



### Resource Review

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<b>Name of reviewed item:</b>	Teaching Short Films
<b>Author(s) / Editor(s):</b>	Author: Symon Quay, Series Editor: Vivienne Clark
<b>Publisher / distributor details (see note below):</b>	British Film Institute 21 Stephen Street London W1T 1 LN <a href="http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/tfms/shortfilms/#order">http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/tfms/shortfilms/#order</a>
<b>Publication / release date:</b>	2007
<b>ISBN number (if applicable):</b>	ISBN 978-1-84457-146-8
<b>Technical details (if software – see note below):</b>	Student worksheets are provided online at: <a href="http://www.bfi.org.uk/tfms">www.bfi.org.uk/tfms</a> a user name and password to access these is provided with the book.
<b>Price:</b>	£24.95. Possible to buy <a href="#">online from the BFI Filmstore</a> or by phone 01256 302866 through Palgrave Macmillan Orders.

#### Review:

This paperback book promotes a conceptual approach to the analysis and production of short film throughout three sections that can be dipped into or read straight through. The *Introduction* includes assessment outlines and schemes of work. In the next section, *Background*, we glance at the history and development of short films but the main body of the book is the final section. Case studies are used to explore short film and moving image language, short film and key concepts, research into the short film industry and short film practical production. The book contains the password to the BFI online resource with student worksheets to print out.

To use shorts rather than, or as well as, features to increase students' theoretical understanding of the forms and functions of film is compelling. Short films use the same modes of communication and provide similar opportunities for textual analysis as feature length films. Whether analysing a film's mise en scene or editing choices or when looking at film history it is easier to keep a lecture alive by using numerous short films or 90 second micro shorts as examples, rather than using one full-length feature followed by out of lecture research. When students start to make films the short is the right starting point so analysis of the form with many examples could be invaluable. Short films are available to view legally in their entirety online on various

websites so new resources can be discovered all the time. These websites act as a motivator as they offer students an immediate international platform for their completed work and a possible source of income.

The resource has been written primarily to support teachers drafted in to cover the high demand for media subjects by post-16 students and their colleges. Some of these teachers lack a subject specific background and need guidance. Writer Symon Quy seems to be painfully aware that such a fascinating creative subject needs to engage young people and has concocted session plans with regular changes of activity without encouraging superficiality. Although designed for AS level, university lecturers will find it useful when preparing sessions with degree students when film and film language is to be introduced. Clear explanations of essential terms are highly recommended and there's a real effort to make the book easy to use without being patronising or "dumbing down". New lecturers will benefit from the session plan examples, which are structured to please learning and teaching enthusiasts and no doubt students. There are various tasks to suit different learning styles and levels of interest: discussion, watching short films, making presentations, group and independent research projects and surveys as well as practical filmmaking from the pitch through pre-production to the press release. The book offers a firm foundation onto which lecturers can add their knowledge enabling degree students to take research, critical analysis and practical work to a higher level than the AS student it was written for. These could be Media, Film Studies or Broadcasting students looking at film theory or practical filmmaking.

The main failing of the book is that it refers in detail to many short films that are not available online but can be found in DVD collections. Any institution buying the book should be able to invest in a number of short film DVD compilations and should make a commitment to keep adding to it. This meant that some of case studies couldn't be followed clearly as I had not seen the film they were based around. In addition to buying additional DVDs there are other texts that one should buy to support the work and research plus other tempting BFI publications in the series that could only help – *Teaching Scriptwriting*, *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* and *Teaching Digital Video Production*.

The book presents an inventory of knowledge needed with off-the-peg schemes of work. This skeleton can then be fleshed-out and dressed-up by the teacher or lecturer who follows the signposts and will then be able to deliver interesting modules to AS and/ or degree students.

The numerous web links were a valuable part of this book. These led me to new sites or corners of well-visited sites that I'd missed. Of course any web links can lead to hours of following more and more links while watching many short films along the way but much was worthwhile. Links and information from the section on vocational issues with suggestions on how to market and distribute films were especially useful. Level 3 students working on major projects and final portfolios benefited from the research on distribution channels and emerging technologies.

All in all it's a pleasure to have short film celebrated as an art form and although sections such as assessment contexts aren't relevant to lecturers, once the DVDs are bought it's a valuable resource and reference for those introducing film to AS or level 1 students and possibly beyond.