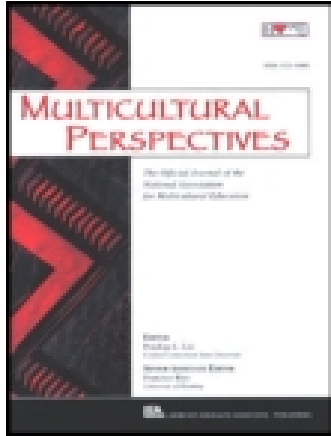


This article was downloaded by: [University of Nevada - Reno]

On: 22 October 2014, At: 06:43

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Multicultural Perspectives

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hmcp20>

Integration of Multicultural Video Strategies that Transform Entertainment into Historical Film Literacy

Greg Nielsen^a & Margaret M. Ferrara^a

^a University of Nevada-Reno

Published online: 17 Oct 2014.

To cite this article: Greg Nielsen & Margaret M. Ferrara (2014) Integration of Multicultural Video Strategies that Transform Entertainment into Historical Film Literacy, *Multicultural Perspectives*, 16:4, 223-228, DOI: [10.1080/15210960.2014.956606](https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2014.956606)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2014.956606>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>



PART III
Creating Multicultural Classrooms

Integration of Multicultural Video Strategies that Transform Entertainment into Historical Film Literacy

Greg Nielsen and Margaret M. Ferrara
University of Nevada–Reno

According to many educators, textbooks will eventually be replaced by digital versions. Today’s teachers, school administrators, and education policy makers are often digitally disconnected or at best digital immigrants, individuals who were born before the existence of digital technology and adopted it later in life. Unfortunately, when students enter most classrooms they are expected to turn off their digital devices and learn through textbooks and teacher-led discussions. This digital disconnect is counterproductive to cultivating film/video literacy, an innovative method that has been supported by the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) as a means to make learning relevant and meaningful for all students in social studies classrooms. The purpose of this study is to showcase the NCSS position through two lenses: Look closely at film and video viewing strategies currently in place in social studies classrooms and point toward viewing strategies that bring engagement and deeper thinking and responses to interact with ideas and information for all students.

Introduction

Teachers need to acknowledge that students of all ethnicities watch an untold number of Hollywood movies outside the classroom (Marcus, 2005). This immersion in film stories streams from a variety of sources including television, movie theaters, computers, laptops, portable DVD players, iPads, iPods, and smartphones. Clearly, what students know about significant historical events does not come solely from textbooks but also from Hollywood films (Briley, 2002).

By the 1880s in the United States, textbooks were the teacher’s “primary tool” (Cuban, 1984). Teachers at that time were mostly untrained and, as a result, depended on textbooks to guide their instruction. Consequently, students learned from textbooks, not from their teachers. Often, teachers used a course of study published along with syllabi that had page numbers referring to the textbook. One study of Texas rural schools in 1922 found that the textbook provided 88% of students’ experience in the classroom (Cuban, 1984).

Researchers (e.g., Cuban, 1984; Loewen, 1995) found that students often find the study of history using a textbook to be disengaging since it is often taught as a rote memorization of names and dates. Moreover, research by Barton and Levstik (2004) suggested that forcing students to record, memorize, and retell historical information has little, if any, influence on a student’s historical

Correspondence should be sent to Margaret M. Ferrara, Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, University of Nevada–Reno, MS 280 WRB 3100, Reno, NV 89557. E-mail: ferrara@unr.edu

interest and understanding. In addition, textbooks are written with a national curriculum agenda that “contributes to a consensus view of the world with only an occasional nod to alternative perspectives” (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 38).

Why Is This Study Imperative at This Time?

The textbook has become a secondary teaching tool in the past ten years. Marcus and Stoddard (2007), for example, surveyed 84 secondary history teachers in Connecticut and Wisconsin, revealing that more than 75% of the teachers reported using some portion (e.g., film clips) of a full-length film every day or at least a few times a week. In the introduction to *Teaching History with Film: Strategies for Secondary Social Studies* (Marcus, Metzger, Paxton, & Stoddard, 2010) the authors wrote, “Educators are deceiving themselves if they think history movies are of trivial importance” (p. 7). Historian and biographer Robert Rosenstone (2004) suggested that historical films are a way of coming to terms with a shared past. He stressed that the

visual form of historical thinking cannot be judged by the criteria we apply to what is produced on the page, for it exists in a separate realm, one which relates to, comments upon, and often challenges the world of written history. (p. 29)

Therefore, teaching students to be active viewers of historical films offers an alternative to the lifeless and often narrow perspective of the textbook. This requires teachers to provide the tools for active viewing that engage students emotionally and mentally. When students implement active viewing methodologies, they become critical viewers of historical films (Metzger, 2007).

Therefore, teaching students to be active viewers of historical films offers an alternative to the lifeless and often narrow perspective of the textbook.

Since the 1980s, textbook research has continuously found that history textbooks are not effective and engaging pedagogical tools and are often boring and unintelligible (Parsons, 1999). So why are textbooks still being used? The bottom line is textbooks endure because of boards of education and education policy makers

(Fitzgerald, 1979; Gagnon, 1989; Loewen, 1995; Nash, Crabtree, & Ross, 1997; Sewall, 1987).

According to many educators, textbooks will eventually be replaced by digital versions that utilize video games, education websites, and historical videos (Lewin, 2009). Most of today’s teachers, school administrators, and education policy makers are digitally disconnected or at best digital immigrants, individuals who were born before the existence of digital technology and adopted it later in life. Unfortunately, when students enter most classrooms they are instructed to disengage from their digital world.

This digital disconnect is counterproductive to cultivating historical film literacy. The National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) official position reads:

If we hope to make learning relevant and meaningful for students, social studies classrooms [ELL and multicultural classrooms] need to reflect the digital world so as to better enable young people to interact with ideas, information, and other people for academic and civic purposes. (NCSS, 2009, p. 2)

The purpose of this study is to showcase the NCSS position through two lenses: Look closely at film and video viewing strategies currently in place in social studies classrooms and suggest viewing strategies that bring engagement and deeper thinking and responses to interact with ideas and information for all students.

Video & English Language Learners (ELLs)

In specific ways, ELL students benefit from film stories. Case studies (e.g., South, Gabbitas, & Merrill, 2008) found that narrative stories had many advantages to non-narrative/documentary film stories. Film character dialog is almost always used to accomplish a clear new language acquisition goal. This provides ELL students an opportunity to exercise more effort in interpreting and understanding English with a greater coherency.

Moreover, it potentially integrates multicultural content (Banks & Banks, 2009). These researchers caution educators that widening the curriculum with video usage does not necessarily change the structure of the curriculum. They add that videos chosen to reinforce mainstream cultural perspectives can prevent students from grasping and empathizing with multicultural perspectives that include seeing events and issues differently.

When film characters adapt to different social situations including formal, informal, threatening, safe, and so on, ELL students experience models for using their new language effectively under new and varied circumstances. In addition, if ELL students get enthralled with a story, enjoyment increases, promoting greater

engagement, a noted prerequisite for increased new language acquisition. Experiencing empathy with film characters means ELLs will identify with universal themes that reach across cultural boundaries, thus reducing antagonistic tendencies often experienced between different cultures.

ELLs receive other significant benefits when watching narrative films that include witnessing another culture's home life, how they go from place to place, how they interact with both strangers and friends, what they eat, and what they wear. Perhaps, even more importantly, they get a sense of the new society's values, mores, and beliefs (South et al., 2008).

Active Video Viewing

This then begs the question: How can teachers use historical films in an effective and engaging way as primary and secondary sources to increase students' historical film literacy to integrate multicultural content? Historical film literacy, defined as "skills and dispositions, empower students to look at movies set in the past critically as historical documents" (NCSS, 2009, p. 6). Teachers need to model and instruct all students in becoming active viewers of historical films rather than passive watchers of movie entertainment. In other words, they must become historical film literate by analyzing, questioning, and discussing films and other popular media.

One of the benefits of digital technology and the greater ubiquity of the Internet is the relative ease of accessing digital primary source documents from depositories as the Smithsonian National Museum of American History (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/>) and the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/>). Historical feature films tell stories about the past. Students can be taught to analyze those narratives by critically examining the storyline. This can be accomplished by substantiating through investigation the film version of the past with primary source documents. Moreover, narrative research introduces students to the experience of learning something on their own. It is important to learn what is happening in social studies classrooms and see the connections and disconnections with today's digital natives—the students in the classroom.

Design of Study

This study used part of a survey created by Marcus and Stoddard (2007) published in *The History Teacher* under the title "Tinsel Town as Teacher: Hollywood Film in the High School Classroom." The portion of the survey used for this study concentrated on classroom use

of film/video. The participants were surveyed at the California Council of Social Studies Conference, the Northern Nevada Council of Social Studies Conference, and the National Automobile Museum History Symposium.

Typically, there were 221 respondents in the study: 41% males ($n = 92$) and 57% females ($n = 129$). The number of years of teaching in the classroom ranged from 1 year to 42 years. Most of the teachers (49%, $n = 104$) who responded to the survey had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Only 11% of the teachers ($n = 26$) had 3 or less years of teaching and 32% of the teachers ($n = 72$) had between 3 and 10 years of teaching experience. All teachers in the study taught at least one social studies course. Most of the teachers (60%, $n = 136$) had a Master's degree; the remaining teachers ($n = 75$, 33%) held at least a Bachelor's degree. The sample size was largely White teachers ($n = 170$, 77%) and, to a much lesser degree, Hispanic ($n = 25$, 12%). Other diversity representation was not as well represented: Black ($n = 27$, 11.9%) followed by Asian ($n = 10$, 4.4%).

Voices of the Teachers—The Findings

The findings of the study helped to demonstrate the various steps involved in structuring a lesson that implemented literacy strategies that involved video viewing. These were in a series of steps: video selection, gaining permission, preparing the lesson, implementing the lesson, a follow-up discussion, assessment, and debunking myths.

Video Selection

Four questions in the survey provided an overview of what teachers reported they did in terms of a video selection. Over 50% ($n = 138$) of the teachers in the study reported that they spent time developing activities to accompany a video. Likewise, the same number of teachers reported that they prepared video clips from various full-length videos to highlight the topic. Teachers also reported that they tended to use only small segments or clips from a video. One teacher explained this decision further: "I have gotten away from full-length video documentaries and will show short video clips off of YouTube often to reinforce a topic." Finally, 84% ($n = 185$) of the teachers reported they viewed the video prior to using it in the classroom.

Gaining Permission

School districts have different policies about permission needed to show a video. In addition, there are

various procedures required to inform parents about videos shown in the classroom. In this study, the response to gaining permission from administrators was mixed. Only 31% ($n = 70$) of teachers reported that they gained administrator permission at least 50% of the time. More frequently, teachers ($n = 122$) reported that they did not need administrator approval. One teacher explained this in this way, “I get a general release for PG-13 films and TV-14 videos—only get specific permission for primary sources footage of liberation of WWII concentration camps.”

Previewing Strategies

Interestingly enough, teachers acknowledge they use previewing strategies that give the students information in advance about the film. Over 89% ($n = 198$) of teachers report that they provide a verbal introduction to the video. At least 80% ($n = 186$) of the teachers reported that they mentioned ideas, situations, or events that students should focus on while viewing a video. Teachers conclude in about 50% of the cases that they use some type of previewing activity before showing the video.

During the Video

Teachers report that they typically implement an activity while viewing the video (70%, $n = 154$). The most frequently cited strategy is to stop the video periodically to highlight different points (59%, $n = 130$). As one teacher explains, “The pause button is your friend.” Another teacher added, “I used to show films in their entirety, but since the video professional development class, I realized the benefit of clips versus entirety. I also only use movies based on our books.”

Post Viewing

Overall, about 50% of the teachers reported that they gave a verbal summary of the video after it was shown. It appears that teachers rather than the students provided summaries. Post viewing activities followed—e.g., a question and answer session (75% of the time) or a class discussion (75% of the time).

Assessment

How does the video play a role in assessment? This response showed high variability. 39% reported that they used a written assessment related to the video for grading. To a larger degree (60% of the time), teachers

reported that they used observing students or non-written assessment related to the video for grading. The most common practice (80% of the time) was that teachers reported that they included items on tests derived from videos.

Beyond the Video as a Literacy Strategy

The most common belief that one might hear about videos is that they are a great reward for exceptional student work; they “earned their right” to watch the video. Teachers, in contrast, reported that they infrequently (11%) use a video as a reward. Over 75% ($n = 142$) of teachers report that they never use a video as a reward. Another common belief is that a video is used for substitute coverage. Again, teachers reported that they infrequently (85% of the time) use a video in a substitute lesson plan.

... teachers used a parent/guardian permission slip. This was an invaluable time to share the curriculum in the classroom and even an opportunity to encourage family members to have a voice in other videos that also might be invaluable in other classroom lessons.

Pulling This All Together

While the teachers’ responses on the surface do not appear to be out of alignment with effective viewing practices, what they do not mention are effective strategies. Teachers overwhelmingly reported that they viewed the video before using it in the classroom. Beyond this, the teachers provided mixed results in the use of the video—and in including others in the video approval or selection.

Teachers report that they are more likely, over 50% of the time, to gain permission from both administration and from parents before showing the video. What was missed was a valuable opportunity to share what is taking place in the classroom with the students’ families. Most times, teachers used a parent/guardian permission slip. This was an invaluable time to share the curriculum in the classroom and even an opportunity to encourage

family members to have a voice in other videos that also might be invaluable in other classroom lessons.

Student voice in the selection of the video was not brought out in the teacher reports in their video collection. One teacher reported that video selection was sometimes determined by how well students previously responded to video types (e.g., documentaries). Regardless, teachers must consider the potential degree of video engagement by selecting videos that will appeal to their students.

Teachers noted in the survey that they used a series of literacy strategies through previewing, viewing, and post viewing practices. Teachers in the study tended to report that they used previewing strategies. These include a verbal introduction to the video and a “mentioning of ideas, situations, or events that students focus on while viewing the video.” However, it appears that beyond these strategies, when asked to identify some type of previewing activities, the response was mixed. Fewer respondents identified a previewing activity, that is, one that involves student engagement at the beginning of the lesson as compared to a teacher-directed strategy such as raising a question or giving an overview of the video.

The point to keep in mind is that student engagement needs to be at the start of the lesson, that is, through more student involvement in asking questions rather than using teacher-directed activities. This needs to continue in the lesson—more opportunities for students to discuss the video in an on-going way, not simply using a viewing guide. This was an interesting outcome based on the teacher responses.

The majority of the teachers reported that they used some type of activity during the viewing of the film. Also, it appears that teachers do stop the film, some more frequently than others and at least in half the cases in the survey. Teachers are less likely, in a verification question, to show the whole film without stopping it. The question that remains here is what is going on when the film is stopped? This would have been an ideal time to follow up with a focus group discussion.

In terms of a post-assessment strategy, it is important for teachers to use more non-writing assignments (e.g., debates, role play). Interestingly enough, the use of videos is not necessarily included in follow-up assessment. It is more likely used for a writing assignment, not to recall information on a test or to find observational data or non-written assessments.

Implications for the Future

James Banks (2008) referred to the process of investigating a film version of the past by comparing it to primary source documents as “the knowledge construction component of multicultural education” (p. 72). By actively comparing and contrasting primary sources with video content,

students begin to comprehend how knowledge is constructed, revealing in the process “biases, experiences, and perceptions of historians and other researchers” (Banks, 2008, p. 72).

Unfortunately, many teachers do not take advantage of their students’ constructed historical knowledge, hesitating to use film/video because of concerns over appropriateness, labor intensive film/video analysis outside of school, the fear of not covering the required curriculum, and the pressures to prepare students for high stakes testing. Preservice teachers and in-service teachers often lack professional development in using films/videos as texts that can be analyzed for perspectives and cultural features that can be examined in combination with other primary historical sources (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007). The current study revealed that 68% of the social studies teachers surveyed had no professional development in the use of film/video in the classroom. Undoubtedly, educators can no longer ignore the impact of film/video-based instruction. Students look to teachers to model how to recognize, describe, question, and analyze historical documents including films, video, and short scene clips (Marcus et al., 2010).

The period of showing a video as a reward is ebbing and the new age is going to look highly different. At the same time, schools are still locked in old technology and this will create a sense of confusion if teachers do not find new ways to show videos using streaming, blogging, [and] quick chats . . .

Furthermore, one film literacy researcher (Russell, 2006) reported that a fully developed film-based lesson utilizes active previewing, viewing, and post viewing components. These film literacy procedures help students to dissect the narrative through the use of evidence (Metzger, 2007). In order to further achieve historical film literacy, students need to be taught the cultural positioning of the film by asking questions about the film’s creators (Sorlin, 2001). Who are the writers, directors, and producers? What are their goals and intentions? Do they have political, social, and/or economic agendas? If so, what are they? (O’Conner, 1990, 2002, 2007).

Perhaps, the power that is most important in this study is the awareness of the need to change and broaden teacher perceptions of video watching and

implementation as a teaching tool for all learners. Indeed, teachers reported in this study that they used videos as a teaching tool in social studies. What is not reported is how they used this tool—and how they hope to use it in the future. The period of showing a video as a reward is ebbing and the new age is going to look highly different. At the same time, schools are still locked in old technology and this will create a sense of confusion if teachers do not find new ways to show videos using streaming, blogging, quick chats, and multiple ways of information delivery beyond the way information is currently delivered.

Imagine a future where there is no substitute teacher showing a video. Rather it is a large viewing room and students simply watch a self-selected video that goes with their course. Imagine students creating more of their own videos to tell their personal histories and to show this as part of their final portfolio. Imagine teachers working with pre-service teachers to “catch up” on what are the latest innovative ways to use videos in learning about social studies. A meaningful integration of inclusive video strategies that transforms entertainment into historical film literacy is possible for all students.

References

- Banks, J. (2008). *An introduction to multicultural education*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Banks, J., & Banks, C. (2009). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Barton, K., & Levstik, L. (2004). Teaching history for the common good. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Briley, R. (2002). Teaching film and history. *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*, 16(4), 5–6.
- Cuban, L. (1984). *How teachers taught: Constancy and change in American classrooms, 1890–1980*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Fitzgerald, F. (1979). *America revised. History schoolbooks in the twentieth century*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company.
- Fitzgerald, J. (2009). Textbooks and primary source analysis. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 4(3), 37–42.
- Gagnon, P. (1989). *Democracy's half-told story: What American history textbooks should add*. Washington, DC: Education for Democracy Project of the American Federation of Teachers. ED 313 305.
- Lewin, T. (2009, August 9). In a digital future, textbooks are history. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/education/09textbook.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- Loewen, J. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Marcus, A. (2005). “It was as it is”: Feature film in the history classroom. *The Social Studies*, 96(2), 61–67.
- Marcus, A., Metzger, S., Paxton, R., & Stoddard, J. (2010). *Teaching history with film: Strategies for secondary social studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Marcus, A., & Stoddard, J. (2007). Tinsel town as teacher: Hollywood film in the high school classroom. *The History Teacher*, 40(3), 303–330.
- Metzger, S. (2007). Pedagogy and the historical feature film: Toward historical literacy. *Film & History*, 37(2), 67–75.
- Nash, G., Crabtree, C., & Ross, D. (1997). *History on trial: Culture wars and the teaching of the past*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- National Council of Social Studies (NCSS). (2009). *Media Literacy*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/medialiteracy>
- O’Conner, J. (1990). *Image as artifact: The historical analysis of film and television*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- O’Conner, J. (2002). Image as artifact: Historians and the moving-image media. *Magazine of History*, 16(4), 23.
- O’Conner, J. E. (2007). Murrow confronts McCarthy: Two stages of historical analysis for film and television. In A. S. Marcus (Ed.), *Celluloid blackboard: Teaching history with film* (pp. 17–39). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Parsons, D. (1999). *Restoring the past*. Retrieved from http://eiffel.ilt.columbia.edu/TEACHERS/cluster_teachers/Dick_Parsons/Restoring/the/Past/Index/Contents.htm
- Rosenstone, R. (2004). Inventing historical truth on the silver screen. *Cineaste*, 29(2), 29–33.
- Russell, W. (2006). *Secondary social studies teacher's use of film: A comparison study*. ProQuest Information and Learning Company. (UMI Microfilm 3216535). Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses Database.
- Sewall, G. (1987). *American history textbooks. An assessment of quality*. New York, NY: Educational Excellence Network.
- Sorlin, P. (2001). How to look at an ‘historical’ film. In M. Landy (Ed.), *The historical film: History and memory in media* (pp. 25–49). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- South, B., Gabbitas, B., & Merrill, P. (2008). Designing video narratives to contextualize content for ESL learners: A design process case study. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 16(3), 231–243.

