UNIT 4:
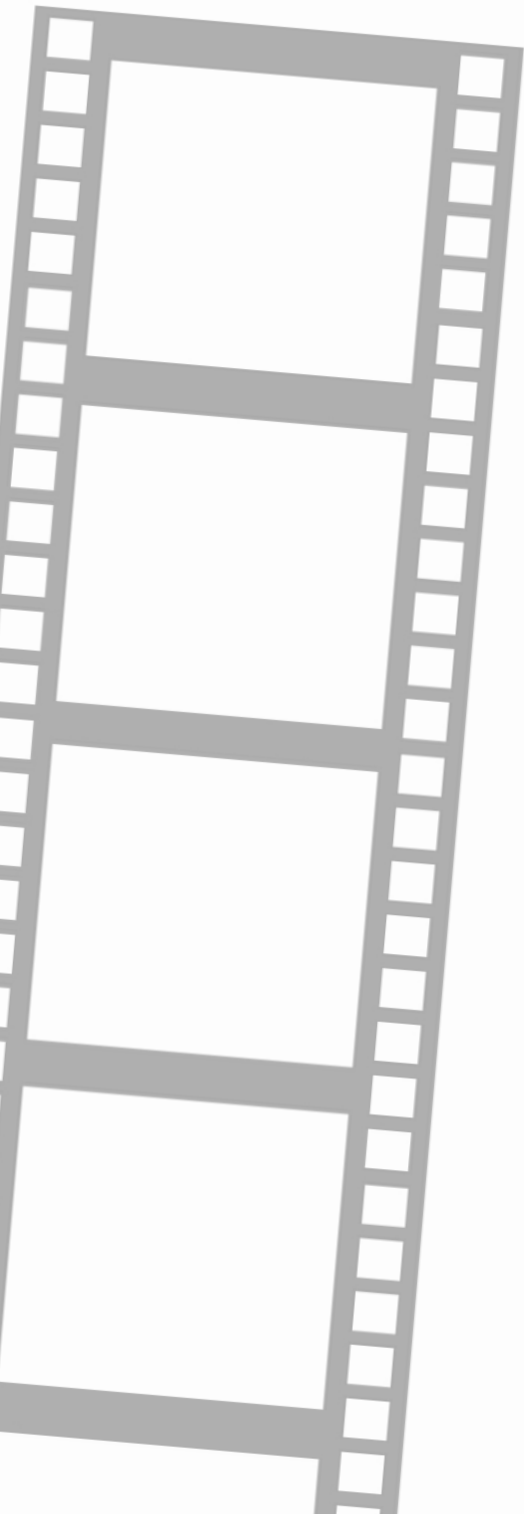# CONVERTING LITERATURE TO FILM
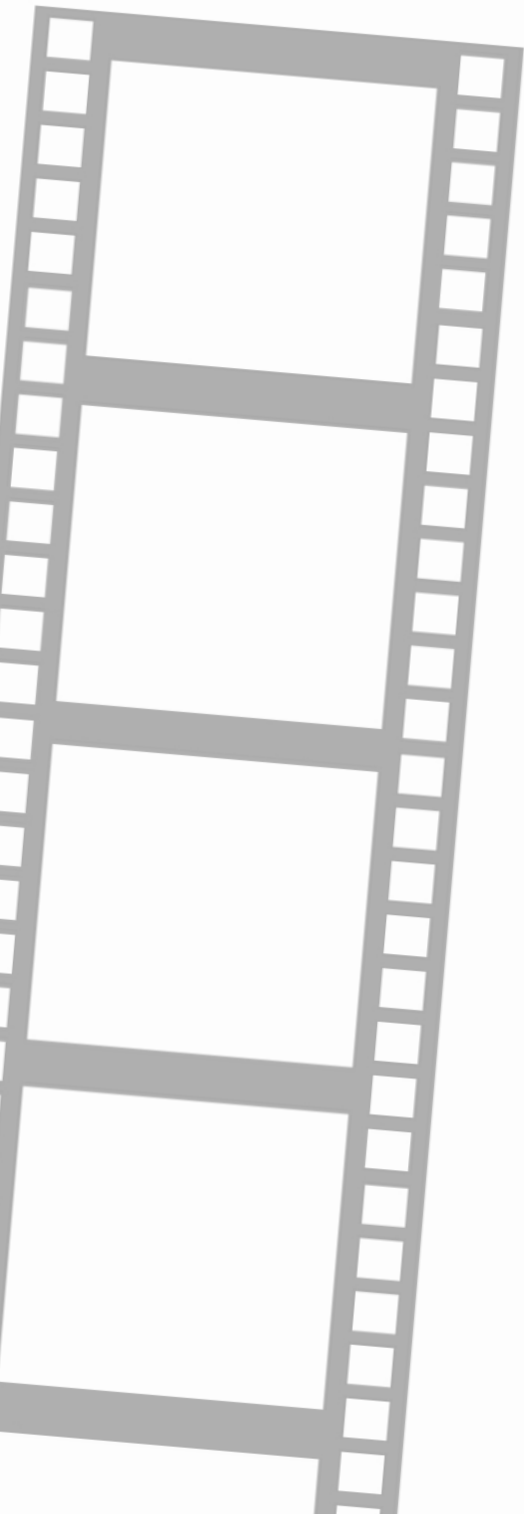
Introduction:

Whenever a novel or play is adapted to a film, there's always a debate about which one is "better." Invariably, English teachers vote for the original novel and students opt for the film, but many times the opposite happens. Most Shakespeare scholars loved Baz Luhrmann's 1996 adaptation of Romeo and Juliet (William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet), set in Verona, California. And the scholars were equally effusive about Michael Almereyda's 2000 Hamlet, set in corporate New York City. But many teachers were put off by the modern trappings in these films and continued to show the more "correct" versions.

What this unit strives to do is to establish that this debate is somewhat pointless. Students need to become aware that books and film are two completely different media, and while it is always fun to say which one is "better," it's impossible to compare them. It would be like comparing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Michelangelo's David.

This unit will focus on how those novels and plays have been adapted, and it will use tableaux vivants, film trailers, and film treatments to achieve this.

UNIT 4: LESSON 1
STORYBOARDING

Objective:
To create a storyboard

Materials:
- Handout of Chapter 2 from *The Scarlet Letter*
- A camera (a digital camera is preferred).

Introduction:

In the early years of photography, the art of *tableau* was created. A natural way to demonstrate the camera's ability to capture a moment in time, tableau allowed early photographers to present actors-in still poses-in recreations of important historic/cultural events or scenes from literature. These images were known as *tableaux vivants* (living pictures). Paintings and photographs are a modern version of this art form. Today's media is a frenzy of tableaux vivants-advertisements and billboards have mastered the skill, telling a story with a single image.

Ironically, as common as the art of tableau has become in marketing, it is one of the great lost arts in moviemaking. Pioneer filmmakers D.W. Griffith and John Ford used tableaux in films like *Birth of a Nation, Intolerance, The Grapes of Wrath* and *Stagecoach*. Both men understood that great dramatic moments deserve time, and tableau provided them that luxury of time. (Teachers might want to show a clip from any of the films mentioned above. To illustrate tableaux vivants, pause the movie when you come to a staged scene that resembles a painting). This method of filmmaking offers the viewer the possibility of understanding an entire scene through a single image.

Though rarely used *in* films these days, the art of tableau is always used by filmmakers *before* they make their films; such tableaux are known as STORYBOARDS. A storyboard is a "play by play" of a film told through tableau. Before a film is made, the artistic staff puts together a storyboard as a visual outline of the shots that will be filmed. This lesson will teach students how to go from text to storyboard.

Procedure:

On the day before this lesson, pass out the handout of Chapter 2 of The *Scarlet Letter. (It is unnecessary to have read the entire book to do this exercise, though of course it is preferable.)* After reading Chapter 2, students should go back and identify at least six passages that they feel are dramatic highlights central to the action and meaning of this chapter. In class, organize students into groups of six. Each group should come to a consensus on the six passages that they think are the key passages. Then, for each passage they should come up with a single tableau image. (So each group will have six total tableaux). When ready, allow each group to perform their tableaux, in sequence, with one member reading each of the passages out loud. Photograph and print each group's tableaux.

Assignment:

Once the photos are printed, each group must create a storyboard. Each story board will consist of 6 images and 6 lines of text (one line of text per image). The text should summarize the passage that the tableau has captured. Often in the world of film, storyboards are presented to producers to get them interested in a film. Invite your students to pretend that they are going to be pitching their film to a room full of producers. Encourage them to make their storyboards creative and eye catching.

Follow-Up:

These storyboards will be an essential part of the screenwriting and filming process in the upcoming lessons.

Assessment:

The goal of this lesson was to go from text to storyboard by converting narrative to imagery that identifies the key moments of each scene.

Evaluate their work in the following ways:
• Were the students able to identify and comprehend the dramatic highlights of Chapter 2?
• Were they able to work collaboratively in groups to decide on six appropriate passages of text to work with?
• Were they able to create tableaux of the selected text?
• Were they able to take the photos of their tableaux and create storyboards?

NOTE: Storyboards can be created either by pasting photos on poster board and writing the text beneath them OR groups can use PowerPoint to create computerized slide shows of their storyboards.

Unit 4: Lesson 1: Assessment

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**your score**
Organization and time management	Always postpones work until deadline. Has no organization for files or notebooks.	Begins work early when required to do so, but usually postpones. May lose work overnight.	Will begin work early in process, but tends to increase effort toward deadline. Has adequate file system.	Begins immediately. Connects work to assignment, not to deadline. Has organized file systems.	
Skill development for task	Assumes others will learn skill. Makes no effort to acquire expertise in skill.	Satisfied with general understanding of skill, but will not go for competence.	Will learn skill when it is necessary. Usually minimum competence to complete task.	Readily learns new skills as a matter of course. Seeks to extend the skill.	
Understanding of the task	Has little idea of nature of task or procedure. Asks for direction rather than overall clarification.	Knows name of task and general outcome, but little idea of the procedural pathway to completion.	Has general idea of nature and procedure for task. May proceed with fuzzy idea of outcome or pathway to completion.	Has clear idea of nature and procedure for task or asks for clarification before launching effort. Continuously clarifies as task unfolds.	
Creativity	Boundaries set by the fulfilling of minimum requirements. No personal input or attempt to enhance.	Has an occasional new idea, but little follow-through. Products are completed in an acceptable form.	Has new ideas or ways of doing things, but may be reluctant to deploy. Products always well done for requirements	Formulates new ideas or new ways of doing things. Products exceed requirements in design and/or content.	
Quality of Questions	Rarely asks questions, or most queries are "What do I do next?" or "What do I have to do or know?"	Asks questions about deadlines, procedures, directions, or for help with little specificity; has few or no proposals of ideas or actions.	Often has specific queries, but they may need amplification. Proposals of ideas or actions are more tentative sometimes off-base.	Most or all queries are specific or take the form of "right on" proposals of ideas or courses of action. "Gets" quick answers.	
Understanding of the process	Avoids teacher. Sees task as burden to fill class time with no value. Sees group as free ride.	Sees task as burden, but is somewhat invested in process. Asks, "Do we have to ...?" Sees teacher as task master.	Sees task as a school requirement to be filled, but sees some value in work. Sees teacher as evaluator and helper.	Sees opportunity in task for doing and learning. Sees value in the work. Sees teacher as colleague/mentor.	

	1	2	3	4	your score
Planning	Has no plan or notion of the magnitude of the work. Is always late or scrambling to complete. Often a "no show" for group work session.	Plan dominated by an early postponement and deadline-related push. May be "no show" at start of task. Rarely meets intermediate deadlines.	Makes plan, but does not always follow it. May need help allotting time. May miss intermediate deadlines; work may pile up toward end of allotted time.	Conceptualizes task and plans execution as a rational, sequenced process. Almost always meets the set intermediate deadlines. Overcomes problems.	
Intellectual contribution	Has little or no grasp of context. Sees task as isolated with no connection to past or future ideas.	Aware of overall context, but makes no connections on own. Can recite connections of others but rarely can support them.	Usually understands overall context of task and asks questions about context. Makes connections on own and "gets" those others make.	Understands overall context of the task. Contributes ideas and proposals. Extends connections to ideas past and future.	
Effort	Actively avoids jobs when possible. Complains about others. Has large set of excuses.	Reluctantly does jobs when asked. Seeks easiest duties in group. Sometimes works to completion.	Willingly takes on jobs when asked. Works to completion. Will work long hours when required.	Volunteers for jobs no matter how difficult Always works to completion. Willing to work long hours.	
Engagement	Waits for direction. Knows little of what is going on or objectives. Cannot describe where group is in process.	Seeks direction, but does not initiate action. Objectives seen as poorly defined external requirements. May know where group is.	Sometimes initiates action and always works well with direction. Generally knows the specific objectives and where group is.	Enthusiastically initiates action. Personalizes the task and takes ownership of the objectives. Always knows where group is.	

NCTE/IRA Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Standards Addressed:

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for Students
The technology foundation standards for students are divided into six broad categories. Standards within each category are to be introduced, reinforced, and mastered by students. These categories provide a framework for linking performance indicators within the Profiles for Technology Literate Students to the standards. Teachers can use these standards and profiles as guidelines for planning technology-based activities in which students achieve success in learning, communication, and life skills.

Technology Foundation Standards for Students
1. Basic operations and concepts
• Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
• Students are proficient in the use of technology.

3. Technology productivity tools
• Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
• Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.

4. Technology communications tools
• Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.
• Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.

6. Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools
• Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions.
• Students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world.

UNIT 4: LESSON 2
THE TRAILER
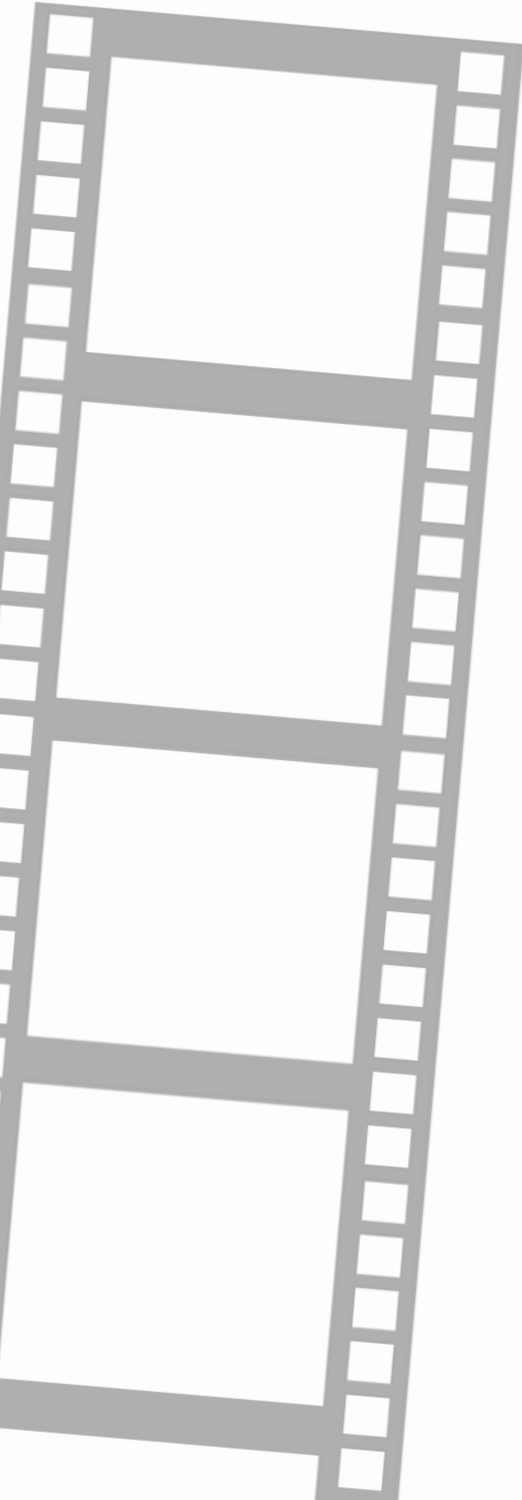
Objective:
To create a three-minute film trailer of a novel or play.

Materials:
• The book or play students are reading for class
• A video camera

Introduction:
Students will certainly know what trailers (previews) are, but you can tell them a bit of their history before beginning this assignment.

The first movie trailers were shown in 1912 at Rye Beach, NY-an amusement park similar to Coney Island. Those trailers appeared after episodes of a serial. Serials were multipart films that screened a chapter a week at the cinema. Serials ended each chapter with a cliffhanger to ensure the audience would return to watch the following chapter. The cliffhanger was always followed up with a "trailed" piece of film posing questions about the heroine's fate:

"Does she escape the lion's pit? See next week's thrilling chapter!"

By 1916, Paramount became the first studio to officially release trailers. From 1927 to the 1970s, most trailers tended to look and sound alike-overblown testaments of spectacle and stardom with pretentious, superlative titles across the screen and narration by pompous circus-barker announcers. Today, trailers have become more of an art form themselves, and they are often more creative than the films they are advertising.

For this assignment, record some trailers from one of the classic movie channels (IFC, TCM, FXM, e.g.) to show in class. There is additional information about trailers at the site below.
http://www.movietrailertrash.com/views/history.html

Procedure:
Show several trailers in class, preferably some from the pre-'70s era if possible. (It's easier to distinguish in them the elements listed below.) Discuss their commonalities.

After showing and discussing these trailers, suggest that students go home and look at other movie trailers on the Internet, especially at www.IMDB.com. Recommend that they compare pre-1970s trailers to trailers from current films.

Assignment:
Now that students are familiar with trailers, it is time for them to create their own. This lesson can be coupled with any full-length work of literature read previously for class or can act as the perfect culminating activity for the book or play students are currently reading.

On their own, students should closely examine their selected literary work. They should start by writing a brief synopsis of the whole book or play (no longer than three paragraphs). After summarizing the story, they should then decide which themes they want to emphasize and which key moments and specific lines they'd like to include in their trailer script. Following the formatting guidelines for screenwriting that they learned in Unit 3, Lesson 3, students should then create screenplays for their trailers.

NOTE: This project can be done in groups as well.

Follow-Up:
Feel free to encourage students to take it to the next level and FILM their trailer!

Assessment:
The goal of this lesson was for students to create a three-minute screenplay for a trailer of a literary work.

Evaluate the work in the following ways:
- Were the students able to adequately summarize an entire work of literature?
- Were they able to take that summary and create a trailer screenplay?
- Was their screenplay creative? Original? Did it capture the essence of the original story?
- Did the trailer include the most significant moments from the text?
- Were essential snippets of dialogue from the literature included in the trailer?

Unit 4: Lesson 2: Assessment

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**your score**
Creativity/ Originality	Does not express originality or creative thought.	Expresses some originality or creative thought, but does not always meet requirements.	Displays some originality or creative thought while keeping in mind the task at hand.	Displays a lot of creativity and original thought; keeps in mind task at hand but is not afraid to experiment.	
Film Fundamentals	Has difficulty demonstrating film fundamentals; film does not demonstrate facility with basic skills.	Has some difficulty demonstrating film fundamentals; film demonstrates some knowledge of basic skills.	Demonstrates confidence with film; is able to create acceptable film with this knowledge.	Demonstrates mastery of film technique; is able to use this knowledge to create exemplary works of art.	
Film Literacy	Displays little to no understanding of the visual arts.	Displays basic understanding of the visual arts through discussion and application.	Displays good understanding of the visual arts through discussion, application, and some interpretation.	Displays excellent understanding of the visual arts through discussion, application, and sound interpretation.	
Applied Knowledge	Is unable to put into practice skills and theories based on discussions, readings, and observations.	Has little ability to put into practice skills and theories based on discussions, readings, and observations.	Has some ability to put into practice skills and theories based on discussions, readings, and observations.	Has excellent ability to put into practice skills and theories based on discussions, readings, and observations.	

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3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

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5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Standards Addressed:

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Technology Foundation Standards for Students
1. Basic operations and concepts
• Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
• Students are proficient in the use of technology.

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• Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
• Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.

4. Technology communications tools
• Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.
• Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.

5. Technology research tools
• Students use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.
• Students use technology tools to process data and report results.
• Students evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks.

6. Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools
• Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions.
• Students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world.

UNIT 4: LESSON 3
FILM TREATMENTS
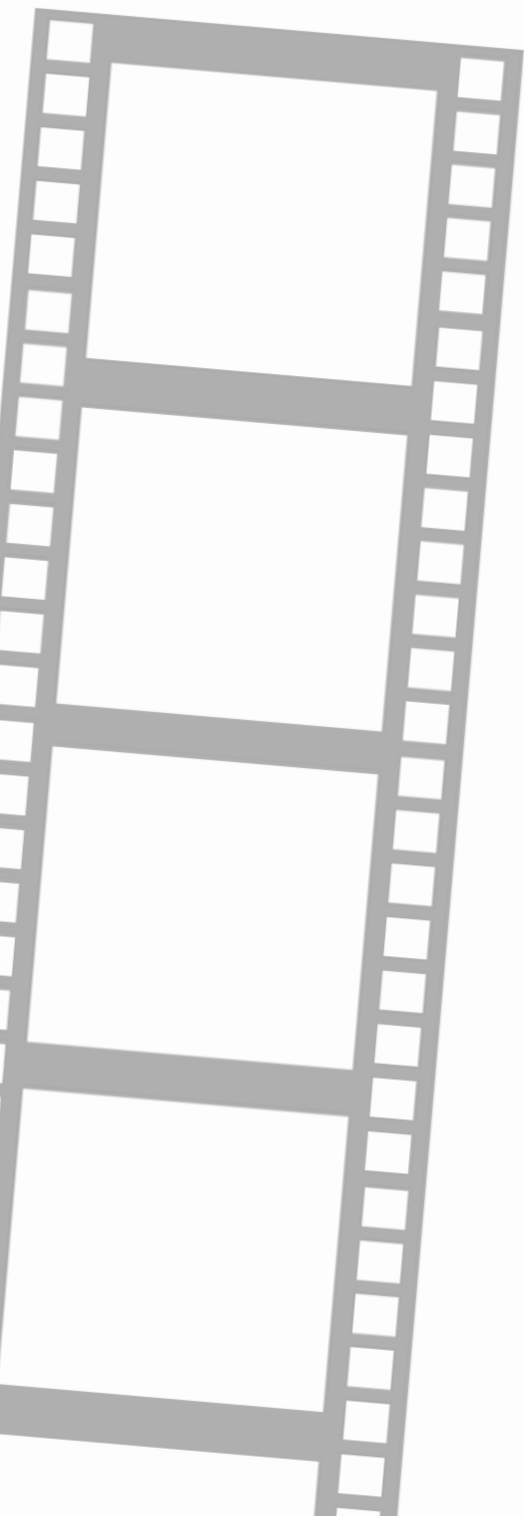
Objective:
To learn to write a film treatment

Materials:
• A copy of the Langston Hughes short story, "Cora Unashamed."
  (This is available at the NCTE American Collection site
  http://www.ncteamericancollection.org/coratext.htm.)

*NOTE: If Cora Unashamed isn't appropriate for your specific
curriculum, this lesson can be done with any novel or short story that
has been adapted for the screen.*

• A VHS or DVD copy of the film, available at vendors such as
  www.wgbh.org, www.netflix.com, or www.amazon.com.

Introduction:
A film treatment is a narrative description of a film; a short piece of
prose that tells the story of the film. Students should think of a film
treatment as a pitch for the film. It is generally shorter and less detailed
than an outline. (See example below.)

Treatments are widely used within the motion picture industry as
"selling documents"-they are written in order to try to get films financed
and produced. They come before outlines and scripts, which are
generally produced as part of the development and production process.
A treatment for a project, regardless of genre or length of film, plots the
narrative as it will appear on the screen. It is written in a
straightforward prose style, normally in the present tense, and with little
or no dialogue. While treatments usually concentrate on the plot, they
can also incorporate ideas or feelings that give information on the
situations or characters. (This can help the reader understand the
motivations of the writer(s) and their intentions for the development of
the project.) The treatment should be written in a series of short
paragraphs. Each paragraph is a separate scene or sequence of events
that advances the action of the story and characters.

Procedure:

Have students read "Cora Unashamed" before coming to class and use class time to discuss the story. Spend time examining the language and author's style. (Specifically look at word choice, sentence structure, and use of flashbacks.)

In the passage below, for example, look for all three of these elements:

Cora was the oldest of a family of eight children-the Jenkins niggers. The only Negroes in Melton, thank God! Where they came from originally-that is, the old folks-God knows. The kids were born there. The old folks are still there now: Pa drives a junk wagon. The old woman ails around the house, ails and quarrels. Seven kids are gone. Only Cora remains. Cora simply couldn't go, with nobody else to help take care of Ma. And before that she couldn't go, with nobody to see that her brothers and sisters got through school (she the oldest, and Ma ailing). And before that-well, somebody had to help Ma look after one baby behind another that kept on coming.

Hughes employs the "N" word for its brutal effect and has the narrator use the ironic tone when he says, "The only Negroes in Melton, thank God!" Throughout this flashback, he uses abrupt, short sentences for their powerful effect on the reader.

NCTE's excellent resources for teaching this story at are available at: www.ncteamericancollection.org/cora_resources.htm

Assignment:

Either individually or in groups, students will now write a film treatment of the opening ten minutes of the film they would create based on their reading and discussion of the story.

Though they will only be treating the first 10 minutes, teachers should suggest that students take into account the entire story.

NOTE: A variation of this assignment is to have students create a treatment for the ending of the film.

Following is a basic example of two paragraphs of treatment action:

Macbeth Treatment

MACBETH and BANQUO walk slowly along a desolate dirt road carrying bloody swords and shields. It is approaching night time. In a series of close ups, we realize that they look exhausted and are covered with blood, dirt, and sweat. In the background we hear thunder and somber classical music. Up ahead in an extreme long shot, three WITCHES come into view. MACBETH stops and turns to BANQUO looking puzzled. As they start to walk again, the WITCHES float across the landscape and stop suddenly in front of them, and predict that MACBETH will be king and BANQUO's children will be king. They then disappear leaving MACBETH and BANQUO shaken. Macbeth realizes the impact of their statements and is both afraid and excited.

Later, in a dreary castle, LADY MACBETH reads a letter from her husband telling what happened. She realizes that this might mean that her husband could become the king and she excitedly runs to her bedroom. She tells her servant to wake her the moment that her husband arrives...

Follow-Up:
Now ... SHOW THE MOVIE! Just the first ten minutes. Ask the students to notice additions, deletions, and changes from the original story (i.e., the "miserable" town is not so miserable and Cora's drunken father, alive in the story, is dead in the film).

Assessment:
The goal of this lesson was to introduce the concept of a film treatment and get students to create a film treatment of their own based on a literary work.

Evaluate their work in the following ways:
• Were students able to comprehend and discuss the story intelligently in class?
• Were they able to discern Hughes's unique use of language?
• Were they able to create their own film treatments?
• Did they make sound observations about the differences between their treatments and the filmmakers' version?
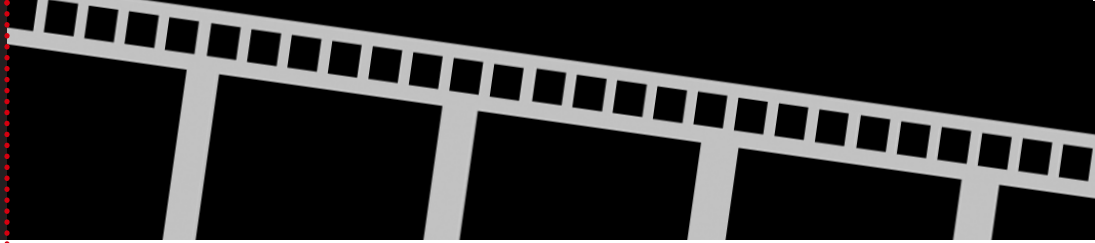
Unit 4: Lesson 3: Assessment

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**your score**
Sentence Fluency (Flow)	Repetitive sentence patterns. There are no connecting words between sentences. Many sentences run into each other.	Sentence patterns are generally repetitive, with occasional variance. There are usually connecting words between sentences, where appropriate. Some sentences should be merged; others should be made into two or more sentences.	Sentence patterns are generally varied, but sometimes variations seem forced and inappropriate. There are connecting words between sentences, where appropriate. Each sentence contains a complete thought; there are no run-on sentences.	Varied and interesting sentence patterns. There are connecting words between sentences, where appropriate. Sentences are complete thoughts, with no run-ons.	
Sensory Description	Very little sensory description is present. Work does not paint pictures for the reader.	Work relies predominantly on only one or two senses. Descriptions are not specific enough to paint vivid pictures for the reader.	Work makes use of more than two senses to paint some pictures for the readers.	Work makes use of more than three senses to paint complete and vivid pictures for the reader.	
Mechanics	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread.	Occasional grammatical errors. Spelling has been proofread.	Nearly error-free. Reflects thorough proofreading for grammar and spelling.	
Original Word Choice	Words are limited and cliché. The same words are repeated often throughout writing. Language is confusing or vague. Words do not create pictures; there is too much telling and not enough showing.	Some words are fresh and original. However, work contains clichés and repetitions. Much of the language is either vague or excessively flowery. Some words create pictures, but there is a great deal of telling that needs to be replaced with showing.	Words are, for the most part, original and free of clichés. Some language is either vague or excessively flowery. Words often create pictures. Writer has made clear attempt to show and not tell.	Words are exceptionally fresh and original. There are no clichés. Verbs are vivid and specific. There is no over-repetition of words. Words consistently create pictures. There is little telling, and mostly showing.	
Figurative Language	Work does not make use of similes, metaphors, or personifications.	Work includes similes, metaphors, and/or personification, but few of them are original. Most are clichés.	Work includes similes, metaphors, and personifications. Most are original; some are clichés.	Work is rich in fresh and original similes, metaphors, and personifications.	

NCTE/IRA Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

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5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

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7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Standards Addressed:

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Technology Foundation Standards for Students
1. Basic operations and concepts
• Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
• Students are proficient in the use of technology.

2. Social, ethical, and human issues
• Students practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software.
• Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.

3. Technology productivity tools
- Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
- Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.