Sherlock Holmes Disc – Teachers' Notes

Why Film?

Films are powerful tools that can support students to understand and access their own world and the worlds of others: historical and contemporary; real and imagined. Part of Film Education's remit is to encourage young people to be active viewers and critical consumers of what they see. An ability to appreciate and interpret film is an empowering skill and one that is increasingly important for young people.

The combination of moving image and sound in a feature film is a familiar format for most students and one that can help bring to life characters in new and vibrant ways. Through action packed plot devices, characterisation and mise en scène the film Sherlock Holmes provides an innovative, contemporary interpretation of a legendary character from English literature. The onscreen portrayal of Holmes and his stalwart partner Watson opens up discussions about representation, genre and modern production techniques.

Where in the curriculum?

This interactive CD-ROM, aimed at KS3 and KS4 students of English and Media Studies, provides teachers with pedagogical tools to explore this highly original interpretation of Sherlock Holmes. In keeping with Sherlock Holmes' reputation for perceptive observations, clever deduction and inspired inference, the materials are designed to encourage the students to develop a similar skill set.

The disc is organised into four main sections each covering a range of key skills relating to speaking and listening, reading and writing:

- CREATING CHARACTER - a series of activities guiding students' analysis of the film's posters and trailer focusing on questions of representation of character.
- DETECT THE DETAIL – a guided approach to annotating still images from the film highlighting film language terminology.
- FRAMING HOLMES – a task requiring students to explore all web-based materials for the film in order to produce their own detailed commentary.
- STUDYING THE SCREENPLAY – a sequence of activities focused around extracts of dialogue from the trailer whereby students consider what characters' words reveal about them, an extract of unpublished film script with a task about the format of screenplays and an opportunity for students to draft their own script ideas.

Pedagogical approaches

Most activities lend themselves to being worked on collaboratively in groups or pairs, thus providing excellent opportunities for teachers to assess students' speaking and listening skills.

Throughout the disc, there are suggestions for students to print out their work. Teachers should be aware of this incase printing facilities are not always available and students may need to make

notes by hand in their exercise books or on paper instead. All interactive charts and diagrams are downloadable as PDFs as are most question-based tasks. These can be accessed via the 'PDF' or 'Worksheet' tabs at the bottom of the screen.

Time allocations of tasks have been suggested but these will vary depending on the age and abilities of your students.

CREATING CHARACTER - a series of activities guiding students' analysis of the film's posters and trailer focusing on questions of representation of character. This section introduces the film's central characters and we suggest all students should complete it. You may wish to set one of these tasks as homework.

i.   <u>Getting Started</u> – this task is an interactive spidergram designed to encourage students to brainstorm all their knowledge and ideas about the character of Sherlock Holmes. Suggested time: 10 minutes working in pairs.
ii. <u>Posing for Posters</u> – this interactive activity is based on the posters promoting the film. It begins with some questions identifying common features in all the character posters. We suggest all students work in pairs on these questions in order to give them an overview of the whole set of promotional posters. After which, students can divide into groups to focus on one of the four posters in more detail by using the annotate tool then report back their findings to the whole class. Suggested time: 30-40 mins including time to report back.
iii. <u>Tracking the Trailer</u> – this task is based on the trailer to find clues about the character. We recommend you work through most of this as a whole class. In the first instance the activity requires students to listen only to the soundtrack then to view it twice more in order to complete a chart analysing the contribution of sound and visuals to the representations of character. Suggested time 35-45: mins including plenary.
iv. <u>Collating the Clues</u> – this task is ideal as homework. It requires students to collect together all the ideas based on their work in this section and to write character profiles. Depending on the ability of their students, teachers will decide how many characters each student will write about. Suggested time: 35-45 mins.

DETECT THE DETAIL – a guided approach to annotating still images from the film highlighting some film language terminology: costumes, lighting, positioning of the actors, positioning of the character, set design and mise en scène.

Part 1: This part includes 5 images for analysis. Depending on time available, teachers may choose for all students to consider all five images or may prefer to task groups of students with analysis of different images followed by time to report back. Suggested time: 30 mins.

Part 2: This part includes one image about which students create their own analytical questions to be answered by other students. It is recommended students work in two sets of pairs for this activity in order to swap questions, answer them then compare the similarities and differences in their work. Suggested time: 30 mins.

Part 3: This part involves students reflecting on their work from this section. Questions direct them to their earlier analysis of the still images and require them to collect together their ideas

about film language in a more generalized way. This could work well as a homework task. Suggested time: up to 1 hour.

FRAMING HOLMES – a task requiring students to explore all web-based materials for the film in order to produce their own detailed commentary.

i.   The Introductory Animation – this task requires students to predict the sequence of frames used to create the introductory animation for the website. This can be completed using the downloadable PDF. If students have access to the Internet they should then view the animation on the website in order to compare their predictions with the on-screen product. If preferred, this activity can be set as homework using the Internet to access the official Sherlock Holmes website. Suggested time: 35 mins.

ii. The Trailer – this activity is based on close readings of the two promotional trailers as carefully constructed media texts. The focus of the work is to identify elements of genres in the trailers and to make predictions about the film from these observations. Suggested time: 45-50 mins.

iii. The Synopsis – the copy on the website summarising the film provides material for close textual analysis in this activity. Students focus on specific words from the text and their position in relation to other words and phrases in order to consider their contribution to the overall meaning. Suggested time: 45-50 mins.

iv. 221B – this activity encourages students to analyse the promotion of the on-line game designed to publicise the film. The game is played via the social networking site Facebook which students do not have access to in school. Nevertheless, the trailer for the game is available to view on the interactive disc and analytical activities based on this trailer provide students with opportunities to discuss the purpose and presentation of this game idea. Teachers should be aware the game is aimed at students aged 14+. Suggested time: 45-50 mins.

v.   Other Stuff – this aspect of the website analysis stimulates students' ideas about the purpose of on-line film promotion such as the gallery, the posters, the downloads and closer consideration of target audience. Suggested time: 35-45 mins.

vi. Your Commentary – this task requires students to collect together all their ideas and write about the official Sherlock Holmes website. Suggested time: 35-40 mins.

STUDYING THE SCREENPLAY – a series of activities focused around elements of script whereby students learn about the format of screenplays, analyse key exchanges, consider what each characters' words reveal about them and evaluate the impact of scripting decisions.

i.   Trailer Talk – this activity invites students to view one of the film's trailers listening out for the dialogue between Holmes and Watson with the support of a PDF worksheet. Students are required to consider the significance of the dialogue spoken by each in terms of their characterisation. Suggested time 20-30: mins.

ii. Screenplay Format – a reading and response task using a formally formatted screenplay about which students respond to questions related to layout. Suggested time: 30 mins.

iii. Scripting Sherlock – a writing task using still images from the film around which students create their own extract of screenplay bringing to the task their understandings of character gleaned from work in other sections and practising the formal layout of a screenplay. Suggested time: 45 mins - 1 hour.