedagogic practices with film today demands contextualization in its past. Following a brief overview of the very lengthy and rich history of film in the English classroom, I detail the scholarship on the philosophical arguments for and against film's inclusion in the English classroom. Next I report on various instructional approaches and the status of English teacher training with film. I engage these issues to illuminate the chasm between the literature and the wonted classroom practices with film. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the gaps in the literature.

A History of Teaching with Narrative Film

I divide this first section into four subsections to mark the major shifts in the evolution of film's place in the education system. In (1) Dawn of a New Era, I detail the enthusiasm and anxiety that the newfangled medium gave rise to in both general society and, soon after, the education system as it took its first steps into the English classroom. Next, in (2) The Golden Age of Film Study, I describe how film in the classroom briefly took off and thrived, buoyed by its recognition and support from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and other early educational pioneers, before I report on how the coalescence of geopolitical events and emerging forms of mass media would scupper its progress in (3) The Audio-Visual Movement Takes Charge. In (4) Setting the Standard, I conclude with film's most recent, and arguably most significant, developments in the English classroom, achieved by its codification in state and national ELA standards.

Dawn of a New Era

With the advent of the motion picture in the late 19th century, the relatively short life-span of film has not precluded a very rich and complicated history (Monaco, 2009), which is mirrored by its complex relationship with the country's educational system. Soon after audiences began watching films in 1895 (Costanzo, 1987), Thomas Edison, one of the founding fathers of film, predicted in 1911 that the "motion picture art will eventually, if it has not already done so, supplant the art of printing for the transmission and diffusion of knowledge" (Thomas Edison Papers, 2017). He was not alone in his optimism for film's pedagogic potential.

In that very same year, when the NCTE was established, English teachers recognized the pedagogic significance of motion pictures (Costanzo, 2004), and through 1920, the NCTE focused on silent film versions of classic literature. However, while English teachers recognized film's ability to stimulate composition, most viewed literature as superior and therefore film as a means, rather than an end (Costanzo, 1987). With its foot in the door of the English classroom in the first score years of the 20th century, narrative film would, however, remain largely "on the margins" (Donaghy, 2015, p. 14) and be recognized for its own artistic merits by "maverick teachers of English" only (Costanzo, 1987, p. 4).

By 1913, Edison would make a much bolder prediction, which of course would prove ultimately inaccurate:

"Books will soon be obsolete in the public schools. Scholars will be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture.

Our school system will be completely changed inside ten years" (Smith, 1913, p. 24).

Edison's provocative prognostications and grand dreams of a comprehensive library of *educational* film intended to replace not just textbooks but even teachers fell well short, in part,

because it flouted much of the culture of American education and made many educators anxious about assertions that they were antiquated and replaceable (Braun, 2012). Edison saw *narrative* film as “the great educator of the poorer people,” and enumerated its capacity to incite “their imagination,” bring “the whole world before their eyes,” set “spectators thinking,” and raise “their standard of living” (Smith, 1913, p. 24).

Writing in direct response to what he saw as Edison’s deleterious, outrageous, and tragic claims, Nelson Green (1926), editor of *The Educational Screen*, begrudgingly credited theatrical film for paving the costly path of production through its box office receipts for the remarkable opportunity that subsequent educational films offered. He fully concurred with Edison that the theatrical film instructed the masses but saw it instead as “lawless and uncontrolled education,” and couched it “as a competitor, and frequently a dangerous opponent” of teachers (p. 124).

Green was hardly the first to moralize against the putative social dangers posed by narrative film.

Early detractors of narrative film in the classroom, in a pattern that would persist for decades to come, objected over a fear of children’s exposure to a medium perceived as replete with moral turpitude. As small neighborhood nickelodeons gave the public and its children their first point of access to the fledgling film industry prior to the dawn of movie theaters (Campbell et al., 2005) and film’s integration into the public school system, *The Chicago Tribune* had already hyperbolically condemned motion pictures in 1907 for indirectly or directly causing “more juvenile crimes...than all other causes combined” (Barnouw, 1956, p. 18). Likewise, the Faustian bargain one English teacher described making in exchange for narrative film’s services in developing his students’ compositional skills was the subject of the first article on teaching with film to appear in *The English Journal*, entitled “Making the Devil Useful” (Neal, 1913, pp. 658-660). The article aptly reflected the societal and educational zeitgeist of anxiety over the

alleged corrupting influence of the novel, libertine medium on America's youth prior to the era of the Motion Picture Production Code.

The National Education Association (NEA) had taken notice of the burgeoning film debate when it appointed its first Committee on Visual Education in 1922, which instituted an inquiry to determine available visual aids for classroom use and gave special consideration to motion pictures (Wood, 1929, p. xvii), of both the made-for-the-“classroom” (i.e. educational) and made-for-“entertainment” (i.e. narrative, theatrical) varieties (p. 209). The study recognized that English teachers have long been interested in the screening of classic stories and novels and posited that the impact of such movies on the literary interests, tastes, and activities upon the speech and writing of children merited large-scale research.

Meanwhile, public schools slowly surmounted the obstacles of prohibitive costs of projectors and films, compounded by limitations of film availability owing to distribution challenges, and by the film stock itself, which was typically a flammable material and prone to disintegration (Green, 1926). Nevertheless, an extensive range of educational silent films was indeed gaining acceptance in the school until 1929, when the demand for sound motion pictures, primarily in the form of documentaries, subsumed the obsolete silent versions in the classroom (Lee & Winzenried, 2009).

However, concerns over dubious morality in narrative film persisted and finally gave impetus to the 1929-1932 Payne Fund Studies. This influential, mixed-methods empirical study sought to raise film appreciation standards and examine the impact of film on children, coinciding with, not coincidentally, the rising success of the crime-ridden gangster film genre and sundry salacious, real-life Hollywood scandals. Despite its methodological flaws (Lowery & De Fleur, 1995), the study concluded that children do acquire and retain information from

movies, that their attitudes regarding ethnic, racial, and social issues are impacted by what they see on screen, and that regular viewers misbehaved in school more than infrequent viewers, directly contributing to delinquent careers. Its ultimately moralistic, arguably puritanical, agenda ushered in the era of the Motion Picture Production Code, while conceding that motion pictures appeared to contribute to visual education more than was previously suspected (Charters, 1933). Debate over the validity, politics, and findings of the Payne Fund Studies would continue for years to come (Selby, 1978) as the quantity and variety of film study programs in American schools blossomed (Polito, 1975).

The Golden Age of Film Study

The NCTE would bring official recognition to narrative film through its newly formed Committee of Photoplay Appreciation in 1932 (Applebee, 1974), developing instructional recommendations and study guides for teachers (Young, Long, & Meyers, 2010). Film study was finally taking off. In 1936, Edgar Dale, who conducted the children's movie attendance portion of the Payne Study (Selby, 1978) and was arguably the leading figure in American audio-visual instruction, pronounced that "motion-picture appreciation is here to stay," and boasted that over "100,000 high school students under the direction of at least 1,000 different teachers studied motion-picture appreciation" (Dale, 1936, p. 113). Dale developed the *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures* guidebook under the auspices of the Payne Study, which by 1938, had distributed 20,000 copies (Polito, 1975, p. 13). Through these guides, Dale sought to teach high school students how to critically analyze film techniques and film's portrayal of contemporary social and political issues (Nichols, 2006). Similarly, William Lewin, another early pioneer of motion picture appreciation, developed a series of film study guides called *Photoplay Studies* in an attempt to offer teachers curricular materials in guiding their students to scrutinize directorial

choices, production challenges, and narrative aspects. Both men authored a new chapter in narrative film education by campaigning for the study of film as a mode of communication in its own right. Additional reports estimated that 5,000,000 American school children were receiving some variety of instruction in film appreciation at this time (Dyer, 1938).

The educational system's orientation to narrative film in the English classroom had evolved from an incipient phase obsessed with safeguarding children from film's social and moral evils, real and imagined, with allowance for narrative film only as a compositional tool in the 1920s, to a budding movement with a bent toward film appreciation and eye for film's dramatic and literary qualities in the 1930s, to a maturing view that the motion picture, as well as the other mass media forms, were inherently worthy of study themselves by the turn of that same decade (Polito, 1975). Unfortunately, though, narrative film education would become collateral damage of the Second World War, owing to a shift in focus away from film study and toward media as a tool to instruct and prepare for combat roles. (Culkin, 1965; Polito, 1975; Selby, 1978; Costanzo, 1987). Film study withered on the vine and, with the exception of the NCTE's continued attention, largely disappeared from the curriculum and educational journals in the 1940s not with a bang but a whimper.

The Audio-Visual Movement Takes Charge

As appreciation of the artistic merits of film waned, a new movement focused on audio-visual aids and educational films waxed during and after the war (Polito, 1975; Selby, 1978; Lee & Winzenried, 2009). Beyond merely serving to "influence, motivate, and train" millions of Americans in the armed services and civil defense fields in wartime skills, what Selby (1975) euphemistically referred to as influencing "attitudes" (p. 115) but Lee & Winzenried (2009) more nakedly called "propaganda" (p. 43), film was studied in concert with its media brethren

(i.e. broadcasting and journalism) through a social sciences lens in a movement known as “communication arts.” Coinciding with the continuing growth of radio and television, this approach largely disregarded inquiry into film as an art form. However, it did keep the film appreciation movement originally sparked in the 1930s on life support by maintaining collegiate interest in narrative film and thus sowed the seeds for its eventual resurrection (Selby 1975, p. 115).

Over the next two decades, though, and in contrast to the burgeoning movement in European schools (Culkin, 1965), film study in American schools was effectively “moribund” until an ideal coalescence of factors made it once again “very much alive” by 1973 (Costanzo, 1987, p. 5). As a renaissance of media awareness was led by scholar Marshall McLuhan, a new recognition of the work of early film theorists gave rise to a spate of foreign and eventually domestic film directors who began churning out critically acclaimed films. Literacy critics’ expanding understanding of text as inclusive of film, a newly founded American Film Institute that advocated on the behalf of film study, the introduction of phase-elective classes which offered a new vehicle for film study, and the proliferation of textbooks for teaching film, led the formerly dominant educational films of the preceding 25 years to take a back seat to narrative film study, which consequently reached its pinnacle by 1980 (Costanzo, 1987).

The “back-to-basics” crusade that characterized the first half of the decade, however, would swing the pedagogic pendulum away from film study once again by eliminating the elective courses which nurtured it (Costanzo, 1987, p. 7; Costanzo, 1992, p. 73). Integrating film in the classroom also continued to be hampered by the paucity of special equipment in the schools for effective film study later considered standard in the 1990s. With the ensuing rise of video technology that allowed fast-forward, rewind, pause, and slow-motion features, viewers

could suddenly examine the frame as never before (Costanzo, 1992). No longer having to rely on memory or notes scribbled in the dark during a theatrical screening, viewers could now study film text with the same careful focus that scholars and students have traditionally given to literary texts. The video version of film was beginning to make it less distinguishable from books, in its increasing availability, affordability, portability, and ease of ownership (Monaco, 2009). Momentum for film study would build through the 1990s and hit an important milestone in gaining a foothold in the English classroom, which I detail next.

Setting the Standard

A joint collaboration between the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) moved the goal posts with a newly defined set of English Language Arts standards grounded in the research and theory of language and language learning in 1996. In defining the new standards, the NCTE and IRA substantively broadened the fundamental concept of ‘text’ in the ELA standards to refer to “spoken language, graphics, and technological communications,” of language to include “visual communication,” and of reading to refer “to listening and viewing in addition to print-oriented reading” (NCTE, 1996, p. 2).

These new benchmarks would codify that:

“Being literate in contemporary society means being active, critical, and creative users not only of print and spoken language but also of the visual language of film and television, commercial and political advertising, photography, and more. Teaching students how to interpret and create visual texts such as illustrations, charts, graphs, electronic displays, photographs, film, and video is another essential component of the English Language arts curriculum. Visual communication is part of the fabric of contemporary life” (NCTE, 1996, p. 5).

This pronouncement was important because it would lend legitimacy to and burst open the floodgates for film study.

The 2001 iteration of the original 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), included the arts as a core subject, and although it excluded a definition of what the arts encompass as an academic discipline, the national standards for the arts did include standards for dance, music, theater, and visual arts (No Subject Left Behind, 2005). While mandated structures within the NCLB Act had the effect of reinforcing print-based definitions of literacy, many educators overcame its strictures by integrating a wide array of texts and mediums to afford richer and more complete literacy learning experiences for their students than print alone could (Fortuna, 2010). For film study proponents, however, NCLB left much to be desired for carving a permanent home in the English classroom for film.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) of 2010, on the other hand, reified the place for film instruction in the English classroom with a spate of learning standards that implicitly and explicitly call for its inclusion. The CCSSI Reading standards enjoin students to “Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats” (National Governors, 2010, p. 35), and to “Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text” (p. 38). Film use is further implied by the CCSSI task to “Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment” (p. 38).

Still more explicitly, CCSSI calls to apply its reading standards to a range of text types, including drama, which it defines as including “one-act and multi-act plays, both in written form

and on film” (p. 57). Moreover, CCSSI calls for students to “Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue,” to “Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium’s portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words), and to “Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea” (2010, p. 39). However, CCSSI limited its focus “on results” and “required achievements” rather than on the “means” of achieving them, thus leaving “room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached” (p. 4). Nevertheless, the educational policies of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st Century afforded the most substantive progress yet for film study in the English classroom.

In summary, film first appeared in the English classroom shortly after its introduction to general society and was soon hyperbolically and paradoxically at once hailed as a revolutionary teaching tool and castigated as the chief cause of all society’s ills. Soon after, film found a firmer and still-flourishing place in the curriculum, before geopolitical events and technological developments stunted its growth. Over the ensuing decades, film’s classroom standing would be subject to the whims of pedagogic trends before it achieved the major milestone of codification in the ELA standards. Having surveyed the history of film’s integration into the classroom, I prosecute the philosophical arguments over film’s place in the curriculum in the next section.

In the Court of Pedagogic Opinion: *Film Friends v. Film Foes*

The historical record of film in the English classroom discussed in the last section revealed the very contentious nature of its use for instructional purposes. I divide this second section into three parts that reflect the fundamental issues that underpin this debate: (1) Making

Sense of Film; (2) The Question Concerning Literacy; and (3) Film: Active or Passive? In the first, I describe the dispute over how film should be philosophically regarded and what is at stake for its role in the classroom depending on how it is understood. In the second, I discuss the arguments in regards to viewing film as a linguistic and literary form, and what that means regarding literacy instruction. In the third and final subsection, I review the literature regarding whether or not film is inherently an active or passive medium, and explore how that impacts film's status in the classroom. I engage these three issues because they fundamentally shape the arguments that position advocates for and critics of including film in the English curriculum on their respective sides of the issue.

Making Sense of Film

In a rare instance of agreement, both critics and advocates of film in the classroom often identify film as a form of popular culture. However, some scholars and teachers hold great disdain for popular texts enjoyed by their students (Lambirth, 2003). This view of film as a guilty pleasure (Donaghy, 2015) may be the root of some adult anxiety over the convergence of children and popular culture texts in the classroom space (Lambirth, 2003). In an atavistic callback to the apoplexies of the early 20th century, the violence, crude language, and rampant nudity renders film educationally unsuitable for many today (Vetrie, 2004).

Literary critics F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson (1933) led the early charge to “discriminate and resist” against what they saw as the exploitation of the cheapest emotional responses, the satisfaction at its basest level, and the immediate gratification, achieved with the least effort bestowed by films and other mass media forms of popular culture (p 3). Ironically, criticism of popular culture created the strangest of bedfellows, with academics on the Left believing it to induce social neurosis and passivity against the dominant culture, and critics on

the Right fearing it as an existential threat to civilization. Both privilege 'high art' as a bulwark against the different forms of "barbarism" that they imagine (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 6). Many modern critics simply believe that it is not the school's place to feature popular texts simply because "they get enough of that at home" and question the quality of such texts (Lambirth, 2003, pp 9-10), citing the volume of worthless or tasteless films.

Film advocates respond to critics that the "piffle index is high for any medium" (Culkin, 1965, p. 1). Despite a disproportionate amount of pablum over paragons, a canon of great film does exist, which like the literary canon, merits study (Selby, 1975) precisely because the artistically rich film can be a uniquely effective way of acquiring knowledge (Nadaner, 1984). Indeed, Teasley and Wilder (1997) were moved to label the canon of university English departments lacking great film incomplete. The U.S. Library of Congress was likeminded when it created the National Film Registry in 1988 to preserve "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" films (Library of Congress).

For many film advocates, using popular culture is a way to utilize and build upon the interests, experiences, and ways of knowing that students already have in order to construct new knowledge. For example, Vetrie (2004) testified that if "we expect students to learn and remember, we must discover what they know and have experienced and design our curriculum to tap into or connect to that knowledge" (p. 42). Giroux and Simon (1989) characterized popular culture as "the terrain on which we must meet our students in a critical and empowering pedagogical encounter" (p. 25) given that today's students are inundated with film and television (Ostrander, 2003). Indeed, Postman (1985) maintained that assisting the young in interpreting the symbols of their culture via media literacy is the acknowledged task of the school. In this way, including film in the curriculum can harness the valuable experience and knowledge students

walk into the classroom with to facilitate and make relevant new material since students have prior experience with film, nearly all of it positive (Teasley & Wilder, 1997).

The learning outcomes of teaching with film as a popular culture text are indeed compelling. Hobbs' (2007) research on English teachers instructing with media documented a climate of trust and mutual respect when the teachers she observed did not trivialize or demean student interest in popular culture and concluded that learning happens best when lessons unfold in response to students' ideas and experiences. Similarly, Teasley and Wilder (1997) noted the marked change in educational outcomes from students who don't expect to encounter anything that connects to their world in the English class to when suddenly the teacher is incorporating a relatable 'text' and they find themselves highly engaged in learning. Likewise, Smilanich and Lafreniere (2010) taught film to their erstwhile disengaged, 10th grade remedial English class when they soon observed how film as a medium of instruction opened doors to their otherwise disinterested students because of its greater relevance, especially for adolescents "raised in the 'video generation'" (p. 605). Hobbs (2007) explained that the use of digital media and popular culture texts allows students to build a richer, more nuanced understanding of how texts of all kinds operate within a culture.

Remarkably, Kincheloe and Steinberg (2004) regard popular culture as "the most powerful pedagogy force in America" in regards to producing and transmitting knowledge, shaping values, and constructing subjectivity. Indeed, Giroux and Simon (1989) warned that educators who refuse to acknowledge popular culture as a significant form of knowledge typically devalue students by refusing to work with the knowledge that students actually have, and thus eliminate the possibility of developing a pedagogy that connects school knowledge to the differing subject relations that help to constitute the everyday lives of their students.

While reasonable minds may draw differing lines for age-appropriate viewing, advocates make the case for film study in the classroom with and without mature content. Vetrie (2004) addressed one reservation of film critics by reframing violence in film as a realistic reflection of life, an opportunity to teach students about its effects on the characters' lives and question whether it is romanticized by the film, and therefore ultimately as a chance to turn it into a moral force as the ancient Greeks did in their drama. Though he tries to avoid 'R' rated films whenever possible, Vetrie noted the profound experience afforded by films such as Stephen Spielberg's *Schindler's List* that would be lost if he omitted all 'R' rated films on these grounds alone. Golden (2001) assuaged concerns over including adult content in the classroom altogether by demonstrating that his teaching strategies for film have equal applicability and efficacy with 'PG-13' rated films as with 'R' rated films. In this way, Foster believes that analyzing the camera angles, shots, and movements, or exploring the theme in a 'PG-13' rated film such as Forster's *Stranger Than Fiction* involves precisely the same skill sets as doing likewise with an 'R' rated film such as Scorsese's *Goodfellas*.

To head off misunderstandings and address reasonable concerns from critics and parents, Costanzo (1992) recommended that schools wishing to include potentially provocative films extrapolate the same measures used to justify the classroom inclusion of novels and other forms of print in the face of censorship attempts they, too, have historically endured: develop departmental and school rationales with clear learning objectives. Hobbs (2006) enumerated the wide spectrum of potential school policies from special permission slips to very restrictive approaches requiring pre-approval from administration that can govern and support classroom practice.

Despite often being trivialized as mere entertainment (McLuhan, 1960; Culkin, 1965; Selby, 1978; Vetrie, 2004; Lee & Winzenried, 2009; Lipiner, 2011), largely owing to its popular culture status, film has paradoxically also been widely recognized as an art form (Lindsay, 1915; Munsterberg, 1916; Culkin, 1965; Selby, 1975; Costanzo, 1992; Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Bordwell & Thompson, 2004; Campbell et al., 2004; Corrigan & White, 2004; Boggs & Petrie, 2008; Monaco, 2009; Goble, 2010; Donaghy, 2015). This tension perhaps owes to film's unique intersectionality as both mass medium and art form (Culkin, 1965). While film's original and chief exploitation for light entertainment (Selby, 1975) caused it to be possibly the only desirable art form in this country (Stanley Kauffmann as quoted by Culkin, 1965), it consequently suffered to be considered art at all.

However, similar misperceptions precluded artistic recognition and study of ancient Roman art, Shakespeare, and the novel by their contemporaries and even subsequent generations (Culkin, 1965; Selby, 1974). Thus, it may be impossible to find a classic that wasn't also initially regarded as light entertainment since virtually all vernacular works were so regarded until the 19th century (McLuhan, 1960). Regardless of its "lowly origin" (Frazier, 1948, p. 175), competing aims, and popularity among the masses, which linked film "with frivolity," it "must be considered an art form...by any serious definition of art" (Selby, 1975, pp. 4-5).

Indeed, film "emerged in the context of modernist experimentation in the arts—music, writing, theater, painting, architecture, and photoplay—especially in Europe" (Corrigan & White, 2004, p. 441), and because film was based on new technology, many considered it an exemplary art for the machine age. Poet Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Motion Picture* (1915) is among the earliest writings that recognized film's artistic merits, but many would follow suit

by positioning film as a cultural form of artistic expression, not unlike many other recognized art forms that communicate culturally important narratives.

Indeed, in the lengthy narrative tradition of “Homer, Sophocles, the Elizabethan theatre, and the English novel,” film constitutes what Campbell et al. (2004) labeled a “consensus narrative” by serving as a vessel of communal cultural experiences, spanning different times and cultures, and speaking to core myths and values in an accessible language that often transcends global boundaries (p 258). Culkin (1965) credited these filmic narratives with communicating valid and significant human experience which shed light on our common humanity. Psychologist Hugo Munsterberg noted still more succinctly that “the photoplay tells us the human story” (1916, p. 173).

Film’s contribution to this cultural narrative tradition stands alone among its artistic peers in that film can record and translate nearly all the codes and tropes shared by narrative, environmental, pictorial, musical, and dramatic arts and yet retains a system of codes and tropes that are unique (Monaco, 2009). Film began by engaging in a reciprocal relationship with its brothers in arts (Corrigan & White, 2004, p. 441) but eventually bridged the pre-existing forms rather than fitting snugly into the established spectrum, ultimately forcing many of the earlier art forms to redefine themselves in regards to the new artistic language of film (Monaco, 2009).

The Question Concerning Literacy

The artistic ‘language of film’ is a complex fabric that communicates through an “interplay between light and shadow...three dimensional space...rhythm...imagery, metaphor, and symbol,” both “visually and verbally...” across “time and space” and in “free and constant motion” (Boggs & Petrie, 2008, p. 3). For film study proponents, this “language of film” (Costanzo, 1992; Teasley and Wilder, 1997; Campbell et al., 2004; Boggs & Petrie, 2008;

Monaco, 2009), and film's status as a "consensus narrative" (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 258) positions it as an inherently linguistic and narrative medium, and anchors one of the primary arguments for its inclusion in the English curriculum. This sophisticated filmic language and the universally human experiences it communicates is what drove Culkin's (1965) view of film as an art form and his desire to share it with his students.

For like reasons, Teasley and Wilder (1997) characterized film as not only an art form but broadly as "a branch of literature" which warrants a deserved place in the English classroom (p. 6). Monaco (2009) further blurred the lines between print and film forms by arguing that explicit differentiations between novels, film, and television forms of narrative entertainment may become impossible (p. 253). His inclusive conception of narrative entertainment was paralleled by the expanding definition of 'text' by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (NCTE, 1996), as well as by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (National Governors, 2010), as detailed in the previous section, thus paving the path for a wholly new understanding of literacy in the classroom accepting of film. Writing in 1997, Teasley and Wilder noted that the definition of a text fifteen years prior was limited to printed forms only, but intervening years have expanded that notion to include disparate media in order to answer the traditional ELA call to provide students with the requisite skills to cope with various sources information in the environment they inhabit.

If ever a consensus over the linguistic and literary nature of film materialized, additional concerns harbored by skeptics are likely to perpetuate this pedagogic parallax. Opponents worry that time spent on film will come at the expense of time spent on printed texts, thus ending print's dominant position in the classroom (Culkin, 1965). Jago (1999) deemed the traditional English curriculum too full to afford room for film beyond occasionally, and by her estimation

the still pedagogically flawed method of, showing high quality adaptations only after reading the print versions. Many agree that it is wrongheaded to divert precious class time to study material that students already consume on their own (Kreuger & Christel, 2001). Critics argue that literacy has suffered because of the copious time students spend on watching television and film outside of school already (Teasley & Wilder, 1997) and believe that students should be reading in the English classroom rather than watching still more film (Vetrie, 2004). In short, opponents fear that the birth of Edison will spell the death of Gutenberg if teachers allow.

This argument has generated four basic responses that provide defilade for film study against its skeptics. First, though time spent watching or working with film may indeed come at the cost of fewer minutes spent reading, that merely reiterates the beneficial precedent set long ago when the printed book was the upstart medium challenging the classroom status quo. The advent of the printed book threatened the oral procedures of teaching but created the modern classroom as we understand it (Culkin, 1965). Second, film study may be employed in the English classroom, if done properly, chiefly to *benefit* print literacy skills. Golden (2001) insisted that film and literature are allies, not adversaries in that the instantaneous and visual qualities of film, coupled with its many commonalities with print literature, uniquely positions film to serve as a stepping stone toward enhanced active reading strategies, improved reading abilities, literary analysis, and synthesis skills. When taught as another form of literature, film can actually be used to build literacy skills (Vetrie, 2004) and excite students about books (Teasley & Wilder, 1997). Even for the eager reader, film can enrich and enhance the study of literature (Kreuger & Christel, 2001). Rather than working at odds with literature, Smilanich and Lafreniere (2010) found that film study actually cultivated understanding of and affection for it. Their students'

comfort and familiarity with visual language made the printed language more accessible by helping to clarify the often abstruse metaphorical nature of literature.

Third, film can be used to hone other fundamental skills traditionally prized in the English classroom. Kreuger and Christal (2001) extolled the learning virtues of thematically pairing narrative film with printed texts. Referring to discussion as “the heart” of the English class, Costanzo (1992, p. 77) enumerated the various forms of dialog that film may effectively induce: factual, contextual, analytic, evaluative, and dialectic. Teasley and Wilder (1997) similarly noted that viewing a film affords opportunities for discussion and writing by stopping films for questions, predictions, or class conversations. However, this approach, while better articulated and more widely countenanced today, largely rehashes that old chestnut of film study advocates in the 1920s, who saw film study, at most, as a means to build print literacy skills, rather than an end (Costanzo, 1987).

But this is merely where the exculpatory evidence for devoting precious classroom time to film begins. Film defendants cite the growing need to build a bulwark against “the persistent and insistent” (Kreuger & Christel, 2001, p. viii) daily bombardment of “seductive images” (Jago, 1999, p. 33) through mass media. The power of the moving image to influence, editorialize, and shape values and attitudes makes it requisite in the era of film and television for the audience to be armed with the capacity to make sense of the rhetoric of the projected image (Culkin, 1965). Film study advocates were not the only ones to recognize this issue. Citing the same need to protect the “child in the second half of the 20th century...against the barrage of visual impressions to which he is being subjected increasingly,” a 1963 United Nations seminar on “The Rights of the Child” explicitly called for “screen education” (Mirams, 1963, p. 12).

The argument for film study to blunt the dangers posed by media manipulation slowly evolved to one that saw screen education as a fundamental requirement for participation in the rising dominant mode of communication. Earnest Boyer's contention that media literacy has become as vital a skill as the ability to read traditional print (Palmer, 1988, preface) lent further credence to the case that print literacy *should* make room for visual literacy. The 1996 NCTE/IRA standards explicitly addressed this concern of critics of film:

“Although many parents and teachers worry that television, film, and video have displaced reading and encourages students to be passive, unreflective, and uninvolved, we cannot erase visual texts from modern life even if we want to. We must therefore challenge students to analyze critically the texts they view and to integrate their visual knowledge with their knowledge of other forms of language. By studying how visual texts work, students learn to employ media as another powerful means of communication” (NCTE, 1996, p. 5).

Likewise citing the need for literacy across disparate modes of communication, Donaghy (2015) argued for screen education so that students can “successfully meet the social, cultural, political, economic demands” of “their future roles as citizens and workers in society” (p. 11). This goal of film study aimed to respond to “the cultural and educational imperative of providing training within the schools for visual acumen and perception” (Culkin, 1965, p. 1) in an increasingly image-saturated society. However, exactly what and how much student perception occurs when watching film in the classroom is another point of contention. This owes largely to instructional practices, which I impeach later in this chapter, and to the very nature of film, which I litigate next.

Film: Active or Passive?

Fueling the “lasting image...of a classroom of slack-jawed students sitting in a darkened classroom” (Fisher and Frey, 2011, p. 2) that many associate with film in the classroom are the allegations that watching film is an inherently passive activity, requiring none of the cognitive or creative skills of the mind, or the mind’s eye, that reading printed texts demands. Iser (1980) contended that film lacks the same “active and creative” facility to participate in filling in the gaps that print texts offer (p. 51). Ostrander (2003) purported that film viewers have little work to do, other than remain awake to complete the cinematic image. With the novel, on the other hand, the reader must create and picture the image in her mind, thus requiring an increased cognitive investment in printed texts.

Jago (1999) likened film adaptations of literature taught in the classroom to a form of modern day SparkNotes in that even high quality movies can only strive to skim the surface of great literature. Teasley and Wilder (1997) confirmed this conventional assumption that students bank on the film providing them with enough information to get by and consequently do not read much of the assigned reading. Jago doubled down by arguing that students disengage *all* critical faculties when it’s movie day in the classroom. Such putative shortcomings of film lend support to the general conclusion that ‘the book is usually better’ than the film (Ostrander, 2003; Corrigan & White, 2004). Still others go so far as to insist that the book is inherently better (Teasley & Wilder, 1997).

In response, Foster (2016) conceded that it is tempting to concur with the frequent assertions that film is an inherently passive medium, only demanding that its audience sit back and passively receive the movie as given. But in reality, he explained, viewers are actively forming judgments about what the screen is presenting the entire time. According to Bordwell

and Thompson (2004), the perception utilized in watching film is an activity in which the viewer's brain aims to relate, connect and compare the film's systematic narrative and stylistic signals within the larger system of the entire film. Nadaner (1984) contended that viewers are continually creating internal meanings while being absorbed in visual reality when watching film, thus characterizing the fundamental act of watching film as cognitive. For him, "the cognitive and educational benefit of the film experience" owes to the "viewer's activity in synthesizing a concretization of the film during the screening" (p. 128).

The cognitive skills used for 'reading' film's visual images (Hobbs, 2007), which Pink (2006) equated with the written word, empowers the viewer to become the final determiners of their significance (Foster, 2016). Indeed, Monaco (2009) explained that a secondary definition of the word "image" is "a mental experience," and that we 'read' them through "a process of intellection" (p. 171), as vision is cognitive by nature (Arnheim, 1969; Neisser, 1976). This aspect of our ability to make sense of visual images relies on learning (Monaco, 2009). This cognitive act common to film and printed texts was documented in the classroom by Garland (2012) when she observed that her English students began to construct understandings of images based on those concepts and details from the films they 'read' in a similar fashion to how they read printed text. Foster (2016) concluded that we "read the movies as we read books" (p. 334).

Marsh and Miller (2000) underscored the parity between film and printed texts as both involve the viewer and reader in becoming "active meaning makers," under the aegis of reader-response theory, and enumerated that both induce the arrangement of phonic, graphic, syntactic, semantic, aural, and visual skills (p. 146). Neuman (1995) and Robinson (1997) concurred that in both visual and printed texts, children serve as active, not passive, meaning makers. Kreuger and Christel (2001) echoed that using film is another path to fostering critical thinking skills.

Parry (2013) contested the notion that film precludes the viewer's participation in creating meaning by pointing to the active reading required to make sense of the symbolic methods by which film reveals concepts relating to setting and character. She also blunted Marsh and Millard's (2001) argument that printed texts make the internal world of the character more accessible than does film by explaining that the character's internal world can be represented both visually and aurally in the latter. Thus, the differing narrative methods do not equate to a disparity in sophistication. Edgar-Hunt, Marland, and Rowe (2010) disputed critics' characterization of film viewers as being ensconced in a vegetative mental state by enlightening that film texts, unlike literary ones, are characteristically metonymic. In other words, what is seen replaces or substitutes what cannot be seen, thus requiring the viewer's mind to 'fill in the gaps'.

In review, opponents and proponents of including film in the curriculum philosophically disagree on whether popular culture forms such as film are suitable for the classroom, with advocates arguing that drawing upon students' preexisting knowledge, skills, and interests is of vital importance in constructing new knowledge and developing understanding of the world they inhabit. Additionally, the two sides dispute whether film constitutes art or is merely a form of popular culture, as the former has a longstanding tradition of study in the classroom. Film study supporters emphasize film's narrative, linguistic, and literary qualities, positioning it as on par with and therefore helpful to understanding printed stories, rather than as coming at the expense of traditional literature. Furthermore, they see film study as increasingly necessary for their students to capably interpret the messages of their image-centric world. Finally, the two sides split over whether or not film is an active or passive medium. All three of these issues informed the conclusions on both sides as to whether or not precious classroom time spent on film is a

worthwhile or wasteful endeavor. However, two more issues that saturate the literature substantively shape viewpoints on the topic of teaching with film in the English classroom. In the next section, I discuss instructional practices with film and briefly survey the history and current status of ELA teacher training relating to film study.

Teaching and Teacher Training with Film: The Good, the Bad, and the Pedagogy

Film study supporters may have built a convincing case for its theoretical place in the English classroom, and in outlining their arguments in the last section, I briefly touched upon some of the pedagogic practices with film that educators found effective in facilitating student learning. For example, instructors often pair related film and print texts to clarify and explore their shared themes (Kreuger & Christal, 2001). Others use film to engage students in analytical discussions (Costanzo, 1992). Some instructors use film to facilitate writing by stopping it for questions and student predictions (Teasley & Wilder, 1997).

Additionally, a minority of English teachers center instruction on the unique methods of communication that film employs. Rather than focus only on the narrative elements common to film and printed texts, such as setting, characterization, conflict, symbolism, plot, and theme, these teachers instruct on how the language of film operates to communicate the story. Though this seldom appears in the literature, such instructors guide their students in learning about how camera angles, lighting, sound, and other cinematic elements work to create meaning and influence the viewer's understanding of the story and the characters in it (Smilanich & Lafreniere, 2010; Golden, 2001; Donaghy, 2015).

However, setting aside the philosophical arguments for and against film for the moment, many other classroom practices leave film study highly vulnerable to criticism. The reality is that teachers have regularly employed film in less than ideal ways in the classroom (Teasley &

Wilder, 1997; Vetrie, 2004; Hobbs, 2006; Goble, 2010; Lipiner, 2011). Too often, instructors employ film as a time-filler, a reward for good behavior, an attentional hook only, a means for controlling student behavior (Hobbs, 2006), or as a stand-in for a genuine lesson plan for the substitute teacher (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Hobbs, 2006). Other teachers misuse film by habitually reducing it to merely a visual aid, or even by just pressing play and letting the film do the instruction (Vetrie, 2004). Still worse, sometimes teachers use film as a chance to grade unit tests while students take a break from the usual work of the classroom (Teasley & Wilder, 1997), or simply as a nonteaching break (Vetrie, 2004).

To be fair, such wasteful practices with film should not surprise given that compared to their training in literature and composition, English teachers by and large have little or no formal training in the analysis of media texts (Krueger & Christel, 2001). Indeed, the best chance for exposure to media literacy is for teachers to chance across it in their professional careers since it is not likely for them to encounter it as education majors in college (Hobbs, 2007). Indeed, “media literacy, and, more particularly film literacy, is still absent from, or on the margins of, national and international policy agendas” (Donaghy, 2015, p. 11).

There was passing chance and reason for optimism regarding teacher training with film during what I termed The Golden Age of Film Study in the first section of this chapter. With his proclamation that “motion-picture appreciation is here to stay” in 1936, film education pioneer Edgar Dale also forecasted that the impetus it engendered would slowly but surely ensure its adoption in both the high schools *and* teacher-training institutions (Dale, 1936, pp. 113-114). A year prior, English teachers’ pleaded for better training “in the preparation for teaching literature” of the “photoplay” (Hatfield, 1935, p. 775). An estimated 345 teacher training institutions gave exposure to instructional methods with film in 1936 (London, 1941). Dale

(1936) reported working “with thirty different teacher-training institutions that are introducing work of this type into their curriculums” (pp. 113-114). But cultivation of the film teacher-training endeavor would be largely curtailed while still in the cradle.

Culkin (1965) revealed the paucity of professional development for teachers of film study over the several decades that followed Dale’s sanguine pronouncement when he lamented that not one school or publisher could offer a classroom-tested program to serve as a model for interested instructors, and that apart from a few summer programs, no colleges or universities provided courses to train teachers with film. Despite teacher training being essential to effective media literacy education, which would require support through undergraduate and graduate school seminars and workshop programs (Heins & Cho, 2003), as recently as 2007, only a small handful of schools of education systematically explored media literacy in ways that afforded preservice teachers to get more than a single class period to consider the concept (Hobbs, 2007).

While English teachers are typically trained to teach literature and composition, and sometimes speaking and listening, they are not trained to teach film (Teasley & Wilder, 1997). Though traditional art forms such as music, art and literature have long been rooted as core elements of national curricula in many countries, film education has typically been ignored (Donaghy, 2015). Instead, film falls “between the cracks” (Fischer & Petro, 2012, p. 3). Despite being the primary instructors of film in the schools, most English teachers across all levels have negligible formal training regarding film study or production (Costanzo, 1987).

Goble (2010) exonerated teachers for lacking “a robust pedagogy around moving images” since the “college of education, library and information science program, staff development program, or building-level initiative that supports the theory and practices of non-print media education” is a rarity (p. 29). “When film is treated at all in English methods

textbooks, it occurs mostly as an audiovisual aid or as something to compare to the ‘real thing,’” meaning literature (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, pp. 7-8). Consequently, many teachers often confuse film study with the educational movement for instruction with audio-visual aids (Culkin, 1965). Overall, the educational system has responded sluggishly to the new visual technologies and the rise of the moving image in society (Donaghy, 2015).

Because of such scarce professional training with film pedagogy, teachers are consequently often left to do the guesswork when choosing the best way of incorporating film to maximize learning (Marcus & Levine, 2007) as they commonly have no specialized training to instruct with film (Costanzo, 1992) and often feel inadequate about how they use film (Teasley & Wilder, 1997). Too, many teachers fear that their students have more knowledge than they do about film (Costanzo, 1992; Golden, 2001), which explains most of the limited instances of teacher resistance to teaching with film (Miller, 1979). Since teachers are “the gatekeepers” of technology in the classroom, they will generally avoid it unless they feel comfortable with it (Lee & Winzenried, 2009). Nevertheless, teachers generally remain eager to include film into their curriculum (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 2) but lack resources (Fischer & Petro, 2012) and strategies beyond the method of comparing and contrasting a book and its film adaptation (Teasley & Wilder, 1997). Despite the explosion of materials brought by the birth of videos, DVD, and the Internet, film teachers and researchers today remain “pioneers—in the best and worse sense of that term” (Fischer and Petro, 2012, pg. 6).

Indeed, much of the literature on teaching with film comes from such pioneering teachers. Kreuger and Christel (2001) used the instructional activities amassed from their own teaching experiences as the primary source for their book on film instruction for English teachers. Similarly, Golden (2001) experimented with a trial and error approach in his English

classroom and supplemented his findings with the fruits of his colleagues' ideas and experiences to arrive at the pedagogical approaches advocated in his book. Teasley and Wilder (1997) authored their book as a guide for preservice and certified English teachers to effectively instruct with film but remarkably and revealingly characterized themselves and all other English teachers as novices when it comes to teaching with film.

To review, the literature reveals that while some teachers have found ways to make film efficacious in helping students achieve substantive ELA learning goals, many more have misused it for non-teaching purposes. Undoubtedly, such misuses of film in the classroom have lent credibility to its critics. But it is difficult to place all the blame on educators, as the vast majority have been given no training for teaching with film at all. Indeed, even those motivated to improve their practice by researching the topic are likely to have difficulty given the gaps in the literature, which I briefly address next.

Gaps in the Literature

In this section, I review the three ways in which the existing literature leaves much to be desired regarding investigation of instruction with narrative film in the high school English classroom. While research on how film scholars make sense of the medium abounds, relatively little exists in regards to how high school English teachers understand and instruct with it. Rather, only a limited number of educators, typically with exceptional knowledge of the medium, speak to the issues involved in grappling to comprehend film as a phenomenon in and of itself. Though they often report on common teacher practices involving film, much of which is undesirable, they offer little perspective on the ways that English teachers see film as a medium, which ultimately underpins how they make sense of instructing with it.

Furthermore, despite more than a century of teaching with film in the ELA classroom having passed, and directives to utilize film in instruction through state and national ELA standards, “little scholarly inquiry concerning the *instructional methods* [emphasis in the original] of using video in secondary classrooms, or about teachers’ perceptions of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of various methods or approaches” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 38) exists. My own anecdotal observations of how other English teachers instruct with film prior to this research endeavor demonstrated to me a chasm between the literature and practice. Indeed, it gave rise, in part, to this study.

Finally, though the literature catalogues the technological innovations that have intertwined with and influenced how film is consumed and how that informs its use in the classroom, there is an inherent lag between the speed of technological innovation and the scholarship that studies it. With the new generation of educational technologies becoming standardized in the modern classroom, including Smartboards, mobile laptop carts, internet and YouTube access, Blu-ray players, online educational platforms such as Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Edmodo, as well as iPhones, social media platforms, streaming services, and other personal technologies and spaces increasingly in the hands of students and teachers alike, the literature offers still less on how these innovations influence teacher consumption, conception, and classroom instruction of film.

In this way, researching how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film remains badly in need and more relevant than ever in a society increasingly saturated by the screen and the moving image.

Chapter 3:

Methodology and Methods

Though my personal interest in narrative film draws back to my early childhood and led me to seek out film courses in college, it wasn't until I entered the teaching profession that I began to seriously consider the art form as a potential type of pedagogy in the high school English classroom. At first, my instincts regarding the efficacy and relevancy of the medium largely guided my path to incorporating film in my own classroom and designing film elective courses. It was not long before I witnessed the unquenchable thirst students have for film and the power film boasts in motivating and enabling them to learn. I grew increasingly curious about best-practice teaching methods with film, keenly aware of the resistance that many in and out of the profession harbored over its place in the classroom. However, there was no training on teaching with film in my teacher preparation program, no in-service professional development opportunities, and state and national teaching standards offered no guidelines other than to use it.

I continued to experiment with instructional approaches with film, as I've long held that the classroom is the laboratory of pedagogy. As I made many discoveries, I soon became increasingly aware of the various approaches that my fellow colleagues took with teaching with film in their classrooms. I also discovered that my colleagues had a very diverse range of backgrounds relating to film, some of whom had unique opportunities and experiences with film that couldn't easily be found elsewhere among high school English teachers. My long-standing interest in film and my newfound discovery of my colleagues' approaches to teaching with it coalesced and gave impetus to my desire to seriously investigate how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film in the classroom.

Methodology

The Qualitative Approach

I chose a qualitative approach in this study because while some research questions lend themselves to numerical answers, others, such as mine, do not (Patton, 2002). Since I sought to illuminate how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film in the classroom space, a qualitative methodology afforded me the necessary framework because many aspects of social experience can be understood and analytically expressed through qualitative field study only (Lofland, 2006). Though qualitative research pursues and privileges insights and deep understanding of “complex phenomena” over experiential generalizations (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1), it nevertheless constitutes an empirical (Smith, 1987) and “well-grounded” source of data (Miles & Huberman 1984, p. 21).

Because I sought to understand how high school English teachers make sense of narrative film in a pedagogic setting, a qualitative approach was especially effective since it presupposes that the “physical, historical, material, and social environment” that people inhabit significantly informs their thoughts and actions (Smith, 1987). Qualitative methods work by inductively generating understanding from observations and interviews in the real world, as opposed to a laboratory or the academy (Patton, 2002), and crucially enabled me to enter the world that my participants inhabit so as to discover its influence on them. Indeed, this methodology is uniquely positioned for explaining processes happening in localized contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Therefore, a qualitative approach was the most suitable for the research aims of this study.

Multiple Case Study

While there are a variety of approaches within qualitative methodology, I elected to conduct a multiple case study. Case studies are most fitting when (a) the focus of the study

centers on “how” and “why” questions; (b) the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) contextual conditions must be considered because they may be relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are nebulous (Yin, 2014). I selected this approach because these criteria perfectly comport with my research given that my primary question centers on *how* high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film *in the classroom space*, and *why* they do so. Regarding the second criterion, I was disinterested in manipulating the behavior of my participants. Too, because the specific context of the ELA classroom brings various relevant standardized pedagogical practices, state and local teaching standards, pre- and in-service training, and other considerations which impact the way teachers make sense of instructing with narrative film, this case study approach satisfied the third criterion above. The final criterion was likewise fitting given that the extent and ways the aforementioned contextual factors inform the phenomenon under study were initially opaque.

Additionally, I employed multiple case study because the resulting evidence from this approach is more robust and reliable than single case study (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). The conditions that call for multiple case study design are when the research “must cover both a particular *phenomenon* and the *context* within which the phenomenon is occurring [emphasis in the original]” because the latter may explain the former, or the boundaries between the two are unclear (Yin, 1993, p. 31). Indeed, to understand how English teachers makes sense of and instruct with narrative film, the relationship between the phenomenon of how they do so and the context of the high school English classroom they instruct demanded consideration. This informed my design and selection process of cases under examination to include teachers with a variety of backgrounds regarding the type of school districts they work in (i.e., suburban, urban,

rural, private), the amount of training with film they may have received, their years of experience teaching, the grade levels, courses, and student populations they teach, and the kind of pedagogical practices they employ in the classroom when teaching with film.

Purposive Sampling

In order to ensure a diverse range of these factors, I purposively recruited eight of the participants based on my personal knowledge of their disparate backgrounds so as to discover the spectrum of ways that English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film. I knew these eight teachers to have varying instructional styles, to have differing backgrounds regarding film study, and to have a range of grades and courses they teach. Additionally, they hailed from suburban, urban and private school settings. I would later recruit two participants from rural schools as well, since I initially knew none. Finally, I recruited one more urban and private school teacher, respectively, to have at least two teachers from each setting, for a total of twelve.

The variations in these factors allowed me to examine how they might inform differences in how the participants understood and taught with film. Qualitative inquiry regularly focuses in-depth on small samples chosen purposefully (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is fitting when the researcher seeks to learn about variation across a set of cases (Lofland, 2006). Whereas such low sample sizes and lack of random sampling would create a “bias” in quantitative methods, it actually affords a distinctive “strength” in a qualitative context because it allows the selection of “*information-rich cases* for study in depth [emphasis in the original]” (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

A Layered Theoretical Lens

As a multi-sensory medium which has generated an enormously colorful corpus of texts, the cinema virtually demands multiple frameworks for understanding (Stam, 2000). As such, I applied a multi-layered theoretical framework to make sense of the data. I will next briefly

explain why structuralism, and its offshoots narratology, semiotics, and formalism, in combination with schema theory and critical pedagogy, are well-suited theoretical frameworks for investigating how English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film in the classroom space.

Structuralism

Structuralism proved a necessary and useful framework in explaining how some of the participants made sense of film as a structural system which communicates through conventions of genre, cinematography, and narrative. Structuralism is a theoretical approach in which human behavior, institutions, and texts are seen as analyzable through an underlying network of relationships (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992) where individual elements derive their meaning from their relationships to all other elements in the system (Eagleton, 1983; Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992; Seiter, 1992). Though structuralism's origins are rooted in linguistics (Corrigan & White, 2004), its application reaches far beyond linguistics since virtually all human activity is expressed through language (Tyson, 1999). Because language operates in patterns, the underlying elements common to human experience may be observed and analyzed. Diverse anthropologic expressions and systems, ranging from music, to economic exchanges, to social life may be analyzed through structuralism since all depend on specific elements or symbols operating in a larger system (Richter, 1998). This framework further opened the door to the theoretical branches of structuralism, each providing a key lens through which to explain the disparate ways that the participants made sense of and instructed with film, which I explain next.

Narratology

The narrativity of film was unanimously cited by all twelve participants and led me to apply structuralism's offshoot narratology, which is concerned with texts, images, spectacles, events, and any cultural artifacts which tell a story (Bal, 1997). Narratology examines various narrative structures, strategies, aesthetics, genres, and attendant symbolic implications, encompassing traditional forms such as epics, novels, and sacred history, as well as modern forms, including comics, television, and film (Altman, 2008), and even alternative forms, such as pantomime, painting, and stained glass windows (Barthes, 1965). The narrative qualities of films were readily apparent for my participants as they were for Bal (1997).

As a theory, narratology studies how stories work, how we understand the raw materials of a narrative, and how we fit them together to form a coherent whole. It likewise examines disparate narrative structures, storytelling strategies, aesthetic conventions, genres of stories and their symbolic implications (Giannetti, 1990). This may entail analyzing how events in a story are ordered, cause and effect relationships, character development, the narrator, and the consumer's role in interpreting the story (Chatman, 1978). For English instructors, this sort of approach is standard practice with teaching literature. Analyzing authorial choices, how a story is told, and the effects achieved by those decisions are a significant focus of instruction in the English classroom, and many of the participants applied it no less when teaching with film.

Since the English classroom is the accepted home for the study of stories in print, as it was for stories from the oral tradition before the printed book first appeared (Culkin, 1965), many English teachers instruct with film on the same grounds. Because narrative film is defined by its story-telling quality (Giannetti, 1990; Bordwell & Thompson, 2003) and has the capacity to tell culturally important stories in the tradition of great literature (Campbell, Martin & Fabos,

2005), teachers' use of film in the English Language Arts class must be understood, in part, in a narratological context. Some participants, however, made sense of film in yet other structural ways.

Semiotics

Because some of the participants spoke of film using a discourse of linguistics, I felt it necessary to borrow from semiotics, or the “study of signs” (Edgar-Hunt, Marland, & Rawle, 2010, p. 13). Semiotics reformulated written and spoken language as merely two among many communication systems and thus opened the door for the study of film as a language (Monaco, 2009) given that film, like all language, is composed of signs. Since film coalesced its own language, a branch of semiotics emerged which is exclusively dedicated to film (Edgar-Hunt, Marland, & Rawle, 2010). Borrowing many of the concepts and much of the jargon from structural linguistics, Christian Metz and others developed a theory of cinematic communication based on the concept of signs or codes (Giannetti, 1990) and ultimately developed the most intricate, subtle, and exact theory of film to date (Monaco, 2009).

The semiotic subset of structuralism is particularly useful for understanding film since it first inquires how meaning is created, which is inextricably connected to what the meaning is (Giannetti, 1990; Seiter, 1992). The signs, as well as the arrangement and order of the signs, in a filmic text are interpreted by the viewer and translated into a coherent story (Costanzo, 1992). Semiotics therefore dovetails with narratology to support the approach of English teachers who focus on the methods by which meaning is created and communicated in film, as they likewise often do when teaching through the means of texts in printed form. Indeed, semiotics views images as signs fit for interpretation akin to traditional language use or the reading of a poem (Corrigan & White, 2004). However, for the participants who teach students how the

components of film operate in concert to communicate meaning is best explained by yet another theoretical lens which is intertwined with structuralism.

Formalism

The approach some participants took of having their students conduct close readings of film led me to apply structuralism's theoretical cousin formalism. Close readings of filmic texts come from the formalist tradition of analyzing literary texts by isolating, naming, and examining the effects of specific elements and their interrelationships. One such method of close reading which borrows from semiotics is to inspect segments of film shot by shot, interpreting the relationships between shot duration, camera movement, and lighting and their patterns of development as codes or structured rules of communication (Corrigan & White, 2004).

Formalism is interested in examining what is specifically literary about a text and is concerned with analysis of the form, structure, and the language of a text to provide the context for the use of literary devices (Carter, 2006). It is a method of analysis that considers form or structure (Corrigan & White, 2004) over other approaches, which might instead focus on examining how social and historical factors inform a text, for example (Richter, 1998). Applied to film, formalism isolates form, the arrangement of its specific components such as light, color, and composition as the primary level of explanation and largely ignores authorship, genre similarities, and other contextual elements. It is "concerned with patterns, methods of restricting reality into aesthetically pleasing designs" through "mise en scene...stylized dialogue, symbolic sounds effects...musical motifs and camera movements" (Giannetti, 1990, p. 377).

Close reading, especially with poetry, is among the most fundamental teaching approaches found in the English classroom, which has only been further encouraged by the Common Core State Standards Initiative guidelines (National Governors, 2010). Teachers train

students to scrutinize the diction, syntax, imagery, and other textual elements in printed form, and rhyme scheme, structure, and meter in poetry in particular. Because of many students' difficulty with the printed medium, some of the participants leveraged their students' greater comfort and familiarity with film to demonstrate how to close read a text before applying those skills to a text in print form. Because of this process of transference, this pedagogical issue also demands contextualization in learning theory.

Schema Theory

Schema theory, which is rooted in psychology and cognitive science, explains the cognitive processes involved in the mind's interpretation of the world and of texts through the application of relevant social and representational schemata (schema theory, 2016). Schemata refers to the organizing cognitive structures that govern how we view and understand the world. These mental structures enable the generation and transfer of knowledge in the mind (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005) and serve to organize categories of information and the relationships between them (Dimaggio, 1997). For example, people may use the image schema of a simple container to transfer and generate knowledge about containers and how they generally function over into other container-like forms, such as bags, bottles, cups, cars, houses, and bodies. These schemas may be combined with other simple schemas to form still more complex schemas (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005).

The narrative elements which contribute to students' and teachers' meaning-making, cognition, learning, literacy, and memory are common to print and film narratives (Parry, 2013). Indeed, by engaging with the narrative of new texts and thereby drawing upon previous experience to make sense of them, "we develop repertoires of experience of narrative from print, film, television, and other media, which help us engage with new texts" (Parry, 2013, pp. 1-2).

This repertoire of narrative experience gained by engaging students in texts across a variety of media to assist them in engaging with new texts is one of the ways that schema theory accounts for the participants' use of narrative film. For example, the teachers often thematically paired film with print texts so as to afford multiple textual experiences, or schemas, for the purpose of better informing students on and illustrating a concept. Much like teaching what a container is by showing examples of a bottle and a cup instead of only the latter, some participants had students read a book and watch a film to teach a common theme and the issues that accompany it. However, the way several of the participants made sense of film demanded one last theoretical lens.

Critical Pedagogy

Some of the participants included film in their curriculum out of regard for their students' ways of knowing, previous knowledge, and cherished values (Freire, 1986). They engaged their students in dialogue that reflects on their own ways of knowing rooted in their own personal circumstances, analyzing the dominant myths shaped by historical and cultural forces (McLaren, 1999). Given that today's students spend inordinate time consuming media such as film (Ostrander, 2003), particularly students of color (Duncan-Andrade, 2006), many of the participants instructed with this form of popular culture in a "critical and empowering pedagogical encounter" (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 25) and aligned with Freire's prescription to incorporate students' interests, prior experience, and ways of knowing into the classroom.

Most of the participants incorporated film as a way to access what students already know and have experienced, and tailor the curriculum to tap into that knowledge (Vetrie, 2004). They viewed it as their responsibility to support students in understanding their own cultural symbols (Postman, 1985). Including film in the curriculum, given its remarkable popularity, is a way that

the participants harnessed the valuable experience and knowledge students walk into the classroom with in order to facilitate discussion and make new material relevant.

I realized very early on that in order to make sense of the multiple ways and multiple forces that shape the phenomenon of how high school English teachers understand and instruct with narrative film, I would require a multi-layered framework. This way, for participants who use film chiefly for its narrative qualities, narratology would fit best. For participants who made sense of film as a linguistic form, a semiotic lens would be most appropriate. Moreover, for participants who understood and instructed with film because it is a storytelling form which communicates as a language, and because they seek to draw on their student's previous knowledge and experience in order to transfer their understandings from the more familiar medium of film to the less familiar medium of printed books, a synthesis of narratology, semiotics, critical pedagogy, and schema theory was needed.

Methods

Data Collection

Because qualitative research “requires robust data collection techniques” (Bowen 2009, p. 29), I employed the three-tiered data collection approach that qualitative findings “grow out of... (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” (Patton, 2002, p. 4; see also Baxter & Jack, 2008). These disparate approaches are typically used in combination with each other to triangulate the data (Bowen, 2009). Triangulation may be understood as the pursuit of convergence among multiple and dissimilar sources of information to formulate themes or categories in an investigation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This method enabled me to produce a convergence of evidence that lends credibility (Eisner, 1991), and

assisted me in determining the strength of evidence in support of my research findings (Patton, 2002).

Interviews

It would be difficult to conceive of a way to effectively understand how high school English teachers make sense of teaching with narrative film that did not involve asking them about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding it. Interviewing is a vital tool (McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, & Francis, 2009) for discovering how participants think and feel about the worlds they inhabit (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

To find answers to my research questions, I first conducted a pilot study with six high school English teachers from the suburban school I teach in, and I asked them questions about narrative film and their teaching experience with it. I chose these six because I knew that they had significantly differing backgrounds and approaches to teaching with film, as well as highly diverse teaching styles. In this way, I sought out a range of cases to explore a variety of ways that high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film.

I used open-ended questions because they allowed me to understand the world as my participants saw it, rather than influencing and limiting their responses through questionnaire categories that I predetermined (Patton, 2002). Avoiding the strictures of researcher-created answer options in favor of open-ended questions allowed participant responses to go in whichever direction they did, thus enabling the data to organically emerge from the participants' experience and thinking. I conducted interviews with these six participants off school grounds in public places, such as the local library or Panera restaurant, so as to maintain confidentiality and to avoid any chance of interfering with their teaching duties, as per my Institutional Review

Board (IRB) obligations. Interviews typically lasted a little over an hour. I began with the following list of questions in my initial pilot interview:

1. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. What grades and courses do you teach?
4. Can you describe what film is to you?
5. Can you describe how often you teach with narrative film?
6. Can you describe which films you teach with and how you choose them?
7. Can you describe your instructional goals for your students when you teach with film?
8. Can you describe how you teach with film in your classes?
9. Can you describe what you have students do before, during, and after viewing a film?
10. Can you describe how you assess learning outcomes of teaching with film?
11. Can you describe the pros and cons of teaching with film?
12. Can you describe if you ever pause the film or replay parts of it?
13. Can you describe how teaching with film impacts your students?
14. Can you describe any training or other background you have with film?
15. Can you describe your impression of how students, colleagues, parents, or administrators view teaching with film in the classroom?

Using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in the pilot study crucially allowed me to try out questions and hone the wording for clarity for subsequent use, and for determining which questions I should jettison or add (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The pilot phase of this study afforded me the chance to refine questions between each succeeding interview. I profited from the initial interviews by eliciting responses that I could not have anticipated when I first crafted questions. For example, I added the following questions to ensuing interviews in this dissertation based on the responses I received from the initial questions in the pilot study:

1. Can you describe any changes in how you teach with film over the course of your teaching career?
2. Can you describe how the Common Core standards or testing has impacted your teaching with film?
3. Can you describe how teaching with film might or might not assist students with the Common Core Regents exam?
4. Can you describe any instances of using film to teach topic relating to race, class, gender, or other similar issues?

Based on the responses I received from participants during interviews in both the pilot study and dissertation, I also used follow-up questions to help achieve “the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implications of what has been said” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 151).

The responses that I received to the questions above shaped my understanding of how the participants were making sense of and instructing with film in the pilot study. First, it revealed that the teachers were using film very frequently in their classroom. In fact, many of them expressed surprise at how much they used it, not realizing the extent until they sat down to speak with me. Second, all participants were using film for very purposeful instructional reasons, and they all spoke of film as a highly engaging and effective pedagogic medium. All six participants testified to the stigma that they witnessed or experienced firsthand with film, though none believed film to be an inherently passive medium, as the critics often allege. The pilot study also opened my eyes to a range of ways and reasons why the teachers instruct with film that was far wider than I had first imagined. Some cited film’s similarity with books, others spoke of the learning power of the visual, and still others testified to their belief in its utility for preparing students for Common Core English Regents exams. These responses made me realize that expanding the number of participants, further diversifying the sample with teachers from urban, rural, and private school settings, and adding questions to my interviews would be a necessary step in my doctoral research to better illuminate the complexity and range of diversity in how English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film.

Toward this end, I recruited an additional six teachers from other schools of different settings (i.e. two from urban, rural, and private schools, respectively) for my doctoral research to

seek additional variation and to investigate if disparate school contexts might yield new questions to pursue or findings. To do so, I recruited two more participants that I previously knew, three participants through referrals from other teachers I knew, and one participant by emailing area teachers at random through publicly available contact information. As with my pilot study, I conducted semi-structured interviews, often lasting between an hour and an hour and a half, with each of these additional six participants. I posed my original questions from my pilot interview, and I also asked the additional questions that the responses from my pilot interviews inspired.

Much of the data I collected from these additional interviews confirmed responses I received from the participants in my pilot study, and some of it added new layers for me to consider. For example, while all participants in the pilot study experienced the stigma that accompanies film in the classroom, two of the six new participants disclosed that their administrators essentially banned the use of film. However, unlike any teacher in the pilot study, three of the new participants shared experiences with either teaching, designing, or trying to create courses that were actually centered on film. The responses I received in this new round of interviews led me to add the following questions:

1. Can you describe how you see film in terms of being an active or passive text?
2. Can you describe how film might impact various subgroups in differing ways?
3. Can you describe what you are doing and thinking as the film plays?

In addition to all of these scripted questions above, I continued to ask follow up questions specific to the responses that individual teachers gave me to the scripted questions. Such questions were not always added to the scripted questions since they were applicable only to the teacher that inspired them. While these methods of interviewing led me to increasingly useful data, as well as new questions that I needed to ask to elicit still richer data, interviewing was not

the only method I employed to pursue my research questions in the doctoral phase of my research.

Direct Observation

Because there are limitations to how much can be gleaned from what people say, I employed direct observations of three participants during the doctoral research to more fully understand the complexities of how they make sense of and instruct with narrative film (Patton, 2002). I recruited three of the original six participants from the pilot study to conduct observations of them teaching in the classroom, particularly when using film. Though observing all twelve participants would have been ideal, logistics and access allowed me to do so for only three. I chose the three teachers based on their highly disparate backgrounds related to film, their vastly different teaching styles, and their descriptions of how they instruct with film in the initial pilot interviews. One of the teachers had no formal training with film whatsoever and was self-taught. The other two teachers both had taken college-level film courses. Of those two, I knew one to speak of and instruct with film in ways I had not encountered in the literature, and the other had actually worked as a professional film critic in his previous career.

Since all three of these participants are colleagues of mine, I was able to visit and observe them in their own classrooms in my building during my own free periods. I conducted repeated observations over prolonged periods of time to increase my participants' comfort level in having me observe them and to increase opportunities to explore and compare interview and observational data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). After obtaining permission from parents of all students in each of the three teachers' classes, I conducted an initial observation prior to the participants even instructing with film so as to get a baseline for what the class ethos was and to allow the teacher and students to get accustomed to my presence. Following that, I conducted

additional observations throughout the school whenever the respective participants indicated to me that they would be incorporating film into their lessons. This resulted in 18 observations of Mr. Davies, 14 observations of Mr. Sanders, and 6 observations of Ms. Franklin. The classes that I observed were 82 minutes long for all three teachers' courses. I also continued to conduct interviews in between observations so as to inquire about how the teachers made their instructional decisions, how they perceived the impact of their use of film on their students, and other related matters as the units I observed them teach progressed. I observed these three participants teaching in their classrooms over a period of eight months.

Direct observation afforded me the advantage of being able to contextualize the data that I collected because I could witness it in close proximity to my informants' experiences (Lofland, 2006). It further allowed me to compare the participants' descriptions of their teaching with their actions in the classroom, and it afforded me a chance to appreciate many nuances of their pedagogic methods that are difficult to detail in conversation. However, I chose to employ one more method of data collection to triangulate the data.

Document Analysis

Since observations are limited to only overt behavior, and because documents afford "a snapshot" into what the author deems important and therefore their personal viewpoint, (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 166), I chose to conduct document analysis of the same three participants' instructional materials whom I observed. The documents utilized or created by these participants to facilitate student learning afforded a unique window into the ways they make sense of teaching with narrative film. The choices participants made concerning the content, assessment, structure, and other elements, included or excluded, of instructional materials they employed in their classrooms frequently shed new light on how they made sense

of narrative film and instructed with it. For example, many of the documents that teachers passed out to their students revealed their approach to center on either *what* or *how* film communicates depending on the types of questions or tasks students were enjoined to respond to.

Document analysis often simultaneously served to confirm my findings from my interviews and observations, and even aided in informing some questions that needed to be asked and situations that needed to be observed as part of my research (Bowen, 2009). For example, many of the teacher handouts confirmed their descriptions of purposefully using film toward specific learning goals, in some cases related to preparing for the Common Core Regents exam, and geared toward actively engaging students with the film. By employing three methods of data collection, I had a far richer wealth of information for analysis.

Data Analysis

Transcription

Including the interviews with the original six participants for the pilot study in the 2016-2017 school year, as well as the additional interviews with three of those original six that I observed in the classroom plus the six additional participants in the 2017-2018 school year, I conducted a total of 27 interviews, totaling over 30 hours of audio recording. I made the decision to transcribe every last minute of the recordings myself as I knew this would give me an intimacy with the data that could not be achieved by hiring someone else to do this very laborious, time-consuming task. Thus, I truly lived with my interviews, as I spent countless hours meditating on their contents while transcribing every last word of the participants as I anticipated the next interview (Seidman, 2006). This exponentially increased my knowledge of the interview data, a daunting amount of information, which consequently allowed me to recall the specific

words of the informants, notice similarities and differences within and between interviews, and to ultimately identify themes, which I detail below.

After obtaining parental permission from all students enrolled in the classes of the three teachers I recruited to observe teaching, I conducted 38 direct observations, translating to over 50 hours of instruction, beginning in November of 2017 and concluding in June of 2018. During the participant observations, I took copious notes, describing the lessons, behaviors, and instructional strategies of the participants and quoting their exact language as often as I could, which ultimately filled several spiral bound notebooks. I typed up my notes and jottings of each observation shortly after conducting it. As participants distributed teaching materials to their students, they shared copies with me, or gave me access to Google Classroom where they digitally shared their teaching materials with their students. I collected 27 documents from the three teachers that I observed. I made photocopies of each document so that I could annotate and code their contents right on the document (see Appendix A for an example). These transcriptions of interviews and observations, and the documents that I collected provided me with additional data regarding the participants' thinking about and teaching with film and thus assisted me in identifying themes, which I detail next.

Coding

I began the coding process as soon as I completed the very first pilot interview. I labeled the data and created a number of codes over the many months that I conducted and transcribed interviews and observations, including: (1) The Stigma of Film; (2) The Power of the Visual; (3) Film as Story; (4) Training with Film; (5) Pausing with Film; (6) Film and Technology; (7) Teaching What Film Communicates; (8) Teaching How Film Communicates; (9) The Transferability of Film; (10) Film: Active or Passive?; and (11) The Obstacles of Teaching with

Film. I constructed these codes because I consistently recognized evidence of each through the language of my participants in the interviews, their actions I observed in the classroom, and the content of the documents they used in their teaching.

For each coding category, I divided the data into subcategories. For example, within the category of The Stigma of Film, I fractured the data into the following subcategories: (1) Stigma From Colleagues; (2) Stigma From Students; (3) Stigma From Parents; (4) Stigma From Administrators; and (5) Self-Imposed Stigma. Ultimately, I constructed 107 thematic categories and subcategories in the data I collected.

As my understanding of the data evolved, I sometimes refined the names and adapted, altered, or added to the coding categories and subcategories. For instance, I initially recognized that many of the participants were using the pause button to stop film for various pedagogic reasons. I initially understood that as merely a teaching technique and coded instances of this in the data as Pausing the Film. Soon I recognized the variation in the ways that the participants were speaking of, using, and making sense of the pause button and divided that category into (1) Pausing While the Film Plays and (2) The Purpose of Pausing. However, as I collected more and more data, and upon further rumination, I realized that my coding was inadequate for capturing what the data was telling me. There was a power dynamic at play in the various ways that the teachers understood and used the pause, so I ultimately constructed new codes to capture it: (1) The Purpose of Pausing; (2) No Patience for Pausing; (3) Powerless to Pause; and (4) To Wield or Yield the Power of Pause.

By labeling the data across all interviews and observations related to pausing film, I was able to identify the multiple reasons for why the participants used the pause button when showing film. They did so to overcome what they saw as the potential for students to consume

film passively, as well as to refocus their students' attention, check for understanding, and to examine how the text functions. Upon labeling all data related to pausing, I noticed many instances where the participants spoke of their students' disdain for when they pressed pause, leading me to identify the theme I called No Patience for Pausing. By scouring the data, I further noticed how the participants spoke of an additional difficulty related to pausing film. It was not merely that students disliked the teacher disrupting the film's narrative, but the data showed that their disdain stemmed from their impotence in controlling how they consume film in the classroom. The participants' language revealed that this stood in contrast to students' relative power over how they consume printed texts, and led me to the theme I labeled Powerless to Pause.

Finally, by closely inspecting and comparing the data across all the interviews, I realized that some of the participants recognized this power dynamic and sought ways to transcend it. They did this by offering to stop or replay excerpts of the film that the students wished to reexamine, or they provided clips of the film whereby students could press pause, rewind, or replay of their own volition on a laptop at their fingertips, very much like they might do so with the pages of a book in their hands. Consequently, I identified the theme To Wield or Yield the Power of Pause since these participants aimed to share this power otherwise fully vested in the teacher's hands. By identifying themes in this way, I was able to further distinguish the relationships among those themes. This was a process that evolved over time, requiring me to frequently return to my findings to flesh out and fine-tune each theme and how the themes related to one another.

In order to ensure that thematic connections were grounded in the data I collected, I strived to identify confirming *and* disconfirming evidence in the coding process (Rubin & Rubin,

1995). Using disconfirming evidence safeguarded against my proclivity toward confirming evidence only, and was necessary for understanding because the nature of reality is complicated and often contradictory (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For instance, several participants extolled the virtues of film for preparing students for the New York State Common Core Regents exam, however, they cited the advent of that exam as to why they severely curtailed their teaching with film. Therefore, looking for differences and similarities in how people who are in disparate circumstances make sense of their world is an especially fruitful approach to identify themes that accurately reflect the phenomena under scrutiny (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Indeed, I did discover contradictory data, and I address that in this dissertation.

The open coding method I employed in this research study afforded a layer of protection against my own potential bias when I interpreted the data. Open coding and its hallmark characteristics of questioning and constant comparisons allowed me to mitigate my subjectivity and predispositions. The process of fracturing the data ensured my examination of preconceived notions and ideas, and my pre-existing familiarity with the language and context of my participants, by contrasting them against the actual data. This method also allowed me to identify errors of incorrectly categorizing data through systematic comparison and by relocating the data and attendant concepts into the congruous and appropriate categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The Constant Comparative Method

In order to generate theory to explain how high school English teacher make sense of and instruct with narrative film that is integrated, close to the data, and clearly expressed, I chose the constant comparative method (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, & Scott, 1993). Utilizing comparison as the “main intellectual tool” (Tesch, 1990, p. 96), I categorized, coded, and

delineated categories, then connected them (Boeiji, 2002) to distinguish conceptual similarities and to discover patterns (Tesch, 1990).

First, I compared data within each individual interview in the pilot phase of this research endeavor which allowed me to identify the central meaning of the interview with the codes that I attached to it and to comprehend the interview, including any challenges, highlights and discrepancies (Boeiji, 2002). This approach supported my attempt to make sense of the interview in the context of the entire story as the participants told it, which I replicated for each subsequent interview in this study. Next, I compared interviews within the same group (i.e., between the six suburban participants in the pilot study phase). By comparing data from different interviews that I interpreted and coded as thematically related, I was able to identify concepts that served as criteria for systematic comparison of the interviews, and thus some interviews could be grouped together because of their similarity regarding specific criteria. For example, I identified how Ms. Donaldson cited film's visual depictions as allowing her students to more easily identify literary techniques. In a subsequent interview, Mr. Davies spoke about his students' increased comfort and confidence when analyzing film because of their vast experience with reading visuals. I interpreted and coded these two instances as thematically related, which I referred to as 'The Power of the Visual', because of the visual nature of film which explained both phenomena. I then applied this criterion to additional interviews, which yielded further evidence in support of this theme from these two and other participants.

Finally, in order to gain deep insight, complexity and its related coherence (Boeiji, 2002), I compared interviews between various groups (i.e., suburban, urban, rural, and private school teachers regarding their experience with narrative film. More than anything else, I found remarkable similarities in the language of the participants in regards to how they understood film

as a narrative form with equal potential to be actively or passively engaged, depending on the purposes and pedagogic practices that the teacher employs. I did appreciate differences in the permission to use film or the pressure to not, depending on whether the school was private, suburban, urban, or rural. Urban teachers testified to their administrators strongly discouraging teaching with film, private and rural teachers described feeling supported in doing so, and the suburban teachers reported falling somewhere in between. In another example, the private school teachers did not speak of film's applicability to preparing students for the Common Core Regents exam as their students aren't subject to taking it.

This additional layer of comparison, seeking differences and similarities in how people from differing circumstances understand their world (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) was particularly revealing and useful in contextualizing the data given that the "facts of social life are socially embedded artifacts, and the researcher's understanding of the data requires that they be accurately placed within the subjective and intersubjective contexts that make them meaningful" (Lofland, 2006, p. 94). Similarly, this approach assisted me in identifying themes across multiple spaces given the myriad real-world circumstances that inform one's lived experience, behavior, and thinking.

As I identified themes, I began to construct network diagrams to explain the relationships among those themes. The process of fleshing out themes and making sense of how they connected to one another was a process that evolved over many months, and therefore my network diagrams did likewise. In Appendix B, the fledgling diagram with very few themes, underdeveloped subcategories and poorly understood relationships reflects my initial steps in making sense of the data. Here I began making superficial connections without seeing the underlying nuance and complexity of relationships in the data. In Appendix C, the more

developed and intricate diagram illustrates my evolving understanding of the data I collected. My thinking progressed as I had more time to consider the data. Creating network diagrams and writing drafts based on the data and the codes I constructed forced me to identify where they held up and where they needed refinement or reconfiguration. Finally, Appendix D reveals my maturing understanding of the information I collected and a more polished conception of the data, themes, and their relationships in the latter stages of the coding process.

Memoing

I utilized analytic memoing to harness the data I collected toward developing theory by reflecting upon the inquiry and coding choices and processes, as well as the patterns, concepts, categories, and themes that I identified in the data (Saldana, 2009). This meta-cognitive process (Mason, 2002; Clark, 2005) assisted me in forestalling the risk of losing sight of important concepts (Glaser, 1978; Groenewald, 2008), served as a catalyst to making deeper meaning from the data (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008), added to the credibility and trustworthiness of this qualitative research, and provided a record of the meanings I derived from the data (Groenewald, 2008). For me, simply having time to think over the data, as well as the process of writing about the data, afforded me the chance to experiment with it in my mind and on the page as if it were pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, testing how one piece fits with and makes sense with another.

Memoing proved to be critical in helping me make choices in developing the study's design in the incipient and later phases, and in coming to deeper understandings of what the data was telling me. Often, after completing hours of transcription and coding, I found myself having epiphanies about the data when I was far away from it. In those moments, I would try to get to my computer or paper as quickly as possible to record my realizations about what the data was saying. In one such case, as I sat in a movie theater with friends and family waiting to see

Ridley's Scott's *All the Money in the World* in early 2018, I had the epiphany that the myriad teaching practices that I had documented among twelve participants could be neatly, elegantly, and simply explained in two broad categories: (1) Teaching *What* Film Communicates and (2) Teaching *How* Film Communicates. I spent the rest of the film thinking of how the participants would be using the movie in their classrooms based on my observations of them, the documents they used, and how they spoke of teaching with film. I frequently utilized jottings to temporarily record my thoughts when I was far from home and my work materials. Indeed, I still have the ticket stub where I scribbled "Teaching Film: What vs. How." I stored these memos as records of the growth I made in this investigation and further used them to advance my progress. In this way, my memos actually constituted research data in this study (Saldana, 2009).

Participants and Settings

Participant Selection

I began the pilot phase of my research by selecting six colleagues of mine, as I was familiar with their teaching styles and had some knowledge of their teaching with film based on previous conversations with them. I recognized that by purposively recruiting, I could achieve a very rich participant pool to uncover the complex and competing ways that English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film. Additionally, I chose purposive recruiting because I wanted to focus on the characteristics of teachers who had very limited or very vast training and experience with film, to have general or very specialized interest in film, and to have a wide variety of English courses on different grade levels that they teach. I suspected that these factors likely informed the disparate ways in which each participant makes sense of and teaches with film.

Following the pilot phase, I elected to significantly expand the scope of the study for several reasons. I recruited six additional participants for semi-structured interviews: two from rural, urban, and private school districts, respectively. This allowed me not only six additional perspectives on teaching with film in the high school English classroom, but it also afforded me insight into how the contextual factors that come with different districts and settings inform how teachers understand and teach with narrative film. I recruited one teacher I previously knew who worked with film from an urban school and another I knew from a private school. Since I didn't know of any other fitting prospective participants, I began asking other teachers I knew if they were aware of any English teachers who worked with film. This method of "snowball" sampling, whereby people shared with me their knowledge of other potentially fitting candidates for this study (Creswell, 1998, p. 158), ultimately led to successfully recruiting four of the twelve participants (see table on p. 71).

In the final phase of the study, I recruited three of my original six colleague participants for direct observations of their teaching and access to their instructional documents for analysis. As before, I purposively chose the three based on their varied understandings and approaches to film, particularly informed by the responses they gave me in the pilot interviews. I would have preferred to observe all six original participants, as well as the six participants from the other school districts, but logistical challenges and access limitations allowed for observations with only three. This additional access invaluablely allowed me to achieve triangulation of data for the three participants.

Participant Colleagues

Recruiting participants from my English department demanded special considerations, but it did not deviate from the norms and standards of qualitative methods. Instead, social inquiry

takes advantage of the researcher's personal connections as avenues to potential investigation more than any other form of social inquiry (Lofland, 2006). Despite conventional reservations over recruiting participants from coworkers or others with pre-existing relationships with the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Lee, 1993; Asselin, 2003), the illusion that robust data are best achieved through distance is belied by the reality that cultivating close ties with others is one of the greatest strengths of ethnographic research (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). Since field research demands both an intellectual curiosity about a topic of interest and access to people and places from which to collect the relevant data, they may derive from experiences and opportunities that are personal and that provide the needed access to the appropriate social settings (Lofland, 2006).

Since a positive relationship, good chemistry, trust and respect between researcher and participants are all essential prerequisites for me to uncover rich data, having pre-existing relationships with interviewees can actually be propitious for research purposes as the steps for developing rapport are hastened (McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). I was careful to clarify my role, articulate my research intent, and reinforce confidentiality throughout the research process in order to avoid potential problems with role confusion, sensitive disclosures, perceptions of hidden agendas, and consequent mistrust (McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, & Francis, 2009)

Recruiting interviewees from amongst friends or colleagues can present the possible difficulty of their feeling obligated to participate (Johnson & Clark, 2003), or simply owe to their comfort and feeling of safety with the researcher by virtue of their pre-existing relationship (McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). To mitigate such issues, I mailed potential participants recruitment letters to their publicly available home addresses, under the

oversight of the Institutional Review Board at Syracuse University, so as to meet standard research protocols, as well as alleviate the possible pressures felt from a face-to-face encounter. The recruitment letter and consent form detailed the confidential and voluntary nature of participation, the possible risks and benefits, and the allowance to withdraw at any point with no consequence of any kind. I will next provide a brief description of each of my twelve participants using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality, followed by a table of participants, which catalogues their demographics and type and amount of their participation in this study.

Description of Participants

Ms. Smith is a Caucasian female teacher with 20 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, she describes herself as a planner who balances a structured and organic approach. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching English 11 AP Language and Composition and a senior Sports Literature course. Interviewed 9/23/16.

Ms. Thompson is a Caucasian female teacher with 21 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, she describes herself as organized, consistent, and reflective. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching English 10 Regents, English 11 Regents, and a Public Speaking elective. Interviewed 10/3/16.

Ms. Donaldson is a Caucasian female teacher with 22 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, she described herself as traditional in some ways but as a continual learner who continues to change and improve. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching English 11 Regents, English 12 AP Literature, and a Public Speaking elective. Interviewed 10/21/16.

Ms. Franklin is a Caucasian female teacher with 18 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, she described herself as a big-picture thinker who tends toward informal conversation as an instructional method in the classroom. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching English 9 Regents, English 9 Co-Teach, and college level writing and textual studies courses offered at the senior level of the school. Initial Interview 10/24/16.

Mr. Davies is a Caucasian male teacher with 26 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, he describes himself as very reflective, constantly developing and flexible regarding the direction of a lesson. At the time of interviewing, he was teaching English 10 Regents, English 10 Honors, English 11 AP Language and Composition, Creative Writing, and a senior college-level textual studies course. Initial Interview 10/26/16.

Mr. Sanders is a Caucasian male teacher with 17 years of experience as a high school English teacher in a suburban district. As a teacher, he describes himself as a career-change teacher who tries to build meaningful relationships with students, treating them as unique individuals, while being “firm, but fair, approachable yet a rule follower.” At the time of interviewing, he was teaching English 9 Regents, English 10 Honors, English 12 Reading Media, and a college level Public Speaking course). Initial Interview 11/2/16.

Ms. Muller is a Caucasian female teacher with 16 years of experience as a high school special education English literacy teacher in a rural district. As a teacher, she describes herself as recipe-based as a result of working to meet the needs of her students who struggle with literacy skills as she strives to tailor her instruction to building on their individual strengths and weaknesses. At the time of interview, she was teaching remedial English literacy classes. Interviewed 3/8/18.

Mr. Pierce is a Caucasian male teacher with 6 years of experience as a high school English literacy teacher in a rural district. As a teacher, he describes himself as pro student and out-of-the-box with his instructional approaches, with a strong rapport and working relationship with his students. At the time of interviewing, he was teaching a literacy based course he designed called English Concepts and a Public Speaking class. Interviewed 3/24/18.

Ms. Wilson is a Caucasian female high school English teacher with 18 years of experience in an urban district. As a teacher, she describes herself as a “school mom,” balancing rules with love, and focusing on advancing each student to a step beyond where they started and aspects of life that go beyond the curriculum. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching 9th grade English repeaters classes and a college-level English course. Interviewed 3/5/18.

Ms. Cole is a Caucasian female high school English teacher with 24 years of experience in an urban district. As a teacher, she describes herself as a combination of counselor, creative director, entertainer, and role model, who ensures every lesson has meaning, challenge, and engagement. At the time of interviewing, she was teaching 10th grade advanced English and 12th grade Regents level English courses. Interviewed 5/23/18.

Mr. Collins is a Caucasian male high school English teacher with 18 years of teaching experience in a private school. As a teacher, he describes himself as one without formal training who operates by posing questions he doesn’t yet have answers to, and encourages students to notice, question, and interpret texts. At the time of interviewing, he was teaching a film elective course, a creative writing course, and a college-level English course. Interviewed 6/7/18.

Mr. Hays is a male high school English teacher with 16 years of experience in a private school. As a teacher, he describes himself as a student-centered teacher who aims to get his students to consider how they think about, see and engage the world. At the time of interviewing, he was teaching exclusively senior classes, including college-level courses. Interviewed 6/13/18.

Table of Participants

All information listed below is as of the time of the initial interview of each participant.

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Years Teaching	School Setting	Number of Interviews	Number of Observations
Ms. Smith	F	Caucasian	45	20	Suburban	1	0
Ms. Thompson	F	Caucasian	44	21	Suburban	1	0
Ms. Donaldson	F	Caucasian	43	22	Suburban	1	0
Ms. Franklin	F	Caucasian	40	18	Suburban	3	6
Mr. Davies	M	Caucasian	46	26	Suburban	6	18
Mr. Sanders	M	Caucasian	51	17	Suburban	6	14
Ms. Muller	F	Caucasian	39	16	Rural	1	0
Mr. Pierce	M	Caucasian	30	6	Rural	1	0
Ms. Wilson	F	Caucasian	54	18	Urban	1	0
Ms. Cole	F	Caucasian	43	24	Urban	1	0
Mr. Collins	M	Caucasian	55	18	Private	1	0
Mr. Hays	M	Haitian-American	51	16	Private	1	0

Positionality and Protections against Prejudice

Reflexivity

In a research endeavor such as this, which involves an investigation of a topic that is of personal interest to me, the profession in which I am a member of myself, and participants who are colleagues of mine, I am obliged to disclose and reflect upon my position and interest in the topic to ensure my findings are not unduly or unwittingly influenced by my own biases (Seidman, 2006). Reflexivity demands that I acknowledged my role in the construction of meanings connected to social interactions and the possibility of my influence on the research (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for me to reveal my “assumptions, beliefs, and biases...that may shape” my inquiry...“so as to bracket or suspend” them “as the research proceeds” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Therefore, an account of my positionality follows.

In the interest of full disclosure, narrative film has long held a place close to my heart. As a Caucasian child who grew up in an upper middle-class Jewish home that valued education and

the arts, film was but one medium that surrounded me in my impressionable formative years. Though I was not raised on the classics per se, or formally educated on film study, my early exposure to the work of directors such as Steven Spielberg, Brian De Palma, Francis Ford Coppola, and others, as well as actors such as Daniel Day-Lewis, Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, Dustin Hoffman, Robert Deniro, and more planted the seeds for my budding passion for film. In college, I quickly found myself drawn to elective film classes, which provided my earliest experience with formal film study.

My first step at the crossroads of film and pedagogy happened when I was in graduate school as a secondary English education major during my second placement as a student teacher in an upper-middle class suburban high school. My host teacher taught a film elective course which I soon took over teaching. The genre based approach he favored tended to feature a couple of examples of each genre, with a focus on some basic background of the genre and of each specific film, as well as an emphasis on elements of the story, characters, and conflicts. To my recollection, there was virtually no inclusion of cinematic analysis.

Shortly after landing my first and current full time teaching position, I investigated the possibility of starting my own elective film course. My vision was to borrow and build on the genre-based approach from my student teaching days, with an emphasis on screening both classic films that helped define the hallmarks of the genre, along with later films that subverted the genre's conventions, as well as a major focus on cinematography and the meanings created by it. This 'language' of cinematography by which film communicates inspired me to name the course 'Reading Films'. After gaining administrative approval for a trial run of one section, which roughly 15 students signed up for, the course quickly mushroomed into four sections of film a year across two additional levels: Reading Films 2, which I designed around an *auteur*

theory approach, whereby the director is positioned as the controlling author of the film and the cinematic and other choices that contribute to her signature style are unpacked, and *Advanced Reading Films*, which analyzes film through continental theory, including Feminist, Freudian, Marxist, and other lenses.

Over my fourteen years of teaching high school English, I discovered that my veteran colleagues seemed to have a wide variety of approaches to teaching with film in their own classrooms. Some appeared to use the standard methods, such as comparing a book to its film adaptation, and some used film in ways that were unique. As my desire to study film as a teaching tool deepened and became the focus of my doctoral studies, my realization that the department I work in featured a rich diversity of teacher backgrounds and practices regarding film began to crystalize. I decided to pursue a pilot study with six of my colleagues to try and discover how they made sense of teaching with narrative film in the English classroom space.

Interviewing colleagues presented some special considerations. Likewise, being an English teacher, and one who has spent much time and thought on teaching with film, positions me as an insider to the world I wished to study as a researcher. Acknowledging and reflecting on these multiple positions I hold has afforded a safeguard against appropriating my understandings, language, interpretations, experiences, and truths in framing my questions, and interpreting the testimony of my participants. It has also sensitized me to the sometimes conflicting roles I situate myself in as both a supposedly detached researcher and invested colleague who cares how the research might potentially represent and affect my coworkers. Ultimately, I see the balance of those multiple roles as beneficial, if not perhaps even ideal, since they collectively demand an equilibrium between the competing roles of dispassionate collector and interpreter of data and the humanistic caretaker of the participant. I believe such an accommodation simultaneously

leaves the data and the participants in the most responsible of hands. In this way, these roles demand I be cognizant of a variety of potential biases that could potentially impact the data I collected.

Social Desirability Bias

As is the case in everyday social interactions, people serving as participants desire to be viewed in a favorable light (Collins, Shattell & Thomas, 2005) This potential bias, known as the social desirability effect, raises the specter that information that participants provided me with, or omitted, may create an inaccurate picture of the subject under study as it relates to that participant. One safeguard I employed against this possible bias was to triangulate data through other qualitative methods to combat this. Aside from assisting to enrich the data collection, the added benefit of culling and comparing data from a variety of sources, was that I could reduce the impact of possible biases that might exist in the study (Bowen, 2009). Participant observations and document analysis allowed for comparisons between what a teacher participant in this study said and what they did in the classroom. This is auspicious even with the most candid and humble participant if only for the sake of protecting against the possibility of unintentional or unwitting disparities between the participant's perception and reality. In fact, while one participant described his teaching methods to me in the interview format, my observations of his practice revealed far more complexity, innovation, and depth than he had described or given himself credit for. Had I not been there to witness his teaching, I would have been ignorant to the nuance and full scope of his instructional practice.

Observer Effect

Another prospective danger I considered is known as the observer effect, by which the researcher inevitably impacts the very thing they seek to study. This prospective issue is hardly

unique to qualitative approaches, however, as all pursuits of knowledge invariably suffer from observer effects of some kind (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). Monahan and Fisher noted that outsiders view the data as biased, and Jensen and Lauritsen (2005) reasoned that the traditional social scientist consequently strives to remain distanced from her object of study. However, despite conventional thinking on the matter, Monahan and Fisher concurred with Jensen and Lauritsen that fears over observer effects are misplaced and procedures to mitigate their effects obviate vital data and critical understandings.

Rather, ethnography's ability to shape the dialogues and practices under observation can be considered a benefit of the method (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). Jensen and Lauritsen similarly contended that "the problem of the social scientist is not that his connections are too many and too strong, but that they are too few and fragile" (p. 72). Monahan and Fisher found value in the performance of participants no matter how "staged for or influenced by the observed" as they nonetheless "often reveal profound truths about social and/or cultural phenomena" (p. 358). Unconvinced skeptics should find solace, in any event, since "with sufficient time, informants will become inured to the presence of the researcher, let down their guard, and behave 'normally'" given that it is "simply too difficult for informants to maintain a façade for researchers for months or years at a stretch" (Monahan & Fisher, 2010, p. 362). In this way, my many observations and interviews with three of my participants over the course of eight months served to further assuage concerns over observer effects without the risk of sacrificing important data or essential discoveries that accompanies many other preventative measures.

Maximum Variation Sampling

I utilized maximum variation sampling by recruiting an additional six participants from outside of my school so as to look past the most convenient contexts granted by my primary

access to discover the diversity of the phenomena and to minimize error and bias (Lofland, 2006). For this purpose, this study includes interviews with high school English teachers beyond the convenience sample of my workplace, as I enlisted teachers from a diversity of teaching situations and backgrounds. This use of theoretical sampling minimized the possibility of premature theorization and conclusions by looking to other situations, groups, or subgroups to see if the emerging understandings hold or apply. Likewise, sampling extreme or atypical cases by seeking outliers as compared to more typical cases helped me guard against bias associated with my role as researcher (Lofland, 2006). For this reason, too, I used purposive sampling based on the six interviews from the pilot study to select three particular participants for further study that featured two anomalous cases based on teacher background and the instructional methods they employ in their classrooms. By purposefully seeking contrasting cases, I increased the “conclusion verification” of my research (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 27).

Member Checks

Another prophylactic against prejudicing the interpretation of data is the use of member checks, which enables participants to express the situational concerns that frame the meaning of their own experiences for themselves (Lofland, 2006). As Miles and Huberman (1984) reasoned, a “good explanation deserves attention from the people whose behavior it is about; informants who supplied the original data” (p. 28). This practice affords an additional oversight against observational and interpretive mistakes (Seidman, 2006), and is arguably the most critical method for establishing credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this way, I consulted and collaborated with participants, to the extent they were interested and willing, to review the collection and interpretation of data since meaning “is not out there to be found by the

researcher; it is continuously made and remade through social practice and the give-and-take of social interaction, including interaction with the researcher” (Monahan & Fisher, 2010, p. 363).

Upon my offer to share, six of the twelve participants expressed an interest to review the drafts of my data chapters. Most of those six indicated that though they trusted my quotations and characterizations of the interviews and observations I conducted, they wished to read the chapters out of sheer curiosity of my findings. Indeed, all six expressed their approval over how I described and made sense of the data I collected, and one pointed out an attribution error I committed. Some of these participants marveled at the responses and practices of other teachers in the study, as they expressed the surprise and interest they had in many of the themes that I identified, which I discuss in detail in the two chapters that follow.

Chapter 4:

Why High School English Teachers Instruct with Film

This chapter focuses on the spate of reasons the participants outlined for why they teach with narrative film in their high school English classrooms. I organize my findings into seven sections, beginning with the first theme I identified: (1) The Stigmatization of Film in the English Classroom. Here I describe how the participants perceived the tainted reputation of narrative film in the classroom, which students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and remarkably, even the English teachers in this study themselves subscribe to in varying degrees and ways. Though this form of stigma did not involve the most extreme manifestations that some stigmas may entail, such as pariah status or trauma, the participants' language nevertheless revealed that teaching with film risked or involved a systemic "mark of disgrace" to their status as a teacher (Stigma, 2019, para. 1). This lowly status of film in the classroom is resisted by the participants in the second theme I identified, entitled (2) English Teachers' Purposeful Instruction with Film. Here I recount how the participants described their carefully considered pedagogic use of film aimed at achieving highly specific English Language Arts (ELA) learning goals.

I examine the foundation upon which the participants build their rationale for teaching with film in the sections that follow. In (3) The Narrativity of Film, I explain how the participants unanimously understand film chiefly as a narrative form, thus justifying its place in the English classroom, and in (4) The Power of the Visual, I draw on their language of visualization to explain film's unique power and learning potential with today's students, whom they recognized as being immersed in a visual culture. Next I describe how the participants invoked the language of schema theory to describe how the skills learned in the more familiar film texts could be extrapolated to print texts in (5) Transferability of ELA Skills, and how that

particularly advantaged disadvantaged students in (6) Film to Help Marginalized/Struggling Students. Finally, I describe how the participants see film as a tool that can transcend the academic and be leveraged to facilitate critical inspection of the lived experiences of students in (7) Critically Examining Society and Self. I follow these themes with a brief summary of this chapter.

The Stigmatization of Film in the English Classroom

All twelve participants testified to the stigma that accompanies their use of narrative film in their classrooms. “The perception that you’re letting them off easy” (Ms. Wilson), that it’s merely “a time killer,” or that “showing film is lazy on the teacher’s end” (Mr. Pierce) systemically permeated the instructional experience of the teachers in this study. Ms. Smith characterized the attacks by presumptuous critics of film in the classroom to being “akin to just saying that PE teachers are just throwing a kickball out there.” They reported that members across all strata of the educational system—from students to parents, from faculty members to administrators—regularly subscribe to this stereotype. While the participants unanimously resisted the pall cast by this stigma over perhaps the most celebrated form of popular entertainment and most castigated form of education (Vetrie, 2004), their language revealed the stigma’s effect to be so powerful as to actually influence their own thinking and instructional decisions with film. I will enumerate the three ways in which the participants spoke of the stigmatization of film next, beginning with how they made sense of student perceptions, adult perceptions, and their self-perceptions of narrative film in the classroom.

The “only drawback” to incorporating narrative film into the English classroom that Ms. Thompson could even think of “is that perception of you’re not doing anything in the classroom if you’re showing a film.” Ms. Donaldson noted that because of the all-too-common practice of other teachers showing films after major assessments with no apparent instructional purpose,

students have often come to see film in the classroom as little more than “a babysitter.” Mr. Collins described being “acutely aware” that students view film in core English classes as little more than “downtime for the teacher.” The misperception that film in the classroom means “that all we’re going to do is watch movies” (Ms. Muller), and that no teaching or learning will occur, has led teenaged students to becoming more apt to “sneak peaks at [their] phone[s]” during class because “it’s *only* movie day” (Mr. Sanders), to thinking that they can “check out” (Mr. Davies), and to even believing that they “don’t need to go” to class on a day that film is being shown (Ms. Wilson).

Their adult counterparts hardly differ. Mr. Hays recounted some parents who “question it still” and implied that his using film was “dumbing down the curriculum.” Mr. Franklin reported hearing “disparaging comments” from fellow faculty, and Mr. Sanders described being stopped and questioned by a colleague in the hallway for an English class fieldtrip to see a movie that his classes weren’t even joining. The reputation of the educational value of film is “almost like an ongoing joke amongst staff and students,” according to Ms. Thompson.

It’s a joke that many administrators find no humor in, however. Ms. Franklin described administrators warning about teachers using film. Mr. Davies surmised that often “judgments will be made” by administrators “because to them walking by, all they’re going to see is kids looking at a movie” when the lights are dark and the screen is glowing. When teacher and students engage in discussions, written responses, or other academic work related to the film, passing administrators likely won’t connect that intellectual labor with the film since often the classroom lights will be back on and the screen dark. Mr. Davies expressed worry about the future possibility of “administrators...department chairs, or curriculum coordinators” forbidding

film in the classroom because of a perceived disconnect with ELA standards or a shift to prescribed learning modules that are a reality for other educators he has come in contact with.

For Ms. Wilson and Ms. Cole, that reality already hit home. For a time Ms. Wilson felt compelled to revise her course syllabus to list film titles as texts her classes would “read” instead of “view” so as to obfuscate the films she was showing because her “principal said, ‘We don’t want to be seeing video. There is no reason for anyone to show more than a five minute clip of a video.’” Similarly, Ms. Cole lamented that she “just had a principal, who wants to be our superintendent, who didn’t want anybody to show any kind of film.”

The lasting stigma that teaching with film is tantamount to “a day off from class” (Ms. Thompson) is so powerful that it has significantly impacted even the English teachers who recognize its instructional value. Ms. Wilson grieved the “obvious...bias” that has followed film nearly all of her career and has caused her to have to “constantly prove its value.” That same “misperception” has caused Ms. Franklin “to be on the defensive,” and for some of her colleagues to “feel self-conscious about using film, whether it’s a clip, a documentary, or an entire feature film.” Despite his strong belief in the pedagogic prowess of film, the stench of the stigma surrounding film is so strong that Mr. Davies experienced a level of anxiety and guilt resulting from being made to feel that he was negligent in his teaching duties for using film:

“It’s one of those things that many of us have. This worry that if we’re using a lot of film we’re not doing our jobs because we’re English teachers and we’re supposed to teach books. I know that I kind of have that. And I still kind of do.”

Mr. Davies’ apprehension reflects the underlying shibboleth in the public education system that the teaching of English is biblio-centric, rather than multi-modal, when he defines the conventional understanding of the job as exclusively teaching books.

The stigma that surrounds film is so powerful that it gave impetus to Mr. Davies virtually abstaining from teaching with it despite his experience and certainty that film offers uniquely effective pathways to learning: “That was me policing myself.” Revealingly, while he initially felt no qualms about instructing with film in the college level course he teaches to high school students, and had no concern whether film would satisfy the curricular expectations of that course, he ultimately worried he was shortchanging his students’ educational experience because of how much film he was using:

“[The college administrators of the course] don’t care. They’re not gonna give you any flack. If you wanna do an entire course with just film? Go for it... I found myself using more and more film in [the college level classes I teach to high school seniors], and then thinking to myself, ‘Jesus. This is also senior English, and here they are going an entire semester—or in one case, maybe an entire year with reading only one or two full length books.’ And so, the college adjunct instructor part of me was like ‘That’s fine.’ The high school part of me was like ‘I’m really selling these kids short.’”

The disparity between the high school and college mindsets Mr. Davies described experiencing reveals the tension in his own thinking driven by the stigmatization of film, which soils its reputation in the high school English classroom. The resulting cognitive dissonance pulled Mr. Davies’ instructional instincts in opposing directions, with film losing the battle. The stigmatization of film proved so powerful as to influence Mr. Davies to severely curtail his use of film, despite his assuredness of its educational efficacy. Ultimately, discussing film for this study made him “feel very guilty about not doing the film stuff [he] used to do” because in talking about it, he was reminded of how effective his previous instruction with it was before he abated it.

Ms. Smith likewise noted that she does “hesitate sometimes” to use film despite it being a “really effective medium” because of her “fear” of feeling like she was possibly using it “too much.” In yet another example, Mr. Collins recognized that limiting film in his English class owed not to any shortcoming of its educational efficacy or to any external pressures, but to the stigma penetrating his psyche: “It’s me. It’s me projecting.” As with other participants, the stigmatization of film in the high school English classroom drove Mr. Collins to unconsciously subscribe to the canard that film is an unworthy medium, despite his firm conscious conviction to the contrary. Like the blood that stains Lady MacBeth’s hands conjured only by her poisoned mind, the stigma that stains film’s reputation as a pedagogic tool poisons the minds of even the very practitioners who testify to its unique instructional powers.

In summary, all twelve participants discussed the stigma that they have experienced with narrative film. They described film as a medium regularly perceived by students, colleagues, administrators, and parents as unserious, unchallenging, and unfit for the high school English classroom. Remarkably, several participants who firmly believe in film’s educational value ultimately succumbed themselves to the power of film’s stigma and curtailed their use of film of their own volition. Belying this enduring negative reputation, however, all twelve participants detailed very purposeful educational uses for film in their English classrooms, which I will discuss next.

English Teachers’ Purposeful Instruction with Film

Though film in the English classroom has often fallen victim to suspicion of being inherently unworthy of the classroom, or of teacher malpractice, the twelve participants unanimously agreed that film’s role in the classroom need not be limited to a mere break for student or teacher, time-filler, babysitter, or reward for good behavior. Rather, all participants

avored using film selectively and purposefully, over a desultory coda to an instructional unit. In this section, I review three subtopics that they discussed as being at issue for leveraging film toward educative benefit. In (1) *Entertaining or Educating?*, I explain how despite the stigma that surrounds film, the participants use it for purposeful pedagogic reasons. Next, I describe how the participants debunked the apocryphal notion that film is any more an inherently passive medium than printed texts are in (2) *The Passive Double Standard*. Finally, in (3) *Old (Film-Viewing) Habits Die Hard*, I discuss the obstacles the participants saw in facilitating active student engagement with film, the determining factor that they cited in overcoming those obstacles, and their counterintuitive and paradoxical insight that while students are indeed savvy film consumers, their vast experience and abilities with film alone are inadequate for deep understanding of it.

Entertaining or Educating?

All twelve participants underscored their disdain for showing film without a clearly defined pedagogic purpose, or merely for entertaining their students. “A movie with no reason? I tell ya’. That’s like doing a word search to me. That’s not my goal,” insisted Ms. Franklin. “It’s not gonna be like ‘just get out your popcorn,’” Ms. Smith echoed. Ms. Muller acknowledged that while “maybe that’s the reputation” film has, her classes are instead “picking apart that scene, or analyzing” that film. “I never show [film] gratuitously...I really never have just shown a movie just because,” reported Mr. Sanders. Ms. Smith selects and uses film “for a very specific purpose, like to deal with satire,” for example. Debunking another film stereotype, Ms. Wilson clarified that screening a film in her class is never to babysit the students so that she has a day “to just correct” student papers. Ms. Donaldson agreed that it’s simply not “worthwhile to pop the movie in and there you go...there’s a purpose why we’re doing this.” In chorus, the participants

laid bare the pedagogic justification for their purposeful inclusion of film in their curriculum and the rigor that it entails.

The majority of the teachers' language on the educative use of film involved descriptions of intellectual labor on the part of their students. In Mr. Hays' class, students "know that they're going to work. Even if [they're] watching a movie...It's not just play time. It's not something we do to relax. It's not a break." Rather, film "advances the curriculum" by eliciting students to "think deeply. Think in new ways. Think about things [they] haven't thought about before." Here Mr. Hays not only demonstrates his view that film may serve as an intellectual instrument for student learning if treated as something more than mere entertainment, but that film may be leveraged to facilitate student cognition that otherwise might not occur.

Likewise, when employing film in his class, Mr. Pierce testified that "there's a lot involved. A lot of effort on [the students'] part that goes into it." Like the other participants, Mr. Pierce makes sense of film in the classroom as something that demands cognitive exertion, contradicting the conventional perception that film is inherently a mindless activity. Ms. Wilson underscored her expectation that students "need to be thinking about" the films she shows, and Ms. Cole similarly described using film specifically to effect "higher order thinking skills" in her students. In this way, she speaks to her understanding that film may be used to achieve the most desired and ambitious learning goals standardized in education.

The participants understood film as a purposeful pedagogic tool, requiring intellectual labor from their students, and resulting in cognitive growth. They intimated that such learning outcomes with film are only achieved through the expectations they set and their careful consideration in using it instructionally since film will not inherently elicit these results by simply showing it. Indeed, some of the participants elaborated on the obstacles that accompany

film for instructors who use it purposefully and strive to maximize its potential in the classroom, which I present next.

The Passive Double Standard

Several of the participants partially agreed with the charge that critics level at film of it being a passive medium, requiring no processing, interpretation, or even cognition on the viewer's behalf in constructing meaning, thus making it unsuitable for an educational context. While the participants acknowledged that it is *designed* by filmmakers to be passively consumed, and it *can* be passively viewed in the classroom, they vehemently disagreed that it is *inherently* a passive medium. "When you're the ideal audience," you're taking in the story on its most superficial level, and "you've suspended your disbelief. You're just gonna buy into everything that's on there," as "you go for the pleasure, or whatever" the filmmakers intended you "to feel," explained Mr. Davies. By this he refers to how film operates and is traditionally consumed. That is, when a film plays, hundreds of thousands of images race across the screen, at an astonishing standard rate of 24 frames per second, complicated by musical scores that subtly inform the viewer's understandings of the myriad images they see, with scant time for or intention of the viewer to deconstruct how they felt, thought, or were manipulated by what they saw and heard.

Film simply wasn't constructed to have the audience slowly and methodically analyze it, Mr. Pierce explained, revealing his nuanced understanding of the medium. Rather, "the way film was designed was you're strapped into the experience for 90 minutes and then you get up, shaking and blinking in the light. That's how it was built." His colorful description reflects the overwhelming effect that film has on most viewers given its multi-layered communicative methods, since film synthesized and subsumed the linguistic methods of a spate of artistic forms that pre-dated its advent while it simultaneously created a linguistic form that is *sui generis*.

These participants reveal a shrewd understanding of film by recognizing that it combines principles of acting, writing, costuming, photography, choreography, music, and more, a concept captured by the German term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which may leave a viewer nonplussed or even unaware as to how it manipulates their thoughts and feelings while the images wash over them. If the teacher doesn't take measures to engage their students in actively analyzing film, the participants concurred that it is indeed a medium that will remain passively consumed.

But so, too, literature. Some of the participants discussed the notion that print literature is equally susceptible to passive consumption as film is in the classroom. For them, film "can be allowed to be a passive activity...in the same way...that reading can be allowed to be a passive activity. That cuts both ways," as Mr. Pierce sees it. His use of the word 'allowed' reflects the teacher's responsibility in ensuring that both mediums are actively engaged. For this very reason, Ms. Cole ensures her students "don't just sit back and watch," but remain "actively engaged" when film plays. Relatedly, Mr. Hays did concede that one potential "downside [to film in the classroom] is if a kid does check out when watching," but he argued "that's also a downside when reading a book." Ms. Wilson echoed that "even when [students] have a book, [they] also have that ability to look at something and not be processing it."

Mr. Davies likewise pointed to the folly of criticizing film for its passive potential when long-accepted forms like literature are no different. Though "popular film was engineered to be passively taken in," Mr. Davies thought one could make "the same statement about almost all media, including the highest forms of literature." In other words, as a commercial and not a scholarly product, film is generally intended for sale as light entertainment. However, he thinks not even "Shakespeare was written to be actively analyzed and parsed" but instead "was made to be passively received as entertainment" in its time. In this way, Mr. Davies establishes an

equivalency between print and film media in their potential for academic benefits regardless of their creators' purposes, and thereby bestows legitimacy to the latter for educational purposes when leveraged effectively.

Mr. Collins was another participant who dismissed the “naïve assumption” that “literature always insists on being interpreted and being pushed back against,” and he doubled down that it’s “just as great a falsehood” to assume that one is necessarily passive when viewing film. Here Mr. Collins not only exposes the bias against film, but the bias toward printed texts. Mr. Hays likewise “disagree[d]” with both assumptions and posited that “understand[ing] a great film...requires as much critical engagement...as reading a great novel,” which explains why “it’s challenging to read some stories by David Foster Wallace,” just as it’s “challenging to watch a Stanley Kubrick movie.” Like Mr. Davies, he equates the mediums of film and print in regards to their cognitive potentials and demands. In this way, understanding “a great film requires as much critical engagement...as reading a great novel,” according to Mr. Hays. In his estimation, it is up to the teacher to ensure active engagement, as a good teacher “wouldn’t allow or reward passive viewing of a film any more than [they] would reward passive reading of a [printed] text.”

Since “kids can just tune out and pay no attention when [they’re] reading a print text also,” Ms. Wilson believes the real question is, “what do you do to make it interactive? What do you do to make sure your kids are thinking while they’re watching?” She, too, puts the onus on the teacher to ensure active engagement and cogitation when working with film, just as with printed story forms. Mr. Pierce agreed that film “can be as passive as we allow it to be, or it can be as engaging as we make it.” “It all just depends on how you use it,” Ms. Muller agreed. In this way, the participants view film as *tabula rasa*, or a blank slate, which can be molded to the teacher’s will for educative purpose or not.

The participants debunked the canard that film is an inherently mindless, passive, unchallenging medium. Instead, they understand film as a medium like printed texts, in that both have equal potential to be critically examined, questioned, and analyzed, or mindlessly consumed. By implication, the teacher serves as the fulcrum in determining the students' classroom experience and learning outcomes with film. Indeed, some participants elaborated that the teacher's role in effectively facilitating learning with film goes beyond just how they approach instruction with it in the classroom. Rather it is informed by how they more broadly approach and understand film as a medium themselves, as I illustrate with the following salient example.

Mr. Hays described himself as “always suspicious...when he hears teachers make that...argument” that viewing film is a passive activity. He questioned the understanding and approach such teachers have and take themselves when viewing film: “It’s like, what are you doing when *you* watch a film? Do you realize how much you’re missing? Do you actually look at a film passively [yourself]?” His incredulity that a teacher might be consuming film passively themselves intensified as he considered the implications that would have for the students of such an instructor:

“And if you’re a critical reader, I can’t imagine that you also wouldn’t be a critical viewer of films. It’s a critical mindset. Either you engage your mind or you don’t... I feel bad for the students that they teach. Because the students they teach are missing out.”

The “critical mindset” Mr. Hays strives to instill in his students when viewing film starts with the instructor's orientation to viewing film. His disdain for “the dismissiveness” that many show toward film by regarding it as necessarily a passive medium reflects the double standard that film is unjustly subject to and the way the participants make sense of the critical role that the teacher

plays in facilitating students' active engagement with filmic texts. But critics and teachers who dismiss film's potential as an active medium are hardly the only obstacles to overcome in ensuring worthwhile learning outcomes when teaching with film, according to the participants.

Old (Film-Viewing) Habits Die Hard

In addition to the conventional misperception that film is an inherently passive medium, the participants spoke of another challenge that the teacher must surmount in facilitating their students to critically examine film: the wonted way students consume it. That is, students typically enjoy film as light entertainment. Indeed, closely studying film is a highly "unnatural move" that "very few people would natively" do, according to Mr. Davies. Ms. Donaldson similarly but more bluntly characterized students as being used to "brainlessly watching" film, and consequently, Mr. Hays noted in agreement, they "want to do it the way they're used to" at home when viewing film in school. This presents "a huge obstacle to overcome" for the teacher, as Mr. Davies sees it. When teaching with film, the participants recognize that they are not starting with a medium absent any prejudices. Rather, they must labor to overcome the predisposition students have that film is unrelated to serious study.

The participants next underscored that teachers must disrupt their students' viewing habits so as to facilitate active scrutiny of and critical thinking about film in the classroom. Mr. Collins believes that "we have to amplify for them, as teachers, the ways in which they have to become more active" when viewing film. Similarly, Mr. Davies sees it as the teacher's "job...to try to set up situations where they stop, review things, and dig in a little bit, and try to figure out, well how is this working? And then ultimately...what is it doing to its audience?" He refers first to the teacher's challenge of helping students overcome the inexorable nature of film, which inherently makes critical inspection challenging. He next refers to the multiple goals in his

instruction of having his students analyze how film ‘works’ as a communicative system, and ultimately, the viewer’s unwitting susceptibility to the way the film makes them feel and the ideology it propagates. Ideology may be understood here as values regarding gender, race, socio-economics, politics, power structures, and other societal issues. I will discuss this issue at greater length later in this chapter.

To counter passive engagement, some of the participants highlighted several other requisite instructional approaches. For instance, Mr. Hays stressed the importance of maintaining the same “expectation in the classroom” for students working with film as the instructor would when teaching novels. Likewise, Mr. Collins views teaching as “extremely similar in terms of approaching a book and approaching a film.” As with literature, it requires “time to talk to them about how to look at” film, or the teacher is just “inviting them” to engage it passively, Mr. Collins clarified. Mr. Pierce also underscored the need to get students working with film to “slow down, and really critically think about things.” Here the participants’ language not only reflects the need for teachers to facilitate students engaging actively and deeply with film, but also the demands this places on precious classroom time required for that to happen.

The participants counterintuitively and paradoxically concluded that despite students having grown up watching movies their entire lives, viewing film critically actually requires them to be trained. For instance, Mr. Collins insisted that students need to “learn how to watch a movie” since “the way [they’ve] been looking at things is inadequate.” He reveals his understanding that merely watching film for passive enjoyment is wholly insufficient for achieving deep understanding of it. Moving beyond “judgment,” is how Mr. Davies distinguished merely liking and disliking a film from analyzing it, whereby feelings are reserved in order to achieve understanding of how the object of study operates. For students to be

“actively engaged” in analysis while working with film, the teacher must “train them for that,” Ms. Cole explained. Despite the ease with which students and most people consume film, the participants recognized that deeply understanding it paradoxically requires a skillset that is not innate or necessarily gained by copious hours of viewing it.

Contradicting conventional wisdom, the participants concurred that film is not an inherently passive medium, and that determining whether film in the classroom is passively or actively engaged by students depends chiefly on the teacher, both in regards to how they view film themselves, and how they set up their students’ interactions with film in the classroom. If the teacher consumes film passively, as mere entertainment without critical inspection, then there is little doubt their orientation will be replicated by their students. Contrastingly, if the teacher engages film with a critical mindset themselves, and takes pains to train their charges to do likewise by affording time and opportunities to slow down the viewing experience and closely examine how film operates, then film can be an active and extremely worthwhile instructional medium.

In review, the participants collectively scoffed at the idea of using film as a purely non-instructional reward for students’ entertainment. They cited the critical role the teacher plays in recognizing and utilizing it as an active medium, and to set up situations whereby students interact with it. Despite their vast experience with film, which ironically makes the teacher’s goal of active engagement more difficult given the passive way students typically enjoy film at home, students require training to adequately analyze its complexities. However, this is merely where the story of how the participants make sense of instructing with film begins. In the next section, I detail how the participants unanimously framed film as a distinctly narrative form with remarkable similarity with printed stories.

The Narrativity of Film

The way all twelve participants make sense of film is, in part, through the lens of narratology, which is concerned with texts, images, spectacles, events, and any cultural artifacts which tell a story (Bal, 1997). Narratology examines various narrative structures, strategies, aesthetics, genres, and attendant symbolic implications, encompassing traditional forms such as epics, novels, and sacred history, as well as modern forms, including comics, television, and film (Altman, 2008), and even alternative forms, such as pantomime, painting, and stained glass windows (Barthes, 1965). Considering the teachers' characterization of film through a discourse of narratology is essential for understanding their justification for integrating a medium best known for light entertainment into their classrooms.

Every Picture Tells a Story

“Great film tells great stories. And it’s all about stories” in the English classroom, Mr. Sanders argued. Indeed, he added that “film reminds [him] of the great written down stories.” Similarly, Mr. Collins referred to film as “enjoyable storytelling,” Both reveal not only their understanding of film as a vessel for narrative, but also their reverence for it. Mr. Davies went further still when he characterized film not only as “a narrative work,” but as a very literary one: “Film is still the purest, biggest sensory input that you can take, especially for someone who really cares about language and narrative.” In doing so, he equates film with printed forms by emphasizing its linguistic elements, and even privileges it by nodding to its multi-tracked system of communication via sight *and* sound. Similarly, Mr. Pierce characterized film as “just another form of storytelling that I think is more in tune with our culture today than anything else...and it’s a more accessible means of storytelling...It’s more conducive to the culture we live in.” Here Mr. Pierce simultaneously positions film as both conforming to conventional narrative hallmarks

while complicating it as he points toward what he sees as its greater relevance to modern society than older forms such as printed texts. This is a theme I will explore in greater detail later in this chapter.

Both Ms. Cole and Ms. Franklin employed a discourse of narratology when speaking of film's natural home in the English classroom. "Who doesn't love a good story?" Ms. Cole asked rhetorically when explaining why film fits so comfortably in her English classroom. Ms. Franklin elaborated still further on film's narrative quality and attendant native place in the English classroom:

"I think of myself as a teacher of stories. I think that that's one of the important things that I'm supposed to be teaching, is how to read stories. How to interpret stories... Stories are our business. Films are stories. That's kind of where we live."

Ms. Franklin added that she uses "film to teach stories, to talk about characters, to talk about any of these things that are a part and parcel of our content." She specified that her "ninth grade course in particular is very much story driven" and she especially thinks "film works there." In other words, precisely because of its narrative essence, film is a fitting and effective medium in meeting the same instructional goals in her English classroom that printed stories accomplish.

For all twelve participants, the *sine qua non* of film is its narrative quality. Given that stories are the heart of the English classroom, they see film as a natural fit. Moreover, because of film's multilayered system of visual, auditory, and linguistic communication, some participants see film as a specially positioned narrative form for modern audiences. For these English teachers, as for Bal (1997), the "narrativity of films is obvious" (pg. 161).

Film and Print Texts: Separate but Equal

Not obvious to skeptics of film, however, is why a visual story form should be studied in the English classroom when stories in printed form have long held the status quo. “This is where we study narratives. This is textual studies. I don’t think there’s really a better place for it. It’s the written art. It’s used to convey a message like any other communication text,” Mr. Davies responded to such questioning. By categorizing film as another communicative textual form, Mr. Davies parallels film with print and other narrative forms despite their differences.

Mr. Pierce agreed after he investigated the ELA standards and realized that the understanding of a text need not be narrowly defined as “just traditional book[s].” Rather, to him, “everything constitutes a text...Film is no different. Posters, or graphs are no different. Those skills are vital” since “literacy skills go way beyond” printed forms only. As such, Mr. Pierce disrupts and decenters printed forms of narration from its traditionally predominant status. Mr. Sanders concurred that “text doesn’t mean print text only.” He noted that when analyzing print and film versions of the anonymously authored *Beowulf*, he and his students “treat [the film] as every bit a viable text as the written text.” Because of film’s narrative reciprocity with printed texts, he too, “think[s] it belongs in [his English] classroom.”

Though the participants recognized the differences between print and film texts, they underscored their similarities. Mr. Collins regarded film as “multifaceted storytelling” with “as rich a variety as literature.” Ms. Wilson characterized film as “just stories” which “move in front of us outside our brain instead of just inside” as poetry does “with condensed language,” for example. While she acknowledges their competing methods and uses a discourse of egalitarianism, she de-privileges printed stories and thus bestows reverence upon and equivalence between film and print. Similarly, though Ms. Cole granted that film and print

communicate in separate ways, she doubted “if you can separate” them because storytelling is inherently “just part of [film].” For Ms. Thompson and the other participants, “they are equal.”

Though none explicitly cited the expanding definition of ‘text’ to include “a variety of media” (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 7) by both the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996) and the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010), the participants made sense of film as merely another story form worthy of study as any narrative text would be in the English classroom. The participants’ experience and intuition would only be buttressed by pointing to its codification in the standards in defending it to their frequent skeptics and even in their own minds, as previously discussed in this chapter. It might even pave the way for expanding instruction with it. Nevertheless, the participants only advanced their argument regarding the parallels between film and printed stories.

Despite the negligible differences in how stories in film and printed form communicate, the ways in which the participants characterized their purposes in teaching with film further reveals how they view it as a story form on par with printed literature. Ms. Smith articulated the mutual teaching aims she has with film and printed texts in her English classroom, owing to the shared storytelling characteristics of the disparate mediums: “I think that's what we try to do with literature, too, is we try to get them to see the world differently. To see through a different lens... That's what literature does.” Using a language of perspective, Ms. Smith ascribes one of literature’s most powerful qualities to film, in affording its audience the ability to reimagine their thinking about the world they inhabit. Mr. Davies even more explicitly characterized film as a form of narrative and similarly spoke of its abilities analogous to printed literature: “Film is that really special storytelling experience where you get to see things through other perspectives and eyes.” Here he underscores film’s capacity, like literature’s, to grant its audience access to the

viewpoint and experience of the other. Both Ms. Smith and Mr. Davies trumpeted film's storytelling ability to offer the viewer a life experience different from their own or their students.

The shared life experiences that film offers positions it as a "consensus narrative" for the participants by serving as a vessel of communal "cultural experiences" (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 258). For precisely this reason, Ms. Thompson pairs filmic stories with printed stories to share human experiences that she and her students might not have familiarity with or otherwise have access to. In her thematic unit centered on the experience of war, for example, she planned to pair film with Lauren Hillenbrand's (2010) biography of veteran Louis Zamperini *Unbroken* and Tim O'Brien's meta-fictional *The Things They Carried* (1990). She explained:

"I don't know what it's like to be in a war. I think we're very blessed living in a country that doesn't deal with the devastation that some deal with on a regular basis with war. So I'm hoping to make it as real as possible using clips from [*Saving*] *Private Ryan*."

In addition to trying to give her students the human experience and perspective of those who have gone through war via printed and filmic narratives, Ms. Thompson's favorite film to share in her 11th grade class is an adaptation of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* precisely "because it's so different from anything that our students live." Ms. Thompson reveals her perception of many of her student population's inexperience with facing firsthand racial discrimination, poverty, decisions about abortion, and other issues dramatized in the film. Her method to vicariously provide otherwise unavailable real-world experiences to her students through film has been previously documented for its benefits (Culkin, 1965). By singling out the film adaptation over the printed source material, she intimates that film accomplishes this in ways that resonate more powerfully with her students than books do, which I will discuss in greater detail in a later section.

The equivalency between film and printed literature is so great that Ms. Thompson characterized film as simply a “book that came to life” and just “another form of literature.” Mr. Davies described film as an experience that is “similar to what I can get from a novel.” Film “reminds” Mr. Sanders “of the great written down stories,” and he reminds others that “film comes from screenplays, which are written down” by “screenwriters” who indeed “are authors.” In his view, “there’s a huge connection between film and things that are written down.”

Owing to the technological evolution of the medium, Mr. Collins pointed to the blurring lines that separate film and literature in the way people consume it:

“Since it’s at home, you can stop it and start it as you can close a book. It’ll often be delineated in chapters. What chapter am I in? And then there are all the extras. So now you’re being given a critical commentary on the thing like when you’re reading a book and looking at the annotations, so film has been turned into a more ‘booky’ medium than it was designed to be.”

Like the other participants, Mr. Collins couches film in a distinctly literary discourse. Using the language of literature, he notes the evolving way in which film can be accessed by consumers, likening scenes to chapters, bonus commentary to annotations, and the ability to interrupt the film as one easily can the reading of a book.

Though the participants’ focus on film’s long-standing and expanding literary qualities ring true, few laypeople, or even educators, tend to make sense of or discuss movies in this way. The increasing convergence between film and books reifies the participants’ rationale for including film in their classroom, as the participants understand film to not only be another form of story, but one with qualities which increasingly make it less distinguishable from books. Though none cited film’s increasing availability, affordability, portability, and ease of

ownership, several participants concurred with Monaco's (2009) sentiment that it soon "may no longer be possible to make explicit differentiations among" novels, film, and television forms of narrative (p. 253). However, film's diverging qualities from printed texts is what underpins another way that the participants make sense of its place in the classroom.

The Power of the Visual

In addition to justifying film in the English classroom on narrative grounds, all twelve participants referenced the "visual culture" (Mr. Collins) that today's students have been immersed in "from the time they were born" (Mr. Sanders) as a salient reason why they teach with film. Mr. Hays characterized the visual as "their domain," which communicates in a "language they're familiar with." Here Mr. Hays identifies film in linguistic terms, understood through a screen literacy, which is native to his students. Other participants also spoke in terms of a language of screens: "They're on screens *all* the time. That's the world that they're in," Mr. Davies noted. "It's no secret," Mr. Sanders acknowledged, that we "live in the most visually-oriented time, I think, in our history. And this generation that we are teaching, the millennials, are the most visually oriented generation ever." And because "all they know is screens, smartphones, TV screens, [and] computer screens," Mr. Sanders is convinced that "it's helpful to supplement the reading [and] instruction with film." In the two subsections below, I outline how the participants used a language of visualization to explain how film affords their students increased confidence and motivation in the learning process.

Student Confidence with Film

Because of students' remarkable familiarity with the visual medium of film, half of the participants in this study noted the increased confidence students have in the English classroom when film is incorporated into the lesson. Even for his students who enjoy reading challenging

texts, Mr. Hays perceived that film “usually raises their confidence. They feel like this is a medium that they understand implicitly. That they’re more familiar with than the written text.” Mr. Hays recognizes the societal shift from a print to a digital culture over recent decades, leaving his students far more experienced, fluent, and therefore confident in the latter.

Similarly, for Ms. Muller’s students who “struggled with the actual reading process, or the vocabulary...they feel more confident [with film].” She cited her students’ own language as evidence: They often say, “‘Oh, I got this,’ you know. Or ‘I can do this.’” Likewise, especially for Ms. Wilson’s English Language and special education students, film “is a lot less intimidating than dealing with print,” which gives them “a higher level of confidence” and “a place to stand and something to offer” when wedding it to printed texts. By this, Ms. Wilson recognizes the importance of incorporating the familiar to leverage learning of the unfamiliar with her students. Both specify film’s impact on their struggling students here, which is a theme I address more fully later in this chapter.

Incorporating film makes use of *a priori* student knowledge, thus valuing what they already know and building self-assurance in areas where they might otherwise lack experience, skill, and confidence. Indeed, Mr. Davies employed screen language and connected it to increased levels of student confidence in the classroom. He argued that regardless of student ability, because “kids are familiar...and comfortable with film...you have kids coming in with this really high level of self-confidence” that enables “students to recognize something in that way of reading visual text and say, ‘Well that’s what I do all the time. I know this. I can get this.’” Like Ms. Muller above, he cited his students’ own language as evidence of their confidence.

And students aren't wrong, as far as the participants of this study understand. Though the participants maintained that students have much yet to learn about their native screen language, they are nevertheless very "savvy film consumers," Mr. Sander confirmed. Indeed, one reason why he teaches with film is because what he gets "from them is amazing... They get it. They prove time and time again that they do." Mr. Davies agreed using virtually identical language: "The thing is they get it. They understand visual signs." Indeed, they understand so well that "some of the kids see right away" the visual elements in a film that Ms. Wilson confessed to not noticing herself at all.

Several participants noted the power that film's visuals hold over and grant students. Ms. Cole cited "the powerful" capacity film has to "draw out feelings and emotions" and discussions on her students' personal situations when she teaches with film. Because young people especially "tend to latch on, and retain longer, the visual" (Mr. Sanders), Mr. Sanders and Mrs. Muller both appreciated that the information they teach which is conveyed by film has an increased chance of "sticking with them" (Ms. Muller). The increase in student self-confidence and even retention of content that the participants identified may be explained by both student familiarity with screen language and by the following theme I identified for how these teachers understand instruction with film.

A Motivational Force of Nature

All twelve participants saw film and its visual nature as a way to "motivate" and "engage" their students in the content they teach because of the inherent interest their students have in film. "In order to entice kids, and really get them involved," Ms. Cole explained, "you have to switch up what you're doing" and include "a little visual" with the printed text. This approach helps students "connect the material to something that's just a little more exciting than

blackboards and a white pitch,” according to Mr. Sanders, which allows “them to connect” class content to “something visual...exciting...[and] familiar” to them. Connecting to the visual nature of film, both Ms. Cole and Mr. Sanders characterize film as a motivational tool which bridges the divide between what students must know and what they are already interested in knowing.

To a person, the participants cited film’s unique ability to engage students in their curriculum. All of Ms. Donaldson’s students were “really excited to see the movie version” of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* in her unit on the novel, and “not just in a fun way.” Her reflection demonstrates both the eagerness that students have for film, and that it can be leveraged for more than mere entertainment in the classroom. She points to the serious interest in the unit that film effected for her students. Likewise, Ms. Franklin noted how her students “seem to engage more” in her unit on *The Freedom Writer’s Diary* when they get to see the film adaptation. Consequently, she “often uses” it when teaching the novel because “they like that a lot” and display greater interest in the unit. Indeed, Ms. Franklin noted unanimous student preference for film over books: “I don’t think I’ve met a kid who would be more engaged by print than by film.” In discussing the motivational effects that film has on their students, the teachers in this study continued to employ the language of the visual when detailing how film can be exploited toward achieving their learning goals.

For the participants, film is the catalyst in enticing their students in books which are often otherwise uninteresting and un-relatable to them. It’s a medium “that captures their interest” (Mr. Davies) since student “engagement for the film [is] just lightyears ahead of the engagement [they have] with the reading,” according to Mr. Pierce. His colorful description aptly captures the kinetic nature of film in contrast to the static nature of books from the perspective of many students today. Demonstrating that point, Mr. Sanders explained that using film “can get students

in 2017 interested in and making connections to” a nearly 100 year-old novel like *The Great Gatsby* by “bring[ing] it alive to visualize it” for them. All participants recognize the stark disparity in student interest between page and screen as well as how the latter may be leveraged to transfer interest in the former.

Some of the participants found film’s lure so powerful, that they called upon its services in just small amounts with big returns. To build interest in books, Ms. Muller advocated showing students just “the trailer...snippets,” or perhaps “the first ten minutes” of the book’s film adaptation to “hook them” because they “relate to” the film so much, as “it pulls a lot of their interests” and “it’s just more of their type.” The description Ms. Muller gives here gave me further cause to identify the motivational force of film as a reason distinct from the visualization of printed stories, such as plays, because her limited use of film in this instance is geared exclusively toward piquing the interest of her students rather than providing understanding of most of the book’s content. In the same vein, Ms. Wilson shows her students the opening scene from the film adaptation of John Steinbeck’s 1937 novel *Of Mice and Men*, only after which they become interested in the story. With her students hooked, she shifts focus back to the novel: “So now they’re captured and they want to know more. We put that film away until we’re at the last chapter.” Like Ms. Muller, she maintains the focus of instruction on print, but she amplifies her students’ buy-in by selectively incorporating film because getting “them wrapped up and engaged with” such printed texts “is easier with film.”

While the teachers in this study pointed toward film as a powerful catalyst in exponentially increasing student interest in the curriculum they teach, they saw it as a critical piece of the curriculum itself in another context, which I will detail in the following section.

Transferability of ELA Skills

In addition to using film in the English classroom to provoke critical thinking, tap into student previous knowledge and interests, and motivate students, all twelve participants used the language of schema theory to illuminate a variety of ways in which film's visual qualities could be exploited to develop and transfer a multitude of ELA-related skills from filmic to printed texts. The participants spoke of using film to facilitate this transfer in six ways: (1) to reinforce understanding of what students are reading; (2) to teach concepts that arise in the less familiar and therefore more challenging medium of literature; (3) to teach effective approaches to reading a text; (4) to teach literary devices; (5) to teach the skills assessed on the CCSSI Regents exam and inscribed in the Common Core State Standards and; (6) to teach critical examination of society and self. I elaborate on each in the ensuing subsections.

Reinforcing What They're Reading

The ways in which the participants described their experiences with film revealed their conclusion that it can increase student understanding of printed texts through a process of transference. "When kids can see what they've read, what we've discussed and analyzed," Mr. Sanders edified, "it really helps their understanding." Ms. Muller uses "the movie to reinforce [the book] so the kids could visualize it and understand." Both participants return to the language of the visual, this time not to explain film as a motivational tool, but as a key to understanding via transferring what they've seen to what they are reading. Ms. Wilson added that by also watching a film adaptation of a book, the students "get to hear [the] tone" interred in the book's language, which is often otherwise lost on them working exclusively from the printed page. She regularly has her students view clips from a film adaptation of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* while they read it as a bulwark to their understanding of the novel.

Similarly, in reading two non-fiction contextual articles about the life and times of J.M. Barrie to supplement the class reading of *Peter Pan*, Mr. Sanders used the film *Finding Neverland* to help students “visualize the things they read about in the two think pieces” and afford them “a different way of thinking about the information.” He believes that had he not shown the film, “the think pieces would have just gone out of their heads” in the ensuing classes as they read the play. This approach and potential benefit of film is particularly fruitful with students who struggle with decoding printed texts and reading comprehension, which I will discuss at length later in this chapter. Next, I will examine how English teachers recognize film as helping more than just student understanding of things they are reading.

Illustrating Concepts

Rather than only using a film adaptation to support understanding of the printed source material, the participants found that stand-alone films which have topics in common with an otherwise unrelated book can serve to visualize concepts otherwise opaque to students in the printed text. “How do you explain homosexual continuum, or erotic triangles...to students? The kids [go] ‘What the hell?’ This was the conundrum Ms. Wilson faced as she tried to teach these abstract social theories to her students through readings on it. “I go, ‘Here’s what they’re talking about,’” as she cues a film clip, “and they go, ‘Oh, now I get it.’” Drawing on her own students’ language, her description reflects the remarkable ease and efficacy by which her students can understand and transfer the visual language of film to other mediums that are less decipherable for them.

Likewise, Ms. Muller discovered that using film is “very helpful because sometimes they don’t have any base knowledge of...topics” that she intends for them to learn about. “But then when you relate it to something else that they’ve watched or seen...they’re like, ‘Oh, OK. That’s

what you're talking about.” She, too, cited her own students' words of evidence. Here's how Ms. Cole understood the phenomenon and its impact: “They kind of transfer the topics, and they know that they can be successful.” Like several other participants, Ms. Cole adopted the language of schema theory to explain how students extrapolate concepts from the one medium to the other. In like fashion, Mr. Pierce explained that he gets his students to “understand some of the concepts through film, and then [the students] carry that over into the reading.”

Or beyond. Ms. Wilson recounted how her students reported recognizing concepts she demonstrated through film even outside of the classroom: “They often come back and say, ‘Oh my God! Now I'm seeing this everywhere’ ... I'm like, ‘Wait a minute. You thought about English class outside of English?’ ‘Yes!’” her students rejoined. Remarkably, not only could Ms. Wilson' students transfer their understanding of the concepts from the film to the printed page, they transferred their understanding of them to their own lives—perhaps the loftiest goal of education.

The teachers' descriptions demonstrate film's remarkable utility in helping students grasp and transfer concepts from film to printed texts and even to their lived experiences outside of the classroom. This lends further succor to the argument that film can be much more than mindless entertainment. The participants only further reified the reciprocity between film and print mediums when they discussed not just transferring understandings of topics within a text, but transferring approaches to how to make sense of any text.

Ways of Approaching Text

Given that many of the participants found an equivalency between print and film texts, they viewed their approach to making sense of either one as being transferable to the other. Therefore, they used the more familiar filmic text to teach students how to approach the more

foreign printed text. Since Mr. Collins' teaching approach for 'reading' a film is nearly the same that he uses when he teaches reading a novel with his students, they "are broadly applicable skills" to both mediums. Mr. Pierce believes that because "literacy skills...go way beyond...just your ability to read the book," they are equally applicable to printed and other visual forms of communication, and that by teaching with film, English teachers may simultaneously hone literacy skills for printed texts through a process of transference.

Since film is merely another form of a communicative text, which like literature, "has its own set of rules, and structures, and expectations," that we make meaning out of, it argues "for a particular way of reading that text or that scene," Mr. Davies explained. Utilizing a structuralist lens, his characterization positions film still closer to printed texts than any other participant's and renders them as nearly indistinguishable in this sense. Because of this profound similarity, working with film is "great practice for everything else that they do...in terms of reading." Here Mr. Davies uses the language of literacy in regards to consuming both mediums, nearly erasing distinguishing markers. In doing so, he widens the meanings of text and the possibilities of what can be accomplished with film. As a result, Mr. Davies recognizes that "these skills and these ways of looking at [texts] are *completely* transferable" because "it's all the same moves." The "moves" he refers to are the analytical approaches to making meaning from texts. Consequently, he thinks "that the stuff with film can transfer into the kinds of readings" students are traditionally expected to do with printed texts. Indeed, several of the other participants explained how they were able to use the schema of literary devices readily understood through their visualization in film to teach recognition of them in literature.

Teaching Literary Devices

At least eight of the twelve participants explicitly preached the powers of using film to teach analyzing literary devices and techniques that are more difficult for students to recognize in printed literature, as I illustrate through the following examples. “For some kids, talking about symbolism is really abstract when they’re reading about it, but it’s easier for them to notice when they’re watching it on the screen,” Mr. Thompson noted. When trying to get her students to appreciate the repetition of symbolism in Tim O’Brian’s *The Things They Carry*, Ms. Donaldson found that “you need to show them” things like that through film before they understand how to identify it in literature because “film can be more obvious in its delivery.” Ms. Cole agreed that “it helps to have a visual as a starting point when teaching “the devices writers use” before “switch[ing] over to the text and say[ing] how is it represented here?” In each case, the participants once again drew on a language of visualization and schema theory to make sense of film’s abilities, this time explaining how it can serve students by teaching them one way of analyzing a narrative text that may then be extrapolated to others regardless of medium. These three were not the only participants to speak of this.

Mr. Pierce recounted that while “identifying [literary devices] in the reading is [often] lost on them...you show them a short clip and say, ‘OK. This is what irony looks like, or this is what symbolism looks like.’ They just get it. And then we can carry that practice over into reading, too.” According to Mr. Sanders, “If you know symbolism, you know symbolism. Doesn’t matter if it’s a Maya Angelou poem, or a Spike Lee film. It is the same thing. I think it’s very helpful” to teaching literary analysis skills. Mr. Sanders draws a remarkable parity between the great authors and the great film directors which few other English teachers might think to equate, and notes the common techniques that both employ despite their disparate mediums. He

elaborated: “When Romeo is acting this way, how is he being characterized? You do that in a film, you do that in a written text, and I think it’s the same thing.” However, Mr. Sanders believes it’s simply “easier to grasp when they see it.” Both Mr. Pierce and Mr. Sanders again couched their understanding of film in a language of optics and schema as they made the case that visual tableaux of literary devices are more readily understood by students, who can then transfer their understanding to a printed context. Because of this capacity, the participants likewise transferred their own understanding of teaching with film to engaging state mandated requirements.

Preparing for the Common Core Regents Exam and Meeting the Standards

Though the New York State Common Core English Regents exam does not feature any filmic content or assess student knowledge of film or cinematography, several participants nevertheless spoke of film as a highly effective tool to prepare students for its challenges. They frequently referred to this in two specific ways, regarding the two essay portions of the exam: (1) the Part 2 essay, in which students must draft an argument, drawing evidence from at least three of the four given sources, while distinguishing their claim from alternate or opposing claims, and (2) the Part 3 essay, in which students must create a text-based response in which they identify a central idea in the text and analyze how the author’s use of one literary element or technique develops the central idea. I detail how they instructed with film in preparation of the Part 2 essay in the next chapter, and turn to the Part 3 essay next.

Since recognizing and analyzing literary devices is “skilled-based,” students can learn them in the more familiar and intuitive medium of film, and “can then apply it to a [printed] text,” according to Ms. Muller. For this same reason, Ms. Muller has her students analyze scenes in film “just like the Regents text analysis [Part 3 essay]” using terms in the same way one would

use “literary terms for [a] Regents” exam. Her ability to utilize the very same terms for literary elements and techniques that occur in both film and printed forms parallels how she sees the two mediums as nearly interchangeable in imparting the analytical skills assessed on the state exam.

Mr. Sanders also viewed the literary analysis skills gained far more easily through film as very much applicable to the kinds of questions they’d be asked on a Common Core Regents” since “the Common Core task [Part 3] that asks them to analyze an author’s use of a literary technique to convey the meaning of that passage.” Owing to film’s visualization of literary elements, the overlap in narrative techniques between the two mediums, and the ability to transfer the concept from film to print, Mr. Sanders concluded that “One hand washes the other.”

Ms. Cole likewise uses film since “it can be a really good tool for the Common Core Regents exam...text-based analysis” essay since “what film doesn’t have a life lesson? A main literary device going on in it?” Here she speaks of the components of the Part 3 writing task and characterizes film as a text which features the same elements as the one students would find on the exam. In this way, she believed that she “can still get the same skills across to write about as [she] can with [a printed] text.” Indeed, she offered empirical evidence to support this. Ms. Cole believed herself to be the only English teacher amongst her colleagues to capitalize on film in preparing her students for the English Regents exam. She reported having “the highest percentage Regents passing rate in the entire district for English,” and held that as evidence of the success of her utilizing film for exam preparation. While not scientific, and even assuming that some teachers might teach with film unbeknownst to her, the learning outcomes her students achieved and way she makes sense of it stand as remarkable testament to film’s potential.

While most of the participants made sense of film as a highly effective tool for preparing students to be successful on the Regents exam in particular, they also saw film as an effective

means of teaching the skills laid out in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) in general. Ms. Franklin believes that film is highly effective in facilitating students to “think...about how rhetoric works...how style works...how you tell the story, not just what story it is that you’re telling,” and understands that these are the “things the standards are pushing [English teachers] to do.” Even upon close examination of standards that she views as intended exclusively for printed texts, she views film as a medium that operates and can be analyzed in the same way. In examining “authorial intention and different interpretations of the same story” with film, she sees herself as fulfilling “some of the 9th and 10th grade standards that [she’s] supposed to be doing.” In this vein, by having her students “picking apart that scene, or analyzing why the author did this,” Ms. Muller also thought herself to be “meeting all of those standards requirements” when she teaches with film no less than when she instructs with printed texts.

Mr. Pierce explained that when he teaches with film, what he is “trying to teach the kids remains the same,” and that “if you look at the standards themselves, it’s very easy to tie” film to them, only “the means in which we get there [are] just different.” Here he speaks of film as not merely satisfying the same ELA standards via an alternate route, but doing so more easily for students. Once again drawing upon a discourse of schema, Mr. Davies insisted that the “stuff with film can transfer into the kinds of readings that could help [students] on the Regents.” He echoed Mr. Pierce’s sentiment by adding that not only can film “be an excellent avenue to get the kids achieving those objectives on the curriculum for print literature,” but that it might do so “faster and better than just taking a strictly print pathway.” He felt so largely because of the remarkable familiarity, comfort, and experience students have with film as previously discussed, the reciprocity film and printed texts have, and the attendant transferability of the skills associated with analyzing both.

Remarkably, though the participants did not make one mention of the Common Core English standards' many directives to teach with film, something I will address in detail near the end of this chapter, they did speak of film as an excellent means to achieving the ends demanded of students in the Common Core Regents Standards.

Critically Examining Society and Self

However, the participants did not ultimately see Common Core Regents practice “as the end by any means” (Mr. Davies) for film’s utility. Yet another significant reason why many of the participants cited for using film was to facilitate students to critically examine themselves, the world they inhabit, and their place in it. Since “they are so inundated with visual images,” Ms. Franklin aimed to “help kids think about how to read films, not just watch them” so as to “help them take apart, parse out, and figure out,” much of the world that surrounds them. Here she uses the language of literacy to underscore the need for students to deal with the ubiquity of screens in their lives and to become fluent in the way screens communicate. Similarly, because Ms. Donaldson recognized that students will be “getting more and more information through things like TV, or movies, or...watching the news, and that their sources of information are increasingly “visual,” she believes it is “really important...to teach them to be critical about that.” Both participants expressed anxiety over the potential for students, as citizens of a highly visual society, to become vulnerable to manipulation from the composers of messages transmitted through the dominant form of communication in their time without adequate training in how to critically examine them.

For precisely this reason, Ms. Wilson showed her students Barry Levinson’s *Wag the Dog*, which in part tackles the intersection of politics and manipulation through mass media, to assist them in developing into “critical readers of a whole bunch of different kinds of media” and

becoming less susceptible to “fake news.” The film was the springboard to having her students question all media: “Who put that news up there? Who took that photo? Who cropped it? Who put that filter on it?” Using the very same film, Mr. Hays discovered that “showing *Wag the Dog* “helped bridge [the] gap” in trying to get his students to see how “some of [the] ideas” from George Orwell’s *1984* “apply even to the United States, or any large scale society...[that] sometimes they manipulate their [citizens].” Paradoxically, while film as a medium can surreptitiously manipulate the viewer’s emotions and thinking through camera angles, lighting effects, musical scores and beyond, the participants found it to be an effective tool to expose those same qualities committed in the media or by political entities. Indeed Mr. Hays believed it could accomplish this in ways that a printed text could not for his students.

In still another example, Mr. Pierce used Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show*, a film that centers on topics such as privacy, marketing, and mass media, to explore “how the world students live in now is so commercialized.” Though he did not report on introducing terms such as ‘the working class’ or ‘the means of production’, Mr. Pierce is indeed using film to engage his students in the beginnings of a Marxist critique of a capitalist society. Whether using film as a platform to critique mass media, government, or consumerism, the participants spoke of film as a particularly apt tool to scrutinize what I refer to as the politics, or the ideology of their society. By this I mean the power structures ingrained in their surrounding culture, and the interactions of groups of people, including topics such as race, gender, and class.

Indeed, several of the participants specified film’s efficacy in broaching topics of race and racial representations in the media. Ms. Muller prized film’s ability to give her students “a different perspective of a different culture.” Screening Clint Eastwood’s *Gran Torino*, which follows the story of an elderly Caucasian Korean War veteran in an increasingly diverse inner

city neighborhood, gave Ms. Cole's Hmong students a stepping stone to share their culture with their classmates. This was followed by a class conversation in which people of various backgrounds "started talking about who does what for the holidays, and they went off on that." Remarkably, familiarity with film made unfamiliar cultures more familiar for her students of disparate racial and cultural backgrounds. Too, because of the film's portrayal of the topic, her students began considering "respect for [their] elders and their traditional ways versus the new neighbors, [and] recognizing differences and how we treat people."

In yet another example, after viewing the strife between Italians and African-Americans as dramatized in Robert De Niro's *A Bronx Tale*, Ms. Cole's students began to think about race relations and make connections to their own lives: "You know, Miss, you would think that everybody would be mixed in the cafeteria, but we're not," one of her students reflected. After the film inspired that student to ponder her own experience regarding race relations in her very multi-racial school, Ms. Cole pointed out that they had no problem working together in her classroom, to which another replied, "I know. Why is that?" Using the film as a stepping stone, Ms. Cole guided her students in taking formative steps into examining and questioning the racial constructs and interactions within the world they inhabit off the screen.

Similarly, Mr. Hays and his students "talk about race" when he shows them Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*, a film set in Brooklyn against the backdrop of simmering racial tensions which ends in tragedy. In another instance, though not the focus of the unit, students discuss the lack of racial representation in Steven Spielberg's neo-noir science-fiction film *Minority Report*, despite it being set in racially diverse Washington D.C. In this way, Mr. Hays leads his students to go beyond considering a film's overt message and complicates the consequences of its tacit messages. Moreover, he paired Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* with D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of*

a Nation and Kevin Willmott's revisionist, satirical mockumentary-style film *C.S.A.: Confederate States of America*, a reimagining of the Civil War with the South as victors, to explore issues related to race. Though the content challenges and discomforts them, Mr. Hays described the film as doing so in an appropriate way conducive to learning. That is, it facilitated a healthy dialogue on a very sensitive but important topic in ways that other mediums often don't resonate with his students as well.

Mr. Sanders similarly felt "the discomfort in the room" when he played a clip from *Boyz in the Hood*, which tells the story of several young African American friends growing up inner city Los Angeles, directed by John Singleton, the first ever African American director to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Director. He described his thinking in selecting the use of this film clip: "It's quite profane. It's quite misogynistic." Nevertheless, he "think[s] the greater good is served when we are honest with kids and we have that discussion" on issues of race and representation. In other words, inspiring critical examination and conversation, despite the discomfort and difficulty often associated with such sensitive topics, is preferable to and more productive than ignoring or sanitizing them in the classroom. For him, the film provoked valuable reactions and discussions on the racial groups represented in the film and what was at stake because of that.

For the same reason, in his senior English media course, Mr. Sanders has students critically examine "pop culture representation of all kinds of people. Racial groups, so-called handicap. I mean, you name it. Any kind of subgroup." His anecdotes reveal two salient understandings: (1) film is a highly effective medium to engage students on challenging topics such as race, and (2) popular culture forms, such as film, are a major force in influencing people on their understandings of race and other political topics. In addition to provoking thought and

conversation on the subject, Mr. Sanders directs his students to investigate how disparate groups are represented in mass media and the attendant consequences.

While some participants understood film as a way to humanize racial groups they represent on screen, and others saw racial representations as worthy of scrutiny, all agreed on film's power to inspire critical thinking and discussion among their students. This was a theme which extended beyond racial representations, and into gender representations.

Several of the participants spoke of film as an exceptional vehicle for teaching students how to critically examine gender roles in a text, and ultimately in society. Ms. Cole found that film brings her "students to a new knowledge of human beings," and this was particularly so regarding the intersectionality of gender and religion in one potent case. Showing her class Jeffrey Brown's film adaptation of Patricia McCormick's novel *Sold* sparked some of her female Muslim students "to talk about how they are regarded in their own home, in the mosque, in their own culture." Ms. Cole's students critically examined not just the representation of Muslim females in the film, but they extrapolated that examination to the very spaces they inhabit in their own culture. Meanwhile, other students in the class benefitted by learning about their peers' experiences and viewpoints.

Male and female groups are the focus when Mr. Hays uses a scene from Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* to have his students examine how they are represented and the roles ascribed to them in the film. He asks them to consider and problematize what the film is implicitly "saying about masculinity...what it means to be a man [and] how it's being shown" in the film. Similarly, because Mr. Davies understands film and other popular culture forms as "the primary ideological educator" for students regarding "who they are, what culture is, and what it means to be masculine or feminine," he finds it important that "kids learn how to look critically"

at how class and “gender [are] represented” in film since it is ultimately “teaching them who they are.”

Like Mr. Sanders in the previous section, Mr. Davies recognizes that film, as with other kinds of popular culture, informs how people come to view gender, racial, and other groups more than any other force in their lives, school and parents included. In this light, teaching with film is arguably a necessity. His insight that gender, racial, and other representations in film and other types of popular culture inform student understandings of these groups and consequently cultivate who they are was a theme picked up some of the other participants as well.

Furthermore, half of the participants spoke about film’s ability to aid students in learning more about their own identities. Ms. Wilson finds film a valuable tool for helping students to “discover who [they] are...[their] place in a society... [and] how [they] interact with others.” In this profound description, she positions film as both window and mirror, in that looking through the frame can afford insight for students into other people’s experiences not immediately accessible in their own lives, while granting teachers the opportunity to scrutinize and problematize how those on screen are being depicted. At the same time, the frame may function as a mirror by eliciting students to reflect on their own identity and role in the world they see on the screen and understand as a reflection of their own society.

In the same vein, Mr. Pierce uses films that depict different themes and then “tie[s] that back to the students themselves” to get them to reflect on “their own lives, [their] decision making in” their lives, their “relationship with family,” and ultimately to help them in “finding” who they really are. He has his students “make a connection between...the actions and motivations of” characters in “what they’re looking at in film” and the students’ own “decisions and what does that say about [themselves].” Through film, Mr. Pierce provides a window into

the experiences of the other through the characters presented on the screen, and he paradoxically affords his students a means to reflect their developing critical eye back on themselves.

Ms. Cole believes that teaching with film has the capacity to “make a person better than before they watched it.” For her, film can help them to “realize something about themselves,” as it is inherently intertwined with “a need we have to think about our existence, and why we’re here, and what we can do while we’re here, and how do we leave our mark on people.” Ms. Cole’s characterization of film here of film as an instrument for existential thought far outstrips even the gravitas she lent it by classifying it as an effective tool to prepare students for high stakes state exams.

Though Mr. Hays understands “how for some teachers film would be a means to a practical end” involving an academic skillset in the classroom, he too aims to leverage film toward “a broader end”:

“[I] don’t want them to think that the things we do in the classroom are just for that class. So if they read a book, they’ll keep thinking about it a certain way. And if they see a movie, they might make connections between that movie and that book, which can get them thinking about the way they are in the world a certain way...to make them be responsible citizens...to inspire our students to think critically, act responsibly, and develop a passion for life-long learning.”

In this way, Mr. Hays sees the ultimate purpose for film as one which contributes to how his students formulate who they are and how they comport themselves in the society they inhabit.

The participants in this study understand film not only as a purposeful, motivational medium from the world that their students inhabit, but as an instructional tool that enables them to more easily understand and then transfer the schema of English related concepts from the

screen to the page, to the Regents exam, and of still greater importance, to society and their own lives. Though the participants spoke of film's power to do all that for the general student population, they also specified more particular populations that especially benefit from these boons that film can bestow.

Film to Help Struggling/Marginalized Students

The final reason that I identified in the data I collected as to why the participants chose to include narrative film in their curriculum was because they understand film as an alternative linguistic teaching tool that is particularly helpful for their struggling and marginalized students who often have difficulty with language and literacy. By this, they mean students who find reading difficult, have reading disabilities or other special education needs, are English Language Learners (ELL), are reluctant readers, or are members of minority populations who are disproportionately represented in the aforementioned groups. I will next explore how the participants understand film as a way for struggling and marginalized students to access the content of printed texts and English-related skills, which they are otherwise excluded from because of their difficulties with traditional literacy, and as a uniquely motivating force for these student populations who are otherwise disproportionately disengaged in the classroom.

First, many of the participants spoke of film as providing access to the content of printed materials for their struggling students who are otherwise excluded because of their linguistic and literary challenges. Film “give[s] kids other ways in” for whom “English has been difficult” by allowing them to “connect those things,” according to Mr. Collins. In other words, students who are confounded by the language on the printed page can keep pace with the content of printed texts, or by learning how to analyze a text, through the more familiar filmic medium and then

linking their understandings of content or analytical approaches to the less familiar printed medium.

Mr. Collins found film a lifeline for his students who despair when working with printed texts: “‘My God, this is my language and I don’t understand it. I don’t know what people are doing here.’ Which has to be terribly frustrating for people who struggle in English classes,” he empathized. But because making sense of print and film texts are “really the same set of skills,” Mr. Collins reveals his perception of both as linguistic forms, in which some are more fluent in one than the other, and which fluency in one is mutually beneficial to the other. For like reasons, Mr. Sanders found teaching with film particularly beneficial for “co-teach...applied...[and] reluctant learners,” and Ms. Thompson believed that “unmotivated readers,” and kids “who struggle with reading, who have IEP’s with reading comprehension...or dyslexia benefit the most from film.” They, too, recognize film as an alternative inroad to printed curriculum for student populations who have linguistic difficulties in the traditional sense.

Ms. Donaldson likewise sees film as offering “a window to be successful” for her Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) students with a “lower vocabulary that don’t really understand some of what they’re reading,” and who “don’t have a lot of success with the traditional reading and writing.” She, too, recognizes film in linguistic terms to offset the traditional vocabulary and literacy deficits that some of her students grapple with, such as for her English Language Learners (ELL), who naturally have a weaker “vocabulary.” Similarly, Ms. Cole found that her ELL students are able “get more out of the film than the [printed] text” and acquire the same “skills” of “how to pull examples and put them in writing.”

The participants again used a discourse of visualization to explain film’s unique impact on marginalized and struggling student populations who have difficulty with traditional language

and literacy. For example, Ms. Thompson thought film to be “especially” helpful for “students that struggle with reading comprehension” by providing them with a visual image. Ms. Franklin also employed a language of optics to explain the phenomenon: To “see what things look like” when “reading something [that’s] a struggle” allows struggling students a “feel for what the world of the story is like.” In a now familiar pattern, she speaks of visual language filling the void of her students’ deficits with traditional language.

Second, while the participants previously touted the powers of film to engage students in general because of the appetite virtually all students have for film, they spoke of its special gift in motivating marginalized students. Mr. Davies recognized his “lowest performing kid[’s]” interest in film and was especially sanguine that the dedicated film unit he was teaching would “help motivate him to say, ‘Wow, I can be successful at *this*, so I may as well not do summer school next summer’. Maybe I could pass this year.’” His optimism in motivating his otherwise disengaged student through film stands testament to his experience in its success with similarly struggling students.

Likewise, Ms. Wilson shared that film engages and is “easier for some of [her] more marginal kids, because if they’re a little marginal in English, it’s probably because the print text isn’t their intuitive place.” Yet because film is a medium they more naturally understand, they tend to be far more interested and engaged. Ms. Muller similarly found that for her Academic Intervention Services (AIS) students who “struggle with reading and writing skills,” film makes “it interesting.” For these participants, the visuals by which film communicates offers marginalized students who struggle with print literacy an alternative language of sorts which they are far more fluent in, giving them access to and ultimately interest in the content of the curriculum in the English classroom.

Summary

My findings in this chapter reveal the challenging context, informed by the invidious stigma that follows film in the English classroom, that the participants resisted in teaching with film. With cynical presumptions of film in the classroom as mere entertainment, reward, break, time-filler, babysitter, or mindless passive medium coming from all populations in the educational system, including parents, colleagues, administrators, and students, even the teachers in this study weren't fully immune to the pervasive power of the stigmatization of film in the high school English classroom. Nevertheless, the participants debunked the canard that film is inherently any of those things. Rather, like literature, the participants understood film to be as active, rigorous, and relevant a medium as the teacher makes it. Thus, the determining factor in leveraging film for its full learning potential is utilizing it toward carefully considered, purposeful instructional goals.

Since teachers are incentivized to develop their students' skills in comprehending and closely analyzing stories, the overlapping qualities that film shares with printed stories anchors the participants' rationale for positioning the English classroom as its proper home. Pointing to film's shared linguistic and narrative qualities, the majority of the teachers view it as another form of text, and thus well-suited to their content area which they characterize as textual studies. While the participants acknowledged the differing ways film and printed texts communicate, they appreciated an equivalency between the two forms. Since they understood their students as having far greater fondness for, and familiarity and fluency with film, they recognized that they can achieve the same educational ends with it as they strive for with printed stories.

All twelve teachers in this study used a language of visualization to explain film's lure, relevancy, and academic success with their students. As they understood, today's students are

immersed in visuals more than any generation before, making it both a comfort and danger. Because students have grown up in a visual world, they have extended experience and confidence working with film. However, being visual natives hasn't naturally resulted in their being skilled at closely analyzing or deeply understanding it. Consequently, the confidence students have gained from their vast experience with film may make them even more susceptible to its covert messages. The participants therefore insisted that viewing film requires students to be trained to critically examine it, lest they be unwittingly vulnerable to the tacit ideologies it, and other visual mediums, convey.

For the participants, film allows their students to visually experience concepts and literary elements they were blind to on the printed page. This visual mode of communication enabled alternative access for students to ELA content and skills, which the participants found success in then having their students transfer over to printed texts. As a result, the teachers in this study understood film as a highly effective instructional tool in teaching Common Core standard skills and preparing students for the New York State Common Core English Regents Exam.

Interestingly, the participants framed the Common Core as not speaking directly to these issues when it in fact does. In this way, I identified a significant contradiction between the participants' beliefs and their instruction with film as they described them. While many of the participants advocated film as an exceptional tool to prepare their students for the Common Core Regents exam, and to meet Common Core ELA standards, inexplicably, none cited the reason for teaching with film as being *because* film is explicitly mentioned in the standards despite the 28 "CCS standards that require or specifically permit the teaching of film" (Teach with Movies).

For example, while acknowledging that "there's language that deals with it somewhat," Mr. Sanders characterized the standards as dealing with "mostly reading and writing" and not

“lend[ing] themselves very well to using film in the classroom.” Although he thought “there may not be a lot of allowances for [film] in the standards,” he nevertheless found using it to be “best practice.” Likewise, though Mr. Davies extolled the virtues and applicability of film in meeting the standards and preparing students for the Regents exam, he noted that “film doesn’t show up on the Common Core curriculum.” Ironically, film is far more codified in the ELA standards than the participants realized, and could lend strong support to their justification of teaching with it against the many who question it, which I enumerated earlier, and even to themselves, which I explicate next.

Still more confounding is that three of the teachers who cited film as an excellent, if not superior, way to teach literary devices and other skills found in the Common Core standards and on the Common Core Regents exam either eschewed using film, saying it owed to pressures they felt in preparing their students for the Regents exam, or saw no connection between the skills they were able to teach with film and the Regents exam. For example, Ms. Donaldson said that a few years back she “felt so pressured with” preparing her students for “the new English 11 Regents exam, the Common Core,” that she tried to see what she could “take out,” of her existing curriculum to allow more time for exam practice. For her, “it was the visual texts, the film aspects” that had to be jettisoned. Though she previously testified to film’s superiority in illustrating literary elements to students for whom they are otherwise lost on when appearing in print form, she abandoned it in preparing for an exam which in one part exclusively assesses on literary elements.

In another striking example, Mr. Davies revealed that while he previously “used [film] *a lot*...with just about every class that [he] taught at all levels,” at the time of his first interview for this study, he had “not used feature film in the classroom in a while, and really would target that

with this Common Core push.” Though he, too, explicitly touted film’s superiority in teaching students ELA-related skills, which he characterized as entirely transferable to printed mediums, he ceased instructing with it when under the enormous pressure of the exam. Having freshly reviewed his enormous success in using film for student learning as a result of participating in this study, Mr. Davies expressed remorse for abating his instruction with it.

In a final example, despite her belief that film is a highly effective tool to teach literary devices, Ms. Thompson responded that she didn’t see a connection between instructing with film and preparing students for the Common Core Regents exam at the time of interview. It’s worth reiterating that the two private school participants made little mention of film’s applicability toward Regents preparation almost certainly because they and their students are not subject to CCSSI or Regents testing.

In addition to speaking of film’s value in teaching Common Core skills, the teachers in this investigation highlighted film’s efficacy in facilitating their students to learn about and critically examine their surrounding society and discover their place in it. By this they referred to film’s visual qualities helping their students to examine societal issues steeped in power structures, such as race, gender, and class. Ultimately, they saw this work with film as helping their students to consider and discover their own identities and place in society by uncovering how the messages that society communicates on these topics tend to inform the ways people make sense of and are oriented toward them.

Additionally, the participants described film as a means of aiding marginalized and struggling populations of students, such as students who have reading disabilities or other special education needs, English Language Learners, reluctant readers, and minority students, who are disproportionately represented in those groups. Film’s visual language, while appealing and

helpful for all students, is a critical difference-maker in providing vulnerable populations access to and keeping them motivated in the curriculum. Film uniquely affords these students another means to learn by and demonstrate their knowledge since they struggle so much through traditional print modes.

This chapter reported on the multiple reasons *why* the participants teach with film, and along the way established that the teacher's role is critical in facilitating it as an active medium toward very purposeful teaching goals. Therefore, I turn my focus next to *how* the participants instruct with film in the chapter that follows.

Chapter 5:

How High School English Teachers Instruct with Film

In this chapter, I focus on *how* the participants teach with narrative film, and I organize the themes that I identified in the data into three sections: (1) As the Film Plays; (2) Teaching *What* Film Communicates; and (3) Teaching *How* Film Communicates. I enumerate three considerations in the first section that the participants spoke of or that I observed as a film plays in their classroom. In the first subsection, To Take Notes or Not to Take Notes: That is the Question, I discuss the multiple ways that the teachers make sense of what they should have their students do when they show film in their classroom. In the second subsection, entitled The Power of Pause, I detail how the teachers emphasized the importance of stopping film, and the different approaches they took in doing so. In the third subsection, entitled Whither the Teacher?, I share how the participants underscored not what they had students do, but what they themselves do when a film plays in the classroom.

I divide the participants' teaching practices into the second and third sections of the chapter, entitled Teaching *What* Film Communicates and Teaching *How* Film Communicates, based on the way the twelve participants spoke of or practiced pedagogic methods with narrative film, which either hewed more distinctly toward one or the other of these two fundamental approaches. In the former, the teachers focused instruction on the story, including elements of the film such as plot, characters, and theme, much as they might with a novel. In the latter, the teachers focused instruction on the cinematic elements that film employs and how they function to create meaning and communicate the story. Finally, I conclude the chapter by describing two contradictions I noticed in the data and with a summary of my findings.

As the Film Plays

Instructing with film presents several issues that simply don't arise when teaching with printed texts. One significant difference between instructing with film and instructing with literature in the English classroom is that film necessitates that the teacher is not standing in the front and middle of the room as so often occurs when working with printed texts, else the teacher blocks their students from seeing the very text they are consuming. It would be the equivalent of the teacher holding their hand over the page of the book and obstructing the words on the page from the student's view. Furthermore, while the lights are naturally on while reading books, they are naturally off when screening a film. And since the book ceases the moment a reader's eyes stop scanning the page, notetaking is not naturally as difficult with a book as it is with a film since the latter moves forward in the darkness of the room and irrespective of the viewer's eyes. These challenges with film have likely informed some of the malpractice with it that I documented in the literature review, and the twelve participants spoke of these topics at length and characterized their pedagogic decisions about them as critical to the success of their instruction with film.

To Take Notes or Not to Take Notes: That is the Question

The topic of whether or not students should take some form of notes while watching film was a contentious one among the twelve participants. Indeed, the issue not only divided them into note-taking and no note-taking groups, it divided some as individuals. "I'm always torn," Mr. Sanders agonized. "I have different views on that," Ms. Muller wavered. The participants' drive to overcome the passive design of film, as I chronicled in chapter four, by having their students take notes battled against their understanding of film as a highly enjoyable and engaging tool that naturally motivates their students in the curriculum and learning process, which the

labor of note-taking threatens to mar. For some the pitfalls of not taking notes outweighed the potential benefits of just letting them watch, which I describe first.

Duly Noted

Despite student indignation, roughly half the participants had their students put pencil to paper while the film plays, whether by taking notes, answering worksheet questions, or completing graphic organizers. In one representative anecdote, Ms. Smith, who struggled to find foothold in the debate, described past students who implored her to just let them watch because they “don't want to ruin it by taking notes...or miss something” in the film. Indeed, looking down to jot notes necessarily takes students' eyes off the screen of a medium that primarily communicates visually. At 24 frames per second, looking down to write for merely 10 seconds means a student misses 240 still images of the moving picture story. However, Ms. Smith found that most students who write things down after watching or not at all “don't write as strongly” about things in the film as those who do. Ms. Smith experienced the traditional active reading strategy typically applied to a printed text of annotating as more effective when having her students watch film than the more passive approach (for print or film) of simply consuming the text absent annotating it. The tension between balancing film's unique student appeal with her academic ambitions was reflected, however, in her preference to require students to only take a nominal amount of notes, jotting down just a few bullet points.

Several other participants spoke of having their students take notes while watching film despite the risk of roiling the students' experience. Ms. Cole also makes use of “either a diagram or an organizer” for her students to write “down their thoughts as the film plays” and ensure they remain actively engaged. Ms. Thompson requires notes while her students watch John Ford's adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* regarding time period information, symbolism and attendant meanings, plot and character elements, and some cinematography. So, too, does Ms. Franklin

have her students “taking notes for a specific purpose,” sometimes aimed at plot comprehension, technical language, or interpretation. All three examples align with the participants’ understanding of film as a purposeful instructional tool in achieving specified learning goals, and as a medium that has the potential to be consumed passively if not actively resisted through teacher facilitation. Ultimately, they viewed note-taking as a necessary strategy to ensure that film is an effective learning tool in their classroom, despite student protestations and the risk of sacrificing some amount of the motivational appeal that film boasts.

For other note-taking advocates, having students do work while watching is a critical approach in ensuring active engagement and elicited no concern over potentially mitigating student enjoyment of the film. For example, regarding his students who complain that they “can’t take notes and watch at the same time,” or that “it’s too dark to see,” Mr. Hays assures them that they’ll “be fine” and advises that they “use [their] phones” for illumination. His faith in film’s appeal is untroubled by his commitment to overcome its passive potential. Thus Mr. Hays described requiring his students to take notes via a handout he provides for them to complete and expects to collect for a grade with a related culminating assignment. Attaching a grade to the notes his students take reveals both the intentionality of his including film, and Mr. Hays’ understanding of film as a text on par with printed forms, both requiring the teacher to facilitate active engagement. However, some participants took a different approach toward achieving the same ends, which I discuss next.

Don’t Take Notes, but Do Take Note

The enjoyment that students get while watching film coupled with the personal experience that two participants have with film themselves informed their decision to not require notes of their students while screening film. Mr. Sanders was another who was conflicted over whether or not he should “make them take notes...[with] all the lights off.” He likened this to

“the way [he] used to take notes when [he] was a film critic,” which rendered them nearly inscrutable because of the darkness and lack of requisite time since, unlike a book, the movie inexorably continues on at its own pace. Consequently, for “aesthetic reasons” and to “let them enjoy the film,” he opts to turn the lights off and lets his students watch without the burden of notes. Mr. Sanders’ personal experience and difficulty with consuming film while note-taking swayed him to not require it of his students. As did the outcomes he witnessed.

While Mr. Sanders conceded that “he probably should have them take notes,” he cited his students’ strong work with film in accompanying assessments as reason why he hasn’t changed to requiring notes. His decision to let his students just watch in spite of his admission that he should be requiring them to take notes speaks partly to the stigmatization of film discussed in chapter four. Mr. Sanders intimates a feeling of guilt for not having his students perform the labor so often associated with teaching printed texts, though he believes his method of teaching with film to be effective for both motivating his students and facilitating learning. The anxiety seems to stem from working with a medium that is oft-considered less serious than printed texts, and not assigning work as the film plays only appears to reify this notion.

Nevertheless, for Mr. Sanders, the film is “every bit as important as that book we just read.” As such, he cautions his students: “Don’t zone out. Don’t sleep. Don’t *take* notes. Unless you want to. But do *take* note.” Here Mr. Sanders underscores that while the method of getting the most out of film might be different than the method most effective for printed texts, reserving the work done with the film for post-viewing doesn’t make it any less serious or effective when intentionally used toward purposive learning goals. Mr. Sanders, however, was not the only participant whose extended film background informed his understanding that film can be effectively taught without the burden of notetaking while watching.

In another striking example, Mr. Davies likewise recounted “writing in the dark” on his “yellow legal pad” while “taking notes in real time as the film’s still going” when he was a student in an undergraduate film class. Because of the difficulty, he’d have to sit through back-to-back screenings of the assigned film at the student center to be able to “get to the text.” Here he demonstrates the inefficacy of notetaking while viewing film for even a college-level student, which especially calls into question the efficacy of notetaking while viewing on the high school level. In contrast to teachers who misuse film for mere entertainment, which Mr. Davies’ non-notetaking approach risks being mistaken for, his goal is to aid his students to “get to the text”. By this he means to penetrate beyond the film’s plot, so effortlessly understood by students as compared to reading a book, which paradoxically masks the layered complexity lurking under its specious simplicity, and uncover the implicit messages film communicates and the methods it employs to do so.

Mr. Davies’ personal experience led him to understand that not only is note-taking while watching ineffective, it is arguably counterproductive. Informed by his own “uncomfortable and unpleasant” experiences of notetaking while trying to achieve deeper understanding of film, Mr. Davies believes “it’s very hard for kids to take any kind of meaningful notes in real time over an entire film... especially if [they’re] caught up in it.” By this, Mr. Davies points to how ineffectual he believes notetaking while viewing to be, and the additional price it comes at in disrupting the pleasurable experience students have with it. Watching while taking notes is “just now how we consume” film, he explained. Though he employs film for educational purpose, he underscores the importance of not sacrificing its entertaining qualities. Consequently, Mr. Davies only gives students “some things to be looking for” as they otherwise just enjoy the film the way

they would outside of school, and he reserves the academic work they do with it for post-viewing, which I will describe in great details later in this chapter.

Nearly all participants acknowledged the difficulty that the nature of film presents in taking notes while watching, in contrast to printed texts, and the toll notetaking takes on the students' enjoyment of the medium, one of the primary benefits of using it in the first place. Some saw requiring notes while watching as a necessary means to ensure that students actively engage with the film. Others, drawing from their own difficult experience in annotating while watching, favored their students experiencing the film as close to the way they would outside of school and reserved the academic labors for post-viewing.

In a similar pattern, and for similar purpose, the participants spoke of another teaching technique that they agreed is critical for active student engagement with film, but disagreed as to how to use it, which I discuss next.

The Power of Pause

The Purpose of Pausing

Many of the participants spoke of using the pause button as a critical teaching strategy to meet their perceived responsibility in overcoming students' passive posture toward viewing film. In order to effect "higher order thinking skills," Ms. Cole insisted that "you have to pause. You have to go deeper. They have to write about it. They have to think about it... You have to force the students to do that" while they watch by using the pause button. For her, stopping the film disrupts the inexorable stream of images to allow the requisite time to process and critically examine the text. She contrasts the challenge of doing this in film with the nature of printed texts, which may naturally be consumed at a slower pace because of the effort required to scan one's eyes over and decode the words on the page. As such, reading can be stopped as easily and

frequently as one chooses for the purpose of thought and reflection, whereas that opportunity may only occur with film if contrived. Likewise, Mr. Hays doesn't allow "more than a half an hour go by without stopping and saying something" to ensure students are "thinking about certain things" as the film plays. Ms. Frank compared her use of pause with film to being "just like [how she] would pause if [she and her students] were reading together." All three participants simultaneously paralleled film and print mediums in the need to facilitate opportunities for students to slow down, examine, and ponder what they are consuming.

Most commonly, the participants discussed using pause to reengage their students and clarify what's happening in the plot, often through discussion or writing. For example, Ms. Wilson often pauses for "just kind of keeping an air of engagement there." Mr. Pierce does the same to make sure [students are] paying attention" and not just "fluffing off." Ms. Donaldson will sometimes stop the film "to jump in there and mention something about how this scene relates to that scene" between the film her class is watching and the book they are reading. In noticing her students' stoic response to a heartbreaking scene in the film adaptation of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Ms. Thompson paused because "clearly [they] didn't get" the devastating decision that the character must make. Mr. Hays pauses to "explain if there's a confusing plot point" because "there are definitely times when things need to be clarified." These multiple examples demonstrate that despite student ease and engagement in watching film, they nevertheless require teacher facilitation for maintaining focus and achieving understanding.

Another reason that participants described pausing the film was to go beyond the surface level of the plot and examine *how* the text functions. When viewing a film adaptation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, Ms. Wilson pauses the film to have her students consider what they see, how "that add[s] meaning" to the story, and the effect of the choices made by the filmmakers. Here she

refers to the framing, editing, and other cinematic elements that are part and parcel of film and influence the viewer's understanding of the content the film communicates. She underscores that because of its dynamic nature, pausing is necessary to create opportunities for students to not only consider the content being communicated but the means by which it is communicated and how those means impact the viewer's understanding.

Since Mr. Davies believes that students are "coming in as passive receivers" of film, he sees it as the teacher's "job to try to set up situations where they stop [and] review things" to try to "figure out how is this working?" In other words, how are the filmmakers' decisions impacting the understanding the viewer comes to? Moreover, Mr. Davies sees pausing the film as necessary for his students to consider "ultimately, how is this working on [them]?" By this he refers to the implicit ways film manipulates its viewers' emotions and even their understandings of fundamental things such as gender roles, race, and socio-economics through its representation of people and tacit messages regarding them. Although it's naturally very "easy to stop a poem" to examine how it functions and impacts its reader because of its static nature, developing ways of stopping the action" with film is naturally difficult because of its dynamic nature.

The majority of participants described pausing film as a necessary and effective means of overcoming its passive potential for active student engagement, of reengaging their students' attention, of clarifying what's happening in the film's story, and of creating opportunities for students to drill down beyond the film's story to deeper levels of how the film functions and impacts the viewer's understanding. This last reason is one I will discuss at great length later in this chapter. However, the participants acknowledged that pausing does not come without its difficulties.

No Patience for Pausing

Just as the participants recognized their students' disdain for notetaking while watching film, so too did they acknowledge their contempt for pausing the film during viewing. "They hate it when I pause... They'll *moaaaannn* because, 'Oh, what now?! What are we gonna' talk about now?!'" Ms. Franklin imitated. Her anecdote illustrates students' thirst to view film without the burden of interruption or reflection, and the attendant dilemma the teacher is left with of either enabling passive consumption or risking student ire and possible loss of motivation. Case in point, Ms. Cole's students will actually "get angry" with her when she pauses the film "in terrible spots" for the express purpose of "actively" engaging them. For her students, these moments in the film are the most engaging, yet for Ms. Cole, they are the most necessary to unpack for engaging their critical examination of the text, just as she would when having her students read a printed text.

However, film's special appeal with students paradoxically presents a unique challenge in leveraging it for learning purposes because of student expectations to enjoy it exclusively as entertainment. This stands in sharp contrast to teaching with books, which many students view as laborious and not especially entertaining or engaging in the first place, and because they are quite accustomed to the associated academic work and interruption of text that is the wonted way of teaching with printed stories in the English classroom. But for Ms. Cole, playing the film without interruption to check for understanding and for critical examination would be as unfathomable, wasteful, and ineffective as having their students read a book without interruption for the same purposes, despite student objections.

Similarly, students in Mr. Hays' classes often complain, "Can't we just watch the movie?...I don't like it when we stop." Mr. Hays informs them of his responsibility to not let

them just “sit in the dark and watch a movie” and their responsibility to engage the text as “critical thinkers.” He intimates his belief that the latter is significantly less likely, or simply won’t occur without his intervention. Despite the fact that “there’s definitely been some resistance” to his stopping the film to clarify, question, and confer with his students about what they are seeing, he sees it as both necessary to reach his instructional aims and his obligation as the teacher.

Many of the participants recognized that they were indeed disrupting the narrative and related enjoyment of the film for their students when they used the pause button, but they found that a necessary pitfall to ensuring understanding, active engagement, and critical thinking of the film while it plays.

Powerless to Pause

Another difficulty with pausing a film that the participants pointed to centered on who has the power in the classroom to pause the film. The “student isn’t in control of the screen the way that they’re in control of the page in front of them,” in Mr. Hays’ words. Mr. Hays frames the issue in a discourse of power dynamics, between students and film, in contrast to the autonomy students exercise over the class copy of the book they hold in their hand. Mr. Sanders elaborated on this point: “They can open [M.T. Anderson’s] *Feed* up to page 203” at any time, but they “can’t go back to the movie on the fly. It is a limitation.” Because students are typically given a copy of any book the class is reading, they have the easy ability to interrupt the text or scan their eyes back over a sentence they want to re-read or struggled to understand. However, with a film, despite the now-standard technology that enables the viewer to pause, rewind, and even view in slow-motion, there is but one text that plays in the front of the room beyond the students’ ability to stop or turn back.

Not being able to stop and turn back is a major obstacle to comprehension when consuming a text, and some participants distinguished the varying levels of challenge that disparate mediums present. For example, Mr. Collins explicated that the comic strip, a similarly visual medium, “gives the audience an enormous amount of power” by granting “the ability of the viewer/reader to control the speed at which [they] move through it. And to back up very easily and to move forward.” Using a language of agency, he highlights the autonomy that readers of a comic strip have to slow down the process of consuming the text to a rate that they choose and best suits them for understanding. It even allows for multiple reads of any particular frame with just the scan of an eye. By contrast, he continued, film “in fact it did the opposite,” since the stream of images in a film is designed to unfold in rapid succession with no stoppage. At least until relatively recently.

Some of the participants spoke of how technological advances have allowed film to be accessed in ways similar to books in recent times. Mr. Collins noted that “a means to access the medium” has “utterly reshaped” the viewer’s “interaction with” film. Using a language of access and power, Mr. Collins speaks of how the evolution of film technology has enabled the viewer to take a more active role and exercise greater power over the medium through controls that didn’t exist in the era of reel-to-reel projectors. Portable film copies, played through a DVD player or computer allow pause, rewind, and slow motion features at the click of a button or drag of a mouse, and afford control over film similar to the reader’s control over a comic or novel. This is “enormously helpful for studying film” since the viewer has the power “to see the ligaments and how [the film has] been put together,” Mr. Collins edified, “just like reexamining a [printed] text.” In other words, the viewer may therefore closely attend to the cinematic building blocks

that film communicates through which are akin to syntax, diction, and other elements employed by printed texts.

To Wield or Yield the Power of Pause

Though technology has afforded the viewer power to exercise control over it, unlike with a class set of books, it is vested solely in the hands of the teacher. While teachers can indeed bend the film to their will via remote control, the students are left without the power they would have over their class copy of a book simply by stopping their eyes or turning back the page, at least not unless the teacher chooses to yield that power to them. In this way, the term remote control is most fitting. The filmic text, unlike the book copy in the hands of every student, is both remote from the students, as it plays yards away from their eyes at the front of the classroom, and the control over how they consume it rests entirely in the hands of the teacher. The consequences of these conditions are far-reaching because they substantively limit the experience students can have with film in the same way that it would with a book if the teacher were to control the turn of every page.

To counter this, Mr. Collins often asks his students if “there are any scenes [they] want to look at again” for closer inspection. This allows students a measure of power over their consumption of the film, though the remote control remains in Mr. Collins’ hands. In another example, Mr. Davies yields the power of the pause to students still more by sharing clips from the film they watched “on their Chromebooks” after they first viewed the entire film in class without stopping or taking notes on the Smartboard. Utilizing the additional technologies of film clips from YouTube and laptop computers for each student, his pupils can choose and analyze the clips they deem worthy of re-watching, pausing or slowing down for to complete their film analysis assignments, rather than being subject to the whims of the teacher for that. Mr. Davies

has his students do so only after watching the entire film without his interrupting it so as not to “break the narrative” or disrupt his students’ enjoyment of the film.

Furthermore, with “all these advantages” that Mr. Davies “didn’t have before” when he was a student, his class can “watch the scenes right there in front of their face” on the laptop rather than from back rows of desks with views obscured by peers and glare on the screen at the front of the room. Too, students can write analytically about film “not from memory [or] from notes taken in a darkened” classroom, but from a screen inches from their face with a film they can stop and re-watch as often as they need. Since “they’ve got it right there” in front of them, Mr. Davies edified, they can “be really precise” in looking at and analyzing the film’s details, thus making notetaking far more effective and understanding far deeper.

More than half of the participants spoke of the critical need to stop film when it plays in the classroom in order to re-engage their students, ensure active viewing, clarify the story presented in the film, and examine how the filmmakers’ choices impact the viewers’ understanding of the story it communicates. While modern technology enables viewers to treat film more like a book by granting them the power to pause and re-watch it, and thus exponentially better examine and understand it, pausing the film comes at the cost of the way film is naturally consumed and significantly abates student enjoyment. Two participants spoke of ways in which they worked to overcome this issue and cede the power associated with the pause button and related technologies to the students. However, using pause in various ways was not the only teacher action that the participants cited as important for effective teaching with film.

Whither the Teacher?

Part of the stigma surrounding film in the classroom is that English teachers use it as merely a break from instruction and means to catch up on grading the interminable influx of

papers, as discussed in chapter four. Since the teacher naturally wouldn't be standing in front of the room instructing while the film plays as they might when reading, discussing, and analyzing a novel or a poem with a class, the participants understood what the teacher does as the film plays as carrying great consequence with the efficacy of instruction with film. While all participants rejected playing a film for non-instructional purposes, my interviews and observations revealed two competing ways that the participants made sense of teaching while the film plays, which I refer to as the multi-tasking and embedded models. I detail both next.

The Multi-Tasking Model

Some participants do sit in the back of the room multi-tasking, as they accomplish other instructional tasks while simultaneously intervening in the film by pausing and discussing it at select times. For example, "If this is like the 3rd or 4th time, or 5th time I've seen this movie, I'm not watching. I will be grading papers," Mr. Hays unapologetically conceded. However, when he knows "something's coming up" that's particularly significant or challenging, he stops the film, talks about it, asks questions, and clarifies confusing plot points. Ms. Franklin did likewise in the classes she taught that I observed. Though she often worked on her laptop in the back of the room at her desk, she constantly reacted with laughter at the amusing moments with the child characters in Robert Mulligan's film adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, gave verbal cues to her students to look for certain things upcoming in the film, and frequently left her laptop to pause the film and question the class about its narrative and cinematic elements.

Though all participants explicated and underscored their decidedly purposeful use of narrative film, as I documented at length in chapter four, some did see film as having the benefit of "serv[ing] a dual purpose" by engaging students intellectually through a more familiar and enjoyable medium while simultaneously affording the teacher a chance to catch up on "grading

tests” (Ms. Smith) or other such related instructional work. For them, the two-fold benefits were not mutually exclusive and did not work at cross purposes. The English “discipline is such” that while Ms. Donaldson was showing a film to her class for “a greater purpose,” she felt it necessary to be “grading the test that they had just taken” in order to keep up with her teaching responsibilities. The nature of the profession she references includes the myriad duties of planning, instructing, managing, grading, calling parents, and attending meetings, with insufficient time to do so, and the greater purpose she refers using film for includes legitimate learning outcomes rather than using it merely as a time-filler or babysitter. Though she described using film for purposive learning goals, she used film as an opportunity to attend to the many other demands of the job.

Managing those demands is still more challenging when you’re a new teacher, which tends to result in less effective instruction with film. “You’re exhausted. You’re blind, and half deaf. You’re just trying to see your way to the next day, [and] you do what you have to do” to stay afloat, Mr. Sanders recalled. By this Mr. Sanders meant that as an erstwhile formative and overwhelmed teacher, he did not adhere to best-practice teaching with film and did take the opportunity to attend to the other demands of the job. In the same way, Ms. Thompson used film to “catch up, to buy [herself] some time to plan that next unit” when she was early in her career because “as a new teacher, you’re always a step behind, or you’re one step ahead of the kids.” However, later in both of their careers, when they learned how to better manage the job’s workload, Mr. Sanders and Ms. Thompson found it important and more effective to abstain from grading papers or performing other teaching duties when showing film. They, like several other participants, took a different approach, which I describe next.

The Embedded Model

Half of the participants described an approach to teaching while the film plays that fully embeds them in the process of consuming the text with their students. This involves them not dividing their attention between the film and other tasks, watching the film right along with their students, and often entailed doing so from physical locations nearer the students. This sometimes included teachers taking seats in student desks, remaining standing, or changing positions from one location in the room to another, as they might do when teaching a book with the lights on to maintain student focus through physical proximity. They also revealed their own renewed cognitive effort in more deeply understanding the film by closely attending to it upon each screening with a new class.

Despite already having “seen [the films he shows] many times,” Mr. Pierce reports that he is not “back there grading papers” when his students watch. Such behavior, he believes, implicitly gives students “permission” to “tune out.” Instead, he models being an “active learner” by watching along with the students and “looking for things” in the film, whether something new he never noticed before or inspiration for possible questions he might pose to his students. Similarly, Mr. Davies, whom I observed watching film with his students from a student desk in the room nearby his pupils, reported looking primarily for things in the film that would be “worth coming back to,” despite also having previously seen the film multiple times. I likewise observed Mr. Sanders take a student seat among his charges, and sometimes change his seat while the film played. He, too, noted that he “always find different things each time” he re-watches the film with a new class.

The very notion of sitting at their desk during instruction of any kind was anathema for some participants. For them, this applied no less to film, which the following three examples

saliently illustrate. “I’m rarely at my desk anyway. My desk is in the back corner and I see it, like, three times a day,” said Ms. Wilson. “I don’t sit at my desk very often...that’s not gonna work,” Ms. Muller echoed. Perhaps most striking was Ms. Cole: “I don’t even have a desk. It’s gone. I got rid of it.” All three found full attention on the text and physical proximity to the students critically important during the entire instructional period regardless of the medium of instruction. “I can’t just put the movie in and sit back,” Ms. Cole insisted. Instead, she’s constantly on the move, walking about the room, “pausing” and “talking” with her students about the film. Ms. Wilson uses physical proximity to “see what kinds of things they’re writing down” as the film plays and then “embed[s] that into the discussion” during pauses in the film. This also allows her students to “whisper a question” to her that they might have about the film which lets her know when to “hit a pause.” These three teachers’ methods make the classroom experience with film more like working with books, with regular stops, questions, and discussions as the class navigates the text. As these three participants understood it, none of these pedagogic strategies, all aimed at facilitating active and critical student engagement with the text, would be possible while grading papers at a desk in the back of the room.

In an effort to realize film’s teaching potential in eliciting active student engagement, all the participants characterized the teacher’s actions while the film plays as crucial. Some found the nature of film to present a chance to satisfy both masters of providing a purposeful learning experience for their students while affording the chance to simultaneously complete non-related teaching responsibilities for the teacher. Other participants viewed their full attention, involvement, and physical presence as equally important to teaching with film as teaching with books. They understood their actions as implicitly setting the tone for the level of expectation and gravity bestowed by them onto the film once the lights go out.

But whether requiring students to take notes while the film plays or not, hitting the pause button as the film plays, after it plays, or not all, multi-tasking or sitting amongst and watching along with the students as the film plays, I identified two fundamentally different approaches to teaching with film that the participants took, which I will discuss next.

Fundamental Approaches to Teaching with Film

In this section, I distinguish the two basic pathways that the twelve participants took when using film in their instruction. While at times some participants toggled between the two, most chiefly focused their instruction on either *what* the film communicates, or *how* the film communicates. In the latter, instructors emphasize the cinematic methods uniquely employed by film and how they contribute to the meanings the viewer understands. However, I will detail the former first, and the three purposes that participants who focus their instruction with film primarily on the story it tells spoke about most frequently: (1) Creating Evidence-Based Arguments; (2) Analyzing Multiple Versions of the Same Story; and (3) Teaching Plays. I begin with one of my participant observations for illustrative purposes.

Teaching *What* Film Communicates

After his English 10 Honors class completed the ancient, anonymous Anglo Saxon author's epic poem Beowulf, the retelling of the same tale from the antagonist's perspective in John Gardner's novel Grendel, and Robert Zemekis' film adaptation of the original story, Mr. Sanders clarifies the complicated relationships between the many characters with the aid of his hand-drawn character tree projected on the Smartboard behind him. In a radical departure from the original text, the monster's mother, played by Angelina Jolie, "exists in the center of the film as a siren of sorts," first having an affair with King Hrothgar, and then later Beowulf, before the film ultimately implies she will do likewise with Wiglaf next, Mr. Sanders explains.

A young lady on the right side of the room raises her hand and astutely notes a pattern across the various texts the class has read since the start of the year: "I think lust is a universal weakness of man. Obviously with Enkidu and the Harlot, and Oedipus and his mom. And now this. Especially in the movie. Women are only powerful when being sexualized." Mr. Sanders agrees and adds that perhaps the most powerful female character in all of literature is coming up in their next unit when they read Shakespeare's Macbeth, which he suggests might be more aptly named "Lady Macbeth."

Another student shares her experience from church school, in which she was taught that laziness is the downfall of man, leading to a lack of need to fight for anything. Mr. Sanders piggybacks on her personal connection to the story's characters and notes the film's "strident religiosity," with a "number of images of crosses, crosses burning, crosses falling...in reference to Christ." The student asks if that was historically accurate, to which Mr. Sanders replies, "No." The discussion continues with a few clarifying questions from the students about the events of the story, and how they played out across the three textual representations of the narrative. A student seated in the front row confesses she "keeps getting it mixed up with all three texts. Did Beowulf win the fight with the sea monster Brecca?" Mr. Sanders clarifies that it was ambiguous in the epic poem. In the film, Beowulf described losing the fight. In the novel, he claimed victory.

In this anecdote, all discussion centers on the narrative elements of the film, from plot, to characterization, to theme, and even gender roles and representations. As Mr. Sanders leads the class in considering the similarities and dissimilarities between the two print and film texts, the discussion remains primarily focused on plot and character differences, rather than how each medium or genre functions to tell its story. Absent from the discussion and instruction are

camera angles, camera movement, scale, composition of the frame, lighting, editing, sound, and how those elements contribute to the viewer's understanding of the story. Rather, narrative elements common to both print and film, such as plot, characterization, symbolism, conflict, and theme are at the heart of this discussion and work that Mr. Sanders assigned the class, which I detail below.

Creating Evidence-Based Arguments

As they often do with printed texts, several of the participants use film as a more engaging and easier medium for students to hone their skills at creating evidence-based arguments. In this way, teachers have students craft arguments, often but not always in written form, about characters, symbolism, irony, or themes in narratives and cite specific examples from the story for support. Indeed, this is a skill emphasized in the ELA Common Core State Standards Initiative and assessed on the ELA Common Core Regents exam. I continue with my observation of Mr. Sanders' class to illustrate.

Mr. Sanders next segues to an essay prompt the class will be responding to as a culminating assessment for the unit. He distributes a handout with the details of the assignment (Appendix E) and projects the same document on the Smartboard. Mr. Sanders introduces the assignment by first paralleling film and printed stories both by affording them equal status in the assignment and by framing both works in the language of authorship: "Yes, the author of a film is the director. Author. Auteur. French auteur. Author. Sorry screenwriters. They're so often getting shafted, aren't they?" He next calls on a student to read the essay task:

"In literature, as in life, people are neither all good nor all bad. That is, none of us is full of love and lacking in hatred; totally courageous and devoid of cowardice; always strong and never weak. We are capable of amazing things – but are also fallible, and at times contradictory.

We are complex. In short, we are human... Write a well-developed, four-paragraph persuasive essay arguing that one text – more than the other two texts – depicts the most fully human character of Beowulf, the one whose characterization represents the most realistic, well-rounded (triumphs, flaws, and all) portrait of humanity. As you make and then support your claim, you naturally will want to compare and contrast your “chosen” text with the other two texts, in part as a way of clearly distinguishing your claim from alternate or opposing claims.”

After elaborating on this culminating assignment and entertaining student questions about it, Mr. Sanders turns the class loose to begin drafting outlines of their essays as he circulates to help. In explaining the assignment, he specified that students must support which story version’s characterization of Beowulf represents the character as most rounded and therefore human, while acknowledging their argument from opposing ones.

As such, Mr. Sanders’ instructional focus is wholly on the content of the film, rather than the way the film communicates its content. In this way, he accomplishes a spate of pedagogic purposes enumerated in chapter four. He uses the film as a purposeful and motivational tool to bring alive and reinforce understanding of a text dating back to circa the 9th Century AD, which even led to his students critically examining society and gender roles. Ultimately, Mr. Sanders created an assignment using film modeled after two essay prompts on the ELA Common Core Regents exam to build experience for his students in synthesizing information from multiple texts to support an argument (the Part 2 essay task), and by analyzing and writing about literary elements and how they function within a story (the part 3 essay task). Indeed, Mr. Sanders was not the only participant to pair film with printed texts for the purpose of synthesis or evidence-based arguments.

In another instance, when pairing Homer's *The Odyssey* with George Lucas' *Star Wars*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* with Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, George Orwell's *1984* with Barry Levinson's *Wag the Dog*, or Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* with Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, Mr. Hays noted that "the use of evidence is the same" for mounting arguments about literature or film. When he has his students write about the latter, he maintains the same expectations he has for the former: be specific, make a critical point, and use evidence to support that point. Likewise, Ms. Muller has her students write argumentative papers on Lee Daniels' film *The Butler* to give them practice using "textual-based evidence." So, too, does Mr. Pierce have his students "pulling evidence from...within the movie... to support" their arguments about the events or literary elements in the film.

In this regard, these participants understood film as a more engaging and scrutable form of text to understand the story it tells and as superior practice crafting and supporting arguments about their narratives with evidence in the same way they desire their students to do with printed texts. According to Mr. Hays, film provides students "another way to think through" the same thematic content that might otherwise be nebulous to students on the page. In other words, working in the more familiar and fond visual medium allows students to better understand and ultimately craft arguments about the similar concepts presented in related books. In a similar pattern, some participants had their students analyze and argue film and print texts that were more than just thematically related.

Analyzing Multiple Versions of the Same Text

Several of the participants incorporated film to achieve yet another CCSSI directive by having their students analyze multiple versions of the same literary text (CCSS.ELA-Literacy RL 11-12.7). In the example described above, Mr. Sanders had his students examine three competing

versions of *Beowulf* across film and print mediums, ultimately evaluating which best satisfied the criteria he provided. Thus, students analyzed which text portrayed the titular character as most fully human and supported their argument through textual evidence while acknowledging counterclaims.

Ms. Wilson and Ms. Franklin described working with film in similar ways. Ms. Wilson combines Homer's *The Odyssey* with both a graphic novel and a film adaptation of it, and has her students examine the differences and similarities between all three, the respective "authors' choices" regarding the characters and plot, and how those choices "add meaning" to each text. Likewise, Ms. Franklin combines Shakespeare's original *Romeo and Juliet* with film adaptations of it directed by both Baz Lurhmann and Franco Zeffirelli. Her students examine the competing portrayal of characters and choose which they view as most "true to what Shakespeare intended" or justify which "worked better in the story." Like Mr. Sanders, she has her students evaluate which textual version best meets criteria that she establishes.

Whether incorporating films that are thematically connected to or theatrically adapted from a book, and whether the teacher required a deliverable in the form of written work or other, most of the participants had their students analyzing and making arguments about the story that the film presented, not the methods that film employs to tell that story. However, the participants spoke extensively about an additional purpose they found in focusing on the story presented in the film other than for teaching their students how to build evidence-based arguments or to analyze multiple versions of the same text.

Teaching Plays: The Film's the Thing

One form of narrative long accepted in the English classroom gave further impetus to the participants of this study employing film in their classroom: the theater. "I think with a play, of

course, you have to see it on stage,” Ms. Donaldson posited. However, since opportunities to take students on field trips to see live theater are severely limited, the participants viewed film adaptations of plays as a critical teaching tool since seeing and hearing a play is “how you’re supposed to” experience it (Mr. Davies). If “it’s a drama...you need to see it dramatized,” Mr. Collins explained, reasoning that if you experience it only on the printed page, “you’ve done a disservice to a play.” In other words, if teachers presented only play scripts to teach what plays encompass, they would be substantively limiting and misrepresenting what plays involve.

Though all participants held the greatest reverence for printed literature and found it a requisite part of studying a dramatic work, they also found it wholly inadequate in affording their students the experience of what plays are since the script is but one element of the enterprise that is the theater.

Mr. Sanders, for example, weaves excerpts of a filmed staged performance of *Oedipus Rex* into his lessons while his class reads the printed text precisely because “Sophocles wrote this to be performed, not to have us reading it.” Likewise, Ms. Thompson toggled between the print and film versions of Reginald Rose’s *Twelve Angry Men* because she wanted her students “to see how it was embodied in these characters,” which “really helps with reading comprehension.” In this way, the participants stressed the performance of the play as helping their students understand the characters, conflicts, and story it communicates. While reading and analyzing play scripts are highly valuable class activities that the participants have their students engage, film offers the closest facsimile to the theater and something literature cannot: human performance of the play.

Some participants employed the same logic that underpins teaching a film or television episode by showing it to students, as opposed to merely reading the TV or film script, to teaching

a play by showing a film adaptation of it. For example, Mr. Davies, thought it misfitting to teach plays via printed script unless specifically teaching script writing, which is why he positions filmic adaptations as the primary text for any play that he teaches: “It really should be a performance that you’re dealing with, in the same way that I think most of us wouldn’t teach a screenplay [when teaching film], we would teach the film.” Ms. Wilson made the same point, arguing that if one were teaching television situational comedies, you wouldn’t hand somebody “a *Simpsons...or Seinfeld...*script and say read it...You’d say watch it.” Again, the visualization and human performance are at the root of how the participants understand film as the best substitute for live-performed plays in their classrooms. However, experiencing the play off the printed page, as intended by the playwrights, is not the only reason why the participants use film when teaching plays.

Performances of plays also substantively aid students in *understanding* them, according to the participants. “Hearing [the play performed] by professionals, as opposed to hearing it from their classmates is going to make a big difference” in the students’ understanding of the play, according to Ms. Franklin. Seeing the human performance of the play directly improves student understanding, in addition to affording the experience of the work as intended by its author. Ms. Thompson testified that her students were better “able to understand what the mother was feeling” when she makes the agonizing decision to have an abortion in Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* since they could visualize the setting, the characters, the mannerisms,” and better make sense of the unfamiliar dialect. In all of these examples, the teachers use film to aid their students in understanding what the story of the play is communicating.

No-where was this more essential for students than with Shakespeare, as the participants returned to a discourse of visualization. Not only because the participants believed “Shakespeare

needs to be watched” since “that’s what it’s built for” (Ms. Wilson), but because “Shakespeare’s a barrier for students, so much of it depends on the performance” in order “to help them understand what’s actually happening in the text” (Mr. Hays). That is, students seeing actors perform enable them to make sense of the language. Indeed, Mr. Davies finds film so “effective, in terms of getting the kids to understand the story” that he “would have a hard time ever teaching Shakespeare in particular without having the kids view a performance” precisely because of their need “to visualize things.” Through the facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, costuming, and other elements presented in the film, as it would be similarly presented on the stage, students are able to make sense of the play’s characters, conflicts, and themes.

Seeing Shakespeare performed is critical “for the kids interpreting the text,” according to Ms. Franklin. In other words, absent the opportunity to visit the theater, film is the fulcrum in determining how students make sense of Shakespearean texts. Since “reading Shakespeare is just so doggone foreign to them,” (Mr. Sanders) largely “because of the language” (Ms. Cole) being “so rich” (Ms. Wilson), the teachers not only rely on film to provide the experience of Shakespeare’s work as he intended it, but for their students to fundamentally understand it at all. With film, “the language becomes more alive and it’s easier to become aware of what’s happening with the language,” Mr. Collins testified. Because of the performance of professional actors, who don’t struggle like students to decode words and can add emotional tone coupled with facial expressions and physical gestures, film affords understanding and the dynamic experience of the theater that the printed play alone cannot.

Since the participants see film as providing better understanding of and a closer experience to live theater than a play script does, film can transform the typically negative interaction that students have with Shakespeare. In Mr. Hays’ experience, because film enables

students to “make sense” of and “appreciate the language” of Shakespearean plays, it allows a “more positive experience” for students who otherwise view it as torturous and irrelevant. “They get it,” Mr. Hays enthused. In other words, film not only permits students to penetrate Shakespeare’s arcane language for understanding, but that newfound understanding enables his work to resonate with them. When a performance of the play is provided to students, “they start going, ‘Wait a minute. I understand this,’” Ms. Wilson reported. Her description similarly reveals the ‘aha’, or light-bulb-going-off moment of students experiencing the joyful epiphany of finally understanding not just the previously inscrutable language but the timeless themes and characters that cause all else to consider Shakespeare’s plays eternal. Referring first to English teachers, Mr. Hays explained that “*We* all love Shakespeare, but the kids don’t.” Yet when he incorporates film adaptations in his classroom, “they come around” and can finally join in appreciation of what Shakespearean works have to offer. This newfound appreciation owes directly to the performance captured in the film enabling students to understand what Shakespeare’s plays are communicating.

In using film to teach Shakespearean plays, I identified two distinctive tracks that the participants took: 1) Read an Act, Watch an Act, and 2) Watch the Film, Read Some Excerpts. I begin with the former.

Read an act, watch an act.

Roughly half of the participants spoke of having their students read scenes from Shakespearean plays and then watching the same scenes in the film adaptation to support their students’ understanding of the play’s story. For example, Mr. Sanders described how he “supplement[s]” his class’ reading of Shakespearean plays with film adaptations by using the method of “read an act, watch act.” Even though “things might be left out” in the film version,

students “can see the drama unfold and match that with how they read it,” and can “compare and contrast” the print and filmic versions. Here he speaks in a language of narrative, referring to which plot events and characters are omitted, and not the cinematic methods the film adaptation employs to tell the story.

Indeed, the latter would likely be just as effective for instruction regardless of decisions to omit plot points or characters if it were Mr. Sanders’ teaching goal, since whatever parts of the original play included in the film would still be presented through various cinematic elements that are integral to *how* film communicates the story. Indeed, Mr. Sanders revealed himself as being well-versed in these elements when at other times he discussed “camera shots and angles... tracking shots and overhead shots... staccato style editing, [and] one-take shots.” Nevertheless, he elects to not include “the grammar of film” while teaching with it in favor of the narrative elements, which he finds “very effective” in helping his students understand the story in Shakespearean plays.

To overcome “the language” barrier in Shakespearean plays, Ms. Cole also “rel[ies] on the film” using the same method of reading then watching. While Ms. Cole reported occasionally directing her students to “pay attention to the [camera] angles” and consider “why would they shoot this character this way, or why is he turned, or whatever,” she, too, spoke of chiefly focusing her instruction with film on “the topics and the themes, and the characters, and the whole storyline” more so than “*how* it’s done.” Likewise, because “it really helps with reading comprehension to watch it along the way,” Ms. Thompson described having her students read and then watch Shakespeare scene by scene rather than “sav[ing] the film until the end.” Moreover, because students have such a better time following the story in the play through film,

watching portions after reading portions of Shakespearean plays “kept the kids engaged” in Ms. Smith’s experience.

Many of the participants used the method of having students read portions of Shakespearean plays, while doing their best to interpret the printed play first, then supplementing their level of understanding with the visual performance in the film to primarily help them understand the story and characters in the play. However, some participants took a different track while striving to achieve the same goal.

Watch the film, read some excerpts.

Three of the participants used film to teach Shakespearean plays, focusing on the story and characters portrayed in the film, in a way I have not encountered in the literature. Rather than having their students read sections of the printed play aloud line by line, struggling to interpret the obscure language, and then watching a filmic version to clarify their understanding of the story, these participants used the film adaptation as the primary text and then had their students read excerpts from the play afterward.

Owing chiefly to a time crunch as the school year neared the end, Ms. Franklin elected to use “the film as the primary text” for her *Romeo and Juliet* unit for the first time in her teaching career, and she found it successful even in her “lower class...that has modified curriculum” for some of the students. In past years, when she had students read the play first, she found that they didn’t “appreciate what it’s doing” precisely because they struggled to understand the story and its characters. The unexpected surprise of starting with the film was that her current students actually “liked it” and understood what “other kids in the past haven’t about the play.” In using the film first, she enabled her struggling students to make still better sense of the characters and

storyline of the play than reading first and showing the film second, as I illustrate next through an excerpt of my observation of her teaching.

“They cut many of Juliet’s strongest speeches...much of Friar John’s part...a lot of stuff from Act V” and several of the “deaths from the original play” in this film adaptation, Ms. Franklin cautions her class. In today’s portion of the film, she forewarns her remedial 9th grade students that the answers to the questions on page 25 in their Romeo and Juliet packets will come up. She flicks the light switch, cues up the film to where they last left off, and hits play on Franco Zeffirelli’s 1968 adaptation. The partially open window blinds only moderately block the ambient light from leaking into the classroom, allowing students to easily see their paperwork.

As the film plays, with subtitles in yellow lettering on the bottom of the screen for her students’ benefit, Ms. Franklin calls out for her students to “watch Friar Lawrence’s face as it will reveal a moment of dramatic irony.” Moments later, she adds that this “is Balthasar, Romeo’s servant.” When the film cuts back to Friar Lawrence’s face, Ms. Franklin pauses the film and asks why he smiles. “Because things are going according to his plan,” a young man answers after being called on. Sitting in a desk amongst her students, Ms. Franklin continuously makes comments and poses questions as the film runs: “There’s Balthasar running off. Where could he be going?” She soon pauses again and asks if the students have a prediction of what will come next in the plot, receiving a variety of guesses called out enthusiastically without raised hands. She mentions that in the play, Romeo asks Balthasar if he has any letters for Romeo, but that this is excluded in the film. She then directs her students to answer the question in the packet which asks why Romeo would visit the apothecary. Twice Ms. Franklin pauses the film and tells students to note the particular words in Shakespeare’s language frozen on the screen in subtitles.

Upon the film's conclusion, Ms. Franklin emphasizes that there is a significant difference between the film and play regarding the relationship of the two families. She projects the original play script on the smartboard, and reads aloud from it starting on line 306. She asks what the conversation between the two lords of the families is about, and the students piece together that the two are one-upping each other in gestures, thus rekindling the rivalry. Ms. Franklin then leads a discussion on which characters have changed or stayed the same between the script and film versions.

While using the film as the initial and primary experience for her students with the play, Mr. Franklin focused instruction chiefly on *what* the story communicates rather than *how* it does so. Along the way, she employed many of the teaching strategies discussed earlier in this chapter, from pausing, to note-taking, to analyzing multiple versions of the same text, all aimed at facilitating active engagement of the text to teach the story and its characters.

For example, she begins by comparing and contrasting the changes between the film adaptation and original text in regards to the characters and plot events. The questions in the packet that Ms. Franklin prompts her students to answer are plot and character questions, asking them to identify what message Balthasar gives to Romeo, or what Friar Lawrence's plan is, for example (Appendix F). She continues the lesson by identifying characters and literary elements shown in the film and clarifying plot events, before returning to a comparison between the two groups of characters. In Ms. Franklin's words, she centered her instruction on "the *what* in the story rather than the *how*." She was not the only participant to do so.

Ms. Wilson "always, always, always teach[es] Shakespeare with film first," because his plays were intended to be seen, "and then dive[s] into the print text," because the "language is so rich" and challenging for her students to understand the story and its characters. She described

frequent pausing and discussion as necessary for student comprehension. For her, film makes the “complex, antiquated language structure” in Shakespearean plays “accessible to them, and they start going ‘Wait a minute. I understand this.’” Like Mr. Franklin, Ms. Wilson reported concentrating her teaching with film “a lot more [on] the story” than on its cinematography.

Similarly, instead of “having [students] read it aloud in class, or chorally,” Mr. Davies finds it more “effective in terms of getting kids to understand the story” by simply showing them a filmed performance, with subtitles on, and then “deal[ing] with it on the page.” After having professional actors “really show the characters,” as he, too, believes the play is intended to be experienced, Mr. Davies has his students close read the language in the printed text, create video recitation performances of key scenes, and sometimes do essay writing on rhetorical techniques in select speeches from the play. In all of these instructional activities, none involve analysis or teaching regarding how the film adaptation communicates its story, as the rhetorical essay involves examining how the language in a speech works to communicate its content.

Experiencing plays through performances, as they were intended by their authors, rather than just reading them off the page, was another reason the participants in this study gave for using film in the classroom. They understand film as the most suitable substitute to live theater productions, an exceedingly rare opportunity, when introducing and teaching plays. Focusing their teaching on what the story communicates, the participants emphasized the necessity of having students see plays performed, as they were intended, which affords student understanding of the most challenging and unfamiliar kinds, and even enables appreciation and enjoyment of plays that students typically dislike, such as Shakespeare’s. While most participants used the ‘read an act, watch an act’ method of teaching Shakespeare’s plays, three participants used film adaptations of Shakespearean plays as the initial and primary access point for their students,

followed by reading excerpts of his original language. Both approaches centered on *what* the film communicated rather than *how* it did so. But some of these very same participants changed the focus of their instruction to the latter in other contexts, which I discuss next.

Teaching *How* Film Communicates

In a distinctively different approach than all previous examples, several of the participants at times centered their instruction on *how* film communicates the story that it tells. In doing so, I identified how they focused their teaching on three methods by which film communicates, including cinematography, composition, and editing. For each, the participants first provided their students a language to discuss and make sense of the specific filmic element and then had students apply it to filmic examples. I follow this with an utterly unique and interactive approach that one participant employed in his teaching with film.

In the first subsection, entitled Studying Cinematography, I describe how the participants introduced camera angles and movements, scale (referring to long, medium, and close up shots, etc.), and several other related cinematic elements, and instructed on how they influence the viewer's understanding of the story. In the second subsection, entitled Close Reading the Frame, I detail the unique way that one participant made sense of and focused instruction on how meaning is created through the composition of the filmic image. In the third subsection, Cut From a Different Cloth, I describe how that participant focused instruction on the way editing functions to help communicate the story presented in the film and influences the viewer's understanding of it. In the final subsection, Student Filmmakers, I describe how that same participant put his students behind the camera to make decisions about cinematography, composition, and editing to create their own visual stories. Though I found only one participant making sense of and instructing with film in ways that I describe in the final three subsections,

he did so in ways rarely seen or completely absent in the literature, and I therefore regarded them as significant findings despite them being anomalies among my participant sample.

The three participants that I describe teaching *how* film communicates its story also appeared in the section above in teaching *what* film communicates. This owes to the variety of purposes and goals they had when working with film, and how they moved between the two approaches depending on their aims for a given unit of instruction. Further, when focusing their teaching on *how* film communicates, they inevitably delved into *what* film communicates at the same time since the two are ultimately inseparable. Lastly, the participants who focus instruction on *how* film communicates often employed the various teaching strategies I described in the beginning of this chapter, sometimes requiring differing forms of notetaking of their students, using the pause button in various ways, and sometimes emphasizing teacher proximity while the film plays. However, they also employed pedagogic strategies not previously noted, which I describe within each of the following sections.

Studying Cinematography

All three of the participants who focused instruction on how film communicates featured instruction on cinematography, and they saw providing their students with a language with which to identify, discuss and analyze cinematic elements as key. For example, after showing his film elective students the opening scene in George Lucas' *Star Wars* following the iconic yellow scroll, Mr. Collins recounted pausing the film and bidding his students to notice what they saw. Most detected the subject of the shot first: "I don't know. I saw stars," a student responded. Mr. Collins pressed his class to describe what else they saw. "It moved. The image went like that," Mr. Collins' student gestured vertically with his hands. "OK. We call that a tilt," Mr. Collins

edified. In this fashion, he provided his students a “language [they] never heard before” so that they have a means to describe, analyze, and ultimately make sense of what they see in film.

By teaching his students some of the lexicon of film, he not only affords them with the words to describe what they see, but increases their awareness that these elements are at play. As such, he frames film in a way that his students have never conceived of before, as an object of study in ways similar to scientific examination of a phenomenon, whereby its parts are observed, named, and then analyzed for functionality. This stands in stark contrast to both how students traditionally consume film for entertainment at home, or often even in a classroom, and to the way that teachers who focus on *what* film communicates emphasize film’s narrative elements only.

After recognizing the elements in the images, and then the tilt through which the film showed the images, Mr. Collins’ student soon experienced an epiphany: ““Like, where the hell is the camera?!”” Suddenly, the student grew sensitive to the film’s method of *how* the stars in the shot were revealed through camera positioning and movement. Mr. Collins next asked his students, “Why is that so strange?...I like the idea that you’ve noticed the thing, but what does it really mean?” In this way, Mr. Collins teaches his students to not only notice and identify the elements of cinematography in the film by using the nomenclature he provided them, but to begin to puzzle out the meanings communicated by them. Rather than focusing on the plotline or characters, Mr. Collins had his students concentrate on what the camera was doing to create meaning and influence the viewer’s understanding of the story.

In another striking example, Ms. Franklin began her mini film unit by telling her students that they will “look at what the camera is doing.” As they readied to watch Robert Mulligan’s film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* following a unit on Harper Lee’s original novel, she

informed her class that she wants them to think about “how is [the story] told and why is it told that way?” in the film. Like Mr. Collins, Ms. Franklin next provided her students with a taxonomy of cinematography as a foundation for them to recognize and then make meaning from the cinematic elements in the film.

Beginning with a packet containing cinematic terms (Appendix G), she, too, provided her students with some of the concepts and the language to discuss what they see the camera do in the film. She began with introducing what a close-up shot is and directed her students to write down in their packet that close-ups are used to show emotion. She did the same for medium and long shots. Next, she moved on to low, eye level, and high camera angles, and the meanings typically created by their use. In this fashion, she imparted both the conceptual ways that the grammar of film communicates by as well as a vocabulary to discuss and make sense of it.

Though cinematography was not Mr. Davies’ starting point when teaching how film communicates in his film unit, which I will elaborate on in the next section, he, too prompted his students to notice “how is [the camera] moving, how is it angled, how is [the shot] framed?” when examining the moving image. “That’s really what’s at stake when you’re looking at cinematography,” he explained. Like the two participants above, Mr. Davies introduced how cinematography operates to communicate the story in film by providing his students with a language to notice, identify, and make sense of it. He did this in two ways.

First, Mr. Davies played a YouTube tutorial video called “Composition in Storytelling,” by Channel Criswell. The video explains copious cinematic concepts and terms they are known by while showing an interminable stream of clips from Hollywood films illustrating each one. For Mr. Davies, having students see the various cinematic techniques in action as they are described was critical since they are inherently visual. Second, following the video, Mr. Davies

distributed a handout (Appendix H) with a comprehensive list of cinematic terms and accompanying definitions so that everyone has “a similar language to talk about cinematography.” Here he notes the importance of providing students with the vocabulary to discuss what they see to be able to effectively think about and interpret the language film uses to communicate.

Indeed, for those who focused instruction on how film communicates, providing a language for students to be able to speak and think about how the grammar of film operates was fundamental. For two of the three who did this, cinematography was at the heart of their understanding of the language of film. However, for Mr. Davies, it was but one of the critical elements by which film communicates, as I illustrate next through an excerpt of one of my observations in his classroom.

Close Reading the Frame

*Mr. Davies flicks the wall switch, plunging the rows of fluorescent ceiling lights into darkness, then presses the button on the remote control to cue the opening scene from the film *Mud*, directed by Jeff Nichols, on the oversized Promethean Board at the front of the classroom. The glow from the dancing images on screen reflects off all 19 student faces like headlights off a startled animal’s eyes along a dark road after dusk. Not one student supine, despite this English 10 Regents group having already finished the entire film last class. After a succession of lowly lit interior shots of unexplained sundry items resting on shelves, a boy of about 12 years sneaks out the window of his bedroom on a houseboat in the pre-dawn hours of morning, spies a stilted breakfast table conversation between parents through an exterior window, and absconds through the shadows into the still-dark woods. The film then cuts to a crane shot speeding through the air over a dark, hazy bayou before the title of the film in small, capitalized, white lettering slowly moves up the screen—and then abruptly freezes.*

Mr. Davies has paused the film with his remote control after diffidently sneaking past his unsuspecting pupils from his position at a student desk in the back of the room, much like the boy in the film past his parents. The students, previously lost in a trance cast by the film's spell during this second viewing of the film's opening, look about the room for explanation. "Alright, take out a sheet of paper," Mr. Davies calls out as he rewinds the film to the opening shot and pauses on that frame (see Figure 1 below). He directs the students to "write down literally everything [they] see on that opening shot" on their paper.



Figure 1

Mr. Davies asks them to consider the objects, lighting, and whatever else catches their eyes. After a few minutes, he asks students to share what they noticed and wrote down. He calls on one male student in the back right of the room, who says there's "not a lot of lighting." Mr. Davies enthusiastically agrees and draws over the frozen frame on the Promethean Board, tracing lines of contrast between light and shadow in the image with the red ink of his stylus. Another student volunteers that he noticed the cougar insignia. Mr. Davies asks what they make of that, or what they associate with a cougar. A tall male student retorts that it comes from a car. Yet another student posits that the boy in the film "likes collecting things off cars," and adds that such items are commonly stolen. Mr. Davies prods further about additional connotations of cougars. Another student, silent until now, notes that cougars are dangerous animals. "What

else about a cougar?” Mr. Davies persists. With a giggle, yet another student bashfully says, “A woman.” Mr. Davies elaborates that it is indeed a term used for an older woman who “preys on younger kids,” and suggests that perhaps that reflects the May Pearl character in the film. He pushes further and asks about its lettering. Earning Mr. Davies’ praise, a young lady recognizes it as being cursive, and a boy seated on the left side of the room notices that it’s reflecting the light—both methods of attracting the audience’s eyes.

Mr. Davies directs their attention to the bulldog doll in the frame and asks what to make of that. A student mentions that when the film plays, the head bobbles, indicating that they might be on a boat. Mr. Davies continues superimposing notes on what the class notices and the attendant meanings they infer in red ink over the image on the Promethean Board. Students next observe the Ford insignia, and Mr. Davies guides them to consider the objects in the frame together; he says there’s perhaps a car theme building, and that many of the objects in the frame are stereotypically associated with masculinity. Another student notices that the shelf seems to have damage. Mr. Davies continues to ask questions like “What does that infer?” or “What does that suggest?” or “So what?” each time a student notices something new in the frame.

Soon Mr. Davies fast forwards to the young boy’s point-of-view shot spying his parents and pauses (see figure 2 below), asking students to again identify what they see.



Figure 2

One student notes the newspaper. Another surmises that the two characters are arguing. Mr. Davies distinguishes that the two aren't actually arguing because in reality, these are merely two actors who hold no ill-will, unlike the characters they portray. "So what is it about the frame that makes us think they are arguing?" Mr. Davies presses. He helps the struggling students by mentioning that it's a classic move for a husband who wants to tune out his wife to hold up a newspaper as a barrier and occupy himself with it. Then he asks who the light illuminates. Several students call out that it is on her. Mr. Davies affirms that and analyzes that she therefore holds our attention, paralleling the attention she seeks from him. He enjoins them to search for the details that bring them to the many conclusions they make when seeing film.

Opting not to question his students on the basics of the film's plot, or challenge them to deduce the film's theme, Mr. Davies began his film unit by guiding them to consider "what's in the image." In this way, he focused his instruction on how the film harnesses its cinematic building blocks to uniquely communicate its story. Prior to having had his student engage in the frame analysis described above, Mr. Davies began by introducing them to the concept of *mise-en-scene*, a term which refers to the composition of the image, and which he defined as encompassing "everything you put" in the frame. He invited students to think of the screen as a stage, and everything on the stage as a part of the *mise-en-scene*, including the furniture, décor, clutter, lighting, actor performances, costumes, and beyond. Even though all of what is seen in the image might seem natural, he cautioned that all these elements are carefully arranged by the filmmakers who intended it to appear organic. By slowing down the inherently rapid stream of images to examine the compositional aspects of what is included in the individual image, the inner workings of film's component parts may be revealed like the gears and springs in a skeleton watch.

Mr. Davies explained his method of closely reading individual images to teach how film works as a system of signs to communicate in one of his interviews with me:

“You can spend 20 minutes, half an hour on a very richly composed frame...[by] breaking things down, and going kind of inductively from the little details, and then trying to produce meaning out of those, and finding strands of meaning, seeing repetitions and motifs develop...I found that really accessible and useful to really teach the kids to break it down as much as possible and say ‘What are all of the different elements in this frame, in this short sequence, in this shot, that are producing meaning?’

Mr. Davies’ employs the language of structuralism when instructing his class and when explaining his approach to teaching how film operates. He views film not merely as a story, with narrative elements shared with novels, such as conflict, characterization, symbolism and the like, but rather as a story underpinned by and communicated through a unique, complex system of cinematic elements that work in concert, similar to a traditional language, through which meaning is made by the viewer.

In describing his approach to unpacking how the multi-layered linguistic structure of film communicates, he borrows analytical approaches often taught in writing and textual analysis collegiate courses. In the example above, he prods his students to notice details, then how those details might repeat or be similar to other details, then recognize the patterns of those details and how they work together in a system. For example, his students notice the Cougar insignia and explore the possible connotations of it as a signifying sign and then how that sign operates within the larger sign system of the entire story. They posit that cougars are dangerous animals, and that perhaps this specific car insignia infers the danger in stealing such things, or the dangerous path the protagonist chooses in the film. Additionally, they recognize the slang meaning for cougar,

and entertain the idea that this sign might also reflect and foreshadow the relationship between the protagonist and another older, female character seen later in the film.

The students next notice the Ford insignia, and they begin to consider those objects together. They conclude that those kinds of objects are typically affixed to vehicles and are often stolen, concluding that they function to characterize the protagonist. Mr. Davies guides them to further consider what that says about the film's tacit representation of masculinity. While the connotations of these signs still operate on the viewer who merely watches for entertainment, Mr. Davies' instructional approach of slowing down the film to closely read the frame enables his students to uncover how film's language works and unpack the meanings that the viewer makes from the signs the film communicates through, even when the viewer doesn't realize it.

For additional and individual practice in identifying the details in a frame of film and how they produce meaning, Mr. Davies yielded the power of pause by posting short clips from *Mud* on Google Classroom and directed students to individually (re-)watch the clips on their laptop computers. After picking a clip that interests them most, they were to screen capture three frames from the clip that they thought were "doing something interesting" and insert them into the assignment document (Appendix I) he created and posted on Classroom. Students were to list ten things they noticed in the *mise-en-scene* of each frame and compose a written analysis of what meaning each detail creates in the same way they practiced with the opening shot together as a class. Thus, Mr. Davies began his unit on *how* film communicates its story.

After several lessons on how film composition operates, Mr. Davies continued his instruction with how cinematography works, as previously described, and then continued his pattern of highly unique teaching methods when he turned to film editing next.

Cut From a Different Cloth

Another way in which Mr. Davies instructed that was anomalous from the rest of the participants and not found in the literature was by having his students closely examine how editing in film operates. While most other participants never even spoke of film editing, and only a couple briefly referenced it, Mr. Davies discussed and instructed on it at length and in very nuanced and sophisticated ways. His words and teaching reveal how he sees editing as a part, and even the defining element, of the grammar of film. As with teaching how cinematography and composition function in film, Mr. Davies introduced the concept then gave his students a vocabulary to speak and think about this aspect of the language of film. I describe his methodological approach to teaching editing next.

Having started his film unit by teaching how composition (also known by the term *mise-en-scene*) works, and then instructing his class on how cinematography operates, Mr. Davies advised his students that they “can go to a play and see all the *mise-en-scene* stuff,” or they can “go to an art gallery and see all the [cinematography] stuff,” but what “makes film really unique...is editing.” This pronouncement epitomizes Mr. Davies’ unique understanding of film, particularly since editing in film is typically designed for the viewer to not notice it. Since most what of the viewer sees in film “is a bunch of very fragmented cut up shots that have been sutured together,” it “should be very jarring to us,” since “we are moving instantaneously across space and time,” Mr. Davies noted. Most film viewers understand sudden changes in perspective from one shot to another, or changes from one setting to another as natural because editing is geared toward working against our feeling of disorientation and done “in a way that feels continuous to us,” Mr. Davies explained. However, his understanding of how editing makes the unnatural seem natural parallels his understanding of how film accomplishes the same goal through composition, as I explicated earlier and elaborate further next.

Mr. Davies informed his class that movies are typically comprised of 24 still images per second, which gives the illusions that they are moving. In one interview with me, he spoke of how with the most common edit in film, the simple cut, there is nothing to even visually see between the image before and the image after the cut, thus making it still less visible to the viewer. This stands in contrast to a fade to black, when the image turns completely dark before the next image is seen, or a dissolve, where the first image begins to disappear as the new image progressively appears. Mr. Davies briefly traced the history of film and the evolution of editing from its earliest form of single shot takes to its more mature stages featuring sophisticated editing techniques, which resulted in “basically a grammar that we are all accustomed to.” Again, he speaks of film here in linguistic terms, and soon after provided his students with a language to discuss and think about this grammar of film.

Mr. Davies’ next step in teaching editing was to distribute and review a handout with editing terms, types, and definitions (Appendix J), including cuts, crosscuts, jump cuts, match cuts, and beyond. However, he did not merely describe a type of edit and give a term to it. Reflecting his understanding of film as a chiefly visual form of language, he illustrated these types of edits by showing his class two YouTube videos (Editing in Storytelling by Channel Criswell and Cuts and Transition 101 by RocketJump Film School). Each video showed clips from Hollywood films using various types of transitions as a narrator explains their name, what they are, and their impact on the story they help communicate. For example, jump cuts, whereby the beginning of an action cuts to a later part of the same action, leaving the middle portion of the action unnaturally excluded, adds a sense of urgency in the sequence that would not be so strongly felt without that kind of editing.

To illustrate how the pacing of editing may be manipulated for effect, Mr. Davies cued up a short clip from *Mud* and directed students to call out “cut” whenever they noticed a cut happen as the clip played. They began by chorally say the word every five to eight seconds, but soon the action and the cuts accelerated, too fast for the students to say cut fast enough. Mr. Davies then led them in a discussion about how the change of pacing in the editing ginned up the intensity for the viewer’s experience, which paralleled the mounting tension in the storyline. Again, Mr. Davies regarded and instructed film as a form of language whose syntactical choices affect the meaning it communicates. He supplemented this concept with yet another unique pedagogic approach.

For practice in identifying and analyzing editing in film, Mr. Davies instructed his students to look through clips from *Mud* that he posted on Google Classroom, and to pick one that they thought was doing interesting things regarding editing. For two edits, students were to screen capture the frame just before the cut, as well as the frame just after the cut and insert them into the assignment document Mr. Davies created (Appendix K). Then, using the editing terms he previously taught them, they identified what kind of edit each is, described how the cut might be analogous to an injunction transition (e.g. next, therefore, however, etc.) between the shots that preceded and proceeded it, and analyzed why they thought the cut was made precisely where it was in the footage. In this way, Mr. Davies again provided students with a language to discuss and analyze editing, and he framed editing in a distinctly linguistic way by paralleling it to how transitions work in written communication.

Like the other participants who focused instruction on how film communicates, Mr. Davies understood film as a form of language which communicates its story through the conventions of cinematic techniques. All three talked of providing their students with a language

to be able discuss and make sense of this filmic language. They did so by introducing terms such as tilt for vertical camera movement, or high angle for the camera positioned above and looking down at its subject. They followed that by describing the typical connotations for each cinematic technique, and then they applied that knowledge in noticing, identifying, and analyzing them in a movie. However, Mr. Davies was the lone participant who spoke or instructed at length regarding the compositional and editing aspects of this grammar of film. This revealed his more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the multi-layered language of film, which he methodically instructed his students about, and represents a significant expansion upon the ways that the other participants spoke of or taught with film.

In this last subsection, however, I detail the instructional approach that Mr. Davies used which was entirely unique from what all other participants talked about it or undertook. I describe his innovative practices in the next subsection.

Student Filmmakers

Reasoning that he would never teach poetry without having students try writing poems, Mr. Davies explained that he wouldn't teach film without having his students try to create film. Having students work behind the camera, moving from critiquing to creating, presents challenges of time and technology. The process of film creation is notoriously time consuming, requiring lengthy planning, filming, and editing phases. Spending precious and limited class time on watching film has already come under fire, as I outlined in the literature review, and creating even a very short film can easily involve significantly more time than watching a feature length one. Additionally, access to camera equipment and editing software, plus knowledge for making use of them, can potentially present obstacles that render such an endeavor impossible.

Nevertheless, Mr. Davies found ways to put all of his students behind the camera to put to use their newfound understandings of how film communicates. He accomplished this in two ways that I describe in the following two subsections entitled: (1) In the Can, and (2) Pre-Production. In the former, named after the film industry term which denotes when filming of a movie has completed and the footage is ready for post-production editing, Mr. Davies had students edit pre-shot raw footage together to create a short film which followed a pre-written script. In the latter, Mr. Davies had students create and plan their own original story in small groups and then take and assemble still photos shot on their cellphones into a visual story shared through Google Slides.

In both cases, Mr. Davies not only gave his students the chance to make decisions about cinematography, composition, and editing, he put the power of the medium in their hands, just as he did with the power of pause I previously documented. In this way, rather than have students only analyze the way other filmmakers exercised the power of the medium, his students took control of it themselves, making decisions on how to manipulate it, and thus exercised greater influence over their educational experience. To illustrate, I start with an excerpt from one of my observations.

In the can.

As students noisily enter the classroom, they notice a startling still frame of film projected on the Promethean Board of a man in a yellow hooded hazmat suite, gas mask obscuring his face and wielding an axe (see Figure 3 on page 176). A boy, wide-eyed with excitement asks, “Are we going to watch a horror film, Mr. Davies?!” The bell rings and Mr. Davies continues his film unit after completing the movie Mud: “OK, so, I’d like to read to you a

script. It's a scary story. Imagine this..." He switches the Promethean Board to project what looks like a film script and begins to read from it using a spooky voice:

"Interior of a warehouse at night. We see down a dark hallway, and Becky's head pops up against the wall on the right side of the frame. She's panting. The killer enters down the hall, Becky looks and sees him, and starts to run. The killer follows, axe in hand. When she looks back, he's on top of her. The killer swings the axe down on her throat. Cut to an interior bedroom morning. Overhead shot of Becky, waking from a bad dream. She checks her throat, gets out of bed. Interior kitchen, morning. Ally, Becky's roommate is making coffee. Becky enters. Becky: 'I just had the most terrifying dream. I was in some warehouse, being chased by this madman in a yellow suit, and he grabbed me by the throat.' Ally: 'Here, you need this more than me.' Ally hands her a cup of coffee. The end."

With his students hanging on his every word and looking up at the script on the glowing screen of the Smartboard in the darkened classroom, they look more like children telling ghost stories around a campfire.

"So that's the movie that you guys are going to be putting together over the next two classes" with everyone working from that same script, Mr. Davies explains, "and it's already been shot for you." He shows them some excerpts of the raw footage he downloaded from the website <http://framelines.tv> and posted to Google Classroom, acted and recorded by what appears to be college film students using three cameras for each scene. Mr. Davies informs that the class will be working on the editing software in the computer lab. They must first watch all 50 minutes of the raw footage "to see what they're working with," then cull and "catalogue" the useable shots, which don't have actor or camera mistakes, on a Google document he has created

(Appendix L). They will ultimately assemble those shots together using editing software in the school's computer lab.



Figure 3

In this activity, students got the opportunity to practice and demonstrate their new knowledge of how editing works, however, they simultaneously got to step into the role that film editors have and the chance to become decision makers. As is typically the case for Hollywood film editors, the students were given copious amounts of raw footage, and it became their job to decide what they thought would be useable or not, preferable or not, and which editing techniques between images would best communicate the film version of the pre-written script. Instead of only noticing, identifying, and analyzing editing techniques that were already determined by someone else, these students were making those decisions themselves using what they learned about editing in previous lessons.

Though time and technical limitations stymied Mr. Davies' ideal vision of having students shoot and edit their own raw footage, the exercise above allowed them to participate through a hands-on activity in the creation of the very medium that his class was studying. Since the story was already determined and the footage already shot, the students worked exclusively on editing and thus a substantive element of *how* the story is communicated rather than *what* it communicates. Their choices over which shots are included or excluded, the pacing of cuts, and

the type of cuts all work toward various ways of telling the same story, but to potentially differing effects from each of their peers and the editing choices they make.

Mr. Davies did note that evolving iPhone technology is making it increasingly possible for that to happen in time efficient ways, though not all students have access to that technology. In the meantime, he recognized that this editing activity afforded students the chance to practice and exercise the power of filmmaking in the post-production phase, but it did not give the same chance to try their hand at the compositional and cinematography aspects of film that they learned about in their film unit. For that, he gave his students another in-class activity, which I share next.

Pre-production.

In order to give his students practice and the power to create film from the pre-production through the production phases, Mr. Davies tasked them with creating their own story as told through still photos of their own creation (Appendix M). Mr. Davies gave students 15 minutes to meet in teacher-arranged small groups to plan a short narrative that would be told through five to ten still frames captured on their cellphones. Each group was assigned a nearby location in the halls, stairwells, and foyers of the school to shoot their frames, with all group members playing parts in the story and taking a turn directing and operating the camera. After 40 minutes of filming and trying to incorporate and make decisions about the concepts they learned about *mise-en-scene* and cinematography, students were next required to return to the classroom, share their images on Google Drive, then select, arrange, and analyze their choices in a Google Slides presentation to be shared with the rest of the class.

In contrast to the editing activity, Mr. Davies gave his students practice and the power to determine *what* the story would be, as well as the power over *how* the story would be told. They

collectively pre-planned the story and some of the ways they wanted to compose images that would communicate the story. Upon arriving at their locations to film, they also made compositional and cinematographic decisions on the fly. While students had full autonomy over their individual choices in the editing activity, they did have to collaborate with others, in the sense that the script was already written and the footage already shot. In this activity, they had to share creative control with their group members. While these are indeed limitations to the power of creating film, they do reflect the real life nature of film production, which is highly collaborative.

Though several of the participants do teach cinematography and focus on *how* film communicates, Mr. Davies was indeed the only one to substantively teach how composition and editing also operate as a part of film's unique language, and to grant his students the role and power of creating film themselves. Though he is an outlier in this way, his teaching approaches represent significant findings as they do not appear in the literature. Thus, he potentially offers novel ways to instruct with the medium of film that go well beyond merely teaching the basics of character and plot, or even how camera angles and shots are manipulated by filmmakers for various purposes.

Contradictions

In analyzing the data regarding how the participants instruct with film, I noticed several apparent contradictions in the answers they gave or their actions I observed. While the majority of the participants focused their teaching with film on what it communicates, perhaps expectedly given that their training is in literature and not specific to film, two of the participants who happen to be exceptionally knowledgeable of how film communicates choose not to incorporate that aspect in their core English classes despite describing great value in potentially doing so.

While Mr. Collins does indeed delve into the cinematic building blocks of how film communicates in his film elective class, he refrains from doing so in his regular English classes. This owes to his perception of the time required to teach his students the foundation of film-related knowledge required to make it worthwhile and the lack of time to attend to everything else in the curriculum. Mr. Sanders, whose film background also makes him highly qualified to include the cinematic elements of film, opts to largely exclude instruction on how film communicates, as he thinks film elective classes are a fitting place for such teaching and because he doesn't want to bring too much of his own interests into the classroom at the cost of what would otherwise be done with class time with a teacher that doesn't have his film background.

Despite discussing at length the power film holds in motivating student interest, in providing their students with a more accessible way to access the content of the English curriculum, Mr. Collins nevertheless doesn't often teach with film at all in his AP English classes, with the notable exception of teaching Shakespeare. And despite Mr. Sanders recognizing the similarity that the languages of film and print have, and film's greater accessibility for students, Mr. Sanders elects to not focus his teaching on how film communicates its story. I focus on these discrepancies because they speak to the complex and, at times, even contradictory nature of how these participants make sense of and teach with narrative film.

Summary

My findings in this chapter reveal the multiple ways that the participants make sense of and instruct with film, however, I identified several common themes among these disparate approaches, particularly regarding what they do when the film plays in the classroom. Despite their competing preferences for having students take notes or answer guided questions during or after the screening of the film, all participants expected their students to engage in written tasks

regarding the film they saw. For them, this was a fundamental way to facilitate active engagement with film for their students, and to increase the learning value and outcomes with film as compared to those who abstain from having their students conduct such academic work with film. Some participants found that work too difficult in the darkened classroom and too disruptive to the enjoyment that film uniquely offers their students and reserved it for post-viewing. Other participants expressed no concern over student complaints that attended such tasks while the film plays.

Similarly contentious was how and when to use the pause button, though nearly all agreed that stopping the film was critical for effective instruction. This, too, was viewed as necessary for ensuring active engagement, whether to clarify unclear events in the film, to refocus student attention, or to be able to take closer looks at the otherwise ceaseless flow of images. Several noted the challenge that the medium of film presents in that unlike a book, the student does not naturally have the power to pause the text or go back to an earlier passage. This paucity of power shapes the very experience students can have with film in the classroom. While the remote control and its attendant powers may reside in their hands while watching film for entertainment at home, ironically, at school, when they are being asked to perform deep analysis of film, this most powerful of tools is stripped from them. Instead of exercising agency over how they consume or analyze the film, the students are subject to the whims and powers of the teacher.

To overcome this obstacle, the participants spoke of several alternative ways to facilitate stopping the film. While some participants preferred pausing in spots of greatest tension in the story and least desired by students, others preferred to facilitate stops after the students have completely watched the film by going back to scenes. Still others opted to allow their students to

choose when to stop. They did so by either having students tell the teacher when they should hit pause in the film, or by uploading clips of the film onto Google Classroom, where students could pause the film clip themselves on their laptop computers. This represented a unique method of sharing power with the student over their control of consuming and studying the medium. These teachers granted their students the authority to consume and enjoy the film on their own terms, uninterrupted, as they would outside of the classroom. Then the teachers either shared or yielded the power over which scenes were worthy of closer inspection and analysis. Remarkably, rather than the students using that power for entertainment purposes only, they used it to more deeply engage with and analyze the film, the very learning goals these participants intended.

The participants also emphasized that what the teacher does during instruction is of great importance. Though a few acknowledged attending to unrelated teaching tasks at their desks as the film played, all underscored the need for the teacher to continue in their role as instructor while the film plays. Some multi-tasked during the film, toggling between pausing the film to ask questions, clarify events, or refocus their students, and grading papers or completing other tasks. Other participants took an embedded approach, whereby they saw their full attention on the film and their physical proximity to the students as equally critical as when working with printed texts. The teachers who employed this strategy believed their full attention on the film tacitly communicated to students that film texts are just as important as and demand equal attention that printed texts do.

Another significant finding was that the participants approached teaching with film in two distinctive ways, either focusing on *what* film communicates, or *how* film communicates. In the former, participants had their students explore the narrative elements of the film, similar to how they traditionally teach stories in printed form. They also used film specifically as a more

engaging and easier way for students to practice constructing evidence-based arguments, with the goal of having them transfer that skillset over to printed texts. They also paired film adaptations with their original or related printed stories to satisfy the CCSSI directive of having students analyze multiple versions of the same text, or they paired film with thematically related printed stories to help students better understand the concepts in the latter. Finally, the participants spoke of using film adaptations of Shakespearean plays so as to help them overcome the challenges of the language and be able to better understand and appreciate Shakespeare's characters, conflicts, and stories.

In a very different approach, three participants chose to focus their instruction, at times, on *how* film communicates. Understanding film as having a language of its own through which it communicates its story, these participants started by giving their students a language by which to discuss and think about this language of film. They introduced cinematic terms to describe camera angles and movements, and then explored how filmmakers manipulate those cinematic elements to impact the way the viewer makes sense of the story it communicates. While most who did this focused instruction on cinematography, one took a more comprehensive approach and included instruction on image composition and editing. He also broke new ground in having students go past analyzing what other filmmakers created and gave his students the role and power of filmmaker to create their own film texts.

This represents an entirely new pathway to instruction with film not found in the literature, which may prove to have learning outcomes that stretch well beyond working to engage students in the curriculum, help them recognize literary elements, development evidence-based arguments, or transfer their knowledge from one medium to another. Rather, this signifies a way for students to construct new knowledge and their own texts, allowing them the

opportunity and voice to be the authors of their own stories and arbiters of how they make sense of the world they inhabit.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

The seeds of my interest in studying narrative film were planted early in my life, nourished through my opportunities to study it formally in college, and crystalized by my pedagogic experiences with it as an English teacher. Never had I encountered a medium which captured student interest more and was at once so stigmatized in education. Nevertheless, I bore witness to film's power as an instructional tool.

Having had the chance in college to study the films of Stanley Kubrick through the lens of philosophical writings by Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jeremy Bentham, for example, and to learn how to close read the language of film frame by frame to unpick the methods by which it creates meaning, I began my teaching career knowing well that film could be experienced as far more than light entertainment. I knew that there was a whole world of study dedicated to uncovering the complexity that covertly operated underneath the surface of film's specious simplicity. Within just a couple of years of teaching, my interest was so keen that I was moved to create an English elective film course dedicated to studying film as I had as a college student.

In my Reading Films course, which soon blossomed into three levels with multiple sections running each year, I frequently received the backhanded compliment that I "ruined film forever" for my facetious students who suddenly realized they could no longer watch film as they previously had, without noticing how the film was communicating and working to create meaning. My method of trial and error yielded some successes but always left me feeling unsatisfied. And the regular pejoratives leveled against film by some students, parents, and colleagues alike gave me only more motivation to improve my practice so as to dispel the unjust

stigma that stained the medium and at times my own teaching reputation for instructing with it.

At the same time, I slowly and increasingly became aware of the very differing ways and purposes that members of my own English department spoke of teaching with film. Their aims with the medium sounded as diverse as their backgrounds with it. While most had no educational background with film, some had studied it extensively in college, and one had even worked as a professional film critic. Nevertheless, in a pattern repeated in nearly every English classroom in the country, *all* used film in their teaching, and I became intensely curious about how they and other English teachers understood film and how they were teaching with it. With that in mind, I began this investigation seeking answers to the following questions:

- i. How do high school English teachers make sense of narrative film?
- ii. How do high school English teachers instruct with narrative film?

Using a web of theoretical frameworks to make sense of this multi-faceted phenomenon, including structuralism and its related branches of narratology, semiotics, and formalism, as well as schema theory and critical pedagogy, I investigated how these twelve teachers understand film, and how those understandings inform the ways that they instruct with it. As I describe in the next section, this study revealed a rich variety of converging and competing ways that the participants understand and instruct with narrative film, often shaped by their educational and other experiences with the medium. This investigation also revealed a number of findings regarding the methods and power dynamics involved in teaching with narrative film that add to the existing scholarly edifice found in the literature.

Summary of Findings

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I examined why the participants teach with narrative film. In exploring this line of questioning, I naturally investigated how the teachers

made sense of film as a medium since that informed their thinking on their instructional decisions in using it. All twelve participants employed a language of narratology in describing film as storytelling form fit for study in the English classroom. Despite the perpetual and pervasive stigma that follows it, the teachers paralleled film with books because of their shared narrative qualities (Barthes, 1965; Bal, 1997). They were also unanimous in characterizing film, like books, as a medium that has the potential to be actively or passively consumed, but not as inherently either. Indeed, they saw it as the teacher's job to facilitate active engagement through a variety of pedagogic strategies, such as guided questions, note-taking, discussion, evidence-based writing assignments, teacher proximity, and the use of the pause and rewind buttons for closer inspection and additional viewings.

Significantly, some of the teachers furthered the comparison between film and print by speaking of film with a discourse of language. They understood something that film scholars outside of education have long recognized, which is that film communicates via a unique linguistic form comprised not only of printed letters, words, and sentences, as in the traditional sense of language, but through the conventions of a multitude of communicative forms (Monaco, 2009). This language of film synthesizes traditional language (i.e. the written film script spoken by actors, and words sometimes printed on the screen), camera shots, angles, and movements, as well as lighting, editing, sound, actor performance, photography, and other compositional elements to communicate. While this understanding of film as a linguistic form does minimally show up in the educational literature (Costanzo, 1992), the literature also reveals that few teachers conceive of film this way (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Hobbs 2006).

With the participants' notion of film as a narrative, and for some even as a linguistic form, they increasingly complicate, disrupt, and decenter the traditionally predominant status of printed

texts in the English classroom. Though scholars in the field of linguistics long ago redefined the concept of what constitutes a text to include forms well beyond just printed books, and while such definitions have subsequently been adopted by educational organizations and codified in the ELA standards, the literature shows that few practitioners in the classroom understand film this way (McLuhan, 1960; Culkin, 1965; Selby, 1978; Vetrie, 2004; Lee & Winzenried, 2009; Lipiner, 2011).

The narrative and linguistic features that film and printed books share anchored the participants' justification for and instructional methods with film in the classroom. Drawing from the language of schema theory (McVee, Dunsmore & Gavelek, 2005), the teachers found that their students could transfer their understandings and analyses from film, a medium they have superior fondness for, and familiarity and fluency with, to the more challenging and unfamiliar form of printed texts. This afforded students, and most especially marginalized students who tend to disproportionately struggle with print literacy, an alternative means of accessing the content and concepts interred and previously opaque to them in printed texts.

Using a language of visualization, the teachers spoke of harnessing their students' vast experience and innate abilities with visuals to teach them how to recognize literary elements, to understand the characters, plots, and themes in Shakespearean plays, and to create evidence-based arguments, and then transfer those skills to printed forms. In this way, many of the teachers recognized that teaching with film satisfies the CCSSI ELA standards and effectively hones the skills assessed on the ELA Common Core Regents exam. Remarkably, some teachers saw film as a *more* efficient and effective means of accomplishing this than working with printed forms. For instance, Ms. Donaldson, Mr. Davies, Ms. Miller, and Mr. Pierce cited film's superior ability to teach students how to identify literary techniques and other skills prized in the ELA

Common Core standards by allowing students to see a visualization of these elements.

Of still greater purpose for several of the participants, film can be utilized as an instructional tool to facilitate students' critical examination of the world they inhabit, including media, as well as social constructions of race, gender, class, and other institutions of power, and how those inform their own construction of identity. I used the metaphor of the window to explain how students see representations of these societal constructs through the frame. However, the frame may simultaneously serve as a mirror since viewers subconsciously reflect on themselves in relation to the world they see on the screen, surreptitiously shaped by the tacit ideology the film communicates. When used effectively, these participants believe that film may equip students with the skills to critically examine news reports, social constructions, and how their understandings of society and self are informed by these forces.

In the fifth chapter of this dissertation, I investigated how the participants instruct with film. I bifurcated the two basic instructional approaches into focusing on *what* film communicates and *how* it communicates. I also identified specific pedagogic strategies that the participants employ while teaching with film, which revealed a substantive power dynamic between teacher and student. I emphasize the power dynamic here because while teachers may incorporate film to allow the interests of their students into the curriculum, they paradoxically syphon away their students' autonomy when working with it, unless measures to share control over how the film is consumed are taken to obviate this from happening. Though students fundamentally tend to have little agency in regards to the direction and content of their education in general (Freire, 2005), since standards and assessments are defined at state and federal levels, curriculum is often outlined at the local school level, and teachers determine specific units and book titles to satisfy the standards and curriculum goals, students ironically have even less power

when film is shown in the classroom.

This power dynamic owes chiefly to the differing nature between film and books, since film is designed to advance without any action on the viewer's behalf once it begins, whereas the book stops the moment the reader's eyes cease moving across the words on the page. For the participants, this difference requires teacher intervention to interrupt the inexorable nature of film, whereas such stoppages with books are natural. However, when and where such stoppages occur are determined exclusively by the teacher in most cases since the film plays at the front of the classroom only, and the remote control remains in the teacher's hand. The consequences of these conditions are far-reaching because they substantively limit the experience students can have with film in the same way that it would with a book if the teacher were to control the turn of every page.

Even when teachers use film toward purposeful and relevant learning outcomes, which the literature shows is a rarity (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Vetrie, 2004; Hobbs, 2006; Goble, 2010; Lipiner, 2011), the student has little power in navigating the text. Unlike a photocopy of an article, they may not annotate on it. Unlike a class copy of a novel, they may not bookmark a page. Should they need to use the bathroom, the film plays on, whereas the book waits for their return. Should they miss a class, the book can travel home with them, but the film may not.

Furthermore, though film is intended for the big screen, classroom TV screens, projectors, and even Smartboards are relatively small and students are not positioned in stadium seating as they would be in a movie theater. Film's sound emanates from speakers in one location of the room, far from back rows. Therefore, many of the communicative methods that make up the language of film are often missed by students, and certainly not easily processed or critically examined as the film plays on. On the other hand, the language of the book is up close to every

student, with every word on the page easily seen and static, moving at whatever pace the student chooses. Even when a class reading of the book is conducted, a student may still choose to rescan a previous sentence and then decide to later catch up with the class.

Additionally, costs, copyright, and technological challenges create obstacles for students to consume film as they do at home, with the power to stop or rewind, or as they would a book in class. Purchasing and replenishing class sets of film copies are cost prohibitive compared to books, and it is unlikely every student would have a means to play their copy at home. While the film's copyright allows for its screening in class for educational purposes, it prohibits copy under severe federal penalty. Of the majority of participants who saw stopping the film as critical to active learning and critical inspection, two recognized the importance of the students having the power to stop or re-watch the portions of the film they deemed worthy or needed. As such, they chose yielding over wielding the power of pause to their students. They did so in two ways.

After viewing a film, Mr. Collins spoke of asking his students which scenes they would like to go back to for closer examination, and then would cue them up himself. This, of course, is a method which could be similarly used when studying literature, though the student cannot flip through the film as they might the pages of the book, searching themselves for a spot to reexamine. Combining several methods completely unseen in the literature, Mr. Davies shared still more of the power over how students consume film in the classroom by locating and downloading clips of the film on YouTube and sharing them with his students via the Google Classroom platform. Once accessed on laptop computers, students had full autonomy over playing, pausing, rewinding, fast-forwarding, watching at slower speeds, and screen capturing segments of the film, all right on the desk in front of their eyes, and with control over the volume as they listened through headphones. This teacher's stance is important because in sharing this

power, students were able to access the technological means to study film with the same rigor long reserved for printed texts (Costanzo, 1992).

Though Mr. Davies can often only locate a limited number of clips distributed by Fandango Movieclips on YouTube for a given film that he shows in his class, representing roughly thirty minutes of the entire film, he nevertheless affords his students unparalleled authority over their interaction with the film. He simultaneously enables them a superior means of accomplishing the type of academic work he strives for with the film. Not only do students exercise the power over the film formally held exclusively by the teacher, but they can close read the film in ways they could not otherwise from far off and no ability to stop it. Consequently, students can review and better notice a character's actions or words, the events in the story, or the myriad cinematic elements chosen by the filmmakers to communicate the story.

In addition to using the method of having students work closely with film on their laptops, Mr. Davies approached film in other ways which shared power with students and were unique amongst the other participants. First, Mr. Davies spoke of the language by which film communicates in deeper and more comprehensive ways than the other participants. Rather than privileging cinematography, meaning camera angles, shots, and movement, he saw that element as merely one register by which film speaks. Thus, he dedicated entire lessons and activities to film's compositional components and editing techniques, among others. Indeed, he was the lone teacher to characterize editing as the element that defines film. For the other participants who spoke of and or focused their teaching on how film communicates, they typically centered their discussion on cinematography, and only tangentially referenced these other cinematic elements.

Secondly, Mr. Davies employed two more methods of teaching with film that are absent in the literature. For his lessons on what editing in film is and how it shapes the way the viewer

understands the story, Mr. Davies showed a tutorial video he found on YouTube which identifies and demonstrates types of edits used in film and the effects each one has. Next, he had his students closely examine, identify, and analyze the edits in the clips he posted on Google Classroom from the movie his class had watched. Finally, Mr. Davies granted still more power to his students in setting up the chance for them to not merely analyze someone else's filmic work, but to step into the role of decision maker in the editing process. To do this, he provided them with a script and previously filmed raw footage he found online, and let them choose which portions of the raw footage to use, which types of transitions to use, and what the pacing of the editing would be as they assembled the footage into a story. Rather than merely being limited to consumer or critic of a film, Mr. Davies afforded his students the opportunity and power to become the creator of a film. But this was not the only unique way he afforded his students such power.

In a culminating assignment before the final assessment in his film unit, Mr. Davies had his students create their own story in small groups and use their cell phones to photograph still images of their performance of the story. Though technological obstacles and limited class time prevented him from having his student record and edit the story through moving images, Mr. Davies nevertheless had his students apply all of the elements of film's language that he had taught them in the unit when creating their stories. In addition to generating their own story, the students had to consider how they would frame and compose their shots, what sort of scale and camera angles they would use and why, how they would transition from one image to the next, and which shots would make the final cut or be excluded. In this way, the students had still more autonomy in the learning process than even the editing activity described above since now they had control over the story and the decision-making process of filming it. This hands-on activity

brought the students beyond mere analysis to the phase of application and creation, all the while affording them the creative control otherwise denied them.

These utterly unique instructional methods that Mr. Davies employed demanded that I devote disproportionate description in the data chapters of this dissertation to them as they represent findings which add to the existing literature on this subject. Furthermore, they helped illuminate a power dynamic, which underpins instruction with all mediums but disproportionately impacts teaching with film, as I described above. However, it is important to note that while Mr. Davies shared his control over the film with his students in multiple ways, never did he abandon his appropriate control over the direction of the lesson or the unit. As the teacher, he still is the one responsible for ensuring his students work toward appropriate learning goals. He is the individual responsible for selecting films that are suitable for the classroom and relevant to the curriculum, and he is the person tasked with guiding his students to newfound knowledge. If Mr. Davies abdicated all of his authority, his students would undoubtedly suffer to achieve these goals. However, by sharing his power, his students were substantively more engaged and better positioned to meet his learning objectives. Additionally, they were actively involved, and most uniquely, partners in the process of creating their own forms of knowledge.

The collective testimonies of the participants led me to one last finding in this study. The participants spoke of not just the universal appeal but the universal efficacy that film has for all of their student populations. Ms. Wilson teaches with film with her “very urban kids, from 70 different ethnicities, of varying degrees of English,” even in her college course class, and “they love it. And it works. They write essays about it, they argue about it, they get mad when the bell rings.” They’re “engaged and “thinking” so much that these marginalized students “stay after class and keep talking” to her: “They won’t let me get down the hallway.” Their excitement and

engagement are so great that they can't help but share their thoughts and feelings inspired by the film with their teacher who introduced it to them.

For one of Mr. Davies' previous classes, comprised of mostly male students, many of whom were African-American, "who had failed English previously, who went to summer school, who would do no homework *ever*...film would capture their interest." After having them bring in their own DVD's to analyze, "there were almost fights over who [got] to pick in [their] group because [they] all brought in something." The students' newfound passions and cause to actually bring in materials for classroom use testify to film's unparalleled motivational powers, even among the most struggling and disinterested students.

Despite coming "from a background where they're not encouraged to prioritize that kind of text-based academic work," Mr. Davies noted that "they'd be as good as or better than anyone else in the class...and do the same kind of intellectual gymnastics of analysis." This anecdote demonstrates first that film was being used for rigorous cognitive challenge and not mere entertainment, that it substantively engaged typically disinterested students, and that it afforded an alternative pathway for marginalized students to partake in and demonstrate their knowledge when otherwise that avenue for their inclusion and success is cut off through traditional means only (Darling-Hammond, 2010). But it wasn't just struggling African-American students who reaped the benefits of film.

Film distinctly benefits other student populations as well. For Ms. Wilson's non-struggling students, who tend to be more intellectually and emotionally engaged already, film also affords them "a nice ramp into complex ideas." While she implies that this group of students is not as dependent on film for investing in or learning curricular concepts as their struggling peers, she specifies here that it nonetheless is an effective means of facilitating and advancing

both for them. In a similar way, Mr. Hays finds film effective in getting his largely “white...mostly privileged,” population “thinking [and] critically engaged.” For him, “the role of showing movies is to get them to access things and think about things they might not have thought by reading the book alone.” Both participants thus speak of film’s appeal to and usefulness with already-achieving student populations.

For Ms. Muller’s predominantly Caucasian, “very rural kids,” many of whom “are farm kids,” including one who “already buys and sells pigs...[and whose] goal is to have a pig farm,” using film was effective in teaching them “Regents text analysis.” In like fashion, when Mr. Pierce shows film clips to his remedial classes with a majority of Caucasian, “male students...from socio-economic challenged families” who “really struggle with reading” to teach them what irony or symbolism is, “they just get it.” The approach of just reading the book, and “hav[ing] them identify [literary devices] in the reading, it’s lost on them.” But when teaching the same content through film, “it makes sense to them...and then we can carry that practice over into reading, too.” The fluency in reading the visual language by which film communicates that Ms. Muller’s and Mr. Pierce’s rural, Caucasian students possessed counterbalanced their lack of fluency in reading printed language. As was the case for Ms. Wilson’s multi-ethnic urban students, Mr. Davies’ struggling African-American suburban students, and Mr. Hay’s privileged Caucasian and Chinese national private school students, film assisted Ms. Muller’s mostly Caucasian rural students, leading some participants and myself to a distinct realization: “film is a unifying force in the class,” Mr. Hays explained, because “everyone’s eager to see a movie,” and because all can benefit from their greater ease with reading its visual language.

The data clearly showed, too, that film is unifying in its ability to level the playing field for struggling students with their non-struggling counterparts by granting the former access to

the same content and skill-building work via a language they understand. Students of every stripe, including urban and suburban students, rural and private school students, English Language Learners and special education students, high-achieving and otherwise struggling and marginalized students, can achieve academic success by transferring their visual literacy and ease of understanding from the screen to the printed page, and even beyond to the world they inhabit and their place in it (Duncan-Andrade, 2006).

Limitations and Next Steps in the Field

I bounded the parameters of this study to include narrative film, of the feature-length, theatrical release variety, largely because that is the form that is so often used by English teachers and scrutinized by critics. I excluded other forms of film that unquestionably merit investigation, such as educational and documentary film, and TED Talk videos, largely because they don't garner the same suspicion and are not intertwined with the same history of being a commercial product chiefly made for light entertainment. Being designed primarily for educative purposes, they don't share the same complications and stigma in the classroom that narrative film does.

I also limited this study to *high school* English teachers, though of course film is used in the middle school and even elementary school levels. I drew this line because some of the factors which inform how English teachers on the middle school level teach with film are very likely to differ from those on the high school level. Certainly, one of the objections that critics often raise regarding exposing students to the mature and violent content of some films is more likely to be at issue on the secondary level. Additionally, many high schools feature block scheduling, meeting for twice as long every other day, rather than meeting every day for half that time, as is common in middle and elementary schools. Given the strictures of class time and the focus on

feature length film in this study, high school teachers are likely to make sense of incorporating film into their respective classes in different ways. Furthermore, given the differing levels of cognitive and emotional development in their respective student populations, instructional approaches between the three levels are likely to differ. For all of these reasons, I limited this investigation in these regards to ensure thorough examination (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Another limitation was that triangulation of the data was only possible for three of the twelve participants. Almost certainly, observing and collecting documents from the other nine participants would have revealed new insights and nuances not captured by semi-structured interview only. This was demonstrably the case with the three participants I did have chance to triangulate the data with. For instance, though Mr. Davies spoke at great length and in great detail about his teaching practices with film in his initial interview, his descriptions simply did not fully do justice to the nuance, extent, and sophistication of his practice, as I tried to illustrate through the accounts of what I observed in his classroom in chapter five.

Furthermore, some of the teachers' understandings and practices evolved, even in the short amount of time from when I initially interviewed them to when I observed them. For example, Mr. Davies facilitated a film editing assignment that he made no mention of and had never taught before at the time of his first interview. Similarly, Ms. Franklin had never before taught Shakespeare by making the film adaptation the first and primary text in her *Romeo and Juliet* unit. This owed chiefly to how the time crunch at the end of the school year impacted her curriculum and students, which speaks to how the context that each participant is in shapes how they make sense of and instruct with film. In these ways, direct observation and document analysis would most certainly have yielded additional insights that were lost to me because of the logistical impossibility of triangulating the data with all twelve participants.

This study did feature a limited sample size. However, despite being a drawback for quantitative study, having a small sample size is often desirable in qualitative investigations as they allow the study of information rich cases and deeper insights (Patton, 2002; Karp, 2017). Since generalization was not the goal of this study, purposeful sampling was fitting to learn about these select cases and the variation across them (Lofland, 2006). Though the findings of this study may have applicability to teachers outside of this study, the data collected here indeed speaks directly to the understandings and experiences of the participants in this study only.

Though my sample of twelve teachers featured significant diversity along a number of markers, including age, gender, sexual orientation, number of years of teaching experience, levels of training and types of experience with film, types of English courses and grade levels taught, and type of school district they teach in, there is a notable lack of racial diversity. While I desired greater diversity than having 11 of 12 participants from one racial background only (Caucasian) and only one teacher of color, recruiting high school English teachers to participate in general was a challenge. Most of my access stemmed from my own English department, which is comprised entirely of Caucasian teachers. I did cast as wide a net as possible in blindly reaching out to teachers through publicly available contact information from many districts in the area, though I had no way of knowing what their racial identity was. Indeed, that method only yielded one participant in this study, who is a Caucasian female. My next method was to use the snowball sampling technique (Creswell, 1998) of asking the participants I had to that point and other teachers I already knew who they thought might make good candidates for this study. This method indeed led me to three participants, including the one teacher of color in this sample. However, for any potential participant I reached in this way, I had no idea about their racial

identity until meeting them. Nevertheless, this study would have benefitted by having greater racial diversity and a wider array of experiences and voices.

Since I was interested to study how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with film, I did not seek to interview or collect the work of their students. Though the consent I procured from the school, teachers, and parents of students where I conducted observations granted me permission to observe how they responded to film in the classroom and the ways that their respective teachers approach it, a separate study investigating how students make sense of and learn through film would be tremendously beneficial to understanding the phenomenon of film in the English classroom. Indeed, this is an approach I am interested to take in the future.

Moreover, given that several of the participants testified to film's usefulness in helping students prepare for the New York State Common Core Regents exam, it would be productive to investigate and compare how high school English teachers from other states make sense of film's utility in their respective states and on other assessments. For example, the ethos or learning standards and assessments in other states might shape teacher understandings and practices in different ways. Additionally, specific locations with anomalous histories and cultures of film, such as in the New York City and Hollywood areas, the two most significant locations for film production in the world, may possibly lack the stigma associated with film in the classroom or may have teachers who are privy to and whose pedagogic practice is informed by resources and experts in the film industry.

Additionally beneficial would be to investigate how college professors instruct with narrative film, particularly since many on that level are likely to be researchers and contributors to the fields of education and or film. In this way, the gap between scholarship and practice

might be mitigated, allowing one to benefit from the other.

Implications and Recommendations

This study aimed to illuminate how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with film. From this research, I offer the following recommendations in an attempt to close the performance gap in teaching with film that is documented in the literature, to forge increased understanding of the phenomenon of film in the English classroom (Hobbs, 2006; Goble, 2010; Lipiner, 2011), to explore film's utility in other educational contexts, and to better educate and prepare 21st century students for the world they inhabit.

First, I implore teacher preparation programs to devote time and resources to readying English teachers for instructing with film. Though the curriculum for pre-service teachers is undoubtedly very full, the ubiquity of film in the classroom, the widely expanded and accepted definition of text that stretches well beyond printed literature, film's inclusion in the ELA standards, and the ever-increasing saturation of the visual in society virtually demands that students be equipped with a screen education. Indeed, the academy is one of the better equipped institutions to make progress on this front, given its close proximity to the latest developments in the research.

However, teacher preparation cannot be the only place in which teacher training occurs, or else the majority of current teachers will be excluded from opportunities to improve their practice. Professional development should be offered through in-service workshops to provide teachers who may be long accustomed to ineffective pedagogic approaches with film. In that case, developing new approaches may prove more challenging than starting from scratch with pre-service teachers.

Perhaps one of the most practical, beneficial, and cost-efficient methods would be to

provide teachers who have made discoveries involving instruction with film the time to share their understandings and practices, and to do likewise between English departments from neighboring districts. The dearth of standardized best-practice approaches for teaching with film positions such teachers as pioneers from whom all can learn (Fischer & Petro, 2012). Moreover, if my small study is any reflective example, there are likely to be maverick teachers of film (Costanzo, 1987) who have extensive training or experience and could share innovative ways of understanding and teaching with the medium. For example, Mr. Davies has a rare and far-reaching educational background with film and teaches with it in utterly unique ways. However, many of his methods could be easily shared and largely replicated by even novice English teachers.

Furthermore, though adequately training teachers to instruct with film would undoubtedly make a substantive difference in improving the efficacy of teaching with film, I believe a comprehensive re-conceptualization of what film is across all strata of the educational system is truly required for change. Though the medium can be consumed for light entertainment and is largely motivated by commercial sale, so too are most other mediums that are the accepted and respected objects of study in the English classroom. Printed literature is also a commercial product motivated in large part by sales, and like film, features plenty of violence, mature content, and subpar specimens. Like film, novels and even Shakespeare were previously regarded as little more than light entertainment. Nevertheless, they retain superior status in the English classroom today.

The existing literature which demonstrates that film is not inherently a passive or mindless medium should be shared with school administrators and others to dispel the misconceptions and attendant stigma revolving around film in the classroom (Nadaner, 1984; Bordwell & Thompson,

2004; Monaco, 2009; Foster, 2016). The notion that many administrators have regarding film is likely shaped by their own current viewing habits, common malpractice with film by the teachers in their charge, and their past experiences as students themselves when film was used in their classrooms, likely for negligible learning benefit. Consequently, they may harbor a very biased and misinformed view of film's potential as an instructional tool. Chances are good, too, that many administrators might not appreciate film as an art form, and are even better that they do not view it as a linguistic form. If few English teachers have had chance for training with film and how it operates, still fewer school administrators likely have. Though many parents and other teachers in the building might see film in the same dim light, administrators are the ones with the power to support, stymie, or even suspend the use of film in the classroom, as two of my participants testified to.

I also recommend additional and comprehensive study of narrative film's potential and impact in the English classroom. While many of the participants discovered creative and effective ways to integrate film into their curricula, their practices were forged by figuring things out on their own, and were not a result of being shaped by best-practice teaching techniques which are standard for teaching with printed texts. And since the data collected in this investigation also suggest that narrative film is potentially a superior medium to teach ELA skills and meet Common Core standards, as well as to prepare students for the ELA Common Core Regents exam, further research must be conducted to determine the most effective pedagogic means when working with film, which the CCSSI explicitly calls for, that will achieve desirable outcomes on CCSSI assessments.

I further recommend that state and national education officials align assessments with the very standards they have written. While the CCSSI enjoins teachers to incorporate film into the

classroom to have students examine content in diverse media, analyze multiple versions of a story, compare and contrast multimedia versions of a text, and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums, none of this is explicitly included or assessed on the ELA Common Core Regents exam. While the teachers in this study have found film an effective, and arguably superior, means to prepare students for the exam in its current form, even they felt compelled to abate their teaching with film precisely because the very multi-media texts that the standards call for are absent from the exam.

The findings of this study also demand deeper understanding of how film may be leveraged to support student literacy generally, and for struggling and marginalized students specifically. The potential consequences of that discovery in this small study loom large. If film may serve as a key to unlocking the language on the page by utilizing the language of the screen, as many of the participants in this investigation testified, then film may prove to be a boon in reaching students for whom literacy skills have long eluded. Consequently, film may even have the potential to help mitigate the achievement gap.

Given that narrative film is not exclusive to English classrooms, investigation of teaching practices with film and how it impacts student engagement and learning in other educational contexts and on other grade levels is essential. How teachers of subjects other than English make sense of and instruct with narrative film may well make the difference in its efficacy in their classrooms, just as teacher understanding and practice proved to be the catalyst in facilitating active student engagement with the medium was for the participants of this study in the English classroom. Furthermore, this study revealed that students are able to more easily understand and develop ELA skills through the power of film's visuals and then transfer those understandings to other mediums and contexts. This strongly suggests that teaching with film would likely allow a

similar process of transference with other skillsets and within other subject areas.

Moreover, since narrative film is a form of popular culture that may be leveraged for educative purposes, other forms of popular culture, from music to commercial advertisements to television shows and other kinds, should be similarly investigated for how teachers make sense of and instruct with them. These media are likewise textual forms, codified in the teaching standards, and engaging and highly relevant to students' lives, though best-practice pedagogy with them remains nebulous. Many of these forms similarly have complicated implications as commercially-driven products meant for light entertainment, and therefore fall subject to skepticism in the classroom when they likely have great potential as very rich and effective teaching tools.

Lastly, because information is increasingly communicated through screens, and because popular culture is a dominant force in shaping the very identities of students and their conceptions of race, gender, socio-economics, and other power and social structures, it is imperative that students are provided with a screen education to be able to critically examine the ideologies that such texts surreptitiously propagate. Given that film is among the most favored popular culture texts, and it can be leveraged to hone critical thinking and analytic skills that can be transferred to other mediums and contexts as documented in this study, serious screen education using narrative film should be viewed as essential to and become standard practice in the English classroom.

Impacts on the Participants and Me

The impacts of this study on the participants and me proved to be many and mutual. After conducting interviews and testifying to film's unique pedagogic powers, some of the participants expressed regret in curtailing their use of film in recent years. They expressed a renewed interest

in reinstating it back into their classroom. Indeed, Mr. Davies, who speaks of and instructs with film with arguably the most sophistication, had all but stopped teaching with film because of the pressures associated with the New York State Common Core Regents exam and the attendant teacher evaluation system. However, he described his participation in this study as giving him “the permission” to return to his previous practice of using film in his classroom. He viewed this as highly beneficial because of his indefatigable belief in the efficacy of film as a teaching tool, and he went so far as to express guilt over what he worried was a short-changing of his students in recent years when he abated his use of film.

Indeed, virtually all participants showed a keen interest and enthusiasm in this study, frequently inquiring about how other participants and I make sense of and instruct with film. In one notable instance, Ms. Muller, who lamented having little training or experience with film, sought me as a resource for a class she proposed at her school for struggling students that would chiefly involve working with filmic texts. Indeed, after the data collection and analysis phases of this study, she ended up coming to my classroom to observe me instructing two classes in a film unit I teach in my English class. I have since shared a number of materials and other resources I use when teaching with film, and we have agreed to remain in touch to share our ideas, experiences, and teaching strategies involving film in the future.

The impact of this study on me has been nothing short of profound. Though I had been thinking and reading about, and teaching and experimenting with film in the classroom for many years, this investigation opened my eyes to new approaches as well as issues underlying instruction with film that I was previously unaware of. For instance, while I had long used film to accompany readings of Shakespearean play to supplement student understanding, I had never before used a film adaptation as the primary text, and then worked with excerpts of the printed

play only after viewing, as Ms. Franklin, Mr. Davies, and Ms. Wilson did. Nor did I often have the confidence to let students not take notes or answer questions while a film plays, as Mr. Davies and Mr. Sanders did. In hindsight, both cases speak to the stigma of film permeating my own thinking and teaching with film, as I had little worry over the efficacy of such practices but great anxiety over how others would view my teaching by doing so. In this way, the participants gave *me* “the permission” to teach with film in ways that I believed to be effective but previously shied away from.

Perhaps most impactful on my understanding of teaching with film, however, is the power dynamic involved that I learned of through this investigation. While I previously assumed that I was only sharing the power I hold as teacher over the educational experience students receive by incorporating and valuing texts that are relevant to their lived experiences into the curriculum, I’ve come to realize that I simultaneously and paradoxically exert more power over their educational experiences when using film unless I take measures to facilitate their autonomy when consuming the filmic text.

Though I have long worked with both teaching *what* film communicates as well as *how* it does so, as well as with utilizing pause and rewind buttons, I remained behind the curve in finding ways to put the student in control of these features and therefore behind the curve in enabling them to closely examine the film with the same focus that they can with printed texts. Combining technologies that became available only recently, such as laptops, the Google Classroom platform, and film clips found on YouTube affords students exponentially greater power in how they may consume and analyze the film than my former methods. Without access to these technologies, I was previously restricted to replaying scenes from the film already viewed by the class at the end or beginning of a class period, or pausing film on specific frames

for students to notice and analyze cinematic elements, or using graphic organizers for students to take notes on as they watched the film, or using pictures of frames from the film I found online in multiple choice quizzes printed in black and white, or replaying a short scene multiple times for students to take notes on, analyze, and write about on assessments. While the evolution of video technology allowed a quantum leap forward in the viewer's entertainment experience with film in the home beginning in the 1980s, the recent evolution of YouTube and other educational technologies represent a quantum leap forward in the student's educational experience with film in the classroom.

Finally, it is difficult to quantify how impactful talking with and observing the teachers in this study has been even beyond matters involving instruction with film. Remarkably, I had access to 222 years of combined teaching experience through my twelve participants. I believe I learned more about how to be an English teacher through this investigation than in my first five years of teaching combined. I listened to, observed, and have already begun to replicate many of the instructional methods my participants use, from small things like the arrangement of desks in the classroom to fundamental approaches of classroom management, lesson structure, and assessments. I simply never anticipated that while I was investigating how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct with narrative film, I would be investigating how high school English teachers make sense of and instruct English at the same time. I am forever changed.

Appendix A

Coding Sample

Name: *Provides a language to teach of film*

Language of film
Teaching how film communicates
 - Language of film
 - How film communicates

Mise en Scene-- with lots of scenes to choose *Student autonomy*

Student Autonomy - [Select one of the scenes from the choices provided.] *Active engagement*

Yield the power of pause/rewind
 Watch the scene a few times, trying to notice as much as you can in the mise en scene. *Ways of approaching a text*

Look at: *Ways of Approaching a Text*

The language of film
Teaching how film communicates
 - space (its size, depth, etc.)
 - setting/decor details (interior/exterior, landscape elements, carpeting, wallpaper, furnishings, trash piles, weeds, props, etc.)
 - lighting (strength, shadows, direction, sources, etc.)
 - costumes/makeup/hair
 - acting/performance
 - staging/blocking (where everything is located in the space)
 - colors/shapes
 and anything else that is "put in the scene."

Close reading the frame
 Student Autonomy - [Then select what you consider to be the three most interesting or representative still frames] *Close reading the frame*
 from the scene for further study. Strive for variety here. Don't do three very similar shots.

Yield the Power of Pause
 Film and Technology - [Use ctrl-shft-window switcher key to capture each image to your drive. Move your cursor to where you want the picture to be pasted into this document. Then use the insert-image-google drive to put the image in this document.]

Ways of approaching a text
 How Film Communicates - [Be sure that you not only point out what is present in the scene but also you explain how these elements help to tell the story and affect the audience's perceptions of the scene.] *Critically examine film and self*
Film as Narrative

Still Frame #1: (insert here) *Ways of Approaching a text*

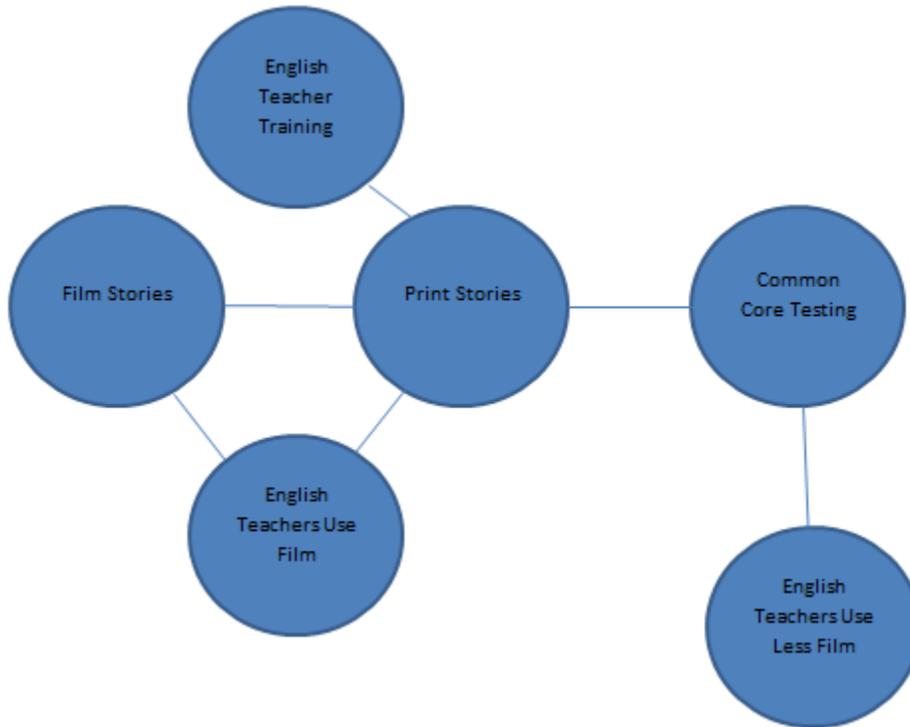
Active engagement
 Describe and analyze (tell us what each of these details might mean or suggest) *Asking "So what?"*
Purposeful use of film
Text-based arguments

The language of film
Teaching how film communicates
Close reading the frame

Space:
 Setting/Decor:
 Lighting:
 Costume/Makeup/Hair:

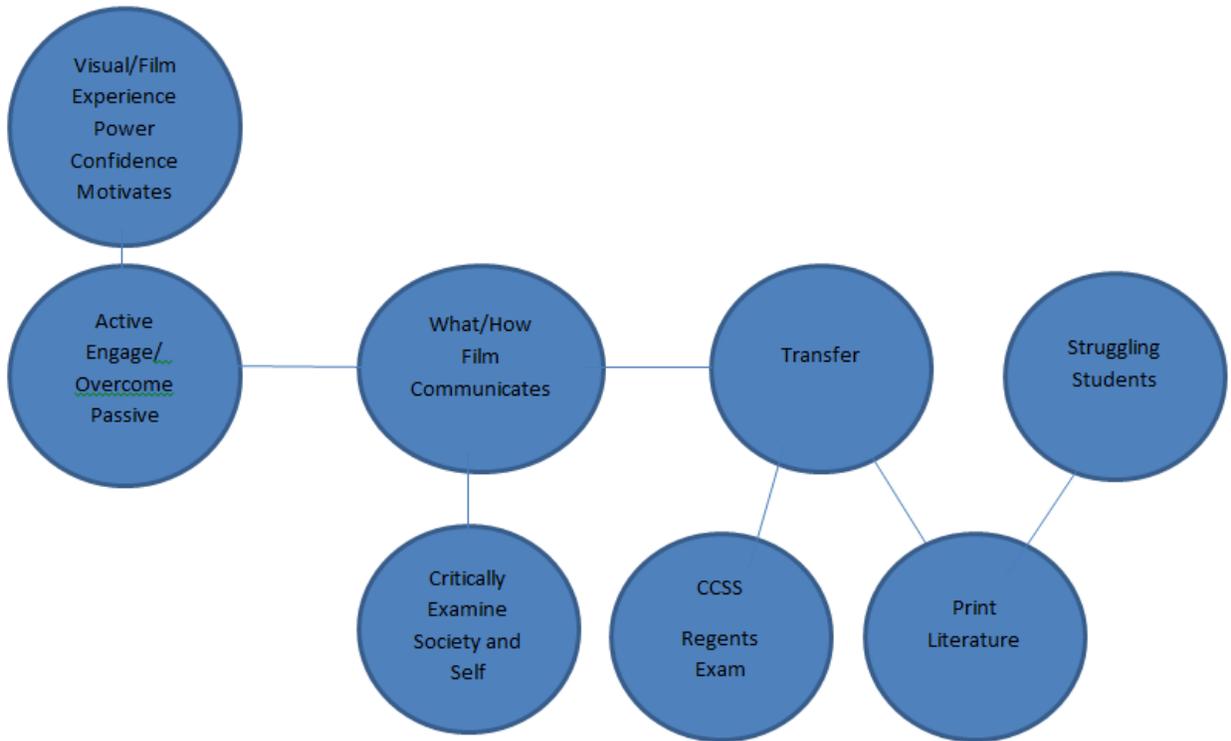
Appendix B

Initial Network Diagram



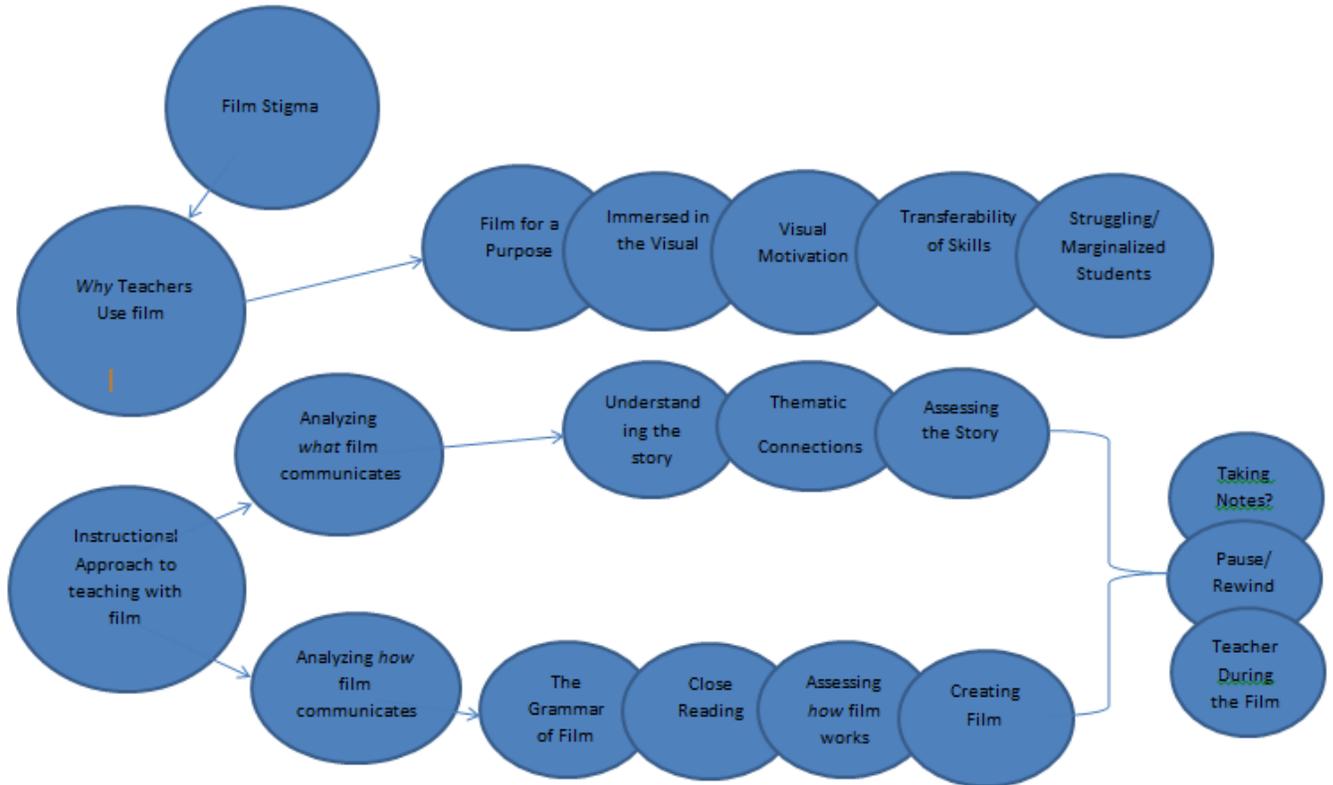
Appendix C

Developing Network Diagram



Appendix D

Maturing Network Diagram



Appendix E

Evidence-Based Argument Essay Assignment

LITERARY ANALYSIS/SYNTHESIS ESSAY

Beowulf

The Texts:

- The epic poem *Beowulf*, by unknown Anglo-Saxon scribes
- The novel *Grendel*, by John Gardner
- The film *Beowulf*, directed by Robert Zemeckis

The Task:

In literature, as in life, people are neither all good nor all bad. That is, none of us is completely full of love *and* lacking in hatred; totally courageous *and* devoid of cowardice; always strong *and* never weak. We are capable of amazing things – but are also fallible, and at times contradictory. We are complex. In short, we are *human*.

Write a well-developed, four-paragraph persuasive essay arguing that one text – more than the other two texts – depicts the most fully *human* character of Beowulf, the one whose characterization represents the most realistic, well-rounded (triumphs, flaws and all) portrait of humanity. As you make and then support your claim, you naturally will want to compare and contrast your “chosen” text with the other two texts, in part as a way of clearly distinguishing your claim from alternate or opposing claims.

The Tips:

Through your analysis of the texts, arrive at your own thesis, which must incorporate your opinion and/or interpretation. Then, back up that thesis with supporting details from the texts. Put in quotation marks passages taken word for word from the texts.

It's essential to have a plan before you write, so an outline is a must.

It is suggested that you use the four-paragraph essay format:

-Paragraph #1: Your introduction should include titles, genres and authors of texts you are analyzing, plus your very specific thesis (or argument, or controlling idea).

What are you arguing? In other words: Tell them what you're going to tell them!

-Paragraphs #2-3: Body: Each body paragraph should support the thesis by showing how your “chosen” text compares/contrasts with the other texts. Each must also show how the texts use at least one literary technique other than characterization (symbolism, irony, etc.) to convey ideas. In other words: Tell them!

-Paragraph #4: Conclusion: Tell them what you told them! And leave them something to think about as they finish reading.

The Reminders:

- Be sure to **define heroism**, and explain whether you see Beowulf as a hero.
- **Address the relevance of authorship and authority:** Who tells the story of “your” Beowulf, and how does the story change depending on who is telling it?
- You may use your notes and the texts – but no Internet, and no talking with friends. This may be your only essay grade of the quarter, so make it count.
- For maximum impact, the writing must have unity, fluency and coherence – be sure to craft smooth transitions (use the packet about transitions) – and must be free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. **Please double-space. Good luck!**

Appendix F

Romeo and Juliet Questions Packet Excerpt

Act V

Name _____

Scene 1

A. What message does Balthasar give Romeo?

What does he **not** have?

B. After Balthasar leaves, Romeo goes to visit an apothecary - someone who sells medicines and potions.

*What does he want from the apothecary?	Why does the apothecary not want to help Romeo?	Why does the apothecary eventually help Romeo?

Scene 2

C. What does Friar John tell Friar Lawrence?

D. After hearing this news from Friar John, what is Friar Lawrence's plan?

Scene 3

E. Why is Paris at Juliet's tomb?

25

Appendix G

Cinematography Terms Handout

✓

Name _____

To Kill a Mockingbird (1962)

Director: Robert Mulligan

Screenplay writer: Horton Foote (won an Academy Award for best Adapted Screenplay)

Cast:

Scout Finch..... Mary Badham

Jem FinchPhillip Alford

Dill Harris John Megna

Bob Ewell James Anderson

Atticus FinchGregory Peck (won an Academy Award and is considered the greatest hero of all time by the American Film Institute)

Boo Radley Robert Duvall

Tom Robinson....Brock Peters

Mayella EwellCollin Wilcox

As you watch:

Keep in mind these film ideas:

diegetic sound - a part of the story, we can hear it and so can the characters

non-diegetic sound - not a part of the story, we can hear it, characters cannot
ex. music, voice overs

close up shots - camera zoomed in, shows emphasis, focus, draws attention in

medium shots - see some of area, show characters and scene/setting

long shots - camera far away, show distance, perspective etc.

low shot - camera looking up at actor, shows power, strength etc.

eye level shot - camera at approximate eye level, seems natural

high shot - camera looking down at actor, shows weakness, lack of importance etc.

1. Describe what you see during the credits. List as many items as you can.

What mood do the credits set?

Do the credits emphasize what you would have?

Appendix H

Cinematography Terms Handout #2

Cinematography: the elements at play in the construction of a shot

Color—color or absence of color in black and white film

Contrast—the ratio of dark to light in an image; if difference between light and dark are large, it is called "high contrast"; if the difference is small, it is called "low contrast"

Depth of field/Focal depth—the distance through which elements in an image are in sharp focus—how much of the image is in focus

Deep focus—significant elements are both near and far from the camera, but all in sharp focus

Shallow focus—a restricted depth of field, keeping only one plane in sharp focus

Racking focus—the practice of changing the focus in a lens during a single shot from one plane to another

Zoom shot—the framed image moves toward or away from the subject, but the movement is made using a zoom lens in the camera rather than actual camera movement

Framing—the edges of the image create a frame that includes and excludes aspects of what occurs in front of the camera

Angle of framing—the vertical tilt from which the camera views the subject

High angle—looks down on the subject

Low angle—looks up at the subject

Level of framing—the actual vertical distance of the camera from the ground

Low level—camera placed low to the ground

High level—camera placed higher above the ground

Eye level—camera is level with the subject

Canted framing—the frame is not level with its surroundings, making things appear unstable

Following shot—framing shifts to keep a moving figure onscreen

Reframing—short camera movements to adjust for figures' movements

Point of view shot—shot taken with camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be

Appendix H Continued

Backside of Cinematography Terms Handout #2

Scale—how near or far the subject appears in the film

Extreme long shot— (ELS) the subject is very small, the camera is distant

Long shot— (LS) the whole subject is about the same size as the screen
(whole body)

Medium long shot— (MLS) more than half of the subject fills the screen
(knees/thighs up)

Medium close-up— (MCU) less than half of the subject fills the screen (chest
up)

Close-up— (CU) most important element of the subject fills the screen (head)

Extreme close-up— (ECU) a small part of the subject is shown (lips)

Movement—literal movement of the camera

Crane shot—the camera moves through the air on a crane in any direction

Handheld shot—the camera operator carries the camera by hand; unsteady

Pan—camera turns on an axis horizontally

Tilt—camera moves on an axis vertically

Tracking shot—camera travels through space forward, backward, or laterally

Rule of Thirds— images are divided into thirds with two imaginary lines vertically and two lines horizontally making three columns, three rows, and nine sections in the images. Important compositional elements and leading lines are placed on or near the imaginary lines and where the lines intersect.

Golden Ratio—(Phi Grid) based on the Fibonacci Sequence, if you place a point of interest on the smallest part of the spiral, the eye will naturally flow through the rest of the image. The grid lines also provide an alternative to the rule of thirds that some photographers find more pleasing.



Additional Framing Techniques: One-point perspective, triangular composition, geometric shapes

Appendix I

Mise-en-scene Assignment

Mise en scene: What's in the Frame?

Setting/Space, Decor, Props, Lighting, Costumes, Acting/Performance, Staging/Arrangement

Remember that in most films, everything is a carefully selected choice. If what appears in a particular scene or shot seems completely natural or realistic or random, remember that it is only seeming to be so. These choices are made so that the audience will feel that the scene is natural and realistic. But all of these choices are designed to help tell the story most efficiently, effectively, and possibly powerfully.

Select three frames from the fifteen provided on Classroom. Make sure that each of your five choices is significantly different from the others in some way. Paste those images into your document. Be sure to indicate the file name. For each one, list everything you see in the mise en scene. You should be able to list a minimum of ten items for each image. Please be as descriptive as you can. Then explain how each one helps to tell the story. Does it add to characterization, mood, suspense, theme? Does it foreshadow things to come? Does it connect to other similar things we'll be seeing throughout the rest of the film?

When finished, use File-DownloadAs-PDF to save the file as a pdf document. You will turn in the pdf by selecting Add and choosing the pdf file from your drive.

Image #1 title:

Insert image here:

List very descriptive and specific elements of the mise en scene. Be sure to explain what each one adds to the story.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Appendix J

Editing Terms Handout

Editing

Editing: The joining together of clips of film into a single filmstrip

Cut—a cut is the simplest and most common edit

Crosscutting—editing that alternates shots of two or more lines of action occurring in different places, usually simultaneously

Jump Cut—a cut that appears to be an interruption of a single shot, as if some frames were missing

Cut-in, cut-away—a cut that takes the viewer from a distant framing to a closer one or vice-versa

30 degree rule—typically the a cut-in or cut-away requires at least a 30 degree difference in camera position; otherwise it is jarring and seems like a jump cut

Establishing shot/Reestablishing shot—a shot, usually a long or extreme long shot that shows spatial relations between the objects in a scene

Shot/Reverse shot—two or more shots edited together that alternate characters, typically in conversations; over-the-shoulder framing is typical

180 degree rule—in a shot-reverse shot situation, the camera must always be on the same side of an imaginary line drawn between both subjects (if the camera is looking over one subject's right shoulder in one shot, it must look over the other subject's left shoulder in the next shot)—otherwise it will feel strange and awkward to the viewer

Matches: editing matches refer to techniques that join as well as divide two shots by making a connection between them

Eyeline match—the eyes of a character in the first shot match up with what the character sees in the next shot

Graphic match—the two shots share a strong similarity in their compositional elements—shape, color, objects, etc.

Action match—splices two different views of the same action together at the same moment in the movement, making it seem to continue uninterrupted

Duration—the time length of a particular shot between cuts; helps establish a rhythm

Rhythm—the perceived rate and regularity of cuts in a scene; can also apply to sound and camera movement

Appendix K

Editing Analysis Assignment

Name:

Please turn this in as a pdf file.

Scene 1

Title of Scene

Discuss the scene's editing in general terms. Pay particular focus to the pace and rhythm. Discuss how the editing helps the emotion of the scene and helps tell the story.

Closely analyze a number of transitions in the scene (3-4). For each, do the following:

1. Out-In screen captures
2. Cut/transition type
3. Discuss how it functions in terms of Murch's six rules (emotion, story, rhythm, eye trace, 2D position, 3D space).
4. Does the cut/transition serve a grammatical-type connection? (next, therefore, however, and then, as well as, although, until, alternatively, because of this, etc.) Does it show cause/effect, reinforcement, or opposition? If so, how?
5. Can you articulate the reason why each shot begins and ends on a particular frame (instead of another one)?

Scene 2

Title of Scene

Discuss the scene's editing in general terms. Pay particular focus to the pace and rhythm. Discuss how the editing helps the emotion of the scene and helps tell the story.

Closely analyze a number of transitions in the scene (3-4). For each, do the following:

6. Out-In screen captures
7. Cut/transition type
8. Discuss how it functions in terms of Murch's six rules (emotion, story, rhythm, eye trace, 2D position, 3D space).
9. Does the cut/transition serve a grammatical-type connection? (next, therefore, however, and then, as well as, although, until, alternatively, because of this, etc.) If so, how?
10. Can you articulate the reason why each shot begins and ends on a particular frame (instead of another one)?

Appendix L

Editing Raw Footage Assignment

Editing Catalog

Name:

For each of the following files, record the start and stop times for each take. Provide a short description of each take, recording what might be useful for you -- if some or part of the take might be worth including in your final cut. Be on the lookout for interesting moments in terms of acting, camera movement, focus, or whatever.

SC01 Cam A

SC01 Cam B

SC01a Cam A

SC01a Cam B

SC02 Cam A

SC02 Cam C

SC02a Cam A

SC02b Cam B

Appendix M

Film Story Assignment

Cinematography and Mise en Scene Hands-On Crash Course in Camera Work

***Movies are horizontal rectangles!!!

In balanced groups of 3-5 (each group with at least one good quality phone camera), you have up to 15 minutes to script and roughly storyboard a small narrative told exclusively through a sequence of 5-10 still frames. Use your knowledge of film technique and the narrative functions of the image to carefully block, compose, frame, and position your shots. Each group is assigned a different location on the campus for the shoot, so you'll need to customize the sequence for your assigned location.

After preparation time (10-15 min), you will go to your locations, taking one or two Chromebooks with you. You have 40 minutes to get to the location, compose your frames, take the shots, and return to class. As you compose each frame, one group member should be recording your decision-making in a shared Google Doc, addressing such choices as scale, camera level and angle, blocking, framing, decor, acting, lighting, negative space, off screen space, focal depth, etc. Try to share the responsibilities as much as possible. You might use a costume item to denote the character so you can swap actors. Each member should direct at least one of the camera compositions. Post each image to a shared folder on Google Drive as soon as possible. You might even go ahead and start dropping them into your slideshow as you work. You might also use more than one camera. Most importantly, don't rush it. Take time to get it just right. Take multiple images for the same shot so you can use the best one. Get into the advanced photo features of the phone camera to control f-stops, iso, focal depth, color tone/saturation, etc. Or use the phone's built-in photo editing app, the editor in Google Photos, or pixlr.com to tweak each shot to something approaching perfection (or at least better-than-sucky). Still, you're on the clock!

Once you return to class, you have at least 25 minutes to create a Google Slideshow with the following components: (*share the document and have all group members contributing*)

- A. Title Page (title of "movie", names of group members, short blurb to "sell the film")
- B. A slideshow of all the shots in order.
- C. A repeated sequence of the shots with commentary for each-- explaining all of the filmic choices and how they produce effects on the characters and audience to tell the story effectively.
- D. A final slide explaining how getting behind a camera adds to your appreciation of film and video production.

Stuff to consider:

color	contrast	focal depth	framing angle
framing level	reframing	scale (ELS-ECU)	crane
handheld	pan	tilt	tracking
decor	lighting	costume	makeup
acting	positioning	spatial depth	lines
frame in frame	exposure	negative space	shapes

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JOSEPH GOLDBERG

EDUCATION

B.A. English, Communications Concentrate, December 2002 Le Moyne College

M.S.T. Secondary English Education (7-12), May 2005 Le Moyne College

- Acceptance into Upsilon Psi of Kappa Delta Pi, the International Honor Society of Education (2005)
- Acceptance to the National Dean's List (2006)
- National Board Certification for Professional Teaching Standards (2013)

RELATED EXPERIENCE

2005-Present Jamesville-DeWitt High School DeWitt, NY

New York State Certified Public School Teacher

- Full responsibilities for instructional duties in inclusive classrooms for English Regents, English Honors, senior Mythology, Academic Intervention Services, Drama, Reading Films, Pop Culture Texts & Psych elective courses
- Winner of two monetary classroom grants for curriculum design from the International Honor Society of Education (2006-2007)
- Created and designed curriculum for four English elective courses (2006-2017)
- Director of the JDHS Drama Department (2006-2015)
- National Honor Society selection committee member (2006-Present)
- Hosted Syracuse University School of Education student teachers (2010, 2019)
- Playwright and director for winning performance in the Michael Harms Theater Festival (2013)

2009-Present Jamesville-DeWitt High School DeWitt, NY

Head Coach

- Head Coach, Boys JV Tennis (2009-Present)
- Head Coach, Girls JV Tennis (2013-Present)
- Certified CPR/AED, First Aid, NFHS Concussion and Heat Acclimatization
- Health Sciences Applied to Coaching, Philosophy of Coaching, Theory and Techniques of Coaching completed

2010-Present Manlius Pebble Hill School DeWitt, NY

Driver's Education Instructor

- New York State Department of Motor Vehicles Permanent Certified Instructor
- Classroom and Behind-the-Wheel Instruction
- New York State Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association member

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Winner of a performance based merit scholarship and student at the Berklee College of Music (1997-2000)
- Volunteer member and contributing writer for the Committee for Accuracy of Middle East Reporting in America
- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Exam Preparation Instructor, Manlius Pebble Hill School (2010-2012)
- Syracuse Stage Education Outreach Board Member (2014-2015)
- American Federation of Teachers (NSEA) Teacher Leader (2016)
- Named an International Honor Society of Education "Teacher of Honor" (2017)
- Syracuse University adjunct instructor (WRT 105; ETS 182)